

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

In a modern era like nowadays, human beings communicate to each other almost every day. Communication is intended to spread important information from an individual to another or to society. One of the tools of communication is a language. For decades, many languages have developed and so are the people who use them. French, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindustani, Malay, Russian and English are several languages that have been broadly used as international languages. But of course, English is become the lingua franca, means that the language can be used when communicating in almost every country in the world.

A language consist of four skills, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading is one of the four language skills which is very important for EFL students because students could develop their English vocabulary, get much knowledge, and learn many things by reading. According to Williams (1998) Reading can be classified into two types: initial reading and reading comprehension. Initial reading is an effort made by those who have not been able to read and learn reading (e.g. how to read the alphabets and combination of letters or simple words), whereas reading comprehension is an activity aimed to understand the messages of a particular text.

Many researchers such as Bernhardt (1991), Kern (2000), Tankersley (2003), Nelson (2008), Gunning (2011), and Sprenger (2013) have agreed that reading is one of the most important skills that an individual should develop in order to succeed in academic and social pursuits. The students are supposed to master the four skills in learning English, one of them is reading. As Grellet (1999:4) states, there are two main reasons for reading: reading for pleasure and reading for information (in order to find out something or in order to do something with the information the readers get). Following this statement, the students will get much information about everything that they do not know or see before by reading.

By reading, the students can find some specific information, understand the whole stories, find reasons, explanation, summary, and comments of the news that they read. The students also can be entertained by reading especially when the students read comics, novel, short story, etc. The information that the students will get is more details rather than the one they get from other skills.

That is why, as human being, it is really important to be able to read and comprehend the information of the text when reading. This is in accordance with the Holy Qur'an Surah Al-Alaq verse 1-5:

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (٣)

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ (٥)

These verses are the first divine revelation that fall upon Moslems through Prophet Muhammad. The verses built Islam civilization to become powerful in economy, politics, and science in 2/3 of the world. The verses became milestone for the mind changing that derived from myth and unlogical thoughts to be more rasional and scientific. Al-Alaq verse 1-5 describe Allah the Almighty priorities to obligation in reading for His servants. The obligation to read in these verses must be interpreted not merely as reading books, but also reading “books” about this world. Such as “reading (observe)” the signs of the greatness of Allah, and “read” the universe.

Related to the verses, without reading, people cannot improve and explore the knowledge to be a professional. A nation cannot develop if the people are lack in science and knowledge of the world. And then, one of the media for reading is not only books, in this era people can gain information and knowledge through another sources such as internet, people can read news, e-journals, e-books, blogs, etc.

In the history of the English instruction in the Indonesian secondary school system, skills in reading text written in English have been considered very important. Renandya (2004:124) indicates that English instruction in the school system in Indonesia aims to provide sufficiently well-developed reading skills among Indonesians to read science-related texts written in English.

On the other hand, the English instruction at tertiary institutions or higher education is different from that at secondary schools in many aspects: status, number of hours, instructional objective, method of teaching, and teaching materials. Most universities requiring their students to take formal English courses focus on developing students' English proficiency to read textbooks to support their study program.

In UIN Antasari Banjarmasin, English Department students are commonly taught series of reading comprehension courses which are aimed to develop the students reading proficiency in English. For example, they are required to take Intensive Reading I, Intensive Reading II, Intensive Reading III, and Extensive Reading with different emphasis in terms of readability, comprehension level (e.g. literal, inferential, and critical), and text types (e.g. narrative, descriptive, argumentative, etc.).

The students from English Department are required to take TOEFL PBT/ITP as one of the requirement to take Comprehensive Examination and take Degree Certificate. For general information, TOEFL or Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers. It has three types: PBT, CBT and iBT. The English students of UIN Antasari also need to get at least 450 score for TOEFL and it will be rise into 500 next year. But in fact, many of the students' score still below 500. Furthermore, from the pre-observation and past experiences, most of the students are struggling in comprehending TOEFL reading section. Some of them said that the vocabularies are extremely

unfamiliar and the content simply not interesting and unfamiliar for them. For general information, the TOEFL reading text usually contains topic related History, Science, Economy, Politics, and Literature.

