CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an in-depth overview of the research, discussing the background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, conceptual framework, hypotheses, and previous studies.

A. Background of the Study

Writing skills are a crucial aspect of English learning and teaching. Based on preliminary interviews, several third semester English Language Education students found it difficult to understand SFG and writing. Even though their writing is just beginning to develop paragraph writing, they think it is difficult to develop their ideas cohesively. In addition, Xin (2007) argue that writing is the most challenging skill to achieve when learning a language. In order to write effectively, according to Muamaroh, Mukti, and Haryanti (2020), students need to master linguistic and attitude aspects. One of the linguistic aspects is the study of grammar. Although there are higher standards for writing performance, grammar instruction in schools frequently occurs outside of its intended context (Nunan, 2003). Students practice isolated skills by working on single sentences or texts. Hampton (1989) states that writing skills enable authors to create meaningful words and emotionally interact with messages. Seeing the problems above, functional grammar is needed for improving writing. Feng (2013) argues that EFL students must know how language functions in literate texts to be familiar with them. Therefore, this study aims to examine the correlation between students' mastery of systemic functional grammar and their writing skills.

Additionally, functional grammar according to Schleppegrell (2004), helps EFL students learn English for communicative purposes and recognize linguistic aspects. Halliday (2004) defines functional grammar as constructing language units and interpreting texts, systems, and elements of linguistic structures. Functional grammar, based on Aguirre-Muñoz, Chang, and Sanders (2015), takes a broad view of the text and genre to assist writers in determining the appropriate word choices for the genre and context. From this perspective, functional grammar efficiently

describes social purpose in writing. Meanwhile, Fries (1997) mentions that teachers who know functional grammar might assist students in being more sensitive to their writing.

Previously, Fauziah and Ramlan (2020) conducted the research by applying functional grammar to evaluate the writing abilities of first-grade high school students in Bandung, Indonesia. This study shows the importance of systemic functional grammar for teachers and students in order to comprehend, write suitable texts, and even develop critical thinking. Then, the research was conducted in the fourth grade of an elementary school in West Texas by Aguirre-Muñoz et al. (2015). This study investigated functional grammar instruction's impact on writing quality. The result proved that students' descriptive writing had increased significantly over time. This development is related to the mastery of more significant functional grammatical structures in the teaching of English.

Last but not least, a study was conducted by Fearn and Farnan (2007) about the correlation between using functional grammar to teach writing. The sample for this research is class X students who attend urban high schools. The findings showed that students using functional grammar outperformed those using identification-definition-description (IDD) in the comprehensive writing examination. If grammar is applied correctly and for writing purposes, a significant relationship exists between grammar function and writing performance. All studies reference researchers who believe functional grammar can impact writing. Overall, there is a relationship between functional grammar and writing skills. Yet compared to the other three studies, this one differs from the others in a number of ways, including the level of participants and the methodology and techniques employed. The researcher also attempts to investigate how strong the relationship is between systemic functional grammar and students' writing abilities, particularly in English Language Education.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to correlate systemic functional grammar with writing skills in English major undergraduate students. This research is titled "Systemic Functional Grammar Mastery and Paragraph

Writings: A Correlation Study of the Students of the English Education Department at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University".

B. Research Questions

This study uses quantitative methods and correlational design. It formulates three main research questions based on the background of the problems described previously. The following are the questions:

1. What are the students' systemic functional grammar mastery?
2. What are the students' paragraph writing?
3. How significant is the correlation between students' systemic functional grammar mastery and their paragraph writing?

This research uses student final exam score data in the Introduction to Systemic Functional Grammar course to answer the first research question. Meanwhile, to answer the second research question, this research uses student final exam score data on the Paragraph Writing course. Both score data were taken from lecturers who taught each of the two courses. Finally, to answer the last research question, this study correlates between students' systemic functional grammar mastery and their paragraph writing employing Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This technique gives a number to represent the magnitude of the linear relationship between variables X and Y (Pearson, 1948). The present study uses systemic functional grammar as variable X and paragraph writing as variable Y.

C. Research Purposes

In light of the research's historical background, this study has several aims. The first aim of this study is to determine how well students understand systemic functional grammar. The second aim is to evaluate students' paragraph writing. It is possible to determine if they have high, medium, or low degrees of mastery or competence from these two aims. Finally, this study's correlational analysis examines how students' levels of systemic functional grammar mastery and their paragraph writing are connected to one another. This study determines whether there is a significant correlation between the two variables. If so, students' systemic functional grammar mastery can be used to help them write more effectively.

