

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

It is not a new thing that the English language has become common and widely known by society in various countries. This can happen because English is an international language inaugurated by the United Nations. Because the figures for English speakers have a vast number and are spread out in almost all regions of the country. Wulandari (2021) declared that about a third of the world's population, or almost two billion people, use English nowadays. Indonesia is a country that applies English as a second language. However, in its development, many or even not all of our citizens can understand or learn the language. In education, by mastering international languages, we can more effortlessly find out and acquire various kinds of knowledge. It is because millions and even more learning resources use the international language.

In learning a language, we need to adapt to use and apply the knowledge we learn frequently. As we know that in developing language skills, students are emphasized to be able to master the functional level of literacy, such as; speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The four components have their respective roles in language mastery. Currently, some of the tests presented to the students are kind of substantial for mastery of the ability to read text. For instance, to accomplish school exams, daily tests, or other academic tests are mostly in the form of reading texts. Moreover, to continue their studies to a higher level, in this case, a college. It is also required to complete the test in the form of reading text, notably in the field of English. Not only in the academic test but also in the test to find a job, sometimes there are those who take the English test as a condition for being accepted for work. In order to be more familiar with English texts, we are advised to read English texts more often. The ability to read can be said to be a significant factor in learning a language. Several types of texts that are used to measure the ability to understand English are almost the same as the types of texts that we can find in the TOEFL test. As

a matter of fact, nowadays looking for a job is not an easy thing. However, not all companies or educational institutions make the TOEFL a requirement to be accepted. It would be better if we had a decent score on TOEFL. This can be taken into consideration as a selling point for our quality.

TOEFL is prepared with the aim of estimating the English language ability of someone who takes the test. This was also stated by Netta and Trisnawati (2019), which is a proficiency test in the field of English without involving the teaching and learning process directly. Clark (2014) also stated that at least more than nine thousand universities and around one hundred and thirty countries in the entire world had implemented the TOEFL test as an intended component to admit their students to join their institutions. English Testing Service (ETS) is one of the companies in our country that organizes TOEFL International certification (Mahmud, 2014). As we realize that there are several kinds of tests provided by the English Testing Service (ETS), they are; Paper-Based Test (PBT), Computer-Based Test (CBT), and Internet-Based Test (IBT). Some practitioner still uses the conventional method, Paper-Based Test (PBT). However, due to the current pandemic, which eventually requires us to adapt to the development of the assistive system, several of them are using Computer-Based Tests (CBT), even Internet-Based tests (IBT). The TOEFL test consists of several abilities that are tested; Listening Skills, Structure and Writing Expression, and Reading Comprehension (Suryani, 2021).

Yuliani (2017) said that the habit of reading has a very important role in supporting students' learning. Because if the student gets several sources for their knowledge, it will inspire the brain's performance to understand reading texts and develop it to remember the noteworthy things. The activity of processing the content of a passage by further reading is generally referred to as reading comprehension. This is supported by devoting their ability to read based on their interpretation, knowledge, and background. By reading, we are expected to distinguish the information available in the text. As explained by Santi (2020), we can also call it an art in the field of language to understand a

written text and also emphasise the reader's way of thinking, especially in mastering the language. Therefore, this activity allows the reader to play an important role in having the ability to read English texts. Due to the virtue of having this ability, they may be slower in understanding the content of the message that the author is trying to convey, and even the chance to face some difficulties in understanding the content of the text will definitely arise.

One of the efforts to reach reading comprehension is to habituate ourselves, dealing with English texts. Reading Comprehension is one of the most important language skills in learning a language. It is not only considerate of the meaning of each sentence provided. But we are also asked to capture the important ideas and points, that's why after reading the English text on the TOEFL test, we are asked to answer several questions related to certain passages. It aims to measure our ability to understand reading well. Activity in understanding English is commonly known as reading comprehension. In summary, reading comprehension aims not only to be able to interpret the information but to be able to understand the meaning of the passage, and we can modify the main point into our own language.

