

The Influence of TOEFL Policy Program and English Competence on the Improvement of Graduate Quality at Bina Taruna Gorontalo University

Ratih Arifin^{1*}, Ellys Rachman¹, Lisda Van Gobel¹

¹Pascasarjana Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author:

Abstract: This study analyzes the influence of the TOEFL policy program and English language competence on the improvement of graduate quality at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo. A quantitative approach with multiple linear regression was applied, using questionnaires and documentation as data collection instruments. The results demonstrate that the TOEFL program has a significant effect on graduate quality with a contribution of 31.5%. English language competence, particularly speaking skills, shows a more dominant influence with a contribution of 45.2%. Simultaneously, both variables account for 66.4% of the variation in graduate quality, while the remaining 33.6% is explained by other factors such as learning motivation, academic environment, and additional student experiences. The novelty of this study lies in emphasizing that the improvement of graduate quality is not solely determined by formal test scores but also by practical communication competence. The findings highlight the importance of policy synergy and the strengthening of applied English language skills as a strategy to build both academic and professional competitiveness. The study recommends adaptive institutional policies, more practical learning strategies, and the provision of adequate supporting facilities so that TOEFL serves not merely as an administrative requirement but as an integrated means of improving comprehensive English competence.

Keywords: Education Policy, Competence, Graduate Quality.

Received: August 01, 2025

Accepted: October 29, 2025

Published: October 30, 2025

To Cite this Article: Arifin, R., Rachman, E., & Van Gobel, L. (2025). The Influence of TOEFL Policy Program and English Competence on the Improvement of Graduate Quality at Bina Taruna Gorontalo University. *Abdurrauf Social Science*, 2(2), 204–222. <https://doi.org/10.70742/arsos.v2i2.392>



Copyright © 2025 by Author(s)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Introduction

Higher education serves as a cornerstone in developing qualified human resources capable of meeting global challenges. In the era of growing international competition, foreign language proficiency particularly English has become an essential requirement for graduates to enter the labor market, pursue advanced studies, or participate in international forums (Arifin & Suparman, 2022). English is no longer perceived merely as a tool of communication but also as an indicator of graduate quality and competitiveness in the global market. Consequently, universities are required to play a strategic role in equipping students with adequate English language skills.

One of the most widely recognized instruments for measuring English proficiency is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). At Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, TOEFL training and testing have been incorporated into academic support programs, functioning not only as a requirement for graduation or scholarships but also as a platform for building students' confidence and competence in academic and professional settings (Rahmawati et al., 2021). However, not all students are able to meet the minimum standards set by the institution. Many graduates still lack sufficient proficiency in the four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Nuraini & Hidayat, 2023). This situation reflects a gap between institutional expectations and students' actual abilities.

Table 1. Student scores of TOEFL

Number	Year	Students	Low (320-400)	Medium (401-449)	Passing Grade (450)	Advance >450
1	2022	110	40	65	5	1
3	2023	114	38	71	3	2
4	2024	80	27	44	6	3

Empirical evidence from 2022 to 2024 shows that the majority of students consistently fall within the medium category (401-449), while only a small proportion achieve or exceed the passing grade of 450. Although modest improvements were recorded in 2024, the proportion of students meeting the required standard remains relatively low. Likewise, while English course

evaluations indicate relatively high academic scores, they do not always correspond to students' practical communication performance. This imbalance underscores the urgent need for more effective teaching strategies, enhanced facilities, and complementary programs such as speaking clinics or intensive TOEFL preparation.

Previous studies indicate that both internal factors (motivation, readiness, self-confidence) and external factors (teaching methods, quality of TOEFL training, institutional support) contribute significantly to the success of English proficiency development (Yuliana et al., 2021). Although universities have implemented various initiatives, challenges remain in ensuring their effectiveness and long-term impact on student competence.

The research gap lies in the limited number of comprehensive studies linking TOEFL performance, English competence, and graduate quality, particularly in local contexts such as Gorontalo. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining institutional policy and individual competence within a single analytical framework. Its novelty lies in positioning both aspects as interrelated and mutually reinforcing factors in shaping graduate quality, rather than treating them in isolation as in most previous studies.

