



IELTS AND TOEFL: AN ANALYTICAL COMPARISON

Ishpo'latova A.F Jovliyeva S.U

Denov Institute of Entrepreneurship and

Pedagogy Faculty of Philology, Department of Foreign Language and

Literature, Group 305

Abstract: *This extended analytical article examines the similarities and differences between the IELTS and TOEFL exams, focusing on their structure, scoring, skills assessed, and suitability for various types of learners. Additional discussion explores the pedagogical implications of each exam, supported by academic references in APA style.*

Keywords: *IELTS, TOEFL, language testing, academic comparison, assessment.*

1. Introduction

English proficiency tests play a crucial role in international education and migration. Among them, IELTS and TOEFL remain the most widely recognized. Both tests assess four macro-skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—but they differ significantly in design, delivery mode, and scoring methodology. This analytical comparison aims to help learners choose the most appropriate test based on their learning style, goals, and context.

2. Overview of IELTS and TOEFL

2.1 IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is jointly administered by Cambridge Assessment English, the British Council, and IDP. It offers Academic and General Training modules. IELTS assesses learners through independent tasks that mirror real-life communication.

2.2 TOEFL



The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), administered by ETS, is predominantly internet-based (TOEFL iBT). TOEFL uses integrated tasks requiring test-takers to combine skills such as reading, listening, and writing.

3. Structural Differences

3.1 Format and Delivery

IELTS can be taken on paper or computer, with speaking conducted face-to-face with an examiner. TOEFL is fully digital, including the speaking section, which is recorded for evaluation.

3.2 Task types

IELTS uses varied tasks, such as matching, labeling, and short answers. TOEFL emphasizes academic-style tasks with note-taking and integrated tasks.

3.3 Writing Tasks

IELTS Writing Task 1 requires describing visual information, while TOEFL Integrated Writing requires synthesizing information from a lecture and reading passage. Task 2 in both exams includes argumentative essays.

4. Scoring Comparison

IELTS uses a band scale from 0 to 9, while TOEFL uses a total score from 0 to 120. IELTS relies solely on human scoring; TOEFL combines AI and human raters.

5. Strengths and Weaknesses

IELTS strengths include natural face-to-face speaking, flexible dates, and varied tasks. Weaknesses include subjective writing scoring and accent variety. TOEFL strengths include consistent scoring, digital integration, and academic focus. Weaknesses include microphone-based speaking and longer readings.

6. Suitability for learners

Learners who prefer interpersonal speaking and varied tasks may choose IELTS. Those comfortable with digital testing and academic note-taking may choose TOEFL.

Conclusion



Both IELTS and TOEFL are valid and reliable measures of English proficiency. Learners should choose based on exam format, personal strengths, destination country, and institutional requirements.

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