

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOEFL SCORE BASED ABILITY
GROUPING IN ENGLISH CLASS OF BATCH 2019 ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITAS HASANUDDIN**



Written By

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*Submitted to the English Department in Faculty of Cultural Sciences of
Hasanuddin University as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain
Sarjana Degree in English Literature*

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THESIS
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It has been examined before the Board of Thesis Examination
On Friday, 20th August 2021
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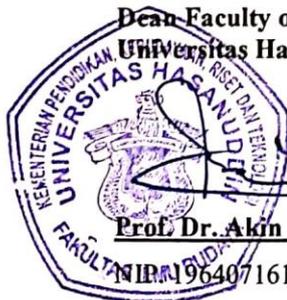
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Today, Friday 20th August 2021, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by **MIRAYA TIFANI HASRI** (Student Number: **F041171302**) entitled:

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOEFL SCORE BASED ABILITY GROUPING IN
ENGLISH CLASS OF BATCH 2019 ENGLISH DEPARTMENT,
UNIVERSITAS HASANUDDIN**

Submitted in fulfillment one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, 26th August 2021

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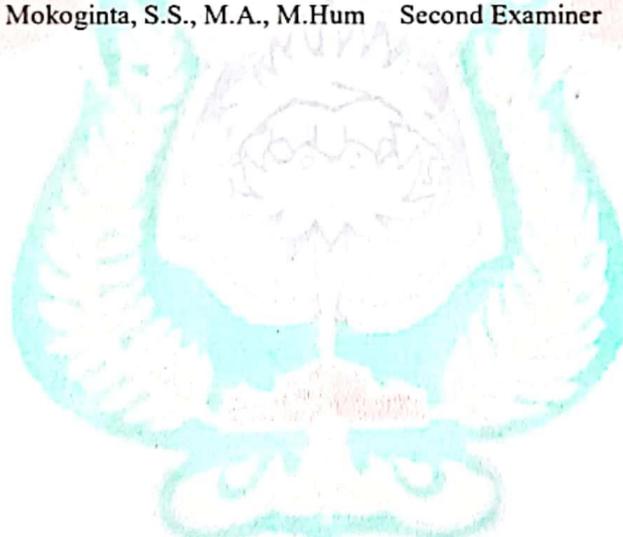
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The thesis of **MIRAYA TIFANI HASRI** (Student Number: **F041171302**) entitled, "**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOEFL SCORE BASED ABILITY GROUPING IN ENGLISH CLASS OF BATCH 2019 ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITAS HASANUDDIN**" has been revised as advised during the examination on Friday, 20th August 2021 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Miraya Tifani Hasri

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Finally, this thesis is still very far from perfection and needs a lot of improvisation. Therefore, with the criticism and suggestions from readers, the writer will be grateful and accepted it genuinely.

Makassar, August 2021

The Writer
Miraya Tifani Hasri

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ABSTRACT

MIRAYA TIFANI HASRI. “The Effectiveness of Ability Grouping Based on TOEFL Score in English Skill Class on Students of English Department (A Case Study at Structure Class A Batch 2019 English Department, Universitas Hasanuddin)” supervised by **Nadira Mahaseng** and **Marleiny Radjuny**.

The aims of this study are (1) to analyze the effectiveness of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A on students of English Department batch 2019 or through what this method is well applied (2) to identify the perspective of students toward the implementation of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A.

The method in this research is mixed method of descriptive qualitative and quantitative. The data are from English Department student batch 2019 who are in Structure Class A. The data is obtained by collecting the students' TOEFL score from the archive of English Department and by filling the questionnaire. The data is analyzed by using *paired t-test* to compare the students' structure score before and after experiencing ability grouping class.

The result of this study shows that the structure score improves after ability grouping by an average comparison score 0,86. The test statistic is $t_{count}=15,62$ with $t_{table.} = 2,064$. $t_{count} > t_{table.}$, it rejects the null hypothesis (H0) and states that there is an effect by accepting the alternative hypothesis (H1). In conclusion, there is an evidence that ability grouping affect the improvement of structure score even though it was not really significant since the average score only 0,86. Thus, ability grouping was only one of factor that improved their structure ability, it was not the main one. Meanwhile they give positive attitude toward the implementation of ability grouping especially in structure class A. They think this method was beneficial and could be an effective alternative not only for structure class but also for others English skill classes.

Keywords: Ability Grouping, TOEFL Score, Structure Class, High Ability Students, English Department Students, Improvement.

