

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the present study. It contains the background of the study, the research questions, the aims of the research, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the definition of key terms, and the organisation of the paper.

1.1 Background

Since the 1970s until recently, gender has been considered a critical issue in education because of some methodological implications that it brings (Koch, 2003). It is believed that gender gives impact on how teachers need to conduct teaching learning process. In planning and implementation stage, for example, teachers should consider choosing learning materials which can fulfil the needs of both genders. In addition, in conducting learning activities the teachers are also demanded to provide equal opportunities both for male and female students to participate (Mlama et al., 2005). In other words, because of the presence of gender differences in classrooms, there is an obligation for the teachers to implement a gender-responsive teaching learning. Therefore, it can be said that gender is one of the influential aspects in conducting teaching learning activities.

Gender identities, which are defined as how someone identifies him/herself as male or female (American Psychological Association, 2011), are socially constructed through interaction (Wood, 1994). This identity is obtained from the interaction with the surrounding society, such as parents, teachers and peers. Wood (1994) believes that in the interactions, individuals will recognise some social norms, values and expectations which are attached to both male and female including what is allowed and not allowed, including, for example, one's choice of toys or games. Parents usually direct boys not to cook or play doll and girls not to play robots and competitive games (Wood, 1994). This

kind of direction, furthermore, makes the children aware of their gender identities. Therefore, it can be said that gender identities are a social construction.

In addition to this, gender identities also play an important role in representing the world. The way men represent an event might be different from the way women do. For example, when there is someone punching a pickpocket in a market, men might say that the action is heroic, but women might say it as a violent action. Moreover, all representations of the experiences can only be conveyed to others through a system of language (Hall, 2013). As a consequence, both men and women face language choices which are influenced by values and expectations from the society, resulting in different use of language.

These language choices, however, can be problematic because it might strengthen particular gender stereotypes which already exist in the society. For instance, if men keep using swear words in their language, it will strengthen the stereotypes that men are aggressive. Similarly, if women keep using hedging to argue, this will also maintain women's image as being indecisive (Newman, Groom, Handelman, & Pennebaker, 2008; Lakoff, 1973 as cited in Mulac, Giles, Bradac, & Palamares, 2013). Therefore, if the stereotypes disadvantage one gender and advantage the other, they will continuously happen and furthermore it might generate gender bias. In relation to this, McClure (1992, p.39 as cited in Mineshima, 2008) considers language as "a primary factor through which gender biases are explicitly and implicitly perpetuate". It means that whenever language which is similar to the stereotypes is used, then the values, expectations, and roles—which are usually unequal or bias—will be reproduced continuously to the next generations (Kamler, 1993). Thus, the gender stereotypes including their advantageous and disadvantageous effects, such as gender bias, can be maintained through language choices of both genders.

The use of language, especially to represent the world, can be analysed critically using one of the three Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) tools of analysis, that is transitivity system (Halliday, 1994; Eggins, 2004; Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Transitivity system is a tool of analysis to see experiential meaning of the text which expresses how

people make sense of their experiences, represent the pattern, and build mental picture of the reality (Halliday, 1970 as cited in Song, 2013). In other words, by employing transitivity system, it is possible to know how people make meaning of what they have experienced through language.

Moreover, transitivity also enables people to observe the association of language and ideology (Matu, 2008). Ideology here may include beliefs, attitude, perception about something (van Dijk, 2006). Therefore, by analysing language, either spoken or written, using transitivity system, it is possible to see ideologies that the language users possess. For example, Opara (2012) has conducted a study centering on the transitivity analysis of speech in Emecheta's texts. From the speech analysis, Opara (2012) found Emecheta's ideology, that is feminism, through which she reconstructs image of women in the texts. All in all, it can be concluded that by examining spoken or written texts, people can also see the underlying ideology realised in the texts.

