

**THE ABILITY OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH  
DEPARTMENT IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FACTS AND OPINIONS  
IN READING ENGLISH FEATURES TAKEN FROM  
THE JAKARTA POST NEWSPAPER**

**THESIS**

**Submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain  
Strata One (S1) Degree**



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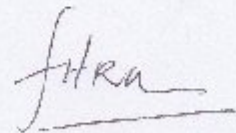
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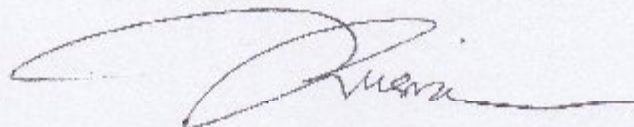
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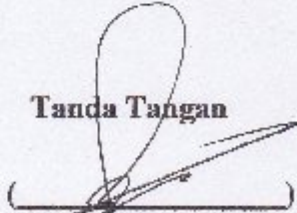
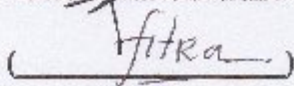
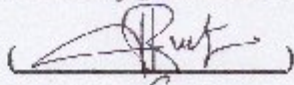
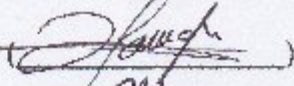

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## ABSTRAK

**Syastra, Dini Mustika. 2011. *The Ability of the Third Year Students of English Department in Distinguishing between Facts and Opinions in Reading English Features taken From the Jakarta Post Newspaper*. Skripsi. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang.**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat sejauh mana kemampuan mahasiswa dalam membedakan fakta dan opini ketika membaca *feature* berbahasa Inggris. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga ingin melihat kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menetapkan suatu kalimat apakah itu fakta atau opini. Kemudian, penelitian ini juga dimaksudkan untuk mengetahui permasalahan mahasiswa dalam membedakan fakta dan opini.

Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode deskriptif. Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah keseluruhan mahasiswa tahun III Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBS UNP tahun akademik 2009/2010 yang telah mengambil mata kuliah *Reading I* sampai *Reading III*. Teknik *Cluster Random Sampling* digunakan dalam pemilihan sampel. Mereka adalah mahasiswa kelas Kependidikan 3 dan Non-Kependidikan 1 yang berjumlah 58 orang. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah tes pemahaman membaca dan wawancara terhadap mahasiswa.

Hasil temuan penelitian tentang kemampuan mahasiswa dalam membedakan fakta dan opini adalah rata-rata (*average*) dengan persentase 58%. Kemudian secara terperinci, dapat diperoleh bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menetapkan kalimat fakta adalah rata-rata (*average*) dengan persentase 64%. Sedangkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menetapkan kalimat opini adalah rendah (*poor*) dengan persentase 54%. Kemudian, dari hasil interview diperoleh beberapa temuan tentang kesulitan mahasiswa dalam membedakan fakta dan opini. Kesulitan pertama yaitu terletak pada panjang pendeknya teks, kemudian beberapa mahasiswa tidak mengetahui kata kunci dari fakta ataupun opini tersebut. Masalah selanjutnya yaitu mahasiswa yang tidak mempunyai *background knowledge* tentang teks akan mempengaruhi mereka dalam membedakan fakta ataupun opini. Kemudian masalah yang terakhir terletak pada kosa kata.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRAK .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLE.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>A. Background of the Problem .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B. Identification of the Problem .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>C. Limitation of the Problem .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>D. Formulation of the Problem .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>E. Research Questions .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>F. Purposes of the Research .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>G. Significance of the Research .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>H. Definition of Key Terms .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>	
<b>A. Critical Reading .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B. Fact and Opinion .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>C. The Nature of Features .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>D. Previous Related Findings .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>E. Conceptual Framework .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHOD</b>	
<b>A. Research Design .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>B. Population and Sample .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>C. Research Instruments .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>D. Technique of Data Collection .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>E. Technique of Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	
<b>A. Findings .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>B. Discussions .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS</b>	
<b>A. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>B. Suggestions .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>56</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 : The Indicators of Facts and Opinions .....	28
Table 2 : Reliability Criterion .....	30
Table 3 : Item Difficulties Criterion .....	31
Table 4 : Percentage and Grading Criterion .....	33
Table 5 : Students' Ability in Distinguishing Between Facts and Opinions...	34
Table 6 : Students' Ability in Deciding Facts .....	38
Table 7 : Students' Ability in Deciding Opinions .....	40

