

# AN ANALYSIS ON THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY IN COMPREHENDING PARAGRAPH AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract

This study was designed to describe the second year students' ability in comprehending paragraph at English Department of Bung Hatta University. To be more specific it was aimed to describe the students' ability to comprehend topic, stated main idea and main detail of paragraph. This research used descriptive method. The members of the population were 108 students. Forty of them are taken as the sample by using cluster random sampling. The instrument used to collect the data in this research was reading test. The data of this study were gathered using reading test in comprehending paragraph in the form of multiple choice. Before the researcher gave the real test, she tried it out of the test. The result of the data analysis showed that the ability of the second year students in comprehending paragraph was moderate. It was proved by the fact that 50% of the students had moderate ability. Specifically, 72.5% of the students had high ability to comprehend topic, 75% of the students had moderate ability to comprehend stated main idea, and 50% of the students had moderate ability to comprehend main details of paragraph. Based on the findings above, the researcher concluded that the third grade students' ability to comprehend the generic structure of recount text was moderate. Based on this conclusion it is suggested that the English teacher should explain more comprehensively about the material of paragraph and give more exercises to the students. Besides, the students are suggested to learn and do more exercise.

**Key words:** Ability, Reading, Paragraph

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## Introduction

One of the ways of getting information is by reading. Everyone has ever done reading activity in his or her life. For examples, students read textbook, comic and other stories that entertain themselves. Reading is one of the four basic skills in language learning. It is an important skill for students in learning English because the success of their study

depends on their ability in reading. By reading well, students are able to understand and comprehend the material which they are learning.

According to Tankersley (2003:2), reading is a complex process made up of interlocking skill and process. Lapp and Flllood (1978:6), declare that reading is a comprehension process; letter and word, comprehension of the concepts, reaction

and assimilation of the language. It means that process in reading starts from comprehending letter and word, concepts, and what is the text about.

Reading is one of the subjects students learn at English Department of Bung Hatta University. It is taught in series; that is Reading I, Reading II, Reading III, Reading IV, and Advanced Reading. Learning materials taught in those series are arranged gradually. It means the learning materials for higher serial was more difficult than the lower.

In Reading III, the second year students have learned to comprehend paragraph. Paragraph is a group of sentences that has topic, main idea, and main details. In other words, they learned to comprehend topic, main idea, and main details. Topic is what the paragraph about. Main idea is the central focus of the paragraph (Townley, 2004: 2). Main detail is statements that support main idea.

However, based on the result of informal interview and discussion that researcher did with Dr. Kusni, M.Pd as lecturer at English Department of Bung Hatta University, it was found that many of the second year students of English Teaching Department of Bung Hatta University, who are registered in academic

year 2013/2014 still got difficulties in comprehending paragraph. It was difficult for them to identify essential elements of paragraph (topic, main idea, and supporting details (specially, main details). Topic is what the paragraph is about. Main idea is the writer's assertion about the topic. Supporting details is the specifics that develop and explain the main idea.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher was interested in analyzing on second year students' ability in comprehending paragraphs at English Department of Bung Hatta University.

In general, the purpose of this study was to describe of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University ability in comprehending of paragraph. Specifically, the purposes of this research were as follows:

1. To describe the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to comprehend the topic of paragraph.
2. To describe the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to comprehend the stated main idea of paragraph.
3. To describe the ability of the second year students at English Department

of Bung Hatta University to comprehend the main details of the paragraph.

### **Research Method**

This study was aimed to describe the student's ability in comprehending paragraph. Relating to this, the researcher used descriptive research. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2012:364) descriptive research typically involves measuring a variable or set of variable as they exist naturally. In descriptive research, the researcher only describes the variable as it is. It means that the researcher did not do any manipulation toward the object being studied. In this research the researcher would describe the second year students' ability in comprehending paragraph at English Department of Bung Hatta University

Brach & Dunn (2004:30) states that population refers to the complete collection of all members relevant to a particular issue. The population of this study was second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University who is registered in academic year 2013/2014. The total members of the population were 108 students. The members of population were distributed into consists of three classes; class A, class B, and class C. The researcher chose the second year students as the

population because they had passed three series of reading; Reading I, Reading II, and Reading III.

