



# Difficulties in Understanding the TOEFL Reading Test of English Language Education Study Program at University

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## Abstract

This research aims to investigate the difficulties faced by students in understanding the TOEFL Reading test and to find the factors that influence the difficulties in understanding the TOEFL Reading test of English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Palopo. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The subjects of this research were 13 of the 3th semester in the English Department of IAIN Palopo in the 2023/2024 academic year. The instruments used to collect data were the TOEFL Reading test consisting of 50 questions in the form of multiple choice and an interview consisting of 5 questions. Based on the analysis of the TOEFL test results, it was found that the unstated detail question is the most difficult question faced by students and the question has been classified into the most difficult question based on the difficulty index formula. Meanwhile, the interview results show that students' opinions regarding the factors that influence the difficulty of understanding the TOEFL Reading test were lack of focus, time management, vocabulary mastery, lack of understanding of the aspects of the questions contained in the TOEFL questions, and lack of practice working on questions or taking the TOEFL test.

**Keywords:** *Difficulties, Reading Comprehension, TOEFL*

## Introduction

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the English proficiency criteria for international students to gain university admissions in English-speaking countries. More than 35 million people all over the world have taken TOEFL tests (ETS, 2018). At the research site, international students who do not meet the English proficiency standard set by the university are “conditionally” admitted and need to take English language courses at the Intensive English Program (IEP). These students need to pass

a TOEFL cut score of 550 in order to successfully graduate from the IEP, move their English proficiency hold, and start attending regular courses at the university.

Reading is one of the four language skills that is very important for EFL students because students can develop their English vocabulary, gain a lot of knowledge, and learn a lot by reading. According to Williams (1998) Reading can be classified into two types: preliminary reading and reading comprehension. Early reading is an effort made by those who cannot read and learn to read (eg how to read the alphabet and combinations of letters or simple words), while reading comprehension is an activity that aims to understand certain text messages.

According to Grellet in Mita (2019). There are two main reasons for reading: reading for pleasure and reading for information (to find something or to do something with the information the reader has obtained). After this statement, students will get a lot of information about everything they did not know or saw before reading. By reading, students can find some specific information, understand the whole story, find reasons, explanations, summaries, and comments from the news they read. Students can also be entertained by reading especially when students read comics, novels, short stories, etc. The information that students will get is more detailed than what they get from other people. Skills.

On the other hand, teaching English in college or higher education differs from that in secondary schools in many aspects: status, number of hours, teaching objectives, teaching methods, and teaching materials. Most universities that require their students to take formal English courses focus on developing students' English skills to read textbooks to support their study program. At IAIN Palopo, students of the English Department are generally taught a series of reading comprehension courses aimed at developing students' reading skills in English. For example, they are required to follow Intensive Reading I, Intensive Reading II, Intensive Reading III, and Extensive Reading with different emphases in terms of readability, level of understanding (e.g. literal, inferential, and critical), and type of text (e.g. narrative, descriptive, argumentative). , etc).

English Department students are required to take the TOEFL Paper Based Test (PBT) or Institutional Testing Program (ITP) as one of the requirements to take the Comprehensive Examination and take a Degree Certificate. For general information, TOEFL or Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test to measure the ability of non-native speakers in English. It has three types: PBT, CBT and IBT. IAIN Palopo English students must also get a TOEFL score of at least 400 and next year it will increase to 450. But in fact, many students whose scores are still under 450. In addition, from pre-observation and experience, most of the students have difficulty in understanding the TOEFL reading. Some of the students said that the vocabulary was very foreign and the content was not at all interesting and foreign to students.

Students in higher education, especially the English Education Department of IAIN Palopo, are expected to be able to master English (which is determined by the TOEFL score) in fact most of the students are still at the intermediate level (TBI IAIN Palopo Report for TOEFL scores). Therefore, researchers are interested in knowing the difficulties faced by students, especially in the TOEFL Reading section, and finding factors that influence students' difficulties in understanding English tests.

Based on the statement above, the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled "Students' Difficulties in Understanding the TOEFL Reading Test of English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Palopo".

