



The Correlation between Undergraduate Students' Reading Interest and Their Ability to Understand TOEFL Reading Test

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ABSTRACT

Even though English student are considered to be closer to English, not a few also turn out to be less proficient in English. This paper discussed about relation between undergraduate students' reading interest and their ability to understand TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) Reading Test. This research used descriptive quantitative method. The subject of the study were 17 undergraduate students in English department from STAIN Bengkalis who had studied about extensive reading and academic reading. The correlation between the two is whether interest in English affects the understanding of the TOEFL Reading Test in English students. Researcher used TOEFL reading test and questionnaire to see the correlation between both variables. This research shows that interest in reading is not always in line with their ability to solve TOEFL reading test. Because it could be that the subject's reading material is not always related to the TOEFL Reading Test.

Keywords:

reading, interest, TOEFL, English student

ABSTRAK

Meskipun siswa dianggap lebih dekat dengan bahasa Inggris, namun tidak sedikit pula yang ternyata kurang mahir berbahasa Inggris. artikel ini membahas tentang hubungan antara minat membaca mahasiswa sarjana dan kemampuan mereka dalam memahami Tes Membaca TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kuantitatif. Subyek penelitian ini adalah 17 mahasiswa S1 Jurusan Bahasa Inggris STAIN Bengkalis yang telah mempelajari tentang membaca ekstensif dan membaca akademik. Korelasi keduanya adalah apakah minat berbahasa Inggris berpengaruh terhadap pemahaman TOEFL Reading Test pada siswa bahasa Inggris. Peneliti menggunakan tes membaca TOEFL dan kuesioner untuk melihat hubungan antara kedua variabel. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa minat membaca tidak selalu sejalan dengan kemampuan mereka dalam menyelesaikan tes membaca TOEFL.

Kata Kunci:

membaca, minat, TOEFL, pelajar Bahasa Inggris



Karena bisa saja materi bacaan mata pelajaran tersebut tidak selalu berhubungan dengan TOEFL Reading Test.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important and rich thing if it is done, because by reading someone can understand something in depth and develop literacy. Reading is an activity that is easy to do but must choose the right reading material and have an understanding when reading. According to Tarigan (2015:7), reading is a process carried out and used by the reader to get the message that the writer wants to convey through the medium of words or written language.

Wahyuni Fitria (2019) said the factors that influence the difficulties encountered in reading comprehension are related to vocabulary, grammar comprehension and interest in reading. Another thing that affects reading ability is that as an Indonesian, English is not a mother tongue, and students need a motivation and interest to get more comprehend in reading skill. Therefore, the ability to master vocabulary and other aspects of English can be influenced by the higher interest of students.

Interest is attention that contains elements of feeling. Interest is an impulse or desire in a person for a particular object. English ability can be influenced by how close a student likes English. Closeness can be in the form of liking books or articles in English, their hobby of listening to English songs, and their behavior during English lessons at school (Hawa Asma Ul Husna, 2021). In addition, reading interest is an initial requirement for the reading process. But, unfortunately not all individuals have an interest in reading. This is what makes a person's ability to understand reading different. Some people are lazy to read because they think reading books is boring and uninteresting. Also, the price of expensive books makes the interest in reading decrease.

In the world of education in various countries, the term TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is already familiar. TOEFL is a series of English tests conducted to find out how far a person's English ability is, and is intended for people whose English is not their mother tongue. In the TOEFL there are several test sessions, namely listening comprehension, reading and written expression, and reading comprehension. To be able to complete the TOEFL test with a maximum score, of course, practice questions in these three skills are needed. If you have taken the TOEFL test and got an average score or even got a high score, it means that you have adequate ability in the field of English, and that can be used as a guarantee to be able to speak English and is strengthened by proof of a TOEFL certificate. Therefore, it is very useful to continue studying English both at home and abroad. Not only for studying or working, taking the TOEFL test can also be used to find out the extent of English language skills, in speaking, writing or listening. This way, you can improve your skills and increase your self-confidence. "TOEFL is also required by someone who want to apply for a particular job abroad, scholarship, and as one of requirements for students to complete their study in some universities in Indonesia" (Samad, 2016).

