

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the study**

The study of cohesion is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics. Markels (in Taboada, 2004) states that without cohesion, the text can hardly be said to exist at all for cohesion provides the textual means for initiating comprehension or sense. And Tanskanen (2006) points out that cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical elements on the surface of the text which can form connections between parts of the texts. Thus, it is expedient to realize that cohesiveness of a text is established through the use of cohesive devices applied by speakers or writers so that listeners or readers would comprehend the text well and the fact that cohesion occurs when the interpretation of some element in the discourse depends on the interpretation of other one, whether preceding or following.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), text refers to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length that does form a unified whole and is regarded as a semantic unit. Henceforth, a text has linguistic features which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving its texture. And texture is created by cohesive relation that exists between cohesive devices. They, furthermore, argued that cohesion distinguishes texts from non-texts and enables readers or listeners to establish relevance between what was said, is

being said and will be said through the appropriate use of cohesive devices and it is essential feature of a text if it is judged to be coherent. Lyons (1981) stated that a text as a whole must exhibit the related, but distinguishable properties of cohesion and coherence. Therefore, it can be inferred that applying appropriate cohesive devices is truly important both for the writers/speakers in creating a text that can be easily comprehended and for readers/listeners in constructing the meaning from the text.

Various means of cohesive devices can assist the writers to establish comprehensible and cohesive text in their writing. Halliday and Hasan (1976) have classified different types of cohesive devices. They are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical devices. Furthermore, the sub-categories of each cohesive device are: reference can be grouped into: personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. Substitution has been classified into three sub-categories: nominal substitution, verbal substitution, and causal substitution. Just as substitution, ellipsis has been divided into three sub-categories such as nominal, verbal and clausal ellipsis. Conjunction consists of additive, adversative, causative, and temporal, while lexical cohesion consists of reiteration and collocation.

In recent years there has been an increasing interest shown by researchers in investigating cohesive devices especially after Halliday and Hasan (1976) described them in the most comprehensive and widely available account. Since then most

models of cohesion in English have attempted to account for explicit linguistic devices used in text to signal relations between sentences. Their main objective has been to explain the principles that govern the well-formedness, the unity and connectivity of texts by looking at the different kinds of ties established within the texts and the relations they express.

Some studies have revealed that the use of cohesive devices in the writing of ESL or EFL had not been very satisfactory. For instance, Gasemi (2013) who investigated the writings of both native and nonnative English has shown that language learners lack the ability to use syntactic and lexical tools to enable them produce competent written text and there are cross linguistic differences in the use of cohesive devices by native and nonnative learners and language users resorted to pronominal more than other cohesive devices for creating textuality between the sentences. Hellalet (2013) investigated lexical cohesion in EFL college students argumentative writing. She discovered that students had lack of awareness of the role of lexis in the creation of continuity and connectedness in their writing. Another study conducted by Kwan and Yunus (2014) who studied about cohesive devices in narrative essays employed by ESL pre-service teachers. The study indicated that lexical cohesion, reference and conjunction cohesion categories were the most errors made by the Medium-level pre-service teachers, while High-level pre-service teachers made more errors in lexical cohesion, ellipsis

and reference. They also stated that overall mastery of cohesive writing is still insufficient.

However, quite a number of studies have presented evidence of a significant relationship between cohesive devices and writing quality. For example, Wu (2010) investigated lexical cohesion in oral English produced by second year English-major students. The findings of the study showed that lexical cohesion was related to oral English quality and repetition was the dominant cohesive device employed by the students, while other cohesive devices were rarely used in their oral English. Zhang (2010) investigated compositions written by college non-English majors. The study indicated that the composition scores were positively co-related with the total number of cohesive ties where lexical synonymy and personal reference among the categories of cohesive ties were better predictors of the quality of the student compositions. Another study conducted by Haris & Yunus (2014) whose research was about the investigation of the lexical cohesion used among TESL post graduate students in academic writing. Their study revealed that lexical cohesion created cohesiveness towards the idea conveyed by the students in writing.