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Before getting into the core of the research, it is better to know the definition of research in advance. Research in common parlance refers to the search for knowledge. One can also define research as a scientific and systematic search for relevant information on a topic. The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English defines the meaning of research as "careful" investigation or investigation especially through the search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. Research is a systematic, formal, rigorous and precise process used to obtain solutions to problems or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships." Research is a genuine contribution to the existing body of knowledge that makes it progress. It is the pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment. In short, research is the search for knowledge through objective and systematic methods to find solutions to a problem.

There are two kinds of research designs based on their approach;

In this research, researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods to analyze data. States that qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomena, that is, phenomena relating to or involving qualities or types. For example, when we are interested in investigating the reasons for human behavior (i.e., why people think or do certain things). In descriptive research, researchers explore and describe, with the aim of explaining a phenomenon based on data obtained in the field. States that descriptive research is: designed to obtain the status of the current phenomenon and is directed to determine the nature of the situation as it existed at the time of research.

In conclusion, this research uses a qualitative descriptive design. The phenomenon studied is the students' difficulty in understanding TOEFL Reading text and the factors that influence the difficulty in understanding the test. This research is conducted in two steps. First, do a test on these subjects. In the test section, the researcher gave TOEFL Reading the test to students to get data related to difficulties in

understanding the test. Second, conducting interviews with the subject to obtain the data connecting the factors that influence the difficulty in understanding the test. Results of tests and interviews are used as the main data in analyzing this research.

### Data and Data Sources

The data examined in this research are data about students' difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests and the factors that influence difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests.

- a. Data collection was carried out through several sources as follows. Informants: 13 students of 3th semester in the English Department.
- b. Documents: all written reports relating to primary data such as test results and interview scripts.

### Research Instruments

The instruments used were tests and interviews. The tests given are sourced from standardized tests and are in the form of multiple choice where students are asked to choose one of the four (4) answer options available. The researcher adopted TOEFL questions from the book Longman Introductory Course for The TOEFL Test Deborah Philips.

The type of TOEFL used in the study, namely TOEFL PBT (Paper Based Test) is a TOEFL test that works with printed paper. This TOEFL PBT test is generally organized by educational institutions or special institutions, because it is done directly on paper, participants who take the TOEFL PBT test must come to the location on the test schedule. The test is done for approximately 3 hours, and consists of listening structure & writing expression, reading comprehension, writing. While the interview is conducted directly with the question and answer method.

Table 3. 1 Aspects of questions in the TOEFL test

No.	Aspects reading of Toe!	Number of item question
1.	Topic/Main Idea	1, 9, 19, 29, 40
2.	Stated detail question	4, 6, 11, 21, 31, 35, 38, 43, 49
3.	Unstated detail question	8, 16, 22, 32, 45
4.	Implied detail question	3, 12, 23, 26, 37, 41, 46
5.	Vocabulary question	2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 24, 25, 27, : 33, 34, 36, 42, 44, 47, 48
6.	Where question	14, 18, 28, 39, 50,
Total		50 items

## Data Collection Techniques

This study used two techniques in carrying out data collection procedures.

### 1. TOEFL Reading Test

Researchers gave reading tests to students to measure students' understanding in reading. By giving a reading test, the researcher tries to find out the difficulties faced by students. Incorrect answers from students are used as indicators of whether students find difficulties or not. The TOEFL reading section uses six aspects of reading comprehension in this test; topic/Main Idea, stated detail question, unstated detail question, implied detail question, vocabulary question, where question. This test is not to measure students' abilities quantitatively, but to find difficulties in understanding the test. This test is taken from Barron's practice drill for the TOEFL Preparatory Test. The number of test items is 50 forms of multiple choice consisting of five tests.

### 2. Interview

Interview is a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a topic. States that interviews be a method of collecting data through debriefing which is carried out unilaterally systematically and based on the objectives of the investigation.

## Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data analysis is a series of processes and procedures where researchers move from qualitative data that has been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations that researchers investigate (Ann Lewins, 2005).

Sugiyono (2012: 246-252) states that qualitative research data analysis can be done in three stages; data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or interpretation.

### Data Reduction

Data reduction means selecting important information only. The sorted data will provide a clear picture of the topic. The data about the tests and interviews were sorted only to get the important information. Then the researcher analyzed the test results to determine the students' difficulties in understanding the text, and in what aspects the students encountered difficulties. The researcher distinguished the students' difficulties from the wrong answers they had done in answering the test.

