THE DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG IN ANSWERING READING SECTION OF TOEFL

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Abstract

This research aimed to find out the students' difficult skills in answering reading section of TOEFL. The participants of this study were 26 students at English department in 2016 academic years. This study used proportional stratified sampling to choose the sample. The instrument used in this research was reading TOEFL test. The test consisted 50 questions multiple choice with 55 minutes. The study found that the last year English students of Universitas Negeri Padang had problems in 13 skills among 5 topics assessed. There were five most difficult items; main idea questions, stated detail questions, transition questions, context to determine meaning of simple words, and determine the tone of the passage.

Key words: Students' Difficulty, Skills, Reading Section, TOEFL.

INTRODUCTION

The era of industrial revolution 4.0 has tremendous impact on human life, one of them in the academic aspect. Students are required to upgrade and highlight the uniqueness or differentiation and added value themselves. Revolution 4.0 create the world community interact and carry out various activities without being constraint by distance. In addition, global interaction is established by the presence of international languages. So, to be able to compete in this era the ability of communication is needed. One of the improvements made by the university to create the best graduates and being able to compete in the opportunities for employment is mastering English. English is used as an international communication. As the result, improving students' English proficiency most of university conducts some test to measure students' skills in acquires English.

Due to the policies and the regulation of Universitas Negeri Padang in order to get graduated students have to pass the English Language Test successfully. In that case, Universitas Negeri Padang requires TOEFL to measure students' proficiency in English. The purposes for taking TOEFL test are first, in order to measure their ability in English as a second or foreign language. Second, an obligation for the students who will pass the college study. The last reason is to

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apply for taking master/doctoral degree or applying particular jobs abroad and inside the country.

Especially for English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang have to pass 475 score of TOEFL for the graduation. In fact, many students cannot complete the requirement for graduation because the TOEFL score are low. Moreover, the score of reading TOEFL test at Advanced Reading subject are still low. Base on the researcher's observation, data score and simple interview with the lecturer. This fact is really problematic because of these students have learned English since the first semester. Also, students have passed the basic reading, intermediate reading, advanced reading and extensive reading, and last, students have conducted TOEFL for several times. In English department of Universitas Negeri Padang, expertise courses such as reading, grammar, writing and listening are ongoing courses that are given in range 8 semesters. Start from the basic, intermediate, advanced, and extensive levels. Since reading is a core part of language acquisition, it is necessary to make a proper study about this process, the identification of the core problems faced during reading comprehension which makes obstacles on language learning. To be more specific the study focuses on reading section on TOEFL Test. This material is taught in advanced reading courses.

The previous studies such a Kamijo (2011) and Nehe (2016) analyzing students comprehension in reading section of TOEFL. Mahmud (2014) study about students problem in answering reading TOEFL test. In addition, Nehe (2016) and Nurhayani & berita (2016) analyze students' strategies in aswering reading of TOEFL test. Oktarin (2018) investigate difficult skills in reading section of TOEFL.This study is an expansion of those previous studies, which focuses on the difficult skills faced by fourth year English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in TOEFL reading comprehension. Using five main topics of reading section of TOEFL and divided the main topic into thirteen sub topics in order to find students' difficulties more specific. A better understanding of students' problems would not only make the students realize their weaknesses but also enable for teachers plan suitable teaching materials or methods to improve students' ability in answering reading section on TOEFL.

RESEARCH METHOD
Method of Research

The research method used in this study was descriptive research in order to investigate students in 2016 academic year difficult skills in accomplishing reading section of TOEFL test, used an instruments in the research; reading sub-test.

Population and Sample

The object of this study includes the 2016 academic year English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang. The samples of this research were 26 students in 2016 academic year of English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang. This number is gained by using proportional stratified sampling technique as proposed by Gay (2009, p. 90). the researcher took around 30% of the total population or around 26 last year English Department Students for this research.

The researcher chose the students who had ever taken PBT TOEFL in advanced reading. This is done in order to find the root of the problem.

Research Instruments

The research instrument which is used in this study was reading sub-test. The test given is the standardized reading comprehension of TOEFL PBT. The test collaborated from some TOEFL books such as Peterson's and Longman These reliable sources make a credible test and result later. The test has 50 questions and students asked to fill the answer. The reading test commonly has 55 minutes to be finished. The reading sub-test consists of 5 main topics with 13 skills talked in Longman complete course for TOEFL test, Philips, (2001).

Techniques of Data Collection

The following steps are used to collect the data from the reading test:
a. The researcher contacts the students and makes an appointment to conduct the test.
b. The researcher met with the students in the class and explains the details of the research such as the reading TOEFL test and the purpose of the research to avoid misunderstanding.
c. The students answered the test for 55 minutes in provided sheets.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data collected through TOEFL Test, Reading section. The researcher analyzed the students' mistakes by finding the index difficulty of all skills. Arikunto (2016) explains that finding the index difficulty of each item by dividing the total number of the students who could answer the questions correctly with the total member of all students. The formula is:

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

Where: P = difficulty skills
B = the number of students who answered correctly
JS = the total number of the students who followed the test

When the index difficulty gotten, the researcher classified them into three categories as proposed by Arikunto (2016):
a. Questions with p 0.00 – 0.29 are difficult questions
b. Questions with p 0.30 – 0.69 are medium questions
c. Questions with p 0.70 – 1.00 are easy questions

The data collection in this study is the students' test answers. The researcher categorized students' ability based on their score. After that, the researcher analyzed the students' mistakes by finding the index difficulty of all skills.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Research Finding

After computing the incorrect answers of the students, the researcher got the total result of the test. Through 1300 point of questions in the test, the data obtained are as follows.

