THE PROFICIENCY OF THE THIRD-SEMESTER STUDENTS OF THE ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM UNIVERSITAS RIAU IN COMPREHENDING READING SECTION OF TOEFL

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive quantitative research is designed to discover the proficiency of the third-semester students of the English study program at FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending the reading section in the TOEFL test. The research population involved the third-semester students of the English study program FKIP Universitas Riau, which consisted of 119 students. The sample was 119 students selected by using the total sampling technique. The instrument of the research was a TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section test which consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. The students' scores in the TOEFL Reading Test were analyzed in selecting skills based on the blueprint of the test related to the reading syllabus that samples took on the Reading Comprehension III class. Based on the data analysis, the average score was 37. The researcher found that the students' reading proficiency can be categorized as poor level. Using contexts for vocabulary achieved the highest score (58), while Scanning for details was the lowest score (43). The finding implied that the third-semester students of the English study program at FKIP of Universitas Riau should improve their proficiency in comprehending the Reading Section of TOEFL to get a better score.

Keywords: students' proficiency, reading comprehension, TOEFL test

KEMAHIRAN MAHASISWA SEMESTER TIGA PROGRAM STUDI BAHASA INGGRIS UNIVERSITAS RIAU DALAM MEMAHAMI SOAL READING TEKS DI TOEFL

ABSTRAK

Penelitian kuantitatif deskriptif ini dirancang untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa semester tiga program studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau dalam memahami soal reading teks di TOEFL. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester tiga program studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau yang berjumlah 119 mahasiswa. Sampel penelitian adalah 119 mahasiswa yang dipilih dengan teknik total sampling. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes sesi membaca di TOEFL yang terdiri dari 50 soal pilihan ganda. Skor mahasiswa dalam Tes Membaca TOEFL dianalisis dengan memilih keterampilan berdasarkan cetak biru tes yang terkait dengan silabus membaca yang diambil pada kelas Reading Comprehension III. Dari analisis data, skor rata-rata adalah 37. Peneliti menemukan bahwa kemampuan membaca mahasiswa dapat dikategorikan dalam tingkat yang buruk. Menggunakan Konteks untuk Kosakata mendapat skor tertinggi (58), sedangkan Memindai detail adalah skor terendah (43). Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa mahasiswa semester tiga program studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau harus meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam memahami soal reading teks di TOEFL untuk mendapatkan skor yang lebih baik.

Kata Kunci: kemahiran mahasiswa, membaca, TOEFL

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is the process of understanding the text that is reading or constructing meaning from the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Comprehension is not only finding the answer in a text, but it is also an active process in which readers can create a version of the text in their minds which makes understanding the text is essential. Through reading comprehension, students can grasp information such as the general structure of the text, language features, and social functions. Students can also improve their vocabulary and know how to distinguish the speech of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.).

In education, especially in the English Study Program of Faculty Teachers Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Riau, reading is one of the language aspects that is mainly learned and taught to the students. The courses of reading in the English Study Program are involved in the curriculum taught in five subjects: Reading Comprehension I, Reading Comprehension II, Reading Comprehension III, Extensive Reading, and Academic Reading and Writing. Reading Comprehension I, II, and III are learning about intensive reading; the extensive Reading subject is learning about extensive reading itself. In contrast, Academic Reading and Writing is aimed to prepare students for higher reading courses, such as essays and journals. These subjects are involved in English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau curriculum for students' batch 2019.

Reading also has a significant role in TOEFL. The TOEFL test uses reading as one of the tests that are Reading Comprehension Section. For general information, the TOEFL or Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers. The students from English Study Program are required to take TOEFL PBT/ITP as one of the requirements to take the Comprehensive Examination for graduation, which means that students should have good comprehension in reading to pass the test. The English Study Program students of Universitas Riau need to get at least 500 scores for TOEFL (Riau University Language Center, 2014). As Ras (2017) stated, the TOEFL mean score of the students from the English Study Program is only 432. It means that the implementation standard of the TOEFL score for requirements before graduation seems complicated for the students to obtain.

