

THE USE OF GRAMMATICAL COHESION DEVICES IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITINGS OF EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to investigate grammatical cohesion in EFL learners' argumentative essay writing. The research question was how the EFL learners used cohesive devices in the argumentative essay. The study found that there were 2.186 grammatical cohesive devices from 17 argumentative essays. The results showed that not all grammatical cohesive devices were used in their writing. This research applied qualitative methods and employed the conceptual framework of cohesion by Halliday and Hasan. It included using possessive pronouns as a reference, verbal Substitution, verbal Ellipsis, and clausal Ellipsis. Furthermore, there are also 14 misuses of Reference. Therefore, it could be concluded that the learners used grammatical cohesive devices in their argumentative essays although it contained misuses of some grammatical cohesive devices.

Keywords: cohesion, grammatical cohesive devices, argumentative essay.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis perangkat kohesif gramatikal dalam tulisan esai argumentatif dari siswa EFL. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan menggunakan kerangka konseptual kohesi dari Halliday dan Hasan. Peneliti mengkaji perangkat kohesif gramatikal melalui esai yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa tahun kedua STBA LIA Jakarta. Ditemukan sebanyak 2.186 alat kohesi gramatikal dari 17 esai argumentatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak semua jenis alat kohesi gramatikal digunakan dalam esai mereka. Diantaranya penggunaan kata ganti posesif sebagai referensi, substitusi verbal, elipsis verbal, dan elipsis klausa. Selain itu, ditemukan pula 14 penggunaan referensi yang masih kurang tepat. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah bahwa mahasiswa banyak menggunakan perangkat kohesif gramatikal dalam esai argumentatif mereka meskipun masih ada masalah dengan penggunaan reference and variasi kohesi yang digunakan.

Kata Kunci: kohesi, perangkat kohesif gramatikal, esai argumentatif.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries provide English as a subject at schools to make students equipped with the language of the world. Thus, English language learners must develop an understanding of the four skills to master the language. Those are listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Harmer, 2002). Among the four skills, writing is the most difficult to achieve for learners (Blanchard & Root, 2010). The

difficulty lies in generating and organizing ideas in a written text. As an activity, writing encourages students to emphasize accurate language use. Also, it involves emotions, opinions, thoughts, dreams, and experiences based on language rules and symbols called letters (Güneyli, 2016). Writing skills stimulate learners' prior knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar, and structure (Azizi et al., 2017). Thus, it makes writing a complex skill because they have to think as they are writing.

To express their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and opinions, learners must pay attention to linguistic aspects. They need to understand how to link the ideas to create a unity of the text rather than only focusing on using correct vocabulary forms. They need to pay attention to their writing patterns so that they can be related and connected. This knowledge is known as cohesion.

Cohesion is the singular factor that enables spoken or written documents together. In writing, cohesion is the use of repetition, transitional expressions, and other devices called cohesive cues to guide readers and show how the parts of the composition relate to one another (Emah & Omanconu, 2018, p. 79). It occurred when the interpretation of the presupposing and the presupposed are dependent on each other to create a relation between sentences. "The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to a relation of meaning within the text" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.4). Cohesion creates relationships between words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the texts. In developing writing skills, competence in grammar will determine the works produced. Grammatical competence refers to language knowledge that accounts for people's ability to create sentences in the language (Richards, 2006).

However, learners tend to have problems in some aspects of grammar that make them use the same form in their writing. In this case, the repetitive grammar devices used in writing can decrease the cohesiveness of their essays since there is no relation between each sentence and/or paragraph. A text or an article should be well-constructed to become evidence for good writing because it will be difficult for the readers to understand the text if the arguments or ideas implied in each sentence are unrelated.

Among all grammatical cohesive devices, reference is the most grammatical cohesive device used by students (Tsareva, 2010; Rofiq'ah, 2017) The dominant

type of cohesive device is reference and conjunction. However, there are problems found regarding the use of the cohesive device. Alarcon and Morales (2011) found that the students misused the conjunction in their writings. Also, Tsareva (2010) analyzed grammatical cohesion in argumentative essays and stated that learners in Norwegian and Russian use reference and conjunction extensively to establish cohesive relations between sentences and the researcher claimed that substitution and ellipsis devices are not representative features of grammatical cohesion in the data.

The use of grammatical cohesion devices in essay writing by EFL learners is divided into four, which are reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. The first one is the reference which is used to refer to the referring expressions in the context. It consists of some elements which can be identified as:

- a. Personal reference, is the referring item that refers to a person, thing, or any other object in the text which includes personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, and possessive determiners.
- b. Demonstrative reference, is the referring item in the form of verbal pointing that refers by locating it on a scale of proximity which includes the article *the, this, these, that, and those*.
- c. Comparative reference, is the referring item that contributes to textual cohesion by setting up a relation of contrast which is divided as a general comparison (deictic) and a particular comparison (non-deictic).

