

**THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS
OF SMK N 9 PADANG IN TOEIC READING TEST**

Thesis

Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to

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ABSTRAK

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Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa SMK N 9 Padang yang terindikasi dari nilai TOEIC mereka. Sesuai dengan kebijakan Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Menengah dan *Permendiknas No. 78 Tahun 2009*, para lulusan SMK dituntut untuk memiliki skor TOEIC diatas 450. Sayangnya, skor tersebut belum tercapai. Salah satu penyebab rendahnya skor TOEIC adalah kurangnya pengetahuan tentang *reading skills* dan materi *reading comprehension* dalam tes *reading* TOEIC. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui masalah-masalah yang dialami siswa SMKN 9 Padang dalam tes *reading* TOEIC.

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif dengan populasi siswa kelas XI program perhotelan tahun ajaran 2011/2012 yang terdiri dari empat kelas. Sampel diambil dengan teknik cluster random sampling dimana diperoleh kelas XI perhotelan 3 sebagai sampel. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah tes dan interview.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa-siswa di kelas sampel memiliki kemampuan yang umumnya rendah dalam tes *reading* TOEIC. Ini dibuktikan dengan nilai rata-rata kelas 34.38. Mereka mengalami kesulitan dalam mengidentifikasi *main idea, supporting details, inference, dan purpose*. Berdasarkan data analisis, *inference* merupakan pertanyaan yang paling sulit bagi mereka.

Data wawancara mengungkapkan bahwa siswa mengalami kesulitan tes *reading* TOEIC karena mereka tidak mempunyai keterampilan dalam *reading comprehension*, mereka tidak tahu pola kalimat dan memiliki kosa kata yang terbatas sehingga sulit bagi mereka memahami isi wacana. Selain itu, kurangnya latihan menjadi faktor lain rendahnya pemahaman mereka dalam membaca.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TOEIC	: Test of English as International Communication
UN	: Ujian Nasional
ETS	: Educational Testing Service
SMK	: Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan
RSBI	: Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is a kind of test used to measure English proficiency of people in the field of business. According to ETS or Educational Testing Service (2010), people usually take TOEIC to advance their career in real-life work settings, such as businesses, hotels, hospitals, and restaurants. Since 1979, the score of TOEIC has been used as one of the standard assessment of English language proficiency to select the candidates in thousands of corporations, educational institutions and governments throughout the world. The good TOEIC score will show their capability in order to be the best candidate in applying a job in international company.

TOEIC consists of two sections: Listening Comprehension and Reading. The listening section measures how well the students understand spoken English. Moreover, the reading section tests how well they understand various materials in written English, such as business letters, formal invitations and memo. The Reading section consists of three parts; incomplete sentences (40 questions), error recognition (20 questions), and reading comprehension (40 questions). In this reading section, the skills tested include identifying main idea, understanding specific information, making inference, understanding purpose/aim, understanding vocabulary, and understanding grammar (Razenberg: 2003).

Furthermore, each part of the Reading section measures the students' reading comprehension based on context given. On the other hand, it is doubtful which part that is really reading comprehension as most people understand it (Kluitmann: 2008). In part V (Incomplete Sentences) and VI (Error Recognition) in Reading section of TOEIC, there is no questions related to the text. The aspects tested in these parts are grammar and vocabulary, not reading comprehension. Therefore, these parts cannot be considered as an appropriate measure of reading comprehension. Moreover, part VII (Reading Comprehension) tests how well students understand a text based on context given. The reading comprehension questions tested include main idea, detailed information, purpose, and inference. The students must understand the meaning of the texts to answer the questions in this part.

In the case of vocational school students, since they are prepared to enter the workplace after graduating, TOEIC becomes very important for several reasons. First, by taking TOEIC, the students can verify the current level of their English proficiency. They can know in what level of their English ability. Second, TOEIC lets the students to monitor their progress in English, especially in listening and reading. By knowing their level of English ability, they can improve their ability for the next TOEIC test. Then, the score of TOEIC itself can be used to look for a job in an international corporation.

Since TOEIC is important for vocational school students, the Directorate General for Vocational Secondary Schools made the policy on the development of

communicative competences in foreign languages for vocational school graduates. The policy requires that all vocational students master English. To realize this, to enhance the quality of English teaching and to help students to achieve a significantly better result of their English learning, a TOEIC program in a number of vocational schools has been implemented. Launching the policy on the implementation of the TOEIC program, the Director General of Secondary Education said,

Facing the free trade era, Indonesia has to prepare its people especially those at the age of the work force to have a competitive capacity in the job market - international as well as domestic. One of the key competences to get into the free global job market is the capability to communicate in foreign languages, specifically English (SMUnet, April 5th 2002).

