

COHERENCE ASPECTS WITHIN EFL ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to discover Indonesian undergraduate students' writing skill in composing a coherent English essay. The approach of the research is qualitative to solve factual issues despite of testing hypothesis. Data is analyzed using content analysis method. The last stage is to present the result using informal method which means presenting result by using words instead of numbers and statistic. The source of data is taken from essay texts written by thirty undergraduate students using theme "Students' Attitude toward Indonesian Language" chosen by purposive random sampling. The result of analysis has revealed if the undergraduate students have not used coherence aspects properly, moreover there is one aspect is not used. The coherence aspects consist of repetition of key noun, the use of consistent pronoun, transition signals and logical order.

Key words: undergraduate students, essay, coherence

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui keterampilan menulis esai bahasa Inggris yang koheren pada mahasiswa program studi Bahasa Indonesia. Penelitian dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk menyelesaikan isu faktual dengan tidak menguji hipotesis. Data dianalisis dengan metode analisis isi untuk melihat kesesuaian aspek esai yang koheren. Hasil penelitian disajikan dalam bentuk pemaparan bukan angka ataupun statistik. Sumber data diambil dari esai berbahasa Inggris yang dibuat oleh 30 mahasiswa program studi Bahasa Indonesia dengan tema "Sikap Mahasiswa terhadap Bahasa Indonesia" yang diambil dengan teknik purposive sampling. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa belum dapat menggunakan aspek koherensi secara tepat bahkan terdapat aspek yang tidak digunakan. Aspek koherensi meliputi pengulangan kata benda utama, penggunaan kata pengganti nama yang konsisten, kata transisi, dan susunan logis.

Kata kunci: mahasiswa, esai, koherensi

INTRODUCTION

In academic world, writing is considered as a necessity since through writing people may transfer their knowledge. Katz (2006) states that science is the orderly collection of observation about the natural world made through well-defined procedures, and modern science is an archive of scientific papers. It is obvious if a piece of writing gives essential contribution to knowledge. Scientists and researchers share their new findings through a piece of writing.

Zemach and Rumisek (2003) state that writing is a very important part in university study because undergraduate students will write tasks which may vary from one paragraph to several pages long. They also will write answers of their test which can be in the form of several sentences long or even in a complete essay. Due to the importance of writing, undergraduate students are demanded to acquire a proper writing skill. One of the products of writing is essay. Based on Siswanto in Lubis (2018), writing will be easy as long someone has basic things to write, willingness, sensitivities, knowledge, creativity, hard work, smart, final goal and sincere. It is clear if before people start to write, they should have attitudes which will help them in composing a good writing.

Through writing, people may express their untold idea and opinion. The smallest unit of discourse is a paragraph. Some paragraphs may extend into an essay. Mcrimmon in Budiyono (2012) explains if an essay has main topic to be communicated. An essay is developed by some elements such as word, sentence, and paragraph. It can be stated if a good essay can deliver its topic clearly to the audience.

Kane (2000) explains that in developing an essay, things must be

considered are its unity and coherence. In unity means, the essay only talks one topic. While coherence means all the paragraphs within the essay are interconnected each other. A coherent essay is easy to be read and understood. To be coherent, a paragraph must satisfy two criteria. First, it must have a relevance-every idea that must be related to the topic. Second, effective order, ideas must be arranged in a way that clarify their logic or their importance. Considering the importance of composing a good essay, the researcher is going to conduct an analysis of essay's coherence developed by undergraduate students of Indonesian Language for education Program.

There have been some researchers conducted in investigating coherence writing essay such as Sanders and Noordman (2000) who focus on the cognitive status of these relations. In an experiment, using reading, verification and free recall tasks, two crucial aspects of the structure of expository texts were investigated: the type of coherence relation between segments (problem-solution versus list) and the linguistic marking of the relations by means of signaling phrases (implicit versus explicit).

Lopez, et. al. (2008) who analyze student responses to an examination, affirm that the performance of students on code tracing tasks correlated with their performance on code writing task. Ahmed (2010) who focuses on the organizational problems, says that Egyptian student teachers of English encounter when they write an English essay. The findings reveal that students encounter some problems in the cohesion and coherence of EFL essay writing such as using cataphoric and anaphoric reference, ellipsis, substitution, and genre related cohesive ties.

