

# Intrinsic Analysis and Types of Question Understanding in Solving Reading Comprehension Question

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## ABSTRACT

TOEFL purposes have developed in recent years, not only for educational needs but also for other needs, such as; job applicant requirements. Meanwhile, the examinee still considers TOEFL as a difficult test. Reading Comprehension appears as one of the sections in TOEFL. As a result of this phenomenon, the goal of this study was to determine how intrinsic analysis theory improved student reading comprehension scores. The method used in this research was the action research method. The research stages started from pre-test, problems identification, treatment implementation, post-test, findings evaluation, and conclusion. The tests were delivered through Google Form and Google Classroom. In addition, the treatment implementation was using Zoom conference. There are 84 students tested in this research. The students form two groups. Group A is doing a reading comprehension test with a narrative genre, meanwhile group B with a descriptive genre. There is a rising in group A average score, from 53 in the pre-test to 83 in the post-test. Besides, group B average score rises from 68 to 92. Therefore, we suggest applying intrinsic analysis in solving the reading comprehension test. However, it needs another research that interacts with student cognitive thinking when taking the reading comprehension test for TOEFL.

**Keywords:** *Reading comprehension, Intrinsic Analysis, TOEFL, Action Research*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The TOEFL, or Test of English as a Foreign Language, is a benchmark for English language competence tests in English instruction. Due to English status as a foreign language in Indonesia, TOEFL is still the prime test for English proficiency tests [1]. Many Indonesian people assume that the TOEFL is a troublesome test. Yet, today the TOEFL demand has become more general. Besides its general purposes as an educational application, the TOEFL certificate is also used as a job requirement nowadays.

This phenomenon causes problems, especially for the examinee who do not have adequate English language skills [2]. According to a survey, Indonesian students and society still have weak English language ability when compared to their neighbours Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam. In Jakarta, English First (EF) released the findings of a global survey of an English Proficiency Index (EF EPI); Indonesia received a score of 52.91, placing it 32nd out of 72 countries polled.

The EF EPI is the world's biggest survey of English ability and is widely regarded as an international benchmark for adult English proficiency. According to

the findings of this year's poll, Singapore is the top Asian country in terms of English language ability, followed by Malaysia and the Philippines, which round out the top 15. In comparison, Indonesia scored worse than several of its neighbours in the region, including Vietnam, which came in 31st place and was rated as 'middle level' [3]. Besides, Indonesia is also stated as a low literacy country (reading and writing). The low level of Indonesian students' literacy had become a national concern in Indonesia.

In addition, according to the 2015 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results, Indonesian students have one of the lowest literacy levels in English in the world [4]. For pupils to grasp the information included in the text, they must be able to read and interpret it. The difficulty of the examinees achieving the desired score is the result of this accumulated phenomenon, which then turns into problems in reading comprehension, namely low English skills and low reading interest.

In response to the phenomenon, several researchers already conducted researches to overcome those problems. One of them was [5] which looked into students' ways for dealing with common TOEFL

reading comprehension issues. Based on this research, the majority of students who are obliged to take the TOEFL test to graduate failed to achieve the expected score [5]. Only 2.77% of the total students-examinee achieved higher than 450 TOEFL scores.

[5] research focus on the reading comprehension section due to the fewest score was found in this section. The problems or difficulties which were highlighted in this research were due to the limited time they have during the test and their lack of knowledge in reading aspects [6]; their inability to understand a specific text [7]; their limited vocabulary and some phrases may prevent them from understanding the meaning of English texts [8]; difficulties in paraphrasing, note-taking, supporting ideas, and managing the time for the reading test [8]; difficulties in paraphrasing, note-taking, supporting ideas, and managing [9]; problems in identifying difficult words, topic, the main idea of the passage, and lack of vocabulary [10]; and students are difficult to comprehend the text due to limited knowledge and skills [11]. Thus, this research identified the problems based on the test given, and do an interview / giving questionnaires regarding the strategies used by the students/examinee to overcome those problems.

Furthermore, [2] research on student strategy in completing the TOEFL reading comprehension test also mention similar problems, methods, and results as [5]. The difference is [2] mentioned the types of questions. Types of the question were one of [2] parameters in concluding his research findings. However, both of these researches did not apply any treatment as a test of teaching method improvement. In each of these studies, interview and questionnaire approaches were utilized to uncover the students' strategies. Meanwhile, our research will implement an intrinsic analysis theory and types of question understanding in reading comprehension treatment to overcome those problems.

