CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents several sub sections which cover brief descriptions of the research including background of the study, research questions, research objectives, significances of the study, limitation of the study, definition of related terms, and organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

Academic writing in both foreign and native languages, have long been known as the most challenging skill to master (Lipson, 2005; Paltridge and Starfield, 2007; Alwasilah, 2007; Emilia, 2008). As the most challenging skill to master, students should be able to overcome several difficulties in writing. The difficulties are not only deal with structure, words selection, or text organization but also in terms of creating a coherent and cohesive writing (Joseph, 1999; Kamler and Thomson, 2006; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007; Emilia, 2008).

Creating a coherent and cohesive academic writing is also complicated for students at the tertiary level. In fact, most tertiary students would agree that academic writing particularly writing a research thesis is the hardest task to complete (Evans & Gruba, 2002; Kamler and Thomson, 2006; Paltridge and Starfield, 2007; Emilia, 2008).

With regard to students' ability to create a coherent and cohesive writing, several studies have been conducted to investigate the coherence and cohesiveness in students' academic writing. Among those are a study conducted by Emilia *et al* (2008 and 2010) that reports students' difficulties in writing discussion chapter of a research thesis coherently and critically. To overcome the problem, Emilia proposes a teaching program with a view to nurture students' ability in writing a

discussion chapter so that they have the capability in writing a thesis critically and coherently.

Another study which focuses on coherence and cohesiveness in students' academic writing is also conducted by Watson, Khongput, and Darawasang (2007). They found that student's essays lack coherence and cohesion and suggested to write comments, feedback, or side notes on students' academic essay particularly to guide the students in recognizing the lack of coherence and cohesion in their essays.

Meanwhile, Jones (2009), in his comparative study in academic writing between native and non native students in Australian tertiary context, points out that writing coherently and cohesively in academic context is still regarded as a complex matter for both native and non native students.

Besides, the findings from a study on coherence and cohesion of undergraduate students' research proposals which was conducted by Widiastuti (2010) reveals that teachers' guidance in writing is extremely significant to improve students' ability in writing a coherent and cohesive research proposal. This study emphasizes that teachers' assistance and support can encourage students to create a more coherent and cohesive academic writing.

Moreover, similar findings from several well-established researches recommends that analyzing students' writing with the emphasis on meaning and function, Theme-Rheme, and textual metafunction of text have provided an effective framework for identifying coherence in students' texts (Vande Kopple, 1991; Bloor & Bloor, 1992; Eggins, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2009; Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Wang, 2007). As a result, it has been suggested that analysis on textual coherence and cohesion using Theme-Rheme progression can be incorporated and implemented in teaching writing and writing instruction (Vande Kopple, 1991; Bloor & Bloor, 1992; Eggins, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2009; Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Wang, 2007).

The studies above point out that a study on coherence and cohesion in students' writing can provide essential outcomes in teaching academic writing. Motivated by the aforementioned issues above, this present study aims to analyze the coherence and cohesion properties in the introductory chapter of a research thesis and in order to investigate coherence and cohesion in students' introductory chapter of a thesis, Systemic Functional Grammar and CARS Model (Create a Research Space) are selected as the appropriate tool of analysis in this study.

SFG analysis examines spoken or written text in systematic way which means grammar is viewed as a system of networks that contains the pattern of choices through which people make meaning of language depend on its function and context (Halliday, 1985; Martin, 1992; Eggins, 1994; Matthiessen, 1995; Butt et al, 2000; Emilia, 2003; Bloor and Bloor, 2004). In other words, SFG views a language as a meaning making system (Martin, Mathiessen, and Painter, 1997).

Whereas CARS Model is a well- known schematic structure that used to identify elements of background section which serve as a standard and communicative purposes in a research paper (Swales and Feak, 1994; Paltridge and Starfield, 2007). The theories above are relevant to be implemented in this study particularly to explain linguistics devices and generic elements that substantially contribute to a cohesive and coherent in students' text.

In sum, the study on coherence and cohesion analysis in students' background section of a research thesis is needed particularly to provide explanation on grammatical function and elements of a research thesis and to better guide students in their thesis writing.

Furthermore, this study is expected to give insight and information for teachers who act as supervisors and are actively engaged in teaching writing as well for tertiary students who are required to produce a good scientific writing or research thesis in their study.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the explanation in the background of the study above, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the students maintain the structure of background section of theses as can be seen from the Move structure and Theme system of the theses written in the second half of 2010, 2011, and 2012 academic years?

2. What kind of thematic progression pattern and cohesive ties are dominantly applied in the background section of the thesis?

3. To what extent do both systems contribute to the coherence and cohesion of background section of the theses?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study is intended to:

1. Find out the structure of background section in the introductory chapter of the theses written in the second half of 2010, 2011, and 2012 academic years.

2. Identify the dominant thematic progression and prominent cohesive device which are used in the background section of the thesis.

3. Find out the contribution of Move structure and Theme system to the coherence and cohesiveness of background sections.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is considerably significant in three aspects:

1. Theoretically, this study can enrich the literature of the theories of coherence, cohesion, academic writing, and thesis supervision.

2. Practically, this study is expected to elicit students' awareness in implementing cohesive devices and employing thematic progression in order to achieve coherence in their background writing.

3. Pedagogically, this study is expected to give ample information on the difficulties of thesis writing faced by EFL students. Thus, by analyzing the thesis product, this study will point out the precise difficulties that students have in common in writing their thesis so that lecturers can resolve the problems and can provide assistance in their thesis writing.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the coherence and cohesion of background section of theses written by undergraduate students of English Education program at one state university in Bandung. The data were taken from the theses which written in three consecutive years 2010, 2011, and in the latest 2012 academic year.

The purpose of limitation in this study is to provide detailed explanation and information on coherence and cohesion in the thesis and the readability from each thesis which is written in three consecutive years. The analysis was to do with the schematic structure, Theme system, thematic progression pattern, and cohesive devices employed in the background section of theses.

1.6 Definition of Related Terms

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

1. Coherence : Continuity in meaning and context. It concerns with underlying phenomenon in the text (Encyclopedia of Linguistics, 2005).

2. Cohesion : Continuity in word and sentence structure. It concerns with the elements in surface text (Encyclopedia of Linguistics, 2005).

3. Theme : The point of departure, the first element of a clause, or the given information in the clause (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

4. Rheme : The reminder of Theme, the rest of the clause after Theme, or the new information in the clause (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

5. Thematic Progression : The pattern or the flow of information from Theme to Rheme in a clause (Eggins, 1994).

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis starts with the introduction chapter which consists of the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, limitation of the study, and thesis organization. The second chapter is mainly designed to review theories which are used in this study. The third chapter provides some information on methodology which includes research design, population and samples, data collection method, and data analysis.

Next, the fourth chapter of this study covers the report on cohesive devices used in the background section of the thesis and provides the analysis on the importance of cohesive devices which contribute to the coherence and cohesiveness of the background section. The last chapter, chapter five, presents a conclusion and suggestions for further research.