In this research, the researcher would like to take the third-semester students of the English Study Program as the subject of the study. The third-semester students at the English study program have already taught Reading Comprehension III Class. Based on the syllabus of Reading Comprehension III class, the third-year students of the English Study Program are expected to be able to find out the main idea of a text, understand context clues, i.e., synonyms, antonyms, examples, and a general sense of a passage, and understand the meaning by figure out the implications of unfamiliar words.

There are several reasons for conducting this research. The first reason is the importance of referring to sources and their advantages for the students. The second is that the third-semester students have already studied Reading Comprehension III and took the TOEFL pre-test. Still, the fact that TOEFL pre-test scores are not easy for the students raises the researcher's curiosity about their TOEFL reading proficiency. Based on the previous explanation, those matters encourage the researcher to discover their proficiency in TOEFL reading. The researcher wishes to know the score of the third-semester students in TOEFL reading which leads the researcher to conduct a research entitled The Proficiency of the Third Semester Students of English Study Program Universitas Riau in Comprehending Reading Section of TOEFL.

REASERCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach. The research was conducted on the third-semester students of the English study program FKIP Universitas Riau. The population of third-semester students of the English study program FKIP Universitas Riau consisted of 119 students with three classes: A, B, and C. This research used total sampling. The sample of this research was 119 students. The data were collected by giving a test to the sample. The test was a TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section which has 55 minutes to be finished. Because the Indonesian Government had stated that there were no meetings in every educational institution because of the COVID-19, the researcher used Google Form to collect the data.

After getting the score of the entire student, the researcher used the following table to know the conversion of the TOEFL Reading score.

Table 1. The table of Conversion TOEFL table score

No	Correct Answer	Conversion Score	Level
1.	0-17	21-37	Poor
2.	18-34	38-51	Good
3.	35-50	53-67	Excellent

(Educational Testing Service, 2005)

Then, the researcher has to find out the students' mean score in answering the TOEFL test, and the formula is presented as in the following:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

In which,

M : Mean score or the average score of the test

$\sum x$: The total number of the students score

N : Sample or number of the students that participates in the test

(Adapted from Gay, et al, 2011)

Next, to know the percentage of the student's proficiency in answering questions in each aspect of TOEFL Reading, the writer used the formula as follow:

$$P = \frac{F}{R} x\ 100$$

Where:

P : The percentage

R : The number of frequency

F : The number of the students

(Arikunto, 2013)

To see the proficiency of the students in TOEFL Reading, the researcher classified by using the classification score levels from Harris's, which is divided into four levels; excellent, good, mediocre, and poor. The classification is as follows:

Table 2. The classification score of the students' proficiency

No	Test score	Level of proficiency
1	80-100	Excellent
2	60-79	Good
3	50-59	Mediocre
4	0-49	Poor

(Adapted from Harris, 1974)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After the data were analyzed by the researcher, the result shows that the students' proficiencies in TOEFL Reading Comprehension Section are in *poor* category level. The percentage of the students' proficiencies in the TOEFL Reading Section can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. The Percentage of Students' Proficiency in Reading Test

Correct Answer	Conversion Score	Frequency	Percentage	Level
0-17	21-37	78	65%	Poor
18-34	38-51	41	34%	Good
35-50	52-67	0	0%	Excellent
Total		119	100%	

From this Table, it can be implied that from 119 students, 78 (65%) students are in *poor* level, 41 (34%) students are in *a good* level, and 0 (0%) student is in *excellent* level

for their proficiency in TOEFL reading test. It can be concluded that in general, the students are still lacking in the TOEFL reading test, it can be seen from the percentage of *poor* level (65%) is highest than others level.

