THE STUDENTS' LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF HIGHER TOEFL SCORES

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This research is intended to find out the learning strategies that Respondents used to get higher TOEFL scores. TOEFL is test of English as foreign language, or a standardize in measuring the abilities in English skills (Listening, Structure and Reading). This research used samples method by using qualitative approach. In this study, the writer found the respondents who got higher TOEFL scores. Then, the writer asked each of the respondent about the strategy that made their scores higher in TOEFL test. This research used both interview and questionnaire instruments. The interview was 10 questions about the TOEFL learning strategies, and the respondents answered relate to their strategy used in learning TOEFL. In addition, the writer made a questionnaire instrument in the research aimed to find out the TOEFL learning strategies scales that respondents usually applied in learning TOEFL. Moreover, The interview and the questionnaire showed that the strategies that respondents used in learning TOEFL was a proper methods to apply in learning TOEFL. In this research, the dominant strategy relate to the theory respondents used, were the audiotory and visual methods, the respondents used those because the TOEFL is the language testing, so visual and audiotory were very influential in learning learning TOEFL. In conclusion, the research illustrated that learning TOEFL has each strategy depends on the respondent, and the strategy that respondents used have been increased their TOEFL scores in official test.

INTRODUCTION

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is one of the standardized tests which have been applied by institutions all around the world to test the members' English language proficiency. TOEFL is the most popular test used in many countries in all over the world. Clark (2014) stated that according to ETS (Educational Testing Service), the TOEFL is used by more than 9.000 colleges, universities, and agencies in more than 130 countries to help them make admissions decisions, making it the most widely accepted English-Language test in the world. Moreover, Toefl tests are often used to test students

for an English ability for a given necessity, for example, continuing study abroad, work entrance exam or even continue to study within the country have also required Toefl testing to. Then, It also becomes one of the graduation standard requirements in the Universities for the students.

ETS Toefl (2020) stated that the Toefl test was developed in the early 1960s to assess the English proficiency of second language speakers of English who intend to study in institutions where English is the language of instructions. It also has an evolution from the types of the tests. it is stated in ETS (2020) since itsinception in 1964, the Toefl test has evolved from a paper-based test to a computer-based test and, in 2005, to an internet-based test. In Toefl test has three components to do. they are included English language skills, it includes three sections of the tests, they are listening, structure or grammatical error, and reading sections.

Many students faced the difficulties in answering the TOEFL and hard to obtain the high score in TOEFL test. The Students have some reasons why they have problems in answering TOEFL test. Because, they don't master all basic skills and seldom practice in TOEFL. Mahmud (2014) found that the main problems of the students in answering the TOEFL test were due to several conflicting reasons, such as fewer basic skills, less practice, less motivation, and students individual differences such as age and social-status.

However, some students have a strategy in answering Toefl questions to get a high score. Many students have their own ways to figure out the hard TOEFL test questions.For example, the students learn TOEFL consistently and try to discover the hard answers by learning more from different sources. Then, Enhancing the English vocabularies is one of the correct strategies in getting high TOEFL score. Twelve Fifteen (2020) stated that candidates who have a rich vocabulary have a higher chance to get higher score on the TOEFL test.

The Students have to prepare well before taking TOEFL exam. It needs some preparations before TOEFL test. For Instance, beginning preparations in long time and doing practice TOEFL questions consistently. GyanDhan (2020), the preparations for TOEFL test may practicing that matters, and for rigorous practice, it needs to start the preparations well in advance. The Students should start studying at least 2-3 months before the test and finding for the deeper materials of TOEF because it will help the students to understand all the views of TOEFL components.

This research will present that TOEFL is one of crusial things in English proficient test. The study will be focused to TOEFL strategy that applied by some students in Banda Aceh City. Researcher strongly believe the focus of this study will deliver the benefits to other students and teachers after this research finds out the result. The result of the study may gives the impacts to improve the students' learning strategies in obtaining higher TOEFL scores. Then, the research will give the great impact for next continuing research to proof the strategies that have applied in this previous study. Moreover, the study also help the students to prepare all components of TOEFL before taking TOEFL test. The researcher will conduct it with the samples from different study backgrounds, this way will figure out the general problems that students faced. However, each student has the way or strategy to solve the problems to achieve high TOEFL score, but this research will explain the clear the strategies that successful apllied by the higher TOEFL score students and it will be delivered the structural strategies by the researcher and the samples.

