



# The Use of Cohesive Devices to Achieve Coherence in The Background Section of The Students' Formal Writing

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### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received 15 September 2018

Accepted 26

November 2018

Published 15 March 2019

#### Keywords:

Discourse, cohesive devices, coherence, background section, final project

### Abstract

A good writing is one that is cohesive and coherence. Cohesive and coherence are essential textual components to create organized and comprehensiveness of the texts. Coherence refers to the quality of being meaningful or we can say that coherence is when a text hangs together. The research has been intended to find cohesion and coherence devices in the background sections of the students' formal writing. The sources were 10 background sections of the students' final projects from undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. The qualitative analysis was performed to explore the results. The results of the analysis showed that the background sections of the students' formal writing contain all kinds of cohesion and coherence devices. The background sections of the students' final project contain grammatical cohesion (reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction) and lexical cohesion (reiteration and collocation). Coherence devices (theme-rhyme and micro level) are also contained in the data. Through this article the writers want to help students to have a better understanding of making background sections in their final projects.

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**p-ISSN 2087-0108**

**e-ISSN 2502-4566**

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is recorded thought that can be edited and revised; therefore, it is more complex. To be able to write a text, the students must be able to master some elements of rhetorical structures of the text, such as mastering the social function, language features and schematic structures of the texts. In addition to that, the students must also be able to master some competencies such as organization, logical development of ideas, grammar, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, style and quality of expression. Murray (2009) says that writing as a process which entails rehearsing, drafting and revising. This process involves the exploration of thought, the composition of a written draft, revision, and lastly, the final draft. For second language learners, especially in college, writing is undoubtedly important. Students are required to analyze, compare and inform through writing; nevertheless, lack of practice, especially structured writing, makes them lack of experience to convey their ideas into a cohesive writing. Moreover, when they reach the end of their study, they should write a final project as part of a requirement to graduate. When learners are unable to create a well-constructed and understandable composition, they will be able to create a good final project.

There are many things to take into account in writing. Some of them are cohesion and coherence. Halliday and Hassan (1976: 28-30) emphasize the importance of cohesion as well as coherence discourse in order to achieve well construct and understandable writing. Final project is an academic writing, and hence, it inevitably needs appropriate cohesion and coherence in order to be accepted as academic writing. Students are expected to be able to write a long paper which is mainly consisted of five chapters on a certain topic. The paper should be effective in terms of quantity and quality. Students are expected to be able to demonstrate their ability to express their ideas clearly and analyze their research findings. Here, the writers finds the gap is cohesive devices used in some selected background of study from

undergraduate students. In cohesion there are five cohesive devices, namely conjunction, references, substitution, ellipsis and lexical conjunction. Cohesive devices are often not considered. In additional, the essential thing is in creating the background of study majority use of language is not in accordance with the context of the discussion, when doing grammar check from some of the students' final project, the writers found out that many students misplaced the conjunction from their final project which then distracted her attention to understand their writing ideas. An easy example is when they use "on the other hand" to signals additional information.

Based on explanation above, the writers think it was really important to conduct the study about these product (background sections) because these product reflect the undergraduate students' ability in writing. This previous study was triggered by some studies earlier such as done by Rukmini (2014) that conducted a study about the quality of clause complexes in article abstracts written by graduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Therefore, the writers want the further investigation on undergraduate students' abilities in writing, especially writing a background of study by undergraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang by examining the cohesion and coherence. Against this backdrop, the writers analyze cohesion and coherence in background of study from undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. This study was aimed to investigate the use of cohesive devices in student final projects available in background sections from undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. There were three reasons why the writers conduct this study. First was the writers has interested in these phenomena and wants to know the quality of students' writing in term of using cohesive devices to integrate sentences in their background sections. Second reasons were to give contribution in cohesive devices analysis. For the future researcher can use this study as their reference. It was also important for the teacher to develop their skill in teaching English.

Whether, there are several study about the use of cohesive devices but in this study there is a difference. In this study, the writers not only analyze the use of cohesive devices but also want to see the achievement of coherence in it.