The data obtained through the test would analyze using the question difficulty index. The formula used in this study is as follows.

$$P = \frac{N}{TNS}$$

TNS

P : Proportion or index of difficulty

N : Number of students who answered correctly

TNS : Total number of students

Then the difficulty index classification needs to be done. The difficulty index classification is used to classify the types of questions that are most difficult for students to understand in the TOEFL test. The interpretation of the difficulty index is as follows:

Table 3. 2 Classification of the difficulty Index

Intervals	Classification
0.00 – 0.40	Difficult
0.40 – 0.80	Fair
0.80 – 1.50	Easy

#### Data Display

After reducing the data, the next step is to display the data. This is the process of displaying data in the form of tables or essays that describe students' difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading texts and factors that influence difficulties in understanding texts. Mil and Huberman (1984) stated that the most frequent form of data display for qualitative research is in the form of narrative text. They also point out "seeing the display helps us understand what is happening and what to do something-further analysis or caution on that understanding."

The final step in data analysis is drawing conclusions or interpretation. The researcher synthesized all the data (test results and interview scripts) to make conclusions.

#### Results

There are two problem statements to be answered in this research. The first problem is what are the difficulties faced by students of 3th semester in the understanding TOEFL Reading tests. The second problem is what are the factors that influence difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests. The researcher used two instruments to collect data: TOEFL Reading test and interview. The subjects of this research were 13 students of 3th semester in the English Department of IAIN Palopo in the academic year 2023/2024

To make it easier for readers to understand the research schedule, below are the test and interview dates.

Table 4. 1 TOEFL Reading Test and Interview Dates

No.	Date of Test	Class	Date of interview	Semester
1.	Monday, September 1 2023	III	Monday, September 1 2023	III

### 1. Students' Difficulties in Understanding TOEFL Reading Tests at IAIN Palopo English Department

To identify difficulties in understanding the TOEFL Reading test, the researcher conducted a one-time in-class test on September 18, 2023, IAIN Palopo English Department academic year 2023/2024.

Based on the research that has been done, it showed which aspects are the most difficult in the TOEFL Reading test. Third semester students who have completed the Intensive Reading course should already have a good mastery of all reading test materials. From a total of 47 fifth semester students, the researcher only took 28% of the population to be tested, namely 13 people from three classes.

The researcher used Deborah Phillips' practice test for TOEFL as the test instrument. The Reading Comprehension section consists of 50 multiple choice questions. Each test had 10 questions to be answered. So, there were a total of 5 tests to be answered within 55 minutes. The themes of the tests were science, business, biography, and art. The most incorrect answers from the students were used as an indicator of whether the students found it difficult or not. The test has six aspects of reading comprehension: topic/main idea, stated detail question, unstated detail question, implied detail question, vocabulary question, where question.

The test results of the 3th semester students of IAIN Palopo's English Department for the 2023/2024 academic year can be seen in the table below. The description of the test results has been elaborated based on the order of classification of the most difficult questions to the easy questions faced by the students.

Table 4. 2 Result of difficulty index topic/main idea

Number	Topic/Main idea				
Question number	1	9	19	29	40
Results	8	9	2	4	6
Difficulty ind	0,61	0,69	0,15	0,30	0,46

	F	F	D	D	F
Totally	<u>Result of difficulty index 2,21 = 0,44</u>				
	Number of questions				5

Questions for Topic/Main idea are found in questions 1, 9, 19, 29 and 40. Question number 1 can be answered correctly by 8 students. Problem number 9 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Problem number 19 can be answered correctly by 2 students. Question number 29 can be answered correctly by 4 students and question number 40 can be answered correctly by 6 students. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question numbers 19 and 29 are included in the difficult questions, question numbers 1, 9 and 40 are included in the medium questions.

