



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE
PUEBLA**

*Struggles That Mexican Pre-Service Teachers
Students Face When Presenting the TOEFL Test*

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Test*

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRESENTATION

As students of an academic foreign language environment, the responsibility of being tested becomes necessary, although not every student is aware of its relevance. A test, first, is designed to “describe different kinds of measure, they are standardized, objective, provide norms and quote reliabilities” (Sheldon, 1995). Thus, tests become an important issue to measure the quantity of English that we acquire and develop during our career.

One of the most important and well known tests that take part at the end of the career for Modern Languages Students is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL test is a worldwide instrument used to “measure English proficiency in the areas of listening comprehension, reading comprehension and grammar structure” (Yi Qiu, 1993). The TOEFL test is a requirement that nonnative speakers of English must apply in order to assess a person’s knowledge of English (Sharpe, 1996). Therefore, TOEFL test becomes a measurement also of proficiency.

Stated by Johnson (2001), “proficiency is the knowledge that enables someone to use a language effectively and the ability actually to use this knowledge for communication”. According to Davies and Pearse (2008), “proficiency tests are broadly focused and cater for all comers, have typically placed more emphasis on grammar and vocabulary knowledge, which can be regarded as core components of language ability”.

Proficiency tests are not based on a particular language program. They are designed to test the ability of students with different language backgrounds. Some proficiency tests are

intended to show whether students have reached a given level of general language ability (Jimenez, 2005).

As a result, we can state that a proficiency test will measure, first, the knowledge of a person about English but also all the abilities that has acquired into this language for purposes of communication.

The relevance of having a proficiency test for some of the LEMO pre service teachers in Facultad de Lenguas Modernas BUAP resides in that TOEFL test is a requirement to obtain their title degree. If they decide this way, they only need a minimum average of 8.5 of their curriculum, not having a course failed during their University studies and the most important requisite is presenting this test gaining a minimum score of 550 points or more (desirable). Otherwise, the other way in which students can graduate and are not required to present a TOEFL test is just by writing and officially presenting a thesis.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is intended, first, to show visual evidence about the level of English that pre service teachers studying a Research Seminar subject have. In this subject, they are required to write a draft of a thesis project, they are examined by the TOEFL test at the beginning and at the end of this course. Another purpose is to make an analysis of these results, detecting the problems with the scores, if there is any.

1.3 Significance of the study

The relevance of this paper is first to know the level of English proficiency of pre-service teachers because it is known that during the five or four years of the degree of these students they are not evaluated constantly with an official test of proficiency as the TOEFL is considered. Our truly desire is that authorities and planners of our curricular scholar training consider the idea of testing students at the beginning, at the middle and at the end of the degree, if possible. The achievement of this kind of tests is significant to the learners for their personal goals in their English Language Development.

1.1 Research Questions

This thesis statement relates to the following research questions:

1. What struggles do students face when answering the TOEFL test at the end of their course?
2. What section of the TOEFL test is the most difficult for the pre-service teachers at the end of the course?
3. What strategies are needed in order to improve student's language proficiency?
4. Do pre-service teachers consider to have a good level of proficiency at this point of their career?
5. Have students increased, decreased or maintained their TOEFL score since the beginning of their thesis writing up to the end?

1.5 Definition of terms

Assessment: A systematic approach for collecting information in student learning or performance usually based on various sources of evidence (O'Malley 1996, p. 237).

Language Proficiency: As Omaggio (2001, cited in Chables, 2012) language proficiency is not a monolithic concept representing an amorphous ideal that learners rarely attain; rather it is comprised of a whole range of abilities that must be described in a graduated fashion to be meaningful . Language proficiency is a capacity of how well an individual is able to master a language. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities. There are four fields to language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language proficiency is measured for an individual by each language, such that the individual may be proficient in English and not proficient in another language.

Language testing: An achievement test assesses how successful a learner has been in a course of study. Proficiency test assesses a learner's level of language in relation to some absolute scale, or the specifications of some job which has a language required (Johnson 2011, p. 164).

Test: A set of questions or situations designed to permit an inference about what a student knows or can do in an area of interest (O'Malley 1996, p. 240).

Proficiency: Degree to which an individual is skilled in a language. When students speak languages other than English, proficiency is assessed to determine primary language. Also, level

of competence at which an individual is able to use language for both basic communicative tasks and academic purposes. Proficiency indicates that: what it means to know a language goes beyond simplistic views of good pronunciation, “correct” grammar, and even mastery of rules of politeness. Knowing a language and knowing how to use a language involves a mastery and control of a language number of interdependent components and elements that interact with one another and that are affected by the nature of the situation in which communication takes place (Valdes and Figueroa, 1994 p. 34).

Proficiency Test: It assess a learner’s level of language in relation to some absolute scale, or to the specification to some job which has a language requirement. The most difficult and complex kind of text could be proficiency test. Such test measures to what extent people’s ability in a language is situated (Martinez and Cerda, 2002, p.25).

TOEFL: The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) measures the level of English language proficiency of non-native speakers of English. It is written and published by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, USA (Manhnke, 2008). It is a standardized test of English for academic purposes, and is commonly used in university programs as a benchmark of proficiency in English for entrance requirements (Sharpe, 2010).

Reliability: Adams (2008) states reliability to the coherence of a measure whilst validity refers to its ability to measure what it is supposed to be measuring. According to Izard (2005) in order to determine how precise a candidate’s score might be, reliability needs to be estimated. The degree to which an assessment yields consistent results (O’Malley 1996, p. 239). Moreover,

reliability identifies potential sources of error in a given measure of communicative language ability, minimizing the effect of these factors over that measure (Bachman, 1990 cited in Luna & Gonzalez, 2013).

Validity: The most important concern in test development is not only that test scores are reliable; what matters is that the interpretation and uses made of test scores are valid (APA, 1985). It refers to whether or not an assessment is an adequate measure of the curriculum and the objectives it represents (O'Malley 1996, p. 240). The validity is the concept with which the Framework is concerned. Hughes (2003) states a test will content validity if it contains a complete sample of the selected language skills and structures. The European Framework considers validity as a means to measure accurately the information gained is an accurate representation of the proficiency of the candidates(s) participated in.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pre service teachers

The role of practice is what makes relevant the subject of teaching, this role as it is crucial is not the same the way to learn just for learning that putting into practice all the knowledge that a teacher has learnt. Borg (2006, cited in Tapia, 2010, p. 209) states that pre-service teachers are those engaged in initial teacher education programs at undergraduate or postgraduate level. In order to demonstrate their own sense of teaching, now pre service teachers that will become future teachers need to engage in practice. Engaging in practice can be understood in two related ways (Burns & Richards, 2009). The first way refers to classroom practice, in which there are opportunities to observe teaching, to be prepared for teaching, to teach, to reflect on it, to analyze it, and thus to learn from it. As a result, the purpose in pre service teachers seems to be self-evident when they are teaching, earlier view suggested that the knowledge base of teaching can be learned without actually teaching (Graves, 2008).

Ideas about teacher education are strongly influenced by a received wisdom about learning to teach (Kennedy, 1999). One of the best aspects of pre-service teaching is the uncertain relationship that a new teacher has with a particular school. Most teachers see the pre-service training period as a viable way of a student's acquisition of methodology and theory. These few years are also important in building confidence levels in order to meet the most important needs and demands in big classrooms today.

