

AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN TOEFL READING SECTION AT THE FOURTH SEMESTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at analyzing the students' difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section at the Fourth Semester of English Education Department 2017 at UIN Alauddin Makassar. The population of this research was the fourth semester students of English Education Department 2017 at UIN Alauddin Makassar. The sampling technique used was total sampling. The instruments were test and questionnaire. The finding of this research showed that skill 3 (Answer stated detailed questions), skill 6 (Answer implied detail questions), skill 7 (Answer transition questions), skill 8 (Find definitions from structural clues), skill 11 (Use context to determine meanings of simple words), skill 12 (Determine where specific information is found), skill 13 (Determine the tone, purpose, or course) were difficult to be answered by the students in the TOEFL Reading Section. While skills considered fair were skill 1 (Answer the main idea), skill 2 (Recognize organization of ideas), skill 4 (Find "unstated" details), skill 5 (Answer implied detail questions), skill 9 (Determine meanings from words parts) and skill 10 (Use context to determine the meanings of difficult words). It also found that the students responded "Agree" that skill 2, skill 3, skill 4, skill 5, skill 6, skill 7, skill 12, skill 13 were difficult skills. The students responded disagree that skill 1, skill 8, skill 9, skill 10, skill 11 were not difficult skills based the data found in the questionnaire. It indicated that there were several difficulties was encountered by students when answered the TOEFL Reading Section.

Keyword: Difficulties in TOEFL, TOEFL, TOEFL Reading Section

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of language skills which is very important to be learnt by the students. Through reading, the students can improve their own language and experience. Reading purposes for language acquisition, communication, sharing information and ideas. The reader will get information and ideas which they need to know. Moreover, they will be able to know what they do not know before.

By reading, people will understand the purpose of communication and comprehend the

meaning from others in written test. Reading is a skill which requires interactive process in comprehending the meaning in order to get information or ideas from written text. Understanding the meaning of the reading skill including the ability in reading from many experts who have different points of view is definitely important for the teacher of reading. Reading is the one of four language skills. It is the first direct communication of the students to acquire their language development. After years of listening and speaking, the students further goes to school where for the first time they learn to read before writing (G.leech in Ba'dulu 2004).

Ahmad and Nur (2017) said that reading is a process in which done by the reader to get message or information from the writer through printed media. It is very complex process in recognizing and comprehending written symbols which influenced by perceptual skill, decoding, experiences, language background, mind set and reasoning of the reader.

In reading, there are many kinds of reading text, such as narrative, recount, report, descriptive, explanation, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, procedure, discussion news item and so forth. According to Brown (2004) there are three types of reading they are academic reading, Job-Related reading, and personal reading. One of these three types of reading is academic reading which is especially for people who are in the world of education. Academic reading is found in TOEFL to assess the ability of a person's English language. According to Putra (2017: 774)

TOEFL is a standardized test to measure non-native speakers of English which was introduced in 1960. The first type of TOEFL is the paper test which has four sections: listening, structure, writing, and reading.

TOEFL Reading is designed to test your ability to comprehend academic reading material. Academic means the passages that what you would find in a textbook at university. According to Barron (2005) The TOEFL reading Section is test your ability to understand written English as it presented in textbook and other academic materials. The students have to know and understand the meaning of the test.

Difficulties in reading is one of the problems that the students find. There are several reasons why today students have a very low interest in reading. Several of them, such as the emergence of boredom when the students read a very long text which is caused by the lack of reading interest. The lack of vocabulary is also a problem for the students, especially in translating English words into *Bahasa*, the students often stop reading because when they translate the words they do not know the test. The next problem is when the students read the

students always think about reading activity take too much time, to finish the test is one of the problems in TOEFL reading section.

In the TOEFL test there are several components of English language. They are; Listening, Reading, Structure, and Writing. Especially in TOEFL reading Section, there are several problems that can be difficult for the students and will take time to solve it.

This research aimed to know reading difficulties in Test of English Foreign Language (TOEFL) which has become a very common problem found among students of English education, especially in the fourth semester. There are several problems that appear in the teaching and learning English, such as limited understanding on vocabulary, also motivation and interest of the students to learn English are still low (Ahmad and Nur 2017).

The students get low score in reading because they can not answer the text well. Many difficult vocabularies and difficult to understand the idea behind the text so, that is why they have to be given a good mainstay method to overcome it (Ahmad and Nur 2017).

