

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter shows the introduction of this study that includes five parts, which are the background of the study, the identification of the problem, the delimitation of the problem, the objective of the research, and the significance of the research. The background of the research presents the general information related to the researcher's topic, the reasons why the researcher chose said topic, and the problem examined by the researcher. In the identification of the problem and the delimitation of the problem, the researcher explains the problems related to the topic. The objective of the research shows the aims of the research questions. Last but not least, the significance of the research provides several research's benefits for the readers.

Background of the Study

In the teaching-learning process, language testing plays a significant role in helping language teachers place students at a suitable stage, diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the students, and evaluate their success during and at the end of the course (ETS, 2021). More importantly, language testing can help students find a job in a company, receive a scholarship, or continue their studies to a higher degree.

One of the means or instruments for testing the skill of learners in language learning is Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). TOEFL is a standardized test for language learning and a comprehensive test that measures

listening, written, and reading aspects of English proficiency especially for academic purposes. Renandya (2018) stated that TOEFL is an English proficiency test designed to examine one's ability to function in an educational setting where English is the main language of instruction. The skill of students refers to how much of what students know can be used in different environments to address different subjects and their level of competence.

TOEFL was originally developed to assess English comprehension as it is being used in a college or university environment. There are several reasons why the students taking TOEFL test. According to Abe, Matsuzaki, Wakita, and Koizumi (2018) the result of TOEFL is used in various situations for example to enter university and join a company. Additionally, in several universities in Indonesia, TOEFL is also one of the criteria for students to graduate and this test may be required by organizations such as government departments, corporations, or education programs.

In addition, TOEFL test design and specifications include the four language skills of listening, structure and written language, and reading. As noted by Brown (2004), TOEFL tests have traditionally consisted of standardized multiple-choice items on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Furthermore, one of the skills tested is reading which has become the most demanding element of TOEFL. Reading ability owned by learners measure their comprehension on what they are reading. The point of reading is to learn essential lessons, stories, and claims by not making sounds in your brain or speaking them out loud. Kirby (2007) claimed that reading is the mechanism by which the

readers comprehend the texts that the readers read. This becomes the purpose of reading and why it is significant to the readers.

This research took place in a English Language Education Department (ELED) at a private university. Based on prior research, observation, and informal interview, the researcher found that students had various challenges such as time management and unfamiliar vocabulary. When the students run out of time to do the reading section, it means they can not manage their time well and when the students do not know meaning of the text because there unfamiliar vocabulary. This can be the challenges when completing on the reading section.

There is one courses in ELED at a private university that is International Language Testing (ILT). International Language Testing course aims to prepare students for the proficiency test, familiarize them with TOEFL, and prepare the students to take English test for it is one of the requirements for graduation. The goal of this course is to increase students' ability to comprehend and attain a certain degree of foreign language testing. The paper-based English proficiency is the main test type used in this course. The passing requirement of this course requires certain score for each type of test. The score intended to be reached by the end of the course is 550. Thus, this also implies that the aim of this course is to develop language skills required to pass the exam. The ILT course is given in the sixth semester and is completed in one semester. Technically, on the first meeting, the lecturer provides a pre-test. Eventually, the next meetings will focus on assessments of each section for students to get the idea of their score in each

section. In addition, the lecturer provides a post-test on the last meeting to find out whether students' scores show any improvement.

From what the researcher observed in the ILT course, some students faced challenges in doing the test while some students did the test well. The lecturer asked the students regarding the challenges that they faced in each section of the test. The phenomenon showed the average score that students have is only 41.6, which means their score is far from the expected standard. Because the standard minimum score in this department is 500. In the ILT class the lowest reading score is 28. Moreover the minimum reading score that students must get is 50. This means that many students still struggle when working on the reading comprehension section.

From the data on the test results of batch 2017, the reading section showed the average score of 41,6. Based on the result of the test, some students acquired high scores while others acquired low scores in the reading section. Hence, the result implied students facing certain challenges when doing the test while other students prepared several strategies to overcome these challenges. Therefore, the researcher was interested in finding out students' strategies and the challenges they faced when taking TOEFL, specifically in reading section. Eventually, it is expected for the community to recognize students' challenges and strategies when doing reading comprehension section.

The Identification of the Problem

The purpose of this research was to discover the challenges faced by students and to identify the strategies used by students to overcome the challenges in completing the reading comprehension test. Reading comprehension is the section that focuses on passage ideas with 50 questions and 55 minutes working time. There are eleven competencies when students take reading comprehension section, ETS (2021) pointed out those abilities include: comprehending the meaning of individual words and sentences, comprehending the meaning of paragraphs and larger bodies of text, differentiating between minor and major points, summarizing a passage, drawing conclusions from the data provided, reasoning from incomplete data to infer missing information, comprehending the structure of a text in terms of how it is organized, and comprehending the structure of a text in terms of how it is organized.

Hence, there might be challenges and strategies in doing the reading comprehension section. Based on the observation by the researcher, when taking TOEFL test, most of the researcher's friends acquired an unsatisfactory score in reading comprehension, even though some students were able to overcome the challenges. Thus, this study was conducted to find out the challenges and the strategies in taking TOEFL by also discussing the complexities of reading section of the test in a private university.

Delimitation of the Problems

This research focused on one type of TOEFL in the form of a paper-based test that contains three sections; they are listening, written expression and structure, and reading comprehension. However, the researcher only focused on the reading comprehension section to discover students' challenges and the strategies to overcome them when doing the reading comprehension section. In addition, there were several reasons as to why the researcher limit the investigation scope regarding this issue. First, TOEFL involves comprehension of listening, structure and written language, and reading. Thus, if the researcher conducts a study to analyze all aspects, more studies should be carried out. Second, this research did not focus on listening and structure and written speech section because the researcher was interested in investigating the challenges and the strategies in taking TOEFL on reading comprehension section. Hence, the researcher limited the analysis to only focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' challenges and strategies to overcome them in reading comprehension section.

Research Questions

Based on the description, the formulations of the problems of this study are:

1. What are the challenges faced by students in doing the reading comprehension test?
2. What are the strategies used by students in doing the reading comprehension test?

The Objective of the Research

Based on the formulations of the problem, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the challenges faced by students in doing the reading comprehension test.
2. To identify the strategies used by students in doing the reading comprehension test.

Significance of the Research

This research is expected to offer various advantages for lecturers, students, and next researchers.

The Lecturers

The outcome of this research may benefit lecturers to acquire deeper insight of their students who take reading test in terms of recognizing the strategies used by students, predicting possible challenges for students, and directing EFL students to overcome their challenges using suitable teaching method.

The Students

This work is expected to be beneficial for students who plan on taking reading section. The students are implied to learn about the challenges often faced by EFL students and the strategies they used to overcome the challenges in taking the reading section of the test.

The Next Researchers

This research may be used as a reference for other researchers who plan on analyzing topic related to students' challenges and strategies to overcome challenges in doing reading comprehension section of paper-based TOEFL test. This research may be a review for future researches that require references or resources with similar topics.

Organization of the Chapter

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter addresses the background of the study, the identification of the problem, the delimitation of the problem, the objective of the research, and the significance of the research. The second chapter discusses the TOEFL literature review, TOEFL sections, the challenges in the reading comprehension, strategies for reading comprehension in the TOEFL, and base studies for review. This chapter also provides the reader with similar researches regarding the reading comprehension section of TOEFL experienced by language learners in the sense of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The third chapter addresses research methods including research design, research setting, participants in the study, method of collecting data, and data analysis. The result and the review of the research are discussed in chapter four. Last but not least, chapter five explains the conclusion and the suggestions drawn from the research.