

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the underlying principles towards this study including background, two research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of related terms, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Research based reports have been one of the primary concerns in higher education. They become the important tasks that were usually given to the university students (Moore & Morton, 1999 in Bruce, 2008). The university students are encouraged to write research based reports which are based on the acceptable form of the university. In order to be able to write research based reports into an acceptable form, academic writing skill is required. Academic writing involves learning a new set of academic rules and learning how to play by these rules (Dong, 1997). Often these rules change from discipline to discipline, and the audience and the purpose of writing vary according to each writing context. Through academic writing skill, students will be familiar with the conventions and expectations of academic writing in English medium universities and are able to sustain arguments and synthesize the words, ideas, and opinions of others in order to develop their own academic writing (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997, Pecorari, 2006). In addition, through academic writing skill as a form of thinking skill, students are able to understand the rhetoric of academic English, way of organizing ideas, defend claims, and address readers (Belcher, 1994).

Some other significances of academic writing have also been elaborated by some other researchers. For example, first, Bjork and Raisanen (1997:34) state “no one can deny that academic writing is of importance not only to master English but also to be successful in learning other disciplines where English is the

medium of instruction”. They believe that the essence of writing lies on the fact that it is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking, and for learning in all disciplines. Second, Abdulkareem (2013) explores that academic writing has a fundamental impact on learners’ progress in a second language. Learners’ progress and attainment depend on their mastery of academic writing.

Third, Chou (2011) reveals that academic writing is very crucial since it is a starting point for publishing their work and a way to let other people know their interests. However, academic writing has been the most challenging skill to master (Alwasilah, 2007; Emilia, 2008). Students commonly understand what they should write, but they do not know how to write it clearly and cohesively in order to enable the readers to accept their ideas and arguments easily (Emilia, 2012). Especially in EFL contexts, students do not only experience problems in terms of understanding some procedures of writing, its schematic structures and content, but they also experience problems regarding the use of grammatical structures, particular expressions, and particular dictions (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007 cited in Emilia, 2012).

Moreover, some studies indicate that students have problems and difficulties in organizing ideas and arguments cohesively and critically, using appropriate style of writing, and expressing their thoughts clearly by using English. For example, Dalsky and Tajino (2007) found that students experienced problems in using appropriate style of writing and expressing their thoughts clearly in using English. In addition, Bitchener and Basturkmen’s (2006) finding shows that students experienced problems and difficulties in organizing the text cohesively and critically.

Furthermore, Herriman (2011) conducted a study on writing problems faced by most students in a private university of Aceh. The findings show that most students in the university experience problems in producing a piece of cohesive text. In more detail, the problem of using more back themes, new

themes, or contextual themes which do not form progression was found in the students' texts.

In order to cope with the problem above, the present study attempts to analyze theme and thematic progression patterns constructed in one of the best theses in a private university of Aceh in order to provide a portrait of linguistic description of a thesis which attains the degree of cohesion. The student's thesis analyzed will be the sample of cohesive text in the teaching of writing through SFL Genre Based Approach to the students in the university.

1.2 Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions;

- 1) What types of theme and thematic progression patterns are constructed in one of the best theses in Jabal Ghafur University?
- 2) How does the choice of theme and thematic progression patterns contribute to the textual cohesion of the thesis?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study is aimed at investigating what types of theme and thematic progression patterns constructed in one of the best theses in Jabal Ghafur University. Additionally, the study also intends to find the contribution of theme and thematic progression patterns constructed to the textual cohesion of the thesis.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on analyzing Theme Rheme and thematic progression patterns in a thesis written by an undergraduate student of Jabal Ghafur University, Aceh. The data were taken from the thesis marked A. The purpose of limitation in this study is to provide concise explanation and

information on the cohesion and readability of the thesis by applying Theme Rheme and thematic progression analysis.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is considerably significant in three aspects; theoretically, practically, and pedagogically. They are as follows;

- 1) Theoretically, this study can enrich the literature of the theories of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Theme Rheme, thematic progression, cohesion concept, and thesis writing.
- 2) Practically, this study is used as guidelines for teachers in teaching academic writing to enhance students' writing skill in producing a piece of cohesive text.
- 3) Pedagogically, this study will give Jabal Ghafur students a portrait of linguistic description of a thesis which attains the degree of cohesion.

1.6 Definition of Related Terms

Considering that several theoretical terms may cause misinterpretation and ambiguity, this section provides clarification of the terms which are employed in this study. Those are:

1) Systemic Functional Linguistics

SFL is one approach that recognizes *meaning* and *use* as central features of language (Bloor & Bloor, 2004). SFL can also be defined as a theory of linguistics which concerns language of a source of making-meaning process rather than a set of grammatical rules (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Bloor & Bloor, 2004). The name of the theory (SFL) reflects its cornerstone: it is a semiotic theory in which language is fundamentally viewed as a meaning potential, i.e. as a repository of meanings from which language users choose when communicating (Hill-Madsen, 2014).

2) Theme

Theme is the point of departure, the first element of a clause, or the given information in the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). It is concerned with the organisation of information within individual clauses, and through this, with the organisation of a larger text (Martin, 1992; Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997).

3) Rheme

Rheme is the reminder of Theme, the rest of the clause after Theme, or the new information in the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). It is Rheme where the Theme is developed and when the writer or speaker typically departs from the familiar to head towards the unfamiliar (see also Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The Rheme typically contains unfamiliar or 'new' information while the Theme contains 'given' information (Eggins, 2004).

4) Thematic Progression

Thematic progression is Theme Rheme development employed in the text to organize the ideas through the Theme which is employed in the clauses (Butt et al, 2000).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction section which includes background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of related terms, and organization of the study. The second chapter will discuss about review of the literature. This section describes about academic writing, Systemic Functional Linguistics, theme system, boundary of theme, theme in different clause types, theme in existential processes and clause complexes, longer unit theme, thematic progression, higher level theme: macro- and hyper-theme, building cohesion through theme system, pedagogical basis of theme and thematic progression, and previous related studies.

The third chapter concerns the methodology of the study. It explains the research design, research site and sample of the study, data collection method and data analysis.

The fourth chapter is findings and discussion. This section presents and discusses the result of the study. Furthermore, the interpretation of finding can also be found in this chapter. The last chapter is conclusions. This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendation of this study. This chapter will be divided into two: conclusion and recommendation. The conclusion section begins with a brief description of aspects underlying this study: findings and conclusion. Meanwhile, the recommendation section provides the suggestion for teachers, students, or other researchers, generally concerning textual analysis through SFL, particularly focusing on Theme and Thematic progression structure.

1.8 Concluding Remark

This chapter has presented the underlying principles of this study covering background, research questions, objective of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of related terms, and organization of the thesis. In the next chapter, the literatures relevant to this study will be elaborated.