

AN ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY IN ANSWERING SYNONYMOUS WORD QUESTIONS IN READING COMPREHENSION OF TOEFL LIKE TEST AT THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the most crucial platform of communication, and it cannot be separated from human needs. One of the most international spoken languages is English. It plays a big role in this revolution era of 4.0. Therefore, various language institutions around the world offer international English tests for students who want to know their English proficiency.

Among many kinds of English proficiency tests, TOEFL has been used worldwide as a means to help people in accomplishing the degree, continuing their study overseas or applying for a job [1]. There are four types of TOEFL tests. They are PBT (Paper-Based Test), iBT (Internet Based Test), CBT (Computer-Based Test), and ITP (Institutional Testing Program). PBT (Paper-Based Test) is the common type used. PBT TOEFL is widely simulated in several institution and the world of education [2]. This simulation is also known as TOEFL like. In addition, it is also the type that is applied in Bung Hatta University to recognize the students' proficiency skills in English and as a requirement before graduation.

The purpose of reading is to grasp or understand the text [3]. In reading, there are many skills that can be improved [4]. The students may increase their ability of listening, speaking, and writing skills through reading. They can also enrich their knowledge of speaking expression, English sentence structure, the English instruction of the text, writing techniques and vocabulary mastery through reading [5].

Reading comprehension section in TOEFL consists of several types, namely guessing vocabulary, main idea, inference, reference, and stated detail [6]. In terms of comprehension, students with an advanced vocabulary will have a shorter time

in understanding a text [7]. As a result, the reading process will be much easier and will result in better comprehension.

Carson et al (1990) classified TOEFL score into 4 levels; elementary level (310-420), low intermediate level (420-480), high intermediate level (480-520), and advanced level (525-677). Regarding to the level of TOEFL score of Bung Hatta University, students' score is still in the elementary level. In order to figure out the students' ability in answering synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL test, the researcher conducted a small test. The researcher found out that there is no student getting a satisfactory result.

There are two previous studies that examined the students' ability to answer synonymous word questions. Putri (2020) found that the students had difficulty in answering reading comprehension of the TOEFL test [8]. In other words, her findings represented that the most challenging part for the TOEFL test takers is reading comprehension section. Another study was done by Elfriandri et al (2020) who found that the most problematic subskill in reading comprehension section of TOEFL test was vocabulary questions (synonymous word questions) [9]. According to Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016), these issues are caused by several factors (i.e the complexity of the reading text, environmental influences, anxiety, interest or motivation, decoding or word recognition speed, and medical problems) [10].

METHOD

The research belongs to descriptive research, and it is designed to describe the current situations or status of the research subject. The sample of this research was all the third year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University consisting of 35 students. Reading comprehension section of

TOEF test was used as the instrument. To maintain the test validity it was made in accordance with the syllabus, curriculum, and teaching material given to the second year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University. Test reliability was found by applying the split-half method and the correlation of the test was 0.70 (high correlation) which means the test was reliable.

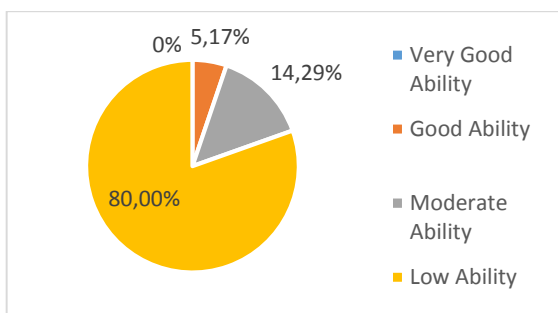
To collect the data, the researcher administered the test by copying the questions of reading section of TOEFL test written by ETS in 20 minutes. These test are in the form of multiple choice. The researcher asked the students to choose one correct answer among four possible answers (A, B, C, or D). Next, the researcher counted the raw score of each student. Then, the researcher categorized the students who had very good, good, moderate, and low ability according to the criteria used at Bung Hatta University. Finally, the researcher calculated the percentage of the students in each ability level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher found that 0 (0%) student had very good ability, 2 (5.71%) students had good ability, 5 (14.29%) students had moderate ability, and 28 (80%) students had low ability in answering synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of the TOEFL like test in the form of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb as shown in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1

Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in Reading Comprehension of the TOEFL Like Test



On the other hand, based on the previous study which was conducted by Putri (2020), the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University had little problem in answering synonymous word questions. It is proved by the percentage of students who had difficulty was

58.33%. This was categorized as moderate difficulty. Meanwhile, comparing to the second previous study that was conducted by Elfriondri et al (2020), the results presented that the most challenging part for TOEFL like test takers in reading comprehension section was vocabulary questions (synonymous word questions). His findings showed that this type of question belongs to the most problematic subskill (level 1). More specific findings as the answers to research questions are presented below.

1. Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Noun

After the researcher analyzed the students' answers, the researcher found that there were many students who had low ability in answering synonymous word questions in the form of noun. It was supported by the fact that there were 6 (17.14%) students had very good ability, 0 (0%) student had good ability, 11 (31.43%) students had moderate ability, and 18 (51.43%) students had low ability. This statement is proven based on the data as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Noun

No	Number of Students	Percentage	Classification
1	6	17.14%	Very Good
2	0	0%	Good
3	11	31.43%	Moderate
4	18	51.43%	Low
Total	35	100%	

2. Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Verb

There were many students who had still low ability in answering synonymous word questions in the form of verb. It was supported by the fact that only 5 (14.29%) students had very good ability, 0 (0%) student had good ability, 13 (37.14%) students had moderate ability, and almost than a half of students (17 students) or 48.57 % had low ability. In more detail, the students' ability in answering the questions of verb can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Verb

No	Number of Students	Percentage	Classification
1	5	14.29%	Very Good
2	0	0%	Good
3	13	37.14%	Moderate
4	17	48.57%	Low
Total	35	100%	

3. Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Adjective

The researcher found that 10 (28.57%) students had very good ability, 0 (0%) student had good ability, 9 (25.71%) students had moderate ability and 16 (45.72%) students had low ability. To be more clear, see the Table 3 below:

Table 3 Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Adjective

No	Number of Students	Percentage	Classification
1	10	28.57%	Very Good
2	0	0%	Good
3	9	25.71%	Moderate
4	16	45.72%	Low
Total	35	100%	

4. Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Adverb

There were 0 (0%) student had very good ability, 0 (0%) student had good ability, 3 (8.57%) students had moderate ability, and 32 (91.43%) students had low ability. In order to be clear, see the Table 4.

Table 4 Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in the Form of Adverb

No	Number of Students	Percentage	Classification
1	0	0%	Very Good
2	0	0%	Good
3	3	8.57%	Moderate
4	32	91.43%	Low
Total	35	100%	

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the third year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have low ability in answering synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of the TOEFL

test in the form of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. Related to the study, the writer would like to give several suggestions. The lecturers are suggested to give more explanation about synonymous word questions, and give the students more examples to practice. The students are suggested to join the Essay Reading class seriously, pay attention to the lecturer's explanation, and do more exercise to answer those types of questions. Last but not least, the future researchers are suggested to conduct the related study to overcome the students' problems in any section of TOEFL Like test. It is suggested to the further researchers to find out the cause of students' low ability in answering TOEFL Like test.

Keywords: Synonymous word questions, ability, reading comprehension, TOEFL Like.

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