

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COHESION AND COHERENCE OF THE STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITINGS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF NAHDLATUL WATHAN MATARAM UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at describing the cohesion and coherence of narrative Essays written by the students of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram University (UNW). To meet the purpose, 20 students of the third semester at the faculty of teacher training and education UNW Mataram were used as the subjects of the study. The data were collected through administering writing task and interviewing. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively on the basis of Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion (1976) and Lautamatti's TSA (1978, in Connor and Farmer, 1990).

The results showed that: (1) the types of cohesive devices used by the students of EED UNW Mataram to build cohesion in their narrative essays were reference (personal, demonstrative, comparative), substitution (verbal, clausal), ellipsis (nominal, clausal), conjunction (temporal, adversative, causal, temporal), and lexical cohesion (reiteration, collocation). The students' writing experience could be a source of the students' most and least used devices. In such cases, the percentage of least use in substitution was of 0,10%. This was explained in terms of avoidance in that students tended not to use such type because they did not know how, when, and where such substitution could be reached. Besides, this was attributed to the students' overuse of repetition when they wanted to emphasize ideas in their story writing. The percentage of most use in reference was of 50,22% which was explained in terms of awareness; i.e., students were probably familiar with the use of most reference devices. The highest use of reference also conformed to the nature of narrative text which required them to use sufficient reference devices when investigating participant chains. However, some of the cohesive devices were used inappropriately; (2) the types of topical progression used by the students to build coherence in their essays were parallel progression (53,2%), sequential progression (27,9%), and extended parallel progression (18,8%). The highest use of parallel progression indicates that the overall view of the topical progression of the students' narrative texts followed a dominant use of parallel progression, realized by the repetition of I/he/we in the beginning sentence as the sentence topics throughout their story writing. This also implies that the students preferred to string ideas close together rather than linked them across paragraphs; (3) some problems of coherence identified were the problems with reference, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion, verb forms, noun, sentence structure, prepositions, and structure of English essay. The findings of the study show the necessity of explicit teaching of the elements of coherent writing. The results confirm the obligation of English teachers to explain the role of each element in building coherent text. Besides, it is suggested that TSA could be applied in EFL instruction to assist writing instructors to check the coherence of their students' writing. Concerning the limitation of this study, it is suggested that future studies integrate other genres as the sources of data.

Key words: cohesion, coherence, narrative

INTRODUCTION

Writing, one of the four skills in English language learning, is more and more important nowadays. Becoming a proficient writer is one of the major objectives of many students, especially for those who want to become members of international business, administrative or academic communities (Tribble, 1997: 8). For scientists, writing is very essential. Scientists must not only 'do' science but also 'write' science. Similarly, for English Education Department students, developing an ability to write fluently and confidently in English is a high priority due to the fact that they will write assignments, research reports, letters, educational papers, essay tests, college application letters, and advanced placement examinations that require writing proficiency.

In terms of EFL instruction, Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) maintain that writing helps students learn. First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary taught to students. Second, when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned, to say, to take risks. Third, when they write, they necessarily become involved with the new language. As students struggle with what to put down next or how to put it down on paper, they often discover something new to write or a new way of expressing their ideas. They discover a real need to find the right word and the right sentence.

Despite the advantages, writing is also a highly complex process involving a host of advanced skills that include critical thinking and logical development of ideas. It also requires the students to be aware of the properties of English text. When they write, they work intensively with new language at the whole text level, the paragraph level, the sentence level, and the word level. At each level they need tools. Besides, they need genre knowledge to help organize and present their thinking to the structure of the whole text (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000:151). They need facility with paragraphing and syntax to layer and create linkages between the ideas they work to express. Linking new ideas can be difficult because it involves transforming or reworking information, which is much more complex than writing a narrative (Myles, 2002). By putting together concepts and solving problems, the writer engages in “a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987 cited in Myles, 2002: 2). Furthermore, students need a good vocabulary for precise word choice which is critical to make writing explicit. At last, they need knowledge of grammatical structure and punctuation to make writing intelligible to readers. With awareness of these necessities and complexities, writing is receiving more and more attention in English language teaching in Indonesian context.

The main focus of the teaching of writing is to develop ability in creating good writing, and in order to create a good writing, according to Corbett in Sutarna (1977), the requirements that should be fulfilled are ‘unity’, ‘coherence’, and ‘adequate development’, with coherence as the most important factor. “A paragraph could be unified and still not be coherent” (Corbett, in Sutarna, 1997).

