

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains seven discussions. They consist of Background of the Study, Research Questions, Purposes of the Study, Scope of the Study, Significances of the Study, Definitions of Terms, and Organization of Thesis. The longest discussion, Background of the Study attempts to portray the present important position of writing in both Indonesia's English curriculum and globalized world of economy to which the curriculum is partly addressed. The Background also tries to discuss the complexities of learning writing, and the reasons for the choice of cohesion in writing as the area investigated in the study. Reviews of some research on similar topic and the position of the study in relation to others are also included in the discussion.

1.1 Background of the Study

With the title *The Realization of Cohesion in Students' Argumentative Writing Performance*, this study has two important variables. They are cohesion and writing. As the primary variable, cohesion would certainly take up most of the discussions in this study if it were not to be discussed in this background of the study. Therefore, in this background, the focus is on writing to start with.

A good command of writing is seen as vital to equip learners for success now in the twenty-first century (Hyland, 2003: xiii). Hyland mentions that the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital network [and through printed media] is to a great extent dependent on good (English) writing skills. Esselink (200: 4 in Hatim and Munday, 2004: 112) also indicates there are high demands for the effective [writing and] translating business written communication among multi-national companies and their marketing textual materials to promote their products and services to the market.

Anyone having good writing skills undoubtedly has competitive edges in securing employment over others who are not skillful enough in writing. Therefore, in the field of second and foreign language teaching, the teaching of writing now has come to obtain a central position.

In Indonesia, as Emilia points out, writing occupies an important position too. Indonesia's competence-based curriculum of 2003 for secondary schools suggested strongly the teaching of writing to provide the students with the skills for their future success. When the curriculum was replaced in 2007, the new curriculum, KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan/Curriculum of Educational Unit), still puts an emphasis on the importance of writing, that is, the mastery of different text types (2010: 104).

However, writing is a difficult skill to master, especially for EFL/ESL students (Widdowson, 1978 in Mukminatien, 1991: 1, in Syafii: 2001: 2; Lengkanawati, 1990: ii in Syafii, 2001: 7; Brown, 2004: 218; and Alwasilah, 2010: 15 & 2007: 5-6). In more robust words, Ahmed (2010: 211; see also Kafes, 2012: 84) claims that ESL/EFL learners writing across the globe is still poor despite numerous approaches to the teaching of writing having evolved from different teaching methods.

Concerning the complexities of writing, in brief they result from the ways of how to make it have coherence and cohesion. This has been suggested by many linguists. Among them are Witte and Faigley (1981), who associate writing quality with the two properties. In a similar vein, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000 in Muto, 2007:127) state that cohesion and coherence are two important features found in a well-known text. Bloor and Bloor (2004: 84 in Guan, 2009: 337; see also Eggins, 2004: 24) assert that texture, namely coherence and cohesion, is "the quality of being a text."

In other words, coherence and cohesion, known together as texture, are what the students need in order they can improve their writing skill. That is because texture is how a text should be like, a prerequisite of how bits of language should meet in order to be called to have the quality of a sensible text. Only when they have texture, coherence and cohesion, coming together into play, do pieces of language belong to a text which is unproblematic and accessible to its listeners or readers. Therefore, it is important for learners of English to get well informed of and learn coherence and cohesion to be, especially, better writers.

However, EFL/ESL learners still find it difficult to learn these two properties

as evidenced by their poor writing skill mentioned previously. At the same time, research that addresses these properties of texture is still limited. More is needed, especially one that can inspire teaching practitioners, writing teachers more specifically, to teach and help the students improve their writing performance. Aimed as such, this study is therefore expected to fill the gap.

Prior to the explanation of the position of this study in relationship with others, several lines of research having contributed to the field of coherence and cohesion are first of all provided in the following part.

In her research analyzing lexical cohesion, one major device of cohesion, Stotsky (1983: 431 & 441) pointed out the weaknesses of Halliday's and Hasan's (1976) two categories of lexical cohesion, Reiteration and Collocation, which were based on conversational and literary text analyses. In her *Types of Lexical Cohesion in Expository Writing: Implications for Developing the Vocabulary of Academic Discourse*, she suggested some revisions related to the categories of lexical cohesion. Among the revisions, one is the suggestion to include derivational elements as part of repetition/reiteration. The suggestion is accommodated in Halliday and Hasan's later work (1985: 81; see also Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 572).

Liu (2000) in his *Writing Cohesion: Using Content Lexical Ties in ESOL* indicated that often EFL/ESL students' lack of cohesion does not result from an absence of connective words, but from a want of content-lexical ties, his term for lexical cohesion. These deficient content-lexical ties in the students' writing often lead to confusion or misunderstanding as the deficiency causes incoherence or illogical meanings. To help them overcome the problem, Liu in his study proposed various exercises. The exercises are proven to benefit the learners to increase the frequency of occurrences of content lexical ties in their writing production.

