

**THE ROLE OF COHESION IN RECOUNT TEXTS :
A CASE STUDY OF SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF STMIK
PROVISI IN ENGLISH 2 WRITING ASSIGNMENT**

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Abstract: *This study is a descriptive research aiming at discovering to what extent students applied cohesion in recount texts in their writing assignment. The participants were STMIK PROVISI students taking English 2. Data were taken from students' writing assignments in June 2008 and they were gathered by applying qualitative methods. Results indicated that most students were relatively aware of the stages in recount texts even though some of them applied past and present tenses interchangeably without any logical reasons. Referring to cohesive devices, the students mostly used anaphoric reference, personal reference, and demonstrative reference, as well as simple additive conjunction.*

Keywords : *Cohesion devices, recount text, STMIK PROVISI students*

STMIK PROVISI is a school of Information Technology in which the portion for English subject is relatively higher compared to other school under the same discipline. If in other schools, English is normally given in the first and second semester only for two (2) credits each. While in STMIK PROVISI, English is presented for four semesters, four (4) credits for semester 1 – 3, and two (2) credits for semester 4.

Why does English have such big portion in STMIK PROVISI? It is due to the vision of this school which is to produce scholars in Information Technology with global competitiveness (STMIK Statuta Chapter III, verse 2 no.1). This means that STMIK PROVISI graduates have to be able to understand English both spoken and written. This research is trying to discover to what extent cohesive devices are applied by STMIK PROVISI students in their recount texts as a part of writing assignments. The research was conducted in June 2008 during semester 2, to 27 students of Information of Technology.

Referring to the ultimate goal of producing scholars with global competitiveness, it can be concluded that they must be able to speak as well as write well in English. However, it is obvious that Indonesian people are relatively weak

in English. The purpose of this research is to discover how cohesion functions within text to create semantic links in order to understand the meaning.

This research was guided by three questions :

1. How the text is structured ?
2. What kinds of cohesive devices are mainly used in the texts?
3. To what extents is the cohesive devices beneficial to the understanding of the students' writing?

According to Martin, et.al (2003:7-8), the term genre refers to a staged, goal-oriented social process. It is called social because we participate in genres with other people; goal-oriented because we use genres to get things done; stages because it usually takes a few steps to reach our goals. While, Rudi Hartono (2005:4) stated that genre is used to refer to particular text-types, not to traditional varieties of literature. It is a kind of text, defined in terms of its social purposes; also the level of context dealing with social purpose.

This research is focusing on certain kind of text, that is recount text. Recounts are concerning with a temporal sequence of events in which the narrator is involved (Eggins, et,al 1997:259). The purpose of recounts is to tell how one event leads to another. The point of recount is simply the succession of events. The generic structure of a recount, as reformulated by Martin (1992) in Eggins, at.al, 1997:259) is :

(Abstract) ^ (Orientation) ^ Recount of Events ^ (Coda)

Labov and Waletzky (1967:32-39) in Eggins, *et.al*(1997:333-334) identified stages in genre as :

- Abstracts** : The purpose of the abstract is to provide a summary of the Story in such a way that it encapsulates the point of the story.
- Orientation** : The purpose of the orientation is to “ orient the listener in respect to place, time and behavioral situation.
- Coda** : The purpose of this concluding stage is to make a point about the text as a whole. It can be ‘ a functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment.’

Rudi Hartono in his book Genres of Texts (2005: 6-7) specified genres into social functions, schematic structures and linguistic features. In his book, he specified Recount text, as a part of story genre, as follows

Social Function : Orientation, events, reorientation

Linguistic features :

- Focus on individual participants
- Use of past tense
- Focus on temporal sequence of events
- Use of material (or action) clauses

This study is trying to discover whether the students followed specific genre stages as mentioned above, or at least some stages normally found in recount texts.

According Michael Halliday and Riquaiya Hasan (1976) in Renkema (1993:37 – 42), they distinguish five types of cohesion.

- a. **Substitution** : The replacement of a word (group) or sentence segment by a dummy word. There are three types of substitution : (1) of noun, (2) of verb, (3) of a clause.
- b. **Ellipsis** : the omission of a word or part of a sentence, sometimes called substitution by zero. The division of ellipsis is similar to substitution : nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis.
- c. **Reference** : the act of referring to a preceding or following element, deals with a semantic relationship. Referring to the relation to texts, there two references : endophora and exophora. Endophora refers to items within the texts, and it is further divided into anaphora (to preceding text) and cataphora (to following text). While exophora reference does not refer to textual items rather than to the context of situation.