In general, people describe reading as an interpretation of written symbols or capturing the meaning of a particular series of letters. Reading is identifying symbols and associating meaning. Reading can also be interpreted as a process of identifying and understanding which traces the message conveyed through the written language system [12]. Furthermore, [13] suggested that reading is an activity that gives a reaction. Because in reading, someone observes letters as a representation of speech sounds and other signs of writing. Then, followed by recognition activities, namely the introduction of forms concerning the meanings they contain and understanding the whole text. In addition, reading comprehension is the next level of reading.

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive activity to find the meaning of reading. Reading comprehension is an interaction that builds meaning between reading material and the reader [14]). According to [15], reading comprehension is the act of constructing meaning by coordinating several complex processes such as word reading, word knowledge, and

fluency. Reading comprehension is a process of building meaning by coordinating several complex processes. Some of the processes in question are word, word reading, word knowledge, and fluency.

Reading comprehension is assumed to be a skill to build meaning before, after, and during reading through linking the reader's background knowledge with the information presented in the context of the text. Reading comprehension is related to the activity of creating meaning. In reading comprehension, the reader is required to have creativity in creating meaning. Furthermore, reading comprehension in the TOEFL test is generally in the form of a text followed by multiple choices questions.

In general, there are 50 multiple-choice questions in the reading comprehension section, with 8-11 questions for each paragraph of 200–300 words. The questions vary, but the majority of them focus on primary themes, expressed or unstated facts, vocabulary, pronouns, and inference. To prevent prejudice when it comes to specific topics, each passage's topic includes a variety of subjects [16]. Here's a quick rundown of each question type in the TOEFL reading comprehension section:

### ***1.1. Main Idea Question***

Because it is the most crucial part that communicates the author's aim, the main idea can be isolated in all passages [17]. Examinees are mostly asked about the "subject," "title," "principal idea," or "major idea" on the PBT TOEFL.

### ***1.2. Stated Details***

Instead of defining all of the material in a paragraph, the examinees are asked to find a specific piece of information [18]. The questions are provided in the same order as they appear in the book, and the answers share the passage's principles, but they do not always use the same words [18]. Examinees can revisit the questions after reading the passage in order to be able to answer them [16].

### ***1.3. Unstated Detail Questions***

Examinees must locate information that is not explicitly stated in the passage [18]. According to the passage, the correct solution to this type of query is false information. To successfully answer these questions, careful reading is required [16].

### ***1.4. Pronoun Referent Questions***

The examinees must locate a certain noun's assigned pronoun [18]. Referents are used by the author to improve word choice and variety [19]. The pronoun can appear before or after the antecedent, and it can even appear in a distinct sentence. For this style of inquiry, transition and connecting words can be used as clues [20].

### ***1.5. Inference Questions***

The examinees must locate a certain noun's assigned pronoun [18]. Referents are used by the author to

improve word choice and variety [19]. The pronoun can appear before or after the antecedent, and it can even appear in a distinct sentence. For this style of inquiry, transition and connecting words can be used as clues [20].

**1.6. Vocabulary Questions**

This sort of topic accounts for roughly 20% of the TOEFL test's total questions, implying that vocabulary and reading comprehension are critical [21]. Because vocabulary is directly related to comprehension [22], it is an important feature in reading [23]. In most cases, unfamiliar words are utilized in the test.

These types of questions in TOEFL reading comprehension were used as research parameters besides types of text. The other research instrument is research theory which is Intrinsic Analysis.

The intrinsic element is one of the elements that build a literary work. [24] stated that intrinsic elements of a literary work have concrete characteristics. These characteristics include the type of literature (genre), thoughts, feelings, language style, storytelling style, and the structure of literary works. A structural approach, or structuralism, is also referred to as the expert study of intrinsic elements. Structuralism is a school of thought that sees literary works as a system of interconnected pieces [25].