Coherence and cohesion are two important components of writing skill which become crucial part and virtual guarantee of writing quality. Besides, cohesion and coherence, as what has been said by Renkema (1993: 34), are two of the seven standards for textuality (the property of being a text). In other words, if there is no cohesion and coherence within a text, it is not qualified as a text. In addition, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000:125) claim that cohesion and coherence are two important features of well-written text that should be considered in writing a text.

Consequently, teachers, as the main facilitators for the writing instruction, are required to assist students in generating, organizing, and ordering the content of the texts they produce to become coherent. Nevertheless, students often produce incoherent writing. This fact is proved by some research into students’ writing which show that the lack of coherence in the flow of ideas through a composition is one the major problem encountered by students (Guo & Wang; Mao, as cited in Wang & Sui, 2006). Most of their writings are not in good textual organization and contain incoherent ideas. Students may not know how to write effective writing, how to structure and sequence ideas with logical consistency, how to use linguistic creativity, and how to write a text that shows coherence. Mostly, the students cannot develop the internal structure of the sentence on the one hand, and cannot handle the structure development of the sentences on the other hand. Furthermore, cohesive devices are often misused or overused by students. For instance, students are still confused when they use certain type of conjunctions in their essays. They tend to use more connectives to maintain surface logicity, but actually there is no logicity in their writing. The worse thing, unlike grammatical errors which can be easily corrected, errors in coherence are often more difficult to handle as they involve chunks of units, such as a series of sentences or paragraphs. In addition, the grammar which the students use might be inadequate. When the grammar is not appropriately used, the sentences or ideas in a text may disrupt the flow of the text and cause incoherence. Christie (2005) emphasizes that grammar is one of the most important ingredients in determining whether or not a text is coherent and cohesive. When writing lacks coherence, the reader is forced to stop and reread. Occasionally, the readers may just give up because of frustration. In addition, the deficient content of lexical phrases in students’ writing causing incoherence of ideas often leads to confusion and misunderstanding.

Therefore, teachers as the main facilitators for the writing instruction are required to assist students in generating, organizing, and ordering the content of the texts that they produce to become cohesive and coherent. In this case, the materials of cohesion and coherence must be formulated based on the students’ need and linguistic proficiency, as what has been said by Reed (1938 in Sutarna, 1997), “Effective instruction in language must be closely adjusted to the development, needs, and interests of the pupil.” In other words, the materials for teaching coherence should be designed based on the level of students’ knowledge of the discourse features such as cohesive and coherence.

However, the problem is there is no description of the college students’ linguistic proficiency in terms of discourse features such as cohesion and coherence, specifically for the students of English Education Department of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram University (here after EED UNW Mataram), the university where the present study was conducted. This mean that, in order to redesign a suitable material for language teaching, specifically writing, there is a need to investigate the students’ competence in terms of cohesion and coherence.

Based on the phenomena illustrated above, a study was conducted to describe the cohesion and coherence in narrative writings produced by the students of the EED UNW Mataram as well as to determine the problems that affect the cohesion and coherence of their writings. Concerning the students’ problems in using cohesive devices, recent scholarship demonstrate the many linguists and composition theories have reached to a conclusion that it is useful to analyze cohesion in writing as it contributes to coherence in prose. Besides, cohesion analysis can help distinguish stages of writing development and might provide methods of explaining concretely some of the differences between *competent* and *no-so competent* student writings. In addition, Halliday and Hasan (1976)

contend that through analyzing the use of cohesive devices, one could evaluate or assess writing quality from the perspective of coherence. Again, from the perspective of TSA, the present study aimed to explore how sentence topic was developed by the students. It was based on the conception that the investigation of topical structure contributes to the coherence problem of the written text and provides instructional suggestions for both the researcher and writing instructors.

The reason for choosing English major students as the participants was based on the assumption that they made fewer grammatical mistakes in their writing and their main problem in writing was that of coherence. Meanwhile, narrative genre was selected as the source of the data of the present study because it contains a story line or plot which is most frequently used in real life and it is achieved in the writing with the use of cohesive devices (Hew, in Dueraman, 2007). This type of writing is also considered easy for students to write compared to other types of writings as it is merely a reflection of the past events or an exploration of the author's values in a story form (Henley, in Dueraman, 2007). In addition, narrative is one of the main materials in Writing III course presented for the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram. The researcher hopes that this study is useful for designing English instruction that includes writing as an important component. The researcher also hopes that the results and suggestion offered by this study can provide insights into why certain students' texts are perpetually incoherent.

