

Examining Building Engineering Education Students' Reading and Listening Skills Using the EF Standard English Test

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
In facing the era of globalization where the demand for foreign language proficiency is increasing, learning foreign languages, especially English, becomes very important. Because of this, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) requires students who will register for the graduation thesis defense to attach an English proficiency certificate. Considering that the main focus of the curriculum in the Building Engineering Education program is not English, it is necessary to analyze their English proficiency level before taking the English course. The method used is an online test through the EF SET website, the results of which will then be converted into CEFR categories consisting of seven levels of English proficiency. Based on the analysis results, the English proficiency levels of class A and class B students in terms of listening and reading comprehension are assessed to be in the upper beginner category. In the reading comprehension aspect, class A students fall into the intermediate category with a percentage of 30.8%, while the beginner and elementary categories each receive less than 30%, with the remainder in the upper intermediate and advanced categories at 5%, and less than 3% at the proficient level. Meanwhile, for class B, 30% are at the beginner level, followed by the largest group at the elementary level (25%), then intermediate (16.7%), upper intermediate (11%), and advanced and proficient levels at less than 10%. In the listening comprehension aspect, both class A and class B are at the beginner level with percentages of 48% and 52%, respectively.	Article History: Submitted 17 February 2025 First Revised 18 February 2025 Accepted 2 March 2025 Available Online 20 April 2025 Publication Date 20 April 2025 Keywords: EF SET; English; Listening; Reading; Students' Skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a global language, and Indonesia is one of the countries that considers English proficiency important from the basic level to university to help young people compete nationally and internationally (Gusti et al., 2021; Sulistiyaningsih et al., 2023), especially in the fields of education and the workforce. In the field of education, this proficiency is often used to continue studies abroad, while in the workforce, it becomes an added value when applying and joining a company, especially foreign companies (Setyowati, 2019; Thariq et al., 2020). However, in essence, learning a language is closely related to communication learning (Emiliasari & Kosmajadi, 2019).

At the higher education level, English is included in general education courses that must be taken by all students and is usually completed in their first year of study (Febriyanti, 2017). This is necessary to help students develop the skills needed for their future job preparation, as expressed by Arianti in the proceedings of the 2017 national seminar on research publication and student creativity program. Given the era of globalization, often referred to as the free market, every individual is required to prepare competent resources, especially in the field of global communication (Handayani, 2016; Rahayu et al., 2024). That is why the University of Education Indonesia has implemented a policy requiring every student to possess an English proficiency certificate before taking the thesis defense exam, thereby urging English instructors in each study program to create teaching materials with course content that can help students achieve the PTESOL passing score.

PTESOL (Proficiency Test of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a test provided by the UPI language center designed to measure a person's proficiency in three aspects of language: reading, structure and writing, and listening, which are necessary in the workplace. The score from the test is close to the TOEFL score, so it is also referred to as a TOEFL prediction. Meanwhile, TOEFL itself is divided into several types, one of which is TOEFL ITP (Institutional Test Proficiency). This test covers four skill aspects, namely reading comprehension, listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and speaking (Utami & Pirmansyah, 2018; Sukmawan et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, according to the English Proficiency Index, Indonesia ranks 80th out of 112 countries in English skills, indicating low proficiency compared to other Southeast Asian countries (Sepniwati, 2022). This is in line with the research conducted by Tambunsaribu & Galingging (2021) on 400 respondents who are learning English, showing that the English language topics that are not easy for students to learn, starting from the most difficult level, are: Grammar (66%), Speaking (22%), Listening (7%), Writing (4%), and Reading (1%). An instrument is needed to detect the initial level of English proficiency of students before they are introduced to teaching materials that cover the skill aspects found in the English Proficiency Test. The researcher utilized the EF SET (English First Standard English Test), which is a website that provides free standardized English tests aimed at determining the English proficiency level of the 2024/2025 Building Engineering Education students in the aspects of listening and reading comprehension.

2. METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach, a research method that according to (Ali et al., 2022) is systematic, planned, structured, and uses statistics as a testing tool. This is in line with Balaka's statement in his book "Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif" in 2022, which states that the research data collected is in the form of numbers. The data is then analyzed to obtain a descriptive overview of the characteristics of the research population. Descriptive studies are research aimed at explaining the subject or object being studied objectively and systematically, by describing the facts, characteristics, and frequency of the research (Rais, 2023). In line with the statement (Sholikhah, 2016) to provide a systematic, concise, and clear description of a phenomenon, event, or condition. This is relevant to the objective of this research, which is to determine the English proficiency of Building Engineering Education students for the 2024/2025 academic year using the EF Standard English Test, a free web-based English test.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subjects of the study are first-semester students of the Building Engineering Education Study Program for the 2024-2025 Academic Year, which consists of two classes, A and B, with 39 and 36 students respectively, who are currently enrolled in the English Skills course. The data collection technique used was to ask students to take an online English test on the EF SET website during the first class meeting, which can be accessed for free at the following link: English test with free certification EF SET, and then collect the students' certificates who have taken the test. This was done to understand their Listening and Reading skills in English before providing them with teaching materials for the upcoming semester. With an exam time of 25 minutes for each competency and a total of 28 questions for reading comprehension and 38 questions for listening comprehension. The details of the time and types of reading and listening questions on the EF SET website are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Types of questions and test duration in EF SET

Competence	Number of Questions	Test Time (minutes)	Type of Question
Reading	28	25	• 6 questions about completing the sentence • 22 multiple-choice questions
Listening	38	25	• 18 long monologue questions • 20 questions about response to conversations

Every student who has completed the online test will be given a certificate with the score details sent to their email. As for the example of the certificate and the conversion of EF-SET scores to CEFR, it can be found in **Figure 1**.

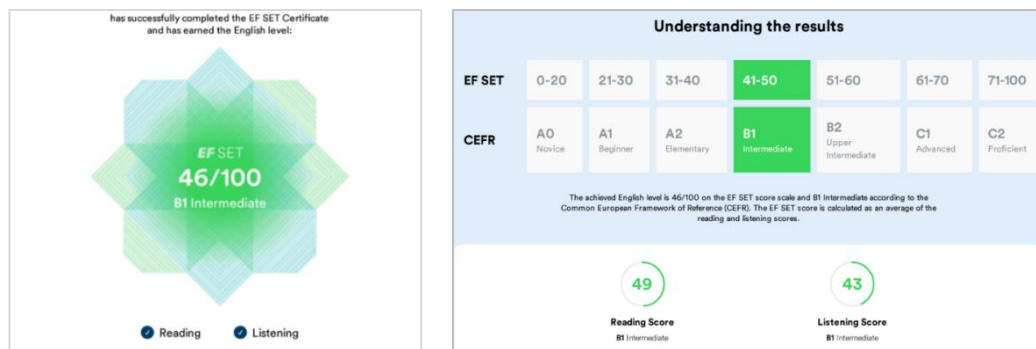


Figure 1. Certificate and conversion of EF-SET scores to CEFR

From **Figure 1**, it can be seen that there are seven categories of CEFR English proficiency levels that have been adjusted to the EF SET score, allowing students to determine their English proficiency in the reading and listening aspects. The seven categories start from novice, which means beginner, beginner, which means upper beginner, the third level elementary, which means basic, intermediate, which means intermediate, upper intermediate, which means upper intermediate, then advance, which means advanced, and the highest level is proficient, which means skilled or competent.

3.1 Reading Ability Levels of the Student Groups

The reading comprehension scores of the Building Engineering Education class A in the EF SET show that the largest percentage falls into the intermediate category at 30.8%, while the smallest percentage is only 2.6% in the proficient category, meaning that only 1 out of 39 students is proficient in understanding or comprehending what they are reading. As much as 28.2% of the students' reading skills are at the beginner level and another 28.2% are at the elementary level, while the remaining 5% scored between 51-60, placing them in the upper intermediate category. In **Table 2**, data on the English proficiency of students in the Building Engineering Education class A in the aspect of reading skill is presented.

