

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology. The discussions are divided into four subheadings. They are research paradigm and design, research site and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm and Design

The study is qualitative research in nature. It is also called interpretive research (Sugiyono, 2010: 7) because it is based on an interpretive paradigm. The term *paradigm* here is a set of basic beliefs (Richards, 2003 in McKay, 2006: 4). According to Holliday, since phenomenon or reality contains mysteries to which the researcher must submit and can do no more than interpret, interpretivists believe that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation. Hence, there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking, reasoning human (2007: 6).

Characteristics of interpretive or qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 39-43 in Alwasilah, 2000: 78-79; McKay, 2006: 7; and Cresswell, 2007: 36-38) are found in this study. Just to mention some, the characteristics are firstly the setting of the study is natural. It was conducted in a natural surrounding of an English class with students and a teacher having a process of teaching and learning to write in a regular class.

Secondly, human is required as the salient instrument. In the study, it was the researcher who became the instrument as he is the human who has the ability to fully interact with the phenomena he observes and investigates. Thirdly, the inductive method in analyzing the data is applied. In line with this, the research investigated particular data – the student participants' writing pieces – to arrive at general findings and conclusions.

In this study, qualitative research was also selected in order that an in-depth analysis of the students' writing performance is assured. So, broad explanatory information about the phenomenon under study, that is, the realization of cohesion in the students' Argumentative texts can be obtained to the most extent.

However, this study also resorted to quantitative method to some extent. Creswell (2003; see also Holliday, 2007: 2) says it is possible to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative method as one method can support the other one by means of elaborating, enhancing or illustrating the results from the other method. Being subsidiary to qualitative one in the study, quantitative method was applied to identify, for example, the frequency of occurrences of the cohesive resources, the percentage of each resource's contribution to the level of cohesion or cohesive density, and the frequency of the learners' failures in observing the cohesive resources.

In this research, a case study design was adopted. Creswell (2007: 73), in line with Merriam (1998) and Yin (2003), perceives the design as a research strategy or methodology. He defines case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as documents and interviews.

The design has been chosen because it allows the researcher to study the phenomenon deeply to find meaning behind it as Connole (1993: 64 cited in Emilia, 2000: 5) says: "... the essential feature of a case study is the level of depth it can offer in researching all illustrative examples of some phenomenon". Another reason is that a case study, which is also known as a triangulated research strategy (Tellis, 1997), uses data triangulation. So, it enables the researcher to obtain more complete and in-depth information about the issue under investigation and at the same time "to confirm the validity of the processes" (Yin, 1984; and Stake 1995 cited in <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html>; see also Alwasilah, 2000: 150 and Emilia, 2009: 197).

Data triangulation employed in this research was the combination of two data sources, the students' writing documents and the interview with them. How data were obtained by means of these two data sources will be further discussed in the forthcoming section 3.3.

3.2 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in the English Department of Bandung State Polytechnic (Politeknik Negeri Bandung). The English Department, which is relatively still young compared with the other departments available there, was established in the year of 2007. The site was chosen since it is the place where the researcher works. This guarantees him to get an easy access to the site.

Further, during the processes of the research, the researcher gained assistance from his colleagues, especially from the lecturer of the class in which the research was conducted, and obtained necessary formal academic documents concerning the student participants of the study. In brief, he found no difficulties in conducting the research in this college for higher education, where graduates of SMA, *Sekolah Menengah Atas* and SMK, *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (Senior High and Senior Vocational School) can continue their study for around three years.

The student participants of the study, twenty seven altogether, were a class of the second year or fourth semester students majoring in English. In general, their English level belonged to higher Intermediate or lower Advanced. They were selected as the participants because they were in the fourth semester students – thus had learned essay writing related to a few genres, one of which was Argumentative, a text type under investigation in this study.

The twenty-seven participants were first asked to write an essay consisting of around 350-450 words in their regular class as scheduled. They had been informed in advance about this writing task. For the writing, they were given some topics to choose. Each topic was provided with writing prompts (see Appendix 4). The participants were also told that the writing was considered to be a test of the subject of Essay Writing that they were taking in that particular semester.