Nowadays, many institutions require the English skill as one thing crucial in selecting the participants are eligible or not applicant for an institution. However, there are still many students who consider TOEFL is the thing not important to learn. Whereas, today almost all universities around the world require the TOEFL is one of requirements to enter or graduate from the university. We Make Scholars (2020) delivered that studying in almost all best universities around the world comes with a long list of pre-requisites that needs to be fulfilled prior to your admissions. One of the most common and important requirements is language proficiency test scores. There are certain universities around the world which allow students with the TOEFL scores.

The common problem, is some students feel hard in learning TOEFL, they are really struggling in settling how the way to learn TOEFL correctly. In fact, researcher believe that all the universities students have studied even English since high school, properly they at least know and understand how lo learn English and do the excises of the TOEFL. On the other hands, there are a lot of universities students struggled in learning TOEFL, even English students major. Moreover, researcher also have did the survey around the English or non-English majors students to discover how difficult and easy they learned English, TOEFL exactly. Half of the students did well in learning TOEFL and the other students didn't feel the same because they hard to learn English. In conclusion, researcher took the main problem of this study, is the students who learned easier about TOEFL and got higher TOEFL scores, they had their strategies in learning TOEFL. Therefore, researcher was strongly excited to do research about the strategy in learning

TOEFL. Because the researcher is sure through this research, will there is an improvement to students in learning English or TOEFL easier and better, so the students will achieve higher scores in TOEFL test.

There are some previous studies which are correlated to the focus of this research. The first research is from Huy (2015) stated that the strategy is the way how we pursue thing, according to Huy the strategy has some types, one of the right strategy to apply in TOEFL learning is "memory strategy". He said that, memory strategy were used to enter new information into memory strorage and for retrieving it to help learners be able to link one L2 item or concept with other. Memory strategies are cotegorized into 4 sets: creating mental linkage, applying images and sound, reviewing well and employing action. Therefore, memory strategies allow learners to keep vocabulary and then retrieve it when they are needed for communication.

The previous research delivered by Vandergrift (2014) explained the strategy in learning has the type which related to learning TOEFL, he stated that defined socio-affective strategies as the techniques. the use of socio-affective strategies to enhance the students' motivation in English speaking. Therefore, the purposes of the study were to find out the students' learning strategies in TOEFL generally. The way of using socio-affective strategies to enhance students' motivation in English speaking and to describe students' perception toward socio-affective strategies in enhancing their motivation in English speaking.

due to the previous studies being appended above, the researcher is interested to continue the research and the researcher will conduct the research with the right respondents. The researcher will seek for the students who have higher TOEFL scores up to 500, and the researcher will select about ten students as research respondents completely. Moreover, the study delivers the benefits by applying the learning strategies that used by the higher TOEFL score students. Therefore, the researcher want to find out about TOEFL learning strategis used by the students of Banda Aceh.

In conclusion, researcher decided to resolve the problem through conducting a proper research on TOEFL learning strategy where it has the certain purpose to figure out the students' learning errors in TOEFL learning. So this research has specific purposes that researcher will do work for the result of this research will be benefits for the students or even English teacher. this study aims to discover the students' learning strategies in obtaining the high TOEFL scores and to find out the students' difficulties in answering TOEFL test. Then, researcher strongly believe that this study will help the other students

to be smart in learning TOEFL by applying the previous strategies that have apllied by the samples of this research. And finally the research can give benefits to the students and teacher and the research will be implemented to the next research about how impactful the strategies in fact.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses the qualitative approach. The writer used qualitative approach because this study focuses on the natural condition obtained the subjects related to this research throughout the written or spoken words. Ary (2010:424) states that the qualitative inquirer deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics.

According to Arikunto (2010), qualitative methods as research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. The reason why the researcher use the qualitative res approach is that it has clear techniques that are directed to answer problems in the research formula (Sugiono:2015).

Additionally, (Sugiyono, 2011:9), added that Qualitative research method are research methods based on on the philosophy of postpositivism, while for researching on natural objects,where the researcher is as the key instrument, data collection technique done by triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and research results emphasizes meaning rather than generalization where the result will always considersthe variety of data that requires the approach the sources related to the data.

