CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the analysis of the application of thematic progression in students' academic writing. The thematic progression analysis draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach. This chapter introduces the underlying principles toward this study including background, statement of problems, purpose of the study, scope of study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms and the organization of the paper.

1.1. Background

Writing is one of the basic skills necessary for English learners. Writing is necessary to be mastered since it represents the comprehensive abilities of English learners (Jingxia & Li, 2013). Unfortunately, writing is considered as the most difficult skill to learn among students. According to Sadeghi and Farzizadeh (2012) writing is challenging because it involves the process of transferring the idea into a code and still needs high concentration because the writer must check the formation of letter visually. Moreover, it is mentioned in the article that writing is more challenging because it needs lots of knowledge about language to make the product (text) well-qualified.

In addition, the use of English as foreign language in Indonesia, where the use of English is only for specific purposes not as a daily language, might also be a reason why students are having difficulty in writing English text. This notion is echoed by Arunsirot (2013) who states that in Thailand where the students are identified as English Foreign Learners, at the most serious problem in English

language learning is writing skills. A sample analysis conducted by Jingxia and Li (2013) found out that many students were able to create a text which grammatically correct, but overall the writing is incoherent. It is also found that students' writing proficiency is closely related to their textual coherence. A coherent text largely depends on the semantic relation between sentences, such as thematic structure. According to Longman Dictionary (2000), coherence is natural or reasonable connection, especially in thought or words. Halliday (1976; as cited in Jingxia and Li, 2013) points out that words cannot be formed by jumping from one point to another point disorderly. The words must be developed regularly following the coherence of a Theme. Moreover, Halliday (1976) defines coherence as the probability of connecting what has been mentioned before. So that it is considered important to pay attention to the development of words in writing to create the cohesion of the text. Cohesion contributes to coherence; and the application of Theme and thematic progression can help to reach the cohesion in the text (Halliday, 1976). In addition, Theme system (Theme and thematic progression) analysis under the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL henceforth) can be used as a tool to value students' writing in term of coherence.

Reflecting the analysis above, nowadays the students are taught to write English text even since the primary school. By doing this, it is hoped that the students can have good writing proficiency. Besides, the students are also hoped to be able to overcome the problem of incoherence in writing. As for the university level, the students are not only required to create a good text but they are also highly expected to be able to convey information through written page (Schlepegrell, 2004). In the academic area, expressing arguments are the ways for creating belief, changing mind, and altering perception which is commonly found in academic discourse (Fulwiler, 2002). In academic area, students are demanded to express arguments, give the comment and response on academic discourse. One

of the academic discourses that is usually made by university students is a response to a literary work such as commentary writing.

> A commentary is an exercise in the close reading of a text or literary works. It requires detail analysis, critical thinking, logical responses, own opinion and supported theory. The purpose of Commentary Writing is to assist the development of writing skills and/or understanding of specific subject (retrieved from: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/french/current/undergrad/infoyr1students/comme ntary.pdf).

This study is intended to analyze students' commentary writing focusing on one of language metafunctions; that is Theme system (Theme and thematic progression). According to Halliday (1974; as cited in Eggins, 2004), Theme system contributes to the cohesion and coherence of a text. Gerot (1994) adds that textual meaning, which is realized in Theme system, makes language contextually and co-textually relevant. Moreover, Jingxia and Li (2013) state that a coherent text depends on the semantic relations between sentences such as thematic structure. The same article noted that a good text is one which has relations between grammatical subject and the topic of the sentence.

In addition to that, it is considered to be important to do the analysis on the text made by students. The purposes of this analysis are to know how the text is organized textually and also to find out the problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme encountered in students' writing. This analysis is considered having many benefits especially for those who are involved in language teaching field. It will provide the students a better understanding about thematic progression and problems in writing so that they can improve their writing performance. Besides, the analysis can also help the teachers in developing their literacy and professional capacity.

Some studies had been conducted related to the analysis of students' academic writing using Theme-Rheme system and thematic progression analysis of SFL. The previous studies are mainly concerned to the analysis of students'

exposition text. Bangga (2013) who investigated Theme-Rheme system and Theme progression of students' exposition text found out that the students were able to make a coherent text seen from Theme choices and all types of Theme progression are present in the students' text. However, there are pattern differences at global and clause level. Multiple Theme pattern is used at global level, while at the clause level, the students mostly used the reiteration pattern. Another research also conducted by Arunsirot (2013) who investigated the problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme proved that there are five problems found from the data. Those problems happened because of many factors such as mother tongue interference, fossilization and writer's lack organizational skill in the writing.

Based on the reasons above, this study aims at analyzing students' commentary writing in terms of Theme choice and thematic progression and also finds out the problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme encountered in students' writing.

1.2.   Statement of Problems

Related to the previous explanation, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do the students organize their writing in term of Theme choice and thematic progression?

2. What problems are found in students' writing?

1.3.   Purpose of the Study

Reflecting on curiosity to answer the problems, this study was conducted to gain information related to the research questions. The aims of this study are:

1. To find out how the students of English Education study program organize their writing in term of Theme choice and thematic progressions.

2. To find out the problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme encountered in students' writing.

1.4.   Significance of the Study

Since this study is aimed at analyzing the Theme choice, thematic progression and problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme encountered in students' writing, it hopefully gives the significance in some areas, such as theory and practice.

Firstly, from theoretical perspective, the result of this study is expected to have a significant impact to the enrichment of SFL theory especially which related to the Theme system including Theme and Rheme, thematic progression and problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme in writing.

Secondly, from practical perspective, this study is expected to provide an in-depth analysis of Theme-Rheme system and thematic progression by applying SFL analysis in both language studies and language teaching studies. It is hoped that the teachers can gain information of this study to broaden their knowledge of schematic structures and problems related resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme in writing.

1.5.   Clarification of Key Terms

a. **Theme system** is the organization of information within individual clauses with the organization of a larger text (Martin, 1992; Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997; as cited in Emilia, 2014).

b. **Theme progression** is the use of Theme and Rheme which helps give cohesion and coherence to a text, guiding the readers through the text in a logical and rational course (Arunsirot, 2013).

c. **Commentary writing** is a text which purpose is to assist the development of writing skills and/or understanding of specific subject. It gives opinion which requires thinking, logical responses, own opinion and supported theory (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

1.6. Organization of the Paper

This paper organized into five chapters. Each chapter is provided with some subtopics to give broader explanation into the topic.

The first chapter is introduction. This section gives the readers an overview to the study by providing background of the study, statement of problems, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms used in the study, and organization of the paper.

The second chapter is literature review. This chapter elaborates the literature relevant to this study: SFL including Basic Principles of SFL, Metafunction, Theme System including Boundary of Theme, Theme in Different Clause Types and Longer Unit Theme, Thematic Progression and Problems Related to the Application of Theme and Rheme in Writing.

The third chapter is research methodology. This chapter focuses on the methodological aspects of this study. It covers four main aspects: research design, research site and participants, data collection and data analysis.

The fourth chapter is findings and discussions. This section presents and discusses the result of the study. Furthermore, the interpretation of findings is also found in this chapter.

The last chapter is conclusion. This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendation of this study. This chapter is divided into two: conclusion and recommendation. The conclusion section begins with a brief description of aspects underlying this study: background, purpose, findings and conclusion.

Meanwhile the recommendation section provides the suggestion for further research, generally in Text Analysis using SFL, particularly in analyzing the application of thematic progression either for experts, teachers, students or other researchers.

1.7.   Concluding Remark

This chapter has presented the underlying principles of this study including background, statement of problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms and organization of the paper. In the next chapter, the literatures relevant to this study will be elaborated.