Because the number of population members was large, the researcher used sample. Reid and Bojanic (2010:246) state that sample is a population member's chance of being selected. According to Gay (1987:114), the minimum sample for a descriptive research is 10% out of the total number of members of population. The class selected as class sample was class B, and all members of class B (40 students) become the sample of this study. It means the percentage was about 37 %.

To select the sample, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique. According to Singh (2007:104), a cluster sample is signifies that instead of selecting individual units from the population, entire group of cluster are selected by random. The researcher used cluster sampling because the members of population were distributed into groups or classes. She used random sampling technique because the population was homogeneous; the lecturer used same material, syllabus, and curriculum in learning reading subject.

In selecting sample, the researcher followed the following procedures. First she used three small pieces of papers and

writes the name of each class (A, B, or C) on it. Then, she rolled it up and put them into a box. After shaking the box, she took one of the papers with closed eyes. Finally, the selected class was class B and it was all members of the sample class become the sample of this study.

In this research, the researcher collected the data using reading test. It was constructed in the form of multiple choice test. The try out test consists of six paragraphs (2 descriptive paragraph, 2 argumentative paragraph, 1 narrative paragraph, and 1 procedural paragraph) with 30 items, and real test 29 items. it took 60 minutes to do the test. The test was aimed to find out the students' ability to comprehend paragraph comprising; indentifying topic, stated main idea and main detail.

A good test should be valid. A test is said valid if it is able to measure what it wants to be measured. Newman and Benz (1998: 33) state that validity is defined how well instrument measures what it suppose to measure. It means that the test is valid if it fixes with materials that have been given to the students. To validate the tests, the researcher constructed it based on syllabus and teaching material and constructed with lectures who taught reading subject.

Before the researcher gave a real test, she tried it out the test. She tried it out to make sure whether the students understood the instruction of test or not and whether time allocation was sufficient or not. The try out done June 12<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 10.00 a.m. The sample for try out was class A. Then, the researcher gave real test on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 10.00 a.m. The sample for real test class B. Beside that, the result of this try out would be used to analyze item difficulties, item discrimination, and to find out the reliability of the test.

Item difficulties is the extent to which an item is easy or difficult for the proposed group of test-takers ( Brown, 2010:70). To analyze the item difficulties of this test, the researcher used the following formula ( Arikunto, 2012: 223) :

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

The item difficulties range between 0.00 – 1.0 and it is symbolized as “P” that refers to “proportion”. The result of index difficulty is classified into the following (Arikunto, 2012:225).

P : 0.00 – 0.30 = difficult

P : 0.31 – 0.70 = moderate

P : 0.71 – 1.00 = easy

From the range above, the researcher used the item that has P between 0.30 – 0.70. because Arikunto (2012: 225) states that the test is considered good if the item difficulty is between 0.30 – 0.70

Item discrimination (ID) is the extent to which an item differentiates between high- and low-ability test-takers (Brown, 2010:71). A test item that can or cannot be answered correctly by both smart and poor students is considered as a bad item because it does not have item discrimination. All students are divided into two groups; upper and lower groups. According to Arikunto (2012:227), for small size of sample, students who get score above mean will be classified as upper group, and the students who get score below mean will be classified as lower group.

To analyze item discrimination, the researcher used the following formula (Arikunto, 2012:228).

$$D = \frac{BA}{JA} - \frac{BB}{JB}$$

Item discrimination is symbolized as “D” that refers to “discrimination”. The result of item discrimination is classified into the following (Arikunto, 2012: 232).

D : 0.00 – 0.20 = poor

D : 0.21 – 0.40 = satisfactory

D : 0.41 – 0.70 = good

D : 0.71 – 1.00 = excellent

From the range above, the researcher used the item that has D between 0.40 – 0.70 because Arikunto (2012:232) states that the test is considered good if the item discrimination is between 0.40 – 0.70.