During the pre-service education program the pre-service teacher will learn how to use their knowledge to elaborate lesson plans to teach their class. The pre-service teachers will be

given opportunities to develop skills through lesson plans, teaching lessons, classroom management, and professional development, mainly (Wallace, 1991).

Pre-service teacher's education is ideally situated to foster such a shift in thinking. It is located directly between teachers' past experiences as students in classrooms and their future experiences as teachers in classrooms. From the experiences that teachers have obtained and will develop as a help to guide correctly to their future practices. If these ideas are not transformed during the pre-service teacher's education, teachers' own continuing experiences will reinforce them, reinforcing them even more strongly into their understandings of teaching (Kennedy, 1999).

As Berry (2007) so eloquently suggests, the process of teacher educator self-renewal is imprecise and never completely achieved, but self-study researchers aspire to closing the space as it were between accepting challenges and working towards new knowledge and deeper understanding of practice (Brandenburg, 2008).

2.1.1 Definition of Teacher Education

Today is constantly increasing the worldwide demand for competent teachers and more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development (Burn & Richard, 2009) and all the kind of formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of being an educational professional or to discharge teaching responsibilities more effectively.

Some years ago teacher's qualification was called teacher training. It prepared teachers as mechanics or technicians. The distinction is that training or education is something that can be presented or managed by others, whereas development is something that can be done only by and for oneself (Wallace, 1991). As Kilpatrick (1997) puts it, —Training is given to animals and circus performers, while education is to human beings. Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills.

The contrast between training and development has been replaced by a reconsideration of the nature of teaching-learning, which is perceived as a form of socialization into professional thinking and practices in a community of practice (Burns & Richards, 2009).

Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment (Wallace, 1991). Thus, it is relevant to include effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of materials. On the other hand, professional skills embrace the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to be fully qualified in their profession.

2.1.2 Language requirements for language teachers (European framework)

During the career of becoming English Language Teachers, students have developed skills and got knowledge about teaching in order to be prepared to undoubtedly be good teacher, but what do they need to demonstrate their competence in teaching English language. Richards (1998) presents six domains of content that are proposed as constituting the base knowledge of the field of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE). As Richards (1998) refers there is an

understanding of the traditional content base of SLTE to include domains of knowledge, skill and awareness relevant to the preparation of second language teachers. Those six domains are described in order to get a general idea of each one.

1. *Theories of teaching*: It is important that a future teacher must develop understandings about theories of second language teaching and most of the implications for language teaching practice. Thus, it will be possible to develop a reflective approach to one's own teaching. Theories of teaching includes recognize the one's own teaching practices that include to be aware about assumptions, beliefs and values on it.

2. *Teaching skill*: It refers to the basic master teaching skills such as classroom management, lesson planning, communicative language competence in teaching and the capacity to adapt teaching skills and to adapt to new situation in class.

3. *Communication skills and language proficiency*: Basically to demonstrate the linguistic ability to develop effective communication during teaching performance. A future teacher needs to acquire an advanced level of proficiency in the language and be able to use the target language successfully.

4. *Subject matter knowledge*: A future teacher has to understand the nature and use of the target language. It involves the systems of phonology, syntax and discourse. In addition, a future teacher undoubtedly must be familiar with principal approaches to language teaching, testing, evaluation, curriculum development and material design.

5. *Pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making*: This point is associated with being able to analyze pedagogical issues and developing alternative strategies for teaching. This point applies as well as to recognize the kinds of decision making employed in teaching and to utilize decision making effectively in one's own teaching.

6. *Contextual knowledge*: It consists of understanding the role of context in language teaching, the contextual factors that can take part in teaching.

These domains are to achieve good performance in the future professional teaching. Following these domains is significant to have a good standard to teaching English and be able to apply them.

2.1.3 Mexican pre service teachers' language requirements

Mexico counts with a variety of Universities in which the degree of Teaching English is an option offered by them where the pre service teacher's language requirements do not vary significantly. The major of English Language Teacher mainly consists of developing the domains previously mentioned. Thus, once students are about to finishing their studies and becoming to real teachers they must demonstrate that they are prepared enough to teach.

To this research were taken into account seven different Universities from RECALE (Red de Cuerpos Academicos de Lenguas Extranjeras), below described, which are located in the center and south of Mexico. The purpose is to know some of the main requirements established to get the degree of English Language Teaching. The following information is related only to a specific requirement in order to obtain the degree, some kind of test or something different from other

degrees. It does not take into account the certification process, the payments or documents requested.

1. *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* (Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas)

- ✓ Having covered the minimum credits established = 450
- ✓ Degree getting an average of 8.5, not failing any Course and getting a TOEFL scores of 550 points on the TOEFL test.
- ✓ Professional Exam: Present and defend a research work (Thesis) obtaining the approved jury's verdict.

2. *Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro* (Licenciatura En Lenguas Modernas)

- ✓ Having covered the minimum credits established in the various areas of training: curriculum map covering a total of 342 credits (professional, disciplinary, interdisciplinary and university).
- ✓ To have passed the TOEFL (minimum 600 points) or FIRST CERTIFICATE.
- ✓ To have released the draft to Social Service.

3. *Universidad Autónoma del Estado De Hidalgo* (Licenciatura en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa)

- ✓ Having covered the minimum credits established in the various areas of training.
- ✓ The accreditation of TOEFL test with 550 points or Category B in "First Certificate" (present from the sixth semester).

4. *Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala* (Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas Aplicadas)

- ✓ Cover 100% of the credits = 376
- ✓ Proof of no debts in libraries.
- ✓ Payment of dues.

5. *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca* (Licenciatura En Lenguas Extranjeras En El Área De Inglés).

- ✓ Academic Excellence: The degree is awarded for the students with greater average than or equal to 9.5 and having approved all assignments in the regular review and study 100% of the degree.
- ✓ Academic Texts and assessment tools: Thesis, Book, Textbooks, Essay or scientific research article.

6. *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana* (Licenciatura en Lingüística)

- ✓ Having equivalent to 400 hrs of study or 410 points on the TOEFL exam issued by CELEX (Cursos Extracurriculares De Lenguas Extranjeras).
- ✓ To have accredited a minimum of 418 credits, as established in the curriculum.
- ✓ To have completed the Social Service in accordance with the Rules of Social Service Degree at UAM.

7. *Universidad Veracruzana* (Lengua Inglesa)

- ✓ The degree is awarded for the students with greater average of 9 and having approved all assignments in the regular review and study 100% of the degree.
- ✓ Academic Texts and assessment tools: Thesis, Book, Textbooks, Essay or scientific research article (Universidad Veracruzana, 2012).

Considering these universities and the requirements requested, students must present and approved an exam, proficiency exam of the language, which allows them to demonstrate their abilities and language skills in the target language. TOEFL test is the most demanded in these institutions.

2.2. Definition of test

Generally speaking, tests are considered by students and people in general as something hard and something that you would not like to talk about because immediately this term is presented in your mind as a difficulty. However, testing takes part of our everyday life, e.g. “in playful activities, we learn to set and achieve goals, to enjoy victory as well as to cope with defeat” (Kluitmann, 2008, p. 5). The same happens in education. If we do not look at testing as something hard and we try to look at it as a process, then, testing becomes a successful outcome in the process of language learning. Thus, tests are often used as a condition to measure language abilities such as speaking, writing, listening and reading in a foreign language with the key of obtaining valuable information through explicit procedures about the success and the progress of learning and teaching a foreign language (Bachman, 1990). In this sense, testing it is used as a regard of a method to provide primary information for teaching and other purposes (Razmjoo, 2011).

