EFL Students’ Ability in Answering TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section

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Abstract: This study aimed at finding out the students’ ability in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section of the English Language Education Study Program of Hamzanwadi University. This study was categorized as a descriptive quantitative research. This study was conducted at the fourth semester students of Hamzanwadi University. The population of this study was 96 students from 3 classes and the sampling method was purposive sampling. The sample of this study was 32 students. The research instrument used to collect the data was reading comprehension of TOEFL. The collected data were submitted by using SPSS 22 for windows. The mean score of the test was 39.2. It was categorized into low. Based on the result, the present researcher found that the students of English Language Education Study Program of Hamzanwadi University had low ability in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section.

Keywords: TOEFL, reading comprehension, ability

1. Introduction

In all over the world, there are several of languages which used to communicate in daily life. Therefore, it needs a language which can connect them that is English. English is one of the international languages that must be mastered in this globalization competition. In English, there are four skills that must be mastered like speaking, reading, listening and writing. As some people who have studied English as foreign language know that English is not relatively easy to learn due to they have to consider the aspects of English itself those are how to speak, how to produce the word, how to write, and how to arrange the sentence.

Reading is one of important role in English. It is commonly used to get an information. It depends on the purpose of the reader. There are four purposes of reading as stated by Grabe and Stoller [1], they are a). Reading is to search for simple information. b). Reading to skim quickly. c). Reading to learn from texts. d). Reading to integrate information, write and critiques texts [2]. And yet, students of university level read something to get the knowledge and information for passing the assignment which given by the lecturer. They need reading to comprehend the materials or subject that are taught. But in reading, students sometimes find the difficulties in understanding the text they read because they lack of English Vocabulary. Automatically, they cannot catch the ideas of the text. It shows that reading cannot be separated with the text.

In line with above comprehension, Tarigan says that reading is the process in recognizing and comprehending written symbols which influenced by perceptual skill, decoding, experiences, language background, mind set and reasoning of the reader [3]. It means there are two main processes in reading action, firstly called recognizing phase in which the reader starting to realize some written symbols then the second process is the condition where the reader try further to understand those symbols, which is called comprehending phase. The two of those processes also influenced by some factors such as language background of the reader as well as her or his mind set etc.

From the statement above, Fuenzalida argues that reading implies interaction between readers and texts, a degree of knowledge of the world and determined topics, some knowledge of the target language and also the interpretation of the writer’s message which can vary from reader to reader [4].

Based on the theory above, it can be concluded that reading is the process of spelling and comprehending to get the topic of the text, the degree of knowledge of the world, the knowledge of
The students’ mastery of English is commonly seen from the result of English proficiency test that is test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). It is used to measure the academic success of a person by several institutions (Sneichder & Hutt) [6]. In some Universities, TOEFL is a standardization test for the students as a part of graduation’s requirement. At Hamzanwadi University, all students must pass the TOEFL test with a score between 370 and 450 the minimum. It is required prior to do thesis final examination.

Based on the pre observation result, the present researcher found that the Hamzanwadi students’ ability in completing the Reading Section on TOEFL test is low which could be seen from the test result which was conducted by Rumah Bahasa. Their score, after calculating all sections of TOEFL test, was under 360 point. It means that their score of reading comprehension section was around 35 point, and it was categorized low which could be seen from the classification of a group achievement index. It was because they did not have a good strategy to complete it. The strategies that they used were reading full of the text which spent the time, guessing the answer, finding main idea but it took too long to find it. Beside, some students felt bored on reading because the texts on Reading Section are full text. As the result, most of the students could not achieve a good score in TOEFL because of the difficulties of the test itself. Although the English students’ of English Language Education Program had studied reading comprehension since the first semester, it could not support their result in TOEFL. Therefore, the students should have a good strategy to answer the TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section.

There are some of relevant studies related to EFL students’ ability in answering reading comprehension section of TOEFL. The first research is from Hoang vu and Lanthi Vu (2013) entitled “Is the TOEFL Score a Reliable Indicator of International Graduate Students’ Academic Achievement in America Higher Education”. The researcher used correlational research design. The purpose of the research was to examine whether there is any significant correlation between TOEFL scores and international graduate students’ academic achievement in term of their GPA. The data were collected via a survey and analyzed through descriptive statistic in order to identify patterns of agreement and disagreement among the group of 464 international graduate students at a Midwestern public university in U.S. according to the analysis of objective data, TOEFL scores were non found to be an accurate and effective predictor of academic performance as measured by GPA. [7]

