CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Study

People produce text, and text is what listeners and readers engage with and interpret. ‘Text’ refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language. Text can also be characterized as language functioning in context (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Halliday, 2010; in Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Then, Teich (1999: 9) also adds that language is thus considered primarily a social resource with which speakers and hearers can act meaningfully. Language is, in the first instance, a resource for constructing meaning; so text is a process of creating meaning in context.

Writing as one of the four skills that should be mastered by students has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English (Harmer, 2004). Writing is not as simple as constructing and arranging sentences. Martin and White (2005:8) assert that writing is concerned with graphology and has to deal with the organization of letters into sentences, alongside punctuation, layout, and formatting. Additionally, Oshima and Hogue (1999) claim that writing specifically academic writing is not easy. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. For both native speakers and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not a “product”. It means that writing is not only a process of linking words into sentences or paragraphs, but also it is a sequence or steps of ideas, organized thoughts and feeling in the form of words and combined into sentence into form of paragraphs in which every sentence is closely related one another.
Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012:138) claim that writing has received a great degree of attention not only because it plays a significant role in transforming knowledge and learning but also in fostering creativity. Writing also involves many aspects of language such as: vocabulary mastery, words-arrangement, grammar proficiency, and constructing paragraph. The capability of writing as the most super power tool in communication should be owned by students. Everyone can freely convey their feelings, ideas, and thoughts to others. Writing also needs much knowledge. To sum up, writing is the process of transforming ideas, and thoughts, and learning to write is prominent to improve the quality of writing.

There are thirteen genres that should be mastered by English department students. They are spoof, recounts, reports, exposition, news item, anecdote, narrative, procedure, description, commentary, explanation, discussion, and reviews. In order to create a good writing product, students should take a deep attention to generic structure of the text and of course, the lexico-grammatical features of the text containing its specific the characteristics.

Gerot and Wignell (1994) argue that recount text is used to retell events for the purpose of informing and entertaining. The generic structure of recount text is orientation ^ events ^ re-orientation. There are some specific linguistic features (lexico-grammar) of every genre that makes them different each other. Halliday (1994) suggests that an investigation of the lexico-garammatical stratum of language reveals the kinds of internal patterns of clause structures which are highly favored for interpreting experience. And the significant lexicogrammatical features or recount text are focus on specific participant, using material process, using circumstances of time and place, use of past tense, and focus on temporal
sequences. In short, Recount text is useful to amuse and to inform reader about past event.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic theory introduced by M.A.K. Halliday which stresses its study on the language as source of meaning that focuses the study on the discourse analysis. Teich (1999:9) adds that the major theoretical concepts that follow from SFL'S view on language and from the central question governing all linguistic investigation are: language is a behaviour potential; language construes meaning; language is multifunctional; using language is choice in the potential and ultimately actualization of the potential. Moreover, SFL is a multi-perspective model, designed to prove analysts with complementary lenses for interpreting language in use (Martin and White, 2005:7). So, SFL is viewed as the system of meaning and can be used to interpret language in multi-perspective area.

The System of transitivity analyzes what goes on in the text including who’s doing what to whom, where, when, when. Then, experiential function concerns with the clauses that have guises as the way of representing patterns of experience through the process of doing, process of being, process of existing, process of physiological and psychological, indicating perception, relational, activities of saying, commanding, asking, and etc.

In this study, the writer is interested in conducting a research based on the experiential function realized by transitivity system from Halliday’s theory of Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) as the basic in analyzing recount text since recount text should be mastered by English department student. The writer chooses Systemic Functional Linguistics because this theory often appears in
social situation or our daily lives, either spoken or written. Eggins (2004:211) asserts that the linguistic features of a certain text can be investigated by using the transitivity. The significant lexicogrammatical or linguistic features of recount text are focus on specific participant, using material process, using circumstances of time and place, use of past tense, and focus on temporal sequences. For example, here is presented the sample of clauses in recount text written by student of a 4th semester in a university in Medan which has learnt recount text based on the syllabus of teaching writing (see appendix 7).

One day, my family and I went to Berastagi. That was a nice place.

We were very happy because we sometimes couldn’t get the best moment to have quality time. We departed from our home at 5 o’clock and then we arrived there at 7 o’clock. The weather was very cold, and at first, we ate roasted corn bought from the sellers in Penatapan. We enjoyed hot coffee mix and saw a wonderful view from the hut.

From the example, it can be observed and analyzed that there are eleven clauses comprising of some kinds of processes (in italic) represented in the text such as material, mental, relational processes and meteorological process. The variation of participant (in bold) and circumstance (in underline) also appear in the text.

English students are required to master and produce recount text as it is stated in the goal of learning writing recount text in the syllabus. If they fail to write a good recount text, they will not pass the lecture. The example given in advance shows the analysis of recount text explored by its lexicogrammatical
features (types of process, participant types and functions, and circumstantial elements. Recount genre has its own lexicogrammatical features and communicative purpose which are different from other genres, it attracts writer’s attention to analyze that kind of text. This study departs to explore and analyze recount text produced by EFL students in Medan through the theory of experiential function in systemic functional linguistics.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

In line with the background of the study, the problem of the study can be formulated as the followings:

1. What are types of process used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan?
2. What are types and functions of participant used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan?
3. What are types of circumstance used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan?
4. Why are the dominant type of process, circumstance, and participant realized in EFL students’ recount text in Medan?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

In accordance to the problem of the study, the objectives of the study are as the followings:

1. To discover the types of process used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan
2. To discover the types and the functions of participant used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan
3. To discover the types of circumstance used in EFL students’ recount text in Medan
4. To explain the reason for the use of dominant type of process, circumstance and participant in EFL students’ recount text in Medan

1.4. The Scope of the Study

One of the kinds of metafunction based on Halliday’s theory on systemic functional grammar is experiential function (clause as representation) realized by transitivity system in which to describe experience. There are three major aspects discussed in the transitivity system, namely participant, process, and circumstance. Additionally, Gerot and Wignell (1994) state that there are thirteen types of academic genre viz. spoof, recounts, reports, exposition, news item, anecdote, narrative, procedure, description, commentary, explanation, discussion, and reviews. Thus, this study is limited to types of process, circumstance, and participant in EFL students’ recount text in Medan.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be relevant and useful theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings of this study are expected to be useful for the readers to broaden and to enrich their horizon in the theory of transitivity in Indonesian EFL Students’ writing. Then, practically, the findings of this research are expected to give benefit providing some valuable information particularly to another researcher willing to conduct an in-depth study on experiential function and also for teachers to enrich their knowledge on recount text that should be acquired and mastered by students.