

ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE AND COHESION IN NARRATIVE PARAGRAPHS OF SMAN 4 SINGARAJA XI GRADE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze exposure related to the coherence and cohesiveness of paragraph texts of SMA N 4 Singaraja students in the 2024/2025 academic year, especially in class XI K. The research method used is mixed method consisting of qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods. The quantitative descriptive method was used to answer the first objective, and the qualitative descriptive method was used to achieve the second objective. Data were collected through document collection, namely narrative text assignments. Furthermore, the data were analyzed descriptively. In general, the study showed that the average coherence level of students' narrative writing reached 77.13%, which was categorized as 'good'. This means that most students were able to convey the topic quite clearly and relevantly, using appropriate supporting details, and well-organized purpose and structure. However, topic development is still not maximized and the flow between sentences is sometimes not smooth. In cohesion device, students generally showed use of cohesion, especially lexical cohesion which reached around 60%, as well as conjunctions and references which reached 20% each.

Keywords: Coherence, Cohesion, Narrative Paragraph

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human communication and education, particularly in fostering students' critical and logical thinking skills. In the global context, English has become an international language widely used in education, science, and communication. Due to its importance, English is formally taught in Indonesia from elementary to senior high school as part of the Merdeka Curriculum (Intan Cahyani Trinita et al., 2024). Mastery of English is therefore essential for students to face academic and global challenges (Ilyosovna, 2024). English learning involves four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, writing is considered the most demanding because it requires students to generate ideas, organize information logically, and apply appropriate language structures (Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

Writing is a complex process that involves planning, drafting, organizing ideas, and revising to ensure clarity and coherence (Seken & Suarnajaya, 2013; Subawa et al., 2017). A written text should be meaningful, well-organized, and easy to understand. To achieve this, coherence and cohesion are essential elements of effective writing. Coherence refers to the logical flow and consistency of ideas within a text, while cohesion involves the use of linguistic devices such as conjunctions, references, and repetition to connect sentences and paragraphs (Halliday & Hasan, 1975). Both aspects work together to create unified and comprehensible writing (Anom et al., 2013; Ali, 2021). Despite their importance, many students still struggle to write coherent and cohesive English texts. Common problems include weak topic development, inappropriate use of conjunctions, and unclear relationships between sentences, which often result in disjointed paragraphs (Akmalia et al., 2022). These difficulties are particularly evident in narrative writing, which requires logical sequencing and clear connections between events.

Previous studies have investigated coherence and cohesion in students' writing and reported varied findings. Some studies indicate that students demonstrate good coherence and cohesion in descriptive texts, while others reveal persistent difficulties in applying cohesive devices appropriately (Citra & Maheswari, 2024; Wahyuni & Syamsudin, 2021). Other research shows that students tend to rely more on grammatical cohesion than lexical cohesion and often misuse cohesive devices in narrative and recount texts (Lestari, 2023; Anjulo Alaro, 2020; Gunas, 2020). However, studies focusing specifically on narrative texts at the senior high school level remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze coherence and cohesion in narrative paragraphs written by eleventh-grade students of SMA N 4 Singaraja. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of students' writing

abilities, support teachers in improving writing instruction, and provide references for future research on coherence and cohesion in English narrative writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coherence and cohesion are central constructs in discourse analysis and writing studies. Cohesion refers to the explicit linguistic devices that connect sentences and clauses within a text, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical ties, while coherence concerns the overall unity and logical flow of ideas that make a text meaningful to readers. The foundational framework proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan (1976) conceptualizes cohesion as a semantic relation realized through grammatical and lexical means. Their systemic functional perspective emphasizes that cohesion contributes to texture, allowing a text to function as a unified whole. However, scholars argue that cohesion alone does not guarantee coherence; coherence also depends on readers' background knowledge and the logical organization of ideas (McCarthy, 1991). Thus, analyzing coherence and cohesion requires attention to both linguistic features and discourse-level organization.

In the context of narrative writing, coherence and cohesion play a crucial role in constructing chronological order, character development, and plot progression. Narrative paragraphs typically rely on temporal conjunctions, consistent reference chains, and lexical repetition to maintain clarity and continuity (Hyland, 2004). Studies in EFL writing contexts indicate that learners often struggle with cohesive devices, particularly in the appropriate use of reference and conjunctions, which affects the overall coherence of their narratives (Crossley & McNamara, 2010). Furthermore, effective narrative coherence involves thematic progression and logical sequencing of events, ensuring that each sentence contributes meaningfully to the unfolding story. Therefore, examining both micro-level cohesive ties and macro-level organizational patterns provides a comprehensive understanding of narrative paragraph quality.

