

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Study

Writing is an important skill to be mastered by English Department students. During the writing process, the writer needs accuracy to produce a good composition. Furthermore, House (2006:6) says that writing is a process, an organic working out of memory, observation, research, and experience. In other words, writing is a step to express fresh ideas, write down the result of observation, tell about experiences and discover a new research to give valuable information to readers.

Writing, in general, can be categorized into five kinds of discourse mode: narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive and argumentative (Kakonis and Scally, 1978:1). The last one, argumentative composition, is a form of discourse in which the writer tries to persuade an audience to accept, reject, or think a certain way about a problem that cannot be solved by scientific or mathematical reasoning alone (White and Billings, 2005: 4). Moreover, this study only concerns on the argumentative composition. Argumentative composition deals with an important issue that needs some suggestions to be solved and persuade readers to accept the critical argument to take actions. To argue does not connote negative and hostility (Ramage, 2004: 1). In the other hand, to argue can create a pleasurable and create creative and productive activities to involve learners in critical thinking.

In Widya Mandala University, the students get writing courses from semester two until semester four. There are three writing courses: Writing course 1, Writing course 2, and the last Writing course 3. When the students pass the Writing course 1, they can continue to take Writing course 2. After they can pass Writing course 2, they can join in the last Writing course, Writing course 3. Writing course 3 helps the students studying argumentative compositions and states their ideas about an important topic.

The objective of Writing course 3 as stated in the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya Guide Book (Pedoman Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Tahun Kuliah 2005 / 2006, 2005: 127-128) is “The course provides students with the knowledge and skills to write English argumentative composition.” The writer can consider that after the students have learnt the basic theory of writing English compositions, they can produce their own good compositions, especially argumentative compositions.

There are several ways to organize a good argumentative composition, namely: unity, coherence, clarity, and emphasis (Kinneavy, 1980). One way to produce a good argumentative composition is coherence. Coherence, in Latin, means to “stick together” (Kolb, 1980:7). Kies (2008:1) also adds that coherence is a product of many different factors, which are combined to make every paragraph, every sentence, and every phrase contribute to the meaning of the whole piece. Still, Kies says that the factors contribute to build coherence are paragraph coherence and sentence cohesion. Then, the coherent paragraphs will lead to the coherence in the whole composition.

In writing an argumentative composition, the students are expected to create coherence in two levels: coherence within each paragraph and coherence in the whole composition. Both levels have a close and important relationship to connect each idea naturally.

The first level is coherence in the paragraph level. It means that all supporting details must support the topic sentence of each paragraph. According to McCrimmon (1984: 215), coherence is necessary, not only within a paragraph, but also among the several paragraphs of an essay, so that the reader can see how any paragraph is related to those that have come before. Smith and Liedlich in Indrajani (1996) also explain that a coherent paragraph must have only a single topic which is developed by supporting sentences. A topic sentence is written as a stakeholder to elaborate supporting sentences. The harmonious organization of sentences in a paragraph builds a beautiful coherence that can make the reader understand what is written about.

In the second level, there must be coherent in the overall level. It means that there should be a logical connection of the structure of formal argument in a composition. According to Moody (1981:197), the structure of formal argument is title, opening, thesis statement, proof refutation, concession, and the conclusion. When all the formal argument's structure are drawn all the ideas logically, it is concerned coherent argumentative composition. In short, a coherent composition is the whole process of connecting all logical ideas together to create a good composition, especially a good argumentative composition.

A strong foundation of creating a good argumentative composition must be supported by the ability of the students to connect each idea together. The tendency of the students to write unfocused idea leads to blur meanings. Therefore, coherence in an argumentative composition leads to the unity as a whole.

Prior to the previous study about coherence done by Indrajani (1996) about coherence in expository compositions written by the 5th semester students of Widya Mandala University, she has found that the students still have the difficulties to write one main idea in a paragraph. She also finds at least two sentences are not related to the topic sentence in one paragraph. Another finding is that the students do not express their ideas in a clear order, where it emerges a confusing. In China, Kaplan (1966, 1972) in Connor (1990:94) also did the similar study about coherence that Chinese writers who write in English may seem out of focus or incoherent. He found that the Chinese understudy write more than one topic sentence in each paragraph where it indicates incoherence in a composition.

The same study has not been done on the coherence of argumentative compositions written by English Department students of Widya Mandala Surabaya. This study is very important, but no one has observed the coherence of argumentative compositions. Moreover, the result of this study is to know whether the students are able to produce coherent argumentative compositions or not.

1.2. The Statement of the Problem

In line with the background above, this study specifically addresses the following questions:

- 1). Is there any coherence within each paragraph?
- 2). Is there any coherence between the title and the whole argumentative composition?

1.3. The Objective of the Study

Based on the background and the problem above, this study aims at investigating:

- a. To find out there is any coherence within each paragraph.
- b. To find out there is any coherence between the title and the whole argumentative composition.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are very helpful for the writing lecturers in order to choose the sequence of teaching argumentative composition and set appropriate teaching writing strategy. Moreover, this study will give precious inputs to the writing lecturers for teaching the students about coherent composition and coherent paragraph. Therefore, this study aimed at finding out whether the students have been able to produce coherent argumentative compositions or not.

1.5. The Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on the analysis of argumentative compositions written by the students in Writing 3 class of the English Department of the Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. The writer did not analyze the choice of words or the structure of the sentences. On the contrary, the writer was concerned to analyze about the coherent composition and the coherent paragraph. The data were collected only from thirteen Writing III final test papers conducted on June 6th, 2006.

1.6. The Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation, it is necessary to define the following key terms:

a. Coherence

Coherence is product of many different factors, which combine to make every paragraph, every sentence, and every phrase contribute to the meaning of the whole piece (Kies, 2008:1).

b. Composition

It is a unified written text of whatever length which has a beginning, a middle, and a closure as well as a purpose (Kinneavy, 1980).

c. Argumentative Composition

It is a form of discourse in which the writer tries to persuade an audience to accept, reject, or think a certain way about a problem that cannot be solved by scientific or mathematical reasoning alone (White and Billings, 2005: 4).

d. Paragraph

It is a set of related sentences that work together to express or develop an idea (McCrimmon, 1984:193).

e. Thesis Statement

A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas (Brunsvold, 2008:1).

f. Topic Sentence

It is a statement that summarizes the idea being developed in a paragraph (McCrimmon, 1984:199).

g. Supporting Details

Supporting details are the facts and ideas that explain or prove the topic sentence or main idea (McWhorter, 2008:1).

1.7. The Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 is the introduction which is divided into sub-chapters: the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective of the problem, the significance of the study, the scope and delimitation, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter 2 is the review of the related literature and the previous study. Chapter 3 is the research method which is divided into: the

research design, the subjects of the study, the instrument, the triangulation, and the source of the data, the data analysis procedure, and the data analysis technique. Chapter 4 is about the data analysis, the discussion and the findings. And chapter 5 presents, the summary, the conclusion and the suggestions.