CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the rationale of the study which motivated the researcher to conduct this study. It also incorporates some statement of the problem, research questions, purposes of this study, significance of the study, scope of the study, definition of related terms, and thesis organization. The longest information, background of the study attempts to portray the importance of cohesiveness in the abstract of the theses written by undergraduate students. Review of some researches on similar topic and the position of this study in relation to others are also included in the discussion of this current chapter. At the end of this chapter, organization of the thesis is presented.

1.1. Background of the Problem

English teaching and learning commonly focus on enhancing the language skills. There are four skills that have to be acquired by students in learning English, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing (Nunan, 2003). Writing is one of the important skills, yet many linguists found that most students consider writing a difficult subject (Emilia, 2005; Ghasemi, 2013; Min, 2006; Peterson, 2010). In doing writing, the writer needs time to think, write, edit, and rewrite (Creswell, 2014; Dania, 2012).

In tertiary level, students' mastery of writing skill is tested through academic writing. At the end of their study, students in tertiary level have to perform their writing skill in the form of research paper or thesis. Emilia (2012) states that writing a thesis is difficult. Meanwhile, Brown (2006 as cited in Emilia, 2012) claims that writing a thesis will be more difficult for ESL/ EFL students.

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In order to be teachers of English in Indonesia, people should be graduated from English Education program from university of education. One of the pre-requirement to graduate is a thesis. Thesis is an academic writing that should be finished by every student. As the most important requirement, students should be able to write a thesis in a good structure.

One of the important elements of a thesis is an abstract (Emilia, 2012). The function of the abstract is to give a summary of the thesis to the reader (Thomas, 2000 as cited in Emilia, 2012). In addition, Pearce (2005 as cited in Emilia, 2012) states that an abstract is the most important part of the whole thesis. Since the abstract plays an important role in the thesis, students should be able to write a well-written abstract.

However, a well-written abstract is rather difficult to be written because of three reasons. The first one, an abstract is usually written at the end of the thesis writing process. In relation to this, sometimes the supervisor does not pay attention to the abstract written by the students. The second one, an abstract is a concise summary from the whole thesis. Meanwhile, students need to write every element that should be written in the abstract. However, they have limited space for it. In relation to this, choosing the best sentences to put in the abstract will be difficult. The last one, since the abstract is a summary of the whole thesis, it should cover all parts of the thesis and should be written in limited sentences. Therefore, the abstract must be written as a cohesive text, not just a collection of unrelated sentences. As Emilia (2014, see Normant, 1994; Palmer, 1999; Normant, 2002; Ahmed, 2010; Hameed, 2008; Salmani, 2007; Tangkiengsirisin, 2010; Wahby, 2014) said, a text is cohesive if the whole text has the sentences that are semantically intertwined and consistent. In other words, students need to write a cohesive abstract in order to make readers easily understand the abstract.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is the grammatical and lexical relationship within a text or sentences. Cohesion can be defined as a link that hold a text together and give the text meaning. In addition, Derewianka

(2011) states that at the text level, there are numbers of other devices that can be used to organize a text cohesively. These cohesive devices make links between various items in the text so that the reader is able to catch the meaning of the text.

Regarding students' ability to create a cohesive writing, several studies have been conducted to investigate the cohesiveness in students' academic writing. One of them is a study conducted by Mardhotillah (2013). It reports that an analysis of cohesion in students' background section of their theses. The result indicated that reference is the most prominent device used in the background section of students' theses. The use of reference in the background section showed that students have been able to provide linguistic source to relate each participant in the background text.

Another study which focuses on cohesiveness in students' writing is conducted by Saudin (2013). This researcher investigated the realization of cohesion in the students' argumentative writing performance. The finding revealed that lexical cohesion made the most contribution to the texts' cohesiveness. It also showed that heavy reliance on repetition might indicate low writing quality while the predominance of collocation indicates high writing quality. Meanwhile, Agustini (2009), in her study on cohesion in three articles of Alwasilah, points out that a text is cohesive when it employs most of the cohesive ties.

From these studies, it can be seen that although a number of researchers have investigated the important of cohesion, the limitations are still found. So far, research investigating the important of cohesion in students' academic writing, especially abstracts, has not been fully reported in the literature. Therefore, the present study attempts to research the cohesiveness of an academic writing which is abstract. In addition, this study would analyze the cohesion of the abstract of the theses written by undergraduate students. This research would be focused on analyzing the kind of cohesive devises used in the abstract and the contributions of the cohesive devices for the cohesion of the abstract.

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1.2. Research Questions

Related to the problems aforementioned, this research tries to reveal two major research questions. They are;

1. What types of cohesive devices do students use in their abstract?
2. How do the cohesive devices contribute to the cohesion of students' abstract?

