

Difficulties of English Study Program Students to Answer the Reading Comprehension TOEFL

Wana Imra Fauzia¹, Edwar Kemal², Dian Noviani Syafar³

^{1,2,3}English Department, Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, Gunung Pangilun, Padang, 25137, Indonesia
E-mail: ¹wanaimrafauzia@gmail.com, ²edwarkemal@gmail.com, ³Dianoviany.s@gmail.com

Abstract— TOEFL is one of the tests where all students are required to take the TOEFL test to test their abilities and measure their English language skills as a process of academic requirements that have been determined by each individual university. TOEFL is divided into three types of questions: students are asked to listening to what the speaker says to measure listening skills, reading texts where the student is asked to understand the reading text that has been questioned by the writer, written structure questions grammar. This study was to find out the difficulties English language education students have in answering the reading comprehension TOEFL test. By conducting this research, the students would know how to solve their problems during the TOEFL test, especially in reading comprehension. This research used Quantitative method. The data were collected using the total sampling technique, then the sample population that the researchers took was 68 English education students in 2021. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using questionnaires and interviews. The results explain that TOEFL is a test to measure the English language skills of students, Non-native speakers. From the internal context, it is found that students' difficulties in answering reading TOEFL are five difficulties such as difficulties in determining the main idea, implied detail question, unstated detailed, stated detail question and vocabulary question. From the external context, it is found that students are lazy to read because the text is too long.

Keywords— English student's difficulties; reading comprehension, TOEFL

Manuscript received 10 November. 2023; Revised 01 January. 2024; Accepted 24 February. 2024

INTRODUCTION

TOEFL is an evaluation tool for English education given in Universitas by analyzing student scores and determining the development of students' English language skills. The score that must be achieved by English learners at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat at least 475. Every student in college is encouraged to take the toefl test exam (Kemal, 2020). The toefl test can measure proficiency in understanding the English language of a non native speaker, with the implementation of the toefl test exam making qualified scholars in each college (Qothiiifah Nurul Izzah, Edwar Kemal, 2023) . TOEFL is a standardized test used to measure the English language, TOEFL scores have become one of the requirements for higher education authorities to set these prerequisites because they believe that able to assess students' abilities and skills in understanding English in assignments and academic assignments of each respective tertiary institution (Astuti & Sudrajat , 2018).

TOEFL is a test measuring students' abilities and assessing students' ability to understand English in academic assignments Aliponga(2018). In addition, there are still many English and non-English language students who say they are still afraid to

take the TOEFL because each study program has a score limit that must be achieved very these students find it difficult to answer the TOEFL reading.

Reading is a way to broaden students' information about language, culture, and the world so reading practice is very valuable in human existence, Candra (2014).It mean that Reading comprehension is difficult because we are confused about choosing the right answer in accordance with the understanding given. Reading skills are influenced by internal and external factors. Internal means factors originating from the reader, the emotional condition and health of the reader, previous knowledge/experience, knowledge of how to read, interest in reading, usefulness for the reader, and level of intelligence of the reader. External means factors that appear from outside the reader.

Reading comprehension is one of the important language skills to learn. This skill uses the human sense of sight to get information and meaning from a reading text. Reading comprehension is a process of interaction from the writer to the reader to get the meaning of the information written.Many students think that reading comprehension on the TOEFL test is very difficult for students who have never taken the test before so students feel they have failed in trying the TOEFL because of difficulties in answering the reading.For more details, the research conducted interviews with English students

at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, to find out the difficulties in the TOEFL exam. English students take the TOEFL test as a way to measure their English language skills whether the TOEFL reading test hinders, interferes with, and makes it difficult for students to answer the TOEFL reading.

The first type of TOEFL is a paper-based test, computer-based test, or internet-based test, and there is also a TOEFL prediction test, this type is intended to estimate a person's TOEFL score before taking the actual test. There are four parts: listening, structure, writing, and reading. TOEFL has a very high level of difficulty and requires a satisfactory command of English and the use of proper techniques. This study was to find out the difficulties English language education students have in answering the reading comprehension TOEFL test. By conducting this research, the students would know how to solve their problems during the TOEFL test, especially in reading comprehension

METHOD

This research used descriptive quantitative method. The participants of this study were 68 samples from 2021 English education students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat consisting of three sessions (session a, b, c). Meanwhile, the instrument used to collect data was the quantitative questionnaire from Likert Scale was analyzed based on the formula suggested by Gay and Airasian. Meanwhile, the data obtained from interviews was conducted by means of researchers asking questions in writing to respondents and respondents' answers were also written in writing. The interview used semi-structured interview. Respondents and the respondents' answers were also written in writing. This method uses a Likert scale to determine the results of difficulties when students answer the reading TOEFL.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Finding of this study are in the form of Students' opinion regarding the difficulties they face in answering the TOEFL reading test. After conducting research, students do find it difficult to face reading in TOEFL and also some students failed in the reading section which can be seen on the scores they get after carrying out the TOEFL test. TOEFL most of the difficulties they experience was Main Idea, Implied detail question, unstated detail, stated detail question.

