

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general issues related to the present study. These include the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Learning to write for academic purposes often involves the process of creating a new identity. The students are expected to represent their identities through a new discipline they are engaging in (Fan Shen, 1988 as cited in Hyland, 2002b). Creating such an identity, however, is generally very difficult for second language students. This is partly because these identities can differ considerably from those they are familiar with from their everyday lives, or previous learning experiences (Cadman, 1997 as cited in Hyland, 2002b).

In social view of language, identity is realised and demonstrated by means of discourse choices in specific discourse communities with their particular purposes are achieved through the use of particular genres (Hyland, 2002a). Demonstrating a new identity may be less than easy for writers in a new field because they bring to it multiple identities and, in their writing, draw on the various, sometimes competing, discourses available to them (Ivanic, 1998).

The discourse community is generally linked with the notion of genre to explain the relationship between the text and the writer and how the writer achieves particular rhetorical purposes and takes on and expresses social identities (Goodier, 2008). In this study, then, purpose and identity are seen in the particular choices made by the writer within the context of the discourse community. The exploration of the purpose and identity is carried out by means of an analysis of the students' discourse choices in a written assignment in which they target a genre new to them but central to the field of engineering, i.e. report writing.

Report writing is an essential skill for professionals in almost every field: engineers, accountants, teachers, graphic designers, information scientists, and other professional fields. Thus, the teaching of report writing at tertiary level education is essential since it provides the students with the foundation skills in writing various types of reports (Marshall, 1991). A good report communicates ideas, data and conclusions efficiently and clearly (Beer & McMurrey, 1997; McKenna, 1997), therefore, an understanding of report writing principles will benefit a student who intends to go into any field of work.

In engineering field, report writing is a part of every engineer's career thus the major focus of report writing is preparing the engineering students with the skills of writing technical report. A good report writing is an indication of someone's written work where its purpose and identity can be revealed (Goodier, 2008). The purpose of a report determines its overall organisation and development hence affects the format

and manner of presentation (Marshall, 1991). The identity, on the other hand, determines discourse choices of a specific text to show the writer's professional identity (Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic and Camps, 2001; Goodier, 2008). It means that by using specific linguistic features and technical terms the writers can identify themselves in a specific discourse community.

Several studies have examined students' writing in terms of purpose and identity. Some focus on the students' conceptions of purpose in their writing (Anson, 1990; Hart, 2000). Some other studies focus on exploring the students' identity in writing (Diani, 2008; Tessuto, 2008; Reid, 2009). They concern on the ways to improve the writing skills of English for second language and foreign language students. They investigate the identity of the student writers in different fields of study. Their findings show that students can have many choices to reflect their identity in writing. Other study which focuses on the relationships between purpose and identity in a medical case report was conducted by Goodier (2008). The result shows that knowing the realisation of purpose and identity in students' writing can give valuable implications for teaching and learning.

Although many previous studies as mentioned above have investigated the purpose and the identity of students' writing, little research has explored the generic structure and linguistic features of a technical report to realise purpose and identity. There is a need to increase a research-based knowledge of realising purpose and identity in terms of generic structure and linguistic features of a technical report since the

researcher has found that the major problem faced by students in the research site in writing a technical report is related to the logical structure of the report and language especially in the realisation of the purpose and identity. It is in line with Cheung & Lai (1997) stating that students often do not structure available information before they begin their writing. As a consequence, the students are not only unable to write grammar-free reports but they do have structural problems in organising their reports at both the macro (text structure) and micro (language features) levels to realise purpose and identity.

Thus, the present study aims to investigate the realisation of purpose and identity in students' technical reports. This study has been conducted in a polytechnic in Bandung. This study attempts to identify the realisation of purpose and identity in students' technical reports in terms of generic structure, and the linguistic features used in their technical reports to show purpose and identity.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

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

1. In terms of generic structure, how do students realise purpose and identity in their technical reports?
2. What linguistic features are used by the students in their technical reports to show purpose and identity?

### 1.3 Purposes of The Study

The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. Revealing the realisation of purpose and identity in the students' technical report in terms of generic structure.
2. Exploring the linguistic features used by the students in their technical reports to show purpose and identity.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study will provide a reference for the engineering students in understanding the purpose and identity in technical report writing. Furthermore, this study will be preliminary inputs for other researchers to further study in the similar area of research with different interest.

Practically, the results of the study are expected to provide a practical guide for the readers in general and engineering students in particular to write a technical report.

Professionally, this study will be beneficial for engineering students and English lecturers in engineering studies.

*For students*, the results provide information to understand how they organize a technical report and to see how generic structures and linguistic features used in their writing can realise their purpose and identity.

*For lecturers*, the results can be used to help them understand the students' purpose and identity in technical report writing so they can provide meaningful guidance for

their students, and can provide the students with the appropriate analytic tools to be used in teaching technical report writing.

### **1.5. Scope of the study**

This study is a case study of exploring purpose and identity as realised in students' technical report writing in a polytechnic in Bandung. It uses text analysis and semi structured interview. The analysis focuses on the generic structure and linguistic features of a technical report in engineering studies. The analysis attempts to reveal the realisation of purpose and identity in students' technical report writing in terms of generic structure, and to explore the linguistic features used by the students in their technical reports to show purpose and identity.

### **1.6 Clarifications of Key Terms**

For the sake of clarity, key terms in this study are defined and specified as follows:

*Students:* The sixth-semester students of Manufacturing Engineering department in a polytechnic in Bandung.

*Purpose and Identity:* The identification of particular choices made by the writer within the context of the discourse community (Bhatia, 1993).

*Technical Report:* A type of writing as communicating technical information for specific purpose that is geared to the needs of specific audience and occurs in a specific workplace situation (Beer & McMurrey, 1997).

*Generic Structures:* The elements and move structures of a technical report (Swales, 1990).

*Linguistic Features*: Forms and structures used by students to achieve a particular communicative and rhetorical purpose, and identity in technical report writing (Swales, 1990).

*Genre Analysis*: A study of a particular type of a written discourse made distinctive by its purpose and the discourse community for which it is intended. Examples of genre are abstract, laboratory reports, grant proposal, poems, letters, etc (Swales, 1990). Particular genre to be analyzed in the present study is technical report in engineering studies (to follow Swales, 1990; Marshall, 1991; Cheung and Lai, 1997; McKenna, 1997; Hyland, 2004 among others).

*Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)*: Halliday's model of text analysis as a point of reference and theoretical framework for the analysis of students' writing in terms of linguistic features based on the Transitivity system (developed by Halliday, 1985, 1994; Martin and Rose, 2003, 2007; Eggins, 1994,2004 among others).

### **1.7 Organization of The Thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One presents the general description of the introduction to the topic of the research. Chapter Two elaborates the theories that support the study. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology. Chapter Four shows data analysis and discussion. Chapter Five presents the conclusions and the recommendations of the result of the study.