The second one is substitution which is used as the relation between words or phrases which occurs when another item replaces an item to avoid repetition in the text. It is divided into three types, which are:

- a. Nominal Substitution, which is expressed with the word **one, ones**, and **same**, which functions as the head of a nominal group and can be substituted only for the word that classifies as the head of a nominal group.
- b. Verbal Substitution, which is expressed with the word **do**, which functions as the head of a verbal group and can be substituted only for the word that classifies as the head of a verbal group.
- c. Clausal Substitution, which is expressed with the word **so** and **not**, which cannot be used to substitute a clause that functions independently.

Next is the ellipsis which is the type of grammatical cohesion device used as the omission of an unnecessary word or item mentioned previously in the text. The omission does not change anything from the text so it still can be understood by the readers. It is divided into three types, which are:

- a. Nominal Ellipsis, which is an omission of a noun that classifies as the head in the nominal group whose function is undertaken by one of the modifiers.
- b. Verbal Ellipsis which is an elliptical verbal group presupposing one or more words from a previous verbal group.
- c. Clausal Ellipsis, which means the omission of a clause or a part of it.

The last one is the conjunction which expresses the 'logical-semantic' relation between sentences/clauses as a connector. There are types, which are:

- a. Additive conjunction, is a type of conjunction that connects each unit that shares semantic similarity in the text.
- b. Adversative conjunction, is used for contrasting results or opinions in the text.
- c. Causal conjunction, is used to cite or introduce the results, reasons, or purpose of the sentence.
- d. Temporal conjunction, is used to show the sequential order (sequences in time) of events.

The use of cohesive devices in writing argumentative essays shows how learners write to convince the readers. Thus, the writing must focus on cohesion in the text so that the writing can be logical. To convince readers, there must be pro-arguments, counter-arguments, and refutations to persuade readers to agree with the writer's opinion about a specific topic (Folse Keith, 2010). Thus, this article studied how were grammatical cohesion in argumentative writings used in argumentative texts by EFL learners.

METHOD

The study used descriptive qualitative analysis to describe the grammatical cohesion devices used in English language learners' argumentative essay writings, which cover reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. This method presented the data by involving a straightforward descriptive summary of the

informational contents of the data (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The purpose of using a qualitative method in this research is to look at the factors to provide a deep understanding of the data. It involves collecting, analyzing, and managing the data to identify grammatical cohesion devices used in argumentative essays by EFL learners.

The data were taken from the final test papers of second-year students of the English Department at STBA LIA Jakarta. It is collected in two steps. Firstly, the students are asked to write an argumentative essay. The essay from all the students is copied. There are seventeen papers in total. Then, divide each paragraph of the essay into sentences before identifying the types of grammatical cohesion devices found in the essays. The data will be analyzed by using the theory of cohesion from Halliday and Hasan (1976).

The process included selecting the item to classify types of grammatical cohesion devices found in the writings. The data were displayed in a table with descriptions of the analysis of the item. The conclusion of this study would disclose the use of grammatical cohesion devices in EFL learners' argumentative essays using Halliday and Hasan's theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed seventeen data collected from essay writing class in STBA LIA Jakarta with the theory of grammatical cohesive devices by Halliday and Hassan (1976). The type of grammatical cohesion devices appeared in the argumentative essay would be described one by one based on its classification.

1. Reference

The data shows that there were 1.614 occurrences of reference. The occurrences of reference devices are divided into three types, which are personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. The following table describes the number of occurrences of each type of Reference found in EFL argumentative writings.

Table 1. Finding of Reference

No.	Type of Reference	Number of Reference Occurred
1.	Personal Reference	1.136
2.	Demonstrative Reference	361
3.	Comparative Reference	117
Total		1.614

The table showed that personal reference takes the first position as the type of reference that the EFL learners frequently use in their writings. It occurred 1.136 times, followed by the demonstrative reference in second position with 361 occurrences. The type of reference appeared the least frequently in EFL writing was comparative Reference. It was only found 117 times.

The data shows personal pronouns that EFL learners used in their argumentative writings are those items that function as subject (*I, we, you, he, she, they, it*), and object (*me, us, you, his, her, them, it*). The findings show that students have problems identifying the antecedent of the reference. The example below shows that students use different personal pronouns as reference.

*Usually, people use the map if **he** wants to go to a place **he** has never been before. (Retrieved from Essay 15, P1/S5)*

The student who wrote the sentence in example (2) used the personal pronoun **he**, referring to the antecedent people. A personal pronoun **he** is classified as an anaphoric reference because of the antecedent mentioned previously. The word people in English is the plural form of the word person. Also, according to dictionary.cambridge.org, the word people is used to refer to groups of human beings or humans in general. In this case, the student should put the pronoun **they** instead of **he** in the sentence. Even though both of the words **they** and **he** were used to indicate the third person, they are used differently. According to the framework, the word **they** is used to indicate the plural, while the word **he** is for the singular one.

Also, when using reference items, there were some inconsistency when referring to the same antecedent, for example:

*You can look up the Google Maps that **you** saved, print it out for your information, and share the link to others. (Retrieved from Essay 5, P3/S5)*

The sentence shows that the reference item was expressed by the reference **you**, and the referred item is also you. The writer used the word **you** to refer to the readers. According to the framework, this type is categorized as the exophoric reference, which is outside the situation. Thus, the readers will still understand the sentence's meaning even though they do not find the word that refers to in the essay. However, in other sentences, the writer used *we* to refer to the readers.