From the aforementioned studies it is clear that cohesion has a fundamentally important role for writing to be considered as good writing. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages known as CEFRL has taken into great attention about the role of cohesion in writing particularly the writing of students whose English level of proficiency is categorized as advanced learners. It

states explicitly and clearly that to be well-developed and understandable writing of advanced learners must be able to:

*“Create coherent and cohesive text making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of cohesive devices and produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.”*

Henceforth, it can be concluded that cohesion is indispensable part of writing and is often serves as the basis of good writing.

One of the prerequisites of graduate students' graduation is writing thesis. As an academic piece of writing the thesis of graduate students has some chapters or sections. The introduction section of thesis has been envisioned to play a central role in academic writing. It is precisely due to the fact that the introduction section directs the readers to know what to expect and what the writers would argue for in their writing and this section also becomes the blueprint for writing another sections of the thesis (Goodson , 2013) . Swales and Feak (1994) argue that it is in the introduction section that a writer makes claims for the centrality of the research and begins to outline the overall argument of the thesis. Moreover, they argue that in order to publish in reputable academic journals, the introduction is extremely important in positioning the writer as having something to say that is worth publishing. Furthermore, Patridge and Starfield (2007) assert that thesis introductions are more amendable to analysis might be due to their very shorter than other thesis sections.

Since the introduction section of thesis is seen as a road map to other sections, the graduate students are expected to direct the readers well by making use of cohesive devices as a map to overall text meaning. As Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) said that the ability to interpret and recognize cohesive devices accurately is critical to the thorough comprehension of a text. Furthermore, they said that readers' ability to acknowledge and use those rhetorical devices would comprehend the text better. Martin and Rose (2008) pointed that the study of cohesion provides an insight into how text are organized and meanings are expressed through investigating the patterns of cohesion that help to understand the text in terms of its representation of ideas; for example, patterns of reference devices ease the readers or listeners track of entities mentioned in the passage and patterns of conjunctive relations show the purpose of the passage. It is supported by the study done by Fakuade and Sharndama (2012) who conducted a comparative analysis study of cohesive devices in professional and popularized legal text. While both legal texts predominantly use reference and conjunctions, their finding revealed also that the use of the referring devices makes reference and information retrieval easy.

Having reviewed the previous studies conducted by the aforementioned researchers, it seems that most studies were conducted to investigate cohesive devices in essays and yet, to the best of researcher knowledge, the case of investigating the use of cohesive devices in written academic paper such as thesis in EFL

context specifically in Indonesia has not been given great attention by the researchers in the past. As a result, in order to fill the gap into this area this present study aims at investigating the cohesive devices in the thesis written by the graduate students at the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University.

### **Statements of the problems**

Having realized the importance of cohesive devices in creating coherence value of text as described in the background of this study, the researcher intends to answer the main problem that is to what extent the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University are able to use cohesive devices in their theses. To answer this main problem, the researcher formulates the problem of this present study as follows:

1. What types of grammatical devices were written by the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University in their theses?
2. Which types of grammatical devices were frequently used by the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University in their theses?

### **The Objectives of the Study**

This present study is intended to assess how far the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University are able to use cohesive devices in their theses. Henceforth, the minor objectives of this study are to find out:

1. The types of grammatical devices written by the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University in their theses.
2. The types of grammatical devices that were frequently written by the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University in their theses.

### **The Scope and Limitations of the Study.**

The present study aims primarily at investigating the cohesion in the theses introduction especially the background of the study section of the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL Graduate School Widya Mandala Catholic University who finished their theses in 2012 until 2015. This section is chosen because it is very essential part of a thesis. It is essential on account of the fact that it is the part of the theses where the students are required to provide all the important information about the topic being studied to the readers. Henceforth, the students, in so doing, are required to organize their ideas well and without having such a good ideas organization an introduction would be hard to achieve coherence. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) made it clear in support of this argument by stating that in order to create a successful thesis background the researcher should be able to provide the context by giving necessary information required to clarify the context, inform the reader as to why the study is important and timely and construct a case for the statement of the problem in order to highlight the focus