The study was focused on investigating the cohesion and coherence of narrative writings produced by the the third semester students of the EED UNW Mataram. The study focused on linguistic aspects of coherence, cohesion, and textual aspects of students' written discourse. For cohesion analysis, the present study was concerned with the use of cohesive devices between and within sentences. For coherence analysis, this study dealt with the organization of topic and comment in the texts as what has been proposed by Lautamatti (1978) in Conon and Farmer (1990). To collect the data, 20 students of the third semester of EED UNW Mataram in academic year 2010/2011 and the instructor of Writing III were chosen to be the source of data. The students were selected as the main subjects, while the instructor as the secondary subject.

Based on the background illustrated above, the problem of the present study was "To what extent do the students of EED UNW Mataram achieve cohesion and coherence in their narrative English writings?" In order to be more specific, three research questions were formulated as follows: 1) What were the types of cohesive devices used by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram in their narrative English writings? 2) What were the types of topical progressions used by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram in their narrative English writings? 3) What were the problems of coherence found in the narrative English writings written by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram?

Looking at the above statement of problems, the purposes of this study were: 1) to describe and explain the types of cohesive devices used by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram in their narrative writings. 2) To describe and explain the types of topical progressions of the narrative writings written by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram. 3) To describe and explain the problems of coherence found in the narrative writings written by the third semester students of EED UNW Mataram.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopted *qualitative approach* involving analysis of students narrative English essays and follow up interviews.

The subjects of this study were the third semester of EED UNW Mataram in academic year 2010/2011 that consisted of 20 students and instructor of Writing III course. The twenty students were taken as the subjects of this study because of a consideration that, when the semester was taking place, there were 20 students at the third semester of EED UNW Mataram who attended the final semester in the classroom. All of them were used as the primary subjects and the instructor as the secondary subject. These students were used as the main subjects of the current study because the twenty narrative essays produced by these students were used as the main data, which were later analyzed to find out the nature of cohesion and coherence in their narrative writings. Moreover, as has been mentioned before, the twenty students of the third semester of EED UNW Mataram were chosen as the subjects because materials for narrative essay were given at semester III. Specifically, according to the curriculum at the EED UNW Mataram, from semester I-VI the students were given Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, Writing IV, Academic Writing, and Creative Literary Writing courses respectively. In Writing III course, they were given some materials that include: (a) the basic structures of an essay that consist of introduction, body/development, conclusion, and their parts; (b) the interrelationships among the parts of an essay: method of development, thesis sentence, controlling ideas, topic sentences, supporting details, coherence, unity; and (c) writing introduction, development, and conclusion. Completing the Writing III course, the students were expected to have knowledge and skills of essay writing especially knowledge of the basic structures of an essay, knowledge of the interrelationships among parts within the basic structures, and skills in writing essays of various genres/methods of development such as narrative, descriptive, etc.

In the present study, the collected data were in the form of: a) narrative essays written by the students, b) records of interviews with the subjects. The essays and the records of interviews with both the students and the instructor of Writing III course were needed for analysis related to all of the research questions. However, the data collected through interviews were essentially needed to support the analysis to answer the research question (3). Interviews were also used to triangulate the essays written by the students; they were needed to support the analysis related to research question (1) and (2).

Regarding the technique for collecting the intended data, Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) explain that data collection is largely determined by the nature of the problem, which means the researcher must collect the appropriate data to contribute to the understanding and resolution of a given problem. Firstly, to get the narrative essays in English, the technique used by the researcher was *administering writing task*. In the study, the researcher asked the lecturer to spread out the writing task that had been made to the students. The writing task required the students to write a narrative essay related to their personal experience or someone's experience. This topic was chosen for the four important reasons: (1) the topic is related to the students' lives and experiences, so it is appropriate for the students at all level, especially at the beginning level; (2) it gives students opportunity to reflect on their own life; thus, encourages self-discovery; (3) in order to accomplish the writing task, the students were expected to exhibit their knowledge of English grammar and syntax; hence, grammatical and lexical features of English and students' proficiency could be described; and (4) determining the same topic for all subjects was aimed to reduce variability in students' performances. The essay writing task provided the students with an opportunity to explore their level of communicative ability, that is, their ability to construct functional sentences as well as to expose their underlying systematic errors. Bachman and Palmer (1996) say that an essay writing task can encompass a wide variety of prompts that can differ in terms of audience, purpose and organization patterns. The essay was written by the students as their final task for final semester examination.