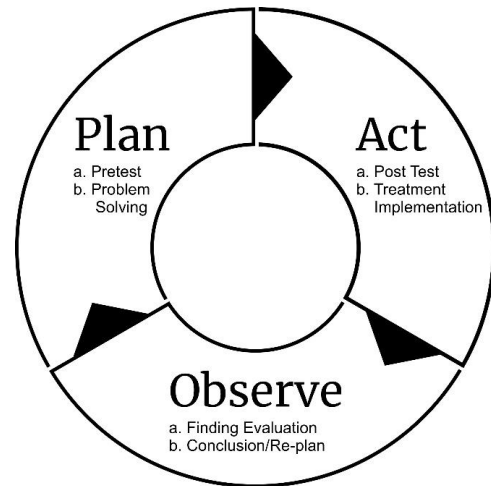
A literary work that uses structural theory according to [26] includes themes, characters, language styles, and plots. [27] explained how the structural theory works, stating that the intrinsic elements are dismantled or unravelled. The same opinion is expressed by [28] that the theory of structuralism emphasizes the analysis of the elements of literary works. In conclusion, intrinsic elements include plot, characterization, setting, theme, message, point of view, and style of language. This theory is modified and implemented to the teaching and learning of the TOEFL reading comprehension section.

Based on the explanations and arguments above, it is an urgent call to undergo research that later will improve student ability in solving reading comprehension in TOEFL. This research aimed to identify and explain the alteration of student scores on reading comprehension before and after intrinsic theory and types of question treatments implementation. The findings and conclusions of this study are intended to improve English reading comprehension exam teaching, particularly in the TOEFL.

**2. METHOD**

The method used in this research was the action research method. This action research method is expected to implement a certain change within the object of study. [29] stated that one of the characteristics of the action research method is to bring about positive change and improvement in the participants' social situation.

This research adopted and modified stages of the action research method mention by [29]. The main stages of this research are plan, act, and observe.



**Figure 1.** Research Design Framework adopted from [29] Action Research

**2.1. Population and Samples**

The participants in this research are the students of the Animal Husbandry Study Program, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sumatera Utara. There are 84 students divided into two groups, A and B. Group A consists of 45 students, and Group B consists of 39 students. During the research, these students were in the TOEFL Preparation class.

**2.2. Research Time and Location**

This research started from February 2021 until June 2021. Research location takes place in Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.

**2.3. Research Instruments**

Due to the covid-19 outbreak, almost all of the research activities were done online, and few were offline using strict health protocols. This research utilized several applications for online teaching and learning, such as; Google Classroom and Zoom. Google classroom was used to conduct pre-test and post-test. In addition, zoom is used to apply intrinsic analysis towards the student as the research treatment.

**2.4. Data Collecting Method**

Document analysis is used to obtain the research data. The research data are the students' pre and post-test results. It is collected in google drive in the form of Ms Excel and google form statistics. [30] stated that this type of method interpreted the documents to provide voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Meanwhile, the data source is 84 students of the Animal Husbandry Study Program, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. The students are in their third year/sixth semester in this study program.

**2.5. Data Analysis**

Action research is usually identified as the learning by doing method [31]. This method moves from identifying the problem, doing something to solve it, seeing how successful their efforts were, and if not

satisfied, trying again. This research only required one application treatment because the expected results are fulfilled.

The analysed data were presented in a qualitative approach, in which the results are described according to the research problems/research objectives. In this study, there are two treatments and two parameters. Types of questions in TOEFL reading comprehension understanding is the first therapy. To answer reading comprehension issues, the second treatment is intrinsic analysis. In addition, the first parameter is the type of text (Narrative and descriptive). The second parameter is the type of text.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research started from the TOEFL introduction as the first TOEFL class meeting. Then move to the Reading Comprehension introduction in TOEFL (2nd Meet). At the end of the second meeting, both student groups were given a pre-test. The pre-test results stated that Group A with 53 average scores. Meanwhile, group B is stated with 68 average scores. Here are the tables for questions distributed by numbers and by the types of questions:

**Table 1.** Pre-Test Question Score Percentage for Group A and B by Number

Question Number	Types	Correct Score Percentage
1.	Main Idea	68.5%
2.	Stated Details	72%
3.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	57%
4.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	63%
5.	Pronoun Referent Questions	64.5%
6.	Stated Details	61%
7.	Unstated Details	60%
8.	Unstated Details	54%
9.	Stated Details	39%
10.	Inference	41%

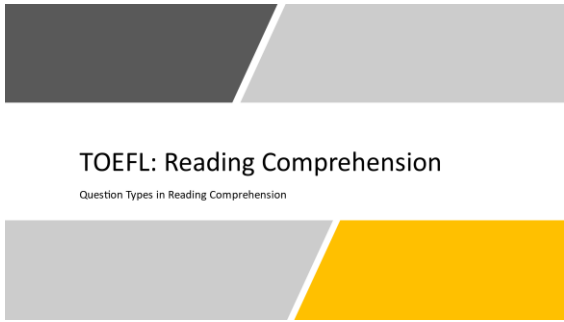
**Table 2.** Pre-Test Question Score Percentage for Group A and B by Types of Question

