CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The concept of lexical density was defined by Halliday (1989) as the ratio of lexical items to the number of clauses in a text. Lexical items are words that carries lexical properties, which includes nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Clause, meanwhile, is where the meaning of different kinds are mapped into an integrated grammatical structure (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 10). The lexical density of written language is higher than spoken language, as written text increase in complexity by being lexically dense.

The term written text does not imply an invariant type of English that is associated with all forms of written discourse (Halliday M. , 1989). Informal and academic texts, for example, would have different choice in structuring its clauses, resulting in different levels of lexical density (Schleppegrell, 2004). Snow (2010) argued that academic writing should be concise and packed with information. In a lexically dense text, a writer could present scientific information efficiently and concisely.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in their final year are expected to produce coherent and contributive texts to their field (Djiwandono, 2016). In Indonesia, the scientific text final year students will produce is called skripsi, and is a requirement to finish their undergraduate study. Lately, there has been a push for skripsi to be published to journals, so it imperative for universities to ensure their undergraduate's work is on par with internationally published articles.

TESOL Quarterly has been one of the most cited publication, and the quality of the works published under their name is assured. Quarterly is in the position of 16th of 1103 at the h-index (publication's productivity and citation impact); 33rd of 968 at the CiteScore (publication's citation frequency); 17th at the SJR

(publication's scientific influence), and SNIP (publication's contextual citation impact). To learn how with internationally published article work is written, it is then worthwhile to examine TESOL Quarterly journals to see the lexical density of their work.

Lexical density has currently been popular topic in the studies of academic writing (Hanafiah & Yusuf, 2016; Mayangsari, Fitriati, and Sutopo, 2021). One study looks into the lexical density and of linguistic thesis abstracts (Hanafiah & Yusuf, 2016). They found the average lexical density score of the thesis abstracts to be 57%, and not one thesis abstract scores below 44%, conforming to Ure (1971)'s statement that written text have over 40% lexical density. Lexical density is also measured by Mayangsari, Fitriati, and Sutopo (2021) when they sought to discover the lexical complexity and readability of the introduction section of selected journals from English Education Journal (EEJ), Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture (EduLite), and Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL). Lexical density is revealed by measuring lexical density and lexical variation, and from that it is found that the journals average lexical density score to be 57,6%, indicating a higher number of content words than function words.

As seen from the research results mentioned above, lexical density is expressed in percentage. The results, which are mostly quantitative, do not provide enough description of how lexical density works in English RAs to achieve efficiency and conciseness of academic writing suggested by Schleppergell (2004). This inquiry may be approached through Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar which is concerned with the study of grammar as a tool for meaning making at the clause level as representation tool. In this function, the clause is a representation of a process, which consist of three elements: (i) the process, represented by the verbal group, (ii) the participants represented by the nominal groups, (iii) the circumstance represented by the prepositional phrase and adverbial groups.

According to Halliday (1989, p. 72), the structure of the modern world and the structure of language forged written language into a lexically dense language

with a strong tendency to have its lexical items in its nominal groups. Therefore, this study is interested in the nominal group are grammatically structured in the transitivity system. The nominal group is the primary resource used by the grammar for packing in lexical items at high density (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 655).

The nominal groups of various text types have been explored in previous researches. Pipit (2013) investigated the nominal groups found in Steve Job's Commencement speech and found 25 different structures of nominal group with the most frequent being deictic + thing. Another research looked into the nominal groups in a speech delivered by Maudy Ayunda in the Post 2015 Regional Speech (Sofa & Cahyono, 2015). The researchers found 15 nominal group structures, with the most reoccurring being deictic + thing + qualifier. In the context of academic writing, Eko (2012) looked into the nominal groups of the headline news in Jakarta Post and the abstract texts in Asian EFL Journal. It is found that the Jakarta post has 25 different nominal group structure, while the journal has 15. However, the journal leads in the frequency of structure that has a classifier or qualifier, such as deictic + thing + qualifier and deictic + classifier + thing + qualifier. Another research looked into the nominal group and lexical density of the introduction section of TEFLIN journal (Khanifah, 2013). The researcher found that the most frequent nominal group structure is deictic + thing + qualifier, and the average nominal group of the journal is 7.8. Rini (2012) conducted a similar research on the introduction section of skripsi. 31 different nominal group structure was found, but the most frequent was not specified. In addition, the introduction section of skripsi was found to have an average lexical density score of 4,63.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to see how lexically dense a text written by experienced writers and researchers is compared to ones written by novice, in this case undergraduates. The study also investigated the transitivity structure of the nominal groups of the texts to see how said lexically dense text is written. the result will hopefully be useful for higher education study program in developing curriculum on academic discourse. TESOL Quarterly published works from

experienced academic writers who have honed their craft in writing efficient and concise—lexically dense—scientific report. On the other hand, SK is written by novice writer who has a comparatively fewer experience in writing scientific report. If SK were to be published online, then the quality of the writing must be improved to be on par with internationally published articles

Texts that will be analysed in this research are the discussion section of three research articless published in TESOL Quarterly and three skripsis of Universitas Negeri Jakarta's English Education Study Program, all selected at random. The quality of each text will not be inferred by their lexical density score. In lieu of comparing the quality of one text with another, the research instead looks into their lexical density and the transitivity on the nominal group of each individual text.

1.3 Research Question

The research questions are, therefore, as follow:

1. What are the lexical density levels of the Discussion section of SK and RAs?

2. How does the transitivity structure of the nominal groups of the Discussion section of SK differ from that of the RAs?

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study investigated the lexical density and nominal group structure of the discussion section of skripsis and research articles. Due to the limitations the researcher had, only three articles and skripsis are investigated.