2.2.1 Proficiency Tests.

Acquiring a foreign language is a really hard working challenge. This challenge implies several features to take into account in order to know the achievement we have reached in this language. Proficiency tests refer to tests that are designed to measure people’s ability in a language (Hughes, 2003, p. 44). Proficiency is a term that has been used for a long time by the people in charge of education describing itself as “good, fluent, knowledgeable, bilingual, and competent” dealing with a necessity of obtaining real qualification in a language (Galloway, cited in Byrnes, 1996, p. 25). This means that proficiency tests are a way of ranging and ranking whether if an individual is able to perform with the language at a certain level, not considering

how, when or where the language was acquired (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012). In this sense, “proficiency tests look to the future situation of language use in the future life referred as a criterion (relevant communicative behavior in the target situation).” (Mc Namara, 2000).

2.2.2 Certification in a Foreign Language

The purpose of teaching foreign languages is primary to have processes that legitimate the qualifications and linguistic competences. Moreover, these processes recognize the competencies acquired in the language possessing complete certification in a foreign language.

According to the Research Administration Certification Council (2007), certification determines that an individual has completed all the requirements with total validity and it is able to perform his knowledge in the professional field. Thus, facing an official proficiency test leads future professionals to develop in their work with total certification in a language.

As a result, certified evaluation of a foreign language uses instruments establishing the parameters of academic quality that allows students, teachers, institutions and other organizations, to provide evidence about the integration and development of the language domain.

As a matter of fact, the Common European Framework for the Language Council of Europe (2002) states that the way to approach to the certification of a foreign language is the established relationship with the model of linguistic competences, which give faculty to the individual to act using specifically the linguistic means (language abilities), to answer national and international demands.

According to Huxtable (2007), a certified test with international prestige is structured according to the needs of the society, based on the model of linguistic competencies that emphasize the academic effort and the ability to measure the knowledge of the English language as a resource for the academic international dialogue.

2.2.3 Types of Proficiency Tests.

The international tendencies demand more and more to graduated students a complete communicative competence in a second or a third language, in which English is always involved. Hymes (1971) describes that the acquisition of a communicative competence is measured by the social experience, the necessities, motivations, and the action that is renewed once again with more motivations, necessities and experiences. This global demand forces to the Universities to include in their programs courses and tests of certification in the English language. Communicative competence extends both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings which means “everything involving in language and other communicative dimensions in particular social settings” (Zhan, 2010).

The relevance in this study, mentioning the types of proficiency tests, is that students at a university have to take one of these English proficiency tests to get graduated and demonstrate that their English ability equals the Common European Framework (CEF), in most of the cases. All these proficiency tests have a mixture of receptive and productive components: listening, reading, speaking and writing.

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations offers the world's leading range of qualifications for learners and teachers of English. These tests are taken all over the world every day for over 3 million of people in 135 countries. Cambridge ESOL offers assessment across the range of language ability. They provide examinations for general communication and academic purposes (including specialist legal and financial English qualifications). These tests are aligned to the principles and approach of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The areas to evaluate are Reading and Use of English, Writing, Listening and Speaking. There are two versions of *Cambridge English*:

1. *First available: Cambridge English: First*
2. *Cambridge English: First for Schools.*

Both follow exactly the same format and the level of the question papers is identical. The only difference is that the content and treatment of topics in Cambridge English: First for Schools have been particularly targeted at the interests and experience of younger learners.

The ESOL Examinations are:

Key English Test (KET) –An exam of basic level, having basic skills in English, where you show you are able to understand simple texts, to communicate in familiar situations and understand short news with a simple language. Skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Conversation.

Computer-based Key English Test (CBKT) - Designed for students in the A2 level of the CEFR. This test is ideal for students in their first years of high school. It measures the ability to handle situations of real life in the written or oral form.

Preliminary English Test (PET) It is an exam for intermediate level, in which you can show your performance in everyday life, written or spoken, reading text books and easy articles, also writing personal letters and to make notes in a meeting. This is a very valuable certification if the desire is to study abroad or to develop a degree in the international business.

First Certificate in English (FCE). A very well-known test and recognized because of its high intermediate level, used when the English language is appropriate for everyday situations, business and studies having a high proficiency in vocabulary, being able to construct an argument using the proper style in a wide variety of situations. It covers the areas of Reading, Writing, Use of English, Listening and Conversation.

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). This is a test of advanced level, when the standard of English language is reached and adequate for social, professional and academic practices. It covers the Reading, Writing, Use of English, Listening and Conversation skills.

Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). This is the exam with the most advanced level. You are able to perform your linguistic competence effectively in any context of the language, reaching a Standard English very similar to a native speaker. It also measures the five skills.

2.2.4 Relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The fact that almost all the international proficiency tests are associated to the Common European Framework “provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc.” It describes in a comprehensive form what language learners have to know in order use a language for communicative purposes and what knowledge and skills they have to build up at the same time they are able to act efficiently. The CEFRL agreed in three levels: A1-A2 (Basic user), B1-B2 (Independent user), C1-C2 (Proficient User) language proficiency is described and combined in the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (CEFRL 2012).

Totally accepted in Europe the scales of the CEFRL are a useful tool because of the results of the scores. In the field of teaching the issue of knowing by a score whose individual is able to perform certain tasks in the English languages is prominent having a “socially constructed meaning for teachers and other test-score users”(Tannebaum,2008). This means that, if a test score can be connected to one of the levels of the CEFR, it is clear what individuals with at least that score are expected to perform.

By pointing out test scores onto the CEFR and the TOEFL test leads us to reflect and project in the progress of this research about the equivalence and the difference that we can draw among these important references of assessment and then, to make an operational bridge built between the descriptive levels of the CEFR and the TOEFL test.

2.3 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

The TOEFL test is the most widely respected English-language test in the world, recognized by more than 8,500 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries, including Australia, Canada, the U.K. and the United States. Wherever you want to study, the TOEFL test can help you get there (ETS, 2012).

The TOEFL was created by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). A national Council on the testing of English as a Foreign Language was formed in 1962 (TOEFL program 2010). This test was formed by 30 organization and government agencies concerned with the English Language Proficiency of nonnative speakers of English whose desire is to study in the United States. During the development of the test many associations such as Danforth Foundations, Modern Language Association, the College Board and the Educational Testing service assumed a responsibility for this program.

The TOEFL board is comprised of 16 members. Some are affiliates with institutions, universities, agencies as undergraduate and graduate schools, nonprofit educational exchanges organization and other public and private agencies with an interest in international education. Other members are specialist in the field of English as a foreign and second language

TOEFL tests are accepted worldwide. The TOEFL is used as an evaluating tool to know the English language proficiency at a basic, intermediate and advanced level. TOEFL test is an official exam applied to non-native speakers of the English language.

2.3.1 Description of the TOEFL

The original TOEFL test was divided into five sections but through some researches in 1995 was modified into three sections like considering four features such as offer a reflective communicative competence of models include a more constructed-response on writing and speaking, integrate language modalities and provide students' abilities to use English in academic purposes.

This test is designed for people whose purpose involves the following characteristics:

- Students planning to study at a higher education institution
- English-language learning program admissions and exit
- A scholarship and certification candidates
- English-language learners who want to track their progress
- Students and workers applying for visas

In this research TOEFL test is focused on the previous characteristics, however it has a plus in the Facultad de Lenguas Modernas and implies that this test has to be taken as a requirement to get graduated.