Types of Question	Total Question	Percentage (%)
Main Idea	1	68.5
Stated Details	3	57
Unstated Details	2	57
Pronoun Referent Questions	1	64.5
Inference	1	41
Vocabulary	2	60

Based on the pre-test results, both groups have difficulties solving Stated Details, Unstated Details, and Inference questions in Reading Comprehension. Stated Details questions are in numbers 2, 6, and 9. The stated details are simple. You must read the text carefully because the answer is stated in the text or explicit [18]. However, students found it difficult because the majority of them cannot focus on reading the text carefully [6]–[8]. On the other hand, unstated details (numbers 7 and 8) are the contrary of stated details, in which the answer is implicit [18].

Students found it difficult because most of them did not grasp the meaning/message of the text [9], [11]. In addition, the inference question (number 10) needs an understanding of the whole text and the ability to summarize the text messages [18]. Students found it difficult because most of them did not grasp the meaning/message of the text [6]–[8]. Based on these problem findings, research implementation focused on solving these problems. The research treatment implementations were carried out on the third and fourth meetings, then followed with a post-test.

In the third meeting, students are given material about types of questions in Reading Comprehension TOEFL. This material is one of the parameters of analysis besides types of text in reading comprehension. These parameters were used to quantify the treatment effect. These are the slides images that were used in the meeting:



**TOEFL: Reading Comprehension**

Question Types in Reading Comprehension

**Stated Details**

- The examinees are prompted to find a specific piece of information instead of defining all of the information in a passage (Philips, 2001, p. 379). The questions are presented in a sequence that mirrors how they appear in the text and the answers share the same ideas of the passage though they do not necessarily use the same words (Philips, 2001, p. 379). In order to be able to answer these questions, the examinees can reread the questions after reading the passage (Hill, 2006, p. 21).

**Pronoun Referent Questions**

- The examinees have to find the designated pronoun of a specific noun (Philips, 2001, p. 388). The author uses referents in order to enhance word choice and variation (Gallagher, 2005, p. 44). The pronoun itself may be before or after the antecedent is mentioned and can even be in a different sentence. Transition and connecting words can be used as clues for this type of question (Gear & Gear, 2002, p. 317).

**Main Idea Questions**

- The main idea can be isolated in all the passages since it is the most important element that states the author's intention (Pierce & Kinsell, 2008). In the PBT TOEFL, the examinees are asked mostly about the "topic", "title", "primary idea", or "main idea".

**Unstated Detail Questions**

- The examinees have to find information that is not explicit in the passage (Philips, 2001, p. 385). The correct answer for this type of questions is false information according to the passage. Careful reading is essential to correctly answer these questions (Hill, 2006, p. 22).

**Inference Questions**

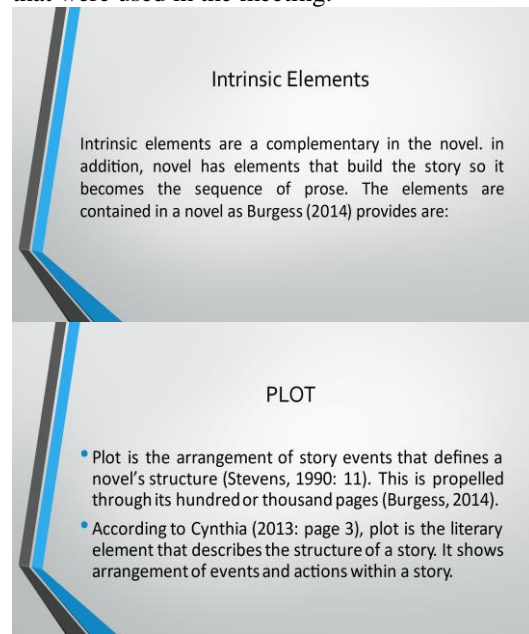
- In this type of question, the examinees have to deduce information from a passage. These questions can be recognized from the presence of words such as "inferred", "implied", "likely", or "probably" (Philips, 2001, p. 398). This question requires sharp reading skills, previous knowledge, and good memorization skills (Broek et al., 2001, p. 1081). Hill (2006) suggested that the answer to this question will not be different from the passage's main idea.

