

**A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ABILITY IN UNDERSTANDING
TOEFL'S READING SECTION AT TOEFL PREPARATION
CLASS OF " UNIVERSITAS SUMATERA BARAT"**

ASIS WARNI¹, ALLEN CHRISTY JUFRY²

Universitas Sumatera Baray¹, Sekolah Tinggi Teknologi Industri Padang²
iniasis@unisbar.ac.id¹, Allenchristy086@gmail.com²

Abstract: The research is aimed to figure out the students' ability in understanding TOEFL's reading section at TOEFL Preparation class of "Universitas Sumatera Barat". The descriptive method and total sampling technique are employed in this research as methodology of the research and the way in set up the sample. There are 33 students of the TOEFL preparation class and all of them are taken as the sample. Reading test is used as the instrument of the study. The result of data from the students' ability in understanding TOEFL's reading section are as the following: The easiest question for the learners is stated detail question about 28 students or 85% can answer the questions. The next, guessing easy word from context, 27 learners or 82% had the right answers. In addition, pronoun, tone, purpose and course are also easy questions for the students, 26 students or 79% overcome the question correctly. The most difficult problems or questions for the learner are about definition from context clues, 22 students or 67% can answer that questions, the implied detail question, only 21 students or 64% answered it correctly. Next, organization of idea, 20 learners or 61% got the right answers.

Keywords: Ability, Reading, TOEFL.

A. Introduction

Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL is used to know someone's English language skill or ability. The test is widely used in measuring the English competencies for university level and the result will show someone's proficiency in English through the scoring procedures. In many countries, the test is commonly used in university as one of the requirements to graduate or finish the study. In addition, the certificate of TOEFL is also needed by students to apply for a job and to continue their study to the next level of education after graduating. For instance, if the students want to apply for postgraduate program, they should prepared the TOEFL certificate with the suitable scores based on the requirement given by the university. Abraham (1990) states that TOEFL' scores are required in more than four thousands universities and colleges around the world.

Similarly, the same situation also happen when applying for a certain job because some employees asked for TOEFL certificates with a standart score for the positions they are offered. Responding to the important of the TOEFL itself, in university level, the students are given TOEFL preparation class as the aid in helping them to prepare themselves appropriately before taking the real TOEFL test. This class also administered by 'Universitas Sumatera Barat', the university provides the students with the TOEFL preparation class that is integrated on the syllabus and curriculum of each department especially on graduate program. The class available at the last year of the program or before the student taking the thesis. The TOEFL Preparation class has a purpose to prepare the students and make them ready to take the test and get a good or high score of TOEFL.

For medical faculty especially nursing department of 'Universitas Sumatera Barat', TOEFL preparation class is given on the fourth year or seventh semester. The class consist of fourteen meetings that focused on materials about TOEFL's skills. One of them is reading skills. The students are given reading techniques and strategies to help them in answering the TOEFL reading section. Through the knowledge and the strategy, the students are expected have had enough preparation to answer all the questions properly on the TOEFL test. However, the fact and the condition showed that there are still many students do not able to overcome and have enough score in TOEFL. Some of them, get problems in reading section

because they are unable to complete the test of the reading in the given time available on the test.

Based on this problem, the researchers are interested to analyze the students' ability in understanding the reading section at the TOEFL preparation class of Universitas Sumatera Barat. The study was conducted at the fourth years students' of Nursing Department on the academic year of 2023-2024. The students are on their seventh semester of their studies so that the TOEFL preparation class is given to them as preparation to take the TOEFL test before graduating or finishing their studies.

B. Research Method

The study applied the descriptive design as the method of the research. This method used to analyze a phenomenon and collect the data in order to answer the research questions and figures out the characteristic of the study (Gay and Peter, 2000). By using this type of research, the researchers intended to find out the ability of the students to understand the reading materials at TOEFL preparation class of "Universitas Sumatera Barat". The population of the study was the seventh semesters' students of Nursing English Class that administered on the TOEFL preparation class on the academic year of 2023-2024.

The sampling technique used in this research was total sampling technique where all the students of the class are taken as the samples. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) write that total sampling technique directly included all of the members of population to be the sample of the study. The total members of the TOEFL Preparation class is 33 students and all of them are participated as the samples of the research to find out their abilities in understanding of TOEFL's reading materials.

The data collection of the test is gotten from the reading test. The students are taken reading test about the reading section of the TOEFL. The test conducted on the November 27th, 2023. Then, the result of the tests are scored and classified by using the formula suggest by Arikunto (2022).

$$P = M/N \times 100\% \quad \text{Where :}$$

P = Percentage.

M = The student' score

N = The total score of the test.

After scoring the students' answers, the result are classified based on the distribution of the reading section proposed by Phillip (2001). This step is conducted to find out the ability of the students to understand the reading section of the TOEFL.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

The Research Finding

The finding of the test showed the classification of the students' test result about the reading materials of TOEFL. The total population of the class were 33 students and all of them have taken the reading test on November 27th, 2023. The reading materials were gotten from the prediction of TOEFL questions or TOEFL like materials. The distribution of questions on the reading section are based on the definition suggest by Phillips (2001). The classification of students' answered can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: The distribution of the students' answer on the reading test.

