

An Analysis of Reading Techniques and Perceptions for Student's TOEFL Success in UPT Bahasa University of Riau

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A B S T R A C T

TOEFL is a widely recognized measure of English proficiency, yet many EFL students in Indonesia continue to face difficulties, especially in the reading section. Despite having been introduced to various reading strategies, there appears to be a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application during test-taking. This study aims to investigate the efficacy of reading techniques in improving students' TOEFL reading performance. Using a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 35 second-year law students at Riau University through TOEFL-style reading tests and questionnaires. Results showed that while students frequently used strategies such as rereading and identifying main ideas, more analytical techniques like summarizing and predicting were underutilized. The findings suggest that instruction should focus on reinforcing both basic and higher-order reading strategies to bridge the gap between knowledge and execution. Enhancing strategy use may significantly improve students' TOEFL reading outcomes.

Keywords: TOEFL, reading strategies, EFL learners, test performance, comprehension skills

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INTRODUCTION

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a standardized test that measures English language proficiency. This exam holds significant importance for students such as a mandatory requirement for undergraduate and postgraduate students to complete their studies, open doors to prestigious universities both domestically and internationally for those pursuing further studies, highly valued by employers in today's globalized world, can enhance job prospects, and others. For students at Riau University, possessing a TOEFL certificate is akin to holding one of keys to get their Degree of Education. A TOEFL certificate is more than just a piece of paper at Riau University; it's a passport to a graduation Early. This is stated in the rector's regulation for prospective graduates which have been updated in Number 8 2024. Additionally, "The ability of students mastering English is commonly seen from the result of English proficiency test that is Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). This test has been respected internationally" (Samad, Jannah, & Fitriani, 2017, hlm. 29).

In today's world, TOEFL test results play a crucial role in many aspects of academic and professional advancement. A high TOEFL score is often a fundamental requirement for students who wish to pursue higher education, especially at universities where English is the primary language of instruction. In addition to being a gateway to further studies, TOEFL scores are also frequently used as one of the main criteria in the selection process for scholarships, both from government and private institutions. "Nowadays, TOEFL is used to get scholarships in order to continue further study in English speaking countries. TOEFL is also used to apply for a job vacancy." (Samad, Jannah, & Fitriani, 2017, p. 30. According to Roza (2023), "Other than students, many people who work or have finished their degrees are



also eager to take the courses for either job promotions or pursuing higher education” (p. 218). Furthermore, as the demand for English proficiency increases in the global job market, many companies and organizations now consider TOEFL results as a reliable indicator of a candidate’s communication skills. Therefore, possessing a good TOEFL score can significantly enhance one’s chances of continuing education, receiving financial aid, and securing employment opportunities in both local and international settings.

Passing the TOEFL exam is not easy. As stated by Widyarti (2023), most studies indicate that taking the TOEFL test is challenging for EFL students, particularly for those in Indonesia who study English solely as a foreign language. This test measures English proficiency comprehensively, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. Many people think that memorizing vocabulary or understanding grammar is enough, but in reality, the test also assesses how well we can use English in complex academic contexts. It requires serious preparation, sufficient time, and the right learning strategies to achieve a high score. According to Rifiyanti, Dewi, and Putra (2023), TOEFL test takers commonly face several challenges, including insufficient preparation, limited time, difficulties in comprehending spoken English, complex written materials, and psychological barriers such as pressure and anxiety. These difficulties are particularly evident in the reading section, which demands not only comprehension skills but also the ability to apply various reading strategies under time constraints (Yusuf, 2019; Sari & Prasetyo, 2021). In fact, research by Fitriani (2020) found that many Indonesian EFL students underutilize higher-order reading strategies, such as making inferences, summarizing, and predicting, leading to lower performance in reading comprehension. In addition, the pressure during the exam is another challenge. Within a limited time, test-takers must stay focused and calm while answering tricky questions. Many have to retake the exam several times just to reach the required score, especially if they plan to study abroad. However, even though it's tough, it's not impossible. With perseverance, discipline, and consistent practice, the dream of passing the TOEFL can become a reality. Riau University has established a rigorous TOEFL proficiency standard to ensure its graduates possess the English language skills necessary to excel in both academic and professional realms. To meet this standard, the university mandates a minimum TOEFL score of 450 for students from non-English departments and a higher benchmark of 500 for students majoring in English. These score requirements signify a commitment to producing graduates who are well-equipped to communicate effectively in English and compete globally. “Thus, this clearly shows that the TOEFL test is a measure of students' successfully mastering English, so the TOEFL test preparation program is needed to improve the scores of participants in the test.” (Maharani & Putro, 2021, p. 64) The bad point is there are still many of English Department students of Riau University who cannot achieve that a minimum TOEFL score, even 450 for general students.