The previous studies related comprehending English texts have been done by Frikaputri Imasei and Ariyanti Puspita. Imasei (2016) in her thesis entitled *The Difficulties Encountered by Islamic Education Department Students in Reading English Text at IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin* was using quantitative approach. The result of this study was that the students' difficulties was in fair category (44,32) and they have difficulties in finding the factual information (68,25%), comprehending the reference (58,5%), and comprehending the supporting idea (55,13%).

Puspita (2017) in her research entitled *Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading Text at Second Grade Students of SMAN 2 Metro* used qualitative approach. Based on this research, the result showed that the students have constraints with five aspects of reading: determining the main idea, finding the specific information, making inference, identifying reference, and understanding the meaning of word in comprehending English reading text. In addition, it has been found that there were five problems faced by the students in comprehending the text; unfamiliar words, unfamiliar content, ambiguous pronoun, and sentence pattern.

The researcher has found the similarity and the difference with the previous studies. The similarity was both the researcher and Imasei and Puspita also trying to find out the students' difficulties when reading English

text. While the previous studies focused on senior high school and Islamic Education Department, the researcher was interested in exploring the reading comprehension difficulties on TOEFL Reading text that faced by fifth semester students of English Education Department academic year 2018/2019. The students on their fifth semester were chosen due to the fact they have been taken a TOEFL Preparation Test before and have been completed their Intensive Reading courses. Descriptive qualitative method was used for conducting the research. This research was different from the previous studies because it focused on the difficulties that the students faced when comprehending TOEFL reading text. TOEFL Reading texts are using formal English vocabularies which is usually use in academic fields. That is why, the level of difficulty is different from the texts that use in senior high school.

While the students in higher education, especially English Education Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin are expected to be advanced in English (which determined by TOEFL score) the fact is most of the students still in intermediate level (TBI of UIN Antasari Report for TOEFL score). Due to this fact, the researcher was interested in finding the difficulties which encountered by the students specifically in TOEFL Reading section, and also finding the factors which influence the students' difficulties in comprehending English text.

Based on the statement above, the researcher was interested to conduct the research entitled **AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIFTH SEMESTER STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN COMPREHENDING TOEFL READING TEXT AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UIN ANTASARI BANJARMASIN.**

B. Statements of Problem

This research was done in order to answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties that the students encountered in comprehending TOEFL Reading text?
2. What are the factors that influence the difficulties in comprehending TOEFL Reading text?

C. Objective of the Research

The aims of this research were:

1. To describe the difficulties that the students encountered in comprehending TOEFL Reading text.
2. To find out the factors that influence the difficulty in comprehending TOEFL Reading text.

D. Significance of the Research

The findings of this research are redound to the benefit of society considering that English plays an important role in communication and resource of information nowadays. This research gives some useful information about the difficulties that the students of English Department encountered in comprehending TOEFL Reading text, so it also helps the lecturer to increase the students' ability. Furthermore, this research describes the factors that influence the difficulty in comprehending TOEFL Reading text. This research is expected to be used as a reference for other researchers who want to conduct a research in reading field. Hopefully, the result of this research is useful for lecturers, teachers, students, and all of the readers.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation to the title of the research, the researcher defined the key terms:

1. Difficulties

Difficulties are obstacles or problems that faced by the fifth semester students of English Education Department regarding comprehending TOEFL reading text. In this research, these difficulties refer to aspects of reading: determining main idea, finding specific information, inference, reference, and vocabulary.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading is perceiving a written text in order to understand its content (Longman Dictionary). Brunan W.K (1989) defines reading as a two way interaction in which information is exchange between the reader and the author. Comprehension is finding meaning in the text. Thus, reading comprehension is the act to process a written text, understand the meaning of its content, and to integrate it with the prior knowledge of the reader. In this research, reading comprehension refers to comprehending texts from TOEFL Reading section.

3. TOEFL Reading Text

TOEFL Reading Text refers to five short texts of Reading section from Barron's Practice Exercises for TOEFL Preparation Test (PBT).