Secondly, to investigate the students' opinions related to their writing performances, *interviews* were carried out two weeks after they had accomplished the writing task. Moreover, the interview with the instructor of Writing III course was conducted as a means of investigating the students' writing performances and causes of their performances. The interviews were a follow-up on the essay writing task that was given to the students. The interviews were carried out as the technique to get a deeper understanding from the participants' comments and perceptions. Also, the interviews were conducted to verify information received from analyzing students' errors. The collected data were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively based on the sequence of the research questions formulated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

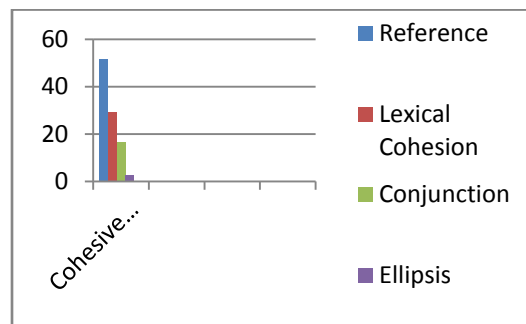
The findings of the study were as follows. The first research question takes into account the theory of Halliday and Hasan (1967), which discusses the principles of cohesion both in spoken and written discourse. Following their taxonomies of cohesive devices, data analysis revealed that the students could employ the five types of cohesive devices to build cohesion in their narrative English essays: reference (personal, demonstrative, comparative), substitution (verbal, clausal), ellipsis (nominal, clausal), conjunction (additive, adversative, causal, temporal), and lexical cohesion (repetition, synonym, superordinate, general word, and collocation). Table 1 shows the students' use of the five types of cohesive devices proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) along with the percentage of their occurrences in each of the narrative English essays analyzed in the present study.

Table 1 shows that reference is the dominant pattern of cohesion observed in the students' narrative texts (50, 22% of total occurrences of all cohesive markers), followed by lexical cohesion (30, 02% of total occurrences) and conjunction (16, 93%). Ellipsis and substitution occur least frequently in the story writings (2, 73% and 0, 10% respectively). To summarize, the students' use of the types of cohesive devices will be more explicit if it is presented in the form of graphic as shown in Graphic 1.

Table 1 Types of Cohesive Devices in the Narrative English Essays Written by the Third Semester Students of EED UNW Mataram

Writing	Reference		Substitution		Ellipsis		Conjunction		Lexical Cohesion		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	110	56.99	0		3	1.55	35	18.13	45	23.32	193
2	73	56.59	0		4	3.10	19	14.73	33	25.58	129
3	98	46.89	2	0.96	3	1.44	28	13.40	78	37.32	209
4	35	36.84	0		5	5.26	15	15.79	40	42.11	95
5	54	49.54	0		4	3.67	19	17.43	32	29.36	109
6	62	50.82	0		4	3.28	23	18.85	33	27.05	122
7	126	58.88	0		5	2.34	31	14.49	52	24.30	214
8	40	35.40	0		1	0.88	20	17.70	52	46.02	113
9	31	53.45	0		1	1.72	11	18.97	15	25.86	58
10	23	38.33	0		3	5.00	2	3.33	32	53.33	60
11	78	49.68	0		5	3.18	36	22.93	38	24.20	157
12	50	59.52	0		2	2.38	19	22.62	13	15.48	84
13	34	49.28	0		3	4.35	13	18.84	19	27.54	69
14	53	40.77	0		7	5.38	15	11.54	55	42.31	130
15	28	52.83	0		1	1.89	8	15.09	16	30.19	53
16	41	56.16	0		2	2.74	18	24.66	12	16.44	73
17	20	50.00	0		0	0.00	6	15.00	14	35.00	40
18	17	50.00	0		0	0.00	12	35.29	5	14.71	34
19	20	42.55	0		1	2.13	7	14.89	19	40.43	47
20	54	56.25	0		3	3.13	16	16.67	23	23.96	96
Total	1047	50.22%	2	0.10%	57	2.73%	353	16.93%	626	30.02%	2085

Graphic 1 Students' Use of Cohesive Devices



According to the results shown in Graphic 1 and Table 1, the most frequently used cohesion type was *reference*. The Tables imply that the students had knowledge of cohesive ties and used a variety of them. From the frequency and the percentage of each subcategory, it could be concluded that the students knew how to utilize various cohesive devices in their writing, and they preferred using specific categories of devices. For example, the students used reference devices most frequently than other devices since the percentage of reference was the highest (50, 22%), followed by lexical cohesion devices (30, 02%), conjunction devices (16, 93%), ellipsis (2, 73%), and substitution (0, 10%).

