

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the writer discusses the background of the problem, the identification of problem, the limitation of problem, the formulation of problem, the research questions, the purposes of study, the significance of research, and the definition of key terms.

### **1.1 The Background of the Problem**

Language is used and learned by people all over the world. People transmit their feelings and thoughts through words. Language is the most crucial platform of communication, and it cannot be separated from human needs. One of the most international spoken languages is English. It plays a big role in this revolution era of 4.0. Therefore, various language institutions around the world offer international English tests for students who want to know their English proficiency. These tests are the International English Language Test System (IELTS), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Among many kinds of English proficiency tests, TOEFL has been used worldwide as a means to help people in accomplishing the degree, continuing their study overseas or applying for a job (Samad et al., 2017). According to Education First (2021), there are four types of TOEFL tests. They are PBT (Paper-Based Test), iBT (Internet Based Test), CBT (Computer-Based Test), and ITP (Institutional Testing Program). PBT (Paper-Based Test) is the common type used. PBT TOEFL is widely simulated in several institution and the world of education. This simulation is also known as TOEFL like. In addition, it is also the

type that is applied in Bung Hatta University to recognize the students' proficiency skills in English and as a requirement before graduation. This is supported by The Chancellor's Circular Number: 1006/UM-1/KP/II-2022 regarding graduation requirements in article (i) which is stated that the students should submit a photocopy of a TOEFL certificate of at least 425 score from PPBA-UBH. The same requirement is also applied in English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Bung Hatta University.

According to Hotcourse (2016), several institutions and universities apply different policies regarding to the passing grade of PBT TOEFL. In general, to apply for a master degree in universities abroad, a student has to acquire TOEFL score 550-600. Meanwhile, to be considered for a job vacancy in this country, you must prepare a TOEFL score of 450-475 (Kampung Inggris, 2021). Considering the very important role of TOEFL test, the English Department at Bung Hatta University offers a subject that is related to TOEFL like test called Essay Reading. This subject is offered at the fifth semester.

The purpose of reading is to grasp or understand the text. In reading, there are many skills that can be improved. The students may increase their ability of listening, speaking, and writing skills through reading. They can also enrich their knowledge of speaking expression, English sentence structure, the English instruction of the text, writing techniques and vocabulary mastery through reading (Wahyuni et al., 2018).

Reading comprehension section in TOEFL consists of several types, namely guessing vocabulary, main idea, inference, reference, and stated detail. Reading

comprehension, according to Grabe and Stoller (2011: 11), is the ability to comprehend and interpret information in a text. To comprehend a reading passage, the readers are required to involve background knowledge of learners, employ a variety of strategies, and the process of environmental factors.

In terms of comprehension, students with an advanced vocabulary will have a shorter time in understanding a text (Putra, 2020). As a result, the reading process will be much easier and will result in better comprehension. One of the issues for readers is when they focus on specific vocabulary rather than content. According to Mehrdad et al (2012, p. 5), readers spend a significant amount of time focusing on new vocabulary, which is an ineffective strategy given the limited amount of time available. Furthermore, students with a limited vocabulary may be misled by unfamiliar words, leading them to misinterpret the author's points.

Carson et al (1990) classified TOEFL score into 4 levels; elementary level (310-420), low intermediate level (420-480), high intermediate level (480-520), and advanced level (525-677). Regarding to the level of TOEFL score of Bung Hatta University, students' score is still in the elementary level. It is proved by Putri (2020) who analyzed the difficulties faced by the third-year students of the English Department at Bung Hatta University in reading comprehension section of the TOEFL test. Her findings showed that the percentage of the students who got score in elementary level was 48.4 %. The advanced level, on the other hand, was only 2.2 %. These data proved that the students' reading comprehension level were still low. Additionally, her findings also represented that the most challenging part for the TOEFL test takers is reading comprehension section. Since they have learned reading comprehension of TOEFL test in Essay Reading

subject in the fifth semester, their reading score should have reached the high intermediate or advanced level.