Based on the preliminary interview of Law faculty Program who had taken TOEFL test, it is found that the students had difficulty in every sections of TOEFL Test. Of the five skills tested in the TOEFL – Listening, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, and Writing – many test-takers find Reading Comprehension to be the most difficult. This is due to the length of the reading passages, the use of complex academic vocabulary, and the need to deeply understand the content in order to answer various types of questions, such as main ideas, inferences, word references, and vocabulary in context. Additionally, time constraints often pose a significant challenge, requiring test-takers to read quickly while still maintaining accurate comprehension.

Previous studies focusing on EFL students' strategies for dealing with common difficulties in the TOEFL Reading Comprehension section have identified various approaches learners use to overcome challenges such as understanding academic vocabulary, recognizing complex sentence structures, and managing time effectively during the test. These studies have provided valuable insights into the role of learning strategies in improving TOEFL scores. Building on these findings, the present study aims to take a step

further by analyzing the effectiveness of specific reading techniques employed by EFL students in the context of TOEFL preparation. The goal is to evaluate the extent to which techniques such as skimming, scanning, making inferences, and identifying main ideas can enhance students' performance in the Reading Comprehension section. Therefore, this study not only explores the strategies used but also assesses their efficacy in contributing to TOEFL success.

Review of literature

Reading Comprehension

Many scholars have offered various definitions of *reading comprehension*. In general, reading comprehension refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate the meaning of written texts. "Thus, reading comprehension should be approached from the cognitive view, according to which the reader actively constructs meaning—instead of simply extracting it—by activating schemata or knowledge structures in his/her mind to relate the knowledge that is already possessed to the new ideas stated in a passage." (Kusumarasyati, 2023, p. 783). Additionally, reading comprehension involves a sophisticated interplay between unconscious and deliberate mental processes, allowing readers to build a mental image or understanding of what they read (van den Broek & Espin, 2012, as cited in Moore, 2012, p. 3). In the context of literature, reading comprehension involves understanding not only the content of a literary work, but also its aesthetic elements and deeper meanings.

Reading literary texts such as short stories, poems, dramas, or novels requires readers to grasp the message conveyed by the author through plot, characters, setting, language style, and symbolism. Similarly, "Whether we realize it or not, we engage with various texts daily and react to them in different ways. These texts may include everything from traffic signs and phone books to instructional guides, news pieces, comic strips, educational materials, and literary works such as short stories or novels." "The reading of literary texts is often a challenge in many second language classrooms. Students need to understand the texts before they can experience or enjoy them" (Vethamani, 2004, p. 20). "Literal comprehension involves what the author is saying. That is a skill of getting the primary literal meaning of a word, idea, or sentence in context" (Rahman, 2022, p. 8). Therefore, literature reading comprehension assesses not only literal understanding but also the reader's analytical, interpretive, and critical thinking skills. Through this activity, readers are trained not just to read the text, but to interpret deeper meanings, connect with cultural values, and develop an appreciation for language and literary expression. Thus, reading comprehension in literature serves as an essential tool for meaningful and reflective language learning.

Reading Difficulties and Strategies

Reading is a core skill essential for acquiring knowledge and supporting the overall learning process. Despite its importance, mastering reading is not effortless for all individuals. Research shows that approximately 13% of adults experience difficulties with basic reading skills (Godsmark & Reading, 1996, p. 180). Many students face challenges in various areas of reading, such as interpreting vocabulary, identifying sentence structures, and making inferences from the text. These obstacles can significantly hinder reading comprehension and, consequently, academic achievement. While some children develop language skills naturally through minimal instruction, others require deliberate and systematic teaching. As noted by Moats (1999), certain learners need organized, structured, and well-designed instruction from knowledgeable educators to grasp language concepts effectively (p. 12). In a similar vein, Richardson and Lyytinen (2014) argue that reading is not an innate ability like spoken language but a skill that must be learned through targeted practice and exposure to appropriate reading materials (p. 47).