Given the low proportion of students achieving passing scores and the observed mismatch between academic achievement and practical communication skills, this study becomes increasingly relevant. It not only evaluates institutional policies but also provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening English language learning strategies. Ultimately, the study contributes to the development of competency-based higher education policies designed to enhance graduate quality and global competitiveness. The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of the TOEFL policy program and English competence on the improvement of graduate quality at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo. Specifically, the research aims to examine how the implementation of the TOEFL requirement, as an institutional policy, contributes to enhancing students' academic and professional preparedness through measurable language proficiency.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach, as the primary objective was to empirically examine the influence of the TOEFL policy program and English language competence on the quality of graduates in higher education. The quantitative method was chosen because it allows the researcher to analyze data objectively through numerical measurements, formulate hypotheses, and statistically test the relationships between variables. This approach also provides the opportunity for accurate measurement, generalization, and replicability of the findings when data are drawn from a representative sample. The type of research applied was causal-associative research, which seeks not only to identify relationships between variables but also to determine cause-and-effect interactions. In this context, the study aimed to evaluate how the TOEFL program as an institutional policy and English language competence as an individual achievement collectively contribute to the improvement of graduate quality.

The research was conducted at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, an institution that has implemented TOEFL training and testing as part of its academic policy and graduation requirements. The site was selected because of its integration of TOEFL into the academic process and its accessibility in terms of both data availability and institutional support for research. The study took place from March to September 2025, encompassing the stages of preparation, data collection, data analysis, and reporting.

The population of the study consisted of all alumni of Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo who had completed their studies and participated in the TOEFL program during their academic years. Alumni were chosen because they provide a comprehensive perspective, having experienced the full academic process, including TOEFL preparation and assessment, and having applied their skills in professional or further academic settings. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with criteria including alumni who had taken the TOEFL program before graduation, were employed or pursuing further studies, and were willing to provide information regarding their academic and professional experiences. This method ensured that the data collected were relevant and representative, while also fulfilling statistical requirements for validity and reliability.

The data used in this study were quantitative, collected primarily through a structured questionnaire designed with a Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted

of items measuring perceptions of TOEFL program implementation, competence in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and perceptions of graduate quality in terms of professional communication, academic readiness, and career potential. In addition to primary data from respondents, secondary data were obtained from institutional documents, TOEFL score reports, academic policies, and tracer studies. Combining both primary and secondary sources provided a more comprehensive understanding of the context.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into sections covering respondent identity, indicators of the TOEFL program, English competence, and graduate quality. Responses ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” To ensure the instrument’s validity and reliability, a validity test was carried out using Pearson’s Product Moment correlation, while reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha, with $\alpha > 0.60$ considered acceptable.

The data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software. Initial stages included editing, coding, and tabulating data, followed by descriptive statistics to describe respondent characteristics and overall trends. Classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, were conducted to ensure that the regression model met statistical requirements. The main analytical technique employed was multiple linear regression, used to assess the effect of the independent variables—the TOEFL program and English competence—on the dependent variable, graduate quality. Hypothesis testing was conducted through partial (*t*-test) and simultaneous (*F*-test) analyses, with a significance level of 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the extent to which variations in graduate quality could be explained by the independent variables.

The hypotheses of this study were formulated both partially and simultaneously. Partially, it was hypothesized that the TOEFL policy program significantly affects graduate quality, and that English language competence also significantly affects graduate quality. Simultaneously, it was hypothesized that the TOEFL program and English competence together have a significant influence on graduate quality. A hypothesis would be accepted if the *p*-value was less than 0.05. The results of this study are therefore expected to provide empirical evidence on the role of TOEFL policy and English language competence in shaping the quality of graduates at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo and to serve as a basis for future academic policy decisions.

Result and Discussion

The empirical findings of this research reveal how the TOEFL policy program and English competence significantly shape the quality of graduates at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo. Data analysis using multiple linear regression demonstrates that both variables—individually and simultaneously—make meaningful contributions to graduate quality. The TOEFL policy program contributes 31.5%, English competence contributes 45.2%, and their combined effect reaches 66.4%, leaving 33.6% to be explained by other factors beyond the scope of this study. These results underscore the centrality of institutional policy and individual competence in enhancing graduate outcomes, while also acknowledging the influence of broader educational and personal contexts.

1. The Effect of TOEFL Policy on Graduate Quality

The TOEFL policy was found to have a significant positive impact on graduate quality, with a contribution of 31.5%. This indicates that institutional measures requiring students to participate in TOEFL preparation and testing play a substantial role in ensuring that graduates meet a minimum level of English proficiency. By adopting TOEFL as a standardized measure, the university ensures accountability in its academic processes and aligns its outputs with internationally recognized benchmarks.

