



An Analysis of English Department Students' Difficulties in Answering TOEFL Test of Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the English students' difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension and the factors of the difficulties. The sample of this study was the English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang who have taken the TOEFL test from August to December 2020. They were given 63 questions to explore their difficulties. Descriptive quantitative research is used in this study. The result showed that the English department students were disagree that they face difficulty in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension. However, they agreed that lack of vocabulary, lack of concentration, length and speed of listening and physical condition were the factors that encountered during the process of answering TOEFL test. By guessing the answer and using clues were the strategies they used to overcome the difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension.

Keywords:

Students' difficulties,
Listening Comprehension,
TOEFL.

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INTRODUCTION

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), paper and computer-based, has become the most popular of International tests in many countries currently. It was first administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service), in 1964. According to Philips (2001), TOEFL is a test to check non-native speakers of English level of proficiency. Additionally, it is required by college students to graduate from universities. Then, it is also taken by non-native students to get a scholarship to English speaking country (Astuti & Sudrajat, 2018). Samad, Jannah & Fitriani (2017) also add that TOEFL is used to apply for a job vacancy.

Furthermore, students may face difficulties in answering the TOEFL test which involves listening skill, structure and written expression skill and reading skill. Kristiyanti (2018) finds that the most incorrect answer when students answering the TOEFL test is the structure and written expression. Students are not able to understand the grammar rules. Then, students have problems with English mastery. In addition, Mahmud (2014) and Halim & Ardiningtyas (2018) agree that the problems faced by

students in answering TOEFL test are; fewer basic skills, less practice, less motivation and students' individual differences such as age and social status. While, Asrida and Fitriwati (2019) state that the problems with reading comprehension process such as main idea questions, stated detail questions, transition questions, context to determine the meaning of simple words, and determine the tone of passage are the most difficult items encountered by students.

Besides, at Universitas Negeri Padang the students who want to enter the university and finish their study have to take the TOEFL test which is administered by the UPT Bahasa which the passing grade is determined by the university. For English Department students the minimum score should be 475 and for other students the minimum score should be reached 400 of the TOEFL test. The type of TOEFL test that is undertaken by students is the TOEFL preparation test. This test belongs to the Paper Based TOEFL test. It consists of three parts; listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. Students who are failed in the TOEFL test must retake another chance to get the minimum score.

However, the English Department students of Faculty Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang have learned about the TOEFL test in some courses at English department. The listening comprehension part of TOEFL test is studied in Listening subject. The structure and written expression part is studied in Grammar subject, while for the reading comprehension is studied in Reading subject. Although they have learned about it, difficulties may be encountered. It can be from the material problem or technical problem or another problem.

To sum up, the previous studies have focused on the TOEFL test in general and problems in structure and written expression and reading comprehension. In this study the researcher will focus to analyze the English Department students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension which is taken as a requirement for students to graduate from Universitas Negeri Padang. In addition, the researcher will also elaborate the factors that make students face difficulties.

METHOD

The research method used in this study was descriptive research to find out students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension. The population of this research was the students of English Department who have taken the TOEFL test on period from August to December 2020. The researcher took 36 students as the sample.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Finding 1: Students' difficulties in listening comprehension of TOEFL test

