IMPROVING TOEFL PREPARATION STRATEGIES THROUGH ONLINE COACHING INTEGRATED WITH MOBILE APPLICATIONS
(Classroom Action Research on Diploma III Nutrition Students in Semester 4 at Politeknik Kesehatan Pontianak in Academic Year 2025/2026)

A THESIS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education
Department of Language and Art Education
English Language Education Study Program

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Hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own original work and does not contain any material taken from other sources without proper acknowledgment. All ideas, opinions, and quotations in this thesis have been appropriately cited in accordance with academic ethical standards.

If, at any time in the future, this thesis is found to involve plagiarism, I am willing to accept any sanctions in accordance with the applicable regulations.

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ABSTRACT

Imam Hidayatullah AL Qadrie. 2026. Improving TOEFL Preparation Strategies Through Online Coaching Integrated with Mobile Applications (Classroom Action Research on Diploma III Nutrition Students in Semester 4 at Politeknik Kesehatan Pontianak in Academic Year 2025/2026)

Supervisor I : Prof. Eusabinus Bunau, M.Si., Ph.D.
Supervisor II : Dr. Ikhsanudin, M.Hum.

This classroom action research addressed passive engagement and low TOEFL readiness among 32 non-English-major nutrition students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Pontianak. The primary problem was the absence of a scaffolding architecture for English-medium TOEFL content. A two-cycle intervention integrated Genius TOEFL Premium for L1 strategy instruction and Digital Eduka Pro for L2 autonomous practice across 18 online coaching sessions. Cycle 1 followed a five-step scaffolding sequence: opening, L1-mediated modeling, guided practice, independent L2 practice, and monitoring. Reflection on field notes, observations, and journals revealed that while comprehension improved, engagement remained passive. Consequently, Cycle 2 introduced five accountability modifications: mini-quizzes, WhatsApp reminders, PDF summaries, study groups, and public recognition. The results showed a meaningful transformation in the learning process. The Active Participation Rate rose from below 20% in Cycle 1 to consistently above 40% in Cycle 2. Students shifted from guessing to systematic strategy application. As supplementary evidence, 29 of 31 students achieved the ≥400 threshold on the unsupervised final practice test. Findings indicated that listening still required more synchronous support compared to Reading and Structure. This dual-app model offers a replicable design for healthcare education settings.

Keywords: TOEFL preparation, MALL, Classroom Action Research, Online Coaching, Engagement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In Indonesian health polytechnic institutions (Poltekkes), English language proficiency is not merely an academic requirement but a graduation prerequisite. At Poltekkes Pontianak, Diploma III and Diploma IV students must achieve a minimum score of 400 on the Polkespon English Proficiency Test (PEPT), a Paper-Based TOEFL equivalent examination, before they are eligible to defend their final projects. For non-English-major healthcare students whose daily academic language is Indonesian, meeting this threshold represents a substantial challenge one that requires not only linguistic competence but also strategic test-taking skills and sustained learning engagement.

Preparing non-English-major students for the Paper-Based TOEFL presents unique pedagogical challenges, particularly when instruction is delivered entirely in English. Within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework (Vygotsky, 1978), effective learning occurs when a more knowledgeable other provides deliberate, adjustable scaffolding that bridges the distance between a learner's current independent ability and their potential level of performance. Ideally, in a TOEFL preparation course, this scaffolding would be systematically embedded in every session: the instructor diagnoses learners' starting points, offers structured support in a comprehensible medium, guides collaborative practice, and gradually transfers responsibility to the students until they are able to apply test-

taking strategies autonomously (Alghamdy, 2024; Ardiningtyas et al., 2023; van de Pol et al., 2010).

The reality observed in the Diploma III Nutrition TOEFL coaching class at Poltekkes Pontianak in the Even Semester of 2025/2026, however, stood in stark contrast to this ideal. The researcher, who also served as the course instructor, documented a consistent set of factual conditions during the direct Zoom sessions at the beginning of the semester. Of the 54 registered students, only four or five typically participated actively through chat or microphone; the remaining students remained silent, with cameras consistently switched off. When complex TOEFL strategies such as listening for negative expressions or identifying reduced clauses were explained exclusively in English, students appeared confused and reluctant to respond; chat logs showed minimal genuine interaction, mostly limited to "yes" or "ok." Students arrived without any preparation or learning materials and reported feeling anxious and overwhelmed by English-only explanations. No structured self-study resources with Indonesian language scaffolding were available outside the scheduled sessions. Furthermore, students received no direct feedback on their independent practice; they completed exercises without knowing whether their answers were correct or why, which prevented them from learning from their mistakes. Finally, no accountability mechanism was in place students were never reminded or required to submit their practice work, so many skipped assignments and fell behind.