In many cases, reading comprehension difficulties stem from a variety of interconnected factors. These may include the absence of effective reading strategies, a lack of relevant background knowledge, or even a limited interest in or motivation for reading

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(Soleimani & Nabizadeh, 2012). Such issues are especially significant for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), who often struggle with complex texts in academic settings. Liu, Chen, and Chang (2010) emphasize that effective reading strategies can be especially beneficial for students with lower proficiency levels, helping them move beyond simple decoding to develop a deeper understanding of what they read – an essential skill for success in standardized tests like the TOEFL. Therefore, the role of educators becomes crucial, as students benefit greatly from structured guidance and evidence-based teaching methods that are tailored to their individual learning needs.

To help overcome these challenges, a variety of strategies have been developed and implemented in learning environments. Some effective approaches include reading with a clear purpose, taking notes on key points, and using concept maps to summarize information. Sujana also stated that "*Academic reading needs more complex activities. Students should be trained to do more academic tasks such as note-taking, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing, evaluating, etc. of the text they read*" (Sujana, 2012, p. 2). These strategies not only support the development of general reading skills but are particularly important in enhancing reading comprehension in standardized tests such as the TOEFL, where the ability to interpret, infer, and analyze academic texts is essential. Reading difficulties can significantly hinder performance in these assessments, as they often involve complex vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, and time constraints. Therefore, the application of well-targeted reading strategies can play a crucial role in helping learners navigate TOEFL reading tasks more effectively, improving both their confidence and accuracy in understanding written texts.

TOEFL Test

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) has become an essential tool for measuring English proficiency among non-native speakers, especially in academic environments. "*TOEFL is one of the most internationally recognised English language proficiency tests, designed to measure the extent to which an individual can understand and use English in academic and professional contexts*" (Khoiruman & Irawan, 2025, p. 2). In Indonesia, many universities now require students to achieve a minimum TOEFL score as one of the conditions for graduation. This policy reflects the growing importance of English in global communication and higher education. By setting TOEFL as a standard, universities aim to ensure that graduates are equipped with sufficient English skills to access academic resources, engage in international collaboration, and compete in the global job market. Furthermore, students with higher scores are considered to be better prepared to respond to academic needs, as these scores reflect essential language skills required in academic settings (Dalimunte, Somanawattana, & Siregar, 2025, p. 146). As a result, TOEFL preparation has become an integral part of the academic journey for Indonesian students.

The reading comprehension section is the final part of the TOEFL prediction test that measures examinees' ability to comprehend English texts. The ability to comprehend and extract key information from English passages is a crucial skill measured in the reading comprehension section of the TOEFL prediction test. As noted by Roger (2005, as cited in Zalha, Alfiatunnur, & Kamil, 2020), this part of the test is specifically designed to evaluate how well candidates can answer questions by referring directly to the information presented in the texts. The Reading Comprehension section comprises 50 questions aimed at assessing the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate written texts. Similarly, "Test takers have fifty-five minutes to complete the fifty questions in this section. In this part of the test, you will be given reading passages, and you will be asked two types of questions about the reading passages: vocabulary and reading comprehension." (Dharmawan, 2018, p. 21). Each question is carefully designed to test various aspects of comprehension, including identifying main ideas, analyzing supporting details, interpreting vocabulary in context, making logical inferences, and understanding the author's purpose and tone.

The texts presented cover a wide range of genres, such as narrative passages, expository writings, and argumentative articles. Several questions also require the



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recognition of organizational patterns such as cause and effect, sequence of events, and comparison and contrast. Additionally, students are expected to demonstrate skills in summarizing information and drawing conclusions based on textual evidence.

