

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background of the study, the research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, methods of the study, data collection, data analysis, clarification of essential terms used in the study, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing, to some extent, is regarded as the most important skill for literate society considering the fact that it is one of several main indicators in determining the quality of a university in terms of teaching, research and international reputation (Kellog, 2008; Hyland, 2009). Likewise, Bailey (2003) and Feez & Joyce (1998) state that one's ability to compose an extended text is the only indicator best to predict the success of university students within their first year. In line with the aforementioned explanation, Emilia (1997) also argues that writing plays an important role in accelerating learning process, building character developments, and establishing empowerments of the writers. Thus, It can be concluded that writing has a significant role in terms of the success of university students in their academic life which will also determine the success of the university itself.

Furthermore, Walsh (2004), Harmer (2002; 2004) and Hyland (2009) point out that in the last two decades the study of writing has shifted from focusing on spelling, grammar, and other writing conventions to the holistic process which emphasizes the actual process of writing. Regarding this, writing process concentrates on writing as a recursive process in which writers have the opportunity to plan, draft, edit, and revise their work. This situation has also been reflected by researchers, such as Emig (1971; 1977), Britton, et al. (1975), Murray, (1980; 1982), Graves (1983; 1991), Bailey (2003), Walsh (2004), Hyland (2009). among others. who have shifted their interest from studying written

products to studying or researching how writers write a composition or their writing process.

Based on the previous explanation, in the context of English writing as a foreign language, Mu and Carrington (2007) assert that it entails all L1 writing process and ESL/EFL processing issues where in L1 writing, an ESL/EFL writer has to be involved in producing content, drafting ideas, revising writing, choosing appropriate vocabulary, and editing text. Therefore, Influenced by the research of writing in a native language, the focus of English as a foreign language writing studies has also shifted from products of writing to the process of writing (Oshima & Hogue, 1999; Bailey 2003; Walsh, 2004; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Hyland, 2009, among others).

In accordance with writing process studies in EFL context, as it has been explained above, findings from several research focusing on writing process that were conducted by O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Richards & Renandya (2002), Chen (2002), Widodo (2008) and many others, have shown that in an EFL context (i.e., Indonesia) the elements of writing and writing process have been a daunting task for students because English, to some extent, is not used as a medium of communication. Thus, for most students in EFL context, including Indonesian students, writing tends to be secondary, i.e. it is only conducted during classroom writing activities with limited exposures of authentic written expressions (Widodo, 2008). In the same manner, Wong (2005) also states that teaching writing, especially in tertiary level in EFL setting, is not carried out in an authentic context because writing practitioners do not fully comprehend the process gone through by students. Therefore, it is crucial for educational practitioners to understand the nature of learners' writing process in order to recognize and manage the differences.

Moreover, William (2005) elaborates that teachers or educationers need to comprehend and understand the process of students' writing in order to give valuable information for their teaching and learning practices. Hence, this study takes high consideration on the elements of writing and its process, specifically in

understanding and identifying students' writing process in producing a descriptive type of writing. In addition, this study also focuses on writing process employed by university students, specifically undergraduate students, in making a descriptive type of writing. In this study, writing process is defined as writing activities which are performed by students in each writing stages, such as pre-writing, writing/drafting, and post-writing stages as proposed by several experts, such as Emig (1971; 1977), Britton, et al. (1975), Murray, (1980; 1982), Graves (1983; 1991), Bailey (2003), Walsh (2004), Hyland (2009), among others. Furthermore, this study also tries to comprehend and identify the significance of activities conducted by students in each writing stages toward the end product of students' descriptive text making in regard to its *schematic structure, organization, purpose, and linguistic features* by using the analysis of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)..

1.2 Research Questions

This study is aimed to address the following research questions:

- 1.2.1 What activities do students do in the process (pre writing, writing/drafting & post writing stage) of making a descriptive text?
- 1.2.2 Do the texts (final drafts) fulfill the required schematic structure, organization, purpose and linguistic features?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The results of the study are expected to give positive contributions to the theory and practice of English as Foreign language writing studies. Thus, the following explanation will elaborate the significance of the present study from three main perspectives.

