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The Students' Ability in Reading Comprehension of TOEFL for EFL Learners

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Abstract

The objectives of the research are to know the students' ability in reading comprehension of TOEFL test for the EFL Learners. This study is categorized as descriptive quantitative research. This study was conducted at the eighth semester students of Hamzanwadi University. The population of this study was 144 students from 3 classes and the sampling method was purposive sampling. The sample of this study was 30 students. The research instrument used to collect data was reading comprehension of TOEFL. The collected data were submitted to descriptive statistic by using SPSS 22 for windows. The mean score of the test was 4.17, which is categorized into low. Based on that result, the EFL Learners did not have good ability in finding main ideas, references, and meaning of words on reading comprehension of TOEFL. Meanwhile, the mean score in finding information was 7.2 and inference was 6.4. Therefore, the EFL Learners did not have good ability in finding information and inference.

Keywords : EFL learners, TOEFL, reading comprehension

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa dalam membaca pemahaman tes TOEFL untuk Peserta Didik EFL. Penelitian ini dikategorikan sebagai penelitian kuantitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada mahasiswa semester delapan Universitas Hamzanwadi. Populasi penelitian ini adalah 144 mahasiswa dari 3 kelas dan metode sampling menggunakan purposive sampling. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 30 mahasiswa. Instrumen penelitian yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data adalah pemahaman membaca TOEFL. Data yang dikumpulkan diserahkan ke statistik deskriptif dengan menggunakan SPSS 22 untuk windows. Skor rata-rata tes adalah 4,17, dimana dikategorikan ke rendah. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, Peserta Didik EFL tidak memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam menemukan ide utama, referensi, dan makna kata pada tes pemahaman membaca TOEFL. Sementara itu, skor rata-rata dalam menemukan informasi adalah 7,2 dan kesimpulan adalah 6,4. Jadi, Peserta Didik EFL tidak memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam menemukan informasi dan kesimpulan.

Kata kunci : mahasiswa EFL, TOEFL, pemahaman membaca

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition Reading of TOEFL

TOEFL is necessary for applicants or speakers whose native language is not English. TOEFL is important to measure the students' ability in English (Rivers, 2018). There are three skills able to measure by TOEFL, those are listening, structure, and reading (Samad et al., 2017). Nowadays, TOEFL become an important test for the EFL Learners. The students has obligation to take TOEFL before graduated from the university (Samad et al., 2017). In Hamzanwadi University, The EFL learners will not be able to join the thesis exam if the EFL Learners could not pass the test, the score is at least 400. TOEFL is important for the students, but TOEFL is not as easy as other test. Most of the students could not achieve 400 score in TOEFL because of the difficulties of the test itself. The University provides TOEFL preparation training class for the students either for English education program or other program. However the result is still the same. Most of the students still feel difficult to achieve a good score in TOEFL. Based on the result of the test, the students get the

lowest score in reading comprehension section of TOEFL. Although, the English education program studied about reading comprehension since the first semester. It could not support their result in TOEFL.

The reading section is designed to simulate the types of reading task that students are expected to do in university level academic settings (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Reading comprehension is a process of the reader's cognitive interaction (van den Broek & Helder, 2017). TOEFL should evaluate academic reading comprehension and focus on four main, there are reading to find information, reading for basic comprehension, reading to learn, and reading to integrate information across multiple text (van den Broek & Helder, 2017). Moreover, the result of reading task designed specifically to focus on reading for basic comprehension task, reading to learn task, a third group of task, and inference task (Z. Wang et al., 2017).

In university level, reading comprehension skills are essential, because the material you read in college from textbooks to websites will be in English especially in English department program (Nordin & Eng, 2017). Based on (Lambe, 2018), reading can be seen as an active process of comprehending when students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently, for example to get the main idea, guess the information from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, etc. Students have to master reading skill as well as possible to support their academic activity in college. Reading comprehension skill can be tested by TOEFL.

According to (Cho et al., 2017), the most valuable reading comprehension is probably the ability to determine the point that the author saying. It means that reading is decoding and understanding written texts. Understanding is determined by the purposes for reading the context, the nature of the text, and the reader's strategies and knowledge. Reading is the process of deriving meaning from the text (Lamon, 2020). Dealing of it, students have to read a lot and comprehend the information presented in their textbook or other reading materials.

Based on TOEFL exam essential by learning express, the reading comprehension question on the TOEFL can be divided into some indicators, they are: finding main idea, supporting details, exceptions, location of information, meaning of words, inference, and reference which are the most difficult for the test taker.

In finding main idea, test taker is asked to determine main idea of passage or paragraph. According to (Allahyari et al., 2017), main idea is called the topic sentences. It tells the content of the paragraph. In other word, the main idea is the important ideas that is developed by the writer throughout paragraph and sometimes are available in key words and explicit or implicit massage. Test takers have to understand the whole paragraph of the text not just read but comprehend to find the main idea of the text (Arshad et al., 2020).

