

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

English is the largest language by number of speakers and it is one of the international languages. The others are Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Spain, and France. English, as a foreign language in Indonesia, has been taught from secondary school up to university. In learning English, four skills should be mastered. The four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All those skills are equally important and whenever possible should try to incorporate all of them into our lessons if we want to have a balanced approach.

In education, reading is important for the learners. It is a part of communication and the way highly building knowledge. It is very important in education fields; students need to be exercised and trained to have good reading skills. In the learning process, reading skill is also the most important skill that must students have because through reading skills they can understand more knowledge especially in English.

There are several kinds of essay studied by students at the English department of Bung Hatta University; Expository essay (to persuade the readers by providing some logical argument), Analytical report (explain ideas, events and illustrate those explanations by providing facts, examples, and descriptions), Persuasive essay (to persuade the readers to share our opinion that provides strong support/evidence for that opinion), Objective report

(an essay that explore and investigate a topic), Argumentative essay (explain a topic and present our opinion along with our arguments for our opinion) (Sari, 2012: 2).

Reading essay is one of the skills which is taught on English subject at the English Department of Bung Hatta University. Reading essays have been studied by the third-year students' at the English department of Bung Hatta University. One of the types of essay which has been studied by them is the argumentative essay. Oshima and Houge (2006: 142) state that an argumentative essay is an essay where you agree or disagree with a problem, using reason to support your opinion.

Even though the third-year students have studied argumentative essays, some of them still got difficulties in comprehending argumentative essays. Based on the researcher's informal interview with the students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University, they are too lazy and get bored to read the argumentative essay because they have difficulty to guess the meaning of the essay.

**Table 1.1**

**The Third Year Students' Grades in Reading Essay**

No.	Name	Grades
1.	Student 1	A
2.	Student 2	A
3.	Student 3	A-
4.	Student 4	A
5.	Student 5	A
6.	Student 6	A
7.	Student 7	A-
8.	Student 8	A
9.	Student 9	A
10.	Student 10	A-
11.	Student 11	A
12.	Student 12	A
13.	Student 13	A
14.	Student 14	A
15.	Student 15	A
16.	Student 16	A-
17.	Student 17	A
18.	Student 18	A

19.	Student 19	A
20.	Student 20	A
21.	Student 21	A-
22.	Student 22	A
23.	Student 23	A
24.	Student 24	A

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled “The Third Year Students’ Difficulties in Comprehending Argumentative Essay at The English Department of Bung Hatta University Padang”.

## **1.2 The Identification of the Problem**

Reading, especially reading comprehension is not a passive activity. In fact, in the higher level, reading is not comprehended as the written symbols only, but, reading comprehension is comprehending, accepting, rejecting, and comparing a text.

As we know there are several kinds of essays. The third-year English students at Bung Hatta University have studied five kinds of essays such as expository essay, analytical report, persuasive essay, objective report, and argumentative essay. One of the types of essays that has been studied by the third-year students is the argumentative essay. Argumentative essay is an essay that explains a topic and present our opinion along with our arguments for our opinions.

Although the third-year students have studied argumentative essays, they still have difficulties in comprehending the essay. Based on informal interviews with some of the third-year students at the English department of Bung Hatta University, they still had difficulty in understanding the purpose of the argument of the text; they were reading due to the lack of vocabulary they master and the lack of understanding of punctuation. They also have difficulty in understanding content such as introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph in an argumentative essay. The result was that they are lazy to read argumentative essays because of their lack of understanding of the text.

### **1.3 The Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the identification of the problem as already discussed before, the researcher limits her study to the third-year students' difficulties in comprehending argumentative essay at the English Department of Bung Hatta University Padang to answer components of reading comprehension questions in the argumentative essay. The researcher limits to find students' difficulties in comprehending the introductory paragraph, body of the paragraph, and concluding paragraph of argumentative essay.

### **1.4 The Formulation of the Research**

Relating to the limitation of the problem of this research as discussed above, the researcher formulates the problem of this research as "What are the third-year students' difficulties in comprehending argumentative essay at the English Department of Bung Hatta University Padang?"

### **1.5 Research Questions**

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the research questions of this study were as the following:

- 1) Do the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulties in comprehending the introductory paragraph of an argumentative essay?
- 2) Do the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulties in comprehending the body paragraph of an argumentative essay?
- 3) Do the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulties in comprehending the conclusions of argumentative essays.

### **1.6 The Purposes of the Research**

The main purpose of this research is to find out third-year students' difficulty in comprehending argumentative essay at the English Department of Bung Hatta University. Specifically, the purposes of this research are:

1. To find out whether the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulty in comprehending the introductory of argumentative essay.
2. To find out whether the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulty in comprehending body paragraphs of argumentative essays.
3. To find out whether the third-year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University have difficulty in comprehending the conclusion of argumentative essay.

### **1.7 The Significance of the Research**

This research gives a contribution to teachers, students, and researchers. Teachers need to improve students' ability in comprehending reading argumentative essays. Particularly, English teachers would get information about their students' difficulty in comprehending argumentative essays.

For students, they will get information about their difficulty in comprehending argumentative essays.

While for the researcher, this research will improve her knowledge of how to do the research. It also can be the experience and useful to know whether the students have difficulties in comprehending argumentative essay.

### **1.8 The Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding the terms used, in the study, definitions of the terms are given as follows:

1. Reading comprehension is a complex developmental process that calls on the coordination of cognitive, language, social, and text-specific processes.
2. Difficulty is something hard in understanding argumentative paragraph.
3. An argumentative essay is an essay about certain issues with logical reason.
4. The introductory paragraph of the argumentative essay is a paragraph that discusses the theme.
5. Body of paragraph of an argumentative essay is a group of related sentences about a particular topic.
6. The concluding paragraph of the argumentative essay is a paragraph that summarizes the thesis.