Angermeyer (2002: 361) also researched on lexical cohesion in his *Lexical Cohesion in Multilingual Conversation*. However, unlike Stotsky, who studied lexical cohesion in expository texts, Angermeyer investigated it in multilingual conversation practiced by a trilingual family in Canada. He claimed that while

bilingual speakers are expressing an utterance in one language, the insertion of an element of another language in the utterance should be viewed as their attempt to establish lexical cohesion to bring about coherence. His analysis suggested to “eliminate the need to distinguish between loanwords, nonce-borrowing, or single-item codeswitches, as a lexical item is no longer defined in relationship to the lexicon of the language in whose context it occurs, but rather by the cohesive tie in which it participates.”

Different from the three linguists whose studies just centered around lexical cohesion, Witte and Faigley (1981) discussed all the cohesive devices outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976), namely reference, conjunction, ellipsis, substitution and lexical cohesion. In their study *Coherence, Cohesion, and Writing Quality*, Witte and Faigley (1981) suggested that in addition to coherence, cohesion be an important factor of writing quality although there was no evidence to conclude that a large number of cohesive ties of a particular type would positively affect writing quality (199 & 202). The same conclusion was also indicated by Field and Yip (1992: 27) as saying that EFL learners tended to overuse conjunctive devices and sometimes to misuse them.

Now, to turn to this present study, *The Realization of Cohesion in Students' Argumentative Writing Performance*, it attempted to research on one aspect of texture, that is, cohesion. The choice of cohesion as the subject was based at least on the researcher's two believes.

The first one is that cohesion in a text reflects the realization of the speaker's or writer's meaning-making. Eggins (2004: 3) indicates that “language use is functional, and its function is to make meaning.” Halliday and Hasan (1985: 16) have also suggested that this language function to realize meaning is “as a fundamental principle of language.”

Accordingly, learning a language should then be viewed as learning its function to make meaning. Since meaning making or “meaning realization” (Kuo, 1995: 49) is closely related to cohesion, as indicated by this Halliday's and Hasan's (1976: 300 cited in Eggins, 2004: 53) assertion, “there has to be cohesion if meanings are to be exchanged at all”, cohesion is therefore

fundamental as well. It certainly occupies a central position in the process of someone learning a language, in determining the quality of his/her text while communicating ideas.

The second belief is that focusing on textual cohesion will result in an indirect study of coherence. It is true that there are other factors that contribute to text's coherence such as its internal logic, organization, identifiable purpose, distinct generic type, and conformity with its given audience's expectation and knowledge (see the discussion of Coherence in the subheading 2.2.2). However, it is cohesion that contributes to text's coherence to a greater extent (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 48; Stotsky, 1983: 430; Kuo, 1995: 50, Liu, 2000 in Paltridge, 2006: 152; see also Fairclough, 1995 in Angermeyer, 2002: 363). To support this claim more, Hoey (1991: 9-10 in Angermeyer, 2002: 363) indicates that cohesion, especially its most important cohesive resource, lexical cohesion, is "the dominant mode of creating coherence."

Though this study might be the same with the others which discussed cohesion such as the four ones mentioned above, it has its own differences. While the others just discussed one resource of cohesion such as conjunction or lexical cohesion, this study dealt with not only both but also all the resources of cohesion known as the theories of Patterns of Cohesion, which consist of five cohesive resources, conjunction, reference, lexical cohesion, ellipsis and substitution (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Witte and Faigley, 1981: 190-195; Gerot, 1994: 170-183; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 532-578; Eggins, 2004: 33-53; and Paltridge, 2006: 131-145).

This study also has distinct characteristics compared with others which exploited these five resources of cohesion such as ones conducted by Witte and Faigley (1981), Johns (1980), Crane (2000), Wanyama (2006) and Agustini (2009). They did not adopt the extended version of cohesive resources as this study did. This study applied the extended version of the resources as the result of taking into account their new development.

Besides the five resources above, this study resorted to the other two, *tense consistency* and *grammatical parallelism* (see their discussions in subheadings

2.3.6 and 2.3.7) to analyze the students' texts. Further, it also expanded the subclasses of the super-ordinate cohesive resources of lexical cohesion. The subclasses adopted consist of not only *repetition*, *synonymy*, *antonymy*, *hyponymy*, *meronymy*, and *collocation* but also *related words* proposed by Salkie (1995: 28-31; see also Liu, 2000). More detailed information about this lexical cohesion with its subclasses can be seen in the subheading 2.3.3.

As far as the present researcher is concerned, there has not been any research yet so far on the application of this extended version. Investigating cohesion in its more complete construct such as this, the study, therefore, is expected to be able to reveal the students' profile of writing cohesion more thoroughly.

1.2 Research Questions

This research was guided by how cohesive resources that belong to the extended version of Patterns of Cohesion were realized in written texts. The texts are of Argumentative genre written in a test by students categorized into the high, middle and low achievers. The research investigated not only their successes but also less successes or failures in resorting to the linguistic means of those cohesive resources. The research also attempted to depict the the density of cohesion realized across the three students' categories. By doing all these, the study was then trying to answer the following research questions.