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	: Reading Test .....	56
Appendix 2	: The Key Answer for Reading Test .....	64
Appendix 3	: Tabulation of the Students' Answer (Sample) .....	65
Appendix 4	: The Reliability of the test (Sample) .....	72
Appendix 5	: Tabulation of the Students' Answer (Try Out) .....	74
Appendix 6	: The Reliability of the test (Try Out) .....	78
Appendix 7	: The Transcription of Recorded Interview .....	80
Appendix 8	: Item Difficulties of the Test .....	92
Appendix 9	: The example of students' answer sheet .....	94
Appendix 10	: Surat Izin Penelitian .....	106

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of The Problem**

Nowadays, as one of English language skills, reading is very important. Reading skill is used in many sectors of life such as education, business, social, politics and technology. In education, reading is necessary for everyday learning, for examination, and getting knowledge. In business, reading is needed for correspondence and in technology reading is needed to read some instruction materials and other technological materials.

Furthermore, reading has many purposes. People read to get some information. It could be done when reading textbooks, articles or newspaper. Besides, the aim of reading for some people is to get enjoyment or pleasure. It could be done when reading novels, short stories and poems.

Reading something in a foreign language is different from reading in the native language. As English is a foreign language for Indonesian students, reading an English text is not an easy task for them, because many difficulties appear during this reading activity. Those difficulties are some unknown or unfamiliar words in reading foreign language; the structure of the foreign language is different from the native language; no background knowledge about the topic. In line with this, Kustaryo (1988:1) says that reading in native language is easier, because the students are familiar with the material, knowing the vocabulary and structure their own. While reading in foreign language, they have to face new words, grammar and structure of that language.

Due to the importance of reading in a foreign language, it has been studied by Indonesian students from elementary to university level. Indonesian government put reading skill in the current curriculum as one of the English language skills that should be possessed by the students. Since reading is important, in English Department of State University of Padang, reading subject is taught in four levels that is Reading 1, 2, 3 and Extensive Reading. These subjects are compulsory and prerequisite, therefore if the students cannot pass in a level, they can't continue to higher level of reading subject.

The third level of reading subject, Reading 3, is necessary to be mastered by the students since in this level, the students can get materials of reading that is more various and more difficult. Based on the syllabus (Reading 3 syllabus), students who are taking Reading 3 should be able to develop their efficiency and flexibility in reading, understand the values of information, understand the relations within the sentences, and also interpret as well as evaluate what they have read. Therefore, it is expected that the students should be able to read and comprehend the text critically.

The ability to read critically is the highest level of the reading skill. Reading a text critically helps the readers to find out the author's purposes. In critical reading, the readers are not only finding something from the text, but also having the ability in analyzing, questioning, comparing and bringing something to the text. In order to achieve these purposes, a critical reader should apply some strategies, they are: making inferences, distinguishing between fact and opinion,

recognizing generalizations and bias, identifying tones and authors' opinion (McWhorter, 1992:377).

The students should have the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions while reading a text, because they will read various reading materials in the learning process that they should know whether it is factual information or just opinion from the writer. Moreover, some information that the students get from the material include a mix of a factual information and opinion of the writer. McWhorter (1992:382) says that distinguishing between fact and opinion is an essential in critical reading skill. This is due to the fact that every sentence contains fact or opinion, so that the students will consider to all information provided by the writer.

In relation with distinguishing between facts and opinions, the students should have known the meaning of fact and opinion and how to distinguish both of them. Fact is something that can be proven. If someone tells you that *Sumatera Island consists of 8 provinces*, he or she has made a factual statement. It can be checked in Encyclopedia book. While opinion is a statement that consists of an idea or belief about something, such as: *She is a beautiful girl in the country*. In this sentence, the writer tells about his/her opinion about the girl by including an adjective to the sentences. According to McWhorter (1992:382), facts are statements that can be verified, while opinions are statements that express feelings, attitudes, or beliefs and are neither true nor false. Furthermore, McWhorter (1992:383) says that one of the ways to differentiate the fact from

opinion is when someone read contains of “it is believed, in my view, in my opinion, showing the adjective” it shows an opinion.

