

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter highlights the general issues related to the present study. These include background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper. This chapter would be described in Sections 1.1 through 1.8.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In the twenty-first century, writing becomes an essential skill for learners to succeed (Hyland, 2003: xiii). The quality of writing skill, as Hyland (2003) asserts, determines the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital network or printed media. In Indonesia, writing also has an important position (Emilia, 2010), which can be seen from the basic competences formulated in the Indonesian school curriculums, i.e. the Competence-Based Curriculum (KBK/Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi), the KTSP, and the 2013 Curriculum. Those curriculums emphasize the importance of writing in which the students are expected to produce written texts in different text types.

However, writing is not considered an easy skill to master (Brown, 2004; Tribble, 1996: 3). It is because writing is not only about writing down ideas into a written language but also how the ideas are written by fulfilling its language features. According to Alwasilah (2007), the difficulties in writing does not only concern how to generate and organize ideas using appropriate vocabularies, sentences, and organization, but also how to compose the ideas into a readable text. Thus, writing is considered a complex activity.

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Not all pieces of writing can be called a text. As explained by Halliday & Hasan (1976: 1; see also Eggins, 2004: 24), a piece of writing, whatever length, can be called a text when its elements bind together as a unity. Similarly, Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spink, & Yallop (2000; see also Brostoff, 1981) state that text is not

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determined by its length but it depends on its relation to the context and its unity. It is inferred that regardless of its length, a piece of writing is considered a text when its elements relate to the context and build a unity.

Halliday & Hasan (1976: 2; see also Eggins, 2004: 24) present a concept of texture to distinguish text from non-text. Texture consists of two important components (Halliday & Hasan (1976: 2; see also Eggins, 2004: 24; Emilia, 2014: 92). The first is coherence. It concerns contextual devices which relate a text to its social or cultural context of its occurrence (Eggins, 2004: 24). The second is cohesion, which deals with how parts of a text are related to each other as a unity (Eggins, 2004: 24). Both coherence and cohesion, as Bloor & Bloor (2004) state, can determine the quality of a text. They can help to achieve a well-constructed and understandable text or piece of writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 28-30). The present study focuses on cohesion since it is considered a complex phenomenon to describe (see Tsareva, 2010).

Cohesion, as explained in the previous paragraph, is an important dimension in the production of a good text. Creating cohesion in a text can be done by applying cohesive devices. They create connections or relations between the items in the text so that the reader is able to track how the meaning is constructed (Derewianka, 2011: 150). Halliday & Hasan (1976) mention five cohesion devices, namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion and conjunction. Furthermore, Eggins (2004: 33) argues that there are three main types of cohesion in written language. It includes reference, lexical cohesion, and conjunction.

However, writing cohesive texts is still challenging task for many EFL learners (Hinkiel 2004). Some research indicate that students have inadequate knowledge and use of cohesive devices (Liu, 2000; Olateju, 2006; Ghasemi, 2013). The students find difficulties in building cohesive text in terms of the use of reference, conjunction, lexical cohesion, grammar, and structure (Seken, Suarnajaya, & Suarnajaya, 2013). Cohesive devices were inappropriately used by

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the students (Liu, 2000; Olateju, 2006; Ghasemi, 2013; Saudin, 2013; and Asikin 2014).

Considering the importance of cohesion in students' writing and the issue explained above, this study attempts to investigate the types of cohesive devices used by students to construct the meaning and their contribution to the cohesion of the texts. This study is expected to provide clear descriptions about the use of cohesive devices by the students so that it can be a valuable input for teaching practitioners to make better improvements of teaching writing.