From the policy above, it seems that English subject in vocational schools and TOEIC have the same goal. They make the students to have the key competences to enter the work place. As the response of this policy, all of the vocational schools have to prepare the students to be accustomed to having TOEIC. It makes TOEIC materials are important to be taught for vocational school students. So, they are included in English curriculum in vocational schools.

Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri (SMKN) 9 Padang is one of the RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional) schools which conducts TOEIC. This school prepares the students to enter work field and face National Examination by giving TOEIC for the grade X and XII. For the students of X grade, the purpose of TOEIC is to introduce the test to the students. While, for the students of XII grade, TOEIC is to know the development of their English during their study in the

vocational school and to prepare the students in facing National Examination (UN). Based on the interview with an English teacher at SMKN 9 Padang, it is said that TOEIC was more difficult and complex than UN. He also said that the skills and materials tested in TOEIC were almost same with UN. In other words, if the students take TOEIC and get a good score, they will probably get good score in English National Examination too. In addition, they will have more preparation to face English National Examination because one of TOEIC teaching function in this school is to prepare students to face UN.

According to the mission of SMKN 9 Padang, it is expected that 60% of the graduate students can achieve TOEIC score of 450. Moreover, *Permendiknas No. 78 Tahun 2009* states that the objectives of the RSBI is to produce graduates who have ability to compete in global work, especially for graduates of vocational schools. They must have a TOEIC score of 450 for vocational. Unfortunately, the target has not been fulfilled yet. On January 9th 2011, 181 students of grade XII took TOEIC. The result showed that the students' mean score of TOEIC was 292. The result did not reach the expected score. The score can be seen in the following table.

Table 1.1: Students' TOEIC Score

TOEIC score	Frequency	Percentage
450-549	0 students	0 %
350-449	48 students	26,5 %
250-349	128 students	70,7 %
150-249	5 students	2,7 %
50-150	0 students	0 %

Based on the table, no student got the score of 450. So, it can be concluded that the score targeted by this school was not achieved yet. Then, the students' reading scores of TOEIC were lower than the students' listening scores. It can be seen from the following tables:

Table 1.2: The Score of Reading and Listening of TOEIC

Score	Reading		Listening	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
201-300	4 students	2,2 %	11 students	6 %
101-200	74 students	40,8 %	141 students	78 %
0-100	103 students	56,9 %	29 students	16 %
Mean score	122		169	

From the table above, the students who got reading score over 200 were fewer than the students who got the score over 200 in Listening section. It was only 4 students (2,2 %) who got the score over 200. Then, the mean score of reading section was lower than the mean score of listening section. The low score in reading indicates the low ability of the students in reading. It means that they still have problems in Reading section of TOEIC.

It is assumed that there are several possible causes that may contribute to the low scores of TOEIC reading test. First, the students may not master all materials and skills tested in TOEIC reading test. This test covers materials and skills in reading. However, they may have problems with the materials and skills in incomplete sentences, error recognition, or reading comprehension part only, both of them, or all of them. It happens because they do not understand some materials and skills in each

part although the teacher has explained it. Richard (2001) says materials are the determiner for much of the language input that learners receive and also the basis of the language practice that occurs in the classroom. They do not have sufficient knowledge about the materials and skills in reading. So, it makes the students difficult to answer the reading section of TOEIC.

Second, the students are not provided with a variety of exercises in TOEIC reading test. Although they have been introduced to the example of TOEIC at the X grade, they still need reading exercises to do the TOEIC reading test. They need to be familiar with the task type and the types of questions which are tested before doing reading test of TOEIC. The more practices they follow means they have more preparation for doing the test.

Third, the students do not apply the reading strategies to answer the questions in TOEIC reading test. They probably do not understand how to use them in answering the test. On the contrary, if they are able to apply the reading strategies, they can do the test and manage the time more efficiently and effectively. Consequently, the students will get better score for TOEIC reading test.

Based on the explanations above, it can be seen that there are some possible causes that make the low score of the students in TOEIC reading test. In this case, it is important to conduct a study about the problems faced by the vocational school

students of SMK N 9 Padang in TOEIC reading test in order to find the real problems which are truly faced by the students.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem above, it can be identified some possible causes why most of vocational school students get low score in TOEIC reading test. They are knowledge of reading skills and materials tested, lack of variety exercises, and also not applying the good reading strategies. Students might have problems about reading skills and materials tested in TOEIC Reading test. They need to have good reading skills and knowledge of materials in order to get good TOEIC score. The materials tested and reading skills are key competence for the students to get success in TOEIC reading test. The research was done to know the problems in TOEIC Reading test.