Facts and opinions can be found more in a newspaper, because some information stated in newspaper. People can write anything in the newspaper freely. So that, the readers should be carefully in reading something that appear in the newspaper because not all the information provided by the writer are based on the fact. Because of that, the researcher takes a newspaper as a media to find out the ability of the students in distinguishing between facts and opinions. The researcher chooses The Jakarta Post Newspaper as the media since all of the contents in the newspaper is printed in English. Moreover, this newspaper is an appropriate material in teaching reading in a foreign language. There are some reasons why newspaper is appropriate as a material in teaching reading. Firstly, the text in newspaper is an authentic material. Secondly, it consists of information, knowledge and has various interesting topics. It includes current news, educated information, articles, features, and many topics based on the students' previous knowledge. That is why; the readers can choose what they will read easily.

In relation with the previous explanation, Sanderson (1999:12) state that material in newspaper contains language which is in no sense graded or there is no level of reader. It means that in the newspaper the language found does not consider the level of the reader. So that, the students have to be a critical reader in understanding the information given, especially in distinguishing between

facts and opinions in order to avoid them from the untruth information. So that, the researcher takes one topics, that is features, as a media to find out the ability of the students in distinguishing facts and opinions. It is because features is one of the article that will make students interested in learning reading, since textbook are often tedious and look heavy. Then, Mohamad (2007:2) defines features as a creative article that has a function to make happiness and give some information for the reader about an event, reality, and human interest. It means that the author will show their feeling about something that seems as fact.

In reading English, some lecturers use an article to teach reading, such as teach distinguishing between facts and opinions as one of the strategy in critical reading. Based on the researchers' experience and observation of English Department students in reading class, it was found that many students had difficulty in distinguishing between facts and opinions. Some problems occurred when the students were assigned to distinguish between facts and opinions. The first one was that they do not know the clue of both of them (fact and opinion) exactly. It meant that when the teacher asked the students to decide whether it was fact or opinion in one sentence, they had to read the entire sentence and tried to guess the answer without using their knowledge about the material.

Secondly, it is difficult for students to distinguish between facts and opinions in reading a text because writer usually uses the combination of fact and opinion. For example; *there is a mangy cur on the porch*. This statement is an opinion factual statement. The fact is, there is a dog on the porch; while the

opinion is that the dog is a mangy cur. The students who did not know the clue of fact or opinion clearly got difficulty in deciding the previous sentence.

Thirdly, if they found some unfamiliar vocabulary, it would make them difficult to distinguish between facts and opinions. Whatever the materials is, vocabulary takes an important aspects in reading a text for non-native readers. Most students who read a text translate them into their native language first. If they could not catch the idea, it gave the effect in choosing which the fact or opinion was. Moreover, in an article they would find many difficult vocabularies such as unfamiliar term, unfamiliar topic for them.

Furthermore, the students had lack of experience about the topic or did not have previous knowledge which functions to guide them in reading a text. Also, they only read the printed materials without challenging themselves to analyze the text and accepted what the author stated. In addition, the students could not expand their previous knowledge about the text and automatically they could not read the text critically.

Since the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions are compulsory for the students who are taking Reading 3 in order to be a critical reader, the research about **“The Ability of the Third Year Students of English Department in Distinguishing between Facts and Opinions in Reading English Features taken from Jakarta Post Newspaper”** is important to be conducted.

## **B. Identification of the Problem**

In critical reading, the students are required to distinguish between facts and opinions. Based on the researcher's experience and observation, some of English Department students still have problems in distinguishing between facts and opinions in reading English articles. Firstly, is they did not know the clue of fact and opinion exactly. Secondly, it was more difficult for the students to distinguish between facts and opinions because in articles some writer usually used combined sentences. Thirdly, if they found some unfamiliar vocabulary, it could be unable for the students to distinguish between facts and opinions. So that, some of the students said that reading an article is a bored activity. It was because there is some language difficulties found in feature since it contains language which is in not considered the level of the reader. Fourthly, the students had lack of experience about the topic or did not have previous knowledge which has a function to guide them in reading a text.