Theoretically, this study is able fill the gap of the limited studies on writing process in foreign language context, especially in Indonesia. As have been noticed by Flores (2006) and Hu and Chen (2006), most studies involving EFL learners with the aims of revealing the process of writing were mostly conducted

in western educational settings. Although numerous studies have been conducted in EFL settings, most of them were conducted in Spanish (e.g. Roca de Larios *et al.*, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2008; Machon, *et al.*, 2005; etc), Polish (e.g. Skibniewski & Skibniewski, 1986; Skibniewski 1988; etc.) and Chinese (e.g. Wang & Wen, 2002; Hu & Chen, 2006; etc.). Therefore, studies that aim to uncover the complex patterns of writing process applied by ESL/EFL learners are needed in order to contribute to the ESL/EFL writing theories, specifically in Indonesian context and language setting.

Practically, it is expected that development towards syllabi and curricula can be taken in accordance with the study on ESL/EFL writing process. Hence, it is expected that the study can fill the gap between students ESL/EFL writing process and government policy making.

Professionally, by comprehending the nature of students' writing process, teachers, lecturers or educationer are able to examine the difficulties, the benefits and the complexity level. Accordingly, the teacher can comprise syllabi that basically encompass suitable method in teaching writing. By considering a growing body of research, writing teachers should also understand the process of ESL/EFL writing and allow them for writing instruction and thus, the study on writing process is significant to be conducted. In addition, the information provided from this study is expected to enhance educators' reflection toward their current practices. Consequently, the reflections may enable teachers or lecturers to implement their approaches in teaching ESL/EFL writing with more considerations on their learners' writing process.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on investigating writing process that are employed by 14 undergraduate students who are classified as high, middle and low achievers. Since there are many stages within writing process, this study covers the three areas of writing process, which are pre-writing, writing/drafting, and post-writing stage, as proposed by some process theorists, i.e., Emig (1971; 1977), Britton, et

al. (1975), Murray, (1980; 1982), Graves (1983; 1991), Bailey (2003), Walsh (2004), Hyland (2009), among others.

Moreover, previous studies on process of foreign language writing (e.g. Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Roca de Larios *et al.*, 1999; Machon *et al.*, 2000; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Chen, 2002; Watskins, 2004; Widodo, 2008; among others) have shown that different writers perform different strategic behavior in their process of writing a second language essay. Furthermore, those studies have also indicated that the level of language proficiency influence the process which is used in writing an essay in a foreign language. Therefore, this study investigates the process which is used by students in their second/foreign language writing, specifically in descriptive writing. In addition, this study also analyzes the descriptive texts which are made by three students that represent the classification of low, middle and high achievers.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1.5.1 Writing process

Writing process, in this study, corresponds to stages which are gone through by writers as they compose. Those stages are pre-writing stage, writing/drafting stage, and post-writing stage, as suggested by writing experts (i.e., Emig, 1971; Britton, et al. 1975; Murray, 1980; 1982; Graves, 1983; 1991; Richards, 1990; Friedlander, 1990; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Gibbons, 2002; Bailey, 2003; Walsh, 2004; Tompkins, 2008 and many others).

1.5.2 Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing, in this study, is defined as a clear description of people, places, objects, or events using appropriate details. An effective description will contain sufficient and varied elaboration of details to communicate a sense of the subject being describe. Details that are used are usually sensory and selected to describe what the writer sees, hears,

smells, touches, and tastes (i.e., Gerot and Wignell, 1995, Derewianka, 2003; Holliway, 2004; Emilia, 2005; 2010; 2014 and many others).

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of :

1.6.1 Chapter I: Introduction; it includes background of the study, research questions, the aims of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, methods of the study, data collection procedure, clarification of the key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.6.2 Chapter II: Literature review; it provides some theories from expert related to the study.

1.6.3 Chapter III: Research Methodology; it explores the methodology in conducting the research that includes overview of methodology, participants, data collecting methods, data analysis methods, and triangulation or validity.

1.6.4 Chapter IV: Data Presentation and Discussion; it consists of all data from the study and interpretation of the writer towards the data.

1.6.5 Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestion; it presents the conclusion of the study and suggestion to other researchers who have the same intention with the writer to conduct the same study in the future.