Next, out of the twenty-seven students, nine (two males and the rest are females) were chosen by a purposive sampling technique as suggested by Kuzel (1992), Frankel and Wallen (1996) and Creswell (2003) in order to represent the nature of the class and to give the complete information as needed. Based on the technique, each three of them were selected to represent respectively low,

middle, and high achievers. It is the writing pieces produced by these three categories of learners that constitute the corpus analyzed in this study.

To avoid misleading selection in categorizing the learners, the researcher crosschecked the English grades of these research participants to the teacher who taught them and to the documents of their academic achievements at the administrative section.

3.3 Data Collection

With the purpose to answer the research questions, triangulated data collections, namely students' writing documents and interview were conducted. The data first collected were the students' nine Argumentative writing documents. The textual documents were obtained after being written for almost one hour, fifty-five minutes to be precise in a test. The texts constituted the primary data in this study.

To complement the primary data, another data collection instrument was implemented. That is interview with the student participants of this study. At one appointed time and in an agreed place, three out of nine students whose texts have been taken as the corpus of the study, were asked to attend the interview. Each of them represented each of their proficiency level.

The questions asked during the interview covered three main themes, the students' general knowledge of the cohesive devices, the sources from where they learned the cohesive devices and the usefulness of knowing the devices for them. To avoid losing the information, the interview was recorded and a note was taken. The transcription and the analysis of the interview can be seen in Appendix 3.

The interview with the students was performed twice. This was so because in the first interview, the data gained were considered to be insufficient yet (Alwasilah, 2000: 203). Some information needed to be added and clarified. In interviewing the students this study applied semi-structured model. This model of interview suggests a sequence of themes to be covered with their respective questions, besides at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and

form of questions in order to follow up the answers given and stories told by the subjects (Kvale, 1996: 124).

3.4 Data Analysis

It is said that data analysis is aimed at discovering pattern, ideas, explanations and understanding of data found and collected during research (McMillan 2001: 221). It was an understanding of how cohesion was realized in the students' documents of Argumentative writing that was sought after in this study. For that purpose, the students' writing documents, the corpus of the study, were investigated and interviews with the students conducted.

In analyzing the data of students' writing documents, the theories of Patterns of Cohesion, which are informed by *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) and discussed in Chapter 2, were applied. The patterns consist of seven cohesive devices, reference, conjunction, lexical cohesion, ellipsis, substitution, tense consistency and grammatical parallelism. The patterns were used to analyze the documents to find out the realization of cohesion in them. That is how the seven cohesive devices above, one by one including their subclasses, were deployed in the documents to bring about the effects that the writers desired. This analysis involved qualitative and quantitative methods since the discussion of the deployment of the cohesive devices was needed to be tabulated too.

In the analysis of the students' documents, how the cohesive devices were erroneously employed was involved as well. This way, the realization of cohesion in the students' texts was seen from two perspectives, from both the correct and erroneous employment of the cohesive devices. Therefore, how cohesion was realized in the texts would be more thoroughly explored. Further, the discussion of this erroneous employment of the cohesive devices was also tabulated. So, the analysis of the students' errors in employing the cohesive devices was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods like that of the students' deployment of the devices.

In analyzing the results of the interviews, conducted at the time and in a place agreed, the answers to the questions were first transcribed. Then, the

transcription of the students' answers to the questions covering the three themes as discussed in section 3.3 above was analyzed. The analysis as seen in Appendix 3 was only qualitatively performed unlike that of the deployment and the erroneous employment of cohesive resources in the students' documents of Argumentative writing.

Further, in order to answer the research questions, the results of this analysis of the interview were triangulated with those of the analysis of how cohesion was realized in the students' document in terms of how the cohesive devices were deployed and erroneously employed by the students. This triangulation of data was aimed to help increase the validity of the research.

In the chapter to come, Chapter 4, the data of the students' documents and the interview are presented and analyzed in detail. The data are further interpreted and related to what other researchers have previously discovered in their respective research on the same or similar area like that investigated in this present study.



