

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates students' skills in writing literary responses in literature classroom. By adopting Functional Grammar as text analysis tool (Halliday, 1994), this research aims to examine students' writing performance by explaining the schematic structure and the linguistic features of students' texts. As the production of the texts is influenced by the context where it happens, this study is also intended to portray the teaching and learning activities which facilitate the writing skills. Finally the students' and the lecturer's perception about writing literary responses will also be figured out.

In this first chapter, the general idea of the study along with the reasons why it is conducted is discussed in sections (section 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5). Section 1.1 discusses the essential reasons why this study is carried out. Section 1.2 talks about the research questions that guide the study. Then, section 1.3 describes the aims of the study. Section 1.4 explains the significance of the study to the teaching and learning methodology. The last section, which is section 1.5, explains the organization of the thesis.

1.1. Background for the Study

Literature teaching plays a very important role in language learning. Literature teaching enables the learners to explore the language used in literature and to use language for writing and talking about the literature (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000: 3). It is expected that literature teaching is able to invite the

students to appreciate literary works and to invite them to use appropriate language for articulating their appreciation. It is in line with the goal of literature teaching in which students are expected to be able to have competence in literary response which means that a reader who is literary competent is able to communicate with and about literature (Coenen, 1992 in Rijlaarsdam et al, 2006). In EFL context, the focus of language in literature teaching has long been established. It means that the relationship between language and literature is closely related. Both of them should be taught hand in hand. By doing this, students are capable of improving knowledge about literature and enhancing their language skills such as reading and writing.

The integration of literature teaching and language teaching is very important, especially in EFL context. It is based on the notion that EFL students need to acquire English, as well as learn difficult subject matter through English (Mohan, 1986: 3). In this case, if the students are involved in an English speaking community, i.e. literature subject, students will greatly enhance their capabilities in learning language. That is the students will be aware of the language which is appropriate with the skills and ways of thinking expected by the literature subject.

Writing, as one of the important skills in literature subject, requires a specific language use. It is specific because it has “ways of meaning or ways of organizing experience, information, and ideas in distinctively different language patterns” (Christie in Couture, 1986:221). In other words, it has its own expected skills or ways of thinking. That is to respond to literary texts; or to interpret and to analyze literary works for higher level education (Marshall, 1990; Purves, Roger

& Soters, 1990; Feez & Joyce, 1998; Gibbons, 2009). Specifically, in higher level education, “students are asked to write a number of expository texts that must function in quite specific ways”(Christie in Couture, 1986: 234). Therefore, literary response text which has similar nature with expository texts becomes the most valued genre in literature subject. It invites the students to develop the language skills appropriate with its ways of thinking, particularly critical thinking. In this case, as Christie suggests, students in literature classrooms should be familiarized with literary response genre. By writing literary response text, the students will have a chance to make sense literature analytically and to develop language necessary to it. Furthermore, their writings will be more effective and more reader oriented. Besides that, students will understand the purpose of writing and know what they need to do with language appropriate with related subject matter.

However, it is often the case that students’ writings are not as expected. The language used in students’ literary response is ineffective. It contains too many words. Besides, it often uses awkward and inappropriate language. As a result, their writings do not fulfill the purpose of literary response text. In addition, students often “are not prepared to meet the special requirements of writing assignments in the upper grades” (Christie in Couture, 1986: 234), as can be seen later in class observation (section 4.1) and analysis of text in section 4.2.

Likewise, the teacher often does not explicitly guide the students to use appropriate language that is suitable for the literary response text. They tend to direct the students to write freely without considering the appropriate language

use. Even if they concern with the language use of literary response text, they tend to have a little knowledge about it and about the way how to guide the students to write their responses. At this point, according to Christie in Couture, the teachers' inability to explain clearly the conventional features (schematic structure and linguistic features) of literary response text to some degree brings about "students' failure to meet the requirements of more sophisticated genre" (p. 234).

Given the reasons above, it is eminent to investigate students' skills in writing literary responses. Through the investigation, how the students write (both schematic structures and linguistic features) literary responses can be evaluated. Additionally, by capturing the actual portrayal of the teaching and learning activities in which the texts are produced and students' perceptions about the writing activity, this study will explain that language should be introduced explicitly to the content classroom (i.e. literature classes).

1.2. Research Questions

The main question that guides this study is how do college students perform skills in writing literary responses? In order to answer the question above, it is broken down into the following questions:

1. What teaching and learning activities that facilitate students' skills in writing literary responses?
2. What are the schematic structures and the linguistic features of the literary response texts written by students?
3. What are the students' and the lecturer's perceptions about writing literary responses?

1.3.Purpose of the study

The main goal of this study is to explain college students' capabilities in writing literary responses. To do this, the main goal above is elaborated as follows:

1. To identify the teaching and learning activities that facilitate students' skills in writing literary response
2. To identify the schematic structures and the linguistic features of students' literary response texts
3. To find out the students' and the lecturer's perception about writing literary responses

1.4.Significance of the study

The significance of this study can be explained from three aspects. First, since this study investigates the teaching strategies that effectively promote students skills in writing literary response, it is very likely that the findings would serve as a reference for future development for pedagogical practice in literature class of the setting of this study. In this case, this study will explain how lecturer guides students to write literary response. That is how she invites the students to use appropriate language in writing literary response.

Second, this study enriches theoretical reference of the teaching of writing skills in literature class. This study informs how students in college literature class organize their writing and what linguistic features they use in their writing. Moreover, it will give insights about students' abilities in writing literary

responses. The description of how students with different level of achievement use language for showing their understanding gives information what each level lacks or have. Consequently, this may help the teacher in treating the students in days to come. Finally, it is expected that this study may provide college students with the knowledge how to improve skills in writing literary responses.

1.5. Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Each chapter discusses ideas related to the major topic of the investigation. The following points describe in details what each chapter consists of.

1. The first chapter mainly deals with the motives of conducting the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study and its significances.
2. The second chapter presents the literature review which becomes the basis of the research. It includes writing in literature classroom, genre in literature classroom and the teaching of genre in literature classroom.
3. The third chapter describes the methodology used in the study. The description takes account of research design, the context of the study, data collection method, data analysis method and issue on validity. Along with these, discussion of Functional Grammar (FG) as an analysis tool is also presented.
4. The fourth chapter presents and discusses the findings.
5. Finally, the last chapter gives several conclusions synthesized from the investigation and recommendation for another related study.