



An Analysis of Students' Ability in Comprehending TOEFL Reading Test at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang

Annisa Kurniawan¹ and Fitrawati²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang

Correspondence Email: kurniawatiannisa888@gmail.com

Article History

Submitted: 2020-08-14

Accepted: 2020-09-09

Published: 2020-09-02

Abstract

This research was about the students' ability in comprehending the TOEFL reading test at English department of Universitas Negeri Padang. The research design was the descriptive research. The population of this study was third-year students of English Education Study Program Academic Year 2017. The population was 148 students from 6 classes. The sample was taken by cluster random sampling technique so that the number of samples obtained was 22 samples. The instrument used was a reading TOEFL test for 60 minutes. The students' comprehension ability was also analyzed in 5 types of reading comprehension skill. Based on this research, students' ability in comprehending TOEFL reading texts was poor. This finding indicated that the third-year students at English Department of UNP had less comprehension in reading TOEFL test.

Keywords:

Reading
comprehension,
Reading TOEFL test

©2020 The Author(s) Publish by Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBS UNP. This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

How to Cite: Kurniawati, A & Fitrawati. (2020). An Analysis of Students' Ability in Comprehending TOEFL Reading Test at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9 (3): pp. 593-598. DOI: [10.24036/jelt.v9i3.44311](https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v9i3.44311)

INTRODUCTION

In Universitas Negeri Padang TOELF is very important because every student who wants to get their degree, they must have TOELF certification first. If they do not have it, so they will not be able to graduate. UNP requires the students to get scores at least 400 of the TOEFL test for non-English Department and 475 for English Department students. This is stated in the rector's regulation for prospective graduates which have been updated in 2018. The bad point is there are still many of English Department students of UNP who cannot achieve that score point, even 400 for general students. Based on the preliminary interview of English Department students who had taken TOEFL test, it is found that the students had difficulty in the reading section than the other four sections.

Moreover, the students also have learned reading skill in Basic Reading, Reading 1 until 3 before taking the advanced reading (reading for TOEFL). In answering reading questions, there are several skills that are needed. The examples of those skills are the skill of finding ideas of the passage, answering direct and indirect questions, and vocabulary (Phillips: 2001). Those skills have been learned by the students in Critical Reading subject. Yet, those skills are often getting neglected by

students. Indeed, reading skill is important as Asmawati (2015) states that students should have good reading skills to help them in academic studies.

Here is the example of the question which is taken from Phillips' book:

The passage:

In English, there are many different kinds of expression that people use to give a name to anything whose name is unknown or momentarily forgotten. The word *gadget* is one such word. It was first used by British sailors in the 1850s and probably came from the French word *gachette*, which was a small hook. In everyday use, the word has a more general meaning. Other words are also used to give a name to something unnamed or unknown, and these words tend to be somewhat imaginative. Some of the more commonly used expression are a *what-d'ye-cal-it*, a *whatsis*, a *thingamabob*, a *thingamajig*, a *doodad*, or a *doohickey*.

The question:

- Which of the following is NOT true about the word *gadget*?
- a. It is used to name something when the name is not known
 - b. It was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century
 - c. It most likely came from a word in the French language
 - d. Its first known use was by British sailors

The answer is B that is *it was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century*. In Phillips' book that question is categorized in 'finding unstated details' which need making inference ability or it will lead students to the wrong answer.

Based on the students' problem mention earlier reading skill is related to reading technique. According to Grellet in Fahriany (2014), the reading techniques are skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading. Students cannot focus on what they read during the reading activity and still have difficulty to get the ideas of the text. Asmawati (2015) states answering reading comprehension test will be time-consuming if they use inappropriate strategies. Another problem is that not every detail of information in the passage is needed to answer the reading questions but students usually read the reading passage word by word. Reading a text word by word also makes them quickly forget what they have read.