The students' proficiency can also be seen from the average score for each TOEFL Reading aspect in the following table:

Table 4. The Students' Average Score for Each Aspect of TOEFL Reading Test

Aspect of TOEFL Reading Test	Average Score	Level
Reading for main ideas	44	Poor
Using contexts for vocabulary	58	Mediocre
Scanning for details	43	Poor
Making inferences	51	Mediocre
Identifying exceptions	54	Mediocre
Locating references	46	Poor
Referring to the passage	47	Poor
Average	49	

Table 4 shows that the students' scores in each TOEFL reading test aspect are in *poor* level or the range of 0-49. The students' achievement in terms of each aspect of the TOEFL reading test is not very different. Those seven aspects of the ability are spread out in *good, mediocre,* and *poor* levels. Hence, it can be stated that the students' scores for each aspect of TOEFL reading tend to be lower, with the lowest score 43 for *Scanning for Details* and the highest 58 for *Using Contexts for Vocabulary.*

Overall from the data above, the result of the TOEFL reading test of third-semester students of the English Study Program in the academic year 2020/2021 is at a *poor* level.

After finding the students' proficiency in TOEFL reading generally, it is essential to know the detail of students' proficiency in TOEFL reading in each aspect of the TOEFL reading test. The researcher presents the students' TOEFL Reading Section proficiency in each aspect of the TOEFL Reading test as follows:

Table 5. Students' Scores in Reading for Main Ideas

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	19	16%	Good
3	41-60	46	39%	Mediocre
4	21-40	54	45%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

It can be seen from the table that from 119 students were joined the test, most of the students (45%) are in *poor* level in range score of 21-40. Out of 46 students (39%) in *mediocre* level, there are only 19 students in *good* level (16%). There is a significant

deviation from *poor* level and *mediocre* level to *good* category level. All in all, most third-semester students in the English Study Program of FKIP Universitas Riau in TOEFL Reading, specifically in terms of Reading for Main Ideas, are in *poor* category level.

Table 6. Students' Scores in Using Contexts for Vocabulary

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	56	47%	Good
3	41-60	52	44%	Mediocre
4	21-40	11	9%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

Table 6 presents the students' TOEFL reading proficiency in terms of Using Contexts for Vocabulary. The researcher found that 119 students, the highest frequency, are 56 (47%) students, which is *good*, followed by 52 (44%) students in *the mediocre* level. The lowest frequency is 11 (9%) students, which is at *a poor* level. The range of *good* level to *mediocre* level is not quite far. Vice versa, the good range level and *mediocre* level to *poor* level are far. Although there is no student in *excellent* level, the *good* level in this terms is the highest than another term.

Table 7. Students' Scores in Scanning for Details

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	18	15%	Good
3	41-60	44	37%	Mediocre
4	21-40	57	48%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

Table 7 shows that the *poor* level with 57 students (48%) is higher than *the mediocre* level with 44 (37%) students. And there is a significant deviation from *a poor* level to *a good* level. Only 18 (15%) students have *a good* level with a range score of 61-80. Also, there are no students in *excellent* category level. From the table above, the dominant category is *poor* level, which means that many students only have scored 21-40.

Table 8. Students' Scores in Making Inferences

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	36	30%	Good
3	41-60	51	43%	Mediocre
4	21-40	32	27%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

Based on Table 8, it can be implied that the dominant level occurred in *mediocre*. There is no student at excellent level (0%), 36 students are at a good level with the percentage is (30%), most of the students are at mediocre level with 51 students (43%), and there are 32 students in poor level with the percentage is (27%).

In addition, the average score achieved by students in the term of Making Inferences is 51, which is in the range of 50-59. It means that generally, the students' proficiency in Making

Inferences is *mediocre*. The lowest score in terms of Making Inferences is 22. The highest score is 80. In short, the students' TOEFL Reading proficiency in Making Inferences is at *a mediocre* level.

Table 9. Students' Scores in Identifying Exceptions

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	50	42%	Good
3	41-60	45	38%	Mediocre
4	21-40	24	20%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

From this Table 9, the results show the highest frequency is in *good* level with 50 (42%) students in range score of 61-80. The deviation from *good* level to *mediocre* level (38%) is only five students. Meanwhile, there are only 24 (20%) students at *a poor* level. In this statement, the researcher can conclude that the students' proficiency in Identifying Exceptions is *mediocre*.

