

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language skills have central roles in learners' intellectual, social, and emotional development and serve as key factors toward success in mastering all subjects. Language skills prepare the learners to accomplish competency which enables them to reflect their own and others' experiences, express ideas and feelings, as well as understand varieties of meaning nuances. Language skills also help the learners know themselves, other people's cultures, participate in the language speaking societies, make responsible decision at personal and social levels, and discover as well as apply the analytical and imaginative abilities existing in themselves.

Traditionally, there are four divisions or areas of language skills and they are often categorized as **productive** and **receptive**. Speaking and writing are the productive skills. Listening along with reading is a receptive skill. The categorizations are made in terms of their directions. In speech or writing, language is generated. In reading and listening language is perceived or conceived, that is, a person is required to receive and understand incoming information (input). In other words, receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. There are generalities about this kind of processing which apply to both reading and listening.

Among the four language skills, writing skill is indisputably a very important language skill senior high school students as well as the leavers need to possess owing to its functional nature for their development, either to further their education to university or to play their roles in the societies having completed their education. Writing is one of the most powerful communication tools that they will use to share thoughts and ideas with others, to help them remember facts and details and even to communicate with themselves. At school, they may have to write to answer test questions, take notes during a lecture, generate ideas for a new project or journal, prepare a science laboratory report, and produce research reports.

Even after they have finished their last school assignment, writing will still be part of their daily business and personal life. At home, they might jot down a "TO DO" list, take a phone message, a quick reminder, send a letter, a short message by a mobile phone or an e-mail or fill out an application or order form. Writing, either simple or complex, is already and will continue to be an important part of daily life (Carrol, Wilson, and Forlini, 2001).

Conforming to the significance of writing skill, the Department of National Education set out to apply a curriculum characterizing on written language proficiency development called Genre-Based Curriculum. As far as its framework is concerned, the most important objective of English teaching and learning in senior high school is to enable the learners to possess communicative written discourse competence at the level of informational through genre-based writing. Philosophically, genre-based writing views that all texts conform to certain conventions and if a student is to be successful in joining a particular English-

language community, he will need to be able to produce texts which fulfill the expectations of its readers as regard grammar, structure, and content. Genre-based writing places grammar centrally since grammar is just as important instrument of communication as content and a text cannot be written coherently and cohesively without attention being paid to how meaning is being expressed through grammar.

Despite the well-established position of grammar in genre-based writing, the teaching of grammar through genre-based writing has been discovered problematic. That is to say since the writing skill of senior high school students as well as that of graduates who were during the course instructed under this approach has proven, with a few exceptions, to be less than satisfactory and grammar-related aspects are noticed a large domain of the shortcomings.

A study was conducted by Linda (2006) on 300 twelve graders of 3 senior high schools in Sibolga and Central Tapanuli writing recount and report texts. This study shows that the most obvious weaknesses of the students lie in the area of grammar, particularly in the aspects of morphology and syntax. Source of the problematic grammatical categories are affixes, adverb, adjectives, plural forms, copula, and subject-verb agreement. This contributes 60% of the total mistakes committed by the students. This inquiry convinces that the attributing factor to this problem is the different grammatical structures existing between Indonesian and English. For example, Indonesian does not have morphological markers for adverb (i.e. -ly), plurality (i.e. -s, es), comparative and superlative forms for adjectives (i. e. -er, -est) and these are some of the constraints the students face in learning the English language. Meanwhile, the different structure in syntax can be observed in relative pronouns, subject-verb agreement, copula and determiners. In the case of

subject-verb agreement, the researcher contends that this is due to the fact that such agreement is not required in Indonesian.

The other study executed by Rosa (2005) on error analysis in writing argumentative essay done by the second year students of English Department of the State University of Padang reveals that the most dominant type of errors committed by the students investigated can be traced back to sentence skills or grammatical structure. It was found that 264 errors or 92% out of 287 are grammatical structure problem-related. Errors in coherence come in the second place with 14 numbers. Occurrence of errors in unity is only 4 numbers or 1.3% among all. The result of the study prevails that the second year students of the English Department of the State University of Padang have good ability in developing and organizing ideas; however, they are very weak in English structure.

This reality is much of a digression to the objective of genre-based writing which aims at enabling students to have communicative written discourse competence. The target is to foster students' ability in using internationally-accepted English. The term 'internationally accepted' here refers to grammatical English with rules or systems familiar with the native speakers. Thus, any texts created by the learners should conform to this norm.

To achieve such a purpose, the theoretical basis underpinning the implementation of grammar teaching in genre-based writing is to be put into account. Muncie (2002:82) ascertains that the focus of grammar instruction in genre-based writing is not on general grammar, but instead on the grammatical peculiarities of the particular type of text being looked at. Furthermore, Hyland

(2004:68) asserts that in genre-based writing, grammar must be treated as more than sets of rules and the teaching of grammar should not take a form of tasks that are disconnected with writing activities or sets as supplementary work to address persistent errors. He argues that the forms students need often remain elusive as they cannot make connection between grammar they study and the meanings these items express in the context of particular genre. Most importantly, genre-based writing is consistent with the theoretical work of Halliday (1994: xvii) who conceptualizes language as a set of systems for creating meanings in social context. It is concerned with the ways we use language as a resource for communication rather than with rules for ordering grammatical forms. Halliday claims that the only approach to the construction of grammar that is likely to be successful will be one that recognizes meaning and use as central features of language and tackles the grammar from this point of view. It follows from this that grammar taught through genre-based writing should be the one which is semantic (concerned with meanings) and functional (concerned with how language is used).

### **1.2 Problems of the Study**

As pointed in the background of this research, the writing competence of Indonesian senior high school students as well as the graduates have yet to be improved to a great extent. Grammar has been identified, as shown by the findings, contributing to the drawback for the most part. This is a deviation from the expectation of the currently applied Genre-Based Curriculum which characterizes in written literacy through explicit teaching of grammar in addition to

communicative purpose and schematic structure. Therefore, the problems of this study are formulated as the following.

1. What aspects of grammar are taught through genre-based writing?
2. How are the aspects of grammar taught through the genre-based writing?
3. Why the aspects of grammar are taught the ways they are through the genre-based writing?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research is aimed at studying a phenomenon – the teaching of grammar through genre-based writing. It specifically attempts to describe and schematize behavior – the procedures of teaching grammatical aspects through recount genre-based writing as well as explain values – reasons of conduct originating in ideals underlying such behavior. The objectives of the study are elaborated as the following.

1. To describe what aspects of grammar are taught through the genre-based writing.
2. To schematize the procedure of teaching the grammatical aspects through the writing course.
3. To explain the reasons why the grammatical aspects are taught the ways they are through the writing course.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The teaching of grammatical aspects through genre-based writing covers various aspects such as the types and number of the genres through which the grammatical aspects are taught, the teachers who teach the grammatical aspects through the genres, and the level of education to which the grammatical aspects are taught through the genres. Therefore, this study is focused on the inquiry of the teaching of grammatical aspects through recount genre-based writing by senior high school English teachers in the first term of grade ten. This genre is chosen since it is one of the genres to be instructed to senior high school students prescribed in the curriculum and based on the findings by Purba (2009), it is one of the most frequently-appearing genres in both senior high school state examinations and university entrance tests.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It is expected that the findings of this study are significant theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research findings are expected to provide a basis for farther researches of different stages for linguistic development. Practically, on the other hand, the research findings are expected to be valuable for government in charge of education, universities preparing teachers to-be and senior high school English teachers in-service in a way that they serve as empirical materials on which pertinent proceedings for quality augmentation in genre-based writing instruction can be based.