Table 4. 3 Result of difficulty index stated detail question

Number	Stated Detail Question								
Question Number	4	6	11	21	31	35	38	43	49
Results	9	7	8	3	8	3	0	2	3
Difficulty Index	0,61	0,56	0,61	0,23	0,61	0,23	0	0,15	0,23
	F	F	F	D	F	D	D	D	D
Totally	<u>Result of difficulty index 3,28 = 0,36</u>								
	Number of questions				9				

Questions for Stated Detail Question are found in questions 4, 6, 11, 21, 31, 35, 38, 43 and 49. Question number 4 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Question number 6 can be answered correctly by 7 students. Problem number 11 can be answered correctly by 8 students. Problem number 21 can be answered correctly by 3 students, Problem number 31 can be answered correctly by 8 students, Problem number 35 can be answered correctly by 3 students, Problem number 38 has no correct answer, Problem number 43 can be answered correctly by 2 students and problem number 49 can be answered correctly by 3 students. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question numbers 21, 35, 38 and 49 are included in the difficult questions, question numbers 4, 6, 11 and 31 are included in the moderate questions.



Table 4. 4 Result of difficulty index unstated detail question

<b>Number</b>	<b>Unstated Detail Question</b>				
Question Number	8	16	23	32	45
Results	4	9	4	5	4
Difficulty Index	0,30	0,69	0,30	0,38	0,30
	D	F	D	F	D
Totally	<u>Result of difficulty index <math>1,97 \div 5 = 0,39</math></u>				
	Number of questions		5		

Questions for Unstated Detail Question are found in questions 8, 16, 23, 32 and 45. Question number 8 can be answered correctly by 4 students. Question number 16 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Question number 23 can be answered correctly by 4 students. Question number 32 can be answered correctly by 5 students and question number 45 can be answered correctly by 4 students. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question numbers 8, 23 and 45 are included in the difficult questions, question numbers 16 and 32 are included in the medium questions.

Table 4. 5 Result of difficulty index implied detail question

<b>Number</b>	<b>Implied Detail Question</b>						
Question Number	3	12	23	26	37	41	46
Results	7	7	11	5	7	4	8
Difficulty Index	0,53	0,53	0,84	0,38	0,53	0,30	0,61
	F	F	E	F	F	D	F
Totally	<u>Result of difficulty index <math>3,72 \div 7 = 0,53</math></u>						
	Number of questions			7			

Questions for Implied Detail Question are found in questions 3, 12, 23, 26, 37, 41 and 46. Question number 3 can be answered correctly by 7 students. Question number 12 can be answered correctly by 7 students. Problem number 23 can be answered correctly by 11 students. Problem number 26 can be answered correctly by 5 students, Problem number 37 can be answered correctly by 7 students, Problem number 41 can be answered correctly by 4 students, Problem number 46 can be answered correctly by 8 students. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question number 41 is included in the difficult question, question numbers 3, 12, 26, 37 and 46 are

included in the medium question and question number 23 is included in the easy question.

Table 4. 6 Result of difficulty index vocabulary question

Number		Vocabulary Question					
Question Number	2	5	7	10	13	15	17
Results	11	9	3	10	7	4	9
Difficulty Index	0,84	0,69	0,23	0,76	0,53	0,30	0,69
	E	F	D	F	F	D	F
Totally							4,04

  

Number		Vocabulary Question					
Question number	20	24	25	27	30	33	34
Results	1	4	8	11	8	8	4
Difficulty index	0,07	0,30	0,61	0,84	0,61	0,61	0,46
	D	D	F	E	F	F	D
Totally							3,5

  

Number		Vocabulary Question				
Question Number	36	42	44	47	48	
Results	6	2	9	4	1	
Defficulty Index	0,46	0,15	0,69	0,30	0,07	
	F	D	F	D	D	
Totally						1,67
	<u>Result of difficulty index</u>					9,21 = 0,61
	Number of questions					19

Questions for Vocabulary Question are found in questions 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 24, 25, 27, 30, 33, 34, 36, 42, 44, 47 and 48. Question number 2 can be answered correctly by 11 students. Problem number 5 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Problem number 7 can be answered correctly by 3 students. Problem number 10 can

be answered correctly by 10 students. Problem number 13 can be answered correctly by 7 students. Problem number 15 can be answered correctly by 4 students. Problem number 17 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Problem number 20 can be answered correctly by 1 student. Problem number 24 can be answered correctly by 4 students. Problem number 25 can be answered correctly by 8 students. Problem number 27 can be answered correctly by 11 students. Problem number 30 can be answered correctly by 8 students. Problem number 33 can be answered correctly by 8 students. Problem number 34 can be answered correctly by 4 students. Problem number 36 can be answered correctly by 6 students. Problem number 42 can be answered correctly by 2 students. Problem number 44 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Problem number 47 can be answered correctly by 4 students and Problem number 48 can be answered correctly by 1 student. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question numbers 7, 15, 20, 24, 34, 42, 47 and 48 are included in the difficult questions, question numbers 5, 10, 13, 17, 25, 30, 33, 36 and 44 are included in the medium questions. Problem numbers 2 and 27 are included in the easy questions.

