

Chapter One

Introduction

This introduction highlights the description of the study. There are some sub chapters that are covered in this part. The background of the research points out reasons and problems why the researcher is interested to focus on this study. The identification and limitation of the study concern on listing limitation that are going to be investigated on the study. Meanwhile, formulation and purpose of the study describe the specific objects that are going to be researched. The significance of the study presents the benefits of this research toward particular people. The last, outline of the study shows the writing organization of each chapter.

Background of the Study

Having high score is a final target of every test taker of TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, because the score is usually used as school requirement. "TOEFL is used by universities in North America to screen their foreign student application" (Forster & Karn , 1998, p. 3). The design of the test forces its test takers to have good preparation before taking the test. Thus, TOEFL has been really a demanding test for the test takers.

The type of TOEFL which is discussed in this research is TOEFL PBT (Paper Based Test). The test takers are given text books containing questions and a answer sheet used to record the test takers' responses (ETS, 2006). The reason why TOEFL

PBT is chosen to be researched by the researcher is because the English Education Department of UMY, as the research setting, has TOEFL PBT program test which is conducted every year. Besides, the TOEFL PBT is still used widely by many people although the new TOEFL test, the iBT (internet Based Test), has been launched. It is because the TOEFL PBT test is still widely accepted as a supporting requirement by institutions such as for study and job requirement.

TOEFL PBT measures the test takers ability in three sections: listening, structure and written expression, as well as reading. In specific, Forster and Karn (1998, p. 4) citing from (ETS, 1997) stated the purpose of TOEFL PBT as follows:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) PBT is to evaluate the English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. The test was initially developed by ETS, Educational Testing Service, to measure the English proficiency of international students wishing to study at colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, and this continues to be its primary function. However, a number of academic institutions in other countries, as well as certain independent organizations, agencies, and foreign governments, have also found the test scores useful (p.7)

The TOEFL PBT test starts with the listening section. The purpose of listening section is to “measure ability to understand English as it is spoken in North America” (ETS, 2006 , p. 4). It tests the skills of dialogue, conversation, and long talk. Each part of the listening skill asks the test takers to focus on WH-Questions,

negative sentences, contrary meanings, and idiomatic language (Phillips, 2004). The structure and written expression is the second section of PBT TOEFL. “It measures ability to recognize the language that is appropriate for standard written English” (ETS, 2006 , p. 4). Basically structure and written expression measures the test takers’ ability in identifying grammatical use such as subject-verb agreement, sentences with one or multiple clauses, parallel structure, and etc. In addition, the reading section is intended to measure the test takers’ reading comprehension (Phillips, 2004). There are six main skills tested on the reading of TOEFL PBT. The strategies are identifying main ideas, answering details and unstated detail question, identifying implied and vocabulary question, as well as recognizing where questions. The total time needed in TOEFL PBT test is roughly two and a half hours, but it usually takes three and a half hour including permitting the test takers to come in to the test room, allowing them to identify the information on the answer sheet, and distributing as well as collecting the test materials (ETS, 2008).

From three sections tested in the TOEFL PBT, reading section becomes a part which has high difficulty degree as it asks the test takers to understand the reading text. Assiri (2000) on his research stated that Arabian English learners point out that reading section of TOEFL PBT is the most challenging compared to other sections. Cohen and Upton (2007) stated that there are three perspectives in understanding a reading text: task perspective, the processing perspective, and reader purpose perspective. In addition, they mention that to understand the reading comprehension,

it needs strategies that basically consist of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. This shows that reading strategies play a big part in achieving general understanding of the text. This statement is also similar to Cohen and Upton (2006) stating that the reading section of TOEFL PBT definitely requires its test takers to have reading strategies in order to obtain the general ideas of the text.

One of the reasons why reading section of TOEFL PBT becomes the focus of the researcher in TOEFL PBT is that reading activity in general helps readers obtain information and knowledge. For example, Fairbairn and Fairbairn (2001) stated that reading activity at university helps students stay focused on their subject, update information related to their work, and adopt scholars' thought. Besides, they also mentioned that reading activity is intended to support the way the students present their work in the form of writing such as essays, papers, and articles. The more students read, the better they present their writing because reading improves their vocabularies, sentence types, and paragraphs. Last, students also shared their thought that reading activity should most likely get improved along with the level of study. Thus, as they have higher education, reading is definitely important to support their study.

Therefore, this research is going to see whether the students understand, recognize, and implement the test taking reading strategies when answering the reading questions in TOEFL PBT. Besides, the research is also going to see their opinions in using test taking strategies toward their TOEFL PBT score.

