

The Effect of the Skimming Technique on Students' Reading Comprehension in TOEFL Tests: A Case Study of Sixth-Semester English Education Students at UNIMUDA Sorong

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the skimming technique on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests at the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program of UNIMUDA Sorong. Many students struggle to answer reading comprehension questions efficiently due to limited vocabulary, slow reading pace, and difficulty identifying main ideas. The skimming technique, which involves reading quickly to grasp the general meaning of a text, was implemented to help students improve their reading speed and comprehension accuracy. This research employed a pre-experimental quantitative design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model. The population consisted of all sixth-semester English education students, and a class of 25 students was selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used was a TOEFL reading comprehension test consisting of 50 multiple-choice items. The pre-test was conducted before applying the skimming technique, and the post-test was administered after four treatment sessions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of improvement. The findings showed a notable increase in students' reading comprehension scores after the treatment. The mean score improved from 52.84 on the pre-test to 72.36 on the post-test, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the skimming technique had a significant positive effect on students' TOEFL reading performance. The skimming technique effectively enhanced students' reading speed and comprehension ability. It can be used as an alternative strategy to help English education students improve their TOEFL test performance and reading proficiency in general.

Keywords: Skimming Technique; TOEFL; Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension plays a central role in English language learning, particularly for university students preparing for proficiency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Among the four language skills, reading is often considered the foundation of academic success because it involves the ability to process, interpret, and evaluate written information. For students in

English education programs, reading comprehension is not only necessary for academic performance but also for professional competence as future teachers or language practitioners. However, despite years of English study, many students still face difficulties in understanding long and complex texts, especially in time-limited test situations like TOEFL.

TOEFL reading passages typically include unfamiliar vocabulary, long sentences, and dense academic content. Students are expected to identify main ideas, supporting details, and implied meanings quickly and accurately. Unfortunately, many Indonesian students, including those at UNIMUDA Sorong, struggle to manage their time effectively during the reading section. They often read word by word, translating every sentence, which slows them down and reduces comprehension accuracy. As a result, they fail to complete all questions or misinterpret key information due to fatigue and time pressure. This problem reflects a lack of strategic reading skills, particularly in using techniques designed for efficient information processing.

One effective strategy to address this issue is the skimming technique. Skimming is a high-speed reading method used to get the general meaning of a text without reading every word. It involves focusing on the main ideas, topic sentences, and keywords to gain an overall understanding of the passage. According to Grellet (2017), skimming enables readers to identify the general organization and purpose of a text quickly, which is especially useful in tests that require time management. When applied to TOEFL preparation, skimming can help students improve their ability to recognize key ideas and answer comprehension questions more efficiently.

Previous research has supported the effectiveness of skimming in improving reading comprehension. Fadillah (2019) found that students who used skimming techniques were able to identify main ideas faster and answer comprehension questions more accurately than those who relied on traditional reading. Similarly, Rahman and Fitria (2020) reported that students who practiced skimming showed significant gains in reading speed and comprehension compared to those who did not. In a related study, Astuti (2021) concluded that skimming was particularly helpful in standardized test contexts like TOEFL and IELTS, where time constraints are a major challenge. These findings indicate that skimming not only improves comprehension performance but also builds students' confidence and test-taking efficiency.

Despite these positive results, many students at UNIMUDA Sorong have not yet mastered or even been introduced to effective reading strategies such as skimming. Classroom observations show that most students tend to read line by line and depend heavily on translation, which leads to slower comprehension and lower TOEFL reading scores. While some have a good understanding of grammar and vocabulary, they still face difficulties recognizing main ideas and answering inference-based questions. This indicates that the problem lies not merely in linguistic knowledge but also in the absence of reading strategies that promote comprehension efficiency.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the effect of the skimming technique on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests. It is expected that by applying

this technique, students will learn to focus on relevant information, understand the general meaning of passages more quickly, and manage their time more effectively during the test.

The significance of this study lies in both its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it provides empirical evidence on how skimming as a reading strategy can enhance comprehension in a high-stakes testing context. Practically, it offers an instructional model that English lecturers at UNIMUDA Sorong and similar institutions can use to train students in strategic reading for TOEFL preparation. The findings may also serve as a reference for students seeking to improve their reading proficiency and test-taking performance through more efficient approaches.