## METHOD

In order to answer the research questions, the writers used descriptive qualitative design. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, it means that the researcher makes an interpretation and descriptions of the data he or she analyze. Creswell (2003) stated that qualitative approach in one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives ( the multiple of individual experiences meaning socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (political, issue-oriented, collaborative or change-oriented ) or both. This design would describe intensive and specific how the use of cohesive devices in students' background sections. This study is using descriptive analysis approach because the result of this research in descriptive data and written words. The writers took 10 backgrounds from 10 final projects which published since the year 2016 to 2017.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Reference

Based on the findings, it can be identified that there are 3 kinds of reference, personal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference. The use of reference was aimed to give explicitness towards the item that the speakers talked about. It is in line with Halliday and Hasan (1976:31) that the use of reference is to signal retrieval. Thus, the audience are not misled in understanding the speech. The results showed that demonstrative reference has the highest percentage with the total of 237 (60%) and followed by personal reference with the total of 119 (30%) and the last was comparative reference with the total of 39

(10%). It means that most of the text contained of the appointment of orally where speakers identify the reference by means of put him in scale distance. It is essentially a form of verbal pointing. Second processes with highest number was personal reference 30%. They can be classified that personal reference expressed by personal pronouns and serves to indicate individual or subject. Comparative reference found in this text was 10%. It was the lowest percentage. Comparative reference expressed by adjectives and adverbs that serves to compare elements in terms of identity or in common.

#### Substitution

Based on the findings, it can be identified that there are 3 kinds of substitutions. They are nominal substitution, verbal substitution and clausal substitution. The results showed that verbal substitution has the highest percentage with the total of 65 (53%) and followed by clausal substitution with the total of 35 (29%) and the last was nominal substitution with the total of 22 (18%). It means that most of the text contained of the replacement of lingual unit that categorized verbal with other part lingual that have same category. Second processes with highest number was clausal substitution 29%. They can be classified that clausal substitution expressed the replacement of lingual unit that categorized clausal or sentence with other part lingual. . Nominal substitution found in this text was 18%. It was the lowest percentage. Nominal substitution is a replacement of lingual unit that categorized nominal with other part lingual that have same category. It is usually expressed by substitute one/ones (singular/plural) and same.

#### Ellipsis

Based on the findings, it can be identified that there are 3 kinds of ellipsis. They are nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis and clausal ellipsis. The result showed that nominal ellipsis has the highest percentage with the total of 89 (51%) and followed by formal ellipsis with the total of 83 (48%) and the last was clausal ellipsis with the total of 2 (1%). It means that most of the text showed by numerals or other

quantifying words which formed of three categories: ordinal (first, next, last, third, etc), cardinal (one, two, three, four, five) and indefinite quantifier (many, much, more, few, several, etc). It is essentially a form of verbal pointing. Second processes with highest number was verbal ellipsis 48%. They can be classified that verbal ellipsis means the omitting lexical word of the verbal group. Clausal ellipsis found in this text was 1%. It was the lowest percentage. Clausal ellipsis expressed by various speech functions, such as statement, question, response, and so on, has modal element and propositional element as the parts of clausal ellipsis.

### Conjunctions

Based on the findings, it can be identified that there are 4 kinds of conjunction. They are additive conjunction, adversative conjunction, clausal conjunction and temporal conjunction. The conjunctions used in the text present the connection between an ideas to another whether the idea is a new information, a supporting idea, an exemplification, and the like. The results showed that additive conjunction has the highest percentages with the total of 138 (64%) and followed by clausal conjunction with the total of 37 (17%) and the third one was adversative conjunction 27 (13%) and the last was temporal conjunction with the total of 12 (6%). It means that most of the text contained of the additional information without changing information in the previous clause or phrase. Second processes with highest number was clausal conjunction 17%. They can be classified that clausal conjunction was marks the relationship of reason, result and purpose. Adversative conjunction found in this text was 13%. It was the third one, adversative conjunction is marked in the text by the coordinating conjunction. The lowest percentage was temporal conjunction. Temporal conjunction expressed the time sequence relationship which exist between sentences.