Putra et al (2017) found that reading comprehension is the most difficult section of the PBT TOEFL. The respondents had completed all the English language skill training at the university, i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The test comprises 50 multiple choice questions to be completed in 55 minutes. The data showed that vocabularies was difficult sub- skills with 50% percentage answered correct, the second was sub-skill inference with 52% percentages correct. Then sub-skill stated details with a presentation of 60% percentages answering correctly and sub-skill unstated details with percentage 62% who answered correctly. And main ideas with 65% who answered correctly and the last one was sub-skill reference with 80% correct answer. This research has found that the most difficult sub-skill were vocabulary and inference.

Hidayati (2018) explained that the difficulties faced by the students are difficulty in answering main idea questions (74%), making inferences questions (56%), and locating reference questions (71%). Therefore, the most difficult aspect faced by the first grade students is reading for getting main idea with (74%). As the result, most of the students had difficulty in achieving the standard grade for reading comprehension test.

Nurhayati & Mambarasi (2016) found that for reading comprehension, many of students read the questions first, and then read the text related to the questions. Besides, most of them employed top down strategies in understanding the text.

Antoni (2004) found that most of the students do not have good preparation in completing the test. It can be shown from the result of the analysis where most of students complete their TOEFL test without having good strategy and having English skills. In reading section, students get difficulties to understand the meaning of written English. They also could not catch the all idea from the passages given. The problem happened because they have limited of

vocabularies and some phrases. Moreover, the time available for the section is limited for them.

Those researchers' found that the TOEFL reading section test is one of the most difficult tests, then supported by other researchers who were related to reading. In addition, previous researchers explained the weaknesses of reading and reading strategies. From several explanations from previous researchers, this research has similarities and differences in each. The equation is discussing about the TOEFL and Reading. The difference from previous research is that there was no previous study about analyzing reading difficulties in the TOEFL section at the fourth Semester at UIN Alauddin Makassar.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used the quantitative descriptive as the method for this research. Descriptive quantitative research is scientific investigation which explains phenomena by using numbers.

Quantitative descriptive is an approach whose research results are interpreted in words or sentences. This research described the students' difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section at the Fourth Semester in English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar, through numerical data and explanation.

Then, to find which Skills were difficult for students, the researcher divided the question items. Finally, the researcher also used the measurement of percentage to know the percent of difficult item. It used the following formula as Sudijono (2001) suggested:

a. Data Analysis Test

The classification of value difficulty was adopted from Arikunto (1998) Interval classification.

Interval	Classification
0-30	Easy
31-70	Fair
71-100	Difficult

Then, to find which Skills were difficult for students, the researcher divided the question items. Finally, the researcher also used the measurement of percentage to know the percent of difficult item. The researcher also measured the average percentages of incorrect answer by using measurement of the mean.