Despite its positive effect, the contribution of TOEFL policy is considered moderate. This suggests that while TOEFL enforces minimum competency standards, it does not fully capture the range of skills needed for professional and academic success. For many students, TOEFL is perceived primarily as a graduation requirement, rather than a tool for skill development. Consequently, some graduates achieve the required score without necessarily mastering the practical use of English in real-life contexts.

Table 2. The Influence of Variable X1

Variable	Contribution (%)	Statistical Significance	Interpretation
TOEFL Policy	31.5	$p < 0.05$ (significant)	Ensures measurable standards, but limited in fostering communicative skills

The findings indicate that the TOEFL program (X1) has a clear impact on graduate quality (Y). A regression coefficient value of 0.214 shows that for

every one-point increase in TOEFL performance, graduate quality improves by 0.214 points. This translates into a contribution of 31.5% to graduate quality. In other words, the higher a student's TOEFL score, the better their overall quality upon graduation. Although the effect is moderate, it nonetheless demonstrates that TOEFL contributes measurable benefits.

The Beta value of 0.315 illustrates the relative influence compared to other factors, positioning its effect at a moderate level. This indicates that while it plays a role in improving graduate quality, it is not the most decisive factor, as elements such as speaking competence, learning motivation, and institutional support also significantly contribute. Moreover, the significance level ($p = 0.004$) confirms the statistical validity of these results. Since $p < 0.05$, the relationship between TOEFL and graduate quality is not due to chance but is genuinely significant. In practical terms, students who prepare diligently tend to graduate with higher quality outcomes compared to those who do not.

Data from the last three years indicate that while most students remain within the medium range (401–449), there is a positive trend of students achieving or surpassing the passing grade (450). In 2022, only five students reached the threshold, but by 2024, this increased to six students, with an additional three students advancing beyond 450. This trend suggests that the TOEFL policy has begun to positively affect student achievement, though the improvement remains proportionally limited. Within the framework of higher education management, this can be interpreted as evidence that the TOEFL program functions as a quality assurance mechanism, albeit one requiring additional supportive strategies to broaden and equalize its outcomes.

Beyond academic outcomes, the participation has also influenced non-academic dimensions such as self-confidence, job interview readiness, and cross-cultural communication skills. Previous studies (Handayani & Nurhadi, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2021) confirm that students who consistently engage in TOEFL training are more confident in national and international forums. This resonates with findings at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, where graduates with high scores are more likely to pursue further studies abroad or enter professional sectors requiring English proficiency. Thus, TOEFL contributes not only to formal graduation requirements but also enhances graduates' capacity to navigate global dynamics.

Nevertheless, several challenges limit the effectiveness program. First, discrepancies exist between outcomes and English course grades. Many students who perform well academically (earning B to A–) fail to achieve comparable TOEFL results, indicating a misalignment between classroom instruction and the practical skills assessed. The curriculum remains overly theoretical, with insufficient emphasis on applied training such as critical listening, academic writing, and speaking fluency.

Second, student motivation is another critical factor. Many students perceive TOEFL as a mere administrative burden rather than a genuine opportunity to enhance their English competence. Consequently, their engagement in additional training programs and its preparation activities remains low. From Edwards III's public policy implementation model, this reflects challenges in the *disposition* dimension: while the policy is clear and resources are available, student attitudes and commitment are not fully aligned with policy objectives.

Third, infrastructural limitations further constrain TOEFL effectiveness. Without an English department, language learning is delivered primarily through general education courses and supplementary training. However, the lack of advanced facilities such as well-equipped language laboratories, internationally experienced tutors, and interactive digital resources restricts the program's potential. As Harvey & Green (1993) argue, quality in education depends not only on classroom instruction but also on the availability of supportive environments.

Despite these limitations, the program contributes significantly to institutional accountability. The scores serve as measurable indicators for mapping student competence across listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The data allow for benchmarking across cohorts and programs, identifying trends in achievement and gaps in performance. When the number of students surpassing the passing grade increased in 2024, it could be interpreted as evidence of successful academic interventions, whether through curriculum revisions or supplementary training programs.

Importantly, the participation has raised awareness of global opportunities among students. Alumni with high scores have been more successful in securing scholarships, advancing their studies abroad, and entering multinational

workplaces. Thus, TOEFL acts as a strategic bridge linking local students in Gorontalo to global opportunities, aligning with the spirit of *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*.