One of the simple but difficult questions in reading of TOEFL test is about reference. Reference is the words or phrases that are used either before or after the reference in the reading material. They are used to avoid unnecessary repetition of words or phrases (Kamal, 2018). The test taker will determine what a specific word (often a pronoun) or phrase refers to in the passage (Allahyari et al., 2017). Finding the meaning of word in reading of TOEFL test as stated by (OBE, 2018), stock of words are used by person, class of people, profession, it is called vocabulary. There are two kinds of vocabulary questions. One asks the test taker to determine the meaning of a word based on how it is used in the passage; the other asks the students to choose a synonym for the vocabulary word.

Another aspect is information that is uncountable noun meaning facts about someone or something (Santoso, 2018). Therefore, as students learn to judge the information that the read, they become better at identifying the main idea (Bråten & Braasch, 2017). Although authors sometimes state the main idea, readers after need to infer it. This can be difficult for many students who

struggle to identify how details are related, but it can be especially challenging to recognize of information in a paragraph or entire text (E. Wang et al., 2017).

The last of all is inference that is when the students encounter an unfamiliar word, a good strategy is to infer (or guess) its meaning from the context (Juliana, 2018). According to (Landi & Ryherd, 2017), reading comprehension is reading for inferencing task. The student may not always be able to infer an exact meaning, but the student can often get the general meaning to continue reading to understanding (Elleman, 2017). Reading needs to understand in making inferences to connect up the ideas. It means that making inferences making conclusions based on information from the text (Dempsey, 2018).

Concerning with at all, the students faced when they read and find main idea, reference, and meaning of the word, the writer should choose an appropriate reading test. Whereas, TOEFL reading test measures students' ability to find main idea, reference, meaning of the word, information of the text, and inference. Therefore, this research was aimed at finding out the students' ability in reading of TOEFL test for the EFL Learners.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

The definition of "reading" and "reading comprehension" have move beyond were explicit recall, word recognition, and mastery of phonemic decoding (Ribeiro et al., 2016). The definitions now include or perhaps are even replaced by the dynamic, reciprocal interactions among reader, text, and the context of reader's prior literacy schema. No longer is the quiet and private model of reading process adequate; the new model, rather, is that reading is an interactive and complex process. The process through which the dynamic interactions of the reader's background knowledge, the information inferred by the written language, and the reading situation context is constructing meaning (Rouet et al., 2017). This news, more divergent definition of reading requires that will be accompanied what has come to be known as authentic assessment (Villarroel et al., 2018). The assessment model has four characterized by the following: a) it should address the reader's cognitive ability to construct meaning our of what is implied in the text. b) it should assist in developing reading fluency, skills, and strategies, and c) it should honor both the reader's literacy context and ability to make cognitive and affective leaps based on a synthesis of old a new information (Darr, 2020).

According to (Darr, 2020), reading in this view is basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quest for making sense of the text. He referred to this process as the 'bottom-up' view of reading. As a skill, reading is clearly one of the most important; in fact in many instances around the world we may argue that reading is the most important foreign language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English material for their own specialist subject but may never have to speak the language; such cases are often referred to as 'English as a library language'. Event there is clearly an overlap between reading and writing, in that a 'text' has to be written down before we can read it. In many societies literature is still seen as the prime example of writing. It is often thought to be easier to supply a written text to be read than a spoken one to be understood.

Based on definitions above, it can be concluded that reading is an interactive and thinking process of transferring printed letters into meaning in order to communicate certain massage between the writer and reader. In reading actively a reader brings her or his background knowledge, emotion, and experience to construct his or her idea in understanding the meaning of text that they read.

2.3 Toefl

Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL is a standard that is used to know the English capability of a person (Papageorgiou et al., 2019), The test is only applicable to students from countries whose native language is not English, but want to study in countries whose native

language is English, either through scholarships or self-test. Then, over the times, this test is also used as standardization by several agencies, either government or private companies in recruiting employees. In tests TOEFL there are four kinds of capabilities that are generally tested, namely listening, structure, reading, and writing based on the type of the TOEFL is selected (Isbell & Kremmel, 2020).

Reading Comprehension is part of the TOEFL that test students' abilities in reading comprehension, in both topic and certain words in it. In the TOEFL (Papageorgiou et al., 2019), the part is placed in section 3 or the last part after listening and structure. Most people consider this part is the easy part compared to the previous two. However, as Listening and Structure, Reading Comprehension questions has its own challenges. According to (Brante & Strømsø, 2018), students will find five types of text that usually appears in the Reading Comprehension, including history and science. The amount of matter is 50 with a processing time of approximately 55 minutes. With time you have to work on problem approximately one minute. Students should have a greater ability to understand and comprehend each question there. The types of questions that often arise in this test include some matters relating to the information contained in the text (Spiro, 2017).