of the theory that will describe in the proceeding chapter. In other words, in the background of the study students are expected to express their ideas or present their arguments coherently. In order to be able to do so, the students need to apply some cohesive devices in the background of the theses. Cohesion can be classified into two which are grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. In this study the researcher limited to grammatical cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976) stated that the effect of lexical cohesion is on the subtle and difficult to estimate. Moreover, they asserted that though this kind of cohesion type is well-defined ideally but it presents difficulties in actual application. It is different, on the other hand, with respect to grammatical cohesion where the effect is relatively clear. For instance, whenever one comes across the word *he*, there is no doubt that some essential information about the identity of the *he* is recoverable or identifiable from somewhere in the text. Furthermore, in this study the researcher simply emphasized on the textual analysis and did not take into account the contextual analysis of the background of the study of graduate students' theses.

### **Significance of the Study**

This present study is an attempt to analyze the use of cohesive devices in the background section of theses produced by graduate students based on the theory of cohesion proposed by Halliday and Hasan in 1976. Hopefully the result of this study will contribute significant input theoretically and practically to English practitioners and students. Theoretically, this present study will give

richer and wider insights to the use of cohesive devices in theses. And practically, the result of this study will give useful information and serve as a reflection about the importance of teaching cohesion for the teachers. For the students, the result will assist them to develop a cohesive and coherent academic writing in the background section of theses.

### **Assumptions**

In this study the researcher assumed that the former students of the Master's Program in TEFL, Graduate School, Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya had written the background of their theses cohesively. In other words, there should be some cohesive devices employed by the students in the background of their theses. Moreover, the researcher assumed that they have had experiences in writing academic paper and they knew how to write academic paper since they were taught and learned it specifically in their academic writing class.

### **The Theoretical Framework.**

For many years, linguists were concerned with the analysis of single sentences where the focus was on morphology and phonology areas. Then, present of Chomsky's transformational generative grammar in 1957 shifted the attention to the sentence level. However, the analysis was not really adequate because it still focused on the formal properties of language rather than achieving meaning (Coulthard, 1977). Henceforth, Harris (1952) shifted attention towards sentences in combination. He states that there is a

sequence to produce coherent stretches of language (rules of use). Halliday and Hassan (1976) introduced cohesion in the text and claimed that cohesion provides the language elements hung together and give a relationship with the other parts of the text.

Cohesion refers to the grammatical and/or lexical relationship between the different elements of a text. This relationship may be between different sentences or different parts of a sentence of written or oral text. In order to be able to create the relationship between different parts of a text, the writer or speaker needs to apply some cohesive devices so that the information in text would be understandable. For instance, the word “there” in the sentence: if you are going to spend your vacation in Flores, I can contact a friend of mine to help you during your stay there; refers backward or anaphorically to the word Flores that has been mentioned earlier in the sentence.

It is in line with the theory proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), which is the focus of this present study, the relations within sentence and among sentences are made possible due to the presence of cohesive relation. According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesive devices are divided into five main parts, which are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. The detailed explanation for each cohesive type will be intensively discussed in review of related literature in the following chapter of this study.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Some terms used in this present study are defined in the following:

Cohesion is a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it (Halliday and Hasan, 1967). In this study the researcher referred cohesion as the relation of meaning that exists between sentences in the text in order the readers can make sense of it.

Grammatical cohesion refers to the various grammatical devices that can be used to make relations among sentences more explicit. The devices used are intended to tie pieces of text together in a specific way and help the reader understand the items referred to, the ones replaced and even the items omitted (Harmer, 2004). In this present study grammatical devices are words or phrases that are used by the writers to connect one sentence to the others and to achieve unity in the background section of the theses.

The background of the theses is a part of theses introduction in which the writer introduces the overview of the topic.

Thesis is a document of final project written by students in support of a candidate for an academic degree or professional qualification presenting the author's research and findings.