Table 4. 7 Result of difficulty index where question

Number	Where Question				
Question Number	14	18	28	39	40
Results	12	9	6	9	3
Difficulty Index	0,92	0,69	0,46	0,69	0,23
	E	F	F	F	D
Totally	<u>Result of difficulty index</u> $2,99 \div 5 = 0,59$				
	Number of questions 5				

Questions for Where Question are found in questions 14, 18, 28, 39 and 40. Question number 14 can be answered correctly by 12 students. Question number 18 can be answered correctly by 9 students. Question number 28 can be answered correctly by 6 students. Question number 39 can be answered correctly by 9 students and question number 40 can be answered correctly by 4 students. From each of these answers, the difficulty index interval is question number 40 is included in the difficult question, question numbers 18, 28 and 39 are included in the medium question, while question number 14 is classified as an easy question.

Based on the results of the TOEFL Reading Test that has been conducted, the difficulties of 3th semester students in understanding the TOEFL Reading test at the English Department of IAIN Palopo in the academic year 2023/2024 show that they have difficulty in all aspects of reading: determining topic/idea, stated detail question,

unstated detail question, implied detail question, vocabulary question, where question. While the most difficult aspects in understanding TOEFL Reading test are stated detail question and unstated detail question.

## **2. An explanation of the factors that influence difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests.**

To find out the factors that influence difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests, the researcher conducted interviews on September 20th, 2023 in the classes of the English Department of IAIN Palopo.

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, it will be shown what factors affect the difficulty in understanding the TOEFL Reading test. The total number of third semester students who have been interviewed is 13 students.

The interviews conducted were structured interviews, which means that the questions asked were prepared before the interview was conducted. There were 5 questions asked in the interview (see Appendix). This statement aims to find out the opinions of students on what factors affect the difficulty in answering TOEFL reading test questions.

### **1. Students' difficulties in taking the TOEFL reading test**

- a. I think the difficulty is because there is some vocabulary that is difficult to translate because I have never encountered these vocabularies.
- b. Not understanding the reading and questions because of the lack of vocabulary that I know.
- c. My difficulty in doing TOEFL reading questions is that I must re-read the paragraph to answer the next question.
- d. The text of the questions in the TOEFL reading test has standardized sentences and is difficult to understand.
- e. Long test and English language. Lack of vocabulary so it is difficult to understand the words in the reading test.

From the results of the interview with the question, what are your difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions? Based on the student responses above, the researcher can conclude that most students have difficulty in working on the TOEFL test because they lack vocabulary, making it difficult to understand the reading text and questions in the TOEFL reading test, students do not understand tricks or how to complete the test quickly. Some students have difficulty because they must re-read the paragraph to answer the next question, therefore it takes a long time to solve the questions in each reading.

2. Types of Reading Comprehension questions in the TOEFL test

- a) Scanning and skimming
- b) I don't know the types of reading comprehension questions in the Toefl test.
- c) Looking for the main idea in the paragraph.
- d) As I recall, the name is also a reading test that automatically tends to questions that must be read carefully from beginning to end.
- e) Find the theme and topic of the paragraph, interpret a vocabulary word in a sentence or paragraph.
- f) Look for other meanings of certain words and find the main discussion of several paragraphs.
- g) From the results of the interview with the question, Name the types of Reading Comprehension questions in the TOEFL test? Most students do not know or learn the types of questions in the TOEFL reading test. In the TOEFL reading test there are six types of questions such as Topic/main idea, Stated detail question, Unstated detail question, Implied detail question, Vocabulary question, and Where question. Learning the types of TOEFL reading questions makes it easy for students to find answers in reading.

3. Things students do to overcome difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions

- a) Learn about vocabulary and increase vocabulary memorization
- b) Increase vocabulary memorization and diligently read English books.
- c) What I do to overcome difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions is to read the question first and then read the paragraph.
- d) Repeating the reading to better understand the meaning of the reading.
- e) Look at the test and think what words are closest to or match the choices in the question.
- f) Study and often practice working on TOEFL questions.