The TOEFL test is offered worldwide and has approximately from 30–40 times a year and locations through 4,500 test centers in 165 countries than any other English-language test in the world. This test can be retaken as many times as people wish. The cost of the test can range from US\$160 to US\$250 and varies between countries.

2.3.2 Types of TOEFL: iBT & ITP

TOEFL test has two different categories. The first one is the TOEFL iBT test, administered via Internet. In addition to the test, the ETS TOEFL Program provides tools and guides to help you prepare for the test and improve your English-language skills.

The TOEFL iBT tests measures your ability to use and understand English at the university level. TOEFL iBT tests are designed to assess learner's ability to use English to study academic content; these test do not assess prospective teachers' ability to use English to teach academic content.

The TOEFL iBT test is taken by more than 27 million people from all over the world test to demonstrate their English-language proficiency. The average English skill level ranges from Intermediate to Advanced.

The second type of TOEFL test is Institutional Testing Program (ITP); it is a paper based and used with academic content to evaluate the English language proficiency of non-native English speakers This official examination is administrated by ITS with a national used to evaluate the academic performance in an intermediate and advanced level of English language this exam has a length of 120 minutes. TOEFL ITP scores are valid for two years from the test date. Because language proficiency can change considerably in a relatively short period of time, scores more than two years old cannot be reported or verified.

2.3.3 TOEFL ITP areas

The TOEFL questions are in multiple choice formats, with four possible answers per question. The test evaluates skills in three areas: (1) Listening Comprehension, measures the

ability to understand spoken English as it is used in colleges and universities. (2) Structure and written expressions measures recognition of selected structure and grammatical points in standard written English. (3) Reading Comprehension measures the ability to read and understand academic reading material. Through the result in TOEFL areas in this research, we also intend to determine which of the skill areas causes more struggles among students.

2.3.3.1 Listening Comprehension

The first skill that we acquired at the time of learning a foreign language is listening because of the exposure we have on it. It may be kept in mind that listening comprehension implies more than the fact of understanding words, it considers a complete understanding of what speakers tend to communicate (Smith, 2006). According to Buck (2001) "the point is that listening comprehension is the result of an interaction between a number of information sources, which include the acoustic input, different types of linguistic knowledge, details of the context and general world knowledge". The total attention of the listeners may be present at the time of facing the TOEFL test because it is a challenge making sense of the information and internalize at the same time the information, the time and the reflection on the test are determiners to succeed or defeat because it takes place in real time and it's momentary (Ji hyun, 2007). Therefore, the importance of the linguistic information and the acoustic input may not be underestimated and in the TOEFL test it is of high relevance to obtain a good score on this aspect.

2.3.3.2 Structure and grammatical points in standard written English

This feature represents an important key in the TOEFL test. This is the section where applicants' students have to recognize accurately everything that involves the correct function of the structural grammar in a foreign language such as phrases, clauses, parts of speech, sentences order, among others (Daw, 2012). This may be one of the skills more difficult to improve in a foreign language because it is not unusual to find students that frequently are not able to use precisely a given grammatical point presenting spontaneous utterances even after repeated instruction, drill and apparent misery as demonstrated on tests (Kao, 2009).

2.3.3.3 Reading Comprehension.

The third skill that is taken into account in the TOEFL test is Reading Comprehension. As reading is a visual input, it uses both the language of the reader and the writing system that encodes a language. Particularly important are “(a) the identification of words and (b) the engagement of language and general cognitive mechanisms that enables these words into messages” (Perfetti, 2001). The RAND Reading Study Group (Snow, 2002), states that reading comprehension is the “Process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”. Through this means, it is remarkable the relation between the text, the reader and the activity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to provide a description about how this research was carried out. The methodology used to answer the research questions mentioned in the introduction is explained and presented in this chapter. This chapter is divided in three sections; first is offered a description of the participants. Secondly, the instruments that were used to collect data are presented and defined. Finally, an explanation of a methodological approach used in this project is described.

3.1 Subjects

This research took place in Puebla, Mexico at the Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas (LEMO). Thus, the sample subjects selected for this study were 10 (pre- service teachers) students who were by that time enrolled in the 9th semester, taking their first thesis seminar course, course in which they write their thesis project as a subject requirement to finish their career and obtain their degree. According to the Common European Framework their English Proficiency has to be level B2. Subjects' ages are range from 22 to 28 years old.

3.2 Instruments

The instruments of this research were designed for collecting qualitative and quantitative data. In order to gather quantitative data the use of a questionnaire was necessary. Then, an interview to have quantitative data was required. Finally, a Color Coded Classification Table was

used to illustrate a comparison between the results gained at the beginning and the end of the course of Writing Thesis.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

Stated by Adams (2008) “. The use of questionnaires is a very useful tool to collect data in order to know, not very extensively, the opinions and criteria that your target group has about your research. Similar to Adams, Criollo (2003) states that a survey is an important tool to know people’s own criteria, people’s evaluation and judgment about specific situations which have been studied. This questionnaire regards ‘Language proficiency’; it was divided into two parts. The first part contains five questions about the importance and role of English in pre-service teachers’ lives. The second has eight questions that are connected to the TOEFL test. Besides, its design requires participants’ names and ages with in order to compare for future results and conclusions.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses. (McNamara, 1999). Consequently, Cousin (2009) states that there are three kinds of interview: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. This research requires the first type of interview in order to analyze better pre-service teacher’s point of view. These interviews are essentially face

to face surveys mainly closed questions are asked against coded responses. The importance of using interviews in this research is that they provide a far more personal form of research than questionnaires.

3.2.3 TOEFL'S Scores

According to Tapia (2012) a useful tool to obtain a visual comparison and a general view of TOEFL scores is through the use of a table , a color coded classification for senior Modern Language/Pre-Service teacher for the PIAFET project, with scale of three colors just as a traffic light. The colors used in this instrument are used according to the level of “knowledge” in the language proficiency gained at the moment to present the TOEFL test. First, with red color are marked the lower scores, meaning a warning about the student’ performance in English. Then, the yellow color indicates a medium achievement in the language and it needs to be improved. Finally, the scores located in green color are those that their level is satisfactory and the scores are acceptable.

Another characteristic of this instrument is that it covers three stages, Initial, Desirable and Optimum, which are supposed to be applied in three different moments of a course of eight months taken as a part of the subject in which students must write their BA thesis called Research Seminar I and II. However, in this research it was just possible to complete the Initial and the Desirable stages.

As it was mentioned, TOEFL test is divided into three sections. This sections are, Listening Comprehension (LC), Grammar (GR), and Vocabulary –Reading Comprehension(V-RC). A relation was made through the collection of the data obtained by the instrument-table and

the TOEFL areas. The purpose was to show visual evidence about a progress, a set-back or if just the score maintained the same level between the beginning and the end of the course.

3.3 Procedure

First, the three instruments were adapted, designed and administered in an extensively revision of each one of them done by the researchers and the thesis director.

After that, the questionnaire was piloted among participants to know if there were errors on it. Certainly some errors were found and the corrections were done. The final version was applied to the subjects. The following instrument was the interview. It was done at the middle of the course of the Research Seminar. The data was recorded, transcribed and finally analyzed.