D. Research Significances

This study offers two important implications, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this correlation research can help create a deep understanding of the correlation between systemic functional mastery and paragraph writing. This research can also add reference sources to identify mastery of systemic functional grammar mastery and students' paragraph writing.

Thus, this research provides knowledge to English educators that systemic functional mastery and paragraph writing are interrelated. So that, in terms of practice, they can implement it in their teaching and learning process, especially in systemic functional grammar mastery and paragraph writing courses. In addition, this research is also expected to help further research and general knowledge.

E. Theoretical Framework

This research aims to investigate and analyze the correlation between students' systemic functional grammar mastery and their paragraph writing. The researcher describes the theoretical framework in the following way:

Figure 1.1 Research Schema
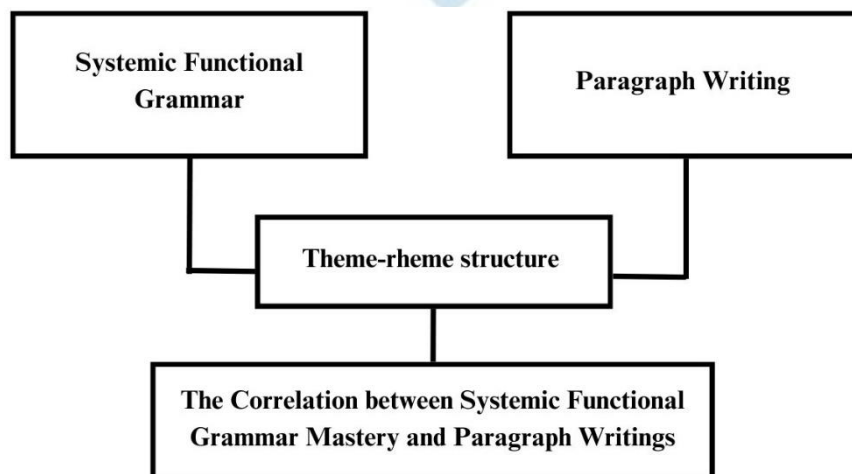
Systemic Grammar was developed by Michael Halliday in 1985, referring to a new approach to examining grammar that departs from traditional perspectives. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004: 31) define functional grammar as a type of "semantic" grammar where language is used to develop meanings, but grammar is still the main focus.

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Moreover, functional grammar is different from traditional grammar. Schleppegrell (2004) states that functional grammar differs from traditional grammar in that it views language as a resource for meaning rather than a set of rules. The focus on identifying the roles of words and word groups within sentences without illustrating how they contribute to the overall meaning of a text distinguishes functional grammar from traditional grammar in another way. Functional grammar, on the other hand, is concerned with how the various bits of language in a text work together as part of a more extensive system in order to construct meaning.

There are also more differences according to Feng (2013), such as the terminology they employ and the fields they cover. Functional grammar differs fundamentally from traditional grammar in that the former is meaning-bound and descriptive, while the latter is form-based and prescriptive. The objectives and applications of language learning and instruction differ significantly because of this difference.

There is a relationship between systemic functional grammar and writing skills. Hanh (2021) explains that teaching English writing requires more than just sentences and grammar, as evidenced by Halliday's textual metafunctions of language and the grammatical characteristics of the theme-rheme selected for use in writing to illustrate how language conveys its meaning. Harmer (2004) defines writing as a way to develop words and express thoughts, emotions, and assumptions. It enables writers to interact with texts and express their opinions. Nunan (2003) also argues that writing is the mental process of conceptualizing, expressing, and organizing thoughts into statements and paragraphs. Hidayati (2018) suggests that writing in EFL contexts produces meaningful texts in English as a foreign language. From the definition above, writing produces language from our thoughts, allowing us to share ideas, feelings, and thoughts or communicate in words or paragraph text.

The grammatical features of the theme-rheme components are selected for use in writing. Halliday (1985) states that the theme-rheme structure is the fundamental type of organization, with a clause's textual function being to produce a message.

A theme and rhyme are created due to connecting this structure to the text's information flow. This correlates to the Systemic Functional Grammar with theme and rhyme as patterns in SFL.

In addition, for further details, functional grammar takes a broad view of the text and genre to assist writers in determining the appropriate word choices for the genre and context (Aguirre-Muñoz, et al. 2015). It can be concluded that systemic functional grammar mastery is related to writing skills, namely the structure of the theme-rheme as characteristics or patterns of both.

