CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction to the present study. It includes the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the operational definition of key terms and the organization of the report.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Students need to pay attention to several internal aspects of texts to write a good composition. One of them is the Theme of clauses. Starting a sentence with a Theme is useful in helping students to communicate their ideas successfully (Wang, 2007). Since the theme is the element of clause structure which serves as the point of departure of the message (Halliday, 1994), the Theme then becomes the prominent element that organizes the clause in such a way that it helps to construct the environment (Emilia, 2014). The theme provides the environment for the remainder of the message, which is known as the Rheme, in the Theme and Rheme organization (Halliday, 1994).

However, as a skill, writing is regarded as a difficult skill to be mastered by the students. Writing is not as easy as it seems for it is generally recognized as a difficult task by ESL and EFL students (Priyatmojo, 2011), especially in Indonesia. It is in line with Emilia’s study (2005), which discovers that most of the students considered writing a difficult subject, and teaching writing so far has not been satisfactory. This claim is supported by Alwasilah (2007), who states that communication in written language is difficult for students and even for teachers. The difficulty in written language communication makes them tend to be unproductive in writing (Alwasilah & Alwasilah, 2005; Davies, 2011). In addition, Writing in an EFL context is seen as one of the challenges in learning a foreign language as it is one of the most difficult areas where students have
difficulties in composing meaningful and good quality academic writing (Yan, 2005).

As indicated above, the problems in writing may to a certain extent be resolved through the understanding of theme management. In addition to the appropriate use of theme types, a good composition is also supported by the appropriate use of thematic progression or organization. Thematic organization of clause is the most significant factor in the development of texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Focusing the students’ writing on the Thematic progression will be very useful in helping students to communicate their ideas successfully (Wang, 2007). For pedagogical contexts of writing, Downing (2001) states that Thematic progression analysis can be applied within educational settings. Downing also suggests that one of the benefits of Theme and Thematic progression is that they can be used as a resource for analysing texts in educational setting, particularly for students’ texts.

There are four reasons why Thematic progression becomes reasonable to analyse. First, thematic progression is used to organize the principles where new information is conveyed in the context, as “other things being equal, reading is easier when the New information is presented in the Rheme position” (Bloor & Bloor, 1992: 35). Second, it is used to represent the text development (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Third, it is used to organize the texts in a linear and coherent way (Butt, et. al, 2000). Fourth, it is utilized to enhance students’ ability to read and construct longer texts (Emilia, 2014).

However, there seems to be limited awareness of writing organisation based on Thematic progression. Huda (2008) mentions that the awareness towards writing organisation based on Thematic progression looks to attract less attention from both teacher and students for probable insufficient information, although it is essential for enhancing language skill development, particularly in writing.

Many studies concerning Theme and Thematic progression have been conducted by several researchers in different fields of knowledge, such as translation (Wang, 2014) and learning (Triyani, 2013). Research on Theme and Thematic progression has also been done in various genres of the texts, such as
explanatory (Yang, 2008; Sugijarto, 2010), report (Ikaningrum, 2009), exposition (Rakhman, 2012), narrative (Safitra, 2013; Triyani, 2013), descriptive (Triyani, 2013) and news items (Triyani, 2013). Not only in those types of texts, analyses on Theme and Thematic progression have also been conducted even in research abstracts (Soepriatmadji, 2009), articles on local journals (Jalilifar, 2010), and articles on international journals (Jalilifar, 2010).

Studies concerning the analysis of the Theme and Thematic progression in types of texts written by students in some education levels have been conducted, including private schools (Sugijarto, 2010), senior high schools (Rakhman, 2012; Safitra, 2013), and university (Wang 2007).

The study on the Theme and Thematic progression in Recount texts written by tenth grade students of a senior high school (Listyani, 2013) has been conducted as well. However, studies dealing with the analysis of the Theme and thematic progression in recount texts written by vocational students are hardly discovered. Due to the teacher's awareness on the importance of the Thematic progression in students’ texts and the apparently insufficient awareness of this issue among teachers and the students, further research about Thematic progression is needed. Thus, the current study focuses on analyzing vocational students’ Recount texts in terms of schematic structure and textual organization using Theme-Rheme and Thematic progression in Indonesian context.

1.2 The Research Questions

In line with the background presented above, this study addresses the research questions as presented below.

a. What Theme and Thematic progression patterns are realized in the Recount texts written by students of a vocational school?

b. How does the importance of Theme management raise the teacher’s awareness in the teaching and learning process?
1.3 The Purpose of the Study

In accordance with the research questions above, this study has two purposes, those are:

a. to investigate the Theme and Thematic progression patterns that are realized in Recount texts written by a vocational school, and
b. to explore the importance of Theme management in order to raise the teacher’s awareness in the teaching and learning process.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study concerns the theme structure and thematic progression analysis on the Recount texts written by students of one vocational school in Bandung in terms of textual organization.

1.5 The Significances of the Study

This study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to inform the development of systemic-functional linguistic theory, especially with regard to the textual meaning. Meanwhile, practically this study is expected to provide teachers with useful information about how to develop students’ writing skills by attending to theme management. Although this study is limited to the exploration of theme in Recount texts, the basic principles may be applicable to other types of texts. A good theme management will allow students to organize their ideas into an effective text.

1.6 The Operational Definition

In order to avoid misunderstanding, some key terms are clarified as follows.

1. **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)** is a theory of linguistics which concerns language of a source of making-meaning process rather than a set of grammatical rules. SFL is one of the linguistics approaches that considers
language as a social semiotic system (Halliday, 1994; Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Emilia, 2005; 2014).

2. The **theme system** is the “element which serves as the point of departure of the message: it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 64). In English, for example, Theme can be identified through the position of the clause. In the text, what comes first in the clause has thematic status (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

3. The **thematic progression** is the choice of Themes which supports the text to develop the ideas that are presented (Eggins, 2004).

4. **Recount** is one of text genres that retells past events to entertain or inform others what happened and when it happened, usually in a chronological sequence (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Derewianka, 2004). Formally, recounts are sequential texts that do little more than sequence a series of events (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

**1.7 The Organization of the Report**

The study consists of five chapters, and each chapter further includes sections and subsections. The first chapter presents the introduction, which gives the readers an overview of the study by providing the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the operational definitions, and the organization of the report. The second chapter is a review of the literature which elaborates the theories relevant to this study, covering the theories of Systemic Functional Linguistics, basic principles of SFL, basic notions in SFL, Theme system, types of Themes, the Thematic progression, themes in different clause, longer unit themes, Thematic progression, higher level Themes, Genre, Recount text, and previous related research reports. The third chapter presents the research method, which provides explanations of the research design, the site and participants, the data collection, and the data analysis. The fourth chapter concerns the findings and some relevant discussions.
based on the analysis results. The fifth chapter concludes the present study and offers some suggestions.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the underlying principles of this study covering the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the operational definition of key terms and the organization of the study. In the next chapter, the literature relevant to this study will be elaborated.