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READING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS IN READING SECTION OF TOEFL TEST

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the reading comprehension problems faced by the eight semester English Education Study Program students of Universitas Bengkulu in Reading Section of TOEFL test. The subject of this research is eight semester students of English Education Study Program in academic year 2018/2019 who have taken TOEFL test in Language Laboratory, FKIP, Universitas Bengkulu. The subject of this research is 70 students of 79 students. This research was used descriptive quantitative as the methodology and the data was collected by using questionnaire as an instrument that distributed via Google-form. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements which represent 5 aspects of reading comprehension problems by Wutthisingchai (2011). This research uses 4-point Likert Scale to measure students perception of reading problem, ranging from never (1 point), sometimes (2 point), often (3 point), always (4 point). The result shows that the majority of the students have problems in reading comprehension in 5 aspects. The percentage average of each aspect from highest to lowest was the reading comprehension problems related to the Reading Comprehension Process. Second problems is Motivation. Third problems related to Background Knowledge. Fourth related to Lack

Reading Strategies. The last problems related to Language Knowledge. From the results, it can be concluded that students of the eight semester at English Education Study Program still have reading comprehension problems.

Keywords: Reading comprehension problems, TOEFL Test

INTRODUCTION

As students we are supposed to master the four skills in learning English, one of them is reading. Reading is one of the English skills which are essential to be mastered by the students to get new information and knowledge. According to Brown (2006) reading is the most essential skill in the educational context as it can be the assessments for students' general language ability. Reading comprehension is one aspect of language skills that must be mastered by the student. To be able to interpret and absorb information from reading the material, students should have a good understanding ability. Reading comprehension is required in each subject because each lesson is inseparable from the act of reading. Therefore, students are required to have a good understanding of capabilities.

To measure reading comprehension ability of foreign language learner, it can be used a TOEFL test. TOEFL or Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test to measure the English ability of non-native speakers. Nowadays, TOEFL is used to get scholarships in order to continue further study in English speaking countries. TOEFL is also used to apply for a job vacancy. The reliance on TOEFL has reached such a point that most domestic universities use this standardized test as a part of graduation requirements. The authority of universities set this precondition because they believe that TOEFL is able to evaluate students' ability and skills to understand English in academic tasks (Aliponga, 2013).

English Study Program of Universitas Bengkulu has a rule for the students. The students have to take TOEFL test first in their study program before they take the research report session. They have to get at least 450 for TOEFL PBT score if they want to continue their research report session. That means the students have to pass the TOEFL standard score and if they are failed, they have to take TOEFL over and over again until they get at least 450. So, it will be a new challenge for them.

Achieving a high score for this test is not an easy task. This is evidence in the works of Samad, et al (2017). They found many students from this university failed to achieve the required score to graduate from their studies. They found that among the participants of the 1916 TOEFL test at Syiah Kuala University, only 53 students were able to achieve a TOEFL score of 450-497 or 2.77%. These results indicate that most students at Syiah Kuala University still cannot reach TOEFL requirements. Furthermore, a study conducted by Abboud and Hussein (2011) suggested that the difficulty in reading parts of the TOEFL comprehension experienced by test participants was due to their limited time of possession during the test, and lack of knowledge in aspects of reading.

There are 70 students from the eighth semester of the English Language Education Study Programs at the University of Bengkulu that have taken the TOEFL PBT test in the languages laboratory in 2018 and 2019. The first test was conducted on Saturday 8th September 2018 and the second test was on Monday 18th February 2019. Based on the data the researcher obtained from the Chief of the Language Laboratory at the University of Bengkulu. In the first test, the number of questions in the reading section was 50 questions. From 79 students, just 70 students who took the test were only 16.90% of students who answered correctly above 30 questions. 35.21% of students who have the truth answered above half of the questions. 61.97% of students have the truth below half of the number of questions. In this section, the highest score is 57, and the lowest is 30. In the second test, the number of students is 41. 8.45% of students who have the right answer above 30 questions. 85.36% who answered correctly under 30 questions. In this section, the highest values are 53 and 38 lowest values.