According to Wahyuni Fitria (2019) in journal Reading Interest and Reading Comprehension: A Correlational Study, with population and sample are eight grade students at SMP Ahmad Dahlan in Jambi. Researchers said that reading interest has a significant impact on students' reading comprehension skills, it can be seen from the results of the reading ability test and reading



interest which are in line. Where if the reading interest test results get a high score, the reading comprehension test results also get a high score.

According to Soemer and Schiefele (2019) in journal Text difficulty, topic interest, and mind wandering during reading, with sample 216 college student ages between 18-37 years old. Researcher said that interest in reading is not the only factor that affects reading comprehension, whether the selected text is difficult or not, it can also have an effect. A text that is difficult to understand will distract the reader, which will take the time to work on the TOEFL questions to mind wandering. Therefore, a text must be easily accessible so as not to reduce reading interest and avoid wandering thoughts.

In this research, the sample was taken from students of the English language program at one of the universities in Bengkalis, who needed more knowledge about the extent of their English skills because they were directly related to English. Of course, the demand for a better understanding of English is greater. And even though they don't study in the capital, their ability to speak English should be able to compete.

The purpose of this study was to see whether the reading ability and interest of an English study program students could have a major effect on their ability to solve reading questions on the TOEFL test.

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative. According to serupa.id, descriptive quantitative is research that seeks to show the results of a statistical data collection such as a survey as it is, without being calculated or seen in relation to other variables. The research begins with determining the place of research, research subjects and determining research instruments. The place chosen for the research was the STAIN Bengkalis. This study took a sample of 17 students, year 2020 in English study program from the population of English students in STAIN Bengkalis. The sampling technique used is a purposive technique, because this research is limited only to students who have studied Academic reading and Extensive Reading courses.

The instruments used in this study were questionnaires and TOEFL Reading tests. The questionnaire contains questions about interest in English as many as 10 items. Giving a questionnaire is intended to see how interested the subject is in English. TOEFL Reading Test is given to see students' ability in answering questions. The correlation between the two is whether interest in English affects the understanding of the TOEFL Reading Test in English students.

To find the Correlation between Undergraduate Students' Reading Interest and Their Ability to Understand TOEFL Reading Test using the calculation of the correlation between two variables, namely using the moment product formula. The formula for calculating the product moment correlation is as follows:

$$r_{XY} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\} \{N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$



Description:

r: Pearson correlation coefficient

N: many pairs of values X and Y

$\sum XY$: the sum of the product of X and Y values

$\sum X$: sum of X values

$\sum Y$: sum of Y values

$\sum X^2$: sum of the squares of X values

$\sum Y^2$: sum of the squares of Y values

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this modern life, the need and demand to be able to master English is increasing. English is no longer an obligation but has become a necessity to be able to compete in the world of education, career and daily life. Many companies or other agencies that need workers who have this international language skill. Especially the demands for a group of people who have a background that is directly related to the English language. As quoted by Kompas.com (2012) Wall Street workers say “English language skills are important for a person’s competitiveness, it will benefit to the country”.

As an English student at one of the University in Bengkalis, researchers have a concern to both find out what can improve students’ abilities in doing the TOEFL Reading Test. When the researcher took data on the subject (by taking questionnaires and Reading TOEFL Test), which in this case the subject was fifth semester English study program student, the TOEFL Reading Test results received varied widely, but tended to be low.

Based on the results of data collection from questionnaires and TOEFL reading tests. It was found that the score from the TOEFL Reading Test was low with an average score of 40. The test consisted of 25 TOEFL reading questions with multiple choice design, participants were instructed to answer questions by choosing one of the options according to their understanding. After conducting the test and collecting data, the participants' scores were grouped according to Suharsimi's categories.

Table 1: Percentage of rating Scale

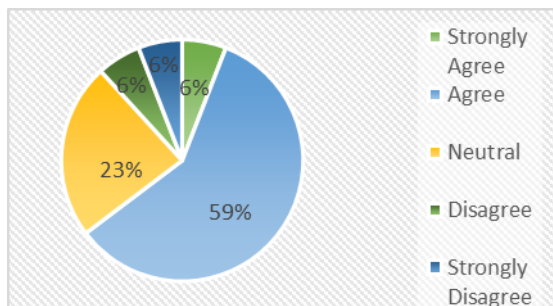
Class Interval	Rating Qualities	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very Good	0	0%
66-79	Good	2	12%
56-65	Sufficient	2	12%
40-55	Poor	3	18%
0-39	Very Poor	10	58%