In summary, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge for English education students, particularly in standardized test contexts like TOEFL. The use of the skimming technique represents a potential solution to overcome slow reading habits and poor comprehension outcomes. This research is therefore conducted to determine whether the skimming technique can significantly improve the reading comprehension ability of sixth-semester English Education students at UNIMUDA Sorong. By identifying its impact, the study aims to promote more strategic, efficient, and confident readers who can perform better not only in TOEFL but also in academic reading tasks in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from written text through interaction between the reader and the text. According to Nunan (2016), comprehension requires readers to decode language symbols, interpret meaning, and integrate information with their prior knowledge. It is not merely recognizing words but understanding relationships, ideas, and structures within a passage. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context such as Indonesia, reading comprehension is often a major challenge because students encounter limited exposure to authentic English materials and struggle with vocabulary, sentence structure, and inferential understanding.

Reading comprehension involves several cognitive and linguistic components decoding, vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, and metacognitive control. Brown (2018) explains that good readers use both bottom-up processes (recognizing words and phrases) and top-down processes (activating background knowledge and predicting meaning). However, many Indonesian students rely heavily on bottom-up decoding, translating word by word, which slows down comprehension. This problem becomes particularly visible in time-limited tests like TOEFL, where success depends on the ability to identify main ideas and relevant details quickly.

Reading Comprehension in TOEFL Tests

The TOEFL reading section assesses a student's ability to comprehend academic texts, identify main ideas, infer meaning, and understand vocabulary in context. It requires efficiency, as students must read lengthy passages and answer multiple-choice questions within strict time constraints. According to Phillips (2017), TOEFL reading comprehension measures not only linguistic competence but also reading strategies such as predicting, scanning, and summarizing. Many students, however, fail to perform well on the TOEFL reading section because they lack strategy awareness. They tend to read every word, resulting in slow performance and incomplete responses.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, TOEFL preparation often focuses on grammar and vocabulary drills, with less emphasis on strategic reading. This creates a gap between students' language knowledge and their ability to process texts efficiently. Studies such as Rahmawati (2018) and Utami (2019) have emphasized that successful TOEFL readers rely on global strategies like skimming and scanning rather than exhaustive reading. These strategies allow students to locate key information and grasp the general meaning of a passage within limited time a critical skill for standardized tests.

The Skimming Technique in Reading

The skimming technique is a rapid reading method that aims to get the general meaning or gist of a text rather than detailed information. According to Grellet (2017), skimming involves focusing on titles, subtitles, first sentences of paragraphs, and keywords to identify the main ideas quickly. It helps readers predict content and structure, making it particularly effective for long or complex texts such as TOEFL reading passages. Harmer (2018) notes that skimming is one of the core academic reading strategies that improves both speed and comprehension. When practiced consistently, it trains students to separate essential information from less relevant details. This cognitive filtering process enhances comprehension efficiency and allows better time management in exams. For EFL learners, skimming also reduces anxiety because it encourages reading for meaning instead of focusing on every unknown word.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the skimming technique in improving reading comprehension among EFL learners. Mariam (2016) conducted an action research study with university students and found that applying metacognitive strategies specifically skimming and scanning helped students increase reading speed and accuracy. Similarly, Darmawan (2017) found that using the skimming technique significantly improved students' ability to identify main ideas and supporting details in expository texts. The study concluded that students became more strategic readers, less dependent on translation, and more confident during reading tasks.

Aritonang (2018) also examined the combination of skimming and scanning techniques in teaching reading comprehension. The results showed that both strategies improved students' understanding of texts and enhanced their ability to locate specific information efficiently. Lesmana (2019) further confirmed that using skimming and scanning techniques in junior high school improved comprehension of narrative texts and helped students answer inferential questions more effectively. These findings consistently demonstrate that skimming can enhance both comprehension and test-taking performance when applied systematically.