b. Data Analysis Questionnaire

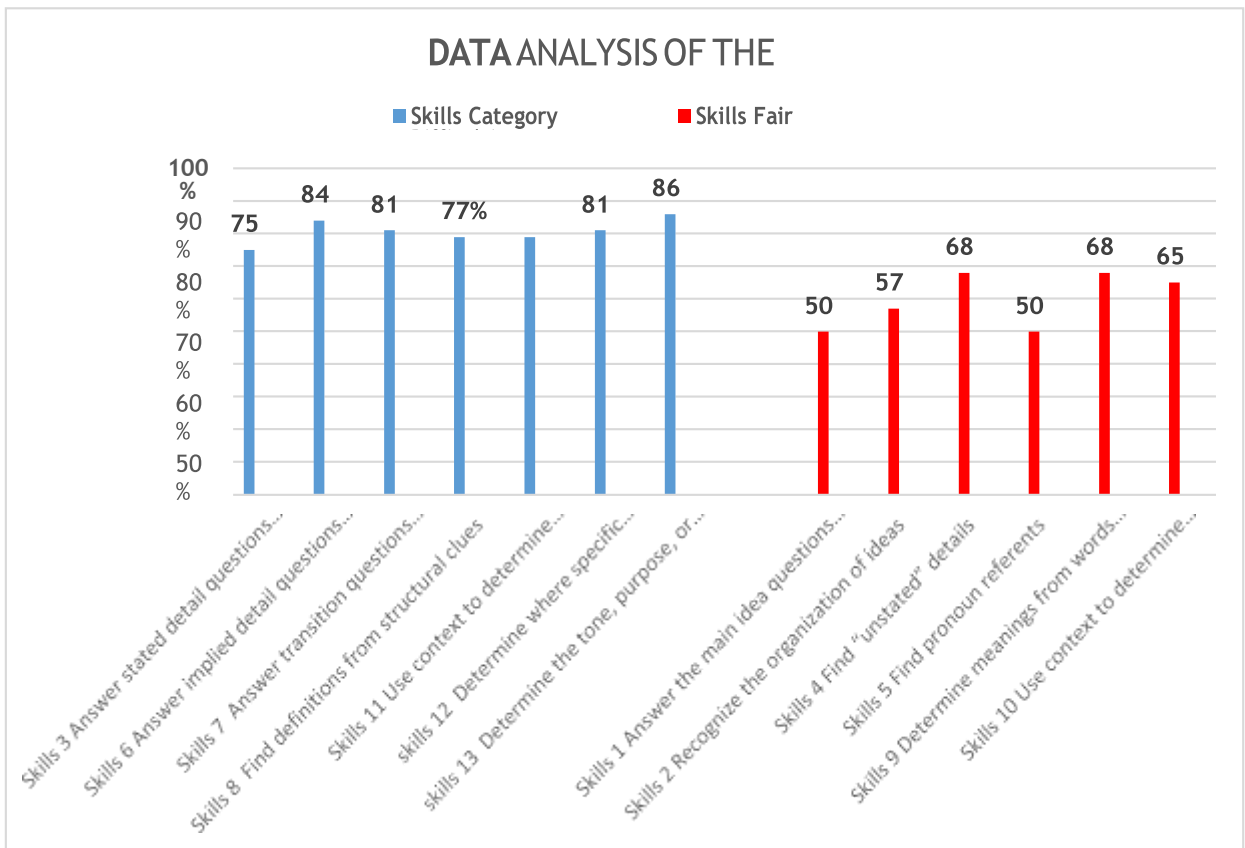
The data analysis technique used in this study was descriptive quantitatively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Finding of the research conducted by the researcher focused in the difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section. The findings of the research were based on the results of data analysis.