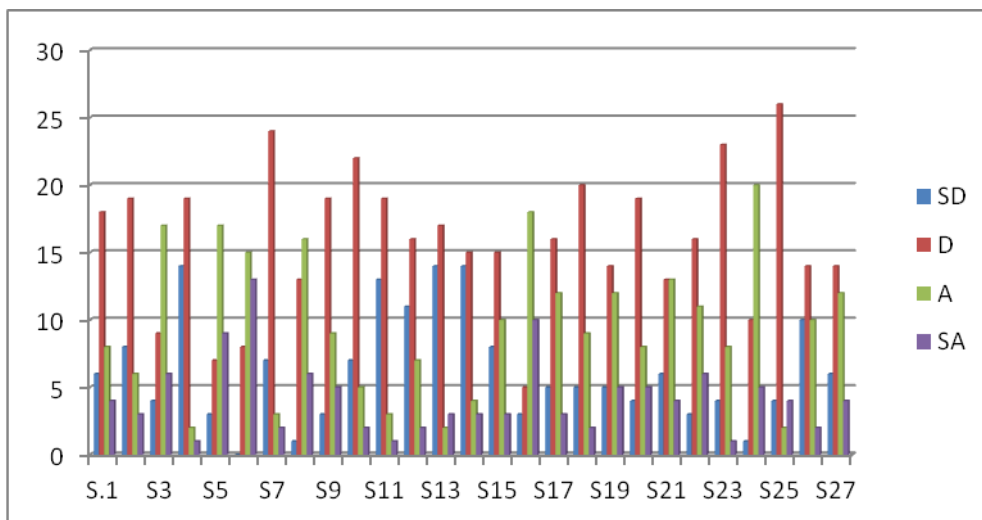
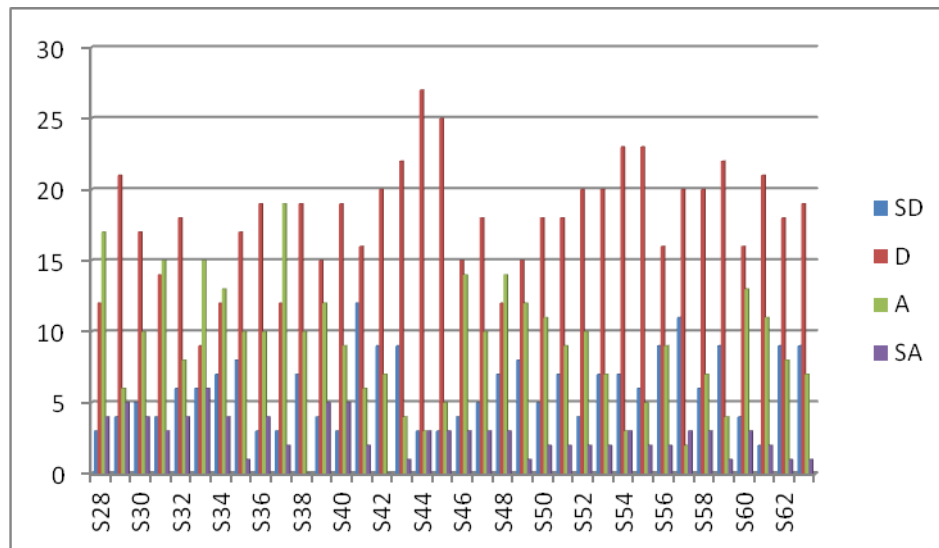


Figure above shows about students' difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension. The results of the data obtained from the respondents indicate that the statement number six with the highest mean score is 3.14. The statement is "I understand about what, who and where in multiple nouns." The statement belongs to undecided level. It means that 44.4% of total respondents are able to answer the question well. Additionally, statement number four with the lowest score is 1.72. The statement is "I find difficulty to make conclusion about what, who and where". It means 52.8% of total respondents disagree that they have difficulty to answer the TOEFL test question related to make conclusion about what, who, and where. It can be concluded that the students do not face difficulty in answering the question about what, who, and where whether in general or multiple nouns.

The following item that students do not face difficulty is statement number 16 "I understand about two and three part verbs" with score 2.97. The score is categorized as undecided level. It means 50% of the students are able to recognize question with past and past participle verb. Besides, the students have no problem to understand about expressions of agreements that belong to statement number 11 with 1.78 mean score. The statement is "It is difficult for me to understand about expression of agreements" belongs to strongly disagree level. It can be interpreted that 52.8% of the students are able to answer the question about past and past participle verbs and also question about expression of agreements.

Finding 2: Students' difficulties in listening comprehension skills



The figure above shows about students' difficulties in listening comprehension. This part consists of 36 statements from statement number 28 to 63 related to listening comprehension. The highest score of this part is 2.58 which belong to statement number 33 "I find difficulty to recognize reduced forms of word." It belongs to undecided level. It can be interpreted that 41.7% of students agree that they face difficult understanding about word that consist of reduced forms. There were three lowest mean score found in part B; statement number 59 "I find difficulty to detect generalization." Statement number 57 "I find difficulty to detect new information" and statement number 43 "I find difficulty to recognize English pattern." With score of 1.92. From 36 respondents more than 55.6% of them disagree that recognizing generalization, detect new information and recognizing pattern face them difficult to answer listening test question.