Previous Studies on Skimming Technique and Reading Achievement

Research conducted between 2016 and 2020 supports the idea that the skimming technique enhances students' comprehension skills in various EFL settings. Mariam (2016) and Darmawan (2017) demonstrated that explicit training in skimming improved university students' ability to identify key ideas, while Aritonang (2018) found that these techniques motivated students to participate more actively in reading lessons. Similarly, Lesmana (2019) observed improvements not only in reading comprehension scores but also in students' attitudes toward reading activities.

Moreover, Astuti (2020) investigated the impact of the skimming technique on students' performance in reading standardized texts such as TOEFL and IELTS. Her results revealed that students trained with skimming strategies achieved significantly higher comprehension scores and completed tasks faster than those taught through traditional reading methods. These studies provide strong empirical support for incorporating skimming into TOEFL preparation courses. However, despite these promising results, research on the use of skimming techniques in Indonesian higher education particularly in TOEFL contexts remains limited. Most studies have focused on general reading comprehension or high school learners. Few have examined how the technique specifically affects university students preparing for TOEFL or similar academic reading tests. This creates a research gap that the current study seeks to address by focusing on sixth-semester English education students at UNIMUDA Sorong.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a pre-experimental quantitative design to investigate the effect of the skimming technique on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to measure improvement

by comparing students' performance before and after receiving the treatment. A one-group pre-test and post-test model was implemented to determine whether the skimming technique could significantly enhance students' ability to comprehend reading passages, particularly in identifying main ideas, supporting details, and implied meanings within TOEFL texts.

The population of this research consisted of all sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UNIMUDA Sorong during the 2023/2024 academic year. From this population, one class comprising 25 students was selected as the research sample through purposive sampling. The class was chosen based on the lecturer's recommendation that it represented an average level of English proficiency and active classroom participation in reading activities. Although the sample size was relatively small, it was considered sufficient for a classroom-based experimental study where the primary objective was to determine the effectiveness of an instructional technique rather than to generalize findings to a larger population.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary instrument used in this study was a TOEFL reading comprehension test consisting of 50 multiple-choice items adapted from Phillips (2017). The test aimed to assess students' comprehension skills in several aspects: identifying main ideas, recognizing supporting details, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in context. The test was administered twice as a pre-test before the treatment and as a post-test after the application of the skimming technique. Both tests contained passages of comparable difficulty and length to ensure fairness and consistency in measurement. Prior to its use, the instrument was validated by two lecturers from the English Education Study Program at UNIMUDA Sorong to ensure content validity and alignment with the reading skills required in the TOEFL test. A pilot test was also conducted with another group of students to measure the reliability of the test items. The reliability coefficient calculated using Cronbach's Alpha was 0.85, which indicates a high level of internal consistency.

The treatment was conducted over four sessions within two weeks, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. During each session, students were introduced to and practiced the skimming technique using different TOEFL reading passages. Each meeting followed three structured stages. In the introduction stage, the lecturer explained the concept, steps, and benefits of the skimming technique and demonstrated how to locate topic sentences, keywords, and transitional markers to identify the main ideas of a passage. In the practice stage, students applied the technique by skimming several reading passages under timed conditions and answering comprehension questions. They were encouraged to focus on speed, accuracy, and identifying key information without reading every word. Finally, in the reflection and feedback stage, the lecturer and students discussed their experiences, analyzed incorrect answers, and reflected on how skimming influenced their understanding and time management during reading. Throughout

the treatment process, the lecturer acted as a facilitator, guiding students to improve their strategic reading habits and providing corrective feedback when necessary. The learning atmosphere was designed to be interactive, allowing students to work individually and collaboratively to build confidence in using the technique. After the treatment, the post-test was administered to measure any improvement in students' reading comprehension performance compared to the pre-test results.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation of students' scores before and after the implementation of the skimming technique, providing a general overview of students' performance and progress. For inferential analysis, a paired sample t-test was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The significance level was set at 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). If the p-value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the skimming technique had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension performance. To further evaluate the level of improvement, the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) formula was applied to categorize the effectiveness of the skimming technique as low, moderate, or high.