Crossley and McNamara (2011) investigate the importance of human evaluations of coherence in predicting human judgements of holistic essay quality. The findings indicate that human judgements of coherence are the most predicative features of holistic essay scores. The findings imply in understanding of coherence in writing quality.

Burstein, Tetreault, and Andreyev (2010) demonstrate that by combining Barzilay and Lapata's entity-based features with novel features related to grammar errors and word usage. Those features can dominantly escalate the performance of automated coherence prediction for student's essay for different population. In this research, the researcher tries to investigate the gap that has not been analyzed in composing a coherent English essay that composes of some aspects of coherences such as repetition of key noun, the use of consistent pronoun, transition signals and logical order.

English Foreign Language or EFL is considered as important language skill since English acts as *lingua franca*. By mastering EFL, undergraduate students are expected to be able to handle other competitors from other countries. Rao in Ahmed (2010) mentions that an EFL writing is useful in two respects. First, it motivates students' way of thinking, organizing and criticizing ideas. Second, it also can strengthen student's learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language. It shows that EFL is beneficial for any learners.

As Indonesian Language for Education undergraduate students, it is important for them to master EFL, since their future competitors may come from western countries. Other reason is that they can enlarge their working

opportunities if they can pour their insight through English.

EFL writing students based on Enginarlar's in Diab (2006) investigations were reported perceive surface-level error correction as effective teacher feedback. This means if students of EFL tend to receive and to consider a surface-level correction from their teacher as an effective reply. Leki in Diab (2006) also states that students equate good writing in English with error-free writing and that they expect and want all errors in their papers to be corrected. This statement shows if EFL students tend to have corrections in their writing since it is not their first language.

Procter in Budiyo (2012) defines essay is a piece of writing (short writing) in the form of prose containing one problem. An essay is a prose writing that contains writer's opinion, feeling, and mind as far as a problem touching his/her mind (Atmazaki in Marni, 2014). It is clear if an essay is assumed as a piece of writing containing writer's opinion, feeling, point of view relates to a problem.

In arranging an essay, the aspects that must be concerned are its unity and coherence. Talking about coherence, Halliday and Hasan in Itaristanti (2016) state if coherence is a logical relation between one paragraph with the other within a discourse. Coherence based on this definition focuses on the relation in between paragraphs that will make a discourse becomes easy to be understood and comprehended.

Paltridge, et. al. in Jones (2011), coherence suggests that ideas in the writing hold together. In this way, the reader can follow the overall position that the writer takes, those arguments are given to support the writer's position, and the evidence that the writer provides in supporting those arguments. It can be

seen if coherence allows the readers to comprehend and to catch the meaning which lie inside the language delivered by the author or the speaker.

Oshima, Hogue, and Lê (2006) propose that in order to have a coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together, that is, the movement from one sentence to the next that must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one. This definition emphasizes on arranging the text into logical order, which means, the text is easy to be understood. In arranging the text into smooth condition means if the transition from one matter into others must not leave a gap that will make the reader confuses.

There are four ways to achieve coherence. First, repetition of key nouns. To achieve a coherence, a writer can repeat key nouns frequently within the paragraph. The repetition of key noun makes the paragraph more coherent and the meaning is clearer. Second, using of consistent pronouns. Another tool to achieve coherence in an essay is by using consistent pronouns. Using consistent pronouns means that the writer uses the same person and number throughout the paragraph. Never change pronoun you into he or she (change of person), or from he into they (change of number). From the example above, it can be seen if the writer used consistent pronoun from the word gold into it. The word gold is classified into impersonal pronoun, which is it. The word gold is also changed using possessive pronoun its.

Third, transition signals. In achieving a coherence, make sure to use appropriate transition signals. Transition signals are words such as first, next, finally, therefore, and however, or phrases such as in conclusion, on the other hand, and as a result. By using them, it will make the readers easy to

follow the writer's idea. Those transition signals make the paragraph become coherence. Thing that must be also considered is a writer does not always use transition signal in front of every sentence. Using too many transition signals can also make the readers confuse. There are three categories of transition signal which are sentence connectors such as in addition, furthermore, etc. Second category is clause connectors such as and, or, although, if, etc. The last category is others form such as another, an additional, in spite of, etc.