Possible factor thought to have contributed to the highest percentage of reference presented in this study included the nature of narrative writing and the task employed. The writing task required the students to write their personal experience or other's experience. Therefore, the reference devices, mainly *personal reference* items, were much used in the narrative essays because the story had to be about person, a thing or an event. Therefore, after mentioning the person (either himself or someone), thing or event in the story, it is often replaced by personal reference "I, me, my/ he, him, his/she, her, hers/it, its, they, them" in the following sentences. This finding corroborates Fox's (1987) statement that "Referential cohesion is a characteristic type of narrative discourse when investigating participant chains." Thus, it is possible to say that personal experience narrative requires the higher use of *reference*, especially for the category of *exophoric* which is represented by the use of first person singular or

plural. The students have been found to use referring expression adequately to introduce and maintain reference to characters and objects in their stories.

In terms of the use of lexical cohesion, the obtained results in the Table 1 and Graphic 1 show that the second highest proportion (30, 02%) represents the students' overuse of *repetition*. The majority of students' compositions reflect the overuse of *repetition*, compared with *synonym*. One possible interpretation is that students, when they wanted to emphasize a particular idea or term, they kept repeating the same words. It can be said that most students did not make efforts in picking up words. They reported difficulty in memorizing words, but were not committed to working out a solution. The lack of commitment to learning words might have resulted in a limited vocabulary size even after 7 years of formal training in language skills. Besides, it is possible that students had already progressed in vocabulary size but the problem laid on how to activate these words in language use. McCarthy (1991 : 68) notes that "An awareness of the usefulness of learning synonyms or hyponyms for text—creating purposes may not always be psychologically present among learners." It is likely that vocabulary learning has been taken as word studying separated from actual use or only associated with receptive skills. In addition, with increased influences from the "process approach" in teaching writing (Raimes 1983), both students and teachers involved in composition instruction have focused on content and organisation rather than grammatical correctness or lexical appropriateness. Although the teachers have noticed problems caused by repetition, few of them would take time to deal with it in the stage of vocabulary instruction or in writing class.

Regarding the use of conjunction, the students generally used the four types of conjunctions much in their essays (16, 93%). Among the four types of conjunctions mentioned, they used the simplest form of each type frequently in their story writing: the conjunction *and* for additive, *but* for adversative, *because/cause* for causal, and *then/and then* for temporal conjunction. However, some of the students frequently used these conjunction items in a fairly confused way. For instance, they used an additive conjunction instead of an adversative one or the use temporal conjunction instead of additive one, i.e., they were not able to see the difference between them. This might be due to the insufficient practice inside the classroom, mainly in grammar sessions, in the area of conjunction.

Furthermore, using *ellipsis* in essay writing reduces the rate of repeating words that are easy to understand from the linguistic context. Table 1 and Graphic 1 reveal that there were 57 ellipses and 2 substitutions (2, 73% and 0, 10% respectively) out of 2085 cohesive ties used by the students in their narrative essays. This was also attributed to the fact that students overused repetition of lexical items, so *ellipsis* and *substitution* were not used much in their essays, or they were confused between ellipsis and substitution since there is no clear cut between them, i.e., if a sentence contains a lot of repetitions, both ellipsis and substitution can be employed. The low frequency of the occurrence of ellipsis and substitution was also attributed to the fact that "Ellipsis and substitution is more frequently found in dialogues, mainly in spoken language" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Especially for the category of substitution, the majority of students did not use substitution: it was hardly used by the students. Students were not familiar with the use of substitution concerning the use of other cohesive devices. This might refer to the learners' avoidance in using such types; students avoided using substitution because they might fear about their appropriateness. This was also explained by the fact that students tended not to use such type because they did not know *how*, *when* and *where* could be reached. In addition, because students generally, during the exam, did not have enough time, they wanted to give as much information as they could, without paying attention to revision and the use of cohesive tie of substitution. Lastly, it was caused by the fact that students overused repetition of lexical items, so substitution was not much used in their essays, or they were confused between ellipsis and substitution since there is no clear cut between them, i.e., if a sentence contains a lot of repetitions, both ellipsis and substitution can be employed.