While referring to the types, there are three : personal, demonstrative and comparative (Halliday & hasan, 1976: 37-39) :

- a. Personal refers to the function in the speech situation, through the category of person.
- b. Demonstrative reference is reference by means of location, on a scale of Proximity.
- c. Comparative reference is indirect reference by means of Identity or Similarity.

Cohesion devices that were analyzed in this study are those that frequently occur in students' recount text , they are : reference (anaphora, personal, demonstrative) and conjunction (additive, adversative, causal and temporal)

This research is a descriptive qualitative research supported by the number of occurrence of unit of analysis in the students' writing. Twenty seven students of STMIK PROVISI at the second semester taking English 2 subject were chosen as the subject of this research. While the data were 27 pieces of writing assignments entitled *My Unforgettable Childhood Memory* by the students that were conducted during the class. The data , then, were analyzed according to the genre stages and cohesive devices.

Herewith are the units of analysis used to analyze the data :
The collection of data were analyzed using the following units of analysis :

- A. Genre point of view
 1. The generic structure of a Recount by Martin (1992) in Eggins. et.al 1997:259) : (Abstract) ^ (Orientation) ^ Recount of Events ^ (Coda)
 2. Rudi Hartono (2005:6-7)
Linguistic Features :
 - Focus on individual participants
 - Use of past tense
 - Focus on temporal sequence of events
- B. Cohesive devices point of view based on Halliday's Principle (1976) :
 1. Reference :
 - a. Textual
 - Anaphora
 - b. Type
 - Personal
 - Demonstrative
 2. Conjunction :
 - a. Additive
 - b. Adversative
 - c. Causal
 - d. Temporal

METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative research. The data were analyzed based on two units of analysis : (1) Genre text type, recount, which refers to the descriptions of Rudi Hartono (2005:10-11) and Suzanne Eggins and Diana Slade (1997:259). While the cohesion devices are based on Jan Renkema's (1993:37-42) and M.A.K. Halliday's and Ruqaiya Hasan's (1976) principles.

Twenty seven students of Information Technology at the second semester of 2008/2009 academic year were selected. They were asked to write essays on recount genre based entitled " My Childhood Memory."

The writing assignments were assigned in the first and second week of June 2008. The data, then, were analyzed based on the recount text stages (abstract, orientation, and coda) and the cohesion devices used in the essays. The first unit of analysis tried to describe whether the students indeed followed the steps in recount text genre and cohesive devices that were most frequently used in the essays.

FINDING

Based on the genre-based analysis on Recount Text, it can be concluded that all students are aware of using abstract and orientation in their writing assignments.

However, only half of them put concluding thoughts. Maybe, this can refer to inadequate knowledge of the test or inadequate time provided by the teacher.

Herewith are the tables containing summary of generic structure of Recount Text and Linguistic Features :

Table 1 Summary of generic structure of Recount Text

| Generic Structure | Number of Writing Assignment (2&) | Remark |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Abstract | 27 | All of the writings included abstract which usually started with : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When I was a child ... - When I was in Elementary school ... - When I was in kindergarten ... |
| 2. Orientation | 27 | All of the writing put orientation to describe the events in sequence. The starting phrases were various, some of them are : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was - We went ... - At that time the students.... - I visited - I and my family took |
| 3. Coda | 14 | Only 14 out of 27 students included coda in their assignments. 13 of them ended the text in orientation stage. In concluding the text most of them used the following phrases : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That's my most unforgettable childhood memory - That is one of my experiences ... Some of the structure refers to presents situations : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I want to have holiday there again |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - So, I don't forget about that place because - Now, it's different ... |
|--|--|---|

Table 2: Linguistic Features of the Students' Writing Assignment

| Linguistic Features | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Individual participant | <p>Subject pronouns that are most frequently used are : I, we, he, she, they, it.</p> <p>Object pronoun that are most frequently used are : me, us, him, her, them, it.</p> |
| 2. Use of past tense | <p>Verbs that are frequently used are :</p> <p>Linking verb (was), went, visited, took, invited, played wanted</p> <p>Example :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I was happy - I wanted a video game - I visited my grandparents in the village <p>However, it turned out that many of the students mixed the use of present and past in this text. So, they can start with a past tense, but then they continued with present tense.</p> <p>For example :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When I was 6 years old, I had a group. My group had to play hide and seek. My friend, whose name was Satya had to hide in the roof. <p><i>It's funny when he is found, he can't go down.</i></p> |
| 3. temporal sequence of events | <p>In contrast, most writing assignment used various kinds of conjunction, they are :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additive: and 2. Adversative : Although, but, only 3. Causal : so , therefore 4. Temporal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sequential : then, next, after that - Conclusive : finally, at last |

While referring to Cohesive Devices, it can be concluded that the types of reference and conjunction and frequently occurred in the students' writing assignment are as follows :

