The Students' Cohesive Devices Mastery and Its Relationship towards Their Writing Achievement

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Abstract

This study was aimed at finding out the students' cohesive devices mastery, their writing achievement, and the relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement at the 5th semester students of English Education Department of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in the academic year of 2018/2019. The study employed the correlational method and conducted with 25 students. To collect the data, the writer used objective test and writing test. The analysis was computed by using IBM SPSS 23. The finding showed that reference was more frequently and correctly answered. It was followed by conjunction with 19 %, substitution with 17 %, collocation with 17 %, and ellipsis with 15%. Additionally, reiteration was the least cohesive devices correctly answered only 12 %. The average score of cohesive devices test was 69.41. The next finding showed that the average score of students' writing was 76.76. The result of writing analysis showed that the dominant writing problems were on vocabulary, mechanics, and language mastery. The last finding showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement (r = 0.715, sig. = 0.00).

Keywords: Correlational Study; Cohesive Devices; Writing

Introduction

Writing skill is essential in higher education and the world of work. It is the most complicated skill to master (Hegarty, 2000: 5). The difficulty in writing is also supported by Mertens (2010: 2), he states that writing is an effortful activity that the human does. It is the most difficult skill than other three skills because it requires all aspects in language. Those aspects are expressing the idea, combining sentences into a good paragraph, choosing the suitable vocabulary, and using the appropriate cohesive devices and applying a good structure to make coherent text.

Despite its difficulty, writing has important role that one generation can transfer the knowledge to next generation. By realizing it, students need to develop their writing skill. As stated by Graham, et al, (2016: 2), developing writing skill can help them be successful inside and outside the classroom. It gives them the opportunity to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences. It also encourages them to think and respond critically.

Learning to write has become a challenge and multi skilled process. Students need to learn how to recognize, evaluate, and build up ideas. They also need to arrange sentences, create paragraphs, and convey ideas in the standards of written English (Muschla, 2006: 15). That is why writing is a long process that most of students have a problem on it. Moreover, many students ignore the importance of studying writing skill because they spend little time in practicing the writing skill.

University students should be able to master the writing skill. They must write clearly about the topics related to their research. Unfortunately, students still face many writing problems in writing. Moreover, writing in English is

not as easy as writing in Bahasa. English writing is complex since English is not the first language in Indonesia.

The problems in writing skill should be noted. In order to solve the problem, the teacher and the student should understand the factors which may be the reason of the problem in writing English. According to Huy (2007: 237), the main problems of students' learning writing skill are students have lack of vocabulary mastery, they face difficulties in grammar structures, they do not understand and interested in the topic of writing, they do not have enough time for being revised, their resources of materials are limit, they do not have enough time to practice. Additionally, other factors may affect the poor writing are because of they have low motivation to write, low reading proficiency, and big effect of their first language toward their English writing text (Fareed, et. al, 2016: 81).

Cohesion is considered as one of the essential factors to make the reader more understand and enjoy reading the whole texts. Khelifii (2014: 20) states that cohesion is a crucial element in making a good paragraph. Moreover, he indicates that cohesive in writing is one of the most challenging skill to determine the success of academic writing. Thus, it is essential for students to master cohesive devices since it is considered as a bridge to connect clauses, sentences, and paragraphs to have an informative text — the more appropriate the use of cohesive devices, the better the quality of the writing.

The objectives of the research are to test the students' cohesive devices mastery and their writing achievement, and to find out how strong the relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement is. There are so many problems that may arise, and it is quite impossible for the writer to handle all of the problems because the time and place limitation. This research only focuses on two aspects. They are students' cohesive devices mastery and students' writing achievement. To obtain students' cohesive devices mastery data, the objective test was used. The writer also conducted a writing test in the form personal recount text.

