CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introductory section of the present study. It consists of the background of the study, purposes of the study, statements of problems, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of paper.

1.1. Background

Writing skill is a very fundamental skill in human life alongside with reading, listening, and speaking skill. It is a mean of expressing ideas. That is why writing is important to learn by people, including deaf people. Deaf people are those who have problems in their hearing organs resulting in hearing disabilities (World Health Organization, 2019). Since many of them cannot speak understandably, deaf people need to learn to write in order for them to communicate with hearing people, who mostly do not understand sign language.

Deafness, however, has an impact on language development and speech, especially to those who are deaf since they were born. Based on personal observation, the language ability of deaf students is left behind to that of hearing students and it is strengthened by some studies, such as Shojaei, Jafari, and Gholami (2016) who argued that hearing loss from birth up to the age of three years has a negative effect on language development and speech, and thus results in cognitive, emotional, and academic defects since it causes delayed development of linguistic abilities. Another study from Spencer and Marschark (2010) believed that the literacy level of deaf and hard of hearing children has lagged behind to that of typically developing children. There is also a study from Svirsky, Robbins, Kirk, Pisoni and Miyamoto (2000) which found that most children who are born profoundly deaf or who become deaf before the age of 3 fall significantly behind
their normal-hearing peers in their mastery of the surrounding oral language in its written, read, spoken, and signed forms.

The studies above imply that writing a text is not an easy activity to do by deaf students. However, they need this skill since they will more likely to communicate with hearing people, as the population of people with disability is only 12.15% from the total population of Indonesia in 2016 (“Indonesia miliki 12 persen penyandang disabilitas”, 2016). Since they cannot express their ideas through speaking, writing is a mean of expressing ideas for deaf people. When deaf people want to communicate their ideas into writing, being cohesive is important, so that people can easily understand what they really mean. Cohesion refers to the relationships between items in a text such as words, phrases, and clauses and other items such as pronouns, nouns, and conjunctions (Paltridge, 2006).

Deaf people need to learn how to write a text, such as recount text. Learning how to write a recount text enables them to share their experience to hearing people since it functions to retell an event or experience that is already happened in the past (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Writing a recount text may benefit deaf students as it can meet a variety of purposes in schooling, from summarizing events in a story to reporting on field trips (Schleppegrell, 2010). Departing from this phenomenon, the present study attempts to investigate how cohesive a recount text written by deaf students is in terms of its textual metafunction, focusing on the type of theme and thematic progression pattern.

Many studies have been conducted to see cohesion in terms of its textual metafunction in various texts, such as in high school students’ texts (Yunita, 2018; Rakhman, 2013). Yunita (2018) did a textual metafunction analysis in vocational school students’ recount text. By using the theory of theme system by Halliday (1994) and thematic progression theory by Eggins (2004), the results show that the use of more reiteration pattern in the students’ texts contributes to the cohesion of the texts by maintaining the focus of the texts by reiterating the thematic element of the clause in the subsequent clauses.
Rakhman (2013) used textual metafunction analysis to analyze high school students’ recount texts. The parameter of the study stated that simple linear theme is a dominant theme in an exposition text. By combining two framework, which are Danes’ (1974) and Eggins’ (2004) systemic functional linguistics approach, the study found that the students tend to use more constant theme pattern to develop their ideas into an exposition text which indicates that the students’ texts are not consistent with argumentative language features resulting in a less cohesive text.

There is also a study conducted to analyze the textual meaning in undergraduate thesis as what Gunawan and Aziza (2017) have done. The data were taken from an undergraduate student’s thesis. Employing Halliday’s theme system and its progression, the study found that theme reiteration pattern is the most frequent pattern used to develop a cohesive thesis by making the point discussed in the text as the central attention.

News reports can also be analyzed in terms of their textual meaning as what have done by Dong, Shao, and Jia (2016). The data were taken from 20 news from VOA, from January 2015 to June 2015. By using Halliday’s (2000) theme theory and Zhu Yongsheng’s (1995) thematic progression pattern theory, the study found that parallel pattern is the most frequent thematic pattern used in news reports which contributes to build a cohesive news report by laying a framework for information to center on the core content, so that the news report will be clearer and more effective. Still in the same field, Shakeh (2016) used the data in the form of twelve opinion articles from the English edition of Azzaman. The result shows that the writers prefer to use simple linear theme and constant theme progression to make their texts cohesive. In addition, due to cohesive concerns, the writers tend to avoid derived theme because of its complexity.