ABSTRAK

MIRAYA TIFANI HASRI. “Efektivitas Penerapan *Ability Grouping* Berdasarkan Nilai TOEFL di Kelas Skill Bahasa Inggris Pada Mahasiswa Sastra Inggris (Sebuah Studi Kasus Kelas Struktur A, Mahasiswa Sastra Inggris Angkatan 2019, Universitas Hasanuddin) dibimbing oleh **Nadira Mahaseng** dan **Marleiny Radjuny**.

Skripsi ini bertujuan untuk (1) menganalisis efektivitas penerapan *ability grouping* berdasarkan nilai TOEFL di kelas skill bahasa Inggris pada mahasiswa Sastra Inggris angkatan 2019. (2) mengidentifikasi pendapat mahasiswa terhadap penerapan *ability grouping* berdasarkan nilai TOEFL di kelas *skill* bahasa Inggris pada mahasiswa Sastra Inggris angkatan 2019.

Metode yang digunakan pada penelitian ini adalah metode campuran yaitu kualitatif dan kuantitatif deskriptif. Sumber data didapatkan dari mahasiswa Sastra Inggris angkatan 2019. Data berupa nilai TOEFL mahasiswa didapatkan dari arsip Departemen Sastra Inggris dan kuisioner yang diisi oleh mahasiswa. Selain itu, teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *paired t-test* untuk membandingkan nilai *structure* mahasiswa sebelum dan setelah ditempatkan di kelas *ability grouping*.

Ada dua temuan baru dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, tes statistik berupa $t_{count} = 15,62$ dan $t_{table} = 2,064$ yang berarti $t_{count} > t_{table}$. Angka tersebut menunjukkan hipotesis nol (H_0) ditolak, sedangkan hipotesis alternatif (H_1) diterima yang menyatakan bahwa nilai struktur mahasiswa setelah ditempatkan di kelas *ability grouping* mengalami peningkatan dengan rata-rata perbandingan nilai 0,86. Meskipun tidak terjadi peningkatan yang signifikan, mahasiswa memberi positif respon mengenai penerapan *ability grouping*. Kedua, hasil dari kuisioner mengenai pendapat mahasiswa menunjukkan bahwa *ability grouping* bukan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi peningkatan kemampuan *grammar* mereka, melainkan hanya menjadi salah satu faktor. Mahasiswa berpendapat bahwa metode tersebut bisa menjadi alternatif yang efektif tidak hanya pada kelas *structure* tapi juga pada kelas-kelas *skill* bahasa Inggris lainnya.

Kata Kunci: *Ability Grouping, Nilai TOEFL, Kelas Struktur, Mahasiswa Kelas A, Mahasiswa Sastra Inggris, Peningkatan.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In this modern era, various kinds of innovations are made to improve the quality of education especially in mastering English, one of the methods is class grouping or the experts known as ability grouping. Ability grouping according to the writer is where the student is classified into different class, group, or level based on student ability. This ability includes from lowest to the highest.

This theory is not a new topic and emergent but it always rife in controversy, therefore many experts have research on this theory, one of them is Kulik and Arbor (1982). They stated ability grouping is defined as a group arrangement in which the students are differentiated in the class placement based on academic capacity. By definition, students who have high academic grades in school need to be grouped into one class. This paradigm is still inherent in the community. There are some research on student grouping at primary, middle and high school level but it is a controversial issue for universities educating the high and low achievers in the same classes, reflecting confusion about whether scholarship and tuition fee students should be taught together.

Other definitions stated by Macqueen (2010), he claimed Ability Grouping is a subject of heterogeneous/homogeneous grouping that has been an important issue for decades. In the first place, different terms have been

used to describe the selection of students on the basis of ability, achievement or other criteria. Basically, 'streaming', 'tracking' and 'setting' have been used to express selection of students on the basis of achievement and frequently 'ability grouping' has come to be used more than 'homogenous grouping'. On the other hand, Pfeiffer (1966) believed ability grouping was a myth, Kulik (1992) said it produced especially clear effects. Therefore, ability grouping was not advised according to Keller (2011) in order to avoid inequality among students. This is especially the case when preschool and primary education is considered. At the high school level evidence and feelings are varied. Some evidence showed benefit for the low achievers and no gain for the high achievers. There was even an anti-ability-grouping movement in the 1990s, stated Fiedler-Brand, Lange & Winebrenner in their research.