These facts are not in themselves the research problem; they are the observable symptoms of a deeper pedagogical gap. The real problem is the absence

of a scaffolding architecture that could make complex, English-medium TOEFL content accessible to learners who are still developing their academic English proficiency. In the absence of L1-mediated explanations and a guided transition to autonomous practice, students remain trapped in their current developmental level, experiencing exactly the kind of cognitive overload that Vygotsky's theory warns against when instruction is pitched beyond the learner's ZPD (Nation, 2003; Walqui, 2006; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

Previous studies have demonstrated the potential of individual mobile applications. Suhardiman and Yulianti (2021) showed that the Genius TOEFL application, which provides Indonesian-language strategy modules, notably improved TOEFL scores. Mabaroh et al. (2021) reported that 68-83% of students preferred this app because of its L1 explanations. Nurkholida and Ni'mah (2024) used the Digital Eduka app alone in a Classroom Action Research and achieved score gains from 407 to 466. However, none of these studies examined the deliberate integration of two complementary applications within a structured online coaching framework designed around the ZPD scaffolding model (Suhardiman & Yulianti, 2021; Mabaroh et al., 2021; Nurkholida & Ni'mah, 2024). This is the research gap that the present study addresses: the absence of empirically tested, dual-app CAR interventions that use an L1-based app for conceptual scaffolding and an L2-based app for autonomous practice, sequenced according to a gradual fading model (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

To bridge the identified gap, the researcher implemented intensified flexible online coaching integrated with two mobile applications: Genius TOEFL Premium

(L1-based strategy instruction) and Digital Eduka Pro (L2-based practice and automated scoring). The intervention was designed as a Classroom Action Research (CAR) to allow iterative refinement based on evidence gathered directly from the classroom (Burns, 2010; Kemmis et al., 2014). This methodological choice aligns with calls in the MALL literature for more instructor-supported, context-embedded implementations (Burston, 2015; Duman et al., 2015; Zain & Bowles, 2021). The urgency of this problem is heightened by the institutional policy: all D III Nutrition students must achieve a minimum Paper-Based TOEFL score of 400 on the Polkespon English Proficiency Test (PEPT) to qualify for their final project defense.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background described above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the intensified flexible online coaching integrated with Genius TOEFL Premium and Digital Eduka Pro implemented across two CAR cycles?
2. To what extent does the intervention improve students' learning engagement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2?
3. To what extent does the intervention improve students' formative Practice Test scores, as administered through Digital Eduka Pro, from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 as supplementary evidence of the intervention's success?

C. Research Objectives

Aligned with the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To document in detail the step-by-step implementation of intensified flexible online coaching integrated with Genius TOEFL Premium and Digital Eduka Pro across two CAR cycles.
2. To measure the improvement in students' learning engagement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2.
3. To measure the improvement in students' formative Practice Test scores, as administered through Digital Eduka Pro, from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 as supplementary evidence of the intervention's success.

D. Research Contribution

1. Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the operationalization of Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding theory in the context of mobile assisted language learning (MALL). By demonstrating how a structured progression from L1-mediated instruction (Genius TOEFL Premium) to L2 autonomous practice (Digital Eduka Pro) enables non-English majors to move from passive recipients to active, strategy-using learners, the research provides a concrete model of how macroscaffolding and microscaffolding can be integrated within online coaching (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). It also extends the application of CAR methodology to dual-app, healthcare education contexts that have received little attention in the MALL literature (Zou et al., 2018).

2. Practical Contribution

For students, the intervention offers extended learning opportunities beyond synchronous sessions through applications accessible anytime, enabling self-paced review and independent practice (Çakmak, 2019; Hockly, 2013). For instructors, the dual-app model provides ready-made, Indonesian-language instructional materials and automated progress tracking, reducing preparation burden while maintaining pedagogical quality. For the institution, the study supplies an evidence-based, replicable intervention model that can improve PEPT pass rates, with detailed instruments and implementation steps that can be adopted by other health programs (McCutcheon et al., 2015). For fellow researchers, this CAR provides comprehensive documentation of dual-app integration, including validated instruments, observation protocols, and authentic student reflection data that can be adapted for similar English for specific purposes settings (Basturkmen, 2019).

E. Action Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and related research reviewed in Chapter II, the following action hypotheses are formulated:

1. Hypothesis 1 (Engagement): The implementation of intensified flexible online coaching integrated with Genius TOEFL Premium for L1-mediated scaffolding and Digital Eduka Pro for L2 autonomous practice is designed to progressively transform students' learning engagement from passive receipt to active, strategy-based participation. This transformation is evidenced by: (a) increased voluntary participation

through Zoom chat and microphone during synchronous sessions; (b) improved camera-on rates and material readiness at the start of sessions; (c) higher completion rates of assigned Digital Eduka Pro homework; and (d) spontaneous student questions and comments that demonstrate active strategy processing (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018).

2. Hypothesis 2 (Score Improvement): The intervention is designed to improve students' formative Practice Test scores from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, as shown by an increased number of students achieving the institutional PEPT threshold of ≥400 (Pratiwi et al., 2023; Suhardiman & Yulianti, 2021).

F. Terminology

To ensure clarity and consistency, the following key terms are defined as they are used in this study:

1. Online Coaching: Zoom-based coaching that uses modeling, guided practice, and feedback to build TOEFL strategy mastery.
2. TOEFL Preparation: A program for non-English majors combining synchronous coaching and mobile practice to reach a TOEFL score of 400.
3. Mobile Applications: Two Android apps: Genius TOEFL Premium (L1 strategy) and Digital Eduka Pro (L2 practice with auto-scoring).