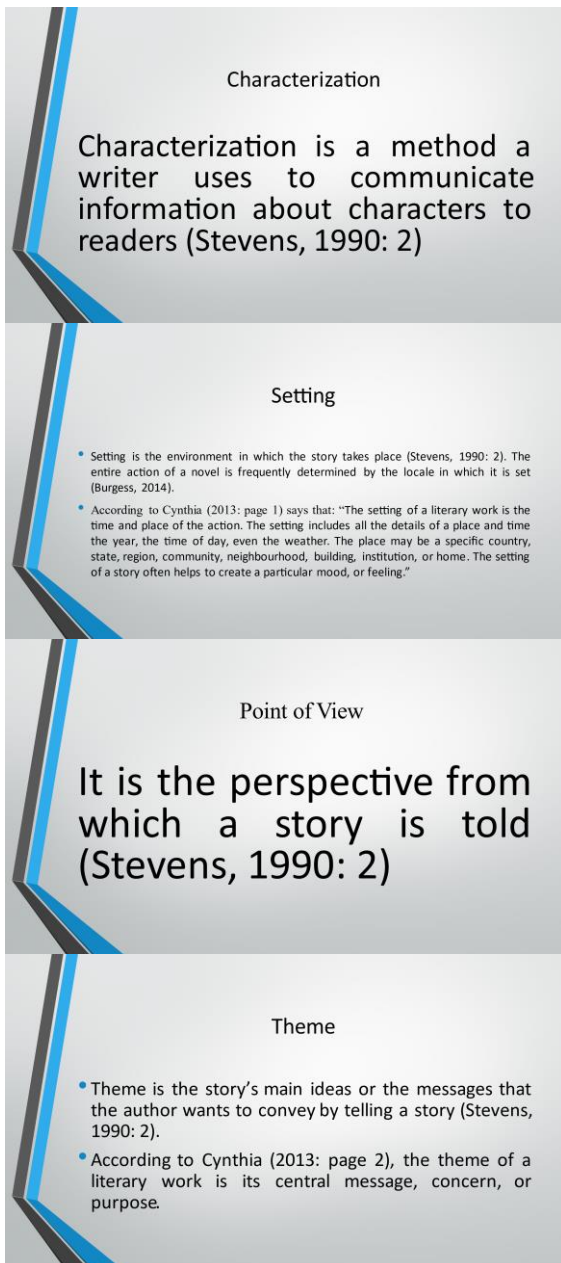
**Figure 2.** Types of Question in Reading Comprehension TOEFL Slides

Students are expected to understand the purpose of the questions to successfully answer them. Every type of sentence had strategies to answer it [32]. Based on that claim, students are taught to identify the question first, belongs to what type question number one is? Or what are the types of number 2 questions? After determining the types of questions, students are expected to apply the strategy given in solving each type of question. Because it is the most crucial part that communicates the author's aim, the main idea can be isolated in all passages [17]. Stated detailed answers are presented in a sequence. Examinees might review the questions after reading the passage to help them answer them [16]. The correct answer for Unstated Detail Questions is false information according to the passage. To successfully answer these questions, careful reading is required [16]. Transition and connecting words can be used as clues for Pronoun Referent Questions [20]. And for Inference Questions, [16] suggested that the answer to this question will not be different from the passage's main idea. The last, Vocabulary Questions, [33] suggests a careful examination of the main ideas surrounding the word and trying every option to replace it until the best possible word substitution is found.

In the fourth meeting, both groups were introduced to the intrinsic analysis theory by Wellek and Warren. Moreover, this theory is modified to adapt the Reading

Comprehension question. These are the slides images that were used in the meeting:





**Figure 3.** Intrinsic Analysis for Reading Comprehension Slides

The students are given the way to apply this theory to answer Reading Comprehension in TOEFL. Especially, dealing with Stated Details, Unstated Details, and Inference question types. Students were instructed to read the question attentively before looking for comparable sorts of words mentioned in the text in Stated Details. In Unstated Details and Inference questions, the students were told to apply the intrinsic analysis. By understanding the plot, character, setting, and theme of the text, students were expected to visualize the messages of the text. Even though the student didn't fully understand the text.

In the fifth meeting, the students are given the post-test. Group A has done a narrative text reading comprehension test. On the other hand, Group B has done a descriptive text reading comprehension test.