Fourth, logical order. A writer should arrange her/his writing in logical order to achieve coherence. Logical order will be depending on the writer's topic and purpose. In arranging a writing, the order must be logical to a reader accustomed to the English way of writing. There are three kinds of logical order in English, which are chronological order, logical division of ideas, and comparison/contrast. Each kind of order has its own characteristic to show the connections between the ideas. In chronological order, the writer uses a lot of time expression such as first, after that, after 1990, etc. In logical division, ideas are put into groups, and each group is discussed one after the other. To introduce each group, the writer uses transition words such as first, etc. The third kind of logical order is comparison/contrast. In comparison, it is often met expression such as larger than, differ from, etc. While in showing similarities, the writer tends to use expression such as similarly, compare with, etc.

METHOD

The data is taken from one of the English Foreign Language classrooms in a private university located in east Jakarta. The data consists of ten essays

selected randomly from thirty essays taken. Each of essay will be analyzed by its coherence aspect based on Oshima's theory. Once the data is analyzed, it will be interpreted and put into a table so that it is easy to be understood. The result of the analysis will be used as an input in gaining the result of EFL writing classroom.

This research is a qualitative research. Data is taken from script play of Oedipus Rex. Qualitative research based on Creswell in Supriatna (2016) is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conduct the study in a natural setting. It means that this approach emphasizes in understanding as an inquiry process which is different from traditional methodology. This approach explores social and humanity matter which relate to human activity and life.

The method used in this research is pointed by Ratna (2004), the method is divided into three steps, that is, collecting data, analyzing data and interpreting result. Data is collected through library research and analyzed using content analysis. The last stage is interpreting data in informal method which presents the result through words, not numbers or statistics.

The technique used in this research is content analysis. Cole in Elo and Kyngäs (2008) states that content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal, or visual communication

messages. Holsti in Neuendorf (2002) defines that content analysis as any technique for making inference by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. It is obvious that through content analysis, researchers may have inferences within the messages.

In order to ensure the credibility of the findings, Creswell in Rapley (2007) suggests verification procedures for qualitative studies which are triangulation; outliers and extreme cases; surprises; negative evidence, peer review; spurious relationships; if-then test; rival explanations; replicating findings; informant feedback; rich, thick description; external audits. This research's credibility is ensured by triangulation. The writer does spiral techniques, continually test and retest the findings until saturation.

The Design of the research can be drawn as follow:

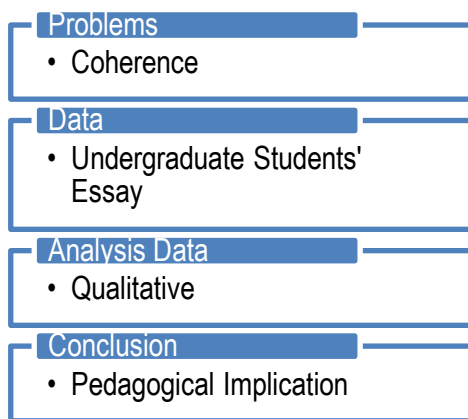


Figure 1
The Design of The Research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Once the essays are read, the writer analyzed them as follows:

Table 1
The Distribution of Coherence's Aspects

Coherence's Aspects	Essay Number	Research Finding	
		Kind	Number
Repetition of Key Noun	1	Bahasa Indonesia	7
		Indonesian	4

	2	Indonesia Language	12
		Indonesian	3
	3	Bahasa Indonesia	7
		Indonesian	3
	4	Bahasa Indonesia	1
		Indonesian language	1
		Language	12
	5	Bahasa	4
		Indonesian language	10
	6	Language	7
		Indonesian language	1
		Foreign language	2
	7	Language	10
		Indonesian language	3
	8	Language	4
		Indonesian language	4
	9	Language	3
		Indonesian language	12
	10	Language	7
		Indonesian language	7
Consistent Pronoun	1	Its (replace Bahasa Indonesia)	1
		They (Indonesian Youth)	2
	2	-	
	3	They (Indonesian people)	3
	4	They (Indonesian people)	1
	5	Their (teachers)	1
	6	It (language)	1
	7	Their (students)	1
		They (students)	2
	8	He (each person)	2
		They (College students)	3
		Them (College students)	1
		Their (College students)	1
	9	-	
	10	It (language)	1
		We (citizen of Indonesia)	3
Transition Signal	1	And, so that, but, thus	4
	2	But, other than that, therefor, then, so also	5
	3	As, at the moment	2
	4	But, because, in my opinion	3
	5	But, and, in this time, for example	4
	6	As well as, and also	2
	7	This fact, whereas, because, in other word, but.	5
	8	And	1
	9	Basically	1
		Because	1
		How ever	1
	10	Thus	1
Logical Order	1	Logical division	
	2	Comparison	
	3	Comparison	
	4	Comparison	
	5	Chronological	
	6	Chronological	
	7	Logical division	