Table 10. Students' Scores in Locating References

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	27	23%	Good
3	41-60	41	34%	Mediocre
4	21-40	51	43%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

According to Table 10, it can be stated that most of the students have *poor* proficiency in terms of Locating References, with 51 students (43%) gaining scores from 21-40. They were then followed by *mediocre* level with 41 (34%) students, which the deviation from *poor* level to this level is only ten students. Only 27 (23%) students of the total samples have *a good* level. In summary, it can be said that the third-semester students of the English Study Program of FKIP Universitas Riau have *poor* proficiency in Locating References.

Table 11. Students' Scores in Referring to the Passage

No	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Level
1	81-100	0	0%	Excellent
2	61-80	30	25%	Good
3	41-60	41	34%	Mediocre
4	21-40	48	40%	Poor
	TOTAL	119	100%	

As in the table above, the deviation of each category level is not too far. The highest percentage is still *poor* level with 48 students (40%). And the lowest frequency is *good* level with 30 students (25%) in the score range of 61-80. It can be concluded that no students were got the mastery level that is *excellent* level and most of the students are in *poor* level in score range of 21-40 in the term of Referring to the Passage.

Discussion

According to the finding and data analysis, the third-semester students of the English Study Program in the academic year 2020/2021 have *a poor* level in TOEFL Reading Score. The percentage of *poor* level is still gain the highest percentage than others level. The researcher found that the students' proficiency in the TOEFL Reading Test reaches the mean score of 37. Based on the conversion TOEFL table score, it can be stated that the mean score of the reading test is at *a poor* level. Therefore, it is categorized into *a poor* level of proficiency. It was also found out that the highest aspect achieved by the students is in *Using Contexts for Vocabulary* with the mean score of 58, and the lowest is in *Scanning for Details* with the mean score of 43 and *Reading for Main Ideas* with the mean score of 44.

Based on the data research, there are some problematic indicators for the students facing the test, such as reading for main ideas, locating references, and referring to the passages. In general, the percentage of reading for main ideas, scanning for details, and making inferences are quietly high rather than other levels.

In conclusion, after analyzing the data, the research problem stated in the introduction could be answered. It can be noted that from the findings, the student's proficiency in the TOEFL Reading test is in *poor* category level in which Scanning for Details is to the lowest aspect while Using Contexts for Vocabulary is the highest one. In other words, the students need to improve their proficiency in the TOEFL Reading test to get a better score.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be concluded that the third-semester students of the English Study Program of FKIP Universitas Riau in the academic year 2020/2021 in answering the TOEFL reading test is at *a poor* level. Based on the result findings, among 119 students, 41 students (34%) are at *a good* level, and 78 students (65%) are at *a poor* level. None of the students are at an *excellent* level. Hence, most of the students are at *a poor* level, with a mean score of 37. Therefore it can be concluded that the proficiency in comprehending the Reading Section of TOEFL by the third-semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau was not yet satisfying.

Although some students had *a good* category level, the mean score is in *poor* level in the range of 21-40. It is not a satisfactory result since TOEFL is essential for the students considering that in higher education, having a good score is needed because TOEFL is a regulation for graduation. The students need more practice to improve their comprehension of the Reading Section of TOEFL, especially in the Scanning for Details skill.

Based on the result of the research, the researcher would like to give two recommendations. First, the students are recommended to pay more attention to every aspect of reading proficiency by practicing reading materials of TOEFL. It is essential to acquire every part of TOEFL Reading to get a satisfying score, especially for the lowest aspects, i.e., Scanning for Details that only has an average score of 43, which is poor. Moreover, for the highest score in Using Contexts for Vocabulary, which gets its average score of 58, students need to improve the *mediocre* category level to *a good* or *excellent* level. Students can borrow TOEFL books from the library, and they can learn from internet sources to help them obtain their passing grades before their graduate from Universitas Riau. Students need to enrich their vocabularies to understand the passage on reading, and it is better to keep practicing to get a better score. Second, this thesis could be used for future researchers who want to conduct research dealing with the Reading Section of TOEFL. It will be one of the references to conduct the next research in this field, and future researchers can conduct research by using wider samples to gain more insight.

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