Recent research highlights that explicit instruction in cohesive devices and discourse organization significantly improves students' narrative writing performance (Rahman, 2013; Zhang, 2021). Cohesion analysis has also been used as an assessment tool to evaluate writing proficiency, revealing correlations between cohesive density and perceived coherence (Crossley, Kyle, & McNamara, 2016). However, some researchers caution that excessive or mechanical use of cohesive markers may not necessarily enhance coherence if the underlying ideas lack logical development. Consequently, an analysis of coherence and cohesion in narrative paragraphs should integrate linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical perspectives to better understand how writers construct meaningful and unified texts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to analyze the coherence and cohesion in students' narrative paragraph writing. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population consisted of all eleventh-grade students, and cluster random sampling was used to select the research sample. One class, namely class XI K, consisting of 44 students, was randomly chosen to participate in the study. The main instrument used was students' narrative paragraph writing, which served as both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, a coherence assessment rubric and a frequency table of cohesion devices were used as analytical instruments to evaluate the level of coherence and identify the types of cohesion found in students' writing.

To obtain accurate data, the researcher conducted several procedures prior to the analysis. First, a preliminary observation was carried out to identify students' general ability in writing narrative paragraphs. Then, the data were collected through document analysis, in which students' narrative paragraphs written as part of regular classroom assignments were gathered with permission from the English teacher. These texts were analyzed quantitatively to determine the level of coherence using descriptive statistics, and qualitatively to examine the use and function of cohesion devices such as reference, conjunction, lexical cohesion, substitution, and ellipsis. The qualitative analysis was conducted to explain how cohesion contributes to the coherence of students' narrative paragraphs.

FINDING

The findings of this current study can be seen in the following chart. The chart describes the statistical graph of the students' narrative text coherence.

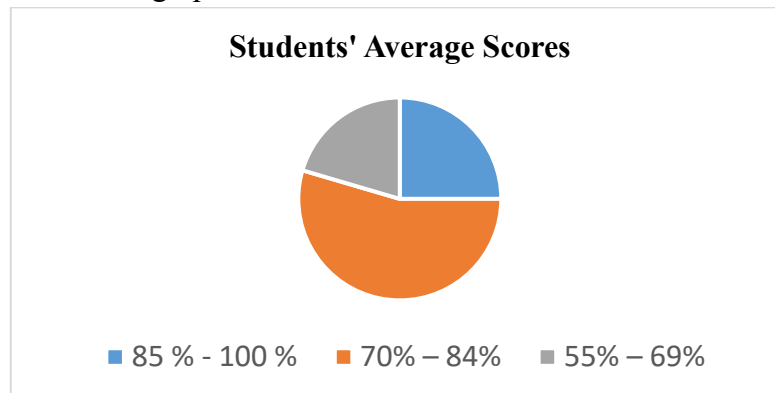


Figure 1. The statistical graph of the students' narrative text coherence

The statistical graph above it illustrates the quantitative findings. It indicates that most of the students in SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja fulfill the basic components of

coherence in writing. The graph shows that the assessment of the students' writing skills is categorized as 'good'. It can be seen that many students received average scores between 70 and 84. However, further improvement is still necessary to enhance the quality of coherence, especially for students who scored below the average level, which is students who received average scores between 55 and 69.

Moreover, the quantitative analysis above shows that when a paragraph contains key elements such as a topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a concluding sentence, the connections between the sentences are generally more coherent. The topic sentence is the opening sentence that introduces the main idea or subject to be discussed in the paragraph. This sentence guides the reader to understand the central issue and provides space for arguments that support or oppose the topic.