THE RESEARCH INTRUMENT

In this research, there are some instruments being used to do the research, they are questionnaire and interview guideline. Three of them are the appropriate tools for the writer to use in running this research. The purpose of those instruments are inherently to obtain the information or data directly from the reliable actors related to this study.

1. **Interview Guideline**

The researcher use the interview guideline to approach the actors who are correlated to the research. The researcher expects that he can access the information through the interviewees' answers. According to Ary (2010), interview guideline is one of the most deployed and basic ways to get the qualitative data and it is used to collect the

data from the individuals' contention, feeling and their beliefs about a certain issue by their own words.

The interview guideline stands as the tool to held the interview to the persons who became the sources of information so the interviewer can obtain the data from that activity. There are for classified parts being interviewed, they are participation, achievement, interest, and support. There will be at least to questions being asked of each part.

2.   **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Sugiyono:2012). Questionnaires can be thought of as a kind of written interview. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or post.

Questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. Data can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the questionnaires were completed. This is useful for large populations when interviews would be impractical.

The type of questionnaire used by the researcher is closed questions structure. According to Sugiyono (2012), the closed questions structure is the questions with the answer that only allow the respondents to give the answers which fit into pre-decided categories in each question. The researcher utilize this type of questionnaire is to efficiently find the data by providing the categorized answers which lead the respondents to have a comparative way of responding process.

In this research, the respondents will alternatively choose the answer among some options of each questions with the that indicate the scales. The researcher use the Likert Scale. The Likert Scale is a tool used to develop instruments used to measure the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of a person or group of people against the potentials and problems of an object, the design of a product, the process of creating products and products that have been developed or created. According to Sugiyono (2012:93), Likert Scale is used to measure attitudes, opinions and the perception of a person or group of a social phenomenon.

According to Sugiyono (2012: 93), there are four to five answer from highly positive to highly negative. Meanwhile, according to Mulyatiningsih (2012: 29) suggested to use

four scales of answers without using a neutral answer in order that respondent answers will be more assertive**.**

3. Interview

In collecting data, the writer uses the Interview process. It is a process of asking for some important information related to the research or topic being discussed or researched. In addition, interview can be a way of deepening a certain issue or case by absorbing and understanding the information related to the issue from the reliable people who are involved in the case being investigated. The people who become the source of information in the interview are called as respondents (Interviewees) while the one who asks some information stands as an interviewer (Moleong, 2014:186).

According to Nurgiantoro (2013:97), an interview is a method used to obtain information from the respondent (interviewees) by providing a question and spoken answer. It means that interview is a way to gain some information orally. The interview is done with the prepared questions that will lead and stimulate the respondent to answer and share what they think of related to the questions being given.

The researcher employ the semi structured interview with open-ended questions in the interview activity of this study. The researcher thinks that by using the semi structured interview with open-ended questions, it will be much easier for the writer to get deeper and further information from the interviewees. Because this study mostly talks about the circumstance so the researcher need to have additional or free-form of questions regarding the variety of the experience, qualification, and the strategy of each person in TOEFL.

At the same time, the researcher also needs the justification of each the interviewees' answer in order to discover the reasons of their claims. This semi structured interview with open-ended questions is an appropriate way to find interconnected replies so that the potential of valid information can be maximized; it is between the unstructured and structured interview, in which the questions relies on the vibe but still relates to the case of this research. Additionally, the questions are formulated at first but the interviewer may modify them when deemed necessary (Ary:2020).

Due to the distance and covid-19 pandemic, the researcher held the interview via mobile phone in order to make sure the efficiency. The researcher also pick some people from other The researcher applies the semi structure interview with the open-ended questions in order to explicitly gain the information either specifically or generally. By those methods above, it shows that the writer engage the reliable channel in discovering

the information being researched in this study. Due to the fact that everyone must have different ways or strategy in achieving their high score of TOEFL.

During the interview, the researcher also still uses audio-recorder as the data saver so that the researcher do not need to worry about the missing points withing the interview. This audio recorded is a necessity; because in semi structured with open-ended questions, there will be unexpected replies that triggers unformulated questions and at the same tame it requires the details or reasons. Hence, the writer do not have enough time to write down all of the answers completely at once. Ary (2010) and Cresweell (2012) agreed that audio recorder is an efficient media to hold an interview.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis In this study, the data analysis approach uses data flow analysis, which includes three elements: data reduction, data display, and discussion. According to Miles and Huberman (Sugiono: 2013), qualitative data classified into 3 types: data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

5. Data Condensation

Depending on Sugiono (2013), data reduction means summarizing and collecting the key points and focusing on relevant topics that have been studied. 27 Furthermore, Sugiono (2013) notes that data condensation is a process of sensitive thinking that needs intellect and breadth and high analysis as well as depth. It means that the method of summarizing and classify the data. the researcher uses it because it is going to make the researcher easier to understand and recognize the differences or similarities between a certain data with others data.