Table 10. The incorrect answers found through reading sub-test

No	SKIILS	Questions with wrong answers						TOTAL
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	Answer main idea questions correctly	19	17	11	19			66
2	Recognize the organization of ideas	11	8	10				29
3	Answer stated detail questions correctly	13	12	15	17	15	21	93
4	Find unstated details	20	18	13	16			67
5	Find pronoun referents	18	16					34
6	Answer implied detail questions correctly	16	10	13	15	16		70
7	Answer transition questions correctly	12	20	17	15			64
8	Find definitions from structural clues	18	14	15				47
9	Determine meaning from word parts	11	13	13	15	16		68
10	Use context to determine meaning of difficult word	12	12	12	13	12		61
11.	Use context to determine meaning of simple word	19	7	12	15			53
12.	Determine where specific information is found	16						16
13.	Determine the tone, purpose, or course.	6	6	17				29
	TOTAL							697

In order to find the index difficulty, the researchers calculated the students answer based on the formula proposed by Arikunto (2016) as stated in chapter 3. Therefore, the index difficulty of each items of the reading test were

Table 11. The index difficulty of each item

No.	Reading Topics	Skills	NQ	ID
1	The ideas of the passage	Answer main idea questions correctly	1, 14, 21, 26	0,36
		Recognize the organization of ideas	20, 35, 43	0,63
2	Directly answered questions	Answer stated detail questions correctly	3, 4, 8, 11, 16, 23	0,40
		Find unstated details	30, 41, 44, 46	0,36

			15, 45	0,35
		Find pronoun referents	15, 45	0,35
3	Indirectly answered questions	Answer implied detail questions correctly	5, 6, 19, 28, 37	0,46
		Answer transition questions correctly.	9, 34, 47, 48	0,38
4	Vocabulary questions	Find definitions from structural clues	39 49, 50	0,40
		determine meanings from word parts	18, 24, 29, 36, 40	0,48
		0. use context to determine meaning of difficult words	17, 22, 27, 32, 38	0,53
		1. use context to determine meaning of simple words	2,7, 10, 31	0,49
5	overall review questions	2. Determine where specific information is found	42	0,38
		3. Determine the tone, purpose, or course.	12, 13, 33	0,58

NQ = Number of Question   ID = Index Difficulty

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there were 13 skills assessed in the test. The item difficulty was vary with the lowest was 0,35 and the highest was 0,63 Arikunto (2016) had suggested three categories of questions: easy, medium and difficult. The easy questions were in range of 0.00 – 0.29, the medium questions were 0.30 – 0.69, and the difficult questions were 0.70 – 1.00. From the table above 13 skills were categorized as medium questions.

Discussion

Arikunto (2016) categorized index difficulty of all skills into 3 levels (difficult questions – easy questions). In this research, students' difficult skills in a medium level were higher than students in the easy or difficul level. It shows many English students do not have a good comprehension in reading. The students do not really acquire the skills or topics assessed in reading section of TOEFL. The fact also emphasizes that, no matter they are English students and learn English every day; it cannot guarantee that they will have a good score in TOEFL. The subjects of basic, intermediate, advanced, and extensive reading are only the obligation for English students to pass the exam and go to the next semester. At least, with these subjects, the English students are able to speak and listen in English or are able to read and write in English even though the rules are not applied well. This opinion is supported by Qarqez & Radzuwan, (2017) that state the ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Reading is the most important skill among the four language skills as it can improve the overall

language proficiency (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Krashen & Brown, 2007; Qarqez & Radzuwan, 2017).

Among 5 main topics or 13 skills assessed in reading TOEFL test, five skills were categorized as difficult skills; answer main idea questions, answer stated detail questions, answer transition questions correctly, use context to determine meaning of simple words, and determine the tone of the passage.According to mahmud (2014) are fewer basic skills, less practice, less motivation, and students' individual differences as the students problem in answering TOEFL test. It can be true because it has been more than a year for the students since their last reading subject. The students also do not practice or relearn the lessons when they have gotten the score for their reading subjects. Therefore, students forget the lessons when they are taking TOEFL test today. This also supported by the research of Qarqez & Radzuwan (2017) A total of 13% respondents agree that they have problems with ambiguous words, 9% have problems of reading aloud in the classroom, 15% have difficulties of pronunciation, 29% have troubles with new words, 32% have problems to guess the meaning, and 2% answered none of the above.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of analysis on the students' difficult skills have led into some conclusions. The analysis of the skill difficulty is all skills in reading TOEFL are medium level for students, mostly. Then, the analysis toward all items assessed also gave the information that Fisrt, in the ideas of the passage students' difficult skills was answer main idea questions. Second, directly answered questions students' difficult skills was answer stated detail questions. Third, in answer indirectly answered questions students' difficult skills was answer transition questions correctly. Fourth, vocabulary questions students' difficult skills was use context to determine meaning of simple words. Fifith, overall review questions students' difficult skills was determine the tone of the passage. Eventhough, students have learn reading TOEFL previously the result of the test show that it does not have significant impact. Therefore, English Department students not only need to learn the materials in classes but also need to exercise them outside of the classes.

It is really recommended for the English Department Students to practice more and be careful in answering the test. The students need to add reading materials and relearn the reading TOEFL materials. English lecturer need to explain the reading for TOEFL material deeply. It is because most of the topics that are hard for the students. The students might say they never learn it before, but it also has the possibility in which the students have learned it but they do not understand it well. Therefore, a deep and clear explanation will help the students in understanding the material better.
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