Based on the questions above, the researcher got many answers from students regarding what was done to overcome difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions. Researchers can conclude the response that students know how to overcome difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions, but students lack preparation before taking the test, the preparation in question is studying the materials in the TOEFL test, memorizing vocabulary and always practicing doing TOEFL test questions.

4. Factors affecting students' difficulty understanding English tests

- a) The high level of language in the test and lack of vocabulary.
- b) Understanding the meaning of each word in the question.
- c) Lazy study and lazy reading.

- d) The test is formal or the vocabulary is rare.
- e) There are unfamiliar terms.

There are several student answers above regarding the factors of difficulty working on the TOEFL reading test, one of which is difficulty understanding each meaning of words in reading and questions, it happens because of the lack of mastery of vocabulary, and lazy learning.

5. The student's highest score when taking the TOEFL reading test
- a) I have never taken a TOEFL test before.
  - b) The score I got when I took the TOEFL test was 420.
  - c) the highest score I ever got was 210

In the fifth question, one student taking the TOEFL test managed to score above the standard, one student taking the TOEFL test scored below the standard and eleven students who never took the TOEFL.

From the five questions above and the students' responses to each of these questions, the researcher can analyze and conclude that there are several factors that affect the difficulty in understanding the Reading TOEFL reading test as follows:

Focus is the first difficulty factor faced by students in working on TOEFL reading section questions. In the reading comprehension session, there are many cases where students take the test forgetting about the main idea of each paragraph, students only focus on the main idea of the paragraph being read so they must read repeatedly to find the main idea. Therefore, concentration is the most important thing when taking the TOEFL test.

Time management the second difficulty factor faced by students in solving TOEFL questions is the lack of students' ability to manage time. In other words, students cannot work on questions optimally with the time provided. They complained that the time provided was very insufficient.

Vocabulary mastery is the third difficulty factor, most students face difficulties in English because they do not have enough vocabulary mastery. Without enough vocabulary mastery, students will not be able to understand the content of the test.

Students lack in understanding the aspects of questions contained in TOEFL questions. In other words, the students could not differentiate between the types of questions because of their lack of knowledge. Therefore, they obtained low scores. In fact, each type of reading question has its own keywords as a characteristic of each question that distinguishes it from other questions and different solution strategies.

Training is the fifth cause, namely almost all students who became informants in this study answered that they had never taken a TOEFL test before. Students revealed this during the interview.

From the interview results, although the students showed a positive response to reading, almost all students emphasized the following factors that affect difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests: most students face difficulties in English because they do not have enough vocabulary mastery. Without enough vocabulary, students will not be able to understand the content of the test and this will lead to failure in reading and will cause a decrease in reading motivation, duration to read each text. Then, students are also lacking in understanding the aspects of the questions contained in the TOEFL questions, so with these various problems they fail in completing the TOEFL reading test.

### **Discussion**

As previously explained in chapter II, comprehension means that, when reading, readers unconsciously try to understand the meaning of the text and they also deal with understanding the purpose of the text, readers may be able to make their own conclusions about the text after reading stating that there are six aspects in reading comprehension, namely: determining topic/main idea, stated detail question, unstated detail question, implied detail question, vocabulary question and where question. In the TOEFL Reading section, the PBT type always consists of 50 questions in the form of multiple choice. In the TOEFL Reading section, many questions are always related to vocabulary in context and information stated in detail. Therefore, there is always an imbalance in the reading aspect. As ETS stated earlier, TOEFL is designed to measure the English language proficiency of native speakers. TOEFL tests abilities that are greater than just speaking or reading English, such as the ability to understand new information or infer information. To understand new information, students must have a good command of vocabulary. Without understanding the meaning of the vocabulary/phrase, students will have difficulty when they try to understand the context.