Some research has been conducted related to the use of cohesive devices in EFL and ESL students' writing. Research has been done on the use of cohesive devices in high school (Seken, Suarnajaya, & Suarnajaya, 2013; and Asikin (2014), and at university (See Khalil, 1989; Meisuo, 2000; Xu, 2000; Hinkel, 2001); Jin, 2001; Liu & Braine, 2005; Olateju, 2006; Mojica, 2006; Dueraman, 2007; Hsu, 2007; Azzouz, 2009; Majdeddin, 2010; Ahmed, 2010; Alarcon & Morales, 2011; Leo, 2012; Sadighi, 2012; Rahman, 2013; Abdurrahman, Wijaya, & Salam, 2013; Saudin, 2013; Mardhatillah, 2013; and Hung & Thu, 2014). The investigation on the use of cohesive devices also has been done in students' students' argumentative text (Connor, 1984; Alarcon & Morales, 2011; Liu & Braine, 2005; and Saudin, 2013), expository text (Lieber, 1980; Karasi, 1994; Norment, 1994; Xu, 2000; Leo, 2012; and Asikin, 2014), essay writing (Azzouz, 2009; Majdeddin, 2010; Ahmed, 2010; and Hung & Thu, 2014), thesis writing (Abdurrahman, Wijaya, & Salam, 2013; and Mardhatillah, 2013), and descriptive text (Rahman, 2013; and Saud, 2015).

Given the fact that the research focusing on cohesive devices is still rarely conducted at secondary school level and there are no studies existing about the use of cohesive devices in discussion texts written by secondary school students, this study is conducted to investigate the use of cohesive devices in students'

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discussion text of senior high school students in Cirebon and the contribution of the use of cohesive devices to the cohesion of their writing.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Referring to the background of the study discussed above, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What cohesive devices are used in discussion texts written by twelfth-grade students of a senior high school?
2. How does the use of cohesive devices contribute to the cohesion of the texts written by twelfth-grade students of a senior high school?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

This study is designed to explore a textual component called cohesion in EFL students' texts. It has two objectives. The first is to examine the types of cohesive devices used by the students in their discussion texts. The second is to investigate the contribution of cohesive devices to the cohesion of the texts.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

There are five types of cohesive devices, namely reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion, and conjunction (See Halliday & Hasan, 1976; and Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). However, since the present study investigates the students' writings so that this study is limited to three main types of cohesive devices in written language proposed by Eggins (2004), namely reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion found in students' discussion texts.

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### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the findings of the research are expected to provide new information on the investigation of cohesion in students' texts. This study is also expected to offer some practical contribution for students, teachers, and policy makers. For teachers, they are expected to provide a clearer description of the achievement of students' writing cohesion. Furthermore, they can inspire English teachers to teach writing more effectively through the knowledge of texture especially cohesion. For students, the research is expected to enhance the students' ability to write cohesive texts. In terms of policy, it is expected that the results of the study become beneficial consideration for government, as policy maker, to take action in facilitating and supporting the teachers to have more knowledge regarding textual component, especially cohesion, to bring about the best learning outcome of the students in writing.

### 1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

To avoid misconception and misunderstanding, several terms are clarified as follows.

1. Cohesion is a component of texture which refers to the way elements of the text or discourse are related to each other to build a unity (Eggins, 2004).
2. Cohesive devices are language devices which can contribute to the creation of cohesion in written and spoken language (Eggins, 1994; see also Eggins, 2004; and Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Halliday & Hasan (1976; see also Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) list the devices into five categories, i.e

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reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion, and conjunction. Additionally, Eggins (2004) mentions that there are three main types of cohesive devices in written language, namely reference, lexical cohesion, and conjunction.

3. Discussion text is one of the argumentative texts whose purpose is to present more than one point of view, at least two, about a certain issue (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; see also Anderson & Anderson, 1998; Emilia, 2011; Thai 2009). In addition, besides presenting two or more points of view of an issue, the discussion text may present the writer's opinion about the issue in the end (Anderson & Anderson, 1998).

### **1.7 Organization of the Paper**

This research paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 highlights the general issues related to the study in general. These include background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper. Chapter 2 elaborates several theories that are relevant to this study. It examines theories on texture, cohesion, and discussion genre. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology. It restates the research purposes and presents the research design, research site and participants, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings of the present study. Chapter 5 concludes the present study and offers some recommendation.