Group A achieved an average score of 83 points, 30 points higher than the pre-test. In addition, Group B achieved an average score of 92 points, 24 points higher than the pre-test. These rising scores are identified due to the significant effect of treatment implementation on the research parameters, types of questions. Meanwhile, types of reading comprehension text did not produce significantly different results.

**Group A Post-Test Analysis**

Based on the post-test results, there is a significant improvement in Group A student average score. The details are presented in Tables 3 and 4 below:

**Table 3.** Post-Test Question Score Percentage for Group A by Number

Question Number	Types	Correct Score Percentage
1.	Main Idea	95%
2.	Stated Details	76%
3.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	90%
4.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	81%
5.	Pronoun Referent Questions	78%
6.	Stated Details	93%
7.	Unstated Details	84.5%
8.	Unstated Details	88%
9.	Stated Details	72%
10.	Inference	67%

**Table 4.** Post-Test Question Score Percentage for Group A by Types of Question

Types of Question	Total Question	Percentage (%)
Main Idea	1	95
Stated Details	3	80
Unstated Details	2	86
Pronoun Referent Questions	1	78
Inference	1	67
Vocabulary	2	85.5

Based on the post-test findings, inference questions in Group A students are still in the lowest percentage of correctness compared to other types of questions. Inference question resulted as 67% from the student answer correctly. Meanwhile, the Main Idea question resulted as the highest correct percentage, with 95% of students answered it correctly. [34] also mentioned that inference question is one of three problematic types of question-based on their research findings. They identify the three categories of questions that are the most difficult to answer: vocabulary, main idea, and inference. Moreover, due to the hidden nature of students, they cannot make inferences [35]. Students are unlikely to understand the implicit meaning of the text by reading between the lines. However, [36] found that

working memory can aid in understanding inferences questions.

On the other hand, [34]) stated that the main idea question is one of the problematic questions. Meanwhile, in this research, the main idea question resulted as the highest correct percentage. This finding declares that one solution in dealing with the main idea question is by applying intrinsic analysis within the reading comprehension test.

**Group B Post-Test Analysis**

Based on the post-test results, there is a significant improvement in Group B student average score. The details are presented in Tables 5 and 6 below:

**Table 5.** Post-Test Question Score Percentage for Group B by Number

Question Number	Types	Correct Score Percentage
1.	Main Idea	96%
2.	Stated Details	90%
3.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	86%
4.	English Vocabulary: Synonym	94%
5.	Pronoun Referent Questions	84%
6.	Stated Details	76.5%
7.	Unstated Details	84.5%
8.	Unstated Details	88%
9.	Stated Details	92%
10.	Inference	90%

**Table 6.** Post-Test Question Score Percentage for Group A by Types of Question

Types of Question	Total Question	Percentage (%)
Main Idea	1	96
Stated Details	3	86
Unstated Details	2	86
Pronoun Referent Questions	1	84
Inference	1	90
Vocabulary	2	90

Based on the post-test findings, pronoun referent questions in Group B students resulted in the lowest percentage of correctness compared to other types of questions. Although stated as the lowest correct percentage, pronoun referent question resulted in 84% correct percentage from the student answer. This result was already declared as a good score. Meanwhile, the Main Idea question resulted as the highest correct percentage, with 96% of students answered it correctly. [32] also mention that reference question is difficult to solve by students. She stated that many students read the question first and then the text related to the question. In addition, most of them adopted a top-down strategy to understand the text. This finding proved that those

strategies are not effective to solve reference questions in reading comprehension. Thus, this research proves something else by resulting 84% correct percentage of reference questions. The main idea question also resulted in the highest correct percentage in Group B. This finding declares that one solution in dealing with the main idea question is by applying intrinsic analysis within the reading comprehension test.

**4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This research showed that intrinsic analysis and types of questions understanding had substantial benefits on increasing student TOEFL reading comprehension scores. A raise of 30 and 24 points is a prove of the treatment positive effect. Type of reading comprehension text (narrative and descriptive) parameter was not an obstacle in implementing the research treatments. These positive effects were suspected due to students’ ability to grasp intrinsic analysis and applied it in reading comprehension text. Students are familiar with intrinsic analysis which they learned as literary work appreciation in their senior high school.

We suggest adopting these teaching methods/strategies to overcome reading comprehension problems. These teaching methods/strategies can be combined with other methods, strategies, or techniques to make it better.

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