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

This research was descriptive quantitative research. The participants were purposively selected for sampling views of students' skills and understanding that the average value of reading for academic communication better than other classes. The researcher took one class which consisted of 30 students.

2.2 Procedure

The instrument used in this research was test. The researcher used the test namely reading comprehension test. The test was in form of reading comprehension of the TOEFL test consisted of 50 items. The reading comprehension test was conducted after making the instrument by the researcher. The test was given to the sample and it was done in one meeting. The technique of analyzing the data was descriptive statistic. The data was analyzed by using SPSS v.22 software. This technique found the mean score and standard deviation of students' reading comprehension test achievement. The researcher got the result of the research by seeing the mean score and standard deviation of the data.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

Referring to the data gained in the test, the result of the students as follows: Detailed achievement on students reading ability in finding main ideas, 5 students (16%) who categorized into expert, 2 students (6%) who categorized into advance, 8 students (26%) who categorized into intermediate, 12 students (40%) who categorized into low, and 3 students (10%) categorized into very low. The mean score of the test was 58. The data shows that the most of the students have low ability in finding main idea in reading of TOEFL.

In finding meaning of word, 2 students (6%) who categorized into advance level, 6 students (20%) who categorized into intermediate, 17 students (56%) who categorized into low, and 5 students (16%) who categorized into very low. The mean score of the test was 43.96. The data above shows that most of the students has low ability in finding meaning of word in reading of TOEFL.

In finding references, 1 students (3%) who categorized into expert, 12 students (40%) who categorized into intermediate, 11 students (36%) who categorized into low, and 6 students (20%) who categorized into very low. The mean score of the test was 42.22. The data shows that most of

the students have intermediate ability in finding references deferent from finding main idea and meaning of word which most of the students have low ability on that aspect.

In finding information the lowest score was 100-190, and the highest score was 200-290. The mean score of the test was 216. Furthermore, in finding inference, the lowest score was 100-130, and the highest score was 140-190 and the mean score of the test was 167. Additionally, in finding Information, there was 13 from 15 students was answered 65% from 20 question with correct answer. It means that 84.5% students got the high score. Then in finding inference, there was 11 from 15 students was answered 90% from 10 question with correct answer. It means that 61% students got the high score.

Based on the calculation of the students mean score and the percentage, the description of the data result of the test in finding main ideas, meaning of words, and references on reading of TOEFL for the students of English language education of Hamzanwadi University. The result of the study suggests that the students of English language education still have low ability in finding main ideas, meaning of words, and reference on reading of TOEFL test.

Based on the survey and observation why the English language students have low ability on reading of TOEFL especially in finding main ideas, meaning of words, firstly, the students did not serious to answer the test because the students were lazy to read of text. Secondly, the students feel under pressure when the students did the test because of the limited time. Third, the students just understand a view vocabulary on reading test. Lastly, the students did not have understood in reading technique, either they did not pay attention during reading subject in class or the lecturer did not give the right material of reading.

Based on the calculation of the students mean score and the percentage, the description of the data result of the TOEFL test in finding information including implicit and explicit information, and inference on reading test of TOEFL in the students of Hamzanwadi University. The result of the study suggest that test of TOEFL were good ability in reading. Moreover, the students can follow this test in every moment to see how their ability and how the students can increase their ability then.

3.2 Discussion

The writer found that the closest result that can support between the previous research and the present research. (Rastegar et al., 2017) proved that TOEFL iBT as test of EAP is accepted by most of HEI in various countries. The purpose is to determine the students' metacognitive awareness of global academic reading strategies, namely the use of context clues within the framework of preparation for TOEFL reading section. The article establishes the connection between success in reading comprehension and the degree of students' metacognitive awareness. The result of this investigation taken into consideration in designing the steps for context clues reading strategy instruction or test task development along with the examination text selection.

Based on the result of these study, the researcher concluded that the TOEFL is effective to measure how the students' ability and knowing how to solve the weakness in reading skill then. Otherwise, the students of English Language Education of Hamzanwadi University do not have good ability in finding main ideas, references, and meaning of words on reading TOEFL.

4. Conclusion

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the mean score of the test was 4.17, which is categorized into low. The EFL Learners did not have good ability in finding main ideas, references, and meaning of words on reading comprehension section of TOEFL. Meanwhile, the mean score in finding information was 7.2 and inference was 6.4. Therefore, it can be concluded that, the EFL Learners did not have good ability in finding information and inference.

5. Suggestion

This research needs to conduct further research to know the aspect of TOEFL test both are listening and structure and written expression. It needs to collaborate with language Centre of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia and Hmzanwadi University (Selamet Riadi Jaelani, 2021).

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