CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Writing in Indonesian pedagogical contexts is one of the four skills in the curriculum. Learning to write means learning ways of meaning or ways of organising experience, information, and ideas in distinctively different language patterns (Christie, 1986: 221). In writing, starting a sentence with Theme is especially useful in helping students to communicate their ideas successfully (Wang, 2007: 5). Theme is the element of clause structure which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is with which the clause is concerned (Halliday 1985a, as cited in Martin 1992). The Theme then becomes the prominent element because it provides the environment for the remainder of the message, which is known as the Rheme, in the Theme-Rheme organisation (Halliday, 1994: 70).

Theme-Rheme organisation or Thematic organisation of clauses is the most significant factor in the development of text (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 105). Thematic organisation is termed by Danes as Thematic Progression because it is one of the organising principles in the ordering information in discourse beyond the clause level, though different scholars give different terms for such a referent (1970, 1974 as cited in Nwogu and Bloor, 1991: 367). For pedagogical contexts of writing, Downing (2001:1) states that Danes' model of thematic progression analysis can be applied within educational settings. The above explanations suggest the benefits of Theme and Thematic Progression as a resource for analysing texts in educational setting, particularly for students' texts, as suggested by Downing (2001: 23). However, in Indonesian secondary school contexts, the awareness towards writing organisation based on thematic progression seems to attract less attention from both teachers and students for

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propable insufficient information, although it is essential for enhanching language skill development; particularly writing (Huda, 1999: 149).

Recent studies of Thematic Progression are generally related to Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Halliday (1985, 1994), although they are previously related to the Prague school of linguistics. This is supported by Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 50) who state that Theme-rheme is now most commonly associated with the work of Halliday (1985, 1994) rather than with the Prague School directly. Studies of text, particularly the Thematic Progression associated to the Halliday's works, have drawn an increasing attention for some linguists and educators. This is indicated by studies on Thematic Progression by Nwogu and Bloor (1991), Downing (2001), Li and Liu (2005), Wang (2007), Maruthai (2007), Yang (2008), and Li (2009). However, those studies seem to be on the Thematic Progression of various texts by which the ultimate stage of the study is commonly describing and explaining how and why certain Thematic Progression exists in texts. It appears that there has not been a thematic progression analysis on students' explanatory texts particularly in Indonesia. Therefore, this study is encouraged to fill the gap; Thematic Progression analysis on students' texts, with the specific focus; it is on students' explanatory texts.

Thematic Progression (TP) is a concept as one of the organising principles in functional sentence perspective (Danes, 1970, 1974 as cited in Nwogu and Bloor, 1991: 369). It is also known as text's method of development (see Halliday, 1994; Eggins, 2004) as text organisation (c.f. Martin, 1992). As one of lunguists discussing text organisation, Danes demonstrates the organization of information in texts which is determined by the progression in the ordering of utterance themes. He also elaborates some types of thematic progression with some detailed examples and discussion (Nwogu and Bloor, 1992: 171-2). Because of those facts, Danes' model of Thematic Progression analysis becomes the model used in this study. Therefore, Thematic Progression is perceived as the choice and ordering of utterance themes in the whole text and the Danes' model is used in the analysis.

By applying Danes' model of Thematic Progression analysis, this study aims to reveal how students realise Thematic Progression in their explanatory texts and to explore the extent to which the students' texts are consistent with common language features of scientific texts in terms of thematic progression pattern. There are several reasons why Thematic Progression becomes reasonable to analyse. The first reason is that thematic progression is one of organising principles where new information is conveyed in the context (Hutchin, 1987). The second reason is that thematic progression represents the text development (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Thirdly, it is the progression of new themes, which has textual meanings of how experiential and interpersonal meanings are organized in a linear and coherent way (Butt et. al., 2000 cited in Yang, 2008).

