

CHAPTER I

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1.1. Background of the Study

The mastery of the writing skills is needed for successful written communication. To make his readers understand what he has written, the writer should write clearly and organize his ideas as well as possible. To be clear, the writer must include well selected, concrete and specific details about the ideas written (Moore 1966:11) and organize them coherently and logically to show unity.

Unity means oneness. A paragraph has unity when all its parts function together in the whole development of its topic idea (Vivian 1961:164). Unity can be achieved by providing only one topic sentence which is directly or indirectly supported by all the other sentences in the paragraph. Paragraph unity is closely related to paragraph coherence. A paragraph which lacks unity or orderly movement will not be coherent (McCrimmon 1967:120). When there is no unity, the reader will not be able to move easily from one sentence to another. Thus, unity is one factor of creating coherence. Transitional devices or links between sentences are also needed in creating coherence. Without them a group of unified sentences may fail to achieve coherence.

Besides, to make a composition well organized, one needs to think logically because logical thought is in fact a great help for the writer to select ideas and put only relevant ones in his composition. By doing this, the writer will most likely make his compositions unified. As a result, his readers will understand the ideas written since the irrelevant ones, which make the readers lose sight of the exact relation between each detail and the central idea, are not included (Moore 1966:35). For example a composition about the importance of motivation in studying, may consist of three paragraphs in which the first paragraph is about the definition of motivation, the second is about the role of motivation in studying, and the third one talks about what parents should do to motivate their children to study. The composition will lack unity if the third paragraph talks about the importance of motivation for teachers, instead. As such, the third paragraph does not have any logical relationship with the first and the second paragraphs because its main topic is about the importance of motivation for teaching and not learning. No logical relationship between the main ideas of the paragraph of the whole essay will then result in the disunity of the whole essay.

Logical thought also influences coherence because a paragraph is coherent when a close relationship exists among the ideas and when the sentences make this relationship immediately clear to the reader(s) (Vivian and Jackson 1961:168). This, however, depends on whether the relationship between one sentence and another is relevant or not. A pair of sentences meant to show cause and effect probably does not show such a relationship if the second sentence or the effect, after being analyzed, cannot be logically accepted.

When paragraph sentences are relevantly related, the quality of coherence can be achieved (Moore 1966:xii). For example: (1) 'Being sick, Mary went to the doctor'. This sentence consists of two parts, '*Mary's being sick*' and '*Mary's going to the doctor*'. The sentence shows coherence because there is a relevant (logical) relationship between both parts. On the other hand, the coherence will disappear if the logical relationship is missing. For example: (2) 'Being sick, Mary went to the library'. As this sentence reads, there appears to be no logical (relevant) relationship between '*Mary's being sick*' and '*her going to the library*'. When a sentence has no logical relationship within its parts, the sentence is not coherent.

Coherence and unity within and between paragraphs and hence in composition is a must. They work together to help the writer communicate his ideas so that the readers will be able to get the message that the writer wants to express. Reid (1989:207) states that unity helps both the writer and the readers to concentrate on one point. Likewise, the quality of coherence will make the writer's ideas flow smoothly from one sentence to another.

As such, the mastery of writing, especially expository writing, is important for the English Department students. This is not just because they have to master all the language skills but mostly because they have to write a lot of academic writings such as their Master's theses in which they have to explain and define a lot of phenomena starting from the Introduction until the Conclusion of their theses. They have to give a lot of supporting details to the main ideas of their compositions and they have to put them coherently so that the readers will be able to understand what they want to explain.

Writing coherently has been a problem since the students began learning to write in English. From the writer's experience many English Department students still make mistakes in writing coherently. Worse, most of

them even do not know why some parts of their compositions do not hang together.

Knowing students' writing errors in coherence will be a great help for writing teachers. Nevertheless, not many studies have been done on this topic: coherence in the S1 students' writings. So far, there have been only two theses written on this subject. They are: 1) "Some Most Frequent Errors in Using Cohesive Devices Encountered in the Compositions of the Third Semester Students of the English Department of Widya Mandala", by Lelly Ekanata Khornomo, and 2) "Recognition of Coherence Devices within a Paragraph as a Means of Helping the Fifth and Sixth Semester English Department Students of Widya Mandala University", by Wida Susiani. Khornomo (1992) states that one way of making a piece of writing clear is by using cohesive devices appropriately in connecting sentences. Knowing the fact that most of the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala still make mistakes in using the cohesive devices correctly, Khornomo did a study on errors which often occur in the students' compositions. In short, Khornomo's study focuses only on the students' errors in applying cohesive devices in their compositions. She does not discuss the other factors determining coherence either between sentences or paragraphs.