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Ability of Students (A)

EF-SET Score	CEFR Category	Number of Students
21-30	Beginner	11
31-40	Elementary	11
41-50	Intermediate	12
51-60	Upper intermediate	2
61-70	Advance	2
71-100	Proficient	1
Total of Students		39

Meanwhile, for the reading comprehension scores of the class B, the majority fall into the beginner category with 33.3%, while the smallest percentage is only 5.6% in the proficient category, which means there are 2 out of 36 students who are in the proficient category in

understanding reading comprehension. As much as 25% of the students' reading ability falls into the elementary category and 16.7% into the intermediate category, while the remaining students who scored between 51-60 fall into the upper intermediate category at 11.1%, and 3 students who scored between 61-70 fall into the advanced category. In Table 3, data on the English reading comprehension skills of students in class B is presented.

Table 3. Reading Comprehension Ability of Students Class B

EF-SET Score	CEFR Category	Number of Students
21-30	Beginner	12
31-40	Elementary	9
41-50	Intermediate	6
51-60	Upper intermediate	4
61-70	Advance	3
71-100	Proficient	2
Total of Students		36

Next, in Figure 2, the high percentage of English reading ability from both classes, both in class A and B, can be seen, still falls into the beginner and elementary categories with percentages between 28%-33%. This indicates that the ability to read English texts among Building Engineering Education students has not yet reached an optimal level. The ability to read English texts well is very important to support the lecture process, especially because in the final semester, students will face the TOEFL Prediction. The score from this test can be used as a requirement to take the thesis defense exam.

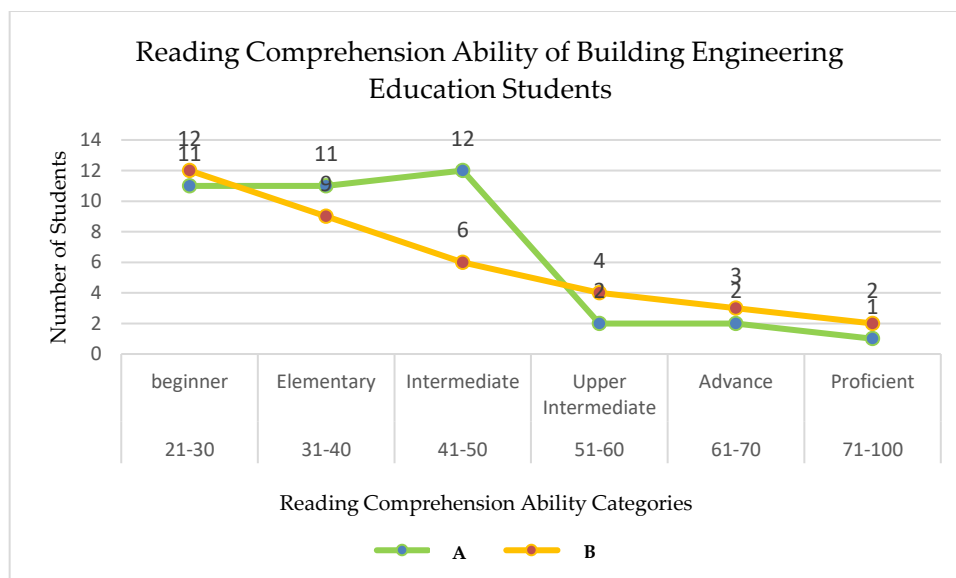


Figure 2. Reading Comprehension Ability Levels of Class A and B

In the research conducted (Susanty, 2019), the reading speed of students in English as a foreign language ranges from 120-150 words per minute, with a comprehension level only reaching 50%-70%. This difficulty is caused by the lack of mastery of English vocabulary, and

the process of reading texts by students also tends to take a long time. Reading is an important skill that every individual must possess in daily life. Young people with low reading skills tend to be more vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, and deviant behavior (Goux, 2017). In the context of linguistics, reading is a person's ability to understand messages conveyed through written media. To achieve a complete and thorough understanding of the message, not only linguistic ability but also cognitive ability is required (Susini & Ndruru, 2021).

3.2 Listening Proficiency Levels of Building Engineering Education Students

In **Table 4**, data on the English proficiency of students in class A in the listening aspect is presented. From the results of the EF SET test, the majority of listening comprehension scores of students in the class A are in the beginner category, with a percentage of 48.7% and scores between 21-30. The second largest group is elementary, with 38.5%, where 15 students scored between 31-40 in listening comprehension. Each category has 2 students or 5.1% in the Intermediate and upper intermediate categories. The smallest percentage, at 2.6%, falls into the proficient category, and there are no students in the advanced category.