F. Hypothesis

This correlation research involves two variables, where systemic functional grammar is variable X and paragraph writing is variable Y. The purpose of this research is to determine whether both of these variables are significantly correlated. Before determining the results, researchers make hypotheses or make predictions about the results of the relationship between the two variables. There are two types of hypotheses: the null hypothesis (Ho), which is a population prediction, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha), which proposes a difference or relationship between them, either positive or negative (Creswell, 2012). In light of this, the following is how this study formulates this hypothesis:

● Null hypothesis (Ho): There is no correlation between students' systemic functional grammar mastery (X) and their paragraph writing (Y).
● Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There is a correlation between students' systemic functional grammar mastery (X) and their paragraph writing (Y).

If the alternative hypothesis in this study is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected, it indicates that students' systemic functional grammar mastery and paragraph writing are significantly correlated. Conversely, if the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected, the result is that there is no substantial correlation between students' mastery of systemic functional grammar and their paragraph writing.

G. Previous Studies

Several studies on various subjects have been carried out. Firstly, Angelia (2013) compared and analyzed the essay writing aspects of Singaporean and PRC students at the university level when taking a freshman composition course. The essays were analyzed using the framework of SFG including analysis of nominalization, theme, and use of modals (or their inappropriate usage). There were 30 Singaporean and 30 PRC students who participated in this study. Calculations were conducted in the form of descriptive statistics to gain insight and provide a more in-depth comprehension of the degree of similarities and differences between the two sets of writing. The outcome showed there were several significant similarities and contrasts in the writing of Singaporean and Chinese students, which may be correlated to their sociolinguistic and educational backgrounds. The results pedagogical implications were offered in order to gain insight around the challenges of teaching different students with various levels of linguistic abilities.

Secondly, Aguirre-Muñoz et al. (2015), examined the impact of the functional grammar approach on students' writing skills in fourth grade classrooms over the course of the fall semester to develop students' descriptive writing. This research analyzed the data using quantitative and qualitative methods. The samples were 24 students in the fourth grade of the elementary school in West Texas with a range of abilities of low, medium, and high. Students were given prompts each week relative to the genre, in most cases, descriptive writing. This study showed that students' descriptive writing had significantly improved over time. This development is connected to mastery of the more significant grammatical structures that are the focus of instruction. Linguistic support is essential for successful outcome-based reform efforts, even if such reforms are aimed at improving educational opportunities.

Thirdly, Fearn and Farnan (2007) conducted a controlled experimental study on the relationship between using functional grammar to teach writing. The sample for his research is class X students who were divided into control and treatment groups for teaching. In the control class, the teacher taught traditional grammar with an emphasis on identification-definition-description (IDD). Meanwhile, in the

treatment group, the teacher taught functional grammar. Both were carried out for five weeks, twice a week. The pre- and post-writing samples were scored both analytically and with a general impression rubric using a g-score. On the grammatical and mechanical accuracy assessments, the results for functional grammar students were essentially the same as those for IDD students. The comprehensive writing examination, however, showed that they performed significantly better than IDD students. If functional grammar used for writing, there was a positive correlation between grammar instruction and writing performance. The SFG approach appears to improve writing skills without impairing students' understanding with traditional grammar.

Next, Hanh (2021) determined the effectiveness of a Systemic Functional Linguistic method in improving writing skills for EFL students at a university in Hanoi, Vietnam. This research included 30 English major students from a foreign language university in Vietnam. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in this research, with a focus on using Systemic Functional Linguistic approaches, specifically Theme-Rheme patterns, to raise students' awareness of the beneficial effects of Theme-Rheme patterns in producing logical text organization and then improving their writing skills. The data was gathered through an examination of the students' narrative writing, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The results of this research showed that using this method could improve students' writing skills, and a large percentage of research participants liked this approach since it kept them focused during English writing courses.

Last but not least, Fauziah and Ramlan (2020) used Systemic Functional Grammar to examine a review text written by a high school student in Bandung, Indonesia. This study employed a descriptive method to provide an in-depth analysis of the Theme System, Transitivity System, Modality, and Grammatical Metaphors applying Systemic Functional Grammar. The results proved that the author of the review text was successful in assembling a text that complies with the objectives, general structure, and linguistic features of the review text in general. This study also showed how important of SFG is for teachers and learners in order to comprehend, produce appropriate texts, and even increase critical thinking.

In the fifth previous study, it examined the relationship between mastery of systemic functional grammar and paragraph writing in the third semester students at an Islamic university in Indonesia with a total of 60 participants. Similar to research conducted by Aguirre-Muñoz et al. (2015), participants are categorized based on low, medium, and high scores taken from systemic functional grammar and paragraph writing courses. In contrast to the previous fifth study, the method used in this research is a quantitative method with a correlation design. Furthermore, the fifth study gathered data through doing field research. Meanwhile, this study obtained the data by analyzing the data scores from the courses of the two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient and SPSS 29 are then used to calculate the data produced in this correlation research.