### Reiteration

Reiteration covers repetition, synonymy, superordinate, and general words. Based on the findings above, the speeches used repetition

more than the other types of reiteration. It implicated that the speakers attempted to recall the items they were talking about to the audience. The results showed that general word has the highest percentage with the total of 222 (76%) and followed by repetition with the total of 61 (21%) and the third was synonym with the total of 8 (3%). The last was subordinate with the total of 0 (0%). It means that most of the text contained general words, these can be general nouns, as thing, stuff, place, person, women and man. Second processes with highest number was repetition 21%. They can be classified that the repetition of words or word phrases occurred within the text. The third one was synonym 3%. There were several repeating word by using another word that has the same meaning or almost the same. Subordinate found in this text was 0%. It was the lowest percentages. All the sentences didn't use subordinate.

### Collocation

The results showed that collocation that used in text 7 has the highest percentage with the total of 16 (22%) and followed by text 3 with the total of 14 (20%) the third one was text 4 with the total of 12 (17%) the fourth was text 6 with the total of (13%), the fifth one and the sixth one has same percentage they were text 2 and 5 with the total of 6 (8%) then followed by text 1 with the total of 5 (7%). Then the next was text 10 with the total of 3 (4%). The ninth one was text 9 with the total of 1 (1%). The last was text 8 with the total of 0 (0%). Collocation deals with the relationship between words on basis of the fact that these often occur in the same surrounding. Collocation is regular combination words in which to fulfill the meaning, this words must occur together such as *fast food* of *quick food* and *powerful engine* instead of *strong engine*.

### Achievement of Coherence

Coherence analysis involved the analysis of thematic progression along with its logical relations within the text. In term of thematic pattern, as Eggins (2004) argues there are three main patterns of thematic development can be observed namely Theme rhyme analysis and

zigzag pattern According to the analysis of text 1, it was only found Theme reiteration and zigzag pattern fold within the text. It can be seen as an example of zigzag pattern below. Example:

Learning —————> a second language is not an easy matter to discuss

Nowadays, —————> most people are required to be able to master English language, both for communication and for other matters.

In formal case, —————> English is used for business communication and public relation

Moreover, —————> English language has become a subject in Indonesian schools, whether in Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School and even Vocational School.

Based on the findings, it can be identified that there are 4 kinds of Micro level. They are additive, adversative, clausal and temporal. The results showed that additive has the highest percentage with the total of 149 (48%) and followed by clausal with the total of 101 (32%) and the third one was temporal with the total of 47 (15%) last was adversative with the total of 15 (5%). It means that the most of the text contain additive relation, it showed the relation is the next sentence gives detail about or specifies the previous sentence. Then followed by clausal relation, it means that the movement of the relation in this text is from general to specific. After that was temporal, it means that the relation in this text is the second sentence provides a reason for the situation or request mentioned in the first sentence. Then last relation is adversative it showed that the relation implies the chronological order of events. It is assumed that the first sentence happened before the second. The second sentence claims the problem solving toward the problem stated in the first sentence.

### Discussion

There are three researchers who did similar research with the writers, they were also analyzed about cohesive devices and coherence. But there are several differences with the present research. Two previous researchers only analyze

about cohesive devices in part of final projects (abstract) and one researcher was analyse about the wholeness of thesis but there is differences in using theory. She was use coherence theory from Oshima and Hogue (1991) and in this study the writers was analyzed the use of cohesive devices in students' backgrounds sections and also want to achieve coherence by using micro level and theme rhyme analysis. The writers use theory from Halliday and Hassan (1976). Then, the results of this study was divided into seven sections. The first section was a discussion of the findings of references in students' background section. Second section was a discussion of the findings of substitution. The third section was discussion of the findings of ellipsis, then the fourth section was discussion of the findings of conjunction. The fifth section was discussion of the findings of reiteration. Next, the sixth section was discussion of the findings of collocation and the last section was discussion of the achievement of coherence in students' background section.