In relation to this, there has been a fair amount of research using transitivity system as a tool of analysis. In these research, the transitivity system is used to examine some literary works (e.g. Gallardo, 2006; Iwamoto, 2007; Cunanan, 2011; Song, 2013; Zendedel & Ebrahimi, 2013), speeches (e.g. Opara, 2012), research articles (e.g. Zheng, Yang, & Ge, 2014), newspapers (e.g. Stamou, 2001; Liao, 2012; Seo, 2013), textbooks (e.g. Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2008; Plucknette, 2013; Hameed, 2014), and student texts (e.g. Kamler, 1993; Kanaris, 1999; Ignatieva, 2008; Emilia, 2010). Here, most researchers relate the results of transitivity analysis to other variables, such as ideologies, world views, ability and difficulties in writing, and gender.

However, there is only a relatively small number of studies which relate the results of transitivity and gender, particularly in student texts. Some of them are conducted by Kamler (1993) and Uriz et al. (2008). Kamler has examined how one male and one female students of primary school in Australia construct gender by analysing their free-topic texts. Meanwhile, Úriz et al. involved 43 female and 38 male students of Spanish Secondary School to investigate gender differences in writing personal recount texts. Both studies find that both genders showed different patterns of language use.

From these studies, it can be seen that although a number of researchers have explored the relation between representations and gender, the limitations are still found. The limitations are not only about the quantity of samples and quality of discussions but also about the coverage of research. So far, these studies only cover primary and secondary schools. Meanwhile, the area of vocational schools remains unexplored. The exploration is important since the students studying here are teenagers who have high receptiveness to ideologies as an influence of their identity (Garbarino, 1990). Therefore, the present study explores the linguistic representation of gender in vocational school contexts. Thus, the aim of this research is to examine how male and female students in a vocational school in Bandung represent their experiences through recount texts, and to find its pedagogical implications.

1.2 Research Questions

On the basis of the discussion above, the problems of the present study are formulated in the following questions.

1. How do the male and female students represent their experiences in recount texts as identified from the transitivity system?
2. What are the implications of representation analysis conducted in this study for English Language Teaching (ELT)?

1.3 Aims of the Research

Related to the research questions above, the present study seeks to examine:

1. the way the male and female students represent their experiences in recount texts, viewed from transitivity system, and
2. the contributions of the representation analysis employed in this study to English Language Teaching (ELT).

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The recent study centres the investigation on how the students of one state vocational school in Bandung represent their experiences linguistically and the implications of this representation analysis for ELT. This investigation is conducted by only analysing two major elements of transitivity system, i.e. processes and participants, in recount texts written by the selected students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study offers some contributions, both in theoretical and practical senses. In terms of theory, this study contributes to the development of literature relevant to the analyses of representation and gender, especially how both genders communicate in written form. Meanwhile, in terms of practice, this study is a way to expand the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and also a source of enlightenment on how to employ the SFL theory, transitivity system in particular, to analyse students' texts. Moreover, it can also be a foundation for both teachers and students to think more critically in both reading and writing processes. The results of this study will inform the implementation of *Kompetensi Inti* (KI) 'core competences' of the 2013 Curriculum, especially KI 2 on social attitude, KI 3 on comprehension, and KI 4 on practice.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding of key concepts as it is used in the present study, some key terms need to be clarified, as outlined below.

- 1. Transitivity system** can be defined as the way to express experiential meaning, one component of ideational meaning (Eggins, 2004). Ideational meaning itself is meanings relevant to how people make sense of their experience, represent the pattern, and build mental picture of the reality (Halliday, 1970 as cited in Song, 2013), enabling researchers to analyse the representation of phenomena in writers' life through components of the clauses.

2. **Gender** is a classification of people based on socio-cultural and psychological aspects (Wood, 1994; Holmes, 2001).
3. **Recount texts** are a text type which socially functions as a source of entertainment or information by retelling events. The generic structure of this text comprises the orientation, events, and re-orientation (Gerot & Wignell, 1994).

1.7 Organisation of the Paper

This paper consists of five chapters, i.e. introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussions, also conclusions and suggestions. Chapter 1 Introduction – consists of the background of study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of study, definitions of key terms and organization of the paper. Chapter 2 – Literature Review– presents some theories in association with the present study. Chapter 3 – Methodology—portrays how the research was conducted by elaborating its research design, site and participants, data collection, also data analysis. Chapter 4 –Findings and Discussions—discusses the answer of the research problems. Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations— concludes the results of this research and provides recommendations for some parties who are related to the research, i.e. further researchers and teachers.