Based on the grouping of the data above, it can be seen that none of the 17 participants were in the very good category. 12% of the participants are in the good and sufficient category, 18% of the participants are in the poor category and 58% of the participants are in the very poor category. If the first and second categories are grouped into the high category, then 12% of the participants are in this category, if the first category is 12



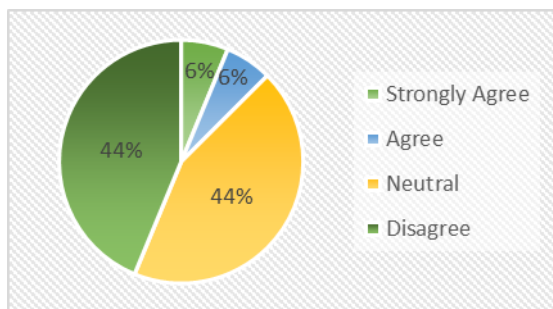
grouped into the middle category, then there are 12% of the participants. Finally, if the fourth and fifth categories are grouped in the low category, then 76% of the participants are in the low category.

Chart 1: Appropriate Title of the Chart



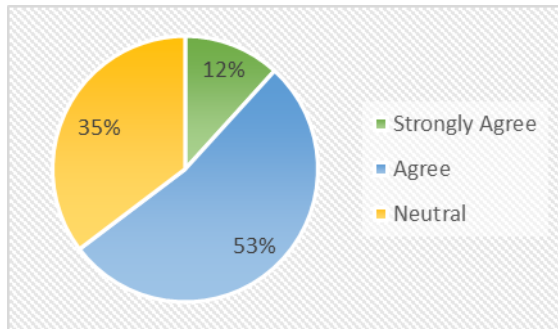
From the diagram it is known that 6% of the participants strongly agree they like to read, 59% of the participants agree they like to read, 23% are neutral. Meanwhile, the participants who voted disagree and strongly disagreed were 6% each. From the diagram it can be concluded that 65% of the participants like to read. However, the results shown on the TOEFL reading test tend to be low. Hence, it is concluded that interest in reading does not mean they get high scores on the TOEFL reading test.

Chart 2: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Likes to Borrow Books in The Library or Not



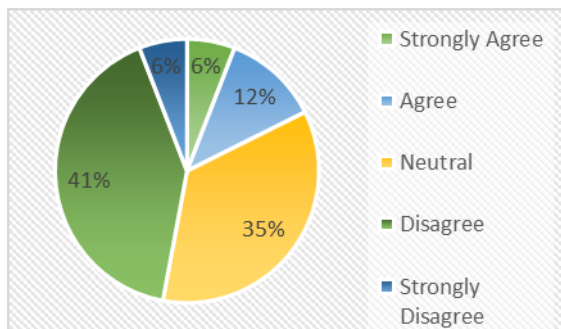
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 6% of participants agree that they like to borrow books at the library, 6% agree, 44% are neutral, and 44% disagree that they like to borrow books at the library. This it can be concluded that 12% of participants like to borrow books in the library and the rest do not. This is higher than the results of the previous question. So, it can be concluded that some participants are not interested in borrowing books from the library, or prefer to learn through other media besides books.

Chart 3: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Reads Book to Broaden Their Knowledge



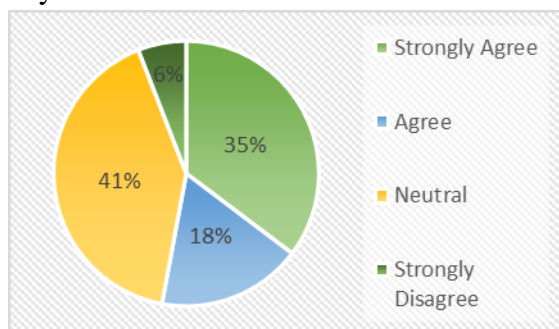
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 53% of participants agree that by reading books to expand knowledge, 12% of participants strongly agree and 35% are neutral. So, it can be concluded that although many participants read books to expand their knowledge, the material is not always related to English. So, it can be a reason why they did not answer the TOEFL Reading Test correctly or with a high score.