The previous researchers who analyse about part of final projects or thesis are, Luthfiyah, Alek and Fahriany from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta. The study is a discourse analysis which uses a qualitative research design to investigate cohesion in thesis abstracts. The data of this study are written data about cohesive devices in the abstracts. The data sources are the students' thesis abstracts of Department of English Education in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta from the period of 2014. Then, other similar research comes from Cut Irna Liyana, she was analyzed about cohesion and coherence in English education students' thesis. The aim of this study is to describe the cohesion and coherence as wholeness aspect of discourse in English education students' thesis. This study is a qualitative research. The data sources in this study are the thesis of three students that were obtained by purposive sampling. Furthermore, analysis of the data was done by identifying and classifying the data that related to cohesion, based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976), and related to coherence, based on the

theory of Oshima and Hogue (1991). From analysis, it was found four things related to cohesion and coherence. First, the use of grammatical cohesion devices in thesis, which consists of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction; and the use of lexical cohesion devices, which consists of reiteration and collocation, was used in thesis. Second, the violence of cohesion device was found in grammatical devices, such as reference and conjunctions. Third, the use of coherence devices, which consists of key nouns repetition, use of pronouns, transition signal, and logical order of chronology was found in students' thesis. Fourth, the cause of the error coherence of thesis consists of keyword repetition errors, inconsistent pronouns, inappropriate transition signal, grammatical errors, and inappropriate punctuation.

After that, the last similar one is Farikah from Tidar University. She was analysed about cohesion analysis of student's thesis abstract of post graduate program of State University of Semarang. From analysis, the cohesive devices they used are references, substitution and ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The percentage of use of each cohesive device can be seen as follows: reference is applied 100 % or 5 abstracts use reference as cohesive devices. Substitution is applied 40 % or two abstracts use substitution as cohesive devices. Ellipsis is used 100 % of five abstracts use ellipsis as cohesive devices. Conjunction as applied 100 % or five abstracts use conjunction as cohesive devices and lexical cohesion is applied 100 % or five abstracts use lexical cohesion as cohesive devices.

## CONCLUSION

The purposes of this research were to answer seven research questions. *First*, whether the reference used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. *Second*, whether the substitution used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. *Third*, whether the ellipsis used appropriately in background sections of students' final project.

*Fourth*, whether the conjunction used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. *Fifth*, whether the reiteration used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. *Sixth*, whether the collocation used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. *Seventh*, whether the zigzag pattern and micro level coherence used appropriately in background sections of students' final project. The answer to the seven questions were obtained by analyzing the use of cohesive devices in the background sections of students' final project to achieve coherence. Based on the data collected through documentation, there were 6 kinds of cohesive devices used in the background sections. The total amount use of reference was 395 appropriately used including 119 personal references, 237 demonstrative references and 39 comparative references. The substitution was 122 used, there were 22 sentences of nominal substitution appropriately used, 65 sentences of verbal substitution and 35 clausal substitution appropriately used. The ellipsis was 174 used, there were 89 of nominal ellipsis, 83 of verbal ellipsis and 2 clausal ellipsis. The conjunction was 214, there were 138 of additive conjunction, 27 of adversative conjunction, 37 of clausal conjunction and 12 of temporal conjunction. The reiteration was 292 appropriately used, there were 61 repetition of key words appropriately used. They repeated words/nouns in the sentence and paragraph. In fact, there was no connection of ideas when the words of repetition key words were used. Then, 8 of synonym, 1 subordinate and 222 general words. The collocation was 72 appropriately used. The micro level or logical relation was 312, there were 149 additive, 15 adversative, 101 clausal and 47 temporal.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of this research, there are some suggestions this may be useful to be considered. They are described as follow:

1. By observing the result of this research, the teacher should improve the using of

cohesive devices to achieve coherence in students' formal writing. It could be done by learning processes to prevent incoherent text of students writing.

2. The students should study about how to use the cohesive devices to achieve coherence in written form.
3. It is also suggested to the next researcher to do research about coherence in written form and other language skills. It is intended to see and compare the result among them. The result is also useful to seek the most effective way to overcome those useless of each kind of cohesive devices and each language skill.

### LIMITATIONS

There are two limitations of the present study that might be used as the consideration for future study. The first limitation is cohesive and coherence occurrence and frequency had to be reviewed manually. The writers need so much time to analyze it. The second limitation is that the main focus of the study was on examining cohesive devices and coherence only, not focused on the content of background sections.

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