Aspects and Skills in TOEFL Reading Section

Reading is a complex skill that involves several important aspects working together to create understanding. A focus on reading comprehension in general and reading strategies specifically is necessary, and the systematic teaching of reading and reading strategies is needed (Hansen, 2016, p. 13). One key element is vocabulary knowledge, which allows readers to make sense of individual words and phrases. Another important aspect is comprehension, where readers interpret the meaning of the text and connect it with their prior knowledge. In addition, identifying the main idea and supporting details helps readers grasp the overall message of a passage. Critical thinking also plays a role, enabling readers to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on the content. Moreover, reading fluency – the ability to read smoothly and with expression – contributes to better understanding and enjoyment of the material. In relation to standardized assessments, the TOEFL reading section specifically evaluates five major aspects: understanding the main idea, answering directly stated questions, interpreting indirectly stated information, mastering vocabulary, and answering review questions regarding information location and the passage's purpose (Philips, 2001, pp. 268–441). Together, these elements form the foundation of effective reading skills.

Therefore, this study aims to address the existing gap by exploring the effectiveness of reading strategies for achieving TOEFL success among second-semester students at Riau University. The findings are expected to provide valuable strategies that can enhance students' reading performance and overall language proficiency.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design. The purpose of using this design was to describe and analyze the efficacy of reading strategies used by second-semester students of the Law Faculty at Riau University in their preparation for the TOEFL test. The survey design was appropriate for collecting numerical data through structured instruments to quantify students' reading performance and strategy use. Through this approach, the researcher aimed to measure students' reading comprehension skills objectively based on their TOEFL reading performance and self-reported responses.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of Second-year students at the Law Faculty of Riau University during the 2024–2025 academic year, totaling 105 students across three classes. The sample was selected using a cluster random sampling technique, resulting in 35 students being chosen to participate in the study. This sampling method ensured that the selected participants represented the overall population fairly.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were a TOEFL-style reading comprehension test and a questionnaire. The reading test assessed students' comprehension skills, while the questionnaire gathered information on students' reading strategies, difficulties faced, and perceptions regarding TOEFL reading preparation. The instrument used in this study was a TOEFL-style reading comprehension test, designed to simulate the actual TOEFL Reading section. The test consisted of multiple reading passages followed by related questions, which students were required to complete within 55 minutes. The test assessed five core aspects of reading comprehension: identifying main ideas, answering directly stated questions, interpreting indirectly stated information, mastering vocabulary, and answering review questions related to information location and author's purpose. A structured questionnaire to assess students' self-reported use of reading strategies and their perceived difficulties.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected by administering a reading comprehension test and distributing a questionnaire to the selected students. Data were collected in two stages: first, students completed the TOEFL-style reading comprehension test within 55 minutes. After finishing the test, they were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their reading strategies, difficulties encountered, and perceptions about the TOEFL reading section.

Data Analysis Technique

The students' performance was analyzed quantitatively. The reading test scores were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (mean, percentages). Questionnaire responses were analyzed to identify common reading strategies employed by students, perceived difficulties, and students' perceptions regarding TOEFL reading comprehension.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Result of the Test

The following table includes their number of correct answers (CA) and the corresponding converted score (CS), which reflects their TOEFL Reading proficiency.

Table 1. Displays the TOEFL Reading test results collected from 35 first-year students of the Faculty of Law at Riau University.

