



Assessing the Students' Use of Cohesive Devices in Writing Hortatory Exposition Text

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Abstract

This research began in the challenging of writing Hortatory Exposition Text, faced by students, especially second language learners in academic settings. Despite writing's crucial role in analysis and communication, limited structured practice leads to incoherent expression. Qualitative descriptive was applied to analyze the use of cohesive devices proposed by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory. The object of this research were fifteen students of *SMA Kesatrian 2 Semarang*. The students' texts were analyzed by using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory. The findings show 336 grammatical and 138 lexical cohesions in the reading passages. The grammatical consisted of 170 (35.9%) references, 3 (0.6%) substitutions, 28 (5.9%) ellipses, and 135 (28.5%) conjunctions and the lexical cohesion consisted of 82 reiterations (17.3%) and 56 (11.8%) collocations. Hopefully, this research offers insights, particularly to English teachers, enhancing their ESL teaching approaches and addressing students' challenges more effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of English involves four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In Indonesia's educational system, English is taught in high schools according to the 2013 curriculum. Writing is a crucial skill for effective written communication. Oshima and Hogue (2006) characterize writing as a process of idea generation, organization, and refinement. It encompasses idea discovery, organization, drafting, and revising, underscoring its significance.

Despite its importance, students' writing proficiency remains subpar. This could stem from language disparities between Indonesian and English, causing challenges in grammar, diction, spelling, and vocabulary. Writing necessitates the creation of coherent and cohesive texts, but this proves problematic for many students. Murray (2009) emphasizes writing's process of planning, drafting, and revising. For students, writing holds significance, requiring analytical and informative skills, yet a lack of structured practice leaves them inexperienced in conveying ideas cohesively, leading to errors in grammar, spelling, and lexical choice.

Furthermore, the inability to construct clear compositions hampers effective writing. Cohesion and coherence are vital considerations. Halliday and Hassan (1976) stress cohesion's role in constructing comprehensible discourse. Ghasemi (2013) asserts cohesion's importance in creating well-structured texts for reader comprehension. The use of cohesive devices (CDs) links to writing quality, with research linking their usage to the effectiveness of writing. Yin Cheng Lee and Tam Shu (2019) highlight the impact of discourse devices on text. Formal texts, like hortatory exposition texts, require mastery of cohesive devices. Hence, cohesive devices are crucial for constructing coherent discourse.

The study focuses on hortatory exposition texts, selected due to their complexity. This text form is taught to eleventh-grade students and involves arguing a viewpoint formally. Language issues, such as misuse of phrases like "on the other hand," are common in students' writing.

This study delves into the challenge students face in using cohesive devices in their writing. Understanding cohesive devices aids text organization by linking sentences to form coherence. Accurate use enhances reader understanding. The research investigates how students employ cohesive devices, particularly within hortatory exposition texts. The selection of this text form is pertinent due to its curriculum inclusion and the requirement for persuasive writing.

The study seeks to shed light on students' writing difficulties, their reasons for using certain cohesive devices, and the effects of language transfer. This information can aid educators in enhancing ESL instruction and fostering a better understanding of cohesive devices' role in effective writing. There are several characteristics that should be considered to make good writing. They are unity, cohesion, and coherence. Rassouli and Abbasvandi (2012). Unity is about how the writer forms his writing connected and related to the topic. Cohesion relates to the meaning that exists within a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976). Coherence is about considering the sequences of sentences or utterances to hang together in a text. Nunan (1993). From these 3 aspects, cohesion is a way to make the writing become united and coherence as in cohesion there are cohesive devices which have the function to make writing connected and related between the clauses and sentences of a text. Moreover, a system of cohesive devices can also embody coherence. Recognizing the use of cohesive devices can be really useful for the students.

Still in line with the idea of discourse analysis in the form of cohesion and coherence investigation is a very important part that can be tools to measure the quality of the text. It draws an interest in conducting research dealing with analysis of cohesive devices in a text. There were some researchers that conducted about such topics, they were Albana et al. (2020), Almutairi (2017), Bahaziq (2016), He (2020), Hill-Madsen (2022), and Kwan (2014). They conducted the research about cohesive devices used in different objects with the present study. Those studies are

the ones that reveal current situation related to cohesive devices used in the text.

The types of relationship under grammatical cohesion are all of the aspect found within the grammar of the language. Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide the grammatical cohesion of basic categories are pointing into four categories and called as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions. Some studies about grammatical cohesion in the writing were conducted by Abdurahman et al. (2013), Ekowati et al. (2019), Emilia et al. (2018), Liardét (2016), and Trisnaningrum et al. (2019).

