

THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE THIRD YEAR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION SECTION OF TOEFL AT BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

It has been known that communication competence plays a very extremely important role in the era of revolution 4.0. Communication is one of the most crucial aspects that individuals need in revolution Industry 4.0, especially communication by using English[1]. Since the students are obligated to have high proficiency of English, some language institutions in the world provide international English tests for students who want to know their English proficiency. Those tests are International English Language Test System (IELTS), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL test is significantly important for the advanced students at universities as it becomes one of requirements to take final thesis examination, to get a scholarship and to get a job [2].

In fact, the universities have their own policies in establishing the TOEFL test because they believe the TOEFL test is able to measure students' ability and evaluate students' skills to understand English in academic tasks [3]. For example, Bung Hatta University makes a policy for English Department students to have a minimum standard of TOEFL score (400) when registering for thesis final examination. Meanwhile, the majority of scholarship and job recruitment determine their own standard of TOEFL score. If the students want to apply for scholarships, they must have 500-530 score of the TOEFL[4]. For the job requirement, the students must get 450-550 score of the TOEFL test [5].

Experts usually classify TOEFL score into 4 levels; elementary level (310-420), low intermediate level (420-480), high intermediate level (480-520), and advance level (525-677)[6].

The researcher checked and observed students' score of TOEFL from website UPT-PPBA as a TOEFL Institution of Bung Hatta University. The preliminary data revealed that students did the TOEFL test in 2017-2019 at English department of Bung Hatta University. The number of students who took Paper-Based TOEFL was 93. Based on the classification of TOEFL score by Carson above, the researcher found out the percentage of the students who got score in elementary level 48.4 %

(percentage), the students who got score in low intermediate level 36.6 %, the students who got score in high intermediate level 12.9 % and the students who got advance score only 2.2 %. It means that the students' English Department is still having difficulties in the TOEFL test.

Two previous related researches at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education have been conducted by Fitria (2018) and Saraswati (2018). Their studies are also related to ability of the third year English Department students in reading comprehension of TOEFL. Fitria found that 96, 43% of the third year students had low ability to answer analytical question in TOEFL text[7]. Similarly, another researcher (Saraswati) found that most of the students (98, 43%) had low ability to answer literal questions in TOEFL text. [8].

Based on those phenomena, the researcher was interested in investigating "The Difficulties Faced by the Third Year English Department Students in the Reading Section Comprehension of TOEFL at Bung Hatta University". There are the five aspects of difficulties in reading comprehension of TOEFL[9]. They deal with the questions about the ideas of the passage, direct questions, indirect questions, vocabulary questions, and overall review questions.

METHODS

In this study, the researcher applied descriptive research. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer the questions concerning with the current status of the subject of the study[10]. The purpose of this research was to describe the difficulties faced by the third year students in the reading comprehension section of TOEFL at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The population of this study was the third year students of English Department, Bung Hatta University. The number of population members was 24 students. Since the number of population was small, sampling technique used in this study was total sampling. The instrument used to collect data of this study was multiple choice of TOEFL test in reading comprehension questions. The instruments used to collect data must be valid and reliable[11]. It means validity and reliability are the most fundamental

consideration in developing and evaluating a test. The formula used to count reliability index as suggested by Arikunto was Product Moment. The reliability index of the test was 0.67. It means that the instrument was reliable. Then the test was valid in term of content validity.

The data were collected by using table of checklist and the data were analyzed by calculating the students' difficulties, by counting the number of students who got very high, high, moderate and low difficulty in category of difficulty level, and by calculating the percentage of students in each category of difficulty level. The data were analyzed by using formula statistical as suggested by Arikunto (2015) and Sudijono (2014).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of data analysis demonstrated that 54.17 % of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University had high level of difficulty to answer reading comprehension section of TOEFL test. There are some difficulties in answering reading comprehension questions related to reading process, motivation, background knowledge, reading strategies, and language knowledge[12]. The most difficulty in this section is aspects of reading comprehension questions on the TOEFL test[13]. Specifically, the researcher divided them into five aspects of students' difficulties in answering reading comprehension section of TOEFL test. Firstly, 62.50% of the third year students had moderate level of difficulty to answer the questions about the ideas of the passages. Secondly, 50 % of the third year students had moderate level of difficulty to answer direct question. Thirdly, 50 % of the third year students had moderate level of difficulty to answer indirect question. Fourthly, 58.33% of the third year students had moderate level of difficulty to answer vocabulary question. The Last, 62.50% of the third year students had very high level of difficulty to answer overall review question.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher drew a conclusion that third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University had difficulties in answering reading comprehension questions of TOEFL test. Related to the conclusion, she proposed some suggestions of this study. For the lecturers, they should give more appropriate learning strategies to solve students' difficulties in reading materials, provide some tricks of answering reading questions. For the students, they should enrich their knowledge and vocabulary. For the further researchers, they are suggested to conduct the related study to overcome the student's difficulties in any section of TOEFL test and find out the cause of difficulties in answering TOEFL test.

Keywords: *TOEFL, Reading Comprehension, Difficulties*

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