8	Logical division
9	Logical division
10	Logical division

Based on the analysis, it is seen if essays composed by EFL students have not contained coherence aspects completely. For repetition key noun, the maximum repetition within the essays is twelve times and the minimum repetition is only one. In using consistent pronoun, the lowest usage is null and the highest is three times. While the lowest usage for transition signal is one and the highest is five. In arranging logical order, three essays are composed in chronological, two comparisons and five chronological order.

1. Essay 1

The writer uses repetition key noun *Bahasa Indonesia* seven times and *Indonesian* four times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *its* and *they*. While for using transition signal, the writer uses: *and, so that, but, thus*. For showing logical order, the writer uses *first* and *second* to show logical order.

2. Essay 2

The writer uses repetition key noun *Indonesian language* twelve times and *Indonesian* three times. The writer does not use consistent pronoun. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *but, other than that, therefor, then, so also*. For showing logical order, the writer uses comparison.

3. Essay 3

The writer uses repetition key noun *Bahasa Indonesia* seven times and *Indonesian* three times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *they* to refer Indonesian people as much three times. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *as* and *at the moment*. For showing logical order, the writer uses comparison.

4. Essay 4

The writer uses repetition key noun *Bahasa Indonesia* only once, *Indonesia language* once and *language* twelve times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *they* to refer Indonesian people only once. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *but, because* and *in my opinion*. For showing logical order, the writer uses comparison.

5. Essay 5

The writer uses repetition key noun *Bahasa* only four times, *Indonesia language* ten times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *their* to refer teachers only once. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *but, and, in this time* and *for example*. For showing logical order, the writer uses chronological.

6. Essay 6

The writer uses repetition key noun *Bahasa* only four times, *Indonesia language* ten times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *their* to refer teachers only once. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *but, and, in this time* and *for example*. For showing logical order, the writer uses chronological.

7. Essay 7

The writer uses repetition key noun *language* only ten times, *Indonesia language* three times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *their* to refer students only one time and *they* to show students two times. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *This fact, whereas, because, in other word, but*. For showing logical order, the writer uses logical division.

8. Essay 8

The writer uses repetition key noun *language* four times,

Indonesia language also four times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *he* (each person) two times, *they* (College students) three times, *them* (college students) once and *their* (college students) once. While for transition signal, the writer only uses *and*. For showing logical order, the writer uses logical division.

9. Essay 9

The writer uses repetition key noun *language* three times, *Indonesia language* twelve times. The writer does not use any consistent pronoun. While for transition signal, the writer uses: *basically*, *because* and *how ever*. For showing logical order, the writer uses logical division.

10. Essay 10

The writer uses repetition key noun *language* seven times, *Indonesia language* also seven times. The writer uses consistent pronoun *it* (language) once, *we* (college students) three times, *them* (college students) once and *their* (college students) once. While for transition signal, the writer only uses *and*. For showing logical order, the writer uses logical division.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, it is implied if the learners of EFL class have not understood the typology of coherence aspects. This understanding is considered as an important knowledge in developing writing skill. Without it, it will be difficult to comprehend the message being delivered by the writer within an essay. In building an essay, coherence must be considered together with cohesion aspect. It is important for teacher in EFL classroom to pay more attention in explaining the theory of coherence aspects and give clear examples of those aspects so that the

learners are able to compose a coherent essay. Due to the deficiency of this research, replication still can be conducted in analyzing essay's relevance and paragraph flow. Those such analysis could help undergraduate students in composing a coherence essay.

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