The results show that students find problems when doing the TOEFL test even they have received 2 courses about reading related to reading part of the TOEFL test in semesters 2 and 4. The above explanation becomes the researcher's background in proposing this research. The researcher would like to analyze reading comprehension problems faced by the Eighth English Education Study Program students in the reading section of the TOEFL test. The researcher would like the research from samad, et al (2017) about Students' Strategies Dealing with Common Difficulties in TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section, but in this study the researcher will conduct in difficult reading section of TOEFL test and use the English Education students who had been taken TOEFL test as the sample of this research.

METHOD

This research is descriptive quantitative research. The purpose of the research is to analyze the problems faced in the reading section in the TOEFL test. Gay (2005) states that “descriptive quantitative research involves collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning current status conducted either through self-reports collected through questionnaires or interviews or through observation”.

The research uses a quantitative method. The quantitative technique is a technique that uses statistical mathematical. That means the quantitative is related to numerical form such as statistics, percentages, etc. Because of the instrument that used in this study is questionnaire, the result is the numerical data. The data was on percentage. It means that the data in this research analyzed in simple quantitative techniques.

The subject in this research is the eight semester of the English department in Universitas Bengkulu. The total number of the students were 79 students from two class. The subject is the students who have taken TOEFL test in the language laboratory FKIP Universitas Bengkulu on Saturday, September 8th, 2018 and Monday, February 18th, 2019. Based on the data that the research got from the chief of Language Laboratory, the first session of TOEFL test the total were 70 students, while the second session of TOEFL test is 41 students. So, the subject of this research is 70 students who have taken TOEFL test in the Language Laboratory FKIP Universitas Bengkulu.

The instrument in this research used questionnaire. The questionnaire adopted from Wutthisingchai (2011). The questionnaire consists of 20 statements about reading problems. It consists of 6 statements about reading problems related to language knowledge, 4 statements about reading problems related to motivation, 3 statements about reading problems related to background knowledge, 3 statements about reading problems related to reading comprehension process and reading problem about the lack strategies 4 statements. Technique of collecting the data used google form and the scoring was using 4-point Likert Scale consists of never (1 point), sometimes (2 point), often (3 point), always (4 point).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher would like to present the statistical results and the data analyses in order to answer the research question about the reading comprehension problems

faced by the 8th semester English Education students of Universitas Bengkulu in 2018/2019 academic years, in Reading Section of TOEFL test.

The tables below showed the differences of English reading comprehension problems.

Table1 The Result of Problem related to Language Knowledge

No	Problems	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
1.	I don't know the vocabulary and idiomatic usage so I cannot understand what I'm reading.	11	86	42	8	147
2.	I don't know sentence structures so I cannot understand what I'm reading.	21	80	21	8	130
3.	I cannot sequence and connect ideas in reading text because I don't know the organization.	12	86	39	8	145
4.	My weak grammar causes misinterpretation of the reading text.	7	60	84	20	171
5.	I'm not quite sure whether I know the meaning of some difficult words.	5	36	138	4	183
6.	I often have a problem with the technical term when I read academic articles or text.	3	30	144	16	193
Mean		161.5				

Table 2 The Result of Problem related to Motivation

No	Statements	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
7.	I don't like reading books even reading in my native language.	15	62	120	16	213

8.	I think the reading problems come from the instructions and materials which affect my interest in reading.	2	50	114	20	186
9.	When the text is too difficult, boring, and uninteresting, I fail to read.	3	32	123	40	198
10.	When I have no interest in the topic discussed in a reading material, I find it even more difficult.	2	20	147	21	190
Mean		196.7				

Table 3 The Result of Problem related to Background Knowledge

No	Statements	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
11.	When I read a passage, I tend to connect its content with my own previous knowledge related to the topic, and this is sometimes different from what the author intended in the passage.	2	32	129	27	190
12.	Some culture-loaded words and phrases will mislead my comprehension of a reading material.	2	30	153	4	189
13.	Sometimes even if I know every word in a passage, I still find difficulty in understanding the whole passage and grasping its central idea because of my limited background knowledge.	8	34	114	21	177
Mean		185.3				