Analysis of the test

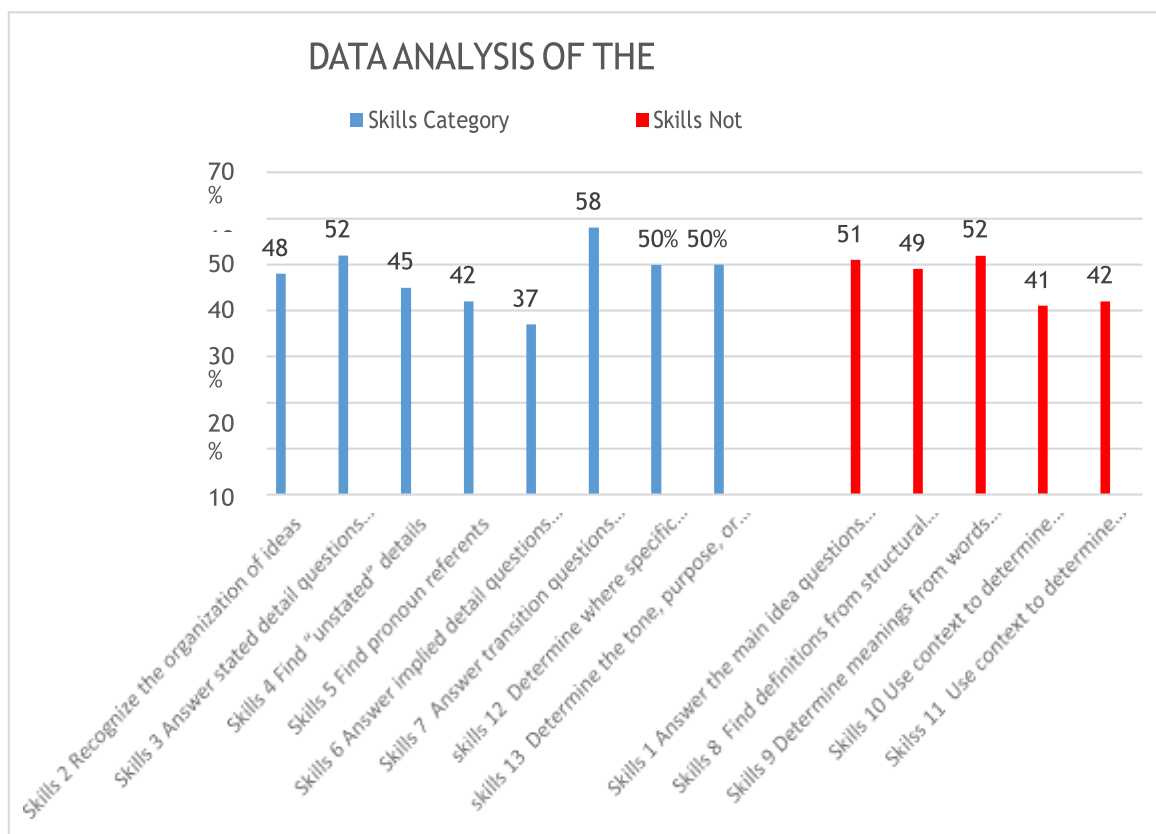


Based on difficult percentage calculations, the researcher got 50% for the skill 1 (answering the main idea). This meant that the students was fair category in answering the main idea questions. For skill 2 (Recognizing the organization of ideas). It meant that skill was categorized fair for students in recognizing the organization of ideas. Found that difficult items were 75% for this skill 3 (Answering correctly stated detailed questions). This meant that skill 3 categorized difficult for the students in answering stated detailed questions. It found that the difficult item was 68% for the skill 4 (Finding “unstated” details). It meant that skill 4 categorized fair for students in answering finding “unstated” details. Based on the calculation of percentage of difficulties, it found that the difficult item was 50% for the skills 5 (Find Pronoun Referents). It meant that skill 5 categorized fair for students in answering skills 5.

It found that the difficult item was 84% for the skills 6 (Answering implied detail questions). It meant that skill 6 was categorized difficult for students in answering implied detail questions correctly. Based on the calculation of percentage of difficulties, it found that the difficult item 81% percentage for this skill 7 (Answering transition questions). It meant that skill 7 was categorized difficult for students in answering transition questions. It found that the difficult item 77% for this skill 8 (Finding definitions from structural clues). It meant that skill 8 categorized difficult for students in answering skill 8. Based on difficulties percentage calculations, it was found that difficult items was 68% for this skill 9 (Determining meanings from words parts). This meant that skill 9 categorized fair for students in answering skill 9. Based on difficulties percentage calculation, it was found that difficult items was 66% for the skill 10 (using context to determine meanings of difficult words). It meant the skill 10 was categorized fair for students in the answering skill 10.

Based on the calculation of percentage of difficulties, it found that the difficult item 79% for the skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words). It meant that skill 11 was difficult for students. Based on the calculation of percentage difficulties, it found that the difficult item 81% for skill 12 (Determining where specific information is found). It meant that skill 12 was difficult category for students. There are difficulties encountered by the fourth semester students in answering TOEFL Reading Section when doing a test those include skill 13 (Determining the tone, purpose, or course) was the most difficult to answer.

Analysis of the Questionnaire



Based on the data obtained skill 1 (Answering main Idea) not difficult category with highest (51%) who said “Disagree”. These skill 2 (Recognizing the Organization of Ideas). And the result from the chart above describe that recognizing the organization of ideas was difficult to answer with highest percentage 48% who said “Agree”. In the skill 3 (Answering Stated detail question) from the result above chart describing that skill 3 Answering stated details question correctly was difficult to answer with highest presentation 52% answered “Agree” that skill 3 was difficult category. In skill 4 and from the result the chart described that skill 4 (Finding "Unstated" Details) was difficult to answer with a highest presentation 45% who answered “Agree” And from the result of the chart described if the skill 5 (Finding Pronoun Referents) was difficult to answer with highest presentation 42% who answered “Agree”.

In skill 6 the results from the chart described that skill 6 (Answering Implied Detail Question) was difficult to answer with highest presentation 37% who said “Agree”. The results from the chart above described that answering skill 7 (Answering transition questions) was difficult to answer with the highest presentation 58%. The result from the chart skill 8 (Finding definition from structural clues) was not difficult to answer with the highest presentation 49% who answered “Disagree” The results from the chart above described if the skill 9 (Determining Meanings from Words Parts) was not difficult to answer with the highest presentation 52%

who answered “Disagree” The result from the above chart described if the skill 10 (Using Context to determine meanings of difficult words) was not difficult to answer with the highest presentation 41% who answered “Disagree”.

The results of the chart described if the skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words) was not difficult to answer with the highest Presentation 42% who answered “Disagree” The results from the chart above described if the skill 12 (Determining where Specific Information is found) was difficult to answer with the highest Presentation 50% who answered “Agree”. The results of the chart above described if the skill 13 (Determining the Tone, purpose, or course) was difficult to answer with the highest Presentation 50% who answered “Agree”.