To sum up, three out of five studies above found that reiteration or constant pattern is the most dominant thematic progression pattern used in their studies (Yunita, 2018; Rakhman, 2013; Gunawan & Aziza, 2017). Meanwhile, the rest two studies found that parallel or simple linear or zig-zag pattern as the most dominant thematic progression pattern (Dong, Shao & Jia, 2016; Shakeh, 2016).
All of the studies above have provided a fruitful insight regarding how the choice of thematic progression pattern contributes to the cohesion of a text. However, none of the studies focus on analyzing how cohesive a recount text written by deaf students is and analyze its textual meaning in terms of the choice of theme and thematic progression pattern.

This study attempts to contribute to the existing studies which focuses on understanding deaf students’ recount texts by using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This study explores more on the textual metafunction of deaf students’ recount texts as cohesion is the focus of this study. Textual metafunction is to do with how messages combine to form a flow in the quantum of information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). When people pay attention to the textual metafunction in writing a text, they are more likely to make a cohesive text since textual metafunction can increase a text’s cohesion by paying attention to the theme, rheme, and thematic progression in a clause. Theme is the first element of a clause; rheme is the rest element of a clause (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Meanwhile, thematic progression is the flow of information between successive themes and rhemes in a text (Eggins, 2004). As they use language differently from hearing students in which they tend to use more sign language, deaf students may have their own structure in writing a recount text. Therefore, this study aims to unfold that structure by using the perspective of SFL to see whether or not the structure is different from hearing students’ writing. This study discusses the textual meaning contained in deaf students’ recount texts in the SFL perspective which focuses more on the types of theme, thematic progression patterns, and how these two elements support the cohesion of the texts.

1.2. Purposes of the Study

This research aims to:

1. Analyze the theme choice in deaf students’ recount texts.
2. Analyze the pattern of thematic progression in deaf students’ recount texts.
3. Investigate how the choice of theme and thematic progression patterns support the cohesion of deaf students’ recount texts.
1.3. Statements of Problems

In order to attain its main purposes, this research aims to answer these following questions:

1. What types of theme are used by deaf students in writing recount texts?
2. What patterns of thematic progression are employed by deaf students in their recount texts?
3. How do theme and thematic progression support the cohesion of deaf students’ recount texts?

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing recount texts written by deaf students from three educational level (elementary school, junior high school and senior high school) in a special school in Bandung. The analysis concerns more on investigating the types of theme and thematic progression patterns used by deaf students in organizing their ideas into recount texts. The present study employed theme and rheme analytical framework proposed by Halliday (1994) and thematic progression framework proposed by Eggins (2004). Some other principal frameworks by Halliday & Hasan (1976), Gerot & Wignell (1994), Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), Emilia (2005), and Paltridge (2006) are also employed to discuss the research problems.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to benefit for:

The Deaf Students

The direct recipients of the output of this study are deaf students. The present study is expected to give more awareness to the deaf students on the importance of being cohesive in writing a text.
The Teachers

The present study will be beneficial to the special school teacher and also general education teachers. Through this study, the teachers may purposefully teach the students to pay attention to the theme and rheme when they write something to increase the cohesion of a text.

Academic Society

This study will give much information about recount texts written by deaf students analyzed in the perspective of SFL.

The Readers

This study is expected to benefit the readers by helping them in understanding the theme and rheme in a text, which therefore may raise awareness of being cohesive in writing.

Other Researchers

The findings of this study may give additional references to other researchers in doing further research. This study is also expected to give ideas to other researchers to investigate deaf students’ writing in other field as it is rarely studied.

1.6. Clarification of Terms

There are some terms in the present study that need to be clarified to avoid misinterpretations, including:

1. Cohesion
   The relationships between items in a text such as words, phrases, and clauses and other items such as pronouns, nouns, and conjunctions (Paltridge, 2006).

2. Deafness
   Hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2017).
3. **Recount Text**  
A text which functions to retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining (Gerot and Wignell, 1994).

4. **Rheme**  
the rest element of the clause (Gerot and Wignell, 1994).

5. **Thematic Progression**  
The flow of information between successive themes and rhemes in a text (Eggins, 2004).

6. **Theme**  
The element which comes first in the clause (Gerot and Wignell, 1994).

1.7. **Organization of Paper**

The study is organized into five chapters. Those are as follows:

1. **Introduction**  
This chapter presents the background of the study, purposes of the study, statements of problems, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of paper.

2. **Theoretical Background**  
This chapter provides the elaboration of several concepts and theories employed to solve the research problems in the present study.

3. **Research Methodology**  
This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study, which includes research design, site and participants of the study, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

4. **Findings and Discussion**  
This chapter reports the findings and discussion of the study.

5. **Conclusion and Suggestions**  
This chapter provides conclusion based on the findings of the study and gives suggestions for further studies.