Table 4 The Result of Problem related to Reading Comprehension Process

No	Statements	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
14.	I thought that I understood the passage quite well, but it turned out that I gave wrong answers to several comprehension questions after it.	7	32	120	28	187
15.	I cannot concentrate until the end of the passage. When reading a long and boring passage, I often forget the former part when I read the latter part.	1	38	36	152	227
16.	After reading a passage once, I seem to forget what I have already read, and have to move backward and reread it.	2	38	123	16	179
Mean		197.6				

Table 5 The Result of Problem related to the Lack of Reading Strategies

No	Statements	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
17.	I must read every single word otherwise, I'm afraid I might miss an important point which will affect my comprehension of the whole texts.	6	46	96	36	184
18.	I always look up the meanings of unknown words in my dictionary every time I have problem with difficult vocabulary.	3	38	102	56	199
19.	When I read, I read aloud to help me remember well.	11	46	78	40	175
20.	When I read, I cannot predict	8	68	72	16	164

	what will come next.					
Mean		180.5				

The majority of the eighth semester of English Education Study Program students often find problems in reading comprehension related to Reading Comprehension Process (197.6 point). Majority of the students were agreed that “they cannot concentrate themselves until the end of passage. When reading a long and boring passage, they often forget the former part when they read the latter part” are their biggest problems.

The second problems encountered by the Eighth semester English Education Study Program students when doing TOEFL test was reading problems related to Motivation (196.7 point). They had problems because when they have no interest in the topic discussed in a reading material, they find it even more difficult, and also when the texts is too difficult, boring, and uninteresting, they fail to read.

The third problems that faced by the student when doing TOEFL test was reading problems related to Background Knowledge that faced by the Eighth semester English Education Study Program students. The problem related to “connect its content with my own previous knowledge related to the topic, some culture loaded words and phrases will mislead comprehension of a reading material, and also limited background knowledge.”

The next aspect that made the students difficult to comprehend the reading was the Lack of Reading Strategies (180.5 point). They had problems because “they always look up the meanings of unknown words in their dictionary every time they have problem with difficult vocabulary”.

The last aspect is Language Knowledge that faced by the Eighth semester English Education Study Program students, the students often felt (161.5 point). The problems related to the Language Knowledge such as they often have problem with technical term, grammar, sentences structure, vocabulary and idiomatic usage when their read the academic articles or text.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the 4-point Likert Scale of each aspect from highest to lowest was the reading comprehension problems related to the Reading Comprehension Process, related to the Motivation, related to Background Knowledge, related

to Lack Reading Strategies, and the last related to Language Knowledge. It can be implied that the students have problems in 5 aspects.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this research show the majority of the eight semester English Education Study Program Students have problems in reading comprehension when doing TOEFL test. The first is reading problems related to Reading Comprehension Process. Such as while looking at the print text, readers are decoding it, deciding what it means, how parts relate to each other, or to things they know, predicting what to come next, and expecting which purpose to read for. Second, it is related to Motivation. They find difficult because when they have no interest in the topic discussed in a reading material, they find it even more difficult. Moreover, if readers are not interested in the topic they are reading, they may fail to read. Third, it is related to Background Knowledge. It means that the students lack of background knowledge as the students prior knowledge or knowledge of the world including culture knowledge. Fourth, it is related to the Lack of Reading Strategies. It is how readers perceive or comprehend a text, how they can process to read, and do what they do when reading comprehension become difficult. Fifth is related to the Language Knowledge as the next problems faced by the students that related to vocabulary and idiomatic usage, also related to grammar, meaning of some difficult word, last related to technical term when the students read articles or text.

The lecture can share knowledge for students about reading comprehension, so it can be minimize the problems in reading comprehension when doing TOEFL test. For the students, this research can be a reference for students to know their problems in reading comprehension. And also students can find solutions to their problems to succeed the reading section of the TOEFL test.

For the further researcher, it is expected that they can investigate a research with another skill about TOEFL test and also this research can be used as a reference to conduct a research with the same topic. For the further researcher should not use an online questionnaire, because we do not know whether participants correctly understand the meaning of the statements or we can change the questionnaire with Indonesian language.

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