Types of Cohesion Used by Students in Their Narrative Paragraph

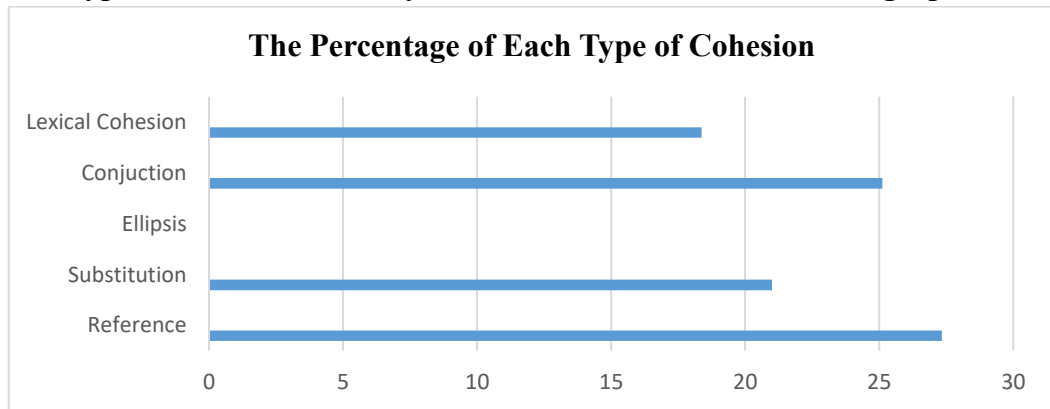


Figure 2. The Percentage of Each Type of Cohesion

Based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan (1975), there are five important aspects of cohesion, including lexical cohesion, conjunction, ellipsis, substitution, and reference. Cohesion is recognized as an essential aspect of writing ability because it makes the text or paragraph easier to understand. The statistical chart above it shows that cohesion in the text is used appropriately. Overall, the use of cohesion in this paragraph is quite good and effective, as it supports the flow and clarity of the ideas presented in the writing.

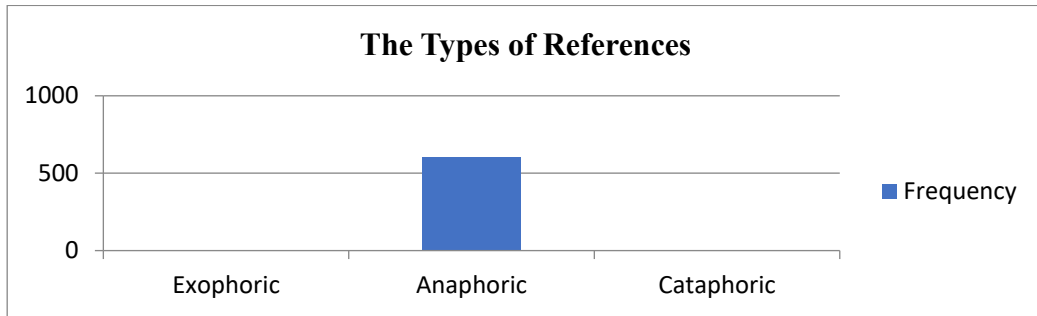


Figure 3. The Types of Reference

One of the cohesion types that is commonly used in students' writings is reference. According to Kotnarowski (2015), a reference is used to connect one part of a text to another, for instance, before or after a sentence. It aims to make the text or sentence easy to read and understand for the readers. In addition, it is also used as a connector between each paragraphs, making the text easier to follow for others. There are two main types of reference, such as exophoric and endophoric (Ramendra et al., 2020). Exoporic refers to something outside the text, and endophoric refers to something within the text. Endophoric reference is further divided into anaphoric (looking back) and cataphoric (looking forward).

According to the Figure 3. above, the type of reference found in students' narrative text is only anaphoric reference. For instance, it can be found in several text, especially in the use of personal pronouns, such as "she", "he", "it", "his", "her", etc.

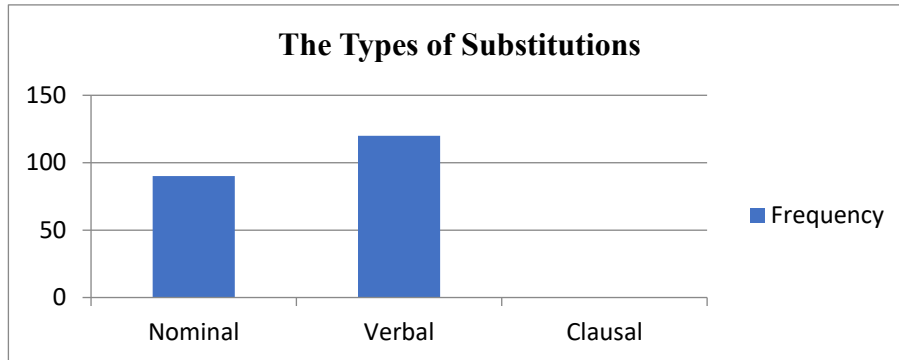


Figure 4. The Types of Substitutions

Figure 4. above illustrates that there are two types of substitutions in students' narrative text writing, which are nominal and verbal. The nominal is in 2 and 1 for verbal. Substitution is known as a word or phrase used by the writer to avoid repetition. It aims to make the text clearer and interesting. It also helps students make a text much shorter, thus enabling readers to easily understand and master the contents.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings above, the researcher will discuss two key aspects of students' narrative writing, such as coherence and cohesion. Coherence refers to how ideas and sentences connect within paragraphs. Cohesion examines how students organize their ideas clearly and logically, enabling readers to follow the narrative's meaning and flow.