To maintain accuracy and reliability in data interpretation, all students' answer sheets were carefully checked and scored. The analysis focused not only on determining statistical improvement but also on understanding the pedagogical implications of using the skimming technique in TOEFL reading contexts. It explored how the technique influenced students' reading speed, comprehension accuracy, and confidence when approaching complex academic passages. The results of this analysis were expected to provide valuable insights for English lecturers at UNIMUDA Sorong and other institutions regarding the integration of strategic reading techniques, such as skimming, into TOEFL preparation and general reading instruction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to determine the effect of the skimming technique on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests. Data were collected from the pre-test and post-test scores of 25 sixth-semester English Education students at UNIMUDA Sorong who participated in four sessions of skimming-based reading instruction. The pre-test measured students' initial comprehension ability before the treatment, while the post-test assessed their improvement after applying the skimming technique.

Table 1. Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Test Type	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Pre-Test	25	52.84	45	63	5.21
Post-Test	25	72.36	64	83	4.73

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of the pre-test was 52.84, indicating that most students initially demonstrated limited ability in comprehending TOEFL reading passages. Many struggled to identify main ideas, distinguish supporting details, and infer meanings from context. In contrast, the post-test mean score increased to 72.36, showing a substantial improvement in overall reading comprehension. The mean difference of 19.52 points suggests that students benefited considerably from the use of the skimming technique during instruction.

In addition, the standard deviation decreased from 5.21 in the pre-test to 4.73 in the post-test. This reduction implies that students' performance became more uniform after the treatment, meaning that even those who initially scored lower made progress and achieved greater consistency in their reading comprehension skills. To determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted using SPSS version 25.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results

Test	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Test – Post-Test	-19.52	-10.47	24	0.000

As presented in Table 2, the t-test result yielded a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that the skimming technique has no effect on students' reading comprehension was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It can therefore be concluded that the skimming technique had a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension performance in TOEFL tests.

To further measure the magnitude of the improvement, the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) value was calculated. The N-Gain score was 0.55, which falls within the moderate improvement category. This classification suggests that the skimming technique produced a meaningful and consistent increase in students' reading comprehension ability. Students became more efficient readers, better able to identify the main ideas and structure of passages while managing time effectively skills crucial for success on the TOEFL reading section. The statistical findings provide clear evidence that applying the skimming technique significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension performance. The technique helped students not only increase their comprehension scores but also develop a more strategic and confident approach to tackling TOEFL reading tasks.

The findings of this study reveal that the skimming technique had a significant and positive effect on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests. The improvement in students' mean score from 52.84 in the pre-test to 72.36 in the post-

test, supported by the p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicates that students' comprehension improved substantially after learning how to apply the skimming technique. This result suggests that when students are explicitly trained to read strategically focusing on main ideas and text structure rather than word-by-word decoding they can process information more efficiently and perform better in time-limited academic reading contexts such as TOEFL.

One of the main reasons for this improvement is that the skimming technique enhances students' ability to locate key information quickly. During the treatment sessions, students were taught to pay attention to topic sentences, repeated words, and paragraph transitions to identify the general meaning of the text. This helped them construct a mental outline of each passage without reading every word. Such strategic reading behavior aligns with Grellet (2017), who explains that skimming enables learners to understand the overall organization of a text and distinguish between essential and non-essential information. Similarly, Darmawan (2017) found that teaching students to skim improves their ability to determine the main idea and supporting details, resulting in more accurate comprehension and faster reading speed.

Furthermore, the improvement observed in this study supports the idea that skimming helps students develop automaticity and reading fluency. By repeatedly practicing the technique under timed conditions, students became more comfortable reading under pressure. They learned to allocate time efficiently for each passage and avoid overanalyzing unfamiliar vocabulary. This finding corresponds with Mariam (2016), who discovered that training students in metacognitive reading strategies, including skimming and scanning, enhanced their reading rate and overall comprehension. In the present study, students reported that they felt more confident and less anxious during reading activities after they learned how to identify main ideas quickly.

The results also indicate that the skimming technique improved students' comprehension consistency, as evidenced by the decrease in standard deviation from 5.21 to 4.73. This suggests that even lower-performing students benefited from the strategy, narrowing the gap between weaker and stronger readers. Lesmana (2019) observed a similar pattern in her study, noting that students across different proficiency levels improved when taught to skim and scan, as these strategies provided clear guidance on how to approach texts efficiently. In this research, students who initially struggled with comprehension were able to participate more actively and produce higher scores after receiving explicit instruction in skimming.