Lexical cohesion refers to the use of words or vocabulary to create connections and maintain coherence between different parts of a text. It is a type of cohesive device that relies on the repetition of specific words, synonyms, antonyms, or related terms to establish relationships between sentences and paragraphs.

Lexical cohesion enhances the flow and understanding of a text by creating a sense of continuity and unity. When readers encounter repeated or related words throughout the text, they can easily recognize the connections between ideas and follow the logical progression of the content. There are some research related with lexical cohesion in writing text, such as Danglli (2014), Hellalet (2013), Khalil (2023), and Rabiah (2020).

How well the students understand the use of cohesive devices can be seen from the types and frequency of cohesive devices they use in their writing. Certainly, when they write some types of cohesive devices, they have to write it accurately. Accurate means that the students use cohesive devices appropriately and correctly as the function. Then, the frequency number of cohesive devices they use can determine the quality of their writings. That means, if the students can use some cohesive devices accurately in their writing, the product of their writing is obviously good.

In this study, hortatory exposition text is chosen to be a medium of analyzing the cohesive devices in students' work because this kind of text has already been learned by them in Senior High School. According to Crowhurst (2015), exposition text is considered important to learn for academic success and for general life. It is about how the students give arguments and thoughts, use the proper vocabulary, and explore ideas they have in writing. From their writing, it will show the way they use cohesive devices for connecting the sentences. Based on that explanation, this study is conducted not only concern about the types of cohesive devices, frequency of the cohesive devices but also about how accurate the students used the cohesive devices according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) theoretical framework.

Besides, the reason of choosing cohesive devices by students can explore more in this study. According to Karim and Nassaji (2013), when first language is transferred to L2 writing by the second learners, their L1 will give effect on their writing. It can be a problem while they are finding some differences in structure, lexical of choice and grammar. This difference can cause errors in writing text, and it cannot be denied that interference from native language happens most of time while we are learning English as a Second Language.

Considered on some reasons mentioned, this study is conducted to give more explanation about what kinds of cohesive devices used by students and their reasons for using those. Hence, it can give information to teacher in improving their knowledge in teaching ESL.

METHOD

This research applied uses a qualitative descriptive method with the instrument analyzed is a hortatory exposition text written made by students of *SMA Kesatrian 2 Semarang*. The number of samples in this study was fifteen students and purposive random sampling was used. The text was analysed for its cohesive devices based on the theory of Hassan and Halliday (1976) which includes grammatical and

lexical cohesion. The students' texts were analysed and then all of cohesive devices was counted to get the result. The expert judgement was also conducted to strengthen the analysis of the results of this study. Choosing students' writing is interesting because it was written by students who are not native in using English Language.

This study was conducted to explore more about to explain the students' use of references in writing hortatory exposition text; (1) to explain the students' use of substitution in writing hortatory exposition text; (2) to explain the students' use of ellipsis in writing hortatory exposition text; (3) to explain the students' use of conjunction in writing hortatory exposition text; (4) to explain the students' use of reiteration in writing hortatory exposition text; (5) to explain the students' use of collocation in writing hortatory exposition text; (5) to show the quality of the students' use of cohesive devices to achieve coherence in writing hortatory exposition text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this part, there are findings and discussions of this research in brief. This section is about a grammatical cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction) and lexical (reiteration and collocation). Here, the following explanation presents all findings and discussions each part.

Reference

The first research question focuses on the use of reference as the grammatical devices on students' writings. Reference is divided into personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference Halliday and Hasan (1976). By the supporting data analysis, all of the passages use those parts of reference. There are 170 references found and 35.9% dominated of the use cohesive devices from 15 text. As for the findings, personal reference is the most frequently used in the passages while comparative reference was rarely used. The example of the use of reference which is consisted of personal

reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference, as follows;

Many students have a relationship these days.

Here, the example used the comparative and demonstrative reference *many* and *these*. *Many* as comparative reference refers to the comparison of amount of student who have relationship. Then, *these* as the demonstrative reference indicate a function to show something plural i.e., "days" in that context.

Substitution

The second research question focused on the use of substitution as the grammatical devices on students' writing. Substitution divided into three parts such as nominal, verbal, and clausal Halliday and Hasan (1976). By the supporting data analysis, substitutions were rarely used in this students' writings because it is used in conversation rather than writing. There are 3 substitutions found or 0.6% of the amount cohesive devices in 15 texts. The example of the use of substitution which is consisted of nominal, verbal, clausal, as follows;

there are many benefits, as already mentioned.

