

THE ADOPTION OF COHESIVE DEVICES (CDS) IN THE INDONESIAN STUDENTS' OPINION ESSAYS

by

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Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the types of cohesive devices (CDs) and the errors in using cohesive devices (CDs) in opinion essays made by the Indonesian students of EFL. The subjects were twenty-six (26) undergraduate program students of EFL enrolled in an Argumentative writing class. In order to get the data, they were asked to write an opinion essay which consists of five paragraphs (including introductory and concluding paragraph). After the data were collected, each of the students' paper was read in order to identify the use of cohesive devices based on the theory of cohesion proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Then, the number, the frequency and the percentage of cohesive devices were counted. The results of the study revealed that reference had the highest percentage (52.04%), followed by lexical cohesion (32.95%) and conjunction (15.02%). Meanwhile, substitution and ellipsis were absent. Although there were three types of cohesive to be used, the errors still happened in small number such as in conjunction; *but*, *so*, or and *and*.

Key words: cohesive devices, opinion essay

INTRODUCTION

Cohesive devices are the aspects that should be considered in writing an essay. Cohesive devices deal with how ideas organized in order to flow smoothly. The flow of the ideas is clearly recognized and comprehended when the signals of the connection among sentences are provided by the writers (Rahayu & Cahyono, 2015). Otherwise, the flow of the ideas cannot be easily recognised and comprehended when the signals of the connection among sentences are not provided. Therefore, the availability of signals of the connection among sentences is really needed. The availability of signals of the connection among sentences can

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be facilitated by cohesive devices (henceforth CDs). With cohesive devices, according to Suwandi (2016), students are able to show how parts of a text (written text), sentences or paragraphs relate to one another. The connection is often called cohesion. That is why cohesive devices is one of the many aspects covered in academic writing has been a subject of study (Turmudi, 2017)

Renkema (1993) states that cohesion is one of the seventh standards for textuality. Murcia and Olstain (2006) claim that cohesion is one of the important features of a well written text. Their statements imply that the absence of CDs leads to the failure of achieving standards of being text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) as cited in Flowerdew & Mahlberg (Eds.). (2009) classified CDs into five major divisions. These are as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction are the types of grammatical cohesion; while reiteration and collocation are group under lexical cohesion.

The trends of several studies on CDs were indicated by research focuses. Some studies have focused on CDs including the errors in using them, some studies have focused on the effectiveness of the instruction of CDs, and others have dealt with the development of the use of CDs and their relationships with writing quality.

Related to the variety and the frequency of CDs, Ayub et al. (2012) indicated that reference appeared more dominant (40.48%), followed by lexical cohesion (37.99%), conjunction (19.6%), ellipsis (1.35%) and substitution (0.29%).

Mawardi (2014) reported that reference was used dominantly (50.22%), followed by lexical cohesion (30.02%), conjunction (16.93%), ellipsis (2.73%) and substitution (0.10%). Na (2011) investigated the CDs used in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) texts written by American and Korean EFL. It was found that reference was the most frequently used CDs and then it was followed by lexical, conduction, ellipsis and substitution. In relation to the errors of the uses of CDs, Kwan & Md Yunus (2014) reported that the medium-level pre-service teachers made the most errors in the areas of lexical cohesion, reference and conjunction. On the other hand, high-level pre-service teachers made more errors in the areas of lexical cohesion, ellipsis and reference. Collocation was considered to be the most difficult form of cohesion for both groups of pre-service teachers, while high-level pre-service teachers made more errors in ellipsis than the medium-level pre-service teachers.

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This still indicated that the pre-service teachers' overall mastery of cohesive writing was insufficient.

A group of scholars focused on the effectiveness of the instruction of CDs (Rassouli & Abbasvandi, 2013; Zoghipour & Nikou, 2016). The instruction could increase the learners' use of CDs, it could assist the students to improve more cohesive writings but the learners' writing quality was improved by the instruction (Rassouli & Abbasvandi, 2013). The results of an independent-samples t-test revealed that the experimental group surpassed the control group in relation to their writing accuracy and complexity (Zoghipour & Nikou, 2016).

The use of CDs can be connected to the development of the use of cohesive devices and the writing quality (Crossley & Kyle, 2016); (Yang & Sun, 2012). In most cases, cohesion cues that demonstrated growth patterns in L2 writers were not the same features predicted judgments of proficiency in regression models. Such findings have important implications for both language testing and teaching. From a testing perspective, the results provide evidence for the types of CDs that are predictive of essay quality providing some indication of what elements inform assessors' decisions (Crossley & Kyle, 2016). The (correct) use of CDs correlated significantly positively with the writing quality, irrespective of the EFL proficiency levels (Yang & Sun, 2012). However, this present study has some limitations which can be explained as follows. First, in terms of reference, the discussion is restricted to the use of personal reference. In relation to conjunction, the discussion is limited to the use of: *but*, *and*, *or*, and *so*.

