CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A.   Background of the Research

Over the last decade or so, the inquiry of language teaching has been showing significant interest to the notion of literacy and its impact on students' language development. Correspondingly, concern about level of literacy has been growing in many parts of the world, including Indonesia. In responding to such literacy development demand, the curriculum developers in Indonesia then adopt the concept of language as social semiotic, presented in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (hereafter SFL) framework at least since 2004 (Emilia, 2005; Emilia et al., 2008, Emilia & Tahseem, 2013; Putra, 2014)).

The perspective of SFL continues to be adopted in the latest curriculum of 2013 which is clearly shown in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation no. 21/2016 on the content standard of English. It is stated, for example, that the X grade students of senior high school are expected to be able to achieve competencies such as: "identifying social function, text structure and linguistic features of a text in a particular social context," and "composing oral and/or written text using accurate schematic structure and linguistic features of a text in a particular social context."

In language teaching practice, the perspective of SFL informs the development of a language teaching approach which is so-called genre pedagogy or genre-based approach (Feez, 1998, 2002; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; da Silva Joyce & Feez, 2016), or in the other places it refers to text-based approach (Butt et

al., 2000). Although initially developed in Australia, this approach has been widely used around the world, including Indonesia (Emilia, 2005; Emilia et al., 2008; Nugroho & Herawati, 2009), opening opportunities for the teachers and researchers to examine the usefulness of this approach in assisting the students' English language development.

While there have been a lot of researches reporting on the effectiveness of genre pedagogy in supporting the students' English language development, especially writing, there have been less researches, as long as the researcher notes, focusing on what language development really looks like in the students' texts. A great number of researches indeed, using various perspectives, have provided description of the students' language development. However, these researches mainly analysed the texts composed by the students in countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue (see the summary of such researches in Christie & Derewianka, 2008: 1-8), and yet there have been less attempt to describe the English language development made by the students in Indonesia where English is considered as foreign language. This research is mainly derived from such rationale in order to contribute to an understanding of language development likely made by the students in their texts by analysing their narrative written texts using framework provided in SFL.

Narrative text is chosen in this research since it is one of the most enduring genres taught in English subject at school. It means that narrative, as demanded by the curriculum, has been one of the key genres taught in Indonesia since the curriculum of 2004, and it can be found and taught from the VII grade of junior

high school until the XI grade of senior high school. Narrative is, in fact, the most commonly produced and important type of story in an English program (Macken-Horarik 2007; Christie & Derewianka, 2008) and is often considered as the macro genre which means it can easily accommodate one or more of the other genres and still dominant (Knapp & Watkins, 2005: 221).

The students, however, often find difficulties in developing their narrative writing ability despite of its long presence in the curriculum. This is probably caused partly by the characteristics of narrative itself which often requires various linguistic resources in order to be able to compose a good one. It may include various process types, verb tenses – especially if the texts includes dialog, clause complexes – especially when expanding nominal groups for describing characters, and words to create images and possible worlds (Derewianka, 1990; Rothery & Stenglin, 1997; Schleppegrell, 2004). In other words, narrative writing requires the students to draw on quite a sophisticated constellation of grammatical as well as lexical features in order to be able to present imaginative world in such texts.

Of course, looking at the errors in the students' text and correcting them will not make their text effective, yet close attention to the choice have been made by the students in their texts enable us to see their actual use of language and their development in controlling and utilising the target language system in order to convey meaning (Schleppegrell, 2007). As Kress (1982) puts it: the students' written texts everywhere bear the signs of the struggle to meet the demands of the generic form, the effects and meaning of discourses, and the form of language in the written mode.

Referring to the theory of language developed in SFL (will be discussed further in the following chapters), this research identify how the students develop their English language competency in responding to the context of social purpose of a text, or genre, which impacts on the choice made in maintaining the stages of a text in order to achieve its purpose. Since genre is defined as a staged, goal-oriented activity in which speakers or writers engages as members of a culture (Martin 1992: 505; 1997: 13; Martin & Rose, 2007: 6), it is possible to identify the generic stages – or schematic structures – of a particular genre and further ascertain how the stages allow the genre to achieve its goals through the choice of linguistic expression made in each stage. In other words, it is assumed in this research that the students' narrative writing development is closely related to how the students' struggle to meet the demand of narrative texts through the selections of language features they made in each stages in order to construct a purposeful text.

Since narrative often deals with imaginative worlds, the narrative writers must draw primarily on the system within English grammar enabling them to construct those worlds: what is going on, who is involved, and possible situation attended within those worlds, also how these notions are put together into structural configuration of different types of clause (Butt et al., 2000: 81). Therefore, this research is mainly concerned only with the variable of field of discourse which is represented by experiential meaning for it is through this meaning that the students can investigate how writers use the grammar resources to build a possible world for their reader and to develop characters in their story in a narrative text (Butt et al., 2000: 81).