C. Limitation of the Problem

The problem of this research was limited to the problems faced by vocational school students of SMK N 9 Padang in TOEIC Reading Test. There were four reading comprehension questions tested in this research: identifying main idea, identifying supporting details, making inference, and identifying purpose.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The problem of this research was formulated as; “ What problems are faced by vocational school students of SMK N 9 Padang in TOEIC Reading Test?”

E. Research Questions

The problems of the research were elaborated in the following questions:

1. What problems are faced by the students of SMK N 9 Padang in identifying main idea, details, purpose, and making inference in TOEIC reading test?
2. What are the causes of the problems faced by students of SMK N 9 Padang in identifying main idea, details, purpose and making inference in TOEIC reading test?

F. Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explain the problems and causes of the problems faced by the students of SMK N 9 Padang in TOEIC reading test in identifying main idea, identifying supporting details, making inference, and identifying purpose/aim.

G. Significance of the Study

This study was expected to give significant contribution to the foreign language teaching development both theoretically and practically. It was hoped that English teachers would get information about their students' problems in identifying main ideas, identifying supporting details, making inference, and identifying purpose in TOEIC reading test. From the information, the teachers could improve their students' ability in answering the questions by giving more practices and using better and more proper teaching methods. Furthermore, the students would gain more success in the next TOEIC and UN for the twelfth grade.

H. Definition of Key Terms

It was necessary to know the clear definitions about some key terms in this research to avoid the misunderstanding. They were as follow:

1. Reading problems: The problems that are faced by the students of SMKN 9 Padang in comprehending TOEIC reading comprehension part.
2. Students' reading comprehension: students' ability in understanding TOEIC reading section in identifying main idea, identifying supporting details, making inference, and identifying purpose/aim.
3. Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC): A multiple-choice English proficiency test (developed by Educational Testing Service) for people whose native language is not English.
4. TOEIC Reading Test: Reading section which consists of three parts that are incomplete sentences, error recognition, and reading comprehension in TOEIC.
5. Reading Comprehension part of TOEIC Reading Section: a part in TOEIC Reading Section that tests how well students' understand variety materials in written English based on texts given.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

After interpreting the result of the research, it can be concluded that the students had problems in Reading Comprehension part of TOEIC. Their problems were limited vocabulary and understanding complex sentences. In addition, they admitted that making inference was the most difficult sub skill in Reading Comprehension part of TOEIC.

In general, the ability of students in identifying main idea was poor. It was proved that students got score 38.10 (poor) in average. This fact indicates that the students had problems in identifying main idea. The problem was clues to find location of main idea.

Moreover, the ability of students in identifying supporting details was very poor. The data show that the students got score 34.64 in average. It means the students had problems in identifying supporting details. The problems were because they found the words in the questions were different with the words in the text

In addition, the ability of students in making inference was very poor. It can be seen from the data that the students got score 32.14 in average. It represents that the students had problems in making reference. The problems were because they have

to make inference through the implied information given in the text. Then, most of students said that making inference was the most difficult reading comprehension question.

Furthermore, the ability of students in identifying purpose was very poor. It can be seen from the data that the students got score 32.74 in average. It represents that the students had problems in understanding purpose. The students had problems in this skill because they do not know the text type and material in the text.

B. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions above, there are some suggestions. First, the teacher as the facilitators in teaching-learning process has to do maximal efforts to increase the students' reading comprehension skills. The teacher should explain to the students the problems that they might face in TOEIC reading test. By showing the problems, they might be more careful in answering this test. They have to teach all skills tested in reading comprehension test in TOEIC clearly to the students. So, the students will have good skills in answering the reading comprehension well.

Second, the teachers are expected to give more Reading Comprehension part of TOEIC exercises to the students. It can be followed by try out of TOEIC continuously not only in the school but also in other private institutions. Through the

try out tests, the students will be accustomed to have tests and ready to have the real TOEIC in the future. In shorts, practice makes perfects.

Third, headmaster as the person in charge in the school is hoped to cooperate with the English teachers to hold as many as try out tests not only for the third year but also for the second and the first year students so that they will be used to have the TOEIC test. Finally, it is suggested to the next researcher to conduct a research about students' problems in other part of TOEIC. It can be the problems in error recognition or incomplete sentence.

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