According to the analysis of this research, the students' narrative writing average score was 77.13%. It means that students are marked as 'good' in writing based on PAP standards. It illustrates that many students possess good knowledge of coherence, specifically in their use of appropriate topic sentences and relevant supporting details in each paragraph.

In addition, according to those 44 examples of narrative writings, 11 students were marked as 'very good' because they reached scores between 85% - 100%. It indicates that students possess good insights and knowledge in writing, particularly in narrative texts. In addition, they demonstrated their strong writing skills, as evidenced by their ability to craft clear topic sentences, incorporate relevant supporting details, and employ well-organized purposes and structures. In contrast, 24 students were marked as 'good' because they achieved an average score between 70% and 84%. It demonstrates that students have demonstrated their ability and competence in writing. However, they still need improvement through more practice in the EFL learning process. For instance, students must learn how to express and write their thoughts or ideas through an appropriate structure. Thus, the writing will be clear and easily understood by the readers.

Additionally, there were 9 students who scored as 'fair'. They got an average of 55% - 65%. It indicates that several students still lack in writing. They still need more practice and improvement from the teacher. Moreover, those students showed their lack of ability in expressing their main ideas, topic sentences, appropriate supporting details, and flow structures while writing.

Overall, most grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja showed an acceptable level of coherence in their narrative writing. This is reflected in the writing of the XI grade students of SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja who are generally able to convey the topic quite clearly and relevantly, use appropriate supporting details, and well-organized purposes and structures. It is related to a theory from Ramendra (2021), in academic writing, students must use good and proper details, main ideas, and clear topics. Thus, it makes the writing much better and attracts the readers' attention (Adi Juniarta, 2001).

On the other hand, it also aligns with research from Ratminingsih et al., (2023) that stated coherence plays a crucial and essential factor in someone's writing text because it makes the reading clear, accurate, and relevant. Through their writing, people also know and understand how to write coherently and properly, thus, it will engage people to have interest in writing (Lestari et al., 2023).

Despite this, in some cases, topic development is still not maximized, and the flow between sentences does not always flow smoothly (Budasi et al., 2021). However, students can improve their writing skills through various methods, including regular practice and receiving constructive feedback from EFL teachers.

Moreover, according to Table 4.2 in this research, it can be seen that students used several important cohesion aspects in writing, such as lexical cohesions, conjunctions, ellipsis, substitution, and reference. Each of these aspects will be explained in detail as follows.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapters, it can be concluded that the narrative paragraphs written by the eleventh-grade students of SMA N 4 Singaraja generally demonstrate an adequate use of coherence and cohesion, although the level of effectiveness varies among students. Overall, most students were able to organize their ideas in a logical and chronological sequence, which helped them develop their narratives in a meaningful way. The use of appropriate transitions also supported the flow of ideas between sentences and paragraphs. However, some weaknesses were still identified, particularly in maintaining unity of ideas, which occasionally resulted in repetition or unclear meaning within the paragraphs.

The analysis of 44 narrative texts showed that the students achieved an average score of 77.13%, which falls into the "good" category based on the PAP assessment standard. This result indicates that, in general, students have a sufficient understanding of coherence in narrative writing. Many students were able to construct clear topic sentences and provide relevant supporting details within each paragraph. Among the participants, 11 students were categorized as "very good," achieving scores between 85% and 100%, which suggests strong insight and competence in organizing and developing narrative texts. In addition, 24 students were classified as "good," with scores ranging from 70% to 84%, indicating that they possess adequate writing skills but still require further practice to enhance consistency and clarity. Meanwhile, 9 students were categorized as "fair," with scores between 55% and 65%, showing that some students still experience difficulties in developing coherent paragraphs and need more guidance and intensive practice from the teacher.

In terms of cohesion, the students employed various cohesive devices, including reference, substitution, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion. Conjunctions and lexical cohesion were the most frequently used devices, indicating that students generally understood how to link sentences and ideas within their narratives. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed cases of inappropriate use or overuse of certain cohesive devices, which sometimes disrupted the natural flow of the text. These issues suggest that while students are familiar with cohesive devices, they still need explicit instruction on how to use them accurately and effectively.

In conclusion, the students' narrative writing demonstrates a generally good level of coherence and cohesion; however, continuous practice and targeted instruction are necessary to improve idea unity, paragraph development, and the appropriate use of cohesive devices. Strengthening these aspects is expected to enhance the overall quality of students' narrative writing.

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