The first step to fulfill the requirements to use the Color Coded Classification Table (used for TOEFL scores) Initial part, the participants were asked to present the TOEFL test at the beginning of the term of the Research Seminar. In order to know the Desirable stage, once again were asked to present the TOEFL, this time at the end of the course. Finally, all the data was collected, organized and analyzed. Later on, the information was processed on the computer. Consequently, that information was turned into graphs, tables and scripts to illustrate the main findings. Finally, the results were showed up and based on them the final conclusions are confirmed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The aim of this chapter is to present the results obtained in the process of data collection. The results are divided into three parts. Each part shows results of the three instruments applied. First, a questionnaire was applied and the results are shown in Table 1. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, the first five questions talk about the importance and role of English in Pre-Service Teachers lives. The other eight questions are related to the TOEFL test. For the second instrument an Interview was designed and the answers to the questions are presented in other set of tables. In order to get a reliable comparison among the results of the participants gained in the TOEFL test, the Colored Coded Table (Tapia, 2012) was used.

4.1 Instrument 1: First part of the questionnaire ‘Role of English in Pre-Service Teachers life’.

It is vital to know the role that English Language has in pre-service teacher’s lives because it is strongly related to the degree they are studying. As it was expected in table 1 are presented the first five questions. Question 1 shows that for the majority of the participants English Language is extremely relevant in their lives. (See Table 1)

As we review in chapter two, the role of language proficiency in a student life it is very relevant because it represents the achievement in the competencies that they have reached in the language. Question 2 reflects a successful result because, most of the participants affirmed that they use some strategies to improve their language proficiency.

Intrinsically related, questions three to five display that participants assume that being certificated in a language or managing in a high percentage a Foreign Language, particularly English, provides important opportunities to any person and especially for a future teacher. Pre-service teachers may be aware that in most of the situations, being certificated in a language is a requirement to obtain a job (See Table 1).

Table 1. Role of English in Pre-Service Teachers life.

Questions	Measure of agreement			
	A lot	Much	Just a little	Nothing
1. <i>English is important in my current life</i>	6	4	-	-
2. <i>The use of some strategies helps me to improve my language proficiency</i>	9	1	-	-
3. <i>'My language proficiency represents a great importance in my future job'</i>	6	4	-	-
4. <i>'It is important for me to manage the EFL language in a high percentage'</i>	6	4	-	-
5. <i>'I really care about my language proficiency'</i>	6	4	-	-

4.2 Instrument 1: Second part of the questionnaire 'Student's perceptions towards TOEFL Test'.

As it was mentioned before, the questionnaire was divided into two parts. The second part of the questionnaire is about how students feel and rate themselves in their skills, tested by TOEFL test. The table contains the corresponding question and the options stated. These options

are ‘Excellent’, ‘Very Good’, ‘Good’, ‘More or Less’ and ‘Deficient’. This section is divided into eight questions; the results are showed in table 2.

Question number one is related to the student’s expectations at the beginning of their major. Most of the participants consider almost satisfactory their initial expectations in this stage of their career. One participant answered as excellent his expectation in the major, on the other hand one subject stated as deficient her expectations.

Table 2. Student’s perceptions towards TOEFL Test.

Questions	Excellent	Very Good	Good	More or Less	Deficient
<i>1. My expectations at the beginning of the major have been successfully achieved.</i>	1	7	0	1	1
<i>2. The program has suitable test to measure my proficiency.</i>	0	5	2	1	2
<i>3. I was able to develop my reading skill.</i>	0	2	5	3	0
<i>4. I was able to develop my listening skill.</i>	0	2	5	3	0
<i>5. I manage a wide range of vocabulary (variety).</i>	1	7	2	0	0
<i>6. I manage a good level of grammar.</i>	2	6	2	0	0
<i>7. I have the appropriate language level to teach.</i>	2	7	1	0	0
<i>8. My English proficiency will affect my developmental as a teacher.</i>	2	7	1	0	0

Question number two is about the perception regarding how subjects consider suitable the program from their university to measure my proficiency, specifically in this research about

TOEFL test. Five of them agreed that school has a “very good” suitable test. Three more consider the test as ‘Good’ and ‘more or less’. Two of the participants consider as deficient the test that is applied in their University to measure English Proficiency.

Right after, question three and four are related to the perception of each subject concerning language skills: listening and reading. Surprisingly, these two questions had the same number of answers. Most of the students scored their performance in the skill of reading and listening as "good". Two more students scored as "very good" and three as "more or less," which means that pre service teachers know they need to improve these skills.

The following questions five and six are associated to how participants consider their vocabulary and grammar management. Both answers were rated by the majority of participants’ as ‘Very Good’ in each area. Vocabulary seems to be better developed among participants. It means that pre service teachers had experienced acceptable the use of vocabulary so far. On the other hand, the average among grammar is variable. Pre services teacher's answers were situated positively in ‘Very Good’ standing. There is a tie among the result between ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’. Two participants rated as excellent their level of grammar and two more as “Good”. Once again, it is perceived that participants at this point of their career feel prepared enough, but not completely.

The questions seven and eight represent two important issues that interfered at the end of this career. The first is the self-perceptions about proficiency and the second the language level that a future teacher of a Second Language needs in order to have an appropriate development. One more time, the answers (see table 2) illustrated that most of the pre service teachers rated themselves in a ‘Very Good’ level in these questions. They considered appropriate their language

proficiency and use of the language. Two other rated the questions as “Excellent”. However, one of them was not sure at this point of the career and rated his level as “more or less”. It is inferred then, that ideally, most of the participants should feel ready to take this answer as an “Excellent” because they are about to get graduated. However, it is not and it could mean they are not a hundred percent developed or proficient in English language.

4.3 Instrument 2: Interview ‘Students Answers To the Structured Interview’.

The interview was structured in order to get better results and to know deeply how the TOEFL test had affected to the participants. In the following tables (3 to 7) are shown the main answers from the participants and a brief description of them.

One of the main reasons that enable this thesis is to discover all the factors affecting participant’s scores on the TOEFL test (See Table 3).

Table 3. Problems facing the TOEFL test.

PROBLEM	SUBJECTS
Boredom, tiredness	2
Noise	2
Time	2
Instructions	1
Vocabulary	1
Nervousness	1
None	1

With this question, it was possible to know if the results were affected by the moment and the place where the test was taken and of course if it affected or not the result.

Analyzing the results it was very interesting to know that most of the participants complained about the same reasons. The first important matter were the instructions. Two of the students argued that the instructions were not very clear, so, when they tried to answer the first questions of each part of the test they were not able to answer accurately.

In this same question, two more students answered that they were tired so they did not pay enough attention to each question of the test. The following common answer was the noise. Two more of our participants' complained about the noise that was disturbing them at the time of taking the test. Because of this reason, participants were mad because they had a very low score in this section of the test.

The last and most common answer was the time. One of our participants said that as he had never taken the test, he could not manage at all the time. The other student that mentioned this, said that the time made her feel stressed so that she was more worried about the time instead of thinking in the answer.

Finally, factors like boredom, the vocabulary used in the instructions, nervousness and boredom were determining factors to fail as well (See Table 3).

Table 4. Student's most difficult section of the TOEFL test.

Section of TOEFL test	Perceived	Real
Listening	4	2
Grammar/Vocabulary	1	3
Reading Comprehension	6	5

It is evident that the section that students most struggled with during the test was Reading Comprehension. Some of them complained about this section because it is the last one and it requires a lot of time and their complete attention as well. Also, as it is placed at the end of the test, the attention dedicated to it is the minimum.