No.	The type of questions	Students' correct answered	Students' wrong answered
1.	Main idea	24	11
2.	Organization of idea	20	13
3.	Stated Detail Question	28	5
4.	Unstated Detail Question	18	15
5.	Pronoun	26	7
6.	Implied Detail Question	21	12
7.	Transition Question	17	16

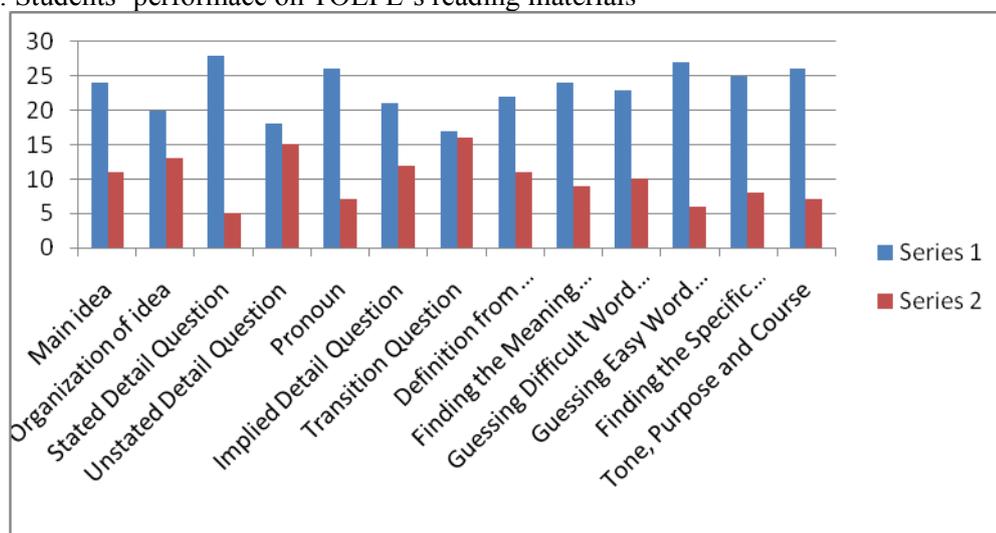
8.	Definition from Structure Clues	22	11
9.	Finding the Meaning from Word Parts	24	9
10.	Guessing Difficult Word from Context	23	10
11.	Guessing Easy Word from Context	27	6
12.	Finding the Specific Information	25	8
13.	Tone, Purpose and Course	26	7

Correspond to the table, the most difficult questions for the students is about transition questions, only 17 students can answer correctly and the rest of them or about 16 students cannot answer it. The next difficult question is about unstated detailed questions, merely about 18 students got the right answer and 15 of them cannot answer it correctly. Then, the organization of idea also a difficult question for the students, only 20 students answered it correctly while 13 students cannot.

The next difficult questions for the students are related to find out implied detail questions, only 21 students had the right answers and 12 of them answered incorrectly. The following is the questions about getting definition from stucture clues, 22 students got correct answer and 11 of them answered incorectly. The last one is guessing difficult words from context clues, 23 students had done it succesfully but 10 of them cannot.

On contrary to the previous data, the students showed their strenght on some aspect of the reading and can answer the questions easily. The first question is stated detail questions, 28 students can manage the questions and only 5 of them cannot answered it correctly. The second one is guessing easy word from context, 27 students answered the question correctly and only 6 of them cannot find the right answers. Lastly, questions about pronoun, tone, purpose and course, the number of students that can answer correctly are 26 students and 7 of them choose the wrong answer. The distribution of the students' performance on reading materials of TOEFL can be seen on the following graph.

Chart 1: Students' performace on TOEFL's reading materials

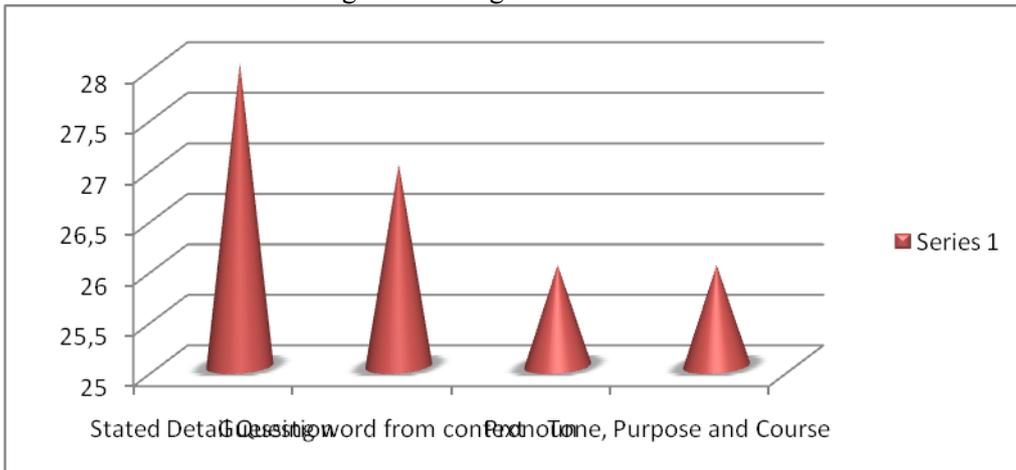


The Discussion

The percentage of students' ability on reading section of TOEFL can be stated as the following:

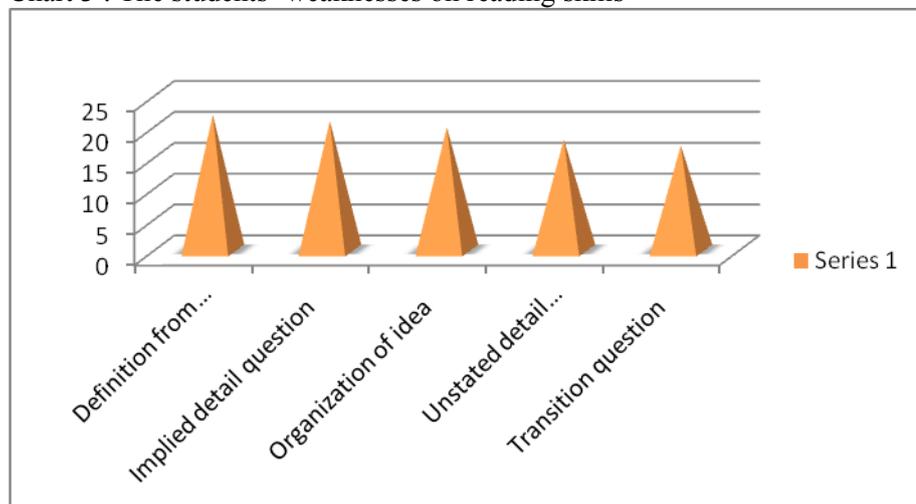
1. The top of students' strenght abilities or performances are about answering reading on the questions related to stated detail questions, 85% or 28 students can answer it correctly. Guessing easy word from context become the second familiar questions for the learners, 27 students or 82% able to answer the questions and the third postion is taken by pronoun, tone, purpose and course for all of the questions on that topics, it can be answered by 26 students or about 79% of the total class. The strenght performance of the students are shown on the following chart.

Chart 2 : The students' strength on reading skills



2. The next questions are finding specific information, 25 students or 76% of the sample overcome the questions easily. Then, the main idea and finding the meaning from word parts get the same position, 24 students or 73% of them can answer the questions. Guessing difficult word from context is the next question that can be answered by the learners, 23 students or 70% them answered it correctly.
3. The rest of the questions are the students' weaknesses, they are definition from structure clues only 22 students or 67% can answer it. Followed by the implied detail question, 21 learners or 64% able to complete the questions. Then, the organization of idea, 20 pupils or 61% got the right answer. Next the unstated detail question, 18 students or 55% of them answered it correctly. The last one is transition question only 17 learner or 52% of them got the right answered. The following chart is the weaknesses of the students ability on reading skills.

Chart 3 : The students' weaknesses on reading skills



In short, the students ability in answering TOEFL reading section is concluded as the following. The easiest question for the learners is stated detail question about 28 students or 85% can answer the questions. The next, guessing easy word from context, 27 learners or 82% had the right answers. In addition, pronoun, tone, purpose and course are also easy questions for the students, 26 students or 79% overcome the question correctly. The most difficult problems or questions for the learner are about definition from context clues, 22 students or 67% can answer that questions, the implied detail question, only 21 students or 64% answered it correctly. Next, organization of idea, 20 learners or 61% got the right answers.

The obvious result followed by unstated detail question just 18 students or 55% able to answer the questions. The last one is the most difficult question for students that is transition

question, just 17 students or 52% understand and able to answer it correctly. From this conclusion, it can be sum up that the students should improve their abilities in answering reading section of TOEFL especially practice more about the difficult section such as transition, unstated detail, organization of idea and implied detail questions.

References

- Abraham, P. F. (1990). The reading proficiency of non-native English speaking applicants to American undergraduate education: How is it assessed? How should it be assessed? Unpublished manuscript, Harvard University School of Education. Cambridge, MA.
- Arikunto, S. (2002). Metodologi Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Proposal. Jakarta: PT. Rineka.
- Airasian, Peter and L. R. Gay. (2000). Education Research: Competence for analysis an application (6thed.). New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Enright, M. et al. (2000). TOEFL reading framework:a working paper. TOEFL monograf series. NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Phillips, Deborah. (2001). *Longman complete course for the TOEFL test*. Addison Wesley Longman Inc.
- Kartawijaya, S. 2017. Analysis of The Students' Reading Comprehension In Comprehending Descriptive Text. *Jurnal Curricula*, 2(3), 80-87.
- Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. (2013) *Research Methods for Business A Skill-Building Approach*. 6th Edition, Wiley, New York.
- Singhal, M. (2001). Reading proficiency, reading strategies, metacognitive awareness and L2 readers. *The Reading Matrix*, 1(1), 8.