According to Van Gobel, Sugiyanto, and Nggilu (2025) in *Introduction to Public Administration*, public administration functions as a strategic mechanism for achieving effective, accountable, and value-oriented governance. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant to the study. The implementation of the TOEFL policy represents not only an administrative requirement but also a manifestation of public administration principles within higher education management. It demonstrates the institution's effort to enhance efficiency, ensure policy effectiveness, and uphold accountability in improving graduate outcomes. By institutionalizing English proficiency as part of academic quality assurance, the university aligns its educational governance with the broader goals of producing globally competitive graduates. Thus, the TOEFL policy and English competence development serve as strategic instruments of public administration aimed at fostering professional capability, institutional credibility, and social responsibility in higher education.

From the perspective of the CIPP model—covering context, input, process, and product—the evaluation of the university's language policy reveals several important dynamics. In terms of context, the initiative emerged as a strategic response to the pressures of globalization, particularly the growing recognition that mastery of international languages has become an essential prerequisite for competitiveness in both academic and professional arenas. The policy was designed not merely as an administrative requirement but as an effort to align graduate attributes with global demands (Sopha & Nanni, 2019).

With regard to input, the program has been supported through the integration of English into the curriculum, the involvement of instructors tasked with preparing students for proficiency examinations, and the provision of partial facilities such as training modules and supplementary courses. However, the level of input remains uneven. While the policy framework and curricular adjustments exist, infrastructural support—such as modern language laboratories, access to international teaching staff, and sustained exposure to authentic language practice—remains limited, thereby reducing the full potential of the program (Manan, 2020).

At the process stage, the evaluation highlights obstacles that hinder optimal implementation. A recurring challenge lies in the gap between classroom-based teaching methods and the demands of international proficiency assessments, which require more emphasis on applied skills such as listening comprehension, academic writing, and oral fluency. Furthermore, student motivation often tends to be compliance-driven, viewing the policy as an administrative hurdle rather than an opportunity for genuine skill development. These factors diminish the effectiveness of the learning process and contribute to inconsistent outcomes across the student population.

In terms of product, the program has yielded outcomes that, while still modest, indicate a positive trajectory. There has been a gradual improvement in test performance and communicative competence among students, demonstrating that the policy is beginning to have an impact. Nevertheless, the gains remain concentrated in a relatively small proportion of students, and overall progress has yet to reach the level required to meet international benchmarks. This suggests that while the initiative has created a foundation for quality improvement, further strengthening of policy design, resource allocation, and pedagogical strategies is essential to ensure that results are more consistent and broadly distributed among graduates (Manan, 2020; Hakan, 2011; Toosi et al., 2021).

Taken together, the CIPP evaluation indicates that the university's language policy represents an important and necessary step toward enhancing graduate quality in an increasingly globalized context. However, greater alignment between contextual objectives, available resources, instructional processes, and desired outcomes will be required if the program is to realize its full transformative potential.

In summary, the TOEFL program at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo has made meaningful contributions to graduate quality, both academically and professionally. However, for its effectiveness to be maximized, improvements are needed in communicative practice, learning facilities, and student motivation. Strengthening these elements would transform TOEFL into a powerful instrument for producing high-quality, adaptive, and globally competitive graduates.

2. The Effect of English Competence on Graduate Quality

English competence, especially speaking skills, emerged as the most influential factor, contributing 45.2% to graduate quality. Unlike TOEFL policy, which serves as an institutional requirement, English competence reflects individual mastery and the ability to apply language skills in professional and academic settings.

The stronger influence of English competence highlights the importance of practical communication over standardized testing. Graduates who are able to communicate effectively in English are better equipped to adapt to professional environments, collaborate in multicultural teams, and pursue advanced studies abroad. Tracer study data confirm that graduates with higher levels of fluency find it easier to secure employment, demonstrate leadership in the workplace, and perform better in postgraduate education.

Table 3. The Influence of Variable X2

Variable	Contribution (%)	Statistical Significance	Interpretation
English Competence	45.2	$p < 0.05$ (significant)	Strongest determinant of graduate quality; directly applicable to real-world contexts

The regression analysis shows that speaking competence (X2) exerts a stronger effect on graduate quality (Y) compared to the TOEFL program. A regression coefficient of 0.287 demonstrates that for every one-point improvement in speaking competence, graduate quality increases by 0.287 points. This accounts for 45.2% of the variance, which is higher than the 31.5% explained by TOEFL performance alone. Thus, speaking competence has a more direct and dominant role in enhancing graduate quality.