Discussion

Based on the results described in the findings, the researcher found that there were some difficulties were encountered by students who did the TOEFL test specifically for the TOEFL Reading Section. There were total 13 skills described. By using a test and questionnaire as a research instruments the results showed that there were skills which was categorized difficult and fair to answer. These results were obtained through 2 instruments used in this research, namely test and questionnaire. Based on data analysis, students had several difficulties in answering the TOEFL Reading Section questions. The findings data indicated for the results of the instrument test given to students, showed that skill 3 (Answering stated detailed questions) was 75%, skill 6 (Answering implied detail questions) was 84%, skill 7 (Answering transition questions) was 81%, skill 8 (Finding definitions from structural clues) was 77%, skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words) was 79%, skill 12 (Determining where specific information is found) was 81%, skill 13 (Determining the tone, purpose, or course) was 86%. Those skills were categorized difficult by the students to answer in the TOEFL Reading Section. Based on the data obtained, the skills that were considered fair to be answered by students in the TOEFL Reading Section included skill 1 (Answering the main idea) was 50%, skill 2 (Recognizing organization of ideas) was 57%, skill 4 (Finding "unstated" details) was 68%, skill 5 (Answering implied detail questions correctly) was 50%, skill 9 (Determining meanings from words parts) was 68%. Skill 10 (Using context to determine the meanings of difficult words) was 65%. Therefore, the researcher did not find skills which included in easy category.

The results obtained by using questionnaire described that the students answered “Agree” of the skill 2 (Recognizing the organization of ideas) was 48%, skill 3 (Answering stated detail

questions) was 52%, skill 4 (Finding “unstated” details) was 45 %, skill 5 (Finding pronoun referents) was 42%, skill 6 (Answering questions detail questions) was 37%, skill 7 (Answering transition questions) was 58%, skill 12 (Determining where specific information is found) was 50%, skill 13 (Determines the tone, purpose, or course) was 50% category “Difficult”. While the students responded “Disagree” that skill 1 (Answering the main idea) was 51%, skill 8 (Finding definitions from structural clues) was 49%, skill 9 (Determining meanings from words parts) was 52%, skill 10 (Using context to determine meanings of difficult words) was 41%, skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words) was 42% were not difficult.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the finding and discussion in the last chapter, the researcher make the conclusion of the Students’ Difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section at the Fourth Semester of UIN Alauddin Makassar. There are difficulties encountered by the fourth semester students in answering TOEFL Reading Section when doing a test those include skill 13 (Determining the tone, purpose, or course) is the most difficult, skill (Answering implied detail questions), skill 12 (Determining where specific information is found), skill 7 (Answering definitions from structural clues), skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words), skill 8 (Finding definitions from structural clues), skill 3 (Answering stated detail questions). Skill fair category include skill 4 (Finding “Unstated” details), skill 9 (Determining meaning from words parts) skill 10 (Using context to determine of difficult words), skill 2 (Recognizing the organization of ideas), skill 5 (Finding pronoun referents) skill 1 (Answering the main idea).

The following skills are considered difficult respectively by the students: skill (Answering transition questions correctly), skill 3 (Answering stated detail questions), skill 12 Determining where specific information is found), skill 13 (Determining the tone, purpose, or course), skill 2 (Recognizing the organization of ideas), skill 4 (Finding “Unstated” details), skill 5 (Finding pronoun referents), skill 6 (Answering implied detail questions) were difficult skills. Base on the data found in the questionnaire that students responded “Disagree” skill 9 (Determining meaning from words parts), skill 1 (Answering the main idea), skill 8 (Finding from structural clues), skill 11 (Using context to determine meanings of simple words), skill 10 (Using context to determine of difficult words) were not difficult skills based the data found in the questionnaire.

The implication of the research is to find out the difficulties in TOEFL Reading Section

when students of English Education Department 2017 worked on the test when students find the difficulties in the TOEFL Reading Section automatically the students learn to overcome those difficulties. In addition, this research also became a reference for all students when working on the TOEFL, especially the TOEFL Reading Section.

Suggestion

The researcher gives a feedback from the research results prior to taking the TOEFL test such as follow:

1. Preparing your-self before attending the test.
2. Understanding the tips and tricks of each skill to facilitate answering questions.
3. Reading and paying attention to both the questions given in answering the reading questions.
4. Using reading and skimming techniques to save time when testing.

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