Concerning the text type being investigated, students' explanatory text becomes the main concern of this study because of several reasons. First, the text has significant position in educational contexts because it is the type of text which answers the questions of how and why things occur (Butt et al., 2000). Secondly, explantory text is also common in academic life, particularly in language class of writing; students generally use the process of explaining to talk and to write about personal experience and concrete knowledge (Knapp and Watkins, 2005). Thirdly, explanatory text is commonly used to evaluate students' understanding of concepts and of why or how a phenomenon occurs. This is so common in some evaluations of students' writing performance in Indonesia, especially in secondary education contexts (see Competence-based Curriculum or Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi, 2003; School-based Curriculum or Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan, KTSP 2006; Hyland, 2002). Finally, explanatory text seems to have less attention from the teachers in terms of their thematic progression and their language feature consistency in learning process and in evaluation.

1.2. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on Thematic Progression, which is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and on Danes' model of analysis on thematic progression (see Halliday, 1985, 1994; Danes, 1974; Fries, 1981; Martin, 1992). By Thematic Progression, it is meant that a clause theme progresses along text to achieve its purpose in supporting the organisation of the text. The analysis of thematic progression focuses on explanatory texts written by grade 12 students in science program in a private school in Bandung. The analysis focuses on Theme selection, Thematic Progression, and Thematic Progression consistency regarding thematic progression in scientific texts.

1.3. Purposes of the Study

Based on the description in the Background, by applying the Thematic Progression analysis, this study aims to:

a. reveal the realisation of Thematic Progression (TP) in students' explanatory texts, and

b. explore the extent to which the students' explanatory texts are consistent with the scientific language features in terms of the Thematic Progression.

1.4. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the research questions formulated as follows.

a. How do the students realise thematic progression in their explanatory texts?

b. In terms of thematic progression, to what extent are the students' explanatory texts consistent with the scientific language features?

1.5. Research Methods

This study employed a nonexperimental research design and applied textual analysis. It is considered nonexperimental because it does not attempt to control or manipulate variables in the students' texts and it is based on naturalistic observation of originial students' texts (see Bodens and Abbots, 2008: 228). This study also applied a text analysis which belongs to textlinguistic corpora research. This text analysis provides some insights by dividing clauses into theme-rheme structures and by stressing the discourse-functional basis of groups of surface structural features, i.e. the ones in the explanatory texts (see Grabe and Kaplan, 1996: 46). For such analysis, the data were students' explanatory texts. They were collected especially for this study after the students had attended writing class about explanatory text. The analysis focuses on clause themes which have certain features such as identical wording, sysnonymous expression, reference, and semantic inference (Nwogu and Bloor, 1991: 274). These clause themes become the basis to identify thematic progression realisations, as presented by Christie and Derewianka (2008: 20-9). The realisations are then compared to the ones in scientific texts investigated by Nwogu and Bloor (1991), to see the extent of thematic progression consistency in the students' explanatory texts.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to offer some theoretical and practical contributions. In terms of theory, this study can verify previous findings in thematic progression analysis and it can also develop studies in Systemic Functional Grammar, particularly the one in Thematic Progression analysis.

For teaching and learning practices of writing explanatory text, the result of this study can give views on teaching explanatory genre, especially in applying theme choice and in developing paragraphs with various sub-types of explanatory genre as proposed by Downing (2001), who states that the exploration of Danes' model can be applied in education settings. The result of this study can also

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exhibit the students' text consistency in scientific writing in terms of the thematic progression.

For other researchers, the result of this study can support Thematic Progression analysis as one basis of text evaluation, so that the analysis of discourse becomes more objective and efficient, as suggested by Li (2009: 66).

1.7.Definitions of Key Terms

This section presents brief and technical definitions of concepts used in this study. It aims to avoid ambiguity, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation of the concepts employed. The terms include Systemic Functional Linguistics, Thematic Progression, and Students' Texts.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a language theory developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985, 1994) which claims that grammar is functional in three senses: in its interpretation of texts, of the system, and of the elements of linguistic structures (c.f. Halliday, 1994: xiii). One of its discussion is about Theme, which becomes the basic concept in this study to identify thematic progression in students' explanatory texts.