Many English courses offer training for the TOEFL test, and several domestic universities also use TOEFL test training as a promotion for their university. Because by having a TOEFL score, we can also get assistance in the form of scholarships at several universities abroad. Several educational institutions, both private schools and public schools in Indonesia, from elementary schools and even pre-schools, apply English language learning as a part of their curriculum. This proves that our country also wants to compete with other countries, especially with the aim of developing the quality of the rising generation. One example of an education level that uses English as a second language in the implementation of current learning is a Vocational High School (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*).

The researcher took Vocational High School as a research field because of the lack of previous research that discusses the implementation of the TOEFL test in Vocational High Schools. Saraswati (2021) said that studying

abroad is mostly only for High School graduates. Generally, it is caused by those who do not have any confidence and have difficulties regarding the curriculum and the language. Besides, most of the earlier researchers made university students the object of their research related to TOEFL. Some of them conduct research in Senior High School due to the abundance of graduates who are more interested in continuing their studies abroad as well. This can be happened because of the lack of insight into TOEFL certificate usage. Generally, people just realize that the certificate can only be used for studying abroad. Despite this, there are also many domestic companies who are considering even making the TOEFL certificate a requirement for their administrative material nowadays. From the goal that has been determined by the school, Vocational High School is definitely more focused on preparing their students to be ready for work instead of Senior High School. Although typically, Vocational High Schools produce graduates who are ready to work, in reality, most students in these Vocational High Schools prefer to continue their studies at university. Therefore, to prepare Vocational High School students to compete in their careers after graduation, it is necessary to have an early and accurate introduction to TOEFL. With the detailed introduction of the TOEFL, thus the researcher hoped that Vocational High School students could become better human resources who are ready to face global challenges.

Ihsanul Fikri Vocational High School is one of the private and Islamic Vocational High Schools in Magelang. One of the programs carried out at the school is the additional hours to extend the students' comprehension of some skills. In this program, the students are given extra time to study their interests and in-depth understanding of several things outside of the teaching-learning activities, including English language development. Considering the increasing number of student enthusiast who wants to study abroad, likewise to prepare students for the TOEFL test in preparation for their additional certificate. So, the language program provides training to take the TOEFL test regularly. The student is targeted to attend the training once a week. However, there are still many of them who have difficulty in the training process. This is evidenced by

the acquisition of their scores when doing the practice test, which is dominated by scores that are less satisfying. It can be described from twenty students who joined the training, less than ten people who got a good score. Based on the whole that has been described previously, the researcher intends to investigate something concern with English Reading Comprehension in undertaking the TOEFL Prediction Test.

B. Problem Statement

The research questions in this study are:

- 1) What is the most difficult skill faced by the students in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction?
- 2) Why do they have difficulty in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of the TOEFL Test Prediction?
- 3) What are the students' strategies in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of the TOEFL Test Prediction?
- 4) How do the teacher's strategies follow up on the difficulties in doing the Reading Comprehension Section of the TOEFL Test Prediction?

C. Limitations of The Study

The researcher is concerned with the student's difficulties and strategies in the TOEFL Prediction Test of Reading Comprehension Section. Moreover, the sample of the research is also limited to the eleventh-grade Ihsanul Fikri Mungkid Vocational High School students who want to continue their studies or work abroad. They are students enrolled in the TOEFL preparation program. The test involves sixteen students, while the interview involves five students chosen at random. And two English teachers who are in charge of implementing the TOEFL training program at the school.

D. Objective of The Study

Based on the problem statement above, there are some aims of this study as follows:

- 1) To identify the most difficult skill faced by the students in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction.
- 2) To analyze the reason for their difficulties in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction.
- 3) To analyze the students' strategies in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction.
- 4) To identify the teacher's strategies to follow up on the difficulties in doing the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction.

E. Benefit of The Study

There are some benefits of the study in this research; they are; theoretical and practical benefits.

1. Theoretical Benefit

This research is expected to increase knowledge in analyzing the most difficult skill faced by the students and the students' strategies in answering the Reading Comprehension Section of TOEFL Test Prediction.

2. Practical Benefit

The result of this research could be useful to educators or other researchers who will find out or evaluate existing theories with a similar topic.