Considering the importance of cohesive devices in writing, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What types of cohesive devices are used by the Indonesian students of EFL in their opinion essays?
2. What are the students' errors in using cohesive devices made by the Indonesian students of EFL in their opinion essays?

METHOD

The present study adopted the concept of corpus-based research. The corpus to be analysed referred to the students' opinion essays. The subjects were twenty-six (26) undergraduate program students of EFL from 2nd semester in an Argumentative writing class

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at a state university in Indonesia. In order to get the data, the students were assigned to write an opinion essay. They were requested freely to choose one of the offered topics: (1) Penalty Laws for Drug Distributors, (2) National Examination in Indonesia, (3) Disadvantages of Arranged Married, (4) LGBT should be banned in Indonesia and (5) Online Shop: Expectation vs Reality. An opinion essay should consist of five paragraphs (introduction, three body paragraphs and concluding paragraph). After the data were collected, each of the students' paper was read in order to identify the use of CDs based on the theory of cohesion proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Then, the number, the frequency and the percentage were counted. The next step was determining the inappropriateness of the use of CDs in opinion essays by the Indonesian students of EFL (Turmudi, 2020b). The analysis of the CDs in Indonesian students of EFL's opinion essays was done manually. In addition the process of displaying data employed the manual system using MS Word (Turmudi, 2020a).

FINDINGS

Since the expected answers to research problems of the study are related to: (1) the types of CDs as used in an opinion essay and (2) the errors in using CD in an opinion essay made by the Indonesian students of EFL. The findings are presented based on the order of research problems.

The Use of CDs

The summary of the use of CDs in opinion essays written by the Indonesian students of EFL can be shown in the following table.

Table 1
The Frequency of the Adoption of CDs in the Indonesian students of EFL's Opinion Essays

No	Types of Cohesive Devices	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Reference	471	52.04%
2.	Lexical Cohesion	298	32.95%
3.	Conjunction	136	15.02%
	Total	905	100 %

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As seen in table 1, it was proved that reference had the highest percentage (52.04%), followed by lexical cohesion (32.92%) and conjunction (15.02%). Substitution and ellipsis are absent.

The Errors in Using CDs

Related to the errors in using CDs in opinion essay made by the Indonesian students of EFL, the following table is provided.

Table 2
The Frequency of the Errors in the Adoption of CDs in Indonesian students of EFL’s Opinion Essays

No	Types of CDs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Conjunction:			
1.	And	1	11.11 %
2	But	4	44.44%
3.	So	2	22.22%
4	Or	2	22.22%
Total		9	100%

Table 2. shows that there were 9 (nine) errors of in using cohesive devices made by the students. Conjunction “*but*” has the highest errors, followed by *so*, *or* and *and*. However, overall, the students only made a few errors.

DISCUSSION

The Adoption of CDs

Based on theory of CDs proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), CDs can be divided into five major divisions. These are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. However, there were three types of cohesive devices that were used in the students’ opinion essays, among others, reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

The following are the examples of the uses of CDs in opinion essays by the Indonesian students of EFL. The CDs include reference, lexical cohesion and conjunction. In terms of reference, the focus of the study is specifically on personal pronoun and in terms of conjunction, the focus of the study is specifically on; *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.

Excerpt 1 taken from SE.16: reference (personal pronoun)

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However, when I called the seller, I told him that I want to buy. He told me that the cost delivery from Bandung to Malang is Rp. 42. It means that I have to pay Rp. 292.000, for the shoes and its cost delivery. Clearly, shopping on line is not that cheap as you think.

Note that there are various personal pronouns to be used in the above excerpt such as: I, me; the seller; him; the shoes, its and you. *I* refers to (the students), *him* refers the seller (other people), *its* refers to the shoes (the object being discussed) and *you* refers to readers.

Excerpt 2 taken from SE.14: lexical cohesion

National Examination in Indonesia still becomes a hot issue that is often being discussed. The use of National Examination is to decide whether students an graduate or not. But some people think that National Examination is still appropriate to decide student's graduation. I perceive that National Examination should be omitted for three reasons.

To achieve cohesion, the writers tend to repeat the same words. The words can be in the form of nouns, adjectives, and so forth. In the paragraphs above, the words “national examination” is repeated three times. Based on these examples, it was indicated that the words “national examination” becomes very important issue for students’ essays so that the students repeat them several times.