Pro and contra still go on but it needs to be evidenced especially at university level as well. Liu in her paper declared that the practice of ability grouping has gained popularity in Taiwan for past decades especially in the arrangement of English as a foreign language at university level but it became an uncommon practice until a decade after it was implemented in the late 1970s. This is to continue the different practices in student intake in higher education around the world, only few studies focused on student grouping in higher education.

The system of ability grouping has been implemented by English Department since 2018 based on TOEFL score of the students. The students grouped for specific English skills such as Structure, Speaking, Listening, but

not all other subjects. The freshmen of batch 2019 were taking the TOEFL test and their score result used to place them into four levels of skill classes, namely class A, B, C, and D. This new kind of arrangement for English Department allows the lectures to vary the method and content of instruction to more efficiently handle the diversity of student abilities, meanwhile there may come up a certain labeling as the side effect for each class that will cause pressure for the students.

One study in 2008 was conducted by Hui-Ju Liu Nicole (2008) in her title “An Analysis of the Effect of Ability Grouping on Student Learning in University-Wide English Classes”, she found that the majority students hold positive attitude toward ability grouping class assignment. A strong majority agree that ability grouping is beneficial to their English learning help them build more confidence. Teachers’ teaching materials and instructional methods better match their ability levels. The sample of the research was a huge class from Da Yeh University; 582 students from the first and second year students. However, the research included first and second year student. This might affect a gap of skill because of the time, due to the second year experienced longer ability grouping than the freshmen. Thus, on this research focus on one high ability grouping class sample who is in the same batch to see whether ability grouping is really beneficial in improving students’ English ability.

The writer noticed three things in this ability grouping implementation, first many of students have been discussed this new curriculum but rarely outspoken directly to the department and lecturers, while their perspective are

matter. Second, the writer strongly believed there were symptoms towards student in how the ability grouping affected their motivation in learning, in addition the writer wondered if the students' have the improvement after being placed in ability grouping class. Therefore, based on all explanation above the writer think it needs to conduct this research with title "The Effectiveness of Ability Grouping Based on TOEFL Score in English Skill Class on Students of English Department Batch 2019 (A case Study at Skill Speaking Class A Batch 2019 English Department, Universitas Hasanuddin)"

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on explanation above, the writer discovered the related issued that can be identified as follows:

- a. There are many factors that affect students in improving their structure ability and ability grouping method could be one of it.
- b. Students in higher class already have a very good basic in structure ability
- c. Students' structure ability had improved from their freshmen year to the second semester.
- d. The effectiveness in putting the students with similar skill levels in the classroom to improve their English ability is still questionable, especially for those in high ability classes. There is a lot stigma about a "gifted class" and might be cause a pressure for the students
- e. There is no room for students to express their opinion about what they feel toward ability grouping especially in structure class.

1.3 Scope of the Problem

In this study, the writer focused to find out the effectiveness in ability grouping especially in class A and create a room for students to express their perception about the implementation of ability grouping.

1.4 Research Question

This research is conducted to answer the following questions:

- a. Is the implementation of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A effective?
- b. What is the students' perception about the implementation of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A?

1.5 Objective of the Study

- a. To analyze the effectiveness of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A on students of English Department batch 2019 or through what this method is well applied.
- b. To analyze the perspective of students toward the implementation of ability grouping based on TOEFL score at Structure Class A, thus it could be an evaluation for English Department itself to keep improving the curriculum for the better.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study addressed important problems in the fields of education especially in ability grouping, therefore the result of this study could be a valid support, reliable assessment and the need for a study of Ability Grouping in higher education which is still rare nowadays.

The findings of this study also redound to the benefit of the evaluation of lecturers to arrange better methods in the curriculum in the future to improve students' performance in mastering English skills. Thus, the result of this study will be able to know the needs of students in ability grouping: what they have got and what they feel about being in ability class. For the researcher, the study will help them uncover critical areas in the educational process that many researchers were not able to explore and a new theory about ability class might be arrived at. The findings of this research are vital in developing better students grouping systems and creating a more conducive learning environment.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Study

There are many studies about ability grouping but the dominant is focusing on elementary until senior high school students, only a few research about ability grouping on university students. Some researchers are reviewed by the writer as a reference that might be helpful for this research. Based on this part, the writer would like to present various terms that are relative and helpful to this analysis. The previous studies are as follows:

Zurriat Nyndia Rahmawati and Mohammad Adnan Latief, Mustafa Bahar (2015) in title *The Implementation of Ability Grouping in English Classroom in SMK Negeri 1 Singosari*. This qualitative study is intended to describe the implementation of ability grouping in English classes in SMKN 1 Malang. The result shows that ability grouping aimed at improving English teaching and students' English competence, a writing test was used as the placement test, the ability grouping was divided into four sessions, the language skills were taught separately, the course design was the same across levels, the activities in ability grouping were similar to those in non-ability grouping classes, but various treatment was given based on the students' characteristic in each level, and the students responded positively to ability grouping.