The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.452 further emphasizes the significance of speaking skills. This value indicates that a one standard deviation increase in speaking competence corresponds to a 0.452 standard deviation increase in graduate quality. Such a result is logical given that speaking is the most visible and practically applied skill in both academic and professional environments. Students who are fluent in English communication are better able to showcase their competence in various contexts, from classroom discussions to job interviews.

The significance value ($p = 0.000$) confirms the reliability of this result. With p far below 0.05, the influence of speaking competence on graduate

quality is not only real but highly convincing. Practically, this means that students with stronger speaking skills are better prepared for global challenges, as they can effectively express ideas, negotiate, and build international networks.

From the perspective of Harvey and Green's (1993) theory of quality, the findings align closely with the dimension of *fitness for purpose*. If the purpose of English education in higher education is to equip students with the communicative competence necessary for both academic and professional contexts, then the predominance of intermediate-level outcomes suggests a gap between intended objectives and actual achievements. This discrepancy reflects a partial misalignment between instructional strategies and the transformative goals of language education, where the shift from passive knowledge acquisition to active, functional language use remains incomplete (Harvey & Green, 1993).

The transformative dimension of Harvey and Green's framework further illuminates this issue. Transformation in higher education implies a qualitative change in learners one that extends beyond cognitive mastery to encompass confidence, autonomy, and communicative adaptability. Yet, as the current evaluation indicates, only a limited proportion of students experience such transformation, while the majority remain constrained by limited oral fluency and low self-efficacy in real-life interactions. Transformative quality should manifest in visible behavioral and attitudinal change, not merely in incremental academic performance. In this regard, the English curriculum at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo has initiated progress but has not yet realized its full transformative potential (Gill, 2022).

From a public administration and accountability standpoint, graduate quality serves as a tangible expression of institutional responsibility to society and the labor market. The communicative competence of graduates is not only an academic benchmark but also a measure of institutional credibility. As Suleman (2016) emphasizes, communication and interpersonal skills constitute the core of employability, directly influencing graduates' professional adaptability and success. Weak oral proficiency, therefore, undermines both institutional reputation and the practical readiness of graduates to meet workplace demands (Suleman, 2016).

Evidence from tracer studies reinforces this connection. Graduates demonstrating strong speaking competence tend to secure employment more

rapidly and exhibit superior career mobility. In contrast, those with only intermediate proficiency often encounter obstacles during English-based interviews and in adapting to multinational work environments. A recent study confirms that communicative competence is a significant determinant of graduate employability and job-market absorption, underscoring the strategic value of English proficiency in higher education outcomes (Dzomeku, 2024).

The dimension of consistency within Harvey and Green's model offers further analytical insight. True quality, as defined by the model, entails uniform excellence across all student cohorts rather than isolated success among a select few. The concentration of fluency gains within a minority of high-achieving students reveals inconsistencies in teaching effectiveness and learner engagement. Addressing this imbalance requires a more equitable and systematic approach to pedagogy, ensuring that all students benefit proportionally from institutional language policies (Harvey & Green, 1993).

Likewise, the value-for-money dimension highlights the relationship between educational investment and tangible outcomes. When students invest time and financial resources in English instruction but graduate without sufficient speaking competence, the perceived return on educational investment diminishes. This not only affects student satisfaction but also public trust in institutional quality. The perceived economic return of education particularly employability outcomes—depends heavily on the extent to which graduates acquire practical, transferable communication skills valued by employers (Fajaryati, 2020).

Despite these challenges, the trajectory remains promising. The gradual improvement in student fluency over recent years indicates that curricular enhancements and institutional English initiatives are beginning to yield measurable results. From a quality assurance standpoint, this progress demonstrates the existence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, albeit ones that require reinforcement. As suggested quality improvement in language education depends on sustained integration of communicative practice into the curriculum through mock interviews, debates, international exchange programs, and real-world speaking simulations. Such initiatives can transform language learning from a theoretical exercise into a holistic process of competency formation.

In summary, English language competence particularly speaking serves as a critical determinant of graduate quality at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo. The relatively modest proficiency levels observed across most students highlight the need for pedagogical refinement that more closely aligns with institutional goals and global demands. Prioritizing oral communication as a central focus of quality enhancement will ensure that graduates not only fulfill administrative requirements but also emerge as confident, competitive, and globally adaptive professionals.

