CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As English become the international language in which all global information being shared. In Indonesia, English is learnt as part of foreign languages. Due to its status as international language, being proficient in English also has become one of the most searched skills for current work recruitments. In the proses of learning a foreign language, being proficient is related to both knowing the language and grammar, and also being able to utilize it in actual daily activity. There are four basic skills which are divided into two categories, which are receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Among the skills that should be mastered, writing skills is considered as the most complex skill to master (Ellis, 1993). Not only does writing become a means of communication but it also becomes a learning tool of a language (Wolff, 2002). Learning the writing skill is a challenging task for foreign language learners as it requires multiple skills and knowledge while writing (Ellis, 1993).

Writing itself is an activity that strongly related to the activity of utilizing the words' knowledge and the knowledge of sentences. The knowledge of words is often referred to lexical richness or lexical complexity, particularly in text. Being able to write a good piece of writings is an essential skill for those who study at the English Department. Moreover, in a working place, having adequate writing competency will significantly be beneficial. However, writing different types of texts can be

1

complicated, even for a tertiary/college students. The lacking of vocabulary could be the main reason as to why students experience difficulties to present their ideas and compose an essay, particularly argumentative essay. Ellis (2010) argued that many L2 writers never achieve target proficiency, instead they reach a level of competence that allow them to communicate freely or they fossilize at a certain level.

Horrowitz (1986) examined the task that should be given in L2 classroom regarding academic writing and assessing a written text as part of a process-oriented task with the help of drafting and peer reviewing. Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) examined text fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the L2 written text in which they argued that complexity of L2 writing include sophisticated words and lexical diversity. According to Yoon (2018), text-based research has indicated that English argumentative writing poses rhetorical difficulties for second-language writers which makes it even harder for students, particularly those who are in transitional phase to convey their understanding and perspective into the text as English is not their native language. When assessing EFL writing proficiency, teachers generally use a timed writing task that requires students to compose an essay—mostly argumentative writing (Coffin, 2004; Qin & Karabacak, 2010).

Most research regarding writing proficiency are focused on either processed based or product based in high school students' writings, for instance a study conducted by Pritomo in 2012 which examined lexical richness in teacher talk of a native and non-native English teacher in oral production in teaching English revealed that the occurrences of lexical richness in students' writing was 28% of the lexical richness in

teacher's oral production. East (2006) also conducted a research regarding the impact of bilingual dictionaries in relation with lexical sophistication occurrence and accuracy in L2 writing proficiency test of high school students and revealed that there was a significant influence from using bilingual dictionary and the number of lexical sophistication found in students' written production.

Dewi, 2016, studied about Lexical and Syntactical Complexities in Undergraduate Students' Research Articles and Their Correlations to Their Quality. In her study, it is found that lexical density, lexical sophistication and lexical variation are high and the category of the research articles is considered above good while it is found that there is no correlation between lexical and syntactic complexities with the quality of the articles. Astridya (2018) also conducted a study that compare students' lexical richness in two different text genres which were narrative and expository. The results of the study indicate that the students were more creative at using varieties of words in writing expository essays while during writing narrative text, they tend to follow the storyline so that the words used were less in variation.

As interesting as it is, there is also a need to gain more insight towards the lexical complexity (lexical richness) achieved by college students. Those studies mentioned above were done by examining lexical richness or lexical complexity from non-English major students and high school students. In order to gain a more diverse perspective about lexical complexity, this current study tries to examine the lexical complexity achieved by college students whose major is English. This present study examined the third semester English Department students of Universitas Airlangga.

In the first semester, the English Department students take a course named Paragraph Writing which equip them with knowledge regarding writing a paragraph, along with Basic English Grammar, the students were also equipped with vocabulary and grammar knowledge. In the second semester, they take Basic Essay Writing in which they learn about the essay structure and types of essays such as problem-solution essay, cause-effect essay, expository and so on. In the third semester, they are enrolled in a course named Argumentative Writing in which they are taught to elaborate and express argument within a certain essay topic. This course is taken along with the Complex English Grammar course. Thus, by this semester, it is expected that they possess adequate knowledge both in essay and also vocabulary use which contribute to their lexical complexity. This research examined the written essays that were uploaded as corpus data into tools named LCA and Vocabprofiler to get the index of the lexical complexity.

According to Weigle (2002 linguistic knowledge is part of the components which construct the writing proficiency which is reflected in a scoring rubric that present the text score. It is also argued by Crammond (1998) that an argumentative task involves an effort of convincing readers by making logical arguments while using the suitable vocabulary, and a persuasive argument which can be constructed with warrants, justification, or even claim, thus it is more suitable to be used as a task to examine student's writing development.