The result of this research is much expectantly to help students especially, and also for readers generally in giving information about how cohesive devices mastery contributes toward writing achievement. This research is expected to be advantageous practically not only for the students and the teachers, but also for researchers who interest in the field of cohesive devices mastery and writing. The students can practice more by learning the factors which can improve their writing. For the teachers, it will help them in designing the material and the teaching method that can be applied in the classroom to increase the writing achievement. The result of this study might be useful for the other researcher as a reference to conduct future research that has relation with cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement. For further study, it may conduct within other skills. They can be speaking, reading, or listening skill.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a correlational method with a quantitative approach. In this study, there were an independent variable and a dependent variable. Cohesive devices mastery was determined as the independent variable. Meanwhile, writing achievement was identified as the dependent variable. The participant of this study was from 25 students at the fifth-semester students of English Education Department of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in the academic year of 2018/2019 which were chosen by using simple random sampling.

The writer used an objective test and a writing test to collect the data. In obtaining the data of students' cohesive devices mastery, the writer employed an objective test in the form of multiple choice test. The writer adapted Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework which focuses on five types of cohesive devices mastery; reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. The objective test consisted of 40 questions. First, it was given to the tryout class. After collecting it, then the writer analyzed its validation and reliability. It was found that there were six invalid questions. Consequently, there were valid and reliable 34 questions.

The writer asked the sample class to write a personal recount text which consisted of at least three paragraphs or 150 words. They were instructed to consider the content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. The scoring rubric of writing test was adapted from Heaton's theory (1975).

Results and Discussion

The data was taken from the already valid and reliable test which had been distributed to the students as participants in the sample class. Based on the result of students' cohesive devices test, it found that the maximum score of cohesive device

mastery was 85, the minimum score was 50, and the mean score was 69.41. From the score of writing achievement test was found that the maximum score was 92, the minimum score was 58, and the mean score was 76.76.

The Result of Cohesive Devices Mastery Test

Before going to discuss the computation result of the Pearson product moment correlation, let us first discuss the analysis of the result of the students' cohesive devices mastery test and their writing test.

After getting the score of students' cohesive devices mastery test, the writer makes a chart to know the percentage of the correct answer from each cohesive devices.

Chart 1. The Percentage of Each Type of Cohesive Device
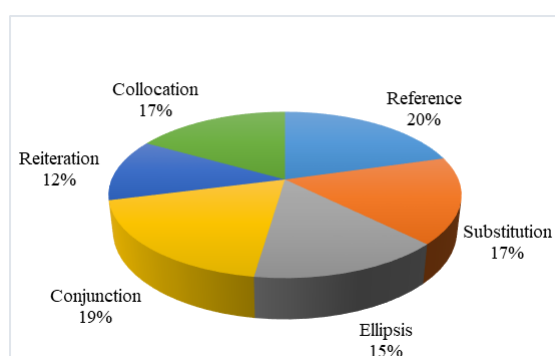
Based on chart 1, the most correctly answered by the students was reference with 20 % followed by conjunction with 19 %, substitution with 17 %, collocation with 17 % and ellipsis with 15%. Additionally, reiteration was the least cohesive devices correctly answered only 12%.

From all the cohesive devices, reference was the most correctly answered. On the contrary, the most incorrectly answered was reiteration. In the test, it included repetition, synonym, hyponym, and antonym questions. Most of students incorrectly answer the question about synonym. They must get rich on their vocabulary items to answer the questions correctly. To improve the vocabulary item, they have to spend more time in practicing their English skill, especially in writing.

After identifying the result of cohesive devices mastery test, then the writer analyzes the result of the writing test. In examining the writing test, the writer examines content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics of the text. The result can be stated that the stu-

dents' writing test is in a good to average criteria. They also use some types of cohesive devices such as reference, conjunction, substitution, ellipsis, reiteration, and collocation.

Reference is the most frequently used by all students. Likewise, conjunction is often used by them. The following example from the student number 13 shows conjunction used in her text:
'It is a really fun activity, even though it is kind of hard to do it lately because of college. Otherwise, I will keep doing this in the future as well, hopefully, only a hobby or stress relief'.

The use of substitution is found on the student number 18's text:
'I was thinking if it was a fight that he wanted, then I would give him one'.

Besides, Ellipsis is employed by the student number 16:
'My school also informed my parents that I must not join any activities referring to both hobbies'.