3. Simultaneous Effect of TOEFL Policy and English Competence

When tested simultaneously using the F-test, TOEFL policy and English competence explain 66.4% of the variance in graduate quality. This strong combined effect illustrates the complementary relationship between standardized testing and practical language skills. TOEFL provides structure, accountability, and measurable standards, while English competence ensures that students possess functional communication skills necessary in the workplace.

Table 4. Combined Variable of X1 and X2 to Y

Combined Variables	R ² (%)	F-test Result	Interpretation
TOEFL Policy + English Competence	66.4	p < 0.05 (significant)	Strong combined effect; standardized policy and individual competence reinforce each other

The joint analysis reveals that the TOEFL program (X1) and English-speaking competence (X2) together exert a significant influence on graduate quality (Y). Regression results indicate an F-value of 87.321 with a significance level of p = 0.000, confirming that the relationship is highly significant and not due to chance. The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.664 further demonstrates that 66.4% of the variance in graduate quality can be explained by these two variables simultaneously, while the remaining 33.6% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. These external factors may include intrinsic motivation, faculty support, availability of learning resources, or students' exposure to non-formal English learning experiences such as courses and international interactions.

This finding suggests that while TOEFL serves as a measurable, internationally recognized standard, English-speaking competence plays a more dominant role in shaping graduate quality. In professional and academic settings, the ability to communicate effectively, present ideas, and engage in dialogue is more visible and directly valued than test scores alone. Thus, when combined, TOEFL and speaking competence provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating and developing graduate readiness.

The value of R^2 also highlights that neither TOEFL nor speaking skills alone are sufficient to explain the overall quality of graduates. Instead, their integration provides a stronger explanatory power. For example, TOEFL ensures that students meet a baseline standard of proficiency, whereas speaking competence demonstrates their ability to apply language skills in real-world contexts. Together, these dimensions reflect a balanced approach to assessing graduate quality—blending formal, measurable benchmarks with practical, communicative competencies.

From Harvey and Green's (1993) quality framework, this combination aligns with the dimension of *fitness for purpose* (Harvey & Green, 1993). The program ensures that graduates meet institutional and international requirements, while speaking competence ensures they are prepared for authentic communication challenges. Graduates who excel in both areas embody the intended outcomes of higher education: not only fulfilling administrative benchmarks but also acquiring practical skills that are meaningful in professional and academic spheres (Language & Employability review, 2023).

Empirical evidence from this study confirms that students who achieve high scores tend to perform better in speaking as well, although exceptions remain. Some students may reach adequate scores but still struggle with fluency due to limited practice opportunities or lack of confidence. Conversely, others may demonstrate strong speaking abilities but struggle due to weaknesses in academic writing or grammar. This duality highlights the need for integrated pedagogical strategies that align preparation with communicative practice (Wagner, 2016; Adaptive materials study, 2022).

From a public administration perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of effective policy design. A university policy that relies solely on

TOEFL certification risks producing graduates who meet administrative requirements without necessarily possessing adequate communicative competence. Conversely, focusing only on speaking competence without standardized measurement may fail to provide objective benchmarks for accountability. Integrating TOEFL with speaking-focused initiatives addresses both challenges, ensuring institutional accountability and practical relevance.

Tracer studies conducted across universities further support this interpretation. Graduates with both strong TOEFL scores and speaking skills are more readily absorbed into the labor market, especially in sectors requiring international communication. They are also better positioned to pursue postgraduate studies abroad, where both certification and communicative competence are prerequisites. By contrast, graduates strong in only one area face obstacles: those with high scores but weak speaking skills struggle in interviews or workplace interactions, while those fluent in speaking but without certification may be excluded from opportunities requiring formal qualifications.

This simultaneous influence also aligns with Harvey and Green's transformative dimension of quality. TOEFL transforms students administratively by providing measurable standards of achievement, while speaking competence transforms them substantively by reshaping their communication behaviors and confidence. Together, they ensure both formal recognition and meaningful personal development, creating graduates who are not only certified but also capable of thriving in real-world contexts (Gill, 2022).

The value for money dimension also applies. Students invest significant resources in their education, and the return should be evident not only in certificates but also in tangible skills. When universities effectively integrate TOEFL preparation with speaking enhancement, graduates perceive greater value from their educational investment, strengthening institutional reputation and public trust.