Similar findings also found by Mustafa Bahar (2015) in *Student Attitudes Towards Change From Ability Grouping To Heterogeneous Grouping At A University Class*. Mustafa Bahar stated that there is a lot of sample research on

student grouping at primary, middle and high school level but it is a controversial issue for universities educating the high and low achievers in the same classes, reflecting confusion about whether scholarship and tuition fee students should be taught together. This study aims to shed light on what the student population at university thinks about heterogeneous grouping after seeing effects of ability grouping, about which there is almost no evidence. Students in an undergraduate department who started the academic year at two different sections grouped according to their prior achievement took courses in mixed ability classes the following semesters. They were given a questionnaire in three intervals asking them about their expectations and opinions of grouping before and after mixing and then after one year of study. 45 students responded to any two questionnaires and 15 responded to all three questionnaires. For the repeated measures design, Friedman test was carried out to see the change of ideas from time1 to time3 and Mann-Witney U test was used to see the differences in ideas between scholarship students and tuition-fee students. Mann Whitney U test was carried out to test whether there was a difference in the GPAs of scholarship and tuition-fee students between time1 and time3. Students expressed a change in their attitudes about achievement and how the other group influenced them. GPAs of high ability students increased after they started being educated in mixed ability classes, realizing the fears of low achievers.

Nicole Baker (2018). On her research titled *Grouping Students by Ability: Is There a Difference in Academic Achievement?*. She found out that in the ability

grouping system high ability groups have the potential to experience success based on the high achieving students that are placed in their class, while the low ability groups have a higher chance of failure. The grouping actually led to no achievement increase, widened the gap between their higher ability counterparts and exacerbated stereotype and stigma. Although placing high achieving students together promotes higher attainment, it has also been proven that when placed in a mixed-ability class “attainment of the most able pupils was unaffected by the change”.

Chin-Ling Lee and Cheng-Jian Lin (2013). The title was *A Method of English Ability-Grouping Teaching in a University of Technology*. The result of the research showed students performed much better on English listening comprehension than speaking one at the beginning and after the English ability grouping learning program. English ability grouping teaching programs can provide students with an adaptive learning environment to meet the needs of students with English proficiency. But, English reading strategy instruction for students in technological college is strongly recommended.

Similar to this research, Hui-Ju Liu (2008) in her paper *An Analysis of the Effects of Ability Grouping on Students Learning in University-Wide English Classes* stated that the majority of students hold a positive attitude toward ability grouping class assignment. A strong majority agree that ability grouping is beneficial to their English learning and helps them build more confidence. Teachers’ teaching materials and instructional methods better match their ability levels.

Based on all those previous studies above, it can be seen various findings and a continued controversy about ability grouping. However, what distinguished this study from the rest is that this study only focused on one high ability structure class that was implemented at the university level. The writer also tries to give students' chance to reveal their perspective toward the ability grouping system.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Ability Grouping

Welke and Bragg (1958) indicate there were tracking practices of ability grouping in the United States around the 1930s. While some (Pfeiffer, 1966) believed ability grouping was a myth, others said it produced especially clear effects (Kulik & Kulik, 1982). Many looked into ability grouping with equality in focus (Davies, Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Jackson, 2008). Therefore, ability grouping was not advised in order to avoid inequality among students. This is especially the case when preschool and primary education is considered. At the high school level evidence and feelings are varied (Keller, 2011). Some evidence showed benefit for the low achievers and no gain for the high achievers. Meta-analytic reviews show the effects of grouping programs depending on their features. Some grouping programs have little or no effect on students; other programs have moderate effects; and still other programs have large effects (Kulik, 1992). Even if there may be a need for a fresh look at the issue of grading in K-12, the issue has been well-documented. The debate still goes on but it needs to be evidenced at university level as well. Because of the different practices in student intake in higher education around the world,

almost no study focused on student grouping in higher education. There is controversy about the issue as grouping may be based on imperfectly measured ability, informal grouping, vague interpretation of terms, survey instruments that fail to discriminate ability and tracking, allocated resources, extent of grouping and the curriculum (Betts & Shkolnik, 2000). There are no distinct answers that suggest ability grouping is always beneficial or harmful to students. Some research said it was beneficial, on the other hand some said ability grouping may negatively affect below level students. Therefore, ability grouping should be implemented depending on students' particular background and level not as a one size fits all approach.