The data collected at this point is noted in depth in the commentary. From the data already noted details, and then it is summarized. The data analyzed only the data that are related to the strategy of adjudicators while giving feedback in competitive debate. The information that refers to the strategy becomes the data in this study.

6. Data Display

The next step is display or show the data after reducing it. According to sugiyono (2013), it will make it easier to understand what is being displayed and to create a plan for the next work based on what has been understood. Data display is a way of displaying information in the form of tables, graphs, pictograms, so that it can be easily interpreted and related. Overall, qualitative analysis uses narrative text in presenting results, Prasetyo (2015). In this step, the data has been organized and then matched with literary and detail for easy to understand. Next, the data will be presented according to the focus of the

research that analyzes the rate of achievement, participation, interest and supports among Acehnese debaters of private institutions in competitive debate.

7.   Data Conclusion

The last step is discussion about the result of the data obtained from the beginning of the study. The three components above; data reduction, data display, and discussion are interrelated and conducted continuously from beginning to the end of the report. This study simply describes the data being analyzed briefly by appending the essential things only which leads to the final result of the research, such as participation, achievement, interest, and the support rate. Thus, the data is understandable and it does not require much time to find.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation in chapter IV, the researcher concludes that the sample Students in this research used some learning strategies in learning TOEFL. Those strategies that sample Students used in learning TOEFL was right strategies in purpose to achieve higher TOEFL scores. The researcher gave 20 questionnaire questions and 10 interview questions for sample Students to find out their strategies in learning TOEFL to achieve academic performance in higher TOEFL scores.

Based on the result of questionnaire, each Student had their own strategy to learn TOEFL those are relates to journal about TOEFL learning strategy. From the questionnaire result, the sample Students answered the questions number 1 to 20 to find out theur strategies in learning TOEFL. The questionnaires were about the TOEFL learning strategies that they applied during learning TOEFL materials. The questions of questionnaire is not only about the strategy in learning the materials of TOEFL, but also about Student's time management, study plan, goals of study and attitude in learning TOEFL. All the respondents of this research did the questionnaires by their own pesrpectives and by what they did in learning TOEFL and set the time to study TOEFL as well. This research to questionnaire instrument had 17 respondents who all the respondents came from different universities in Banda Aceh, they had the qualification and eligible to be the sample of this research about TOEFL learning strategy. The researcher gave the questionnaire instrument to all the sample Students by the google form and the Students had to finish the questionnaires for 3 days. The result of this questionnaire was managed to find out the final result of Students' TOEFL learning strategies. The researcher made all the results of the questionnaires in to table of result, it

was conducted by researcher because of finding out the final result easily by the researcher and othet Students who wants to implement their TOEFL learning strategies.

Moreover, the second instrument of this research was interview session to all respondents. Based on the result of nterview, all the sample Students answered by direct answer between researcher and the Student. The questions of interview was related to TOEFL learning strategy, time management, attitude in learning and study plan in learning TOEFL materials. The researcher conducted the interview with each Student by direct interview to 10 sample Students, each Students had the qualification to be a respondent and eligible for this TOEFL learning strategy. The researcher gave 10 interview questions. The questions of this research related to TOEFL learning stategy that Students used in learning TOEFL. The sample Students answered all the interview questions by their own strategies during learning TOEFL materials before they took the test for TOEFL. This interview aimed to find out the Students' strategy in learning TOEFL and their did the tricks and tips to achieve the higher TOEFL scores, then the others Students could follow and implement the sample Students' TOEFL learning strategies. From the interview result, the researcher could take the conclusion that all the strategies that Students used in learning TOEFL were related to TOEFL learning strategy. By the results of the interview, other Students might be follow and impelemnt the strategies that Students applied in learning TOEFL. All the strategies that they used were purpose to achieve higher TOEFL scores in any specific purposes to each Student.

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