Find the Main Idea

The difficulty in finding the main idea of students not understanding the intent of the main idea, the vocabulary does know it meaning and the sentences being too long so students the only focus on long text sentences, finding the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph or at the last paragraph. Students have difficulty finding the main idea because do not know the speed reading.

Implied Detail Question

Implied detail questions will require answers that are not directly stated in the reading students find it difficult from the information provided in the paragraph reading text. This type

of question contains implied words so students have difficulty answering implied detailed questions.

Unstated Detail

Students find it difficult to answer unstated detail that are not mentioned will be asked in reading comprehension to find answers that are not correct in the text. Student should know that are two type question.

Stated Detail Question

The students' problems when answering explicitly detailed questions for question like that were also a repetition of what had been mentioned in the reading text so students found it difficult to find ideas or things that same by using different words.

Vocabulary Question

The students have difficulty answering questions related to synonym because in the vocabulary questions, there are questions ranging from synonym concepts, antonym and vocabulary tests.

The research used questionnaire and interviews as data collection instrument to find out the most difficult faced by students in answering the reading TOEFL.

Finding main Idea

Explained the TOEFL test knowledge statement stating whether they understood the material taught by the lecturer during the TOEFL training idea. There are several statements about the knowledge of English students about the TOEFL, as follows:

TABLE I
RESULT OF FINDING MAIN IDEA OF STUDENT'S READING TOEFL

Disagree	Netral	Agree+Strongly Agree
20	22	13+11=24 Students

The explanation above can be supported by the results of interviews with participants, they gave their opinions about how students can understand and answer the main idea questions about reading the TOEFL when attending classes provided by the campus, and this has a direct impact on the test results they get so that the average the answers in the interview, the students did not know the main points contained in the TOEFL reading test, the highest score they got only reached the passing mark determined by the campus to measure their English ability and the average. students have difficulty in determining the idea organization questions.

Implicit Detail Questions

Implicit detailed question statements describe implied questions in the reading text, for example questions are not included in the questions so that they affect the learner's understanding in answering the reading on the TOEFL. There are several statements regarding the Implied Detail Question, as follows:

TABLE II
RESULT OF IMPLICIT DETAILED QUESTION OF STUDENT'S
READING TOEFL

Disagree	Netral	Agree+StronglyAgree
7	11	26+22=48students

It can be seen from the two statements above that it can be concluded that reading comprehension is indeed difficult, supported by statements 3 and 4, where most of the respondents agreed with difficulty answering implied questions from the reading text correctly making it difficult for them to listen and answer implied questions correctly.

In the interview results, some students also explained implicit questions that were difficult to find due to various factors ranging from a lack of understanding of the text being conveyed.

Unstated details

Detailed statements that are not stated include among the questions in the TOEFL reading text listening test. If the reader is able to conclude the reading text, the writer is able to find the points contained in the question. If readers cannot find the keywords, students will have difficulty understanding the words. There are several statements about details that are not stated, as follows:

TABLE III
RESULT OF UNSTATED DETAILS OF STUDENT'S READING TOEFL

Disagree	Netral	Agree+StronglyAgree
13	22	17+11=28 Students

From the statement above it can be concluded that reading comprehension on the TOEFL is indeed difficult which is supported by statements 5 and 6, where from one question to another the text sentences are too long so they lack focus in answering the questions in this case, most of the statements their answers agree and are very agree.

To support these results, the sample was also explained in the interview that most of them had texts that were too long so the students did not focus on the questions.

Detail Questions Stated

The detailed questions stated were explanations about finding the same sentence idea in the text with different vocabulary so the students experienced problems in answering the detailed questions stated.

TABLE IV
RESULT OF DETAIL QUESTIONS STATED OF STUDENT'S READING TOEFL

Disagree	Netral	Agree+StronglyAgree
2	17	24+15=39 Students

From the statement above it can be concluded that listening comprehension on the TOEFL is indeed difficult which is

supported by statements 7 and 8, where many of them feel unfamiliar with a few words and it can be seen from these statements that most of the answers agree.

The above statement can be supported by several answers in the interview, the sample also explained that they have a small vocabulary, usually they read every paragraph so they don't focus on the core of the question, making it difficult to find the core of the question.

Vocabulary Questions

Question vocabulary how to question vocabulary can be seen by asking questions about vocabulary sentences that are already known, and so on. There is one statement about the question vocabulary, as follows:

TABLE III
RESULT OF VOCABULARY QUESTIONS OF STUDENT'S READING TOEFL

Disagree	Netral	Agree+StronglyAgree
14	12	24+15=39 Students

From the keywords above, it can be interpreted that the vocabulary is small so there is a lot of foreign vocabulary. o It is indeed difficulties to answer vocabulary questions supported by statements 9 by 10, supported by password 8, where many of them do not understand what the writer and looking at this statement, most of the answers agreed. So it can be seen that the vocabulary question is one of the most significant factors affecting the answer to the TOEFL reading.

Formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage of student's answers in the questionnaire

F = Total of student's answers in the questionnaire

N = Total Sample

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{f}{n} \times 100\%$$

The percentage in the questionnaire will be measured by the formula above. The percentage will be obtained from (f) as the frequency of student responses (n) as the total percentage of respondents (p) for each category. After getting the percentage, the researcher knows the percentage in the questionnaire that will be measured by the formula above. The percentage will be obtained from (f) as the frequency of student responses (n) as the total percentage of respondents (p) for each category. After getting the percentage, the researcher knows the factors of students' TOEFL reading difficulties.

Interpretation

Interpret, interpret, and synthesize organized data into a common understanding. At this stage, the researcher interpreted the difficulties in learning to read faced by students.

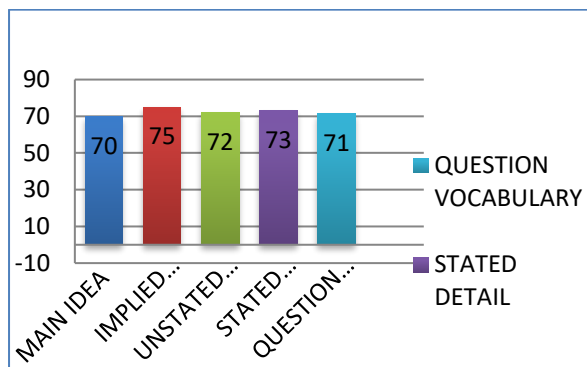


Fig. 1 Average difficulties of students answering the Reading Comprehension TOEFL

The information that the writer obtained from the graph is: an indicator of English students' knowledge of the main idea "agree with a percentage of 70%", implicit detail questions that on average "strongly agree with a percentage of 75%", detailed indicators that are not stated on average strongly agree with a percentage of 72%, the detailed question indicators mentioned look on average "strongly agree with the percentage of 73%", the foreign vocabulary indicator looks average" strongly agree with the percentage of 71%.

To support the results of the questionnaire, the researcher discussed the results of interviews involving 66 English students who were randomly selected as samples. In conducting interviews, the authors asked several questions related to the topic of student problems in answering the reading on the TOEFL test. After the writer finished conducting the interviews, the writer found several skill factors that caused English students to have difficulty answering the TOEFL reading test.

In conducting the interview, the researcher asked ten questions about when they took the TOEFL test for the first time, then what skills were the most difficult in answering the reading section on the TOEFL, and finally what skills were a factor of their difficulties in answering the reading on the TOEFL. After the researcher finished conducting the interviews, the researcher could conclude some of the skills and difficulties factors in answering the reading on the TOEFL test.

The results of the interviews, the researcher concluded that the average students started taking the TOEFL in the early semester where they took the TOEFL to determine their English proficiency. Most of them get scores only for reaching the grade limit set by the campus. Difficulties skills in answering the reading test are elements nine and ten (lack of vocabulary, and difficulties distinguishing antonyms and synonyms. There are several factors that influence students in answering difficulties answering such as factors related to the question points, namely their lack of understanding of the TOEFL material. Another factor that affects the difficulties of answering the TOEFL is that long texts can make students take too long to understand the ideas in the text.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher made a conclusion about focus Students' Difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section in English Study Program. There are difficulties faced by English student in

answering the TOEFL Reading section including five skills: Finding main idea, Implied detail question, Unstated detail, Stated detail question and vocabulary question.

Based on the data contained in the questionnaire, the highest percentage in answering the implied detail question 75% of students strongly agree that is difficult to determine the implied question, 73% of students strongly agree that students are constrained in answering stated detail, 72% of students strongly agree are student constrained in answering unstated detail question, 71% of students strongly agree that students have difficulty answering vocabulary questions due to the lack of vocabulary by students, and the last percentage in answering the main idea question 70% of students agree that students find it difficult to determine the main idea. Because students focused on the text and do not know the tricks in determining the main idea.

REFERENCES

- Aliponga, J. (2013). Reading journal : its benefits for extensive reading. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.3(12),73-80
- Barron.(2005) *How to Prepare for the TOEFL TEST*, 11th Edition.Indonesia:Bina Rupa Aksara,2005.
- Kasirman, M. (2010). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Kuantitatif*. Malang: UIN Maliki Press
- Maizarah, M. (2019). *Analysis on the students' common difficulties in TOEFL reading comprehension* (a case study on the second semester of English *EJI (English Journal of Indragiri): Studies in ...*. <https://ejournal.unisi.ac.id/index.php/eji/article/view/561>
- Majid U. *Research Fundamentals: Study Design, Population, and Sample Size*. Undergraduate research in natural and clinical science and technology journal <https://doi.org/10.26685/urncst.16>
- Oktarina, R. (2018). *Difficult Skills in Reading Section of Toefl Faced By Sixth*.
- Phillips, D.(2001) .*Complete Course For theTOEFL Test*.New York:Longman
- Riswanto, A., Azisah, S., & Asmawati, A. (2019). An Analysis of the Students ' Difficulties in Toefl Reading Section At the Fourth Semester of English Education Department. *English Language Teaching for EFL Learners.*, 1(2), 146–150.