- (1) How are cohesive resources deployed in the Argumentative writing performance of the high, middle and low student achievers?
- (2) What are the levels of cohesive density these three categories of students achieve in their writing performance?
- (3) What cohesive resources do the students fail to conform with in their documents of Argumentative text writing?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

This study is aimed at probing into cohesion in its more complete construct. This is done by involving its seven resources or devices to be analyzed as they were realized in the texts. The study also has a purpose to analyze this realization of cohesion in two perspectives, how the devices were deployed and

how they were employed erroneously. The two aims above taken together, the results of the study are expected to provide more thorough accounts of how EFL/ESL learners resorted to the cohesive devices. The results are also hoped to inspire teaching practitioners to teach writing more effectively and in turn help their learners with diagnostic feedback to improve the learners' writing productions to the most extent.

Further, this study has also an aim to reveal the cohesive density across the three proficiency levels. Regardless of whether the densities revealed are different or not across the three learners' levels of proficiency, it is expected that the results can give an insight into the nature of the learners' realization of cohesion in their Argumentative texts.

1.4 Scope of the Study

There are some choices of aspects concerning text to research on. But due to the limitation of his knowledge, his time and the space, the present researcher just attempted to explore a textual property called cohesion in the students' Argumentative writing they produced in an English test. However, the other property, coherence, was discussed too to a certain extent. As the two properties are interwoven, an investigation of one brings a consequence of taking the other into account.

1.5 Significances of the Study

Cohesive resources as a whole have not been fully explored. Just few researchers have resorted to them when doing text analyses. In the light of the fact, it is quite likely that the study, which resorted to the seven cohesive devices in investigating the learners' writing texts, will open a wider perspective in the research on cohesion to provide a clearer picture of the achievement of students' writing cohesion. The following significant points are, therefore, expected to result from this case study:

- (1) It imparts a contribution to the theory of writing cohesion.
- (2) It widens more areas to research on in the field related to texture, especially cohesion.

- (3) It hopefully inspires English teachers, particularly writing teachers, to teach writing more effectively through the knowledge of texture, especially that of cohesion, shared by this study.
- (4) Its results might become considerations for policy makers of education to take actions in helping teachers understand texture, especially cohesion, to bring about the best outcomes on the part of the students' learning to write.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

The study reported in the thesis uses a number of terms in exploring the phenomenon investigated. The terms need to be defined in order to avoid misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ambiguity from emerging. The provision of the definitions is also expected to help the readers sharing the same interest. So, they can obtain much useful information from it. Below is the alphabetical list of the definitions.

1. Coherence is a quality of a text obtained when the text hangs together, meanings or ideas in it form a unified whole to meet the expectation of its listener/reader, and when the text relates to its extra-textual contexts, the social and cultural contexts of its occurrence (see Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 48; and Eggins, 2004: 24).
2. Cohesion is another quality of a text achieved when certain kinds of relations among lexical items in the text are established by lexico-grammatical patterns (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 71). Similarly, Knapp and Watkins (2005: 47) define cohesion as the linguistic devices available to help link information in writing and help the text flow and hold together.
3. Cohesive resources/devices refer to the lexico-grammatical patterns or linguistic cohesive devices which consist of two major classes, lexical cohesion such as repetition, collocation, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and meronymy; and grammatical cohesion such as reference, conjunction, ellipsis, substitution, tense consistency and grammatical parallelism. In

this study, all those cohesive resources belong to the theories of Patterns of Cohesion (see subheading 2.3).

4. Cohesive tie is the establishment of a semantic relation between one element and another in a text so that the interpretation of one of them depends on that of the other (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 8; Witte and Faigley, 1981: 190; Halliday and Hasan, 1985 73; and Eggins, 2004: 29-30). When a cohesive tie or link is established between items, they are then cohesive.
5. Genre is defined as 'a kind of text that derives its form from the structure of a (frequently repeated) social occasion, with its characteristic participants and their purposes' (Kress 1988: 183 in Chandler, 1997).
6. Meaning-making/meaning realization is the construction of a text that is started with the intention of communicating ideas to be construed (see Kuo, 1995: 48-49).
7. Writing performance is a writing production. The type studied in this research is extensive writing performance in which the writer is expected to meet all the standards applied to native language writers in terms of being able to demonstrate his/her successful management of all the processes and strategies of writing up to the length of an essay (Brown, 2004: 220 & 232).

1.7 Organization of Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters, started with this current chapter, chapter one, which is broken down into seven points starting from the background of the study to the organization of the thesis. Chapter two presents four discussions which focus on the literature review in the study. Chapter three describes research methodology, which includes the discussions of research design, research site, research participants, data collections and data analysis. Chapter four shows data presentations and analyses of the students' writing documents, including the data analysis of the interview with the students. This chapter is

summed up with concluding remarks. The last chapter, chapter five, closes all discussions in the thesis with conclusions, limitation and recommendations.

