

IMPROVING COHESION OF THE STUDENTS' SENTENCES THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF COHESION THEORY IN THE SENTENCE-BASED WRITING CLASS

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Abstract

This study was aimed at 1). describing what kinds of cohesive device mostly occurred in the students' sentences, 2). describing how to apply cohesion theory in the sentence-based writing class, and 3). finding out whether the use of cohesion theory gives its positive significance to cohesion of the students' sentences. This is an action research study employing two cycles. The subject of the study was 24 students of group 2, in a class of SBW, and the object of the study was students' sentences created by the students in the teaching and learning process. The result of the study shows that cohesive devices mostly employed by the students are references followed by lexical, conjunction and substitution. Moreover, the students never used ellipsis in the students' sentences. In the teaching and learning process, cohesion theory was given to the students in two cycles. The first cycle focused on introducing the cohesion theory and its kinds of cohesive devices. Then, in the next cycle the students learned about Halliday and Hasan Taxonomy. Based on the result of the study, teaching SBW using cohesion theory gives its positive significance by varied cohesive device used by the students. It can be seen from the analysis of the students' sentences from pre-test, paragraph 1, paragraph 2, paragraph 3 and post-test. The students also give positive responses upon its teaching and learning process using cohesion theory based on the pre and post-test questionnaire data. It is hoped that the result of the study gives positive contribution to the students in preparing them to write in bigger contexts such as paragraph-based writing, genre-based writing and academic writing in the next coming semesters.

Keywords: cohesion, cohesive device, Halliday & Hasan Taxonomy, SBW

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four skills in English from which students are supposed to master it besides listening, speaking and reading. Those skills are classified into two main skills – receptive and productive skills. Here, writing is classified into a productive skill as the students are recommended to be able to write in the forms of sentences, paragraphs, essays

and texts. This is due to its main objective, the students have literacy in writing. Literacy is defined as the students' competence in communicating messages (Paltridge, 2001:4).

The students doing writing gives some significances. First, the students can explore their ideas or opinions. Then, writing is one of the academic demands. Moreover, writing belongs to the epistemic

level for the students. It is based on the literacy level proposed by Wells (1987). Based on this level, the students are supposed to have skills in writing started from the basic one, sentence-based writing, in which by the coming semesters they are going to meet other writing activities namely paragraph-based writing, genre-based writing and academic writing. The purpose of those writing activities is the students' competence in communicating meaningful messages for the readers.

Sentence-based writing is one of the course subjects given to the students in the second semester. Before they get this subject, the students learn intensive writing in the first semester. Furthermore, the materials given is quite simple. For example, they have to rewrite words, phrases, clauses and sentences. As a result, they do not explore their ideas. Here, the writer only had one class consisting of 24 students. Based on observation and sentence analysis, it was found that some students still had difficulties in writing cohesive sentences. They also gave some arguments in the questionnaires relating to their weaknesses due to some considerations; they were not only about the structure of the sentences.

The followings are some comments given by the students based on one of the questions in the pre questionnaires "Did you use to practice writing sentences and find its difficulties?"

Intan Adi Setyaningrum, one of my students said that she liked writing even it was not that easy:

"In my opinion, there must be some rules especially grammar if I would like to write sentences. As a result, I should pay attention in that process".

(pre-questionnaire)

Then, another comment was given by Ela Julaeaha:

"It is not easy to write sentences in English. I have to practice a lot how to write good sentences and paragraphs. I do practice every day, but it is still difficult indeed".

(pre-questionnaire).

Moreover, Haifa Khairunnisa provided her different point of view:

"We are not only aware of grammar but also other things such as references, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions dan lexical cohesion in producing cohesive sentences".

(pre-questionnaire).

It is very interesting to analyse Haifa's comment as she has already read some references about how to write cohesive sentences. It seemed that she had copied and read the books recommended by the lecturer in the first meeting. Those

comments indicated that some students still had less knowledge of producing sentences.

According to Witte & Faigley (2008) good sentences are connected with one another (connected discourse) and not autonomous sentences. The relationships rely on lexical and grammatical relationships. Then, some writers also have difficulties in producing systematic sentences in which they are able to employ the appropriate words. It indicates that they are lack of cohesion knowledge. Halliday and Hasan (1976) stated that sentences should have structure. This is called as cohesive ties. Better sentences should consist of more cohesive ties. They are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction dan lexical cohesion. Based on the elaboration above, the writer was interested in conducting a research. He tried to find out whether cohesion theory can be applied in sentence-based writing class and it has its positive significances.

Statement of the problems are 1). what kinds of cohesive devices mostly occur in students' sentences, 2). how to apply cohesion theory in sentence-based writing class and 3). whether the application of cohesion theory has positive significance.