Table 4. Listening Comprehension Ability of Building Engineering Education Students A

EF-SET score	CEFR Category	Number of Students
21-30	Beginner	19
31-40	Elementary	15
41-50	Intermediate	2
51-60	Upper intermediate	2
61-70	Advance	0
71-100	Proficient	1
Total of Students		39

For the listening comprehension scores class B, almost 50% are in the beginner category, followed by 25% in the intermediate category and less than 20% in the elementary category, while the smallest percentage, less than 5%, is in the upper intermediate category. This means that less than 2 students are in the upper intermediate category in capturing and understanding information heard through presentations, conversations, and discussions. There are no students in this class with advanced and proficient listening comprehension scores. In **Table 5**, data on the English listening comprehension skills of students in the Building Engineering Education program B is presented.

Table 5. Listening Comprehension Skills of Building Engineering Education Students B

EF-SET Score	CEFR Category	Number of Students
21-30	Beginner	19
31-40	Elementary	7
41-50	Intermediate	9
51-60	Upper intermediate	1

61-70	Advance	0
71-100	Proficient	0
Total Students		36

From the EF SET scores of both classes, the level of listening comprehension ability is almost the same. As can be seen in **Figure 3**, although there is one student in class A who falls into the proficient category, more than 80% of the students scored below 50, which means that most students' listening comprehension skills are still at the beginner and upper beginner levels. This is not much different from the data presented for class B, where nearly 80% of the students' listening skills are at the two lowest levels, and the highest listening skill is at the upper intermediate level, held by just one student.

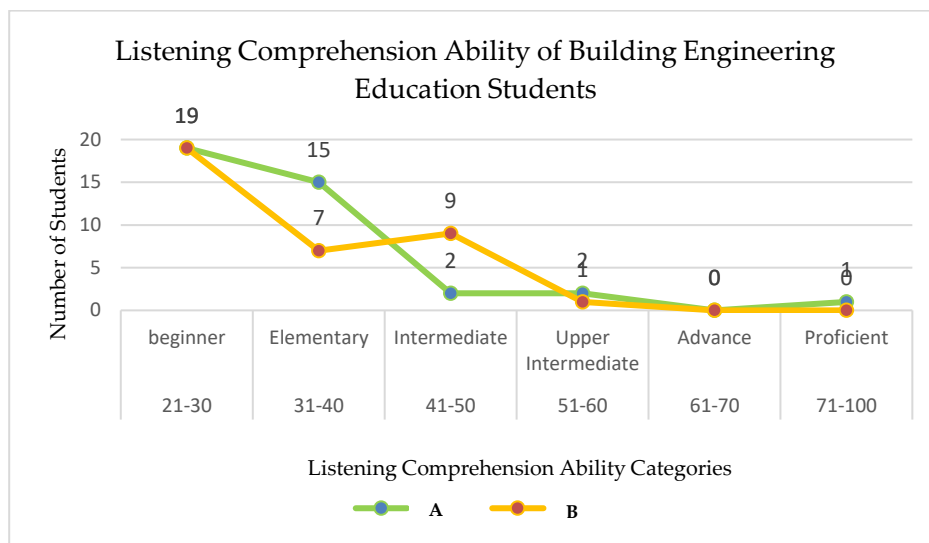


Figure 3. Listening Comprehension Ability Levels of Class A and B

According to Mulyadi at The 2nd University Research Colloquium in 2015, listening competence in the context of foreign languages is the skill in communication that is a daily activity for humans. More than 40% of our daily communication focuses on listening, followed by 35% for speaking, 16% for reading, and 9% for writing. In addition, about 50% of students' learning time in mastering a foreign language is allocated to practicing listening skills. Listening itself is the ability to focus on what is said or read by others.

Based on Nurmala's presentation in the Proceedings of the National Seminar & Expo II Research Results and Student Creativity Program in 2019, one of the challenges in training listening skills is the inability to focus, which can be caused by an uninteresting topic, physical fatigue, or a noisy environment. Some common challenges faced include the speaker's accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, and speaking speed that is too fast (Meilinda & Yuliah, 2019). Therefore, commitment to learning and practice is necessary as an effort to get accustomed to discussing in English.