Some studies have discussed in the area of TOEFL. The first research was conducted by Sari (2016) in Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Salatiga. This research entitled "The Descriptive Analysis of Students Toefl Reading Score In 6th Semester of English Department Students of State Institute For Islamic Studies In The Academic Year Of 2015/2016". The third one is a research by Oktarina (2018) under the title "Difficult Skills In Reading Section of TOEFL Faced By Sixth Semester English Students".

METHOD

The research was carried out by using descriptive quantitative research. According to Gay (2000:176), descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The

population of this research was the third year students of English Department students in Universitas Negeri Padang. There were 148 students from 6 classes. The technique sampling that was used in this research was cluster random sampling. So, the researcher chose a class randomly with 22 students as the sample/representative through lottery system from the 6 classes of third-year students of English Department academic year 2017 and they have learned about reading for TOEFL.

The test had 50 questions as the same as the real test in reading TOEFL. In real TOEFL test, the test taker will be given 55 minutes to answer the reading questions. Meanwhile, in this TOEFL-like test, the students will be asked to answer the question in 55 minutes and five minutes extra time to make sure their answer. In total, the students will have 60 minutes to answer the test. The second instrument was the interview. Thus, by using this instrument the researcher was able know the students' problems in answering reading TOEFL test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

1. Students' ability in Comprehending Reading TOEFL Test

Based on the findings from test, students' ability in individual score was poor with the average value was 51%. The test conducted was consists of 50 items whereas the five categorizes of reading ability took 10 items in the questions. Since the test was designed in multiple-choice questions, the students were enhanced to choose the correct based on their knowledge. After collecting the data and getting the distribution of the students' ability the general score were grouped into rating criteria by Suharsimi. The following table shows the rating scale of students' ability in answering reading TOEFL questions in individual.

Table 1. Percentage of Rating Scale

Class Interval	Rating Qualities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
80 – 100	Very Good	0 students	0%
66 – 79	Good	3 students	14%
56 – 65	Sufficient	6 students	27%
40-55	Poor	8 students	36%
0-39	Very Poor	5 students	23%

Based on general score criteria above can be seen that among 22 students there were none of their scores were classified to very good and just 14% who classified in good. Meanwhile, there were 27% of the students were classified insufficient and many of them were classified in poor (36%). Lastly, in very poor criteria there were 23% of the students.

2. Students' Problems in Comprehending Reading TOEFL Test

After getting the distribution frequency of reading ability, the patterns of ability distribution per reading skill type questions and were also calculated into percentage. There were five skill types in this research: Finding Ideas question, Directly Answered question, Indirectly Answered question, Vocabulary question, and Overall Review question. After collecting the data

and getting the distribution of the students' ability in each reading skill types, the scores were also grouped into rating criteria by Suharsimi. The following table shows the rating scale of students' ability in answering reading TOEFL questions in individuals.

Table 2. Rating Scale of Reading Skills

Class Interval	Rating Qualities	Skills	Mean of the Skills
80-100	Very Good	-	-
66-79	Good	-	-
56-65	Sufficient	Overall Review	64%
40-55	Poor	Finding Ideas	44%
		Directly Questions	50%
0-39	Very Poor	Indirect Questions	35%
		Vocabulary	37%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that based on Suharsimi the average skills of the participants were rated in Sufficient, Poor and Very Poor. Overall review question as the highest mean (64%) of the five types of skills were put in Sufficient. Meanwhile, Finding Ideas (44%) and Directly Answered Questions (50%) were put in Poor. For the last two skills; Indirect Questions (35%) and Vocabulary (37%) were put in Very Poor criterion. Moreover, the average value of the individual score of all of the students was 51% which categorized in poor.