The objectives of this study were to find out what kinds of cohesive devices mostly occurred in the students' sentences, to describe how to apply cohesion theory in sentence-based writing class and know whether this theory was applicable to improve students' sentence writing.

It is hoped that the result of the study will give significant contribution to the students relating to the improvement of the cohesion of the students' sentences. Moreover, English department will get its benefit by the improvement of the students' writing skill. Then, the students will not find difficulties when they are having other writing activities such as paragraph-based writing, genre-based writing and academic writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cohesive sentences are connected with one another. Furthermore, it has been constraints for many students because it is problematic. It related to a research conducted by Bamberg (1983) cited in Wang (2007) that one of the difficulties faced by the students are their lack of knowledge on how to write cohesive sentences. Based on Halliday and Hasan (1976) cited in Coulthard (1974) cohesive sentences are constructed based on ties. These ties are *reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctin dan lexical cohesion*.

Reference refers to how a writer introduces characters and tracks them in the arranged sentences (Eggins, 1994: 95). Halliday and Hasan (1976) proposed two kinds of references *-situational and textual reference*. Based on this theory textual cohesion is achieved through the textual reference. The former is applied in the spoken texts. Textual reference consists of anaphoric reference and cataphoric reference. Halliday dan Hasan

(1976) classify them into *personal reference* (I/me, she/her, he/him, they/them, we/us, dsb), *demonstrative reference* (that/this, these/those) and *definite article* *sekaligus comparative reference* (the, -er, more-).

A substitution is the replacement of a word (group) or sentences segment by a “dummy” word. The reader can fill in the correct element based on the preceding sentences (Rankema, 1993: 37). There are three types of substitution: *nominal, verbal and clausal substitution*.

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or part of a sentence. It occurs when some essential structural elements are omitted from a sentence or clause and can only be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text (Nunan, 1993: 25). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 144), ellipses occur when something that is structurally necessary is left unsaid, there is a sense of incompleteness associated with it. Ellipsis also consists of *nominal, verbal and clausal ellipsis*.

Conjunction is a part in a sentence which combines sentences (Rankema, 1994: 38). It mostly occurs in the beginning of the sentence. Baker (1992: 191) categorises conjunction into additive (and, or, also, in addition, furthermore, besides, similarly, likewise, by contrast, for instance), *adversative* (but, yet, however, instead, on the other hand, nevertheless, at any rate, as a matter of fact), *causal* (so,

consequently, for, because, for this reason), *temporal* (then, next, finally, after that, on another occasion, in conclusion, an hour later, at last) and *continuative* (now, of course, well, anyway, surely, after all).

Lexical cohesive devices refer to the role played by the selection of vocabulary in organizing relation within a text (Baker, 1992: 202). It does not deal with grammatical and semantic connection but with the connection based on the words used. Meanwhile, Nunan (1993: 28) says that lexical cohesion occurs when two words in a text are semantically related in some way. There are two kinds of lexical cohesion, *reiteration and collocation with their parts repetition, synonym, hyponym, metonym and antonym*.

In addition to the taxonomy that allows cohesive ties to be classified according to function, Halliday and Hasan introduce a second taxonomy. This second taxonomy allows cohesive ties to be classified according to the amount of text spanned by the presupposed and presupposing elements of a given tie. Halliday and Hasan term four such “text-span” classes. Membership in a class is determined by the number of T-units a given cohesive tie span. Taken together, the two taxonomies Halliday and Hasan present are classified in two different ways, one according to function and one according to distance. The four “text span” classes contained in

Halliday and Hassan's second taxonomy are illustrated in the following:

- (1) The last word ended in a long bleat, so like a sheep that **Alice** quite started.
- (2) **She** looked at the queen, who seemed to have suddenly wrapped herself up in wool.
- (3) **Alice** rubbed her eyes, and looked again.
- (4) **She** couldn't make out what had happened at all.
- (5) Was **she** in a shop?
- (6) And was that really – was it really a sheep that was sitting on the other side of the counter.
- (7) Rub as **she** would, **she** could make nothing more of it
(Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 330-340)

