CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose, the scope and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the four skills in English that has to be mastered by English language learners. It deals with presenting ideas and thoughts in written forms (Hughes, 1996). However, not all ideas and thoughts can be put randomly in a writing or essay because it has to be clear. A clear writing or essay is the result of a clear thinking. The elements in writing have to be accurately arranged and constructed so that it can be understood by the readers. Besides, there are aspects of writing, such as grammar, mechanics, organization, and contents that need to be considered as well. Because of that complexity, writing should be learnt through a gradual and continual process.

In universities and colleges, students are faced to write academic essays. Swales and Feak (2004:7) describe that "an academic writing is a product of many considerations; audience, purpose, organization, style, flow and presentation". Writers, specifically students, need to establish those six considerations in writing. Thus, mastering a proper writing skill is required to produce academic writing. An academic writing or essay involves critical review and considerations of an issue, response to an argument, alternatives and conclusions of an issue (Belmont and

Sharkey, 2011). It makes writing an academic essay different from writing articles for magazines, novels, and newspapers as it has several considerations. To write an academic essay, certain writing characteristics should be included. The main characteristic of an academic writing or essay is its clarity, precision, conciseness, and coherence (Weisman, 1980; Williams, 1990).

Clarity, precision, conciseness, and coherence in writing are then different from those in speaking since written language is also different from spoken language. Writing establishes its clarity, precision, conciseness, and coherence through selecting words, constructing phrases, clauses, and sentences in order to express the writers' intentions as well as to make the readers understand. Precise writing occurs when the issues communicated correspond to the written expressions used in writing (Weisman, 1980). Thus, writers should avoid words, phrases, and sentences that contribute to the unclear meaning as well as redundancy and wordiness. On the other hand, the precision to convey meaning in speaking is determined by involving gestures, intonation, inflection, volume, pitch, pauses, movement, and visual cues (Hughes, 1996). That is why there are two types of language; written and spoken language. They are then different in term of linguistics features as the result of situation or context and audience differences.

There are several different features brought by written and spoken language. Since academic writing is intended to inform certain subjects to the readers or to argue writers' opinions, the words, phrases, and sentences have to be dense in order to establish the densely packed information. To be densely packed, more content

words are used rather than function words. Content words mostly appearing in academic writing are nouns and verbs. Unlike speaking that describes more actions using verbs, writing describes more products or objects (Halliday, 1987).

Biber and Conrad (2009) mention that one of the obvious ways to differ written from spoken language is nominal features, including its noun phrases – nouns, premodifiers of nouns, and post-modifiers of nouns. The high occurrences of nouns tend to increase the frequency of nominalization – the process of turning words that do not belong to noun class, to be nouns. This feature deals with grammatical metaphor which only written language maintains this type of language (Halliday, 1987).Therefore, nouns appear more rather than verbs.

Nominalization can contribute to the clarity, precision, conciseness, and coherence in writing. It is a language strategy that tends to establish effective sentence structure as it can be used to prevent writing from redundancy (Feng, 2012). Besides, it can be one factor contributing to the formality style in academic writing. Tian (2013) in a study about distinguishing spoken English from written English discovered that nominalizations were more utilized in writing instead of speaking. This was supported by the indication of 20 or more nominalizations in average of each text he analyzed. In addition, nominalized passages can help readers, especially non-native speakers, to understand and recall important idea units in texts (Spyridakis and Isakson, 1998). Nominalization is increasing in written language. This idea is supported by Biber and Gray (2011) discovering

that the use of nouns structure has been increased over time in many written registers especially academic writing.

Nominalization can support clarity, precision, conciseness, and coherence in writing if it is used and constructed accurately. Writing English academic essays containing the useful nominalization is challenging. Consequently, certain problems may occur in their writing related to the ways nominalizations are constructed. Heeler (2000) argues that it is just a type of redundancy. It also increases more abstract nouns in writing and abstract nouns make a writing difficult to read. Consequently, when students are not able to apply useful nominalizations, their writing turn to be wordy, not concise as well as hard to read and understand (Williams, 1990).

Feng (2012), in a study about developing nominalization awareness in Chinese learners of English, concluded that students still faced difficulties in utilizing nominalization. There were four problems of students' using nominalization in sentences; problems in getting the right nominal morphology, in marking whether a nominalization should be a subject or an object, in prepositions following a nominalization, and in identifying when a nominalization should be applied. Students were not able to use nominalized structures properly as well as to apply it in writing.

ELESP UNJ students tend not to use nominalization as from four students' writing, there are only 9 or 10 nominalization. They seem to use pronouns to refer to previous information. Whereas, pronouns sometimes can lead to ambiguity

such as pronoun *it* in *It can decrease the use of private cars* that follow sentence *Government decide to form a new transportation mode.* Pronoun *It* can refer to *government*, *a new transportation mode, or the process of government deciding.* If the writer intends to point out the process of government deciding, nominalization can be used to make the sentence clear. By looking at the fact that nominalization is still few and difficult to be applied whereas academic writing should utilize useful nominalization, this study is conducted to discover the use of nominalization in ELESP of ED UNJ students' academic writing.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background above, the research question that can be formulated is:

How is nominalization used in ELESP UNJ Students' Academic Writing?

 To help the writer in answering the question, below are two sub questions which are proposed:

1. What types of nominalization used in ELESP UNJ students' academic writing?
2. What is the most dominant category of nominalization occurred in ELESP UNJ students' writing?

1.3 Purpose of the study

Based on the research question above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the types of nominalization. In addition, this study aims to identify the most

dominant category of how nominalization is usefully constructed ELESP UNJ students' academic writing.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study focuses on types of nominalizations. In addition, the most dominant category of how nominalization is constructed ELESP UNJ students' academic writing is also identified. The main data are students' academic writing from an academic writing class year 2012.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be significant for both ELESP students and lecturers. It can give information about nominalization in ELESP students' academic writing. When students know how accurate they use nominalization, they can then learn to utilize useful nominalization in their writings. It is also expected that this study can help ED lecturers to create appropriate learning, including its writing materials, techniques in teaching writing in class, in order to increase students' writing skills to increase students' writing quality.