There are five tests in the Reading section of the TOEFL test, each test has about 100-200 words. For the main idea aspect, of course, the number of questions is only 5. Then in the aspect of specific information, in the TOEFL Reading section, it is divided into stated detail information and unstated detail information. In this study, the total questions for stated detail information are 9 questions. Then, the total questions for unstated detail information are 5 questions. The total implied detail question is 7, vocabulary is 19, and where question is 5.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the results found from students' responses to reading questions contained in the TOEFL show that almost all aspects of questions students have difficulty with such as: finding the topic/main idea, explicit detail questions, unexpressed detail questions, implied detail questions, vocabulary questions and place questions. However, explicit detail questions were the most difficult questions for students to solve. This type of question is among the most

difficult questions for students. This can be seen from the number of students who can answer correctly each of these questions. All questions stated as description questions fall into the interval of difficult questions based on the classification of the difficulty index.

Then, based on the source of the results of the interview analysis, the factors of students' difficulties in working on TOEFL reading questions were found. From the interview results, although the students showed a positive response to reading, almost all students emphasized the following factors that affect difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests: most students face difficulties in English because they do not have enough vocabulary mastery. Without sufficient vocabulary, students will not be able to understand the content of the test and this will lead to failure in reading and will lead to decreased motivation to read, the duration to read each test, students are also lacking in understanding the aspects of questions contained in TOEFL questions, so that with these various problems they fail in completing the TOEFL reading test and lack of practice doing TOEFL questions and being lazy to take the TOEFL test is one of the factors that affect the difficulty in answering the reading part of the TOEFL test because practice or taking the TOEFL test aims to measure English language skills and also students see where the mistakes are in completing the test so that they learn more TOEFL material before taking the next test.

There are also previous research results that investigate students' difficulties in completing the reading section of the TOEFL test. The previous research is Sari, Mita Desi, according to the results of the study showed that: the difficulties experienced by students in understanding the TOEFL Reading test are determining the main idea, reference, inference, detail information that is not mentioned, detail information that is mentioned, and vocabulary in context. Meanwhile, the results of the interview showed that students' opinions about the factors that influence difficulties in understanding TOEFL Reading tests are students' interest in the theme of TOEFL Reading tests, the duration for reading each test, students' limited knowledge of vocabulary, and the complexity of sentences.

This research aims to find out the difficulties of students in doing the TOEFL reading test and to find out the factors that influence the difficulty in answering the TOEFL reading test. The instrument used to collect data is the TOEFL reading test which consists of 50 questions in the form of multiple choice and an interview consisting of 5 questions, which distinguishes it from previous research. Based on the findings of this research, it can be used as an alternative reference document as a guide in teaching TOEFL reading skills, especially for English Lecturers who will teach reading for academic courses that focus on TOEFL reading comprehension skills.



The novelty in this researcher, in this research, there are six types of questions examined to find students' difficulties in doing the TOEFL test in the reading section, topic/main idea, stated detail question, unstated detail question, implied detail question, vocabulary question and where question. Based on the index of students' difficulties in completing the TOEFL test lies in the unstated detail question section and there are five factors that influence the difficulty in answering the TOEFL test in the reading section, namely lack of focus in taking the TOEFL test, time management, lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of understanding of the aspects of the questions in the TOEFL reading section, infrequent practice or taking the TOEFL test.

### **Conclusion**

The purposes of this research were to describe the fifth semester students' difficult is in comprehending TOEFL Reading test and to find out the factors which influence the difficulty in comprehending TOEFL Reading test. After conducting the research and analyzing all the data, the researcher would like to conclude all the results of this research as follows:

1. The difficulty of third semester students in understanding the TOEFL Reading test was in the aspect of unstated detailed information questions which were the most difficult questions faced by students and these questions have been classified into the most difficult questions based on the difficulty index formula.
2. The factors that influence the difficulty in comprehending TOEFL Reading test were lack of focus, time management, vocabulary mastery, lack of understanding of the aspects of the questions contained in the TOEFL questions, and lack of practice working on questions or taking the TOEFL test.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the test and interview that have been done, the researcher has the following suggestions:

1. For the lecturers/teachers, they should build and develop the students' mastery in vocabulary, especially the vocabulary which common in TOEFL Reading test. The lecturers can ask them to often read academic.
2. Books and journals of research, it would help them to build their memorization of academic vocabularies.
3. For the students, the researcher hopes that they never stop learning and studying English. Please keep practicing and mastering new vocabularies through many strategies.
4. For the next researchers, this thesis might not be perfect, but it would be one of the references to conduct the next research in reading field, especially in TOEFL Reading test.

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