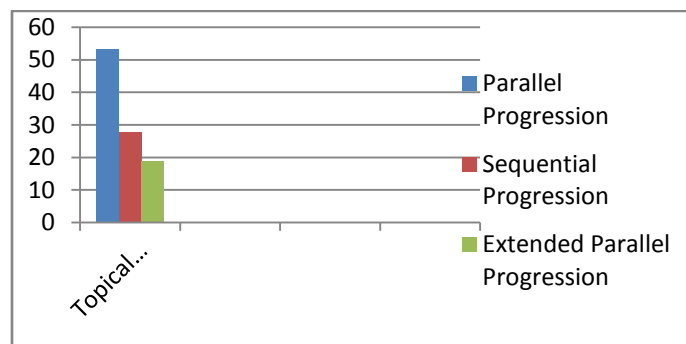
The result of identification of the types of topical progression in the students' writing along with their frequency of occurrences yielded result in the Table 2. Table 2 shows that parallel progression was most frequently used by the students to build the coherence of their essays (53,2%), followed by sequential progression (27,9%), and extended parallel progression (18,8%). This indicates that much of the topic development was done more through repetition of key words and phrases in consecutive sentences than through reiterating them in non - consecutive sentences or across paragraphs and taking the *rheme* as the *theme* of the topic of the next sentences. The tagging result of parallel progression also indicates that repetition of topic words devoted to coherence of a text; for these words were just the point of each passage, so there was no doubt that they ran through the whole text and had the highest frequency.

Table 2 Types of Topical Progression used in the Narrative English Essays Written by the Third Semester Students of EED UNW Mataram

Writing	Sentences Topic	The Frequency of Each Type of Progressions		
		PP	SP	EPP
1	34	19	7	7
2	23	13	7	2
3	35	12	14	8
4	17	7	6	3
5	19	9	5	4
6	17	5	6	5
7	45	20	13	11
8	19	12	4	2
9	12	7	2	2
10	18	9	5	3
11	24	16	4	3
12	18	8	5	4
13	14	6	5	2
14	18	17	-	-
15	11	6	4	-
16	11	4	3	3
17	7	2	2	2
18	9	4	3	1
19	10	5	2	2
20	20	11	4	4
Total	381	192	101	68
Percentage		53.2%	27.9%	18.8%

Table 2 tells us that *Parallel Progression* is used among other three topic progressions mentioned above; the subjects' essays, except one essay, display a variety of progressions used in connecting ideas and thoughts within their essays. This means that most of the essays employ two or more types of progressions as their topic development. The students' use of topical progression in the students' narrative essays in English will be more explicit if it is revealed in the form of graphic as shown in Graphic 2. The frequency and percentage of each type of topical progression is also presented in the table.

Graphic 2 Students' Use of Topical Progressions



Graphic 2 shows that *parallel progression* is the most preferred pattern of topical progression in the essays (53,2% of total topic progressions), *sequential progression* is the second most preferred progression (27,9%), and *extended parallel progression* is used least in the essays (18,8%), which means that the students make more use of the parallel progressions than the sequential and extended forms of progression. The highest use of parallel progression indicates that an overall view of the topical progression of the narrative texts written by the students follows a dominant use of parallel progression, realized by the repetition of *I/he/we* as the sentence topics throughout the story. The higher use of parallel progression also indicates that the students chose to string ideas close together rather than linked them across paragraphs.

It can also be stated that the use of the three types of topical progression in different percentage of use shows that the students of EED UNW Mataram do not have one definite, clear preference of the type of progressions to

use in their attempts to produce a coherent piece of writing. The form of predominant progression in their compositions vary in frequency, which indicates that the students do not limit themselves to only one topical structure but employ different combinations of patterns of progression, especially for those who have good compositions. With this in mind, the highest use of parallel progression, if employed in many clauses, runs the risk of making the texts somewhat static and tedious for the reader.

It is important to note that the sentence topics of students' stories are mainly positioned in the beginning of the sentences in their texts. By following this strategy, they try to make it easier for the reader of their story to follow the plot of the story, as the topics are activated from the beginning of the clause, usually in subject position. However, there are some of the topics that introduce the main characters in the first paragraphs of the story are typically placed towards the comment/rheme of the sentence "A long time ago after I finished form SMA I" In addition, the utilization of temporal conjunctions such as *one day, the following day, in the meantime* in the initial position often forces the new topic into the rhematic span (in the comment position) of the sentence, and decreases slightly the average of sentence topics that are located in thematic position (in the beginning of sentence).

The findings tell us that the language of personal narrative written by the students is direct and informal, only slightly more developed than the colloquial language. This choice of informal and direct language affects the placement of sentence topics in the story writings. It is also important to note that, although the writing task required them to write their own personal experience, which caused them to use the high frequency of first person pronoun to indicate themselves, the coherent piece of their essays were evident as long as there were the continuity of meaning and the relationship of the sentence topic with the discourse topic in their essays: there was no coherence break. However, the students had a serious problem in using pronoun efficiently in the poor writing samples. Many participants used pronouns without clear referents in the previous paragraphs. The misuse of pronouns not only caused difficulty in applying TSA, but also disrupted the discourse coherence. The detailed explanations of some types of coherence problem found in the students' essays are discussed in the following section.