From the result of try out test, 24 test items fulfilled the criteria of a good test from point of view of item difficulties and item discrimination, the researcher revised two items (18, 24). The researcher revised item 18 because the item discrimination was satisfactory. She revised item 24 because the item difficulties was easy and it was in satisfactory category of item discrimination.

The researcher also discarded four items (7, 15, 27,30). She discarded item 7 because the item discrimination was poor category. She also discarded items 15, 27, and 30 because they were in poor category of item discrimination.

Reliability is concerned with how consistently you measure what you are trying to measure. In other words, whenever we do the test, the result is still same. Reliability is designed numerically, usually as a coefficient. A high coefficient indicates high reliability. To analyze the reliability of the test, the researcher used split half

method. Singh *et.al* (2008:79) state that split - half method (odd – even) typically provides largest reliability coefficients for a given test. It is a kind of method which divides the items of the test into odd group and even group.

To find out the coefficient of correlation of the test, the researcher used Pearson Product Moment formula (Arikunto, 2012:87).

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\}\{N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

To find out the reliability of the whole test, the researcher used “Spearman Brown’s formula” (Gay, 1987:139) as follows:

$$r_{total\ test} = \frac{2r_{xy}}{1+r_{xy}}$$

Arikunto (2012:89) classifies the coefficient of correlation of the test into several categories as follows:

0.800 – 1.00 = very high

0.600 – 0.800 = high

0.400 – 0.600 = enough

0.200 – 0.400 = low

0.00 – 0.200 = very low

As the result of the try out test the researcher got the degree of coefficient correlation of the test was 0,78 and the reliability of coefficient for total test was 0,88. It means that the degree of coefficient correlation was very high and the test was reliable.

In collecting the data, the researcher used the following procedures.

- a. The researcher collected the students’ answer sheet.
- b. The researcher checked the students’ answer sheet.
- c. The researcher gave score 1 for the correct answer and 0 for the wrong answer. The highest score was 26 and the lowest score is 0.
- d. The researcher counted the total score for each student.

The data of this study are students’ score on ability to comprehend paragraph consisting of comprehending topic, stated main idea and main detail. The researcher used some steps to analyze the data.

1. Calculate the mean by using the following formula (Arikunto, 2012: 299).

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

2. Calculate the standard deviation by using the following formula (Arikunto, 2012:299).

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum X^2}{N} - \left(\frac{\sum X}{N}\right)^2}$$

3. Classify the students' ability into high, moderate, and low by using the following criteria (Arikunto, 2012:299).

$$>M + SD = \text{high}$$

$$(M - SD) - (M + SD) = \text{moderate}$$

$$<M - SD = \text{low}$$

4. Find the percentage of students who get high, moderate, and low ability by applying the following formula;

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100$$

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Findings

#### *Students' Ability in Comprehending Paragraph*

In measuring the students' ability in comprehending paragraph, the students' score were counted. After the researcher checked and gave the score for the students' answer, she found that the lowest score got by the students in comprehending paragraph was 6 and the highest one was 25. Then the researcher calculated the score and got 15.65 for mean and 6.13 for standard deviation.

The students' ability was classified into three groups (high, moderate, and

low). Students' ability was categorized as high if their scores were higher than 21.78, it was categorized as moderate if their scores were in the range of 9.52 to 21.78, and it was categorized as low if their scores were lower than 9.52. The researcher calculated the percentage of students who had high, moderate and low ability as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**The Classification of Students' Ability in Comprehending Paragraph**

Classifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High Ability	9	22.5%
Moderate Ability	20	50 %
Low Ability	11	12.5 %

Table 2 indicates that the ability of students in comprehending paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 20 students (50%) with the score range between 9.52 until 21.78 whose ability fell into moderate category.