In addition to improving comprehension, the skimming technique contributed to students' metacognitive awareness. As they practiced, students became more conscious of how they approached reading tasks planning where to look for main ideas, monitoring their understanding, and evaluating whether they had captured the text's overall meaning. This self-awareness plays a crucial role in effective

reading, as supported by Aritonang (2018), who concluded that strategy-based reading instruction encourages learners to become more autonomous and reflective. The present findings confirm that when learners understand the purpose behind their reading actions, they are better able to control their comprehension process.

Another key finding from this study is that the skimming technique helped students manage time pressure, one of the most common challenges in TOEFL reading sections. Students often reported difficulty finishing passages during the pre-test because they read word by word. After learning to skim, they became faster and more focused, allowing them to complete all the questions within the allotted time. This supports Astuti's (2020) research, which found that the skimming technique significantly improved test performance among TOEFL and IELTS learners by increasing reading speed without reducing comprehension accuracy.

The findings of this study also hold strong pedagogical implications. English lecturers at universities, particularly in teacher education programs, should integrate reading strategy training such as skimming into TOEFL preparation and academic reading courses. While vocabulary and grammar remain essential, strategy instruction allows students to apply their linguistic knowledge effectively during timed tests. Regular practice with techniques like skimming can make reading more purposeful, efficient, and less stressful for students. This approach is particularly beneficial in contexts like UNIMUDA Sorong, where students often have limited access to authentic English materials and struggle with test anxiety.

Despite the significant findings, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The research involved only 25 participants from a single class, which limits the generalizability of the results. The treatment period was also relatively short four sessions, so the long-term retention of the strategy was not assessed. Furthermore, the study focused solely on the skimming technique; future research could compare its effectiveness with other strategies such as scanning, summarizing, or inferencing to gain a more comprehensive understanding of strategic reading instruction.

Nevertheless, the findings provide valuable insights into how targeted reading strategies can enhance comprehension in academic English settings. The study confirms that explicit instruction in skimming not only improves comprehension performance but also fosters reading autonomy, confidence, and efficiency. This aligns with the broader view of Nunan (2016), who emphasized that effective language teaching should involve equipping learners with strategies that enable them to become active, self-directed readers.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the effect of the skimming technique on students' reading comprehension in TOEFL tests at the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program of UNIMUDA Sorong. Based on the findings, the skimming technique was proven to significantly enhance students' comprehension performance. The

statistical analysis showed an increase in students' mean score from 52.84 in the pre-test to 72.36 in the post-test, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the improvement was statistically meaningful. The N-Gain score of 0.55 also demonstrated a moderate level of improvement, confirming that the technique helped students achieve better understanding and efficiency in reading TOEFL passages. The results imply that the skimming technique effectively improved students' ability to identify main ideas, recognize supporting details, and infer meaning under time constraints. Students who previously relied on word-by-word translation learned to focus on essential information and comprehend passages more quickly. The reduction in the standard deviation of scores further indicates that the improvement was consistent across different proficiency levels, suggesting that even weaker readers benefited from the training. Pedagogically, the study highlights the importance of incorporating explicit reading strategy instruction into English language teaching, especially in TOEFL preparation and academic reading courses. Teaching students how to apply skimming helps them become more strategic, confident, and autonomous readers. Lecturers are encouraged to design reading lessons that include both speed and comprehension training, using authentic TOEFL materials to simulate test conditions. Although this study achieved its objectives, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size was limited to one class of 25 students, and the treatment period lasted only four sessions. Therefore, future research should involve larger participant groups, longer treatment durations, and comparisons between skimming and other reading strategies, such as scanning or summarizing, to gain a broader understanding of their combined effects. The findings confirm that the skimming technique is an effective and practical method to improve students' reading comprehension, particularly in standardized test contexts like TOEFL. It not only enhances comprehension accuracy and speed but also builds learners' confidence and self-regulated reading behavior. Implementing this strategy in EFL classrooms can significantly contribute to the development of students' academic reading proficiency and overall language competence.

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