Finding 3: Interview

Based on the interview data the researcher found that there were some factors that make students faced difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension.

Firstly, lack of vocabulary. In listening to the TOEFL test unfamiliar vocabulary is commonly appear which make students face difficulty to answer the TOEFL test question. Related to the listening comprehension, the students find out the unknown vocabulary makes them confusing to comprehend the information. Not only new vocabulary, some students agree that they hear similar sound of vocabulary but different in meaning.

Secondly, lack of concentration. Based on the students' experience during taken the TOEFL test they agree that they cannot stay to focus in answering the question of TOEFL test. The problem is the noisy sound from the outside like construction sound from another building which distracts students' concentration. In addition, students also lose their concentration because of others students' activity such as the sound of falling paper or eraser or pencil down to the floor which may break their concentration. The students who are not focus in listening will not get better

understanding toward the main point of the information given. It will make them stress and uninterested anymore to continue the listening test process.

Thirdly, length, and speed of listening. Listening to the long speech or conversation then followed by some questions is commonly made students feel confuse to answer the question. The reason is they easily forget the information given especially if it given delivered with native speaker who speaks too fast. The students have to memorize the information given in mind then completing the question after that. It makes students face double difficulties. Especially for foreign language learner, it will be difficult to them to comprehend information which given in long speech and speed delivery too fast. Those problems will make them failure to comprehend information and also fail to answer the TOEFL test question.

Fourthly, physical condition. Based on students' experience on doing listening TOEFL test, they will not focus to answer the question if their physical condition not so well. A student said that it would be better to take breakfast before taking the TOEFL test because it will increase energy and concentration also.

To sum up, the students who encountered difficulties in answering the TOEFL test will do their best to answer the question well. They will use as many clues as they hear to choose the best answer. If there is no time to thinking loud of the best answer, they will do guessing random answer to fill the answer sheet.

Discussion

Based on the findings above, the English department students' difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension is categorize disagree with average mean score for all questionnaire statements 2.28. This statement is answered the first research question about "what are the English department students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension." It means that the English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang do not face difficulty in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension.

Compared to the previous studies done by some researchers, their result of research found that students encountered some difficulties such as problem in negative expression, synonym, listening tool problems, and many more. This research found different answer for the same research topic.

Furthermore, from the three part of listening comprehension of the TOEFL test, short dialogue, long conversation and long talks, the students certainly face the most difficult on part three. As Gunawan (2010) said on his research the speed delivery and infrequent vocabulary were the factors of the difficulties. In addition, students get in trouble with the long speech which delivers too fast by native speaker and the speech content is about academic subject such as Biology. Students have problem because many vocabularies related to academic subject they do not familiar with.

Moreover, lack of concentration is also make students' face difficulties in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension. Pratiwi (2017) on her research is also found that students are not focus to do the test. The noisy sounds from the outside make students' hard to get concentration. Physical condition is also causing students' difficulty in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension. Students who are not taken breakfast before doing the test will not focus to do the test. Those results are answering the second research question about the factors of causing

students' difficulties in answering TOEFL test of listening comprehension. Although they do not face difficulty from the content of TOEFL test but some problem from the process of answering the TOEFL test appear. Fortunately, they are able to answer the TOEFL test question well even some problems may be appeared. They use to guess the answer and use the clues from what they hear.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the data from this study it can be concluded; the English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang do not face difficulty in answering TOEFL test material of listening comprehension. The students' agree that the questions in the TOEFL test of listening comprehension is not too difficult to answer. The students only face difficulty in the process of answering test because of some factors of due to lack of vocabulary, lack of concentration, the length and speed of listening and physical condition. In addition, even the smallest problems found they are able to manage a good strategy to find the best answer. Therefore, This result is not making confuse why the students do not face difficulty because they are the English students who learn English all the time which make them easy to understand about English question in TOEFL test.

This research is expected to give benefits for English students to improve their motivation to be more enthusiastic on learning about TOEFL test even though the result of this research found that English students do not face difficulty in answering the TOEFL test of listening comprehension. Then, for other researchers who want to conduct the same topic, it is suggested to involve many participants may be from another faculty and department. It will make the result of the research be richer and powerful. This research cannot involve many participants due to Covid-19 outbreak which makes other students' cannot take the TOEFL test.

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