3.3 English Proficiency Levels of Building Engineering Education Students A and B

By examining **Figure 4**, it can be concluded that the English proficiency of Building Engineering Education students A and B in two skills, namely listening and reading comprehension, falls into the elementary category with a percentage of 48.7% for class A and 33.3% for class B. The second highest percentage is in the beginner category, followed by intermediate, upper intermediate, and proficient. There are no students at the advance level in both classes. For class A, the highest level of English proficiency among students is in the proficient category, while for class B, it is in the upper intermediate category.

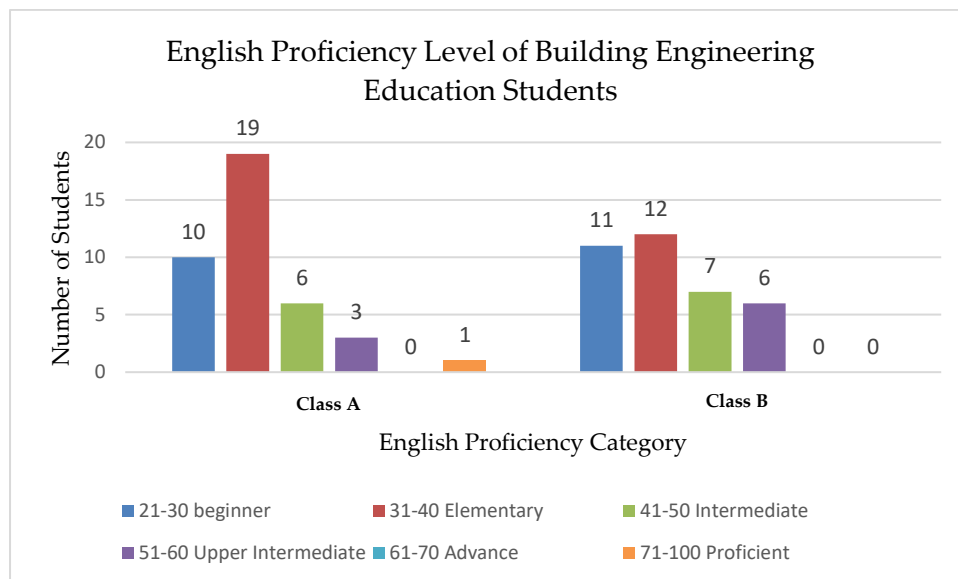


Figure 4. English Proficiency Levels of Building Engineering Education Class A and B

This is similar to the survey results conducted by (Aflah et al., 2018) on 40 students, where 70% of the students' proficiency levels were at the beginner level and the remaining 30% were at the advanced level. Furthermore, Aflah revealed that the result was due to the fact that English was never used in daily communication despite having been learned since elementary school. Nevertheless, according to the analysis conducted by (Wahyuningsih et al., 2021), 95% of 100 students consider English important, while the rest do not. This shows that students still have a strong desire to learn despite facing various challenges in the learning process, one of which is vocabulary mastery (Karmaker, 2023). Vocabulary mastery is necessary to improve English skills, especially in listening and reading comprehension.

The level of English proficiency among students is certainly influenced by various factors, including parental involvement and the campus environment. (Saadu, 2023) states that parental involvement, such as creating a supportive home environment and participating in educational activities like discussing books, plays an important role in enhancing children's language skills and literacy. Campuses equipped with adequate learning facilities generally achieve better academic results. In addition, the competence of the instructors and the effectiveness of their teaching methods have a significant impact on the students' English language proficiency. Engaging teaching techniques, interactive class activities, and a supportive learning environment are fundamental in the language acquisition process.

4. CONCLUSION

From the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the English proficiency of the students in the Building Engineering Education class A and B at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia is at a basic level. For proficiency in two of the four aspects of English proficiency testing, namely listening and reading comprehension, both the class A and B classes fall into the beginner to intermediate category. In reading comprehension, the majority of students in the Building Engineering Education A class fall into the intermediate category, with 12 students (30.8%), while the rest are spread across six CEFR categories. In contrast, the majority of students in the Building Engineering Education class B are at the beginner level, accounting for more than 30%. In listening comprehension, both classes A and B are at the beginner level, with each having 19 students. At the beginner level with the same number of students, which is 19 people.

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