Excerpt 3 taken from SE.23: conjunction *and*

I got a broken and dirty cell phone.

In this context, the writer uses conjunction *but* to connect between a broken and dirty cell phone.

Excerpt 4 taken from SE.28: conjunction *but*

The cellphone looked very good in the advertisement in an online shop but what she got was a broken cellphone.

In this sentence, the writer uses conjunction *but* to show that the picture of a cell phone that appears in advertisement in online shop and compared to cell phone that the buyer get were different.

Excerpt 5 taken from SE.23: conjunction *so*

In some cases, the users do not have enough money, so they stole the money to buy drugs.

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The conjunction *so* as found in the sentence above indicated that the users stole the money as consequence of is having not enough money.

The results of the current study are similar to some studies that have been conducted by the following scholars in the context of the uses of cohesive devices (specifically in the case of reference). Na (2011) when investigating the cohesive devices used in CMC texts written by American and Korean EFL found that reference was the most frequently used cohesive devices followed by lexical, conduction, ellipsis and substitution. Ayub's study (2012) indicated that the dominant types of cohesive devices used by the students were reference (40.48%), followed by lexical cohesion (37.99%), conjunction (19.6%), ellipsis (1.35%) and substitution (0.29%). Another finding as revealed by Mawardi (2014) in which reference was dominantly used by the students (50.22%), followed by lexical cohesion (30.02%), conjunction (16.93%), ellipsis (2.73) and substitution (0.10%).

Referring to the results of research mentioned above, it seems clear that reference occupies the top position. This means that reference is the most common item in cohesive devices that the students adopt in their opinion essays. This is caused by the existence of reference as the part of sentences as either subject, object, modifier and so forth. In this context of the study, substitution and ellipsis are not found. Halliday and Hasan (1984) contended that substitution and ellipsis are more characteristically found in dialogue. Above all the current findings are schemed in the prior studies (Turmudi, 2017; 2020b).

The Errors in Adopting CDs

Errors still appears in the students' essays. The following are the examples of errors that the students made.

Excerpt 6 taken from SE.2: error in using "*but*"

But they still face some test to enter the next grade.

Conjunction *but* here is put in the beginning of the sentence and there is nothing to contrast. Therefore, the conjunction *but* is considered to be an error.

Excerpt 7 taken from SE.12: error in using "*so*"

It means that most of the national examination results are not based on competence. So, it is not effective since the students' answers are not pure and they should do another test.

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Conjunction *so* here is put in the beginning of the sentence and there is nothing to contrast. Therefore, the conjunction *so* is considered to be an error.

Excerpt 8 taken from SE.21: error in using “*and*”

And the biggest reason if you buy in onlines shop is the large number of deception. Conjunction and here is put in the beginning of the sentence and there is nothing to combine. Therefore, the conjunction and is considered to be an error.

Excerpt 8 taken from SE.25: error in using “*or*”

How about if the parents choose a husband or wife for their child which they never meet before or ask know as arrange marriage.

The students can use three types of cohesive devices in their essay, namely reference, lexical cohesion and conjunction. Although the students can use three types of cohesive devices in their essay, the errors still happened in a small number such as *but*, *so*, or and *and*.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that reference had the high percentage (52.04%) followed by lexical cohesion (32.92%) and conjunction (15.02%). Meanwhile, substitution and ellipsis are absent. Although there were three types of cohesive to be used, the errors still happen in a small number such as in conjunction; *but*, *so*, or and *and*.

Implication

The effective use of cohesive devices has been seen as one of the important criteria for good writing. Therefore, in the context of writing instruction, the adoption of CDs should be taken into account and it should become an integral part of writing instruction. The students cannot avoid adopting cohesive devices in their writing because the text is often built on the phrases, the sentences, the clauses and the paragraphs. The inclusion of CDS in writing instruction, will help the students to see how parts of a text; the phrases, the sentences, the clauses and the paragraphs related to one another. Insufficient knowledge and skills in adopting cohesive devices can hinder the students to achieve cohesion in their writing.

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Conflicting results of present study with previous studies on various aspects of CDs open the teachers' outlooks that the items in CDs work well in certain contexts or situations.

BIOPROFILE

Rahmadi Nirwanto obtained his undergraduate degree in English education from University of Palangka Raya in 1995 and Master's in English education from Islamic University of Malang in 2010. He is taking a Ph.D program at Universitas Negeri Malang now. He has been working as a lecturer at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya since 2002. His corresponding author: rahmadi.nirwanto@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

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