Table 3: Cohesive Devices in the Students' Writing Assignment

| Cohesion Devices | Type | Occurrence | occurrence in one essay | Example in sentences |
|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|---|
| Reference : Anaphoric | 1. Personal Reference a. Existential Head : | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I - me - we - us - he - him - she - her - they - them - it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 197 12 20 1 5 2 1 0 4 2 1 | 1-19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When I was a child, about nine years old, I separated from my parents. - I missed family. My father often visited me. - I always did this with <u>my friends Uzi, Dita, and Nico</u>. ... We planned ... |
| | b. Modifiers | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - my - your - our - his - her - their - its | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82 0 0 2 0 0 0 | 1-9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During holiday I usually went to Jakarta. I visited my cousin. I went to Jakarta with my parents and my all family in Semarang. - <u>My friend</u>, whose name was Satya ... waiting for his father, his father ... |
| | 2. Demonstrative Reference : | | | |
| | a. Selective | | | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | <p>Modifier/Head (Determiner)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this 0 - these 1 - that 1 - those 2 <p>Adjunct adverb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - here 1 - there 17 - now 1 | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>These</u> flying kites were flying high ... - After that we pray and try to solve <u>that</u> problem. - In <u>there</u> I can play in the wet rice. - I want to holiday <u>here</u> again. - <u>Now</u>, it's all gone ... |
| <p>Conjunction :</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple additive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - and 50 2. Adversative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - though 2 - but 8 - only 0 3. Causal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - so 4 - therefore 0 - because 21 4. Temporal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sequential : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * then 14 * next 0 * after that 8 * before 1 - Conclusive (simple) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * finally 1 * at last 0 | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every morning we helped our uncle to clean the house <u>and</u> make breakfast. - <u>..but</u> the teacher asked me... - I could <u>although</u> not in clear way. - <u>So</u>, I don't start primary school until one week. - I'm funny <u>because</u> I'm talkative - <u>..then</u> my family took me to see the doctor. <u>After that</u> we pray and try to solve that problem. |

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DISCUSSION

School curriculum concerning English subject in Indonesia is known to be focused more on grammar and vocabulary rather than speaking, let alone writing. No wonder high school graduates find it very hard to express their opinion both verbal or written. This is due to the fact that they are not used to practicing writing.

The results of this research can support the fact that most high school graduates still had difficulty in doing the writing assignment even though they were dealing familiar topics. After learning English for one semester in the university, their ability in composing sentences did not really improve much.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that :

1. Referring to how the text is structured ,

- It can be seen that most students understand the stages in recount text that consist of abstract, orientation and coda. However, some of them did not complete the writing assignment – they missed the last stage – coda. This may refer to the lack of time provided by the teacher.
- Referring to the linguistic features analysis, it revealed that the most commonly used subject pronouns were : I, we, she, they, it.
While for object pronouns, the most frequently used were : me, us, him, her, them, it. This may shows that they tended to be self centered in describing recount text.
- As to the tense, most students tended to mix the use of present and past tense. Therefore, the tenses were used interchangeably without any logical reasons. This fact may refer to the lack of knowledge that experience should be presented in the past instead of present situation because it has already been done.
- The students applied various kinds of conjunctions in contrast to the convention that recount should apply temporal sequential and conclusive (then, next, after that, and finally), and causal (so, therefore) – even though this usage is not frequent.

2. Concerning to the question of types of cohesive devices and their implications to the understanding of students' writing assignment. It can be concluded that :

- the most frequently used reference was anaphoric reference (referring to the previous item).
- Regarding to the type of reference, existential personal reference as head like : *I* (197 times), *me* (12 (times), *we* (20) were the most commonly reference discovered in the writing assignments.
- the most commonly used modifier was *my* (82 times) while other modifiers, except *his* (2 times), were not used.
- the numbers of demonstrative reference found in the assignments were not significant, except *there*.
- simple additive conjunction, *and*, was the most commonly used in writing (50 times). Although other conjunctions such as adversative (although, but, only), causal (so, therefore, because) and temporal (sequential and conclusive) were also applied but the numbers were not significant.

Based on the above facts, it can be said that STMIK PROVISI students' style in simple recount text was : highly self-centered (the frequent use of *I* and *we*), illogical reference (the word did not refer to anything in the sentence, such as in the example : “ Every group must pass through the forest. In the forest **we**.... → we did not refer to anything).. In terms of other aspects of cohesion, it is clear that their competence in sentence building was low due to the frequent use of simple additive conjunction, *and* in their writing assignments.

Therefore, it is recommended that university students need to have more practice in English writing regardless their disciplines. English now has become a global language, so the ability to write in English will be beneficial for their future.

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