#### *Students' Ability to Comprehend Topic of Paragraph*

The lowest score for students' ability found to comprehend topic of paragraph was 0 and the highest score was 6. The mean was

3.53 and standard deviation was 1.71. The students' ability was classified into three groups (high, moderate, and low). Students' ability was categorized as high if their scores were higher than 5.24, it was categorized as moderate if their score were in the range 1.82 to 5.24, and it was categorized as low if their score were lower than 1.82. The researcher calculated the percentage of students who had high, moderate and low ability as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**The Classification of Students' Ability to Comprehend Topic in Paragraph**

<b>Classifications</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High Ability	4	10 %
Moderate Ability	29	72.5 %
Low Ability	7	17.5 %

Table 3 indicates that the ability of students to comprehend topic in paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 29 students (72.5%) with the score range between 1.82 until 5.24 whose ability fell into moderate category.

***Students' Ability to Comprehend Stated Main Idea of Paragraph***

It was found that lowest score to comprehend stated main idea of paragraph was 0 and the highest score was 6. The mean was 3.53 and standard deviation was 1.68. The students' ability was classified into three groups (high, moderate, and low) Students' ability was categorized as high if their score were higher than 5.21, it was categorized as moderate if their scores were in the range 1.85 to 5.21, and it was categorized as low if their scores were lower than 1.85. The researcher calculated the percentage of students who had high, moderate and low ability as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

**The Classification of Students' Ability to Comprehend Stated Main Idea in Paragraph**

<b>Classifications</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High Ability	5	12.5 %
Moderate Ability	30	75 %
Low Ability	5	12.5 %

Table 4 indicates that the ability of students to comprehend stated main idea in paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 30 students (75%) with the score range between 1.85 until 5.21 whose ability fell into moderate category.



### ***Students' Ability to Comprehend Main Details of Paragraph***

The lowest score for students' ability to comprehend main details of paragraph was 3 and the highest score was 13. The mean was 8.6 and standard deviation was 3.51. The students' ability was classified by the researcher into three groups (high, moderate, and low). Students' ability was categorized as high if their scores were higher than 12.11, it was categorized as moderate if their scores were in the range 5.09 to 12.11, and it was categorized as moderate as low if their scores were lower than 5.09.

The researcher calculated the percentage of students who had high, moderate and low ability as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

#### **The Classification of Students' Ability to Comprehend**

##### **Main Details in Paragraph**

<b>Classifications</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High Ability	8	20%
Moderate Ability	20	50%
Low Ability	12	30%

Table 5 indicates that the ability of students comprehend main details in paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 20 students (50 %) with the score range between 5.09 until 12.11 whose ability fell into moderate category.

## **2. Discussions**

### ***Students' Ability in Comprehending Paragraph***

As stated before, the first finding of this study that on the second year students' ability in comprehending paragraph was moderate. It was indicated that the majority of the students (50%) had moderate ability. It means that many students still got difficulty in comprehending paragraph. According to Hogan (2013: 25), paragraph is a group of related sentences about one focused idea. In comprehending paragraph there are some activities that reader should do; the first thing you need to know is what the paragraph is about. Then you have to understand each of sentences and what they are saying. Next, you have to see how the sentences related to one another. Finally, to understand the main point of the paragraph, you have to consider what all sentences, and taken together sentence (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2004: 40)

### ***Students' Ability to Comprehend Topic of Paragraph***

The next finding of this study was that the second year students' ability to comprehend topic of paragraph was moderate. It was indicated that the majority of the students (72.5%) had moderate ability. It means that many students still got difficult to comprehend topic. As illustration, question 19 asks students to decide the topic of the following paragraph.

When summer brings very hot weather, many people suffer more than they need do. There are a number of ways to make life more comfortable in the heat. For example, you can try to keep your home as cool as possible. It is best to close all the windows and curtains during the hottest part of the day. Then, when it is hot in the evening, you can open them up again. Also, it is important to keep yourself cool by wearing loose, light clothes. Cotton is the best materials for clothes in hot weather. Finally, you should try to stay calm and relaxed. You could even try a nap after lunch, like many people do who live in hot climates. This way you are more rested and ready to enjoy the cool evening hours.

What is the topic of the paragraph?

- a. The weather
- b. Hot weather
- c. The way to be comfortable in the heat
- d. Heat

Some students answered:

- a. The weather

The correct answer is: c. The way to be comfortable in the heat.

Based on the result of correction that researcher did, it was found that only 50% students that can decide the topic of the paragraph above correctly.