Regarding the problems of incoherence found in some of the the students' essays as well as the contributing factors of the incoherence problems data analysis showed that there were some problems the students encountered in writing coherent narrative English writings. These problems affected their writings. The problems were: 1) problem with the use of cohesive devices and grammar and 2) problem with the structure of essay. Much of these problems were encountered by the *not-so-competent* students.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the discussions of the findings, three conclusions can be drawn as follows:

- (1) Following Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion (1976), the types of cohesive devices used by the students of EED UNW Mataram to build the cohesiveness of their narrative essay in English were *reference (personal, demonstrative, comparative)*, *substitution (verbal and clausal)*, *ellipsis (nominal and clausal)*, *conjunction (additive, adversative, causal, and temporal)*, and *lexical cohesion (repetition, synonym, superordinate, general word, and collocation)*. Most of the students were able to produce a good story; they provided the reader with a setting, problem identification or complication, and resolution of the problem by means of these cohesive devices. However, these cohesive devices differed in terms of the frequency of occurrence. *Reference* was used predominantly (50,22%), followed by *lexical cohesion* (30,02%), *conjunction* (16,93%), *ellipsis* (2,73%), *substitution* (0,10%). This is explained as follows. First, *Reference* was used dominantly by the students because the narrative writing task required them to write their experience or other's experience. This task contributed to the higher use of *reference*, mainly for the sub-category of *personal reference*, to refer back to the referent mentioned inside (*endophoric*) or outside (*exophoric*) the text. Secondly, the second most preferred use of cohesive devices was *lexical cohesion*, which was attributed to the students' writing experience; instead of using *reference devices, substitution, or ellipsis*, the students kept repeating the same word when they wanted to emphasize idea in their story. Thirdly, four types of conjunctions used much in the essays, with the frequent use of the simple form of each type were the conjunction *and* for additive, *but* for adversative, *because* or *so* for causal, and *then* for temporal. Fourth, *substitution* and *ellipsis* were not used much in the essays because of the fact that the students overused the repetition of lexical items, or they were confused between ellipsis and substitution since there is no clear cut between them; i.e., if a sentence contains a lot of repetitions, both ellipsis and substitution can be employed. Besides, this was caused by the students' avoidance, in the sense that they tended not to use such types because they did not know *how, when* and *where* such substitution and ellipsis could be reached. However, the four types of cohesive devices, except substitution, were often used inappropriately. Conjunction device was the most inappropriately used in the students' story writing (50% out of the other types of cohesive devices), then followed by lexical cohesion (33,33%), reference (16,67%), and ellipsis (1,51%). The highest frequency of the inappropriate use of conjunction was attributed to the students' L1 (Indonesia) interference and the students' misconception about the use of certain conjunction items, especially in the area of Grammar course.

- (2) Following Lautamatti's TSA theory (1978, in Connor and Farmer, 1990), this study shows that *parallel progression* was the most preferred type of topical progression in the students' narrative essays (53,2% of total topic progressions), followed by *sequential progression* (27.9%) and *extended parallel progression* (18,8%). The highest use of parallel progression indicates that the overall view of the topical progression of the narrative texts written by the students employed a predominant use of parallel progression which was mostly realized by the repetition of personal reference items such as the sentence topics throughout the story. The highest use of parallel progression also implies that the students preferred to tie their ideas close together rather than linked them across paragraphs. The use of the three types of topical progression in different percentage of use shows that the students of EED UNW Mataram did not have one definite, clear preference of the type of progressions to use in their attempts to produce a coherent piece of writing. Most of the students did not limit themselves to one topical structure only but employed different combination of topical progressions, especially for those who had good compositions. It is also important to note that the sentence topics of students' stories were mainly positioned in the beginning of the sentences in their texts. By following this strategy, they tried to make it easier for reader to follow the plot of their story, as the topics were activated from the beginning of the clause, usually in subject position. The findings also tell us that the language of personal narrative written by the students was direct and informal, only slightly more developed than the colloquial language. This choice of informal and direct language affected the placement of sentence topics in their story writings.
- (3) This study found several writing problems that have affected the coherence of the students' narrative essays, namely: a) the problems in using cohesion devices and grammar, and b) the problems with the structure of English essay. Problems in using cohesive devices and grammar included the problems with: reference, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion, verb forms, noun, sentence structure, and prepositions. Interference was the most influential factor which caused the problems in the students' essays. The problems with essay structure occurred when some of the students did not develop their story writing into an essay. Instead, they wrote their story in only one paragraph. However, the problems with structure of English essays were less frequent than coherence problems with cohesive devices and grammar because the opportunities of making them were more limited, but they were perhaps more serious in that they might obscure the message of the entire essay.