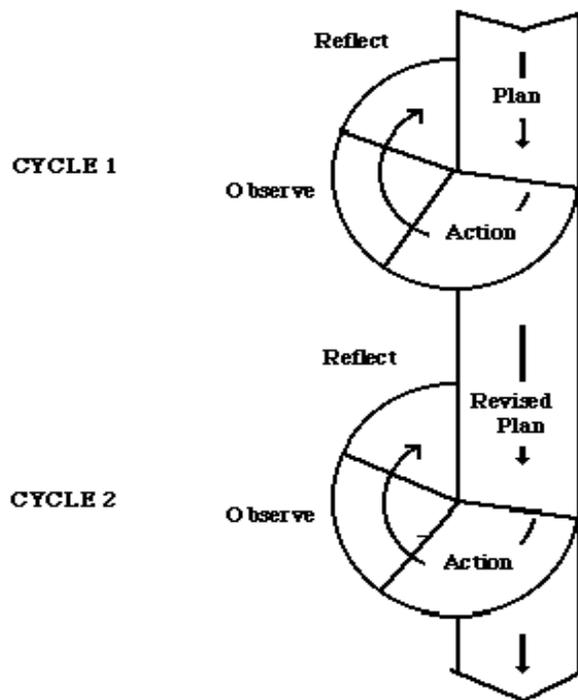
In sentence (2), *she* refers to Alice in the first sentence. It relates to the sentence which immediately precedes it. It is called an immediate tie. The word *she* in sentence (4) also *refers* to Alice in the immediate sentence. *She*, in sentence (5) has the target of its presupposition another instance of *she*, that in (4) and in order to

resolve it we have to follow this through to the occurrence of *Alice* in sentence (3). This type is called a mediated tie.

Remote ties, on the other hand, result when two elements of a tie are separated by one or more intervening T-units. It can be seen from sentence (6). In the sentence, there is no presupposing or presupposed item. Finally, a tie may be both mediated and remote. For example, the *she* in sentence (7) does not have any presupposition in sentence (6) but refers back to sentence (5). Here, the tie is considered remote. At the same time the presupposed item in (5) is again *she*, which has to be followed through to the *she* in (4) and finally to *Alice* in (3), so it is also mediated.

METHOD

This is an action research employing two cycles. The following describes cycles proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart:



Picture 3.1. Action research cycles based on Kemmis dan McTaggart (1988) cited in Burns (2010:9)

1. Subject of the study
24 four students (student group 002) of the sentence-based writing class were the subject of the study.
2. Object of the study
The writer analysed the students sentences as the object of the study. The sentences were analysed using cohesion theory. They were taken from the teaching and learning process.
3. Time allotment
It took 6 months to complete the study based on the targeted orientation and time limitation.
4. Location

This study was conducted in the English department, faculty of Languages and Arts. The class was conducted in B3 building room 317B.

Techniques of the Action Research Study

1. Problem Identification
In identifying the problem, the writer had already given assignments for the students in the early meetings. The purpose of which was to have an early observation and assessment. The result of this was one of the indicators to conduct such research.
2. Data Gathering

To get the data, the students' sentences was analysed using cohesion theory. In doing so, the writer gave assignment for the students to write by the end of teaching and learning process.

3. Data Interpretation

After completing the analysis to get the result, the writer would plan what should be done after this.

4. Doing Action

This study was divided into two cycles, so the materials were categorised based on the teaching and learning process. In the first cycle, the writer focused on introducing cohesion theory and its kinds of cohesive devices. Then, the next cycle was Halliday and Hasan Taxonomy. The following is the reserach cycles:

Table 3.1. Teaching and Learning Process in the First Cycle.

	Activities	Materials
CYCLE 1	TLP Discussion Question and Answer Practice	Introduction of cohesion
	TLP Discussion Question and Answer Practice	Introduction and kinds of cohesive devices
	Writing Practice	Free Themes (2x)

It was followed by another cycle based on the result finding.

Tabel 3.2. Kegiatan tindakan kelas pada siklus kedua

	Activities	Materials
CYCLE 2	TLP Discussion Question and Answer Practice	Cohesive devices
	TLP Discussion Question and Answer Practice	Halliday and Hasan Taxonomy

	Writing Practice	Free Themes (2x)
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Instruments

1. Observation

Here, it is defined as the textual analysis on students' sentences produced in every meeting of the teaching and learning process.

2. Test

The students were supposed to do pre and post-test. The purpose of doing this was to measure the students' progress in writing sentences.