## **C. Limitation of the Problem**

This research is limited on the discussion of the students' ability in distinguishing between facts and opinions. The reason for limiting the scope of the problem was due to the facts and opinions are mostly found in every sentence in the newspaper. Then, because there are some topics in newspaper, the researcher limited the topics into features only. Then, the researcher used *The Jakarta Post newspaper* edition December 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 and January 10<sup>th</sup> 2011 as the

media to find out the ability of the students in distinguishing between facts and opinions.

#### **D. Formulation of the Problem**

Related to the limitation above, the problem was formulated as follows:

“How is the students’ ability in distinguishing between facts and opinions in reading English features?”

#### **E. Research Question**

To be more specific, the question above is developed into the following questions:

1. How is the ability of the students in distinguishing between facts from opinions?
2. How is the ability of the students in deciding fact?
3. How is the ability of the students in deciding opinion?
4. What are the problems of the students in distinguishing between facts and opinions?

#### **F. Purpose of the Research**

The purposes of this research were to identify:

- a. The ability of the students in distinguishing between facts and opinions
- b. The ability of the students in deciding facts

- c. The ability of the students in deciding opinions
- d. The problems of the students in distinguishing between facts and opinions.

### **G. Significance of The Research**

It is expected that this research will give the contribution for the reader who wants to be a critical reader. As we know, critical reading is the highest level of reading skill. One of the strategies is distinguishing between facts and opinions. This strategy is important since some information stated by the author. Thus, it is better for the reader to distinguish between facts and opinions in order to avoid them from the untruth information.

This research is also expected to give contribution to the lecturers and the students. It is hoped that after conducting this research, both students and the lecturers can get a lot of advantages and will give the information about the students' ability in critical reading. Then, the lecturers can use this research as guide to improve the quality of teaching reading. In addition, the students are expected to improve their ability in reading.

### **H. Definition of Key Terms**

1. Students' Ability : The level of the student in distinguishing between facts and opinions in reading English features.
2. Fact :Something that can be checked by experimentation,

- observation, or research and shown to be real.
3. Opinion : Statements of belief, judgment or feeling.
4. Feature : A piece of journalistic writing that covers a selected issue in-depth found in the Jakarta Post.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### A. Conclusion

This study aimed to know the students' ability in distinguishing between facts and opinions when reading English features. In addition, the study wanted to see the ability of the students in deciding whether the sentence is fact or opinion. The population of this study was the entire of third year students of English Department registered in academic year 2009/2010 which was taking Reading 1 to 3. Cluster Random Sampling Techniques was used in the selection of the sample in this study to do the test. They are Education 3 and Non-Education 1, with amount of the respondent is 58 people. Then, for the interview, Stratified Random Sampling was used. In sum, there are 20 students who have been interviewed by the researcher.

Based on the research conducted it can be concluded that the ability of English Department students in distinguishing between facts and opinions in general was considered as *average (58%)*. The ability of the students in deciding facts was only considered *average (64%)*. Moreover, the students' ability in deciding opinions was interpreted as *poor (54%)*. In addition, the ability in deciding opinions is worse than the ability in deciding facts.

Then based on the interview of the research, there are some problems occurred. Firstly one is the students do not know the clue of facts and opinions itself. Secondly there are some students who have lack of vocabulary. Thirdly,

the problem comes from the length of the essay. Fourthly, the last problem is the students do not have background knowledge about the topic.

## **B. Suggestion**

Based on the finding and conclusion above, the following suggestions are given to:

### 1. The Lecturers

The lecturers are expected to teach fact and opinion as one of the strategies in critical reading more intensively like others sub skills in reading such as skimming and scanning. Besides, the lecturers need to give more examples in this strategy which is taken not only from the textbook, but also from other authentic materials, such as magazine, newspaper, or any other materials because reading materials can be found in everywhere. Moreover, the lecturers have to find out an interesting techniques and methods in teaching reading.

### 2. The Students

It would be better for the students to review the material that have been given by the lecturers. In addition, the students are expected to read more about how to distinguish between facts and opinions in other sources, not only in reading books, but also from the journalistic book. Furthermore, it would be better for the students have willingness to practice this strategy every time they read some article or any other reading sources.

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