Furthermore, the key system responsible for construing experiential meaning in English is the system of transitivity. It is the overall grammatical resource for construing goings on (Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 2007: 100). It is through the system of transitivity the writers (or speakers) construe the world of experience (factual or imaginative) into manageable set of process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 170). Moreover, transitivity is a very important concept in SFL and it often works as foundation for any analysis, that is, it is through the analysis of transitivity system on a clause that the full analysis of meaning can be derived (Fontaine, 2013: 73).

A number of researches investigating the important role of choice made from transitivity system to construct successful stages in particular genre have been undertaken by several researchers in the SFL tradition. Washitake (2004) shows how the selections in the system of process type vary from one generic stage to another in narrative text and presents the transitivity profiles in the construction of those stages. Matthiessen (2007) also outlines the possible link between the transitivity system selection and generic stages in building a successful text. More recently, addressing the same issue raised by Washitake and Matthiessen, Shanshan and Libo (2008) present the transitivity profiles as indicators of the students' development in writing narrative texts.

In line with this enquiry, this research tries to examine the students' development in writing narrative text through the analysis of generic structure construction employed by the students in their texts which is further realised in linguistic formulations from viewpoint of the transitivity system. This, further,

entails the frequency of occurrence of variety transitivity choices made by the students for each stage in order to construct a successful narrative text.

The small corpus of the students' texts was taken from one of senior high school in Yogyakarta**.** This school was chosen because it is one of the oldest as well as the best national schools in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, it is one of the A's accredited schools in Indonesia and also, it was one of the schools assigned for International standard pilot-project schools (*Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional – RSBI)* throughout the country. In this sense, it implies that this school has passed through the shifting trends of the curriculum and English teaching methods during the development of teaching English as foreign language in Indonesia (TEFLIN) which gives it splendid experiences in the practice of teaching and learning English in the classroom. Moreover, the English teacher has always encouraged the students to compose written texts for each topic of the lesson. The collection of those texts has become such a small corpus of students' written texts available for doing an analysis, especially in tracking the students' language development in written mode.

B.   Identification of the Problems

With regard to the elaboration of background of the problem above, and also through the preliminary classroom observation as well as preliminary brief analysis on the small corpus of the students' texts, the researcher can identify major problems as follow:

1. Even though narrative has been introduced since the curriculum of 2004, and also it has been taught from the junior high school level, the students still find some difficulties in developing their competency in writing narrative text successfully;

2. Despite the fact that our curriculum has adopted the insight of systemic functional model of language, there has been very few studies aiming at tracking the students narrative writing development using systemic functional grammar tools, especially in terms of the possible relation between the choice made in transitivity system and the generic stages development to construct a successful narrative text;

3. The analysis of the students' texts has been limited to the errors identification;

4. Since narrative often requires the writers to draw on various sources of grammar and lexicon within the system of English language, the analysis on the students' narrative writing can, in some degree, reveal the students' development of understanding of the target language system used in certain context;

5. There are few sources available for the students in the classroom to explore English grammar as the resource of meaning making in various social contexts.

6. The students gain not enough opportunity in exploring English grammar as a system of meaning making resource for different social context;

7. As shown in the preliminary analysis of the students' texts, the students' find some difficulties in utilising their grammatical knowledge into an effective writing, especially at the level of clause rank.

C. Delimitation of the Problems

With regard to the problems identified above, this research was delimited to the identification of the students' narrative writing development through an analysis of the patterns of transitivity selection made by the students in constructing generic stages of their texts. In order to do so, the researcher used the tool of analysis provided in SFL framework as developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and his proponents.

D. Formulation of the Problem

This research, therefore, was attempted to address the following problem:

What does the students' narrative writing development look like, in terms of the patterns of transitivity selection they make in constructing the each generic stage of their texts?

E. Objectives of the Research

The main objective of this research was to identify the students' narrative writing development which particularly occurred in written texts of the students of a school in Yogyakarta who learn English as foreign language. In doing so, this research specifically sought to draw conclusion about the development through the analysis of the patterns of transitivity selection made by the students in constructing

the generic stages of their texts. The transitivity patterns here referred to the frequency of the variety of process types selections made as an indication of the successive stages of the text. Furthermore, the delicacy of the transitivity system network which the students have already been able to present in their texts would also be used as indicators of the development.

F.   Significance of the Research

This research was expected to bring about significance as follows:

1.   Theoretical Significance

The application of the SFL theory in language teaching and development has been mainly developed in English-speaking countries, especially in Australia. And yet researches using SFL framework has delivered hardly in finding the nature of language development process made by the students who study English as second or foreign language (Perret, 2000). Therefore, this research was expected to have a theoretical contribution to SFL in the inquiry of describing the process of language development of the students learning English as foreign language, especially in Indonesian context.

2.   Practical Significance

Even though the concept of SFL has been adopted into our English curriculum since 2004, as far as the researcher concerns, there has been very limited understanding about the concept in general and its practical application in the classroom. Therefore, the findings of this research was expected to offer a new

understanding about English grammar teaching in the classroom using the framework offered by SFL which sees grammar as resource for making meaning instead of a set of rules for recognising correct or incorrect sentences. Thus, this research was expected to have contribution in raising the understanding towards this model of language and its implementation in language teaching in Indonesian classroom context.