Chart 4: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Reads More Books Than Their Friends



From the diagram above, it can be seen that 6% of participants strongly agree that they read more books than their friends, 12% of participants agree, 35% of participants are neutral, 41% of participants disagree and 6% of participants strongly disagree. So, it can be concluded that more participants do not agree that they read more books than their friends, they assume that their friends read more books than themselves, whether it's just guessing or indeed they saw it directly.

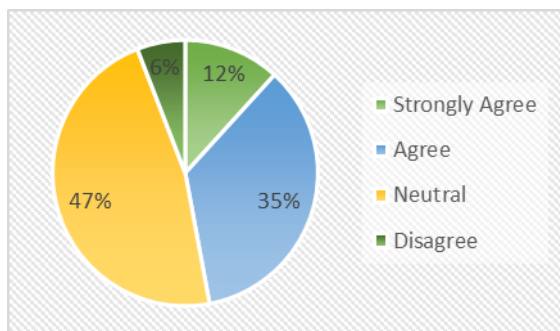
Chart 5: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Take Time Every Day to Read





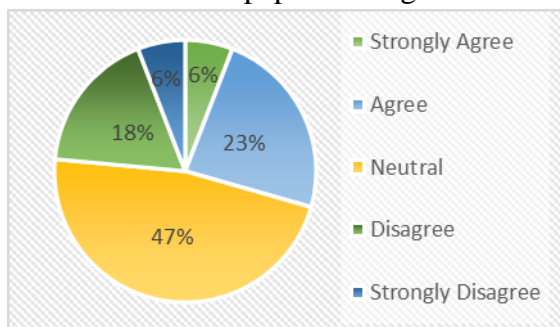
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 35% of participants strongly agree that they take their time every day to read, 18% of participants agree, 41% of participants are neutral and 6% of participants strongly disagree. So, more participants are neutral.

Chart 6: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Reads Newspaper and Article



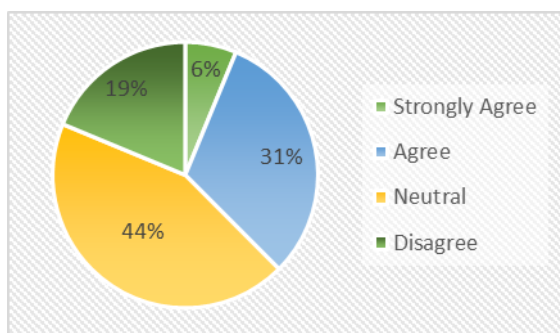
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 12% of participants strongly agree that they read newspapers and articles, 35% of participants agree, 47% of participants are neutral and 6% of participants disagree. However, the results of this questionnaire have a weakness because many participants choose neutral. Moreover, newspapers and articles are intensive reading material, which requires understanding the whole content to read them (Naely Muchtar: 2019). It is also not known how often they read newspapers and articles, so that could be the reason why participants tend to get low scores.

Chart 7: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Use Free Time to Read Books Newspaper or Magazines



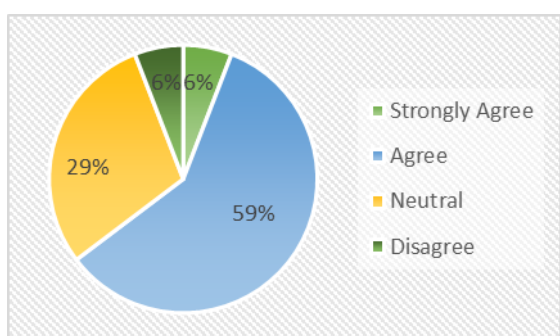
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 6% of participants strongly agree that they always use their spare time to read books, newspapers or magazines, 23% of participants agree, 47% of participants are neutral, 18% of participants disagree and 6% of participants strongly disagree.

Chart 8: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Reads Many Books Related to English



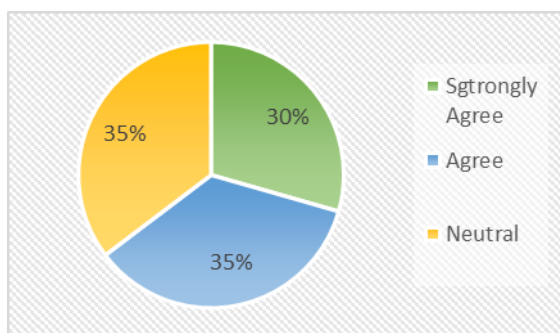
From the diagram above, it can be seen that 6% of participants strongly agree that they read a lot of books related to English, 31% of participants agree, 44% of participants are neutral and 19% of participants disagree. 37% of participants answered agree to the statement. This statement is certainly more specific than the first statement, and those who answer agree are lower. So, it can be concluded that although the participants like to read books, the books they read are not always related or in English.