The next cohesive devices' type is reiteration, such as repetition, synonym, antonym, and hyponym. Repetition can be found on the student number 23's text:
'I saw that the captain of the ship had a big responsibility for the crew and the ship. If the captain moves the rudder, the ship direction will change to different routes....'.

Synonym is employed by the student number 18:
'I am sure we were on the high tension at that time, but little by little our anger was calming down, and our mean faces turned into smiles ....'.

Antonym is applied by the student number 6:
'I was neither sad nor happy. I still proud of myself because I .... '.

Hyponym is also found on the student number 25's text:
'When I was in senior high school, I took science major because there was one of my favorite lesson that was biology'.

The writer also finds collocation on the student number 10's text:
'.... I tried to find my bed and then, I jumped on the top of my bed. The light out was extraordinary long'.

The more appropriate the use of cohesive devices, the better the quality of the writing. Besides, it seems the length of the text affects its quality. It is proven by the student number 18 who obtains the highest score of writing test. He employs appropriate cohesive devices. The number of words is likewise adequate to the length of the text.

On the contrary, the student number 19 achieves the lowest score. The problems are on the limited knowledge of the subject, the range of vocabulary, the simple/complex construction, and the errors of spelling. Moreover, the number of words is not sufficient. There are only 145 words, whereas the minimum number of words is 150 words.

The Result of Students' Writing Test

The writer then analyzed the result of the writing test. In examining the writing test, the writer examined content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics of the text. The results are shown on the following chart.

Chart 2. The Result of Students' Writing Analysis
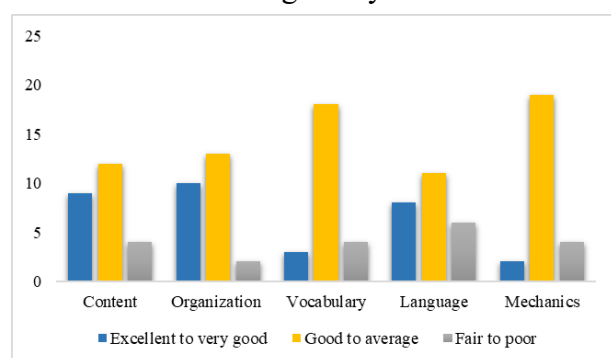
According to the chart above, the result shows that there are 36% students who have knowledgeable and substantive writing. Such as in the following student's writing:

Student number 18 (S18) His writing titled "*Like a Roller Coaster*".
It consists of five paragraphs. His writing content is interesting. It was not about the writer's experience in riding a roller coaster. He used metaphorical words to express his feeling. By reading his writing, the reader could feel for every event from the beginning till the end of the paragraph.

(S23) His writing titled "*Boarding a Sailing Ship*".
He only wrote three paragraphs, but he could deliver a good message on his writing. He wrote his first experience in boarding a sailing ship when he was twelve years old. It taught him to have a commitment to take responsibility for the decision he made and to stay strong when facing the obstacle in life to pursuing his dream.

The other seven students also have the excellent to very good content. In addition, twelve students (48%) displayed good to average writing content. The examples are listed as follows:

(S3) her writing titled "*Went Camping*" and (S4) her writing titled "*Story of My Dormitory*". Based on their writing title, the reader can guess the content. They tried their best in doing the writing test. So, they could write more than three paragraphs. They also displayed some knowledge of subject such as in (S3)'s writing the reader could get information that there is a mountain in Patulungan, Kuningan, and in (S4)'s writing, she displayed information of her activity in the dormitory. The writing topic was a personal recount. It was chosen because it related to their experience which they involved in every event from the beginning to the end. Therefore, they could be easier to write it.

In addition, four students (16%) have limited knowledge of subject and little substance. Such in the following students' writing:

(S9) his writing titled "*Driving a Car*"
The title was not appropriate to his writing content since it told the reader about his dream cars. Furthermore, most of his writing content displayed the story of his childhood that he liked car.

(S19) her writing titled "*To the Theatre*"
Both students number 9 and 19 wrote less than 150 words. Moreover, the student number 19 had a short writing. A short writing might have an effect on his writing content quality. They had a time limitation in doing their writing test. The students had for about fifteen minutes in doing their writing test since the researcher also had a time limitation in regarding to the lecturer's permission. Therefore, it was the students' problem, so they need more time in doing their writing test.