The following section most difficult to answer was listening. Students said that they were not focused on the listening section because of the noise and some others said that the difficulty of the recordings was very high. To conclude with, vocabulary was mentioned because students consider it as very complicated. (See Table 4)

In this following question the focus was directed to the personal opinion of the participants respecting to their personal performance using the different skills / sub skills in English.

Table 5 Student’s choice about the most difficult skill/ sub skill they struggle with.

Skill Sub skill/	#Ss
Reading Comprehension	4
Writing	3
Speaking	1
Listening	1
Grammar	1
Vocabulary	0

The results were much related to the answers in the previous question. Again, Reading Comprehension represents for students a great deal, we can say then that it is the most difficult skill for them to work with.

The following skill/ sub skills are *Listening* and *Grammar*. Although *Writing* it is not included in the TOEFL test, participants think that it is important to include this section in the test because it is very necessary today. (See Table 5)

Furthermore, answers from question 6 are very important for this research because are the tools that the participants use in order to improve their language proficiency. Through the answers of our participants we could realize how media has a great impact in the use of English. Students say that it is very easy to have access to English through the use of media, watching movies, in the computer listening to songs or reading articles, short stories in English. (See Table 6)

Table 6. Student’s strategies to improve their English proficiency.

S1	Studying grammar and speaking alone.
S2	Watching movies, documentaries, interviews.
S3	Listening music, watching movies.
S4	Listening songs, watching movies and reading.
S5	Watching movies and listening movies.
S6	Listening songs and short stories.
S7	Living his life in English.
S8	Watching TV programs and listening music.
S9	Listening music.
S10	Practicing everyday the four skills.
S11	Reading.

Answers taken from the question 6 of the Interview are of great importance for this research because here are known the tools that participants use in order to improve their language proficiency (See Table 6).

Table 7 Students' opinions and perceptions about TOEFL test in their academic environment.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Do you consider that TOEFL test is appropriate to measure your English proficiency?</i>	<i>Why do you consider TOEFL it is or it is not appropriate to measure your English proficiency?</i>
1	Yes	It shows what your level is in English.
2	It's good	To check your grammatical issues.
3	No	It is not included in the CEF and in does not measure all your knowledge in English.
4	No	Because this is the one of practice and the real one is very difficult.
5	Yes/No	Yes, because measures your English proficiency; however it needs to assess the writing part.
6	No	It is very academic.
7	Not sure	You just get an idea about your strengths or weaknesses.
8	Yes	Because you measure your English level through real situations.
9	Yes	You get practice in this test.
10	Yes	It helps to measure your proficiency.

Finally, these last aspects were fundamental for this research because subjects made their own judgment about TOEFL providing very interesting answers. Six of the participants agreed with the idea that TOEFL test was appropriate, first, because it really shows a level in English proficiency. Then because they consider the test is based in real situations and finally they definitely had practice in the test having the opportunity to realize about their grammatical issues, mainly.

On the other hand, three of them thought this test is not appropriate because this TOEFL of practice is nothing compared with the real one because the official is considered very difficult. Also, they thought this TOEFL of practice is very academic because it is not included in the Common European Framework and it does not measure the four skills. Unfortunately, just one of the subjects did not want to make a judgment about TOEFL because he had very ambiguous ideas.

Table 8. Student’s awareness of the types of tests designed to measure English Proficiency.

<i>Do you know another official test that is suitable to measure your English proficiency?</i>	No. of Students
Cambridge (Trinity College, First Certificate)	8
Oxford	1
TOEFL iBT	1

The last question of this instrument emerges from the fact that the University takes the TOEFL as the only test to measure English Proficiency although there are some others available. It was significant to know student’s knowledge about this matter because as it was expected, according to student’s perceptions, TOEFL test does not fulfill all the skills and sub skills to










measure English Proficiency. The subjects were asked to mention another kind of test to measure proficiency. The most known test among the participants is from Cambridge University which includes Trinity College and First certificate. Oxford test was known just by one participant and TOEFL iBT as well.

4.4 Instrument 3 Table comparisons TOEFL tests scores.

This table about TOEFL test scores was designed as a third instrument. It was created to make a comparison between the scores gained by the participants during two stages. These stages are the Initial and Desirable stage. The scores were obtained while pre service teachers have been writing their BA thesis. The purpose is to show visual evidences about their scores. In the column called *Initial* reflects the score of our participants at the beginning of semester. On the other hand, the column called *Final* is showed the results of the participants obtained in the almost ending of their research seminar class.

According to Tapia (2012), the following table is a useful tool to determine the TOEFL students' level. Through this table, students can be evaluated according to the score obtained in each stage. (See Table 9)

Table 9. Color Coded classifications for senior Modern Languages Pre Services Teachers

TOEFL TEST SCORES						
	INITIAL		DESIRABLE		OPTIMUS	
LOW	401- 450		451-500		501-550	
AVERAGE	451-500		501-550		551-600	
HIGH	501-550		551-600		601-677	

(Tapia, 2012)

In this instrument are taking into account the scores from Initial and Desirable stages. This is according to what participants should have had in each TOEFL test's section. In the first *Initial* stage; red color means a low score that need. It is gotten with a minimum of 401 to 450 points. Color yellow is according to the score on average between 451 to 500 points. The last one is green color, it means that the student present a high raking more than 501 points.

Subsequently, in *Desirable* stage; red color is about 451 to 500 points, color yellow from 501 to 550. Finally, color green counts from 551 points. Based on this stage are rated the final pre services teachers' TOEFL scores in these instruments. This final high scores stage , at first is a truly desire, because it is thought it would not be coherent to expect high scores due to the fact that participants did not have any experience facing the TOEFL test before the course.

The next table shows visual evidences with their respective color. Using the traffic lights is easily to understand how it works. (See Table 9)

Table 10. TOEFL Test Scores

		T O E F L Test							
		INITIAL				FINAL			
No.	Name	LC	GR	V-RC	TL	LC	GR	V-RC	TL
1	Patricia	440	370	390	400	480	390	460	443
2	Mónica	510	570	570	530	540	580	560	560
3	Mario	523	501	513	512	567	530	546	547
4	Pedro	530	480	500	502	520	560	500	526
5	Leticia	530	480	480	496	510	500	520	510
6	Azael	630	640	660	643	610	650	630	630
7	Rosario	440	580	520	513	570	580	520	556
8	Alex	570	470	560	533	540	560	500	545
9	Ma.Luisa	520	560	520	533	580	640	500	563
10	Magie	560	530	520	536	570	580	560	570

4.4.1 First TOEFL scores: Initial stage

The participants who were taken into account at the initial stage of this research were ten pre-service teachers. Participants 2, 3, 6, 9 and 10 since the first time they faced the TOEFL test they obtained a high score according to the table suggested by Tapia (2012). Participant 6 was the only who had a higher score, even more than the expected in an initial stage. On the other hand, the yellow color was seen in three participants (4, 5 and 7) in the 'Grammar' section. In the section of 'Vocabulary and Reading comprehension' participant 4, 5 and 8 had yellow color also. Participants 6 and 1 had the final score in yellow color. They all for being in yellow color obtained an average score, acceptable by then. In the initial stage, the red color was present with two participants. Participant 7 got a low score in 'Reading comprehension'. Participant number 1 got a lower score in two sections 'Grammar' and 'Vocabulary- Reading comprehension'. This participant was specially observed by the researchers because unfortunately, this participant got red color in the three sections and in the final score as well. Results are showed in table 10.