1.3. Purposes of the Research

With reference to the research questions proposed, this research then is aimed at:

1. Identifying the types of cohesive devices used by the students in their abstract.
2. Investigating the contributions of the cohesive devices used by the students in their abstract.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The use of cohesive devices in students' text has not been fully explored. Only few researchers have explored cohesiveness when doing text analysis. Based on that assumption, this study will contribute to open a wider perspective in the research on cohesion to provide a clearer picture of student's writing achievement. Furthermore, this study is considerably significant in three aspects.

1. Theoretically, this study will give a contribution to enrich the literature of the theories of cohesion, academic writing, and thesis supervision. It also will be helpful in opening widen areas to research in the field of systemic functional grammar, especially cohesion.

2. Practically, this study emphasized the importance of the understanding of creating cohesive texts. Therefore, it is expected to build students' awareness of implementing cohesive devices in order to achieve cohesiveness in their abstract and thesis as a whole.

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3. Pedagogically, it is expected that this study will give enough information on the difficulties of academic writing, especially thesis writing, faced by EFL students. It hopefully inspires writing skill lecturers, particularly thesis writing lecturers, to teach writing more effectively and explicitly through the knowledge of cohesion that is described in this study. This study is also expected to point out the precise difficulties that students have in common in writing their abstract so that supervisor can provide assistance in their abstract writing. The supervisor also can resolve the problems happened in their abstract writing.

1.5. Scope of the Study

There are a number of aspects concerning text that could be investigated and analyzed. Unfortunately, due to the restrictiveness of knowledge, time, and space, the present research only focuses on analyzing a textual property called cohesion in the students' abstract of the theses. The data were taken from the theses which written in two consecutive years 2014 and in the latest 2015 academic years. The abstracts were written by undergraduate students of English education program at one state university in Bandung. The limitation in this study is aimed to cover detailed description and information on cohesiveness of the abstracts and the readability from each abstract which is written in two consecutive years. The analysis dealt with the cohesive devices utilized in the abstract of students' theses and the impact of the use of cohesive devices in students abstract.

1.6. Definitions of Related Terms

The study reported in this thesis utilizes some sort of terms in describing the theories. Considering these theoretical terms may cause misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ambiguity, this section presents short definition to classify the terms which is employed in this study. The clarification of the definitions is

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also expected to assist the readers who share the same concern. It is hope that the readers can obtain a lot of useful information from this section. These are the alphabetical list of the definitions.

1. Abstract is a brief and objective representation of a document or an oral presentation (ANSI, 1997). It provides a description of thesis contents namely, background issues, objectives, methodology, and results.

2. Cohesion is defined as the available linguistics devices used to link information in writing, help the text flow, and hold the text together (Knapp and Watkins, 2005)

3. Cohesive devices refer to the lexico-grammatical patterns consist of reference, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

4. Reference is a semantic relation that creates cohesion by creating links between elements in the text. It relates one element of the text to another element of its interpretation in the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976)

5. Substitution is defined as the replacement of one item in the text by another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

6. Ellipsis refers to a presupposed anaphoric item, the substitution by zero, or the omission of an item and ellipsis operates through its structural link, nominal, verbal, and causal level (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

7. Conjunction refers to the semantic system where speakers/ writers relate clauses by using conjunctive words (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Paltridge, 2006).

8. Lexical cohesion refers to relationships among lexical items in a text and in particular, among content words (Paltridge, 2006).

1.7. Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of five chapters. It starts with the introduction chapter which explains the overall picture of the study, background of the problem that inspire the analysis of cohesion in students' abstract of the theses, the research questions that guide the analysis and investigation of this study, the purposes of the research, the significance of the study, the limitation of the study, and thesis organization. The second chapter is mainly designed to review related literature or theoretical foundation of the theories which are used in this study. The theories focus on cohesion and academic writing. The third chapter elaborates some information on methodology of the research which include research design, research site, data collection method, and data analysis.

Next, the fourth chapter of this study presents the report on cohesive devices used in the abstract of the thesis. This chapter also previews the analysis on the importance of cohesive devices which contribute to the cohesiveness of the students' abstract. The last chapter, chapter five, closes all discussions in the thesis and concludes the present study. This chapter also offers some recommendations for further study.

1.8. Concluding Remark

This chapter has elaborated introduction to this present study. This involves statement of the problem, research questions, purposes of this study, significance of the study, scope of the study, definition of related terms, and thesis organization. Based on the background of the problem, it can be concluded that this study would be focused on analyzing the kind of cohesive devises used in the abstract and the contributions of the cohesive devices for the cohesion of the abstract.