However, the study also identifies challenges. Not all students achieve balance between TOEFL performance and speaking competence. This unevenness points to the need for policies that integrate both components more effectively. For instance, TOEFL simulation sessions could be paired with speaking clinics, debate programs, or mock academic presentations. Such

initiatives would ensure that test preparation simultaneously builds practical speaking confidence, reducing the gap between formal assessment and real-world application. From a quality assurance perspective, the synergy between TOEFL and speaking competence illustrates a dual-track approach to accountability: quantitative measurement through standardized testing and qualitative assessment through observable communication skills. By employing both, Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo demonstrates a holistic approach to graduate quality assurance, ensuring that students are prepared both administratively and practically for global demands.

In conclusion, the simultaneous influence of the TOEFL program and English-speaking competence is best understood as two complementary dimensions of graduate quality. TOEFL ensures accountability through standardized benchmarks, while speaking competence ensures applicability and readiness for professional challenges. Together, they create graduates who are not only compliant with institutional requirements but also competitive in national and international arenas. Strengthening their integration through policy innovation and curriculum development will further enhance the university's capacity to produce adaptive, high-quality graduates prepared for globalization.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that institutional language policies and communicative competence jointly contribute to shaping the quality of graduates at Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo. The analysis reveals that while standardized assessments provide measurable benchmarks of proficiency, applied speaking skills exert a stronger and more visible influence on academic readiness, employability, and professional confidence. When considered together, these two dimensions explain a substantial portion of graduate outcomes, indicating that effective policy must integrate both formal certification and practical application.

The findings also highlight several challenges: gaps between classroom instruction and the skills demanded in standardized evaluations, uneven levels of communicative competence across students, and limited facilities that restrict experiential learning opportunities. These issues suggest that policy refinement should move beyond compliance-based requirements and focus more on strategies

that strengthen communicative practice, improve access to learning resources, and cultivate student motivation.

The novelty of this research lies in reframing graduate quality not only as an academic achievement but as a product of policy accountability within higher education governance. By linking performance indicators, communicative competence, and tracer study results, the study provides a comprehensive model for evaluating outcomes that is both accountable to the public and responsive to global demands.

In conclusion, strengthening graduate quality requires a balanced approach that aligns institutional standards with practical competence. Future policies should prioritize integrative strategies—combining measurable proficiency, communicative practice, and supportive infrastructure—to ensure that graduates are not only credentialed but also adaptive, competitive, and well-prepared for professional and academic challenges in a globalized context.

References

- Arifin, A., & Suparman, S. (2022). *English proficiency as a determinant of graduate employability in higher education*. *Journal of Educational Development Studies*, 10(3), 112–121.
- Dzomeku, B. (2024). *Communicative competence and employability among university graduates in global contexts*. *International Journal of Higher Education Policy*, 15(2), 88–102.
- Fajaryati, N. (2020). *The value-for-money principle in higher education quality assurance*. *Journal of Educational Quality and Policy*, 8(1), 45–57.
- Gill, S. (2022). *Transformative learning and language education: Revisiting Harvey and Green's quality dimensions*. *Journal of Language and Higher Education*, 14(4), 201–218.
- Hakan, R. (2011). *Evaluation models in education: CIPP approach revisited*. *Educational Evaluation Review*, 9(2), 56–68.
- Handayani, T., & Nurhadi, A. (2021). *TOEFL training and students' self-confidence in academic communication*. *Indonesian Journal of Language Education*, 6(2), 135–144.
- Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). *Defining quality*. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9–34.
- Manan, A. (2020). *Implementing language policy in higher education: Challenges and prospects*. *Asian Journal of Education Policy*, 5(1), 55–68.

- Rahmawati, L., Santoso, D., & Putri, M. (2021). *Integrating TOEFL programs in university curriculum: A pathway to international standards*. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Education*, 7(3), 199–213.
- Sopha, A., & Nanni, M. (2019). *Evaluating higher education language policies using the CIPP model*. *Journal of Educational Management and Evaluation*, 11(2), 78–90.
- Suleman, Q. (2016). *Employability skills of higher education graduates: A public policy perspective*. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2), 23–37.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n2p23>
- Van Gobel, L., Sugiyanto, H., & Nggilu, R. (2025). *Pengantar ilmu administrasi publik* (J. Mariyanto, Ed.; Cet. 1).
- Wagner, R. (2016). *Adaptive materials and communicative English teaching strategies*. *Journal of Language Pedagogy*, 9(2), 67–82.