

Where TOEFL Academic Discussion Answers Lose Points: Data

Runtian He, CEO, LingoLeap · Published 26 September 2026 · Version 1.0

THREE FINDINGS

- 1 Language is where answers lose points. Language Use & Grammar was the lowest sub-score, or tied for lowest, in 93.8% of 3,683 answers.
- 2 The averages: Relevance & Contribution 4.38, Clarity & Elaboration 3.88, Language Use & Grammar 3.76, each out of 5.
- 3 Language Use is lowest in every overall score band, and it is also the dimension that climbs furthest from the bottom band to the top (1.10 points, against 0.99 for Relevance and 1.01 for Clarity).

CLASSROOM DRILL

The language pass

10 minutes, individual then pairs

1. Students take an Academic Discussion answer they have already written.
2. In a 5-minute pass they change nothing about the ideas: only grammar, word choice and sentence joins.
3. Partners compare the two versions line by line and name the three changes that helped most.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU USE IT

3,683 of LingoLeap's published sample answers with all three sub-scores, scored by LingoLeap's AI grader (not ETS), retrieved 2026-09-26. The pattern could come from the learners or from how the grader is calibrated; the data cannot tell which.

Source: lingoleap.ai/research/academic-discussion-subscores · Data: CC BY 4.0 (aggregate numbers only)

Cite: He, R. (2026, September 26). Where TOEFL Academic Discussion answers lose points: Data (Version 1.0). LingoLeap.
<https://lingoleap.ai/research/academic-discussion-subscores>