Qin and Uccelli (2016) argued that lexico-syntactic complexity and organization marker diversity were predictors of an argumentative writing quality. A study conducted by McNamara et al (2010), also support the idea of how a set of linguistic features measurements can predict the quality of the argumentative essays in which it is found that the distinction between high and low quality essays was marked by the lexical diversity and lexical sophistication. Thus, it can be concluded from these findings that in different writing task types of achieved high-quality writing, different linguistic features are expected to be found in accordance of the text types.

Read (2000) developed a measurement which specifically measures the students' lexical proficiency level by conducting comparison of students' lexical richness and external reference point which may include time, duration of writing, lexical complexity, and length of writing which were gained time to time. Bulte´ and Housen (2014) proposed lexical complexity as a valid and basic L2 performance descriptor in L2 and L1 research as an indicator of language proficiency, development, and progress.

Lexical Complexity is the proportion of various words aspect employed in a writing. Laufer & Nation (1995) propose four measurement tools to evaluate students' lexical richness, namely Lexical Originality (LO), Lexical Density (LD), Lexical Sophistication (LS), and Lexical Variation (LV). Lexical Originality (LO) which refers to the uniqueness mark of lexical used by one person will not be used to measure the collected argumentative essays due to the irrelevancy of its measurement in analyzing texts produced by various/group of people. The index of those four measurements are

examined in order to gain the lexical complexity achieved by the third semester English Department students.

Lexical Density is defined as the percentage of lexical words in the text. Lexical words included in the measurements are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. This lexical complexity aspect was measured using LCA (Lexical Complexity Analyzer) while the perception of the lexical words was proceed after the data were tagged into Clawws Tagger. Lexical sophistication refers to the percentage of 'advanced' words in the text. In this present study, the lexical sophistication aspect was measured with the help of VocabProfiler in which the words were categorized in accord with the GSL (General Service List) and AWL (Academic Word List). Lexical Variation refers to the type/token ratio, the ratio in per cent between the different words in the text and the total number of running words in the text. How well a learner can express himself with the vocabulary he knows is what can be reflected in a high type/token ratio score. The examination of the lexical complexity achieved is limited only to examining the increase or decrease of index of each aspect and its implication.

1.2 Research Questions

This research is conducted to analyze each lexical complexity's aspect and its development obtained by the third semester of English Department students of Universitas Airlangga in Argumentative Writing course. There are three main aspects focused in this study which are:

1. What is the index achieved by third semester students in their argumentative essays in Lexical Density aspect from week four to week twelve?

2. What is the index achieved by third semester students in their argumentative essays in Lexical Sophistication aspect from week four to week twelve?

3. What is the index achieved by third semester students in their argumentative essays in Lexical Variation aspect from week four to week twelve?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research is conducted to analyze each lexical complexity's aspect and its development obtained by the third semester of English Department students of Universitas Airlangga in Argumentative Writing course. There are three objectives which are:

1. Describing and examining the lexical density index from week four and week twelve.

2. Describing and examining the lexical sophistication index from week four and week twelve.

3. Describing and examining the lexical variation index from week four and week twelve.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is hoped to be contributing in the understanding of lexical complexity theory in terms of the use of vocabulary argued by Laufer and Nation, particularly in measuring lexical density, lexical sophistication, and lexical variety of the texts

produced by foreign language learner. It is also hoped to be contributing in the understanding of second language writing in general, its complexity development and also giving insight of measuring writing proficiency in general.

The practical significance of this study is that it is expected to be used as reference for related individuals, institution and also those who are about to conduct research addressing lexical complexity in written texts or writing proficiency in general. This study is also hoped to be useful as reference for lecturer to conduct class and assessing the writing development of the students.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

This part of the paper describe about several key terms that which were presented in this study as below;

Argumentative Essay: An argumentative essay is a type of essay that presents arguments about both sides of an issue (Sony and Munir, 2015). In this study, the argumentative essay produced should meet the goal of the Argumentative Writing course which is presenting balance view as result of responding to presented issue.

Lexical Complexity: The complexity of lexical used which is presented in second language literature concerning lexical density, diversity/variability, and sophistication/rareness. (Kalantari and Gholami, 2017)

LCA: Lexical Complexity Analyzer (Kalantari and Gholami, 2017)

Lexical Density Index: The index of the Lexical Density aspect which refers to the proportion of content words (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs) that contributes and correlates to the total number of words employed in written text. (Johansson, 2008)

Lexical Sophistication Index: The percentage of 'advanced' words in the text (Laufer & Nation, 1995)

Lexical Variation Index: The type/token ratio index which refers to the ratio in per cent between the different words in the text and the total number of running words. (Laufer & Nation, 1995)