Chart 9: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Read English Material Happily Without Compulsion



From the diagram above, it can be seen that 6% of participants strongly agree that they read English material happily without coercion, 59% of participants agree, 29% of participants are neutral and 6% of participants disagree. So, it can be concluded that although many of them read English material happily without coercion, it is not something that can make them able to answer the TOEFL Reading Test with a high score.

Chart 10: Percentage Diagram Whether the Participant is A Person Who Read English Material to Increase Knowledge About the Subject



From the diagram above, it can be seen that 30% of participants strongly agree that they read English material to increase knowledge about the subject, 35% of participants agree and 35% of participants are neutral. So, 75% of participants agree that they like to. But learning English is not just about reading. For example, participants may learn more about grammar. while in completing the TOEFL reading test, grammar is not too emphasized.

The measurement data is calculated with the correlation coefficient with the formula in the previous section.

$$r = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\} \times \{N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

$$r = \frac{(17)(22508) - (572)(680)}{\sqrt{17(19758 - (572)^2)} \times \sqrt{17(31776 - (680)^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{382.636 - 388.960}{\sqrt{335.886 - 327.184} \times \sqrt{540.192 - 462.400}}$$

$$r = \frac{-6.324}{\sqrt{8.702} \times \sqrt{77.792}}$$

$$r = \frac{-6.324}{93,28 \times 278,91}$$

$$r = \frac{-6.324}{26,016}$$

$$r = -0,24$$

The results of these calculations obtained a value called the Pearson correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient shows how strong the correlation between variables is. After performing calculations with the formula, the results obtained are -0.24, which means that the interpretation of the value at the level of correlation is low. with value interpretation:

0,00 – 0,199: very low correlation

0,20 – 0,399: low correlation

0,40 – 0,599: moderate correlation

0,60 – 0,799: strong correlation

0,80 – 1,000: very strong correlation



Likewise with the negative value, the closer to 0 the correlation is lower and closer to -1 the stronger the correlation. A negative value indicates an inverse relationship while a positive value indicates a unidirectional relationship.

In the results that have been described, the data shows that the participants' preference for reading has a high percentage, be it books, or other reading materials. However, if look at the results obtained on the test, 76% of the participants are in the low category. This is of course a great value, and goes against their liking for reading, as well as with statements according to Edri (2019) that there is correlation between reading interest and reading skill, and there is significant effect. In this case, the love for reading is not always in line with their ability. For example, some students tend to dislike reading but score high on tests, and vice versa. Judging from the results of the questionnaire, more participants like to read, but got low results on the test.

Another thing that can be taken into consideration in the TOEFL Reading Test ability is the regional environment. Students who have good English skills are students who are educated in high quality schools, where the school and family environment are very supportive of development and most of them are in urban areas. Meanwhile, the research conducted this time was in remote areas. So, it affects their habituation in English which also affects the skills they have.

Quoted from kursustoeft.com, there are several causes of failure to take the TOEFL exam, namely: a) inadequate facilities, b) overconfidence, c) lack of preparation, d) punctuation problems, e) poor grammar skills, f) health and psychological problems. Reading preferences do not necessarily affect the ability to complete the TOEFL reading test, because reading materials are not necessarily related to English, and even English reading materials are not necessarily related to the materials needed to complete the TOEFL reading test.

CONCLUSION

This research is limited to English students at STAIN Bengkalis. It can be concluded that in this study, even though they have an English background, they cannot complete the TOEFL reading test with high scores, even their fondness for reading is not a guarantee of high scores. Because it could be that the subject's reading material is not always related to the TOEFL Reading Test.

SUGGESTION

In this research the researchers recommend teacher or lecturer to apply many strategies to increase students' ability in answering TOEFL Reading Test, because even their interest in reading not always has a significant effect.

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