In the example above, *as already mentioned* is a verbal substitution used to replace the clause or sentence about learning English as mentioned by the writer. By using these words, the writer did not explain again what the benefits are. The example was taken from text 9, entitled "We Should Learn English"

Ellipsis

The third research question that focused on the use of ellipsis as the grammatical devices on students' writings. Ellipsis divided into three parts such as nominal, verbal, and clausal (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Similarly, with substitution, by the supporting data analysis (see Appendix 2) there were 28 ellipses or 5.9% in the text and it was frequently used in this students' writings. The examples of the use of ellipsis which is consisted of nominal, verbal, and clausal, as follows;

because there is something to work on, namely ideals.

In the example above, there is no correlation between the word "ideals" and the

clausal ellipsis *there is something to work on*. Thus, the reader will be confused to determine what the author meant.

Conjunction

The fourth research question focused on the use of conjunction as the grammatical devices on students' writings. Conjunction consists of additive, adversative, causal, temporal, and continuative (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). By the supporting data analysis (see Appendix 1), the analysis of conjunction was frequently existed following the frequently of reference. It found 135 conjunctions or 28.5%. Conjunction is a relationship that shows how a sentence or clause must be linked to the previous or next part of the sentence. The datum of the use of conjunction which is consisted of additive, adversative, causal, temporal, and continuative, as follows;

Dating is an activity in which tow boy and girls like each other, ...

The example above uses *and* as conjunction. It's express additive conjunction and signal the presence of additional information without changing the previous information on the clause or phrase.

Reiteration

The fifth research question focuses on the use of reiteration as the lexical cohesion on students' writings. Reiteration covers repetition, synonymy, superordinate, and general words (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). It found 82 reiterations or 17.3% of cohesive devices found based on the analysis. The examples of the use of reiteration which is consisted of repetition, synonymy, superordinate, and general word, as follows;

Dating is an activity in which tow boy and girls like each other, ...

In the sentence there are two different words *boys* and *girls* and opposite meaning but in one theme, gender. The example was taken from text 1, entitled "Senior High School Students Should Not Be in a Relationship in Their Ages".

Collocation

In this section refers to the sixth research question. Here is last part of lexical cohesion, collocation. Based on the findings, there are 56 collocations or 11.8% of cohesive devices found. Here provides the examples in the use of collocation, as follow;

And if speaking English is a must then it would be better to find extra hours to study it.

In the example above, *speaking English* is a common collocation that refers to the action of using the English language for communication. In the phrase *speaking English* is used to emphasize the importance of being able to communicate in English. It implies the act of using the English language for speaking and conversing.

In this research, the investigation into cohesive devices has highlighted their pivotal role in achieving coherence within written texts. This analysis unveiled various patterns and frequencies of cohesive devices, offering insights into their contributions to text structure and readability.

The research outcomes revealed a diversity of cohesive devices at play. References, encompassing personal, demonstrative, and comparative forms, emerged as prevalent in student writing, constituting a significant proportion (35.9%) of the cohesive devices employed. Substitution, a mechanism for linguistic variation, surfaced with nominal, verbal, and clausal types, though it was relatively less prominent (0.6%). Ellipsis, a grammatical device that strategically omits information while preserving coherence, accounted for 5.9% of cohesive devices. Conjunctions, acting as grammatical connectors, were abundant (28.5%), predominantly additive conjunctions, enriching text content and clarity. The study further illuminated the role of lexical devices – reiteration (17.3%) and collocation (11.8%) – in enhancing cohesion and comprehensibility.

One implication of this research is the influence of students' first language (L1) on their second language (L2) writing. The transfer of L1 structures, vocabulary, and grammar to L2 writing can result in challenges and errors.

Acknowledging the potential for L1 interference, particularly in ESL contexts, underscores the importance of tailored pedagogical strategies. Additionally, variations in students' perception of cohesive device appropriateness were observed. However, despite these challenges, the text's overall readability affirmed the efficacy of cohesive devices in fostering coherent communication. Recognizing and addressing these challenges can facilitate more effective instruction, helping learners navigate L1-related hurdles and develop a nuanced grasp of cohesive devices in the target language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research substantiates the vital role of cohesive devices in establishing coherence and enhancing readability in hortatory exposition writing. By encompassing the component of cohesive devices – references, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions, reiterations, and collocations – the researcher underscores their significance in crafting well-structured and intelligible texts. For both educators and learners, a nuanced understanding of these cohesive devices is indispensable for effective communication and comprehension within written discourse.

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