3. Questionnaires

It was used to find out the students' point of view relating to the teaching

and learning process by the application of cohesion theory. The pre-questionnaire was delivered in the early meetings before the writer conducted the study. Later, the students responded their view in the post-questionnaire. It asked the students whether TLP using this theory gives its positive significances to them in sentence-based writing class.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The following chart describes cohesive devices found in the students sentences started from pre-test until post-test:

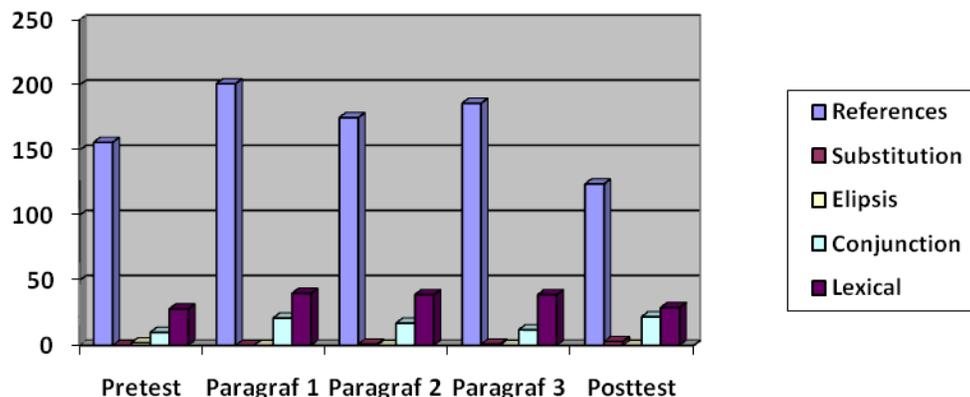


Chart 4.1 The number of cohesive devices.

Based on the chart above, it can be seen that references dominates others. The use of references are the easiest ones for the students. On the first paragraph, the

students started exploring the other devices. The numbers improved and varied. It was assumed that it is due to their better acknowledgement on cohesion

theory. The most significance was the improvement of lexical devices.

We can find any significance on the second and third paragraphs when analysing the cohesive devices used by the students in their sentences. Furthermore, the students tried to explore their sentences using conjunctions. One of the reasons was some paragraphs produced by the students were in the form of recounting. If we look at the some lexicogrammatical features of a recount text is the use of conjunction/sequence of events in elaborating the events. The post-test shows that almost all number of cohesive devices are decreasing. It can be seen from references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical devices. Learning

the materials, in this case cohesion theory and taxonomy could affect it. The students were to write sentences well based on Halliday and Hasan Taxonomy. It was not an easy job. As a result, it affected cohesion of the students' sentences. Furthermore, it did not indicate that it was not successful as based on the chart above. The students are accustomed to writing using varied cohesive devices. In conclusion, teaching and learning process applying cohesion theory contributes to the cohesion of the students' sentences.

The followings are some arguments given by the students related to the teaching and learning process using cohesion theory:

Table 4.1: Students' Responses

<i>Question 4: Does the cohesion theory give positive significance to your sentences?</i>	
Adriani Yulia P	Yes. This theory helps me to write well.
Asmarani	Yes. I understand how to write varied sentences now.
Ela Julaeha	I think that my sentences are getting better now.
Girindra	Yes. By this theory, I can write sentences using different styles.
Nuki Nur Azizah	It improves my sentences. I learn how to put the right conjunctions in the correct positions and how to choose the right words. .

It can be inferred from the responses above that the students benefit the

teaching and learning process using cohesion theory.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

- (1) The students in producing sentences employed four cohesive devices. They are references, elipsis, conjunction and lexical. The textual analysis shows that the number of reference is 79.6% on pre-test, 76.71% on the first paragraph, 75.43% on the second paragraph, 78.15% on the third paragraph and 69.66% on post-test. Then, it was followed by lexical devices, 14.28% on pre-test, 15.27% on paragraph 1, 16.8% on paragraph 2, 16.39% on paragraph 3 and 16.29% on post test. Moreover, conjunction occurs 5.1% on pretest, 8.01% on paragraph 2, 7.32% on paragraph 2, 5.04% on paragraph 3 and 12.35% on post-test. Finally, the number of cohesive devices occurred least is substitution, 0% on pre-test and the first paragraph, 0.43% on the second paragraph and 0.42% on the third paragraph, and 1.68% on post-test. Related to cohesion theory, there should be five cohesive devices: reference, substitution, elipsis, conjunction and lexical. Hence, we can not find any ellipsis. It related to some researchers' finding that it is one of the most difficult devices to apply by most students
- (2) The teaching and learning process was divided into two main activities. The students received the introduction

of cohesion theory in the early meetings followed by some writing exercises by producing at least 10 sentences in a paragraph based on their own interests. The students also learned Halliday and Hasan Taxonomy in the next meetings.

- (3) The students' sentence writing is improving based on its textual analysis. It can be seen from the varied use of cohesive devices by the students and their responses on pre and post questionnaires.

Suggestions

- (1) The students need to understand about cohesion theory and its application in sentence writing;
- (2) Writing sentences need lots of practice both in inside and outside of the classroom;
- (3) In intensive writing class, the students need to have independent ideas to write not to do rewriting;
- (4) It needs lecturers' will for improving their expertise in teaching writing.

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