According to Boushey and Moser (2009:165) Topic is the subject, or what the text is about. To comprehend topic there are some tips that reader should employ:

- (1) Topic is one subject as the focus of the paragraph
- (2) It appears in every sentence in the paragraph; using the same word or a reference
- (3) It is expressed in one word or one phrase
- (4) Topic is the answer of the question, "what is the while paragraph about?"(Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2004: 44)

### ***Students' Ability to Comprehend Stated Main Idea of Paragraph***

The next finding of this study that the second year students' ability to comprehend stated main idea of paragraph was moderate. It was indicated that the majority of the students (75%) had moderate ability. It means that many students still got difficulty to comprehend stated main idea of the paragraph. As illustration, question 15 asks students to decide the stated main idea of the following paragraph.

I arrived in Yogyakarta, on Sunday. I stayed in a cheap accommodation, a Wisma. The room was clean and I could get hot water to bathe. On Monday, I went with a tour group to visit Borobudur and the Hindu temples in Prambanan. Some of these temples are more than twelve hundred years old. They date well beyond the churches in my hometown in Europe; I was amazed at the enormity of the construction. I'm sure they did not have the heavy machines we have today to raise and lay those huge blocks of stone. The carvings on the walls were another feature of the construction.

What is the stated main idea of the paragraph?

- a. I stayed in a cheap accommodation, a Wisma
- b. I arrived in Yogyakarta
- c. I went with a tour group to visit Borobudur and the Hindu temples in Prambanan
- d. The carvings on the walls were another feature of the construction

Some students answered: c. I went with a tour group to visit Borobudur and the Hindu temples in Prambanan.

The correct answer is: b. I arrived in Yogyakarta.

Based on the result of correction that researcher did, it was found that only 53% students that can decide the stated main idea of the paragraph above correctly.

According to Townley (2004:27) stated main idea is sentence within the paragraph that actually states it is the main idea. To find the main idea of paragraph that you read, here are the guidelines for identifying it:

- (1) Use heading announce the section's topic
- (2) If there are no heading, ask your self "what is this paragraph about" then ask "what does the writer wan to me to understand about topic?"
- (3) Look for general statements

(4) State the main idea as a complete thought (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2004: 47)

### ***Students' Ability to Comprehend Main Details of Paragraph***

The next finding of this study that the second year students' ability to comprehend main details of paragraph was moderate. It was indicated that the majority of the students (50%) had moderate ability. It means that many students still got difficult to comprehend main details of the paragraph. As Illustration, question 7 asks students to decide the main details of the following paragraph.

In most industrialized countries, family patterns have changed in recent years. Families used to be large, and most mothers stayed at home to take care of the children. They were usually entirely responsible for all the housework, too. Father did not often see the children, except to play with them on the weekends. Now the families are smaller and many women are working. Fathers often help with the housework. They may feed and dress their children and take them to school in the morning.

“Families used to be large, and most mothers stayed at home to take care of

the children” This sentences functions as

- a. Stated main idea
- b. Main detail
- c. Topic
- d. General Idea

Some students answered: a. Stated main idea

The correct answer is : b. Main detail

Based on the result of correction that researcher did, it was found that only 53% students that can decide the stated main idea of the paragraph above correctly.

The main details are statements which carry the primary supporting evidence needed to back up main idea. To find the main details in paragraph, here is the guidelines for identifying it:

- (1) Ask yourself: what are the main characteristics, features, and details of main ideas
- (2) Use the question leads (who, why, what, when, and where)

(McCormack & Pasquarelli 2010:140)

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of this study as already discussed in the previous chapter, the researcher drew the some conclusions as follows;

1. In general, the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in comprehending paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 20 students ( 50 % ) who had moderate ability.
2. The ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to comprehend topic of paragraph was also moderate. It was indicated by 29 students ( 72.5 % ) who had moderate ability.
3. The ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to comprehend stated main idea of paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 30 students (75 % ) who had moderate ability.
4. The ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to comprehend main details of paragraph was moderate. It was indicated by 20 students (50% ) who had moderate ability.

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