No	Name	Major	CA (Correct Answer)	CS (Converted Score)	Reading TOEFL Score
1	DOR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	16	36	36
2	SBM	S1 Ilmu Hukum	19	39	39
3	VS	S1 Ilmu Hukum	21	41	41
4	HR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	15	35	35
5	PCRS	S1 Ilmu Hukum	32	49	49
6	NM	S1 Ilmu Hukum	31	48	48
7	ANKR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	36	52	52
8	KBA	S1 Ilmu Hukum	35	52	52
9	DAP	S1 Ilmu Hukum	35	52	52
10	YN	S1 Ilmu Hukum	34	51	51
11	DF	S1 Ilmu Hukum	34	51	51
12	SI	S1 Ilmu Hukum	21	41	51
13	MN	S1 Ilmu Hukum	14	34	34
14	CS	S1 Ilmu Hukum	13	34	50
15	ND	S1 Ilmu Hukum	34	51	51
16	JN	S1 Ilmu Hukum	30	48	48
17	FN	S1 Ilmu Hukum	11	30	49
18	SF	S1 Ilmu Hukum	13	32	32
19	TPC	S1 Ilmu Hukum	28	46	46
20	MKH	S1 Ilmu Hukum	11	30	30
21	TFH	S1 Ilmu Hukum	13	32	32
22	ZAP	S1 Ilmu Hukum	12	31	31
23	DR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	32	49	49
24	K	S1 Ilmu Hukum	28	46	46
25	LN	S1 Ilmu Hukum	32	49	49
26	MRA	S1 Ilmu Hukum	12	31	31
27	HJ	S1 Ilmu Hukum	27	46	46
28	GNP	S1 Ilmu Hukum	16	36	36
29	ANP	S1 Ilmu Hukum	10	29	29
30	FAL	S1 Ilmu Hukum	14	34	34
31	AJ	S1 Ilmu Hukum	15	35	35
32	NR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	16	36	36
33	DR	S1 Ilmu Hukum	13	32	48
34	AMPF	S1 Ilmu Hukum	24	43	43
35	RAH	S1 Ilmu Hukum	26	45	45

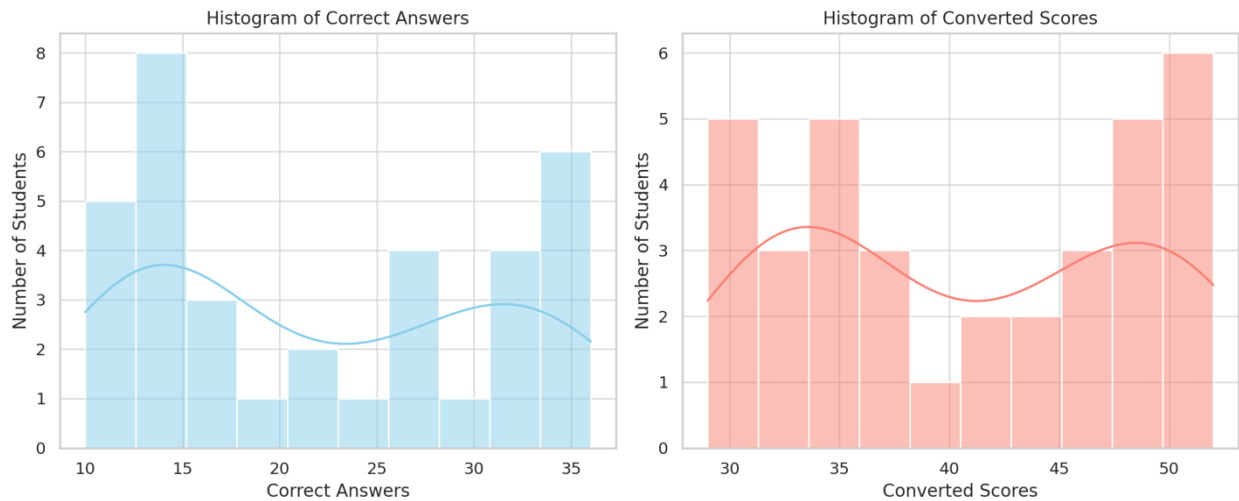


Figure 1. TOEFL Reading Test - Descriptive Statistics and Visualizations

Below is the histogram illustrating the TOEFL Reading test results from 35 first-year students of the Faculty of Law at Riau University. The left chart displays the distribution of Correct Answers and The right chart shows the distribution of Converted Scores. Both histograms indicate that the majority of students scored in the lower to mid ranges, with only a few achieving high scores. This supports the finding that students' reading comprehension performance is generally at a low to moderate level.

To assess students' reading proficiency, a TOEFL-style reading test was administered to 35 second-semester Law students at Riau University. Table 2 below categorizes the test results into four score ranges, highlighting how many students achieved scores within each range.