Thematic Progression refers to the sequence or patterns of unmarked topical Themes which are sometimes found in texts (Droga and Humphrey, 2002: 122). This is supported by Danes (1974 as cited in Nwogu and Bloor, 1991:367; Martin, 1992; Martin and Rose, 2007). Thematic Progression will be found if there are four possible relations between a clause Theme and another clause Theme or between a clause theme and a Rheme in another clause. The relations can be realised by certain features, such as *identical wording*, *synonymous expression*, *reference*, or *semantic inference*.

Explanatory text is a factual text used to explain the process involved in the evolution of natural phenomena, why or how something happens. It is also commonly known as explanation genre (see Callaghan and Rhothery, 1988:70; Knapp and Watkins, 2005: 125-151). In this study, students' explanatory text

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refs to the explanatory text written by Year 12 students in science program in a private secondary school in Bandung. There are twenty students' explanatory texts. The texts were intentionally written for this study.

1.8.Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is written in five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study by presenting introductory background in *Introduction* section, *Scope of the Study*, *Purpose of the Study*, *Research Questions*, *Research Method*, *Significance of the Study*, *Definition of Key Terms*, and *Organisation of the Thesis*.

Chapter II provides a theoretical basis for the analysis of Thematic Progression in the students' explanatory texts. This chapter thus presents two main sections: *Systemic Functional Grammar (and hencefort SFG)* and the *Theme System*. The former section focuses on the features of SFG and its three metafunctions. This section also argues the consideration of applying SFG. The latter section consists of several sections; *Definition of Theme*, *Types of Theme*, *Thematic Progression*, *Thematic Progression Consistency* and *Explanatory Genre*. *Definition of Theme* discusses theme elaborations by some functionalists and preferred definition for this study. *Types of Theme* section presents the themes based on its division into single and multiple themes, on theme markedness, and on its predications. The unmarked Topical Theme then becomes the basis for identification of thematic progression. *Thematic Progression* section discusses thematic progression identification and the four thematic progression patterns; Simple Linear Progression (SLP), Constant Thematic Progression (CTP), Derived Theme Progression (DTP), and Split Rheme Progression (SRP). *Thematic Progression Consistency* section presents the parameter of scientific texts' consistency in terms of their thematic progression patterns. *Explantory Genre* section provides the elaborations of explanatory text; the definition, the function and the features related to scientific texts in terms of thematic progression pattern.

This chapter close the chapter with a *Conclusion* presenting what have been discussed and what comes later in the next chapter.

Chapter III elaborates a framework for the Thematic Progression analysis. The elaborations are subdivided into three sections; *Research Design*, *Data Collection*, and *Data Analysis*. The first section presents some research designs and argue the design for this study. The second section elaborates the data colletion technique, the data type, participants, and some consideration for the data collection. The third section discusses how thematic progression is identified and classified into the four patterns. The last section is the chapter *Conclusion* presenting what have been elaborated and the coming brief dicussion in the following chapter.

Chapter IV presents the data analysis, the findings and their discussion, which are organised into three primary sections; *Theme Realisation*, *Realisation of Thematic Progression* and *Discussion*. The first section presents the analysis and the findings; the theme realisations based on its markedness, types, and predication. The second section elaborates the four realisations of thematic progression and their trends. The realisations are the classified into Simple Linear Progression (SLP), Contant Thematic Progression (CTP), Derived Theme Progression (DTP), Split Rheme Progression (SRP). After being categorised, the thematic progression trends are compared to the ones in scientific texts previoulsy found by Nwogu and Bloor (1991) to see the thematic progression consistency.

Chapter V has two sections; the *Conclusion* and *Recommendation*. The *Conclusion* elaborates a brief basis for the study, research problems, and some findings from which the conclusions are drawn. The *Recommendation* section presents some proposals for readers, particularly for teachers and students in secondary education.