4.4.2 Second TOEFL scores: Desirable stage

After having presented twice the practical TOEFL test it can be seen how successful the final results were for some of the students. The results are compared using the colored coded table in the Desirable stage.

Reviewing results, it is showed that participants with number 6, 9 and 10 continued with good scores in the three sections and even, they were able to get a high score in the 'Desirable' stage according to the colored coded table designed by Tapia (2012). Other students such as number 3, 4 and 8 continue also with their good scores in the three sections. Nevertheless, they

did not obtain the average of the desirable stage in the final score. Participant number 2 had a high score in ‘Grammar section’, ‘Vocabulary-Reading Comprehension’ and in the final score. This participant had only with yellow color her score in ‘Listening Comprehension’ because of the lack of only ten points.

The participant number 5 got a lower score during this second TOEFL practice in ‘Grammar’ section to red color with 500 points. However, she increased her score contrasted with the first TOEFL, where she had 480 points. The other two sections and the final score are covered by yellow color due to lack of points.

Moreover, participant 7 in this second part gained a successful result in the three sections with green color. In the first stage, two sections with lower scores, after that the participant was able to increase his scores in all the sections, reaching the level expected.

During the initial stage the participant who showed troubles with the scores was the participant 1. The participant was able to increase in each section some points. Unfortunately, this participant did not reach the scores expected in the desirable stage. (See Table 10)

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is a restatement of what was done and why. In the section 5.1, the main findings will be mentioned. In section 5.2 the problem, the aim and the instruments stated for this project. In the following section 5.3 the global findings on Pre-service Teacher's results achieved in two TOEFL test of practice. Finally, in 5.4 proposals for Further Research are presented.

5.1 Summary

The problem that encouraged this research was that most of the students at this point of their degree had never tried before a test or an official certificate in order to know their proficiency in their Second Language. Additionally, the language proficiency required at this point of their academic level it is not the appropriate because in the last target language subject students struggled and complained about their self performance. The facts besides these problems rely on different aspects. The first one is students' low interest in their own language proficiency improvement. Second, students' perception that TOEFL test it is just an academic test considered not enough to prove the four skills required in a language because it does not include speaking and writing. Third, the lack of interest from academic authorities to test their own registered students continuously. The last one is that students are not informed about other types of assessing their language level or some others are not helped to find ways to improve it.

According to the information collected from the instruments, in the questionnaire first, the research tried to focus mainly in the Student's perception about their own language proficiency. Subsequently, the other questions match with the previous questions because students realize and make some suggestions for this research in order to use some strategies to improve their language proficiency. The issue about language proficiency takes a great deal in

students' lives because is the main tool to succeed in this degree, reflecting the value that English takes in their academic, professional and personal levels.

As a result, the center of this study is to show the level that students present in the TOEFL test focusing in the progress, step-back or the continuity of the same level in English at the time of almost getting graduated.

The aim of this study was to analyze and evaluate pre-service teachers scores based on a Color Coded Classification of the TOEFL scores in order to determine the factors and reasons that this issue implicates. The data was also supported by the other instruments used, the Interview used as qualitative data and the Questionnaire as quantitative data, both fundamental to complete successfully the requirements for this research.

Referring to the Research Questions:

1. What struggles students face when answering the TOEFL test at the end of their course?

Through the table 3 done from the first question of the Interview, this research, could answer the first question. There were different factors that affected students' results in the TOEFL test, evidently affected by the moment and the place where the test took place.

The struggles presented respecting at the right moment that the test was executed are four. The first two factors are related the vocabulary used in the test and the instructions of it and the people that assist you in the room. Students argued that the vocabulary used in the test is very difficult, so they could not answer successfully the test. Then, the instructions presented in the test and the people in charge of offering the test were not clear. Students were confused about how answering the test and they mentioned they had the first questions wrong because of this

reason. The second factor was the noise. It is suggested for the people in charge of the room that noise would be more controlled because noise represents a distraction to understand the listening section and to concentrate on the answers. The third factor was timing, timing is essential in this kind of tests; unfortunately, some of the participants were not completely accurate manipulating their time of response. It is advisable that students previously practice with some exercises at home or they make an effort to look for material inside the University.

Respecting to the students' personal performance, other problems were found. The factors mentioned were that some participants were tired, some others were very nervous and others got bored at the time of presenting the test. Unfortunately, through this research it is seek that pre-service teachers take into account this factors, trying to work on their future performance at the time of presenting this test or some others that may be related.

2. What section of the TOEFL test is the most difficult for the pre-service teachers at the end of the course?

The question number two in the Interview was a guide to have the answer. The most difficult section for participants when answering the TOEFL test was Reading Comprehension. As this section is the last one, students argued that it requires a lot of attention, take more time to answer it and up to that point of the test they were tired and some kind of bored. The following most difficult section is listening. For students, the Listening Comprehension was difficult; the noise in the room really affected their answering in the exam. Finally, just one student complained about the section of vocabulary, he said that the vocabulary in the test is really difficult because he never experienced that before.

As showed in table 4 in question three of the Interviews' results, participants' most difficult section was Reading Comprehension. Surprisingly, the most common answer for this question was the same, the Reading skill. Participants said that for them the most difficult skill during the time they have learnt English and experienced with it has been reading. Reading they said, takes for them more time to comprehend for the purposes of reading as drawing conclusions, making summaries, finding the main ideas and some others. This project was created with the purpose of helping to make conscious people about what TOEFL implicates. One of these implications is that students of this career up to this point do not read enough or do not read at all. It is suggested that everybody taking part in this University and others enable in all aspects of their lives Reading.

3. What strategies are needed in order to improve student's language proficiency?

Through gathering information from the face to face interview, to this question was answered by the participants with the purpose to know their own strategies to help them improve their language proficiency. Pre-service teachers remarkably include English Language in their lives daily. 'Living the life in English'; said one participant. Taking into account the opinion from all participants, it is summarized, in the idea to live the English. The helpful strategy for them is to include something in order to be in touch with the language. It is supported by watching, reading or listening to English. Most of the strategies come from media and technology.

Nowadays, media takes an unbreakable role in human's life. It is easy to maintain and establish a relationship with any kind of gadget in order to be communicated. Moreover, one participant is aware of the use of other strategies. She considers it is very significant to practice grammar and speaking to help her to improve her language proficiency.

4. Do pre-service teachers consider to have a good level of proficiency at this point of their career?

The ten participants have a positive perception about their language proficiency at this point of the career. They consider having a considerable level of English Proficiency. The students' responses were situated in a high with the majority of responses in a 'very good' level of language proficiency.

According to Chambless (2012) certainly, a teacher's oral proficiency in the TL is not the sole determining factor in student achievement, but it has been generally accepted as an essential characteristic for effective teaching. Taking into account this fact, most of the students complained the fact, TOEFL test does not include something related to speaking. It is a necessary tool to evaluate pre service teachers before concluding their career in order to know if they accomplish one of the main aspects of teaching. They are aware of their language proficiency and all that, with a purpose, that at the end of their career they may be able to provide an effective learning to their future students.

5. Have students increased, decreased or maintained their TOEFL score since the beginning of their Thesis Writing up to the end?

Based on the 'Colored code table' about TOEFL scores, it is seen how pre service teachers have progresses through these eight months. Fortunately, in the Initial stage most of participants got a green score, they were able to full fill the first requirement from the 'colored coded table'. Once the course finished, all of the participants were able to increase their own score. The majority of the participants were able to maintain their TOEFL score. These participants were located on average of the scores expected.