Table 2. Distribution of TOEFL Reading Scores

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
20–29	1	2.9%
30–39	11	31.4%
40–49	13	37.1%
50–52	10	28.6%

The Table clearly shows that most students scored between 30 and 49, which indicates a moderate level of proficiency. A small number reached a higher range (50–52), while only one student scored below 30. This pattern reveals a general need for improvement in reading comprehension.

Results of Questionnaire

In order to systematically investigate students' approaches and perceptions regarding the TOEFL Reading section, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed. This instrument is divided into two distinct sections: the first section examines the frequency and nature of specific reading strategies employed by students, while the second section assesses their perceptions of the TOEFL Reading challenges, perceived difficulties, and motivation to improve. The questionnaire is intended to provide empirical data that can contribute to a better understanding of the factors affecting students' reading comprehension proficiency in the context of high-stakes language assessments.

Questionnaire: Students' Reading Strategies and Perception toward TOEFL Reading Section:

Part A: Reading Strategies

Petunjuk: Beri tanda centang pada jawaban yang sesuai dengan kebiasaanmu.

Skala:

1 = Never

2 = Rarely

3 = Sometimes

4 = Often

5 = Always

Part B: Perception and Difficulties

Instruction: Put a checkmark (✓) on the most appropriate answer..

How difficult do you find the TOEFL Reading section? Very Easy Easy Moderate Difficult Very Difficult*What is your biggest difficulty when doing TOEFL Reading tasks? (You can choose more than one.)* Understanding academic vocabulary Managing time Understanding long and complex sentences Finding main ideas Answering inference questions Lack of concentration Others: _____ (please specify)*In your opinion, how important is mastering reading strategies for succeeding in the TOEFL test?* Very Important Important Neutral Less Important Not Important at all*Have you ever been formally taught about TOEFL reading strategies?* Yes No*How motivated are you to improve your TOEFL Reading score?* Very motivated Motivated Neutral Not very motivated Not motivated at all

Table 3. TOEFL Reading Strategies : Response Distributions (%)

Reading Strategy	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
I skim the text to get the general idea before reading in detail.	5.7%	17.1%	28.6%	34.3%	14.3%
I scan the text to find specific information quickly.	5.7%	20.0%	28.6%	17.1%	28.6%
I try to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context.	2.9%	17.1%	28.6%	34.3%	17.1%
I reread difficult parts of the text to understand better.	2.9%	14.3%	22.9%	28.6%	31.4%
I identify the	2.9%	17.1%	20.0%	34.3%	25.7%

main idea of each paragraph.	I make predictions about the content before and while reading.	2.9%	17.1%	40.0%	28.6%	11.4%
I underline or highlight important points while reading.	I use my background knowledge to understand the text better.	14.3%	20.0%	8.6%	28.6%	28.6%
I summarize the text after reading it.	I allocate my time carefully when answering reading questions.	8.6%	14.3%	42.9%	20.0%	14.3%
		5.7%	14.3%	25.7%	22.9%	31.4%

The table titled 'TOEFL Reading Strategies: Response Distribution (%)' provides a detailed overview of how frequently students employ various reading strategies in the context of TOEFL preparation. The data shows that certain strategies are consistently applied, while others are underutilized.

The most frequently used strategies, as indicated by high percentages in the 'Often' and 'Always' categories, include rereading difficult parts of the text (28.6% Often, 31.4% Always), identifying the main idea of each paragraph (34.3% Often, 25.7% Always), highlighting important points (28.6% for both Often and Always), and allocating time carefully (22.9% Often, 31.4% Always). These results suggest that learners are aware of and regularly apply metacognitive strategies that help with text comprehension and information retention.

Moderately used strategies include guessing the meaning of unknown words from context, skimming for the general idea, and using background knowledge. These strategies show balanced distributions between 'Sometimes' and 'Often' responses, indicating situational use depending on text complexity or individual preference. However, strategies such as making predictions before and during reading (40.0% Sometimes, only 11.4% Always) and summarizing the text after reading (42.9% Sometimes, only 14.3% Always) are noticeably underutilized. Despite their pedagogical value in enhancing comprehension and promoting active engagement, these techniques have not been fully adopted by most students.