The second research was written by Seyyed Ahmad Mousavi, et.al (2014) entitled “The Effect of Test Preparation on the Test Performance the Case of the IELTS and TOEFL iBT Reading Test”. The researcher used experimental research design. The main objective of this study was to see whether preparation influences learners’ reading comprehension of IELTS and TOEFL?. This study tried to find answer(s) to the following question: Does getting a high score imply enhancement in the reading comprehension ability? 60 EFL learners were selected to take part in a preparation program in which they were instructed different techniques and strategies to deal with the reading section of TOEFL and IELTS tests. The result of this research, there was a significant effect of IELTS reading preparation on test performance while there was no such effect for the TOEFL reading preparation program. [8]

From the statement above, the researcher conducted a study to investigate the undergraduate students’ ability in completing TOEFL reading comprehension test, entitled “EFL Students’ ability in answering TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section of the English Language Education Study Program of Hamzanwadi University in the Academic Year 2018-2019”.

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2. Method
This research was categorized as descriptive quantitative research. Sugiyono states that descriptive research is a research conducted to determine the value of an independent variable, either one or more variables (independent) without comparison, or connect with other variables [9]. On this research, the quantitative data obtained in the form of figures to determine the value of its variables.

Participants
The population in this study was the fourth semester students of English Language Education study program of Hamzanwadi University in the academic year 2018-2019. It consisted of three classes: A, B, C. The class taken was IV B that consisted of 32 students. This sample was a descriptive quantitative research. It was taken through purposive sampling technique.

Data Collection
This research was non experimental with one investigated variable which was EFL students’ ability in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section. In gaining the data, a test namely reading comprehension test which was taken from Penerbit CMEDIA was given to the students. The gained data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics technique of SPSS 22 software.

In collecting the data, the present researcher took data after conducting the test. The test was given to the subject after doing the observation and the result of this research knew the ability of the students in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section.

Data Analysis
The data of this study were collected and analyzed by using descriptive statistics technique of SPSS 22 software. Descriptive statistics was used to find out the mean score and standard deviation of students’ reading comprehension test achievement.

3. Result
Referring to the data gained in the test, the result of the students in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section are that 1 student (4%) was categorized into expert, 3 students (12%) were categorized into advance, 4 students (16%) were categorized into intermediate, 16 students (64%) were categorized into low, and 1 student (4%) was categorized into very low. The mean score of the test was 39.2.

Based on the data gained of the students’ ability in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section after calculating from very low to expert, most of students were categorized into low. By this result, it can be concluded that the students of English Language Education of Hamzanwadi University were low ability on reading of TOEFL.

4. Discussion
Reading is one of skill in Language that can influence other skills. Therefore, developing other skill by knowing reading skill is crucial thing that must be known by the students. However, in Reading, the students should have skill in reading comprehension to know the context of the text. In knowing whether the students have a good quality in Reading Comprehension, it can be measured by conducting a TOEFL Test. There are some aspects in reading comprehension, finding main idea, reference, and meaning of the word. [10]

Reading test of the TOEFL test is only one small part of the test. There are actually two other skills tested that contribute to the overall score of the TOEFL score; listening and structure. However the focus of this study is reading of TOEFL test. The texts which appear on every reading test may not be known for certain, yet it is still predictable because the reading test usually consist of five reading passages. Each is followed by a number of reading comprehension and vocabulary questions. The topics are varied but are often about informational subjects that might be studied in an American
A study conducted by Iskandar (2017) about the most difficult skills in TOEFL reading comprehension section were answering implied detail question correctly, answering stated detail question correctly, the use of context to give meanings of difficult words, answering main idea question correctly, and determining meanings from word parts. Another study conducted by Chawwang (2008) showed some similarities with the present researcher that is about the problems faced by students in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section that were identifying difficult words, topic, the main idea of the passage, and lack of vocabularies. These problems made students unable to guess the meaning and to understand a text.

The present researcher found that there were other factors which affected the students’ score that were the students did not pay attention fully to the reading texts because the text were too long, they just understand a view of vocabulary, they did not have a good strategy and technique, and less of knowledge which was taught in their study.

In addition, to solve the problems, the results of the study showed that some of students agree that strategies on completing TOEFL are very important to succeed the test. From the study, it can be concluded that students should have appropriate strategies to complete TOEFL reading comprehension section.

5. Conclusion
Referring to the result of the study, some conclusion can be concluded. The fact that, from the total of 50 reading item questions with 25 students as the test taker proved that the students were low ability in answering TOEFL reading comprehension section which could be seen from the students’ score in low level that was 64 percent.

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