Pre-service teachers know Thesis writing is being a challenging task where knowledge is required and also are required skills to be able to write a good piece of work. The fact of writing their Thesis helped them to lead the autonomy, where they have the opportunity to reinforce and increase all their skills. In order to have got a self-reflection and maintain a positive attitude, they had to think, to write and to re-write each part of their thesis. Undoubtedly, through this rewriting, they got new experiences and new knowledge. Thesis writing means ongoing learning and their previous knowledge about researching and writing was a help to develop their thesis project. The results are showed in this research in the participants who were able to increase or maintain their TOEFL score, but they do not have a step back in their scores.

5.2 Implications

According to the results gathered from the data collection, it is evident that it is up to this moment of the degree that students realize of their real language proficiency. One of the proposals, as a result of these findings, is to suggest to our Academic Authorities that is advisable to asses students at least one or two times per semester, ideally, with an official exam or evaluation regarding language proficiency. In this way, first, the university offers an individual opportunity for students to know their own level in language and give them the choice to improve or remain on that level. Then, in the teacher's role, it is an opportunity as well to progress in the teaching strategies to rise up the level of language proficiency at each period expiration.. Besides, pre-service teachers are concerned about the issue that TOEFL test is not enough to measure accurately the four skills required to fulfill the demands that a Second Language requires. Students need official assessment in their language. At least, having these

kinds of tests at the beginning, at the middle and at the end of the career, students would be aware of their real proficiency in the language. Another possible suggestion is that professors, especially those of the Target Language, try to be more demanding on their students' English development. Through their classes, teachers may encourage students to realize about the value that a high proficiency percentage is very important to accomplish the demands when they face the real world after University. Thus, it is finally implicated that these problems are the result of a correlation responsibility among students, academic authorities and teachers.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This research had some limitations at the moment to be created, which definitely changed results or performed others at the end of the research. The first limitation presented, is the research is based on TOEFL because it was the practice exam, not the official. It could change results because, participants even though they felt odd at the time of submitted it, and there was not real excitement or nervousness whether they were presenting the TOEFL for a real certification. They answered the TOEFL test positively, but not completely committed with it. It was difficult for some of the participants the Initial stage, because it was the first time in the whole career they faced this test. Another limitation found is a pre-service teacher presenting the same practical test twice. This was mentioned and emphasized by the participants, who said it had not been good or enough. They really wanted to practice a different one. Subjects consider it is necessary to require and take at least a third one. This is another possible difficulty that involves time. The time plays a significant place, at the end of the research the participants were asked more than twice to present once again TOEFL test. It was nothing more than lack of time.

Pre service teachers at the end of the career are in a slight overworked with professional practices and finishing the last subjects in the career. Participants were in the best disposition to help, but they asked for time to submit the TOEFL test.

Perhaps, applying more instruments could help to support more the scores obtained and the way to collect data. Moreover, another difficulty presented applying the questionnaire was because of the closed questions. Probably, participants felt really sure with their answers, most of the results in this stage were positive. It was helpful but with the same range of answers it is difficult to analyze them and to determinate if they were in trouble. The interview was more supportive. Through this method, participants were able to express their deeper ideas about what they have to face at the time to present the TOEFL test and data was adequate to this research. However, using these tools was helpful to conclude some of the struggles that pre service teachers face at the moment to present the TOEFL test.

5.4 Directions for Further Research

First, this Research enables future researchers to study more about the advantages of promoting another Language Test in an Academic Environment which covers the four skills required to perform a language successfully. Because of the lack of assessment in the areas of Speaking and Writing in the TOEFL, it is considered very academic and students require to be assessed in these areas also.

Through this research we want to make conscious first, to the academic personal in all the universities that have access to this research about the importance of the promotion and knowledge of other tests to measure students' proficiency.

Likewise, another possible direction for research could be extensive but meaningful is applying a proof practice for the ending of each semester. Teacher might ask to students as part of a requirement for the course assessment or just to be more prepared to present the TOEFL test. It might be present since the beginning of their career semester by semester and it should be taken to become familiar with this kind of test too. It is not necessary to be the official test. Students may have the practice, the same that is offered today in the Faculty, but each time a different test, it must be updated. Academic directors and also teachers could take as a guide the colored code starting in initial stage, measuring students' scores and increase the percentage ever. Thereby, when the pre-service teacher is about to finish their career he will have most likelihood of being placed in the 'optimum' stage.

Finally, the intention of this research is to encourage future researchers interested in the areas of language proficiency, Certifications, Language Certifications and others related to take into account the proposals of this research in order to make this project wider, gaining more results and subjects of study not only in this University, we would like to invite Mexican National Researchers and also International Researchers. International Language Certifications are vital for the improvement of future generations of Language Teachers and Future Researchers.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE > LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Name: _____ Age: _____

- Instructions: Circle the best option that fits with your personal point of view.

1. - English is important in my current life.

N= Nothing	JL= Just a little	M= Much	AL= A Lot
------------	-------------------	---------	-----------

2. - The use of some strategies helps me to improve my language proficiency.

N= Nothing	JL= Just a little	M= Much	AL= A Lot
------------	-------------------	---------	-----------

3. My language proficiency represents a great importance in my future job.

N= Nothing	JL= Just a little	M= Much	AL= A Lot
------------	-------------------	---------	-----------

4. It is important for me to manage the EFL language in a high percentage.

N= Nothing	JL= Just a little	M= Much	AL= A Lot
------------	-------------------	---------	-----------

5. I really care about my language proficiency.

N= Nothing	JL= Just a little	M= Much	AL= A Lot
------------	-------------------	---------	-----------

II. Instructions: Please circle the number that according to the rates in the scale gives the lowest and the highest qualifications of certain aspects.

1 = Deficient	2 = More or Less	3 = Good	4 = Very Good	5 = Excellent
---------------	------------------	----------	---------------	---------------

1. My expectations at the beginning of the major have been successfully achieved.

1.	2.	3.	4.
----	----	----	----

2. The program has suitable test to measure my proficiency

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

3. I was able to develop my reading skill.

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

4. I was able to develop my listening skill.

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

5. I manage a wide range of vocabulary (variety).

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

6. I manage a good level of grammar.

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

7. I have the appropriate language level to teach.

1.	2	3	4
----	---	---	---

8. My English proficiency will affect my developmental as a teacher.

1.	2	3	4
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(Questionnaire adapted from: Hernández, F.E. (2010). *Language Proficiency & Competence Present in LEMO Students at Advanced Level*)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW> STRUGGLES FACING TOEFL TEST

- 1.-What problems did you face when you take TOEFL test?

- 2.-What was the most difficult section of the TOEFL test?










3. - According to your language proficiency, what do you consider is the skill/sub skill that you most struggle with?

- 4.-Do you use any strategy to improve your language proficiency?

5. - Do you consider that TOEFL test is appropriate to measure your English proficiency?

6. - Do you know of another test suitable to measure your English proficiency?

APPENDIX C: COLORED CODED TABLE CLASSIFICATION

TOEFL TEST SCORES						
	INITIAL		DESIRABLE		OPTIMUS	
LOW	401- 450		451-500		501-550	
AVERAGE	451-500		501-550		551-600	
	501-550		551-600		601-677	

T O E F L Test									
	INITIAL					FINAL			
No.	Name	LC	GR	V-RC	TL	LC	GR	V-RC	TL
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

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