Susiani's thesis is different from Khornomo's thesis. Susiani (1991) claims that students should know and understand how to make their paragraphs coherent since coherence is one of the main qualities needed to create a good paragraph. Further, Susiani also describes all the factors that create a coherent paragraph, i.e. the existence of topic sentences, orderly arrangement, transitional words and phrases, pronouns, references, repetitions of key words or phrases, paralelism, etc. As Susiani's thesis is the result of a library research, it presents no concrete data representing the students' real mastery of coherence in their compositions.

The study under report investigated how far the students' compositions reflect the students' coherence mastery. For this reason, the writer intended to analyse the students' compositions in order to get a clear picture of the idea relationship (logical links) between and within the paragraphs of the compositions of the English Department students of Widya Mandala University.

1.2. The Problem Statements

Based on the reasons presented in the Background of the study under report, this study was guided by the following problem statements :

1. How coherently are the topic sentences related to the thesis statement of each of the compositions of the subjects under study?
2. How coherently are the supporting sentences related to the topic sentence of each paragraph of the compositions of the subjects under study?
3. How appropriately are the transitional words/phrases used in each paragraph of the compositions of the subjects under study?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Derived from the formulated research questions stated above, this study intended to :

1. describe how coherently the topic sentences are related to the thesis statements of each of the compositions of the subjects under study. In other words, this study intended to describe the quality of the coherence between the paragraphs of each of the compositions under study.
2. describe how coherently the supporting sentences are related to the topic sentence of each paragraph of the compositions of the subjects under study. In other words, this study intended to describe the quality of the coherence within each paragraph of the compositions under study.

3. explore how appropriately the transitional words/phrases are used in each paragraph of the compositions of the subjects under study. In other words, this study intended to explore the quality of the uses of the transitional words or phrases in the compositions under study.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

With the results of this study, it is hoped that teachers of the English Department of Widya Mandala University will know the students' ability in making their compositions coherent. If the results are disappointing, the English writing teachers will try to look for new ways to make their students write coherently. On the other hand, if the results show that the students under study have been able to write coherently, the writing teachers will maintain what they have done in helping their students to write coherently.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The subjects of this study were limited to the fifth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University belonging to the school year of 1993-1994 with the assumptions that they have learnt and hopefully are good at writing description, narration,

persuasion and exposition using various kinds of paragraph development techniques.

Although coherence is important for all kinds of writing, the study under report was limited to the coherence of expository writing because this kind of writing is predominantly used in academic writing such as term papers and Master theses.

1.6. Definition of the Key Terms

Before discussing the main points of the thesis, it is necessary to present some key terms used throughout the thesis. The aim is to avoid misinterpretation that may happen when reading this thesis.

a. Writing

Writing is a purposeful selection and organization of opinions, or ideas. Thus, it is more than an orthographic symbolization of speech (Arapoff 1970:4).

b. Expository Writing

Expository Writing is a kind of writing to explain or to teach the reader about something new. It has several functions including explaining, defining, classifying or contrasting (Reid 1982: 202).

c. An Analysis

An Analysis is a separating or breaking up of any whole into its parts so as to find out their nature, proportion, function, relationship, etc (Paulston 1976).

d. Coherence

Coherence is the quality of a paragraph or a sentence in which the elements of it hang together (Beardsley 1976:xii). This quality enables the smooth and clear transition between ideas, between the sentences of a paragraph, and between the paragraphs (Moore 1966:107).

e. Unity

Unity is the quality of paragraphs dealing with a single idea which can be summarized in a single sentence (Moore 1966:101).

f. Transitional Words/Phrases

Transitional Words/Phrases are logical or mechanical connections between or among ideas expressed in the sentences of a paragraph (Marshek 1982:107). According to Pickett and Laster, as quoted by Susiani, the transitional words/ phrases relate thoughts so there is a clear, coherent progression from one to the next (Susiani 1991:23) (Sic).

1.7. The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction of the study including the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of the key terms. Chapter two presents review of related literature. Chapter three presents the methodology of the study which consists of research nature and its design, the subjects of the study, instruments, and the procedure of collecting the data. Chapter four discusses the data analysis, findings and the interpretation of the findings. At last chapter five presents some suggestions and a brief summary of what has been discussed in the previous chapters.