Regarding to the students' writing organization, there are ten (40%) students who demonstrate fluent expression, and their ideas are clearly stated. As in (S21)'s writing, they wrote 6 paragraphs in an organized structure. It began with orientation which showed about who, where, and when the incident happened. Then, the sequence of events which was written in the second, third, fourth, and fifth paragraph. The last was reorientation. Thirteen students (52%) show a bit choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out. The example is on (S24)'s writing. On the first paragraph she wrote "......*I was only 10 years old. As long as I attended scout training, there were lots of lessons I learned, I became more independent, responsible, I was taught to make my own money to buy personal needs*". While on the last paragraph, she wrote "........*However, I get a lot of lessons from the training such as a sense of*

responsibility, independence, and solidarity with others". There was no problem with the second paragraph, but the problem was in the first and the last paragraph. It is better if the first paragraph contains the orientation of the text. They need to practice more and of course they should be given feedback to have writing improvement.

There were two students (8%) demonstrate non-fluent ideas. A poor text organization can be found such as in (S9)'s writing. He wrote unclear idea "……….. *Every morning my father always invites me to see many cars because in this way I feel deep happiness. And until now I am very familiar with the motivational point of my life to get in the future*". He continue the second paragraph with the sentences "*When I was child my father often bought me many cars toys if I got the first rank…….*". His idea are confusing. It might be the lack of practice. The teacher/lecturer should give more attention to the students who have problem with their text organization.

The overall result of the organization of students' writing is good. They have learned the generic structure of the text since in the junior high school so they have used to write in a good organization. In addition, the results of vocabulary analysis show that three (12%) students have sophisticated range and effective word/idiom choice and usage. Eighteen (72%) students demonstrate adequate range and occasional errors of word choice and usage but the meaning is not obscured.

The Result of Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis test was calculated by using IBM SPSS 23 with the Pearson Product Moment correlation to answer whether there is a significant relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement. The computation result of the Pearson product moment correlation analysis shows that there is a relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement. The correlation coefficient is strong (r = 0.715) and the significance value is less than 0.05 (sig. = 0.00 < 0.05). So, the relationship can be generalized to the population. Thus, the hypothesis can be answered: there is a significant relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement. Furthermore, cohesive devices mastery contributes 51 % toward writing achievement (r^2 x 100% = 0.511 x 100). The result of the Pearson product moment correlation analysis computed by using IBM SPSS 23 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Result of Correlation Analysis

Correlations		Writing	CDM
Writing	Pearson Correlation	1	.715
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	25	25

The finding showed that there was a relationship between cohesive devices mastery and writing achievement. It strongly and positively related to writing achievement. Moreover, it gave 51% contribution to students' writing achievement. In this study, the correlation coefficient and the contribution of cohesive devices mastery was big. Since writing is a process of conveying meaning into the written and informative text, cohesive devices are essential to be mastered. Bahaziq (2016) stated that cohesive devices are essential in producing effective writing. If the students use cohesive devices appropriately in writing text, then the writing is well organised and the idea is clearly stated. On the other hands, if the students cannot use the appropriate cohesive devices, then the writing is not easy to be understood.

Conclusions

To sum up, based on the result of the students' cohesive devices mastery, reference was more frequently and correctly answered. It was followed by conjunction with 19 %, substitution with 17 %, collocation with 17 %, and ellipsis with 15%. Additionally, reiteration was the least cohesive devices correctly answered only 12 %. The average score of cohesive devices test was 69.41. The next finding showed that the average score of students' writing was 76.76. The result of writing analysis showed that the dominant writing problems were on vocabulary, mechanics, and language mastery. The problems was their first language interference was still dominant. From the language, they still faced a problem in constructing a simple or a complex sentence. Regarding to the writing mechanics, they might be use to write a document by using a computer or a laptop and they wrote message instantly by using their smartphone. These conditions might be effect their writing mechanics. Some errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization were found. The last finding could be concluded that cohesive devices mastery had a significant and positive relationship with r = 0.715 and sig. = 0.00.

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