In addition to the reading test, students completed a questionnaire designed to evaluate the frequency of various reading strategy uses. Table 4 lists the five most commonly used strategies based on combined percentages of "Often" and "Always".

Table 4. Most Frequently Used Reading Strategies

Strategy	Often (%)	Always (%)	Total Frequent Use (%)
Rereading difficult parts	28.6%	31.4%	60.0%
Identifying main idea	34.3%	25.7%	60.0%
Underlining/highlighting	28.6%	28.6%	57.2%
Allocating time carefully	22.9%	31.4%	54.3%
Guessing meaning from context	34.3%	17.1%	51.4%

The data from both the table suggest that students rely heavily on foundational strategies such as rereading and identifying the main idea. Meanwhile, deeper strategies such as summarizing and predicting were not commonly used. This indicates a need for more comprehensive instruction that emphasizes higher-order thinking skills in reading tasks.

In conclusion, the results reflect a strong application of basic and reflective reading strategies among participants. Nevertheless, there is a clear need to encourage the use of predictive and post-reading strategies that can further deepen understanding and improve test performance. Educators should integrate more practice and explicit instruction on strategies like prediction, summarization, and skimming to ensure a more comprehensive reading skill set aligned with TOEFL demands.

Discussion

The findings from both the TOEFL reading test and the accompanying questionnaire reveal valuable insights into the reading proficiency and strategy application among second-semester students at the Faculty of Law, Riau University. The test results show that a significant portion of students scored in the low to mid-range, with only a few achieving high scores. This suggests that although some students demonstrate basic reading comprehension abilities, the overall performance indicates a need for improvement in understanding complex academic texts.

In relation to these results, the questionnaire data reveal that students tend to rely on certain strategies more than others. The most frequently employed strategies were rereading difficult parts of the text, identifying main ideas, highlighting essential points, and managing time during reading. These strategies reflect meta cognitive and reactive approaches that help students when they encounter comprehension difficulties. While effective in some contexts, these strategies do not fully address the need for proactive reading behavior.

On the other hand, predictive and analytical strategies—such as making predictions about the content before and during reading, and summarizing after reading—were used less frequently. These strategies are critical for developing deeper comprehension and retaining information. Their under utilization highlights a gap between knowledge of strategy and its practical implementation. This is despite the fact that most students acknowledged the importance of mastering reading strategies and expressed motivation to improve their TOEFL performance.

Interestingly, a majority of the students reported having been formally taught about TOEFL reading strategies. This suggests that the issue is not rooted in a lack of exposure to strategies but perhaps in the insufficient reinforcement or ineffective application of them in actual reading tasks. Therefore, the study underscores the need for more focused instruction that not only introduces strategies but also fosters their consistent and meaningful use.

In conclusion, while the students demonstrate awareness and partial application of essential reading techniques, a more comprehensive approach is required. Educators should prioritize the integration of predictive and post-reading strategies, such as skimming, summarizing, and making inferences, to ensure that students can approach TOEFL reading tasks with greater confidence and competence. Tailored instruction that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use will be instrumental in improving students' reading proficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the relationship between students' use of reading strategies and their performance on the TOEFL Reading section. The results revealed that although most second-semester law students at Riau University are aware of various reading techniques, their application of these strategies remains inconsistent and often limited to basic comprehension methods. Specifically, strategies such as rereading, identifying main ideas,

and highlighting key points were commonly employed, while higher-order techniques – such as summarizing, predicting, and making inferences – were noticeably underutilized.

The data from both the test scores and questionnaire responses highlight a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation. Despite acknowledging the importance of reading strategies, many students continue to face challenges such as managing time effectively, understanding complex vocabulary, and processing dense academic texts within strict time limits. To address these issues, this study recommends that future TOEFL preparation programs place greater emphasis on training students not only in recognizing but also in consistently applying a full range of reading strategies. Instruction should focus on integrating these techniques into practice through guided reading sessions, real test simulations, and reflective activities that build students' analytical and inferential reading skills. Moreover, continuous reinforcement and personalized feedback may help students transfer their knowledge into actual test-taking performance. By narrowing the gap between strategy awareness and execution, learners will be better equipped to succeed in standardized English assessments and future academic pursuits.

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