

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University prepares students to become English teachers. For this purpose, the English Department gives various courses which improve students' English proficiency and teaching skills to produce qualified English teachers.

Writing, one of the compulsory courses in the English Department, is given in four semesters in four series, namely, Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, and Writing IV. Each of these writing courses places specific emphasis. Based on the syllabus of the English Department (2009: 137), the students taking Writing III are expected to write cohesive and coherent expository compositions in grammatically correct and acceptable English sentences. According to Cuevas (2011), expository writing is the most frequently used type of writing by students in universities. Expository writing presents information in a way that readers can be persuaded to see necessary facts and can gain new insight into particular topics.

The Writing III students have to understand about the concept of cohesion to create cohesive expository compositions. Connor (1996: 216) defines cohesion as the use of explicit linguistic devices to signal relations between sentences and parts of texts. Cohesion, which is like glue holding a

piece of writing together, can be either phrases or words guiding readers and writers to associate previous statements with subsequent ones. The difference of the presence or absence of cohesion for a text is illustrated in the following examples:

(1) *Graham King was born in Adelaide on October 16, 1930. He moved to London in 1969, where his marketing stratify transformed the Sun newspaper into the United Kingdom's bestselling tabloid; subsequently, after 1986, he successfully promoted the reconstruction of The Sunday Times as a large multi-section newspaper.* (Taken from a paragraph in Improve Your Punctuation issued by HarperCollins Publishers)

(2) *I will go to Japan. They are cooking now. She bore him three sons.*

The example in (1) seems to make sense, i.e., we can easily know who Graham King was; in contrast, the set of sentences in (2) does not qualify as a unified text, but simply as three completely unrelated sentences. There is no possibility to relate the three sentences in (2) to each other, not even by changing their position.

Cohesion is expressed through cohesive devices In *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan (1976) identifies five general categories of cohesive devices: reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion, and conjunction. Salkie (1995:68) states that an important cohesive device is the use of what we shall call reference. Salkie (1995:64) also asserts reference is words which do not have full meanings; therefore, we have to refer to something else in order to work out what the words mean.

When sentences, ideas, and details fit together clearly, readers can follow along easily, and the writing is cohesive. Warriner (1986:67) claims one of the ways to achieve cohesion is through reference, which assists readers in seeing the relationships between sentences in a paragraph by using a pronoun to refer to a noun or to an idea in a preceding sentence. Pronouns are closely related to reference, as according to Hadley (1987), reference is concerned with the identification of a thing or specific group of things by the use of certain reference items, such as personal pronouns.

Writing III students are expected to be able to produce cohesive compositions by using appropriate cohesive devices, especially reference, since these teacher candidates have to be competent to teach how to write correctly. Unfortunately, cohesive devices and coherence comprise the most problematic areas in EFL writing, with cohesive devices being the maximum problem (Shokrpour and Fallahzadeh, 2007). This area, cohesive devices, needs more attention. Moreover, based on Lunsford's survey (2009: 4), there are the top twenty errors in students' compositions, one of which is vague pronoun reference. Vague pronoun reference occurs when a pronoun does not refer to a specific noun. A pronoun with one clear antecedent is very important because readers will clearly understand which noun the pronoun refers to. Based on Lunsford (2009:6), a pronoun should refer unambiguously to the word or words it replaces – the antecedent – elsewhere in the sentence or in a previous sentence.

In order to find out whether vague pronoun reference exists in students' compositions, the writer conducts a study on the writing III students' papers entitled "Vague Pronoun Reference Encountered in the Compositions Written by the English Department Students". To examine

further, the writer also analyses what pronouns which have vague reference are made by Writing III Students. This study benefits not only students but also grammar lecturers since both parties can identify their weaknesses and improve themselves.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Related to the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. Does vague pronoun reference exist in the compositions written by the English Department Students taking Writing III in the academic year of 2010/2011?
2. What pronouns which have vague reference are encountered in the compositions written by the English Department Students taking Writing III in the academic year of 2010/2011?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to find out whether vague pronoun reference exists in the compositions written by the English Department Students taking Writing III in the academic year of 2010/2011 and to describe pronouns which have vague reference in these compositions.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for the improvement in the writing quality of the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University. This study also can be used by the writing lecturers as positive feedback to improve the quality of students' compositions, so the writing lecturers can help the students minimize vague pronoun reference in writing.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This thesis is making use of two theories: cohesion and vague pronoun reference.

Cohesion helps readers understand and perceive a text as a single unit. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:5), cohesion is how words and expressions of a text are connected via use of devices: reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion, and conjunction. Reference is limited in a model to the relationship between two linguistic expressions which exist in a text. For example, "*Ms Alexander has resigned. She announced her decision this morning.*" The pronoun *she* in this example points to Ms Alexander. Reference occurs when the reader has to retrieve the identity of what is being talked about by referring to another expression in the immediate context. The resulting cohesion lies in the continuity of reference.

Halliday and Hasan (1963:31) claim that reference includes personal and demonstrative. Personal reference is a type of reference which

is shown by means of category of personal pronouns, while demonstrative reference is shown by means of category of demonstrative pronouns. A pronoun derives its meaning from its antecedent. As a rule, a pronoun does not refer to an entire sentence and a clause (Regis Writing Centre, 2005).

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to eliminate any misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the writer would like to define the key terms used in this study as follow:

- a. Vague
Vague means not having or giving enough information or details about something (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2011).
- b. A pronoun
A pronoun is a word that is used in the place of a noun or noun phrase. When a noun or noun phrase has been used once, a pronoun is used to avoid repetition of the same noun or noun phrase (Kam Chuan Aik, 1999).
- c. Reference
Reference is the relationship of one linguistic expression to another, in which one provides the information necessary to interpret the other (Alpha Dictionary, 2010).
- d. Vague Pronoun Reference
Vague pronoun reference occurs when a pronoun does not refer to a specific noun (Lunsford, 2009).

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The subjects of this study are limited to the compositions written by the English Department Students taking Writing III in Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University, and class C is randomly chosen to represent the Writing III students in the academic year of 2010/2011. Writing III students are chosen because these students need to comprehend how to use reference correctly in composing cohesive expository texts. Clear pronoun reference will support clarity in writing so that the information can easily be digested by readers. Also, Writing III students are considered to have mastered pronouns because these students have taken Structure I – pronouns are taught in Structure I. The area of analysis is only focused on pronouns which have vague reference, so other grammatical errors are beyond the scope of this research.

The Writing III students are expected to be able to use correct cohesive devices to create cohesive texts. One of these cohesive devices is reference. There are two types of reference are investigated in this study: personal reference and demonstrative reference. The writer does not discuss comparative reference because the writer's concern is only on pronouns having vague reference. Comparative reference is expressed by the means of adjectives or adverbs of comparison, for example, such as, as, such, other, the same, different, identical, similar, and similarity.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter explains about background of the study, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, definition of key terms, scope and limitation, and organization of the thesis.

The second chapter deals with review of related literature. The main points discussed here are underlying theories and previous studies which are related to the study under report.

The third chapter explains about research design, source of data, research instrument, triangulation, data collection technique, and data analysis technique.

The fourth chapter reveals data analysis and findings. Finally, the fifth chapter presents conclusion of this study and suggestions.