In order to figure out the students' ability in finding synonymous word question in reading comprehension of TOEFL test, the researcher conducted a small test. The researcher found out that there is no student get a satisfactory result. This test is important to assist students in understanding the vocabulary (synonymous word question) that has been provided in the TOEFL question sheet. Understanding this vocabulary will help students in answering questions correctly and the time needed will be also short. Based on this phenomenon, the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled "An Analysis of the Third Year Students' Ability in Answering Synonymous Word Questions in Reading Comprehension of TOEFL Test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University".

## **1. 2 The Identification of Problem**

The common problems that students face in answering reading comprehension of the TOEFL like test are categorized by the difficulty in answering the types of reading comprehension and the factors of reading. The most difficult type of reading comprehension is vocabulary question, or another term of vocabulary question is called synonymous word question (Elfriondi et al., 2020). The obstacles they face are limited time allocated for the test, difficult or new words for them, and not knowing the strategy to answer it. Sometimes, the students do not even recognize whether that word belongs to a noun, verb, adjective, or an adverb. Moreover, it makes them more difficult in doing the test. According to Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016), these issues are caused by several

factors (i.e the complexity of the reading text, enviromental influences, anxiety, interest or motivation, decoding or word recognition speed, and medical problems).

Another problem that might be faced by students is that they have an adversity in understanding English grammar. Grammar does not only cover the students' ability in composing correct structures of words or sentences, but also their capability to know and understand when and how to use the noun, verb, adjective, and adverb form properly. In addition to grammar, students are also not trained and accustomed to translating. This contributes to the students' difficulty in answering those four types of questions (Westwoodprep, 2022). Last but not least, the students do not have friends to practice to do the exercise of TOEFL Like test. As a result, students' interest and motivation are also low in answering synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of the TOEFL Like test.

### **1. 3 The Limitation of Problem**

Based on the identification of the problem above, the researcher limited her study to some types of synonymous words in TOEFL like reading comprehension test. These words are in the form of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. This research is implemented to the third year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University in the academic year 2021/2022.

### **1. 4 The Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the limitation of the problem above, the researcher formulates the problem as follows: "How is the third-year students' ability in answering synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University?"

## **1. 5 Research Questions**

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the researcher has four research questions to be answered as follows:

1. How is the third-year students' ability in answering synonymous word questions that belong to the noun form in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University?
2. How is the third-year students' ability in answering synonymous word questions that belong to the verb form in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University?
3. How is the third-year students' ability in answering synonymous word questions that belong to an adjective form in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University?
4. How is the third-year students' ability in answering synonymous word questions that belong to an adverb form in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test at the English Department of Bung Hatta University?

## **1. 6 The Purposes of Study**

In general, the aim of this research is to describe the third year students' ability to answer synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL test. Specifically, the purposes of this research are:

1. To find out the third year students' ability in answering synonymous words questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test in the form of a noun at the English Department of Bung Hatta University.

2. To find out the third year students' ability in answering synonymous words questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test in the form of verb at the English Department of Bung Hatta University.
3. To find out the third year students' ability in answering synonymous words questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test in the form of an adjective at the English Department of Bung Hatta University.
4. To find out the third year students' ability in answering synonymous words questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test in the form of an adverb at the English Department of Bung Hatta University.

### **1. 7 The Significance of Research**

The results of this research are expected to give contribution to the lecturers, the students, and the researcher. For the lecturers, it could give scientific information about the students' ability in finding synonymous word questions so that the lecturers can find strategies to teach them. For the students, they will know their ability to find synonymous word questions in reading comprehension of TOEFL like test so it can increase their motivation in studying grammar and reading. And for the researcher, it can increase her knowledge about conducting a research.

### **1. 8 The Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding about the key terms used in this research, the researcher defines them as follows:

1. Synonymous word question is word or phrase that has similar meaning in the form of noun, verb, adjective, and an adverb.

2. Ability is the student's competence to answer synonymous word question in reading comprehension of the TOEFL test.
3. Reading Comprehension is one of the skills that has been tested in TOEFL test.
4. TOEFL like is a simulation test to know English proficiency skill and uses for a requirement before graduation in Bung Hatta University.