The table also shows that the students face problems mostly in Indirect question and Vocabulary. It is in line with the interview which was conducted to know more about their problem in comprehending reading TOEFL. Based on the interview with the students, it is found that in answering TOEFL reading questions, the students have problems in understanding or comprehending the texts. In addition, the students also state that they still have problems in finding implied information when they try to answer reading TOEFL questions. This problem is related to reading comprehension in the area of Indirectly Answered questions. Moreover, they claim that they often misunderstand a text or an answer because they lack in making inference the meaning in the text. In reading, there are many questions where the answer in multiple choices is the paraphrasing of the answer in the text. Due to the paraphrasing, it often makes them confused or even leads them to wrong answer. Furthermore, the lack of vocabulary was also the reason of the students' difficulty in comprehending the reading TOEFL test.

2. Discussion

The first question aimed to find out the students' ability. The findings that have been obtained from the analysis of students' reading comprehension were poor because the average score of the students was 51%. It can be concluded that the third-year students who learn advanced reading subject are not good enough in comprehending reading in TOEFL. It was proved in table above. In Finding Ideas category, the average value of students' ability was 44% which was categorized in

poor. Directly answered questions was also categorized in poor with the average value 50%. There were two skills which classified in very poor, which were indirectly answered questions (35%) and vocabulary questions (37%). Meanwhile, overall review were the highest skills which were able to answer by the student and it is classified as sufficient with the average value was 64%.

This research finding was in line with Oktarina (2018). According to her results, it was proved that from the ranges of correct answer 1– 3, 4 – 6 and 7–8 / 9, almost all of students could answer correctly only in the range of 1 – 3 correct answer. While for the higher range there were less or even no students could answer correctly. There was an exception only for skill of Where question. She found that there are four difficult skills. They were Finding Main Idea, Implied Detail Question, Unstated Detail and Stated Detail Question and Vocabulary Question. In contrast, the skill of Where Question could be said that it was the easiest difficult to be answered by students.

The second research question aimed to find the problems faced by the in comprehending the reading TOEFL test. From the finding, it was found that the students faced most problems in Indirectly Answered question type and Vocabulary question type. Indirectly Answered question and Vocabulary question were two skills which classified in very poor with the average value 35% and 37%.

In conclusion, the third year-students' ability in comprehending reading TOEFL test was poor. It was also found that the students faced most problems in Indirectly Answered question and Vocabulary question type. Overall, these finding indicates that the third-year students at English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang not quite understand about reading in TOEFL test.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on 1.100 items analysed, it was found that third-year students' reading comprehension in reading TOEFL test were poor. It was also found that students faced most problems in Indirect Answered question and Vocabulary question. The second difficult skills were Finding Ideas and Directly Answered question type. Lastly, the least difficult skill was Overall Review question.

Suggestion

1. For the third-year student of English Department in UNP. The students should improve their ability in comprehending reading TOEFL that they have learned in Advanced Reading subject. The most important aspect that should be concerned more is the skill in answering Indirectly Answered question and Vocabulary question.
2. For English language instructor it is suggested to teach about reading TOEFL by focusing more on their skills or its type of questions, especially in Indirectly Answered question and Vocabulary question.
3. It is also expected that the result of this research could use by the next researchers as a reference to conduct similar research about compound sentences.

REFERENCES

- Arikunto, Suharsimi. 2013. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Rineka Cipta: Jakarta
- Asmawati, Andi. 2015. *The Effectiveness Of Skimming – Scanning Strategy In Improving Students' Reading Comprehension At The Second Grade Of Smk Darussalam Makassar*. State University of Makassar
- Fahriany. 2014. *Schema Theory in Reading Class*. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta
- Gay, L.R, & Airasian. P. (2000). *Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, Prentice Hall.
- Philips, Deborah. 2001. *Preparation for the Computer and Paper Tests*. Bank Street: Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL test.
- Oktarina, Ririn. 2018. *Difficult Skills In Reading Section Of Toefl Faced By Sixth Semester English Students*. Universitas Jambi.
- Sari, Nastiti Ardina. 2016. *The Descriptive Analysis of Students TOEFL Reading Score In 6th Semester of English Department Students of State Institute For Islamic Studies In The Academic Year Of 2015/2016*. IAIN Salatiga