There are some aspects concerning pedagogical implications as follows: First, the findings of the current study show the necessity of teaching cohesion in English writing. In other words, the students of EED UNW Mataram need to be given explicit instruction about the elements of cohesion which contribute to the coherent writing such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. All of the cohesive devices can be applied by the students in their narrative writing, but the course still needs to be reconsidered to maximize its outcomes.

Second, based on the findings of the current study, it is suggested that Lautamatti's TSA could be applied in EFL composition classroom to assist writing instructors to check coherence of their students' writing. The analysis is considered a useful tool to examine text coherence and a self-revision strategy because language learners consider the relationship between the discourse and sentence level of their writing (Connor & Farmer, 1990). Writing instructor can examine their students' writing in terms of this technique to identify coherence in their students' writing. Teachers can easily and quickly scan through a composition and simply look for repetitions of key words and phrases in order to determine whether it is a piece of coherent or incoherent writing. Then, based on the analysis, EFL instructor can interview students whose writing is judged incoherent, point out the coherent parts to the students, and explain why the incoherent ideas are irrelevant to the main idea in terms of the relationship between the discourse topic and sentence topic.

Teachers also can guide their students on the technique of achieving coherence through repetition of key words and phrases, and through limitation of the number of topics introduced in their paragraphs. They can also better facilitate peer revision if the students are taught how to detect the kinds of progression employed in the papers being evaluated. However, students should be taught to revise not only in terms of mechanic and grammar but also in terms of discourse features such as cohesion and coherence. It is emphasized here that TSA is one strategy to make their compositions easier for the audience to understand. By using this strategy, students will also be aware of how to judge for themselves whether the articles they have at hand are good pieces of writing. Consequently, students would have critical eyes for coherent articles and information far beyond the classroom setting, and they would eventually become a critical audience that could distinguish coherent compositions from those that have loosely tied ideas. In such a way, students could become good independent readers and writers.

Third, based on the findings, many participants have problems with coherence involving the problems with cohesive devices, grammar, and the structure of English essay. The problems with cohesive devices include the inappropriate use of reference, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion. The problems with grammar comprise the incorrect use of verb forms, noun, sentence structure, and preposition. Even if the participants improve in using conjunction items, for instance, they still do not control the grammatical properties of some conjunctions. Indeed, students need to be taught the grammatical restrictions of using conjunctions along with their meanings, but doing this within the time constraints remains a hope. It would be more practical to focus on teaching cohesive devices in

Grammar sessions. The results also shows that the students have more problem with the the use of cohesive devices, grammatical aspects and with the mechanic of coherence than with the organization of essay structure. Thus, the explicit teaching of those aspects is necessary. The results confirm the obligation of English teachers to explain their students the role of each aspect in building the coherent texts.

Regarding the interference of Indonesia on their English writings, EED UNW Mataram students often create interlanguage sentence structures; their English sentences are mixed with the rules of Indonesian grammar such as word order, modification, prepositions, etc. The research subjects' grammar competence thus seems weak. Their English sentences are also inevitably influenced by Indonesian sentences.

Moreover, the interference in this study are caused by two factors. First, the differences and similarities between Indonesia and English language structures affect the students' written English performance. Some syntactic elements of Indonesian language are not found in the English language. Second, the similarities and differences between the styles of Indonesia and English essays that are important for paragraph writing should be pointed out. In English essays, each paragraph which consists of 'introduction, body, and conclusion' must contain its own topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and cohesion markers for unity. This style is inevitably modelled for English paragraph writing.

Finally, possible solutions for negative Indonesian interference in English writing from this study are suggested for teachers of English as follows: (a) teaching of the correct use of bilingual and English-English dictionaries can help students understand word choices and their meaning for appropriate contexts as well as examples of correct English sentences, (b) the use of process approach to teach writing that contains *pre-drafting, drafting, revising, and editing* stages can assist the students to self-discover errors and improve their writing, and (c) pointing out the communicative approach by intensive use of English as the instructional medium in the writing classroom can be an alternative to diminish Indonesian interference.

There are two limitations of the present study that might be used as the consideration for future study. The first limitation is the size of the research subject. The present study does not allow for generalizing the results. Future study can take a large number of subjects and can combine the subjects coming from different cultural backgrounds as the subjects of the study. The second limitation is that only narrative essay is analyzed. It will be more interesting and richer to observe the students' performance by integrating the other types of genre such as argumentative, procedure, exposition in one research.

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