2.2.2 High-Ability Group

a. Overview

It was observed that students placed in a high ability group tend to have a higher self-esteem than who is not. One of the factors comes from the teachers' less controlling and more supportive behavior which guides students with high academic potential. (Ismail & Majeed, 2011). Ability grouping affects way more positive students in high ability groups rather than negatively (Hui-Ju Liu 2008). On the other hand, students in higher ability group may have more stress because of the competition happening among high achieving students, also there were too high expectations, fast paced lessons, and pressure to succeed. (Boaler et al., 2000; Sumadi et al., 2017) The students may compare themselves with similar ability

and be less satisfied with it, which will lead them to a slight decline of self-confidence (Kulik 1992).

b. Stigma

High ability students are often seen as “the gifted” since they have an advanced ability than others, so improvement is expected and it will lead to a stigma. When a students’ ability in school becomes an “immutable trait,” stigma is present. If the stigma is present, students will live up to that trait, which is why one sees high-ability students thrive amongst their ability educated teachers and critical thinking challenges posed to them (Hoffer, 1992, p.206). High ability students facing the pressure that they will achieve in all aspects of their learning and low ability facing the stereotype that they will never achieve the past level they are placed in leads to stigma. “Status assignment is a powerful mechanism, in school, in the classroom, and particularly in the peer group” (Terwel, 2005, p.665). Research has highlighted that if students placed too high, improvement is expected and the labeling and stigmatism might be arrived at with consequent negatives such as a high pressure and self-blaming attitudes toward school.

2.2.3 TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language)

a. Overview of TOEFL

TOEFL assesses your ability to both speak and understand English by analyzing English ability in terms of reading, speaking, listening and writing. These are all skills which will be needed to carry out academic studies and the test is used by institutions to ensure students are able to proceed and succeed on their chosen course in a country where the curriculum is taught in English. It developed in 1963 in the United States of America to assist within the evaluation of the language competence of non-native speakers. As a type test, it is a standardized of English proficiency administered by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton. (Nurasia, 2018)

b. Types of TOEFL

1) TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program)

ITP first began in 1965 and become the most common test throughout the world. It differs from other TOEFL test programs because it gives qualified universities, English language institutes, and other agencies opportunity to use older forms of International Testing Program paper-based TOEFL Test to their own students using their own facilities and staff and setting their own test dates (Abboud and Hussein. 2011).

There are 3 sections of ITP TOEFL:

- Listening

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to understand spoken English

- Structure and Written Expression

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English

- Reading Comprehension

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to read and understand short passages.

2) TOEFL CBT (Computer Based)

This test contains of four sections which are Listening, Structure, Writing and Reading. The writing section in this test is equivalent to the Test of Written English (TWE) in the Paper-Based TOEFL test. In addition, everyone who takes the TOEFL during the same administration may not see or answer the same questions. These questions are selected according to the level of the students' proficiency. (Sharpe, 2009)

3) TOEFL PBT (The Paper Based)

Paper based test is one of the International Testing Program. It includes four sections; Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Test of Written English (TWE) one essay, 250-300 words. (Nurasia, 2018)

4) TOEFL iBT (The internet-Based)

This test) measures ability to use and understand English as read, written, heard, and spoken in universities. It's taken on the computer and measures four skill sets: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. (Nurasia, 2018)

2.2.4 Structure and Written Expression

Structure is tested the second test for TOEFL. This section consists of number of multiple-choice questions that test knowledge of the structure of English sentence and error recognition questions that test students' knowledge of correct written expression. In conclusion this section is testing students' grammar. Grammar is the process of forming words and making sentences by using the rules. According to Simon and Schuster (1976:792) grammar as these following:

- a. A book that contains rules.
- b. The words structures and word arrangement system of a language.
- c. The rules of speaking and writing in a language that contains in the system.
- d. Grammar as knowledge refers to the native speakers' language.
- e. The ways of speaking and writing that have to be learned because it very useful in understanding the pattern of the structural.