Identification and Limitation of Study

There are some problems which are faced by students in answering the reading section in TOEFL PBT. Based on the researcher's experiences and observations, students feel confused to what they have to do when they answer the questions in reading section of TOEFL PBT. Students might not know which part of the paragraphs from the reading section that they have to read in answering a particular question. What most happens is that they read too many paragraphs just to answer one question. Therefore, when the time is up, the students might not answer all the questions in reading section because they run out of time. Besides, one other problem which the students face in the text of the reading section might feel bored because sometimes the text is just too long to read, and students might dislike the topic of the text. Thus the researcher argues that to answer the questions in reading section of TOEFL PBT, students need to understand and implement test taking strategies in answering the questions.

The TOEFL PBT section which is explored in this research is only reading section. There are many strategies that test takers can use when doing TOEFL PBT reading section. In order to emphasize the things investigated of TOEFL PBT reading section in this research, it highlights some identification and limitation of the study. In general, according to Phillips(2004) there are six basic question types in TOEFL PBT reading section, and each of them has different kinds of strategies. Those six questions types are questions about main idea, stated details, unstated detail, implied

detail, vocabulary context, and “where” questions (Phillips, 2004). Questions about main ideas emphasize on choosing the best idea of each paragraph of the whole passages. The stated, unstated, and implied detail question types answer specific information on the passage which can be clearly stated, not stated, or implied on the text. On the other side, the vocabulary questions might ask about the synonyms of certain words on the text, or ask about the reference of certain pronouns toward words. The “where” questions ask about the location (lines) of certain information on the text. The last, the form of the questions has 50 questions from five texts which mean that one passage usually has 10 questions, and the duration of the TOEFL PBT reading section is only 55 minutes.

Besides that, seeing from the strategies the TOEFL PBT reading section has also its strategies in each question type. The following experts’ opinions are going to be the first identification of strategies used on the reading section of TOEFL PBT. Based on Phillips (2004), he mentioned that the answer of main idea question type is most likely in the beginning sentence of each paragraph. Usually the form of the answer is in different phrase or sentence but still has the same meaning. The stated detail strategies see the only correct answer on the options, and the unstated details identify the three correct answers on the options, and choose the incorrect answer based on the text. On the other side, to answer the unstated detail questions the test takers need to draw conclusion. To answer the vocabulary questions simply can be seen from the meaning of the words. If it is not recognized from the meaning, it still

can be guessed from the text context. The last, the “where” questions simply look at the line of the specific information asked in the questions.

The participants of this research are the students of English Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. They are the students of batch 2011 who have taken the TOEFL PBT at the Language Training Center of UMY.

Formulation of the Problem

Based on the problems and limitation of the previous explanation, this study has two research questions stated as follows

1. What are the test taking strategies used by students’ of English Education Department of UMY in answering the TOEFL PBT reading section?
2. What are the students’ perceptions after applying test taking strategies on reading section?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions, this study has two purposes stated in the following statements.

1. To know the test taking strategies used by students’ of the English Education Department of UMY in answering the TOEFL PBT reading section.
2. To know what are the students’ perceptions after applying test taking strategies on reading section.

The Significance of the Study

The significance of the research can be given at least to four groups: researcher, students, teachers, institutions, and other researchers.

Researcher. The researcher can improve himself both in implementing the reading strategies on the TOEFL test and pursuing high score of TOEFL, especially in the reading section. In addition, the researcher can also implement the reading strategies when reading a text which is not used for a test.

Students. Students can use the findings of the research to improve their understanding of reading strategies on the TOEFL PBT test and can support them to get higher score on it. In general explanation, they also can use the reading strategies to be implemented in a non-reading test such as textbooks. By this way, it is hoped that they can reevaluate their strategies in reading a text both in a reading test or non-reading test.

Teachers. Like students, it is hoped that teachers might use the results of this research findings in such a way to improve the skills of their students on TOEFL PBT score, particularly on the reading section. In addition, these findings may help them to make their students know what strategies the students should use when they are assigned a reading work.

Institution. The institution, in this case the English Education Department, can rule new policy in facilitating the students to achieve high TOEFL PBT score,

particularly on the reading section. It is expected that these research findings might contribute to teaching innovation of TOEFL PBT test.

Other Researchers. The results of this research might hopefully benefit other researchers who concern with investigating the reading section of TOEFL PBT. This research can be a theoretical overview of reading strategies in TOEFL test and might become an analytical references of further research.

Outline of the Study

The outline of this study is organized as follows: Chapter one contains the background, limitation and identification, formulation, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter two reviews some academic literature of the research. Chapter three highlights the research methods which concern on the design of the research, data collection, and the participants. Chapter four exposes the findings of the research which are based on two research questions. Last, chapter five contains the summary of this research.