*If you already looking for the location where **we** are going, then **we** click the directions. (Retrieved from Essay 13, P3/S5)*

It was different from the use of exophoric reference *you* in previous example even though in both sentences, the antecedent was the readers.

2. Substitution

The second grammatical cohesion device found in EFL argumentative writings is substitution. The data showed that there were 17 occurrences of substitution items found in total. The nominal substitution type was frequently found among the rest. It occurred 11 times, followed by clausal substitution that only appeared 6 times. However, the data do not show EFL learners used any verbal substitution.

Table 2. Types of Substitution in The Data

No.	Type of substitution	number
1.	Nominal Substitution	11
2.	Clausal Substitution	6
	Total	17

The item of nominal substitution found in their argumentative essay was only **one** and **ones**.

*For instance, there are two ways that are on the left route, the flyover **one**, and the normal way **one**. (Retrieved from Essay 10, P3/S19)*

The sentence showed that the item of nominal substitution was expressed by substitute **one**. It indicated the substitute item is in a singular form. The function of the nominal substitute **one** in *the flyover one* is the head of the nominal group. It presupposes the word *ways* in *two ways* that also function as the nominal group's head in the sentence. As it only substitutes the head, however, it does not mean the same *ways*. The substitute **one** in *the flyover one* carries other words that are known as repudiation. The repudiation is signaled by the word *the flyover*

Clausal substitution in the data only shows that the item **not** is used by EFL learners in their writings.

*I would say it is a modern map that actually everyone has on their phone whether they realize it or **not**, or whether they use it or **not**. (Retrieved from Essay 7, P2/S3)*

The data showed that the use of clausal substitution is expressed by the word **not**. There are two **not** in the sentence with the same uses and functions. Both function as the head. The clausal substitution item **not** in *they realize it or not* had a meaning of *they do not realize it*. Meanwhile, the substitute item **not** in *they use it or not* had a meaning of *they do not use it*. It was also used in order to presuppose the entire clause.

3. Ellipsis

There were 20 occurrences of ellipsis in total and it only consisted of nominal ellipsis. The symbol \emptyset was applied in order to indicate the ellipsis.

Three, Google Maps will navigate the public transportations around you to show how crowded the place is and \emptyset will alert you about local transit agencies. (Retrieved from Essay 1 P4/S5)

The sentence showed that the student was implying the ideas of what Google Maps will do. There were two ideas that the learner mentioned; *navigate the public transportations* and *alert the local transit agencies*. The learner connected those two ideas with conjunction *and*. The learner omitted the nominal item in the second idea which made Google Maps functions as the head of the nominal group. The learner might omit it to avoid repetition. If he/she kept putting the word Google Maps there, then the idea would be *Google Maps will navigate the public*

transportations, and Google Maps will alert you about local transit agencies. It was acceptable to omit the same nominal item by nothing, as it was how the nominal Ellipsis works. By doing so, the meaning was still understandable by the readers since the omitted item did not change the intention that the student meant in the sentence.

4. Conjunction

There were 535 occurrences of conjunction in EFL learners' argumentative writings consisting of 252 additive conjunctions, 68 adversative conjunctions, 136 causal conjunctions, and 79 temporal conjunctions. The items of additive conjunction items found included *and, or, also, besides, for example, moreover, in addition, furthermore, and for instance*. The illustration could be seen below.

Table 3. Types of conjunctions

No.	Type of conjunction	Number of conjunction Occurred
1.	Additive Conjunction	252
2.	Adversative conjunction	68
3.	Causal Conjunction	136
4.	Temporal Conjunction	79
Total		535

If you seek for a business site, Google Maps will give you a general rating and reviews of that business along with the link of the company.

Furthermore, users can track their friends in the area when you are doing a trip. (Retrieved from Essay 5, P3/S9-S10)

As it was shown in the sentence, the conjunctive item that is used by the learner is expressed by ***furthermore***. It is used at the beginning of the second sentence, which emphasizes another idea of it. It was categorized as an additive conjunction since it was used to form a link between ideas in different sentences. The student/writer talked about the benefits of using Google Maps for its user.

Then, the student put a conjunctive item ***furthermore*** to add another argument related to the benefits of using Google Maps which was also beneficial

to use outside the business field. The conjunctive item *furthermore* in the sentence is used as internal conjunction because the order of the idea that is being mentioned can be switched. In other words, although the student mentioned *users can track their friends in the area when you are doing a trip* first and followed by *if you seek for a business site, Google Maps will give you a general rating and reviews of that business along with the link of the company*, it is acceptable because it talks about the same feature of Google Maps but is used for another field.

Next, the items of adversative conjunctions found in the learner's writing are *but, however, even though, actually, instead, in fact, yet, and nevertheless*. The illustration can be seen in the following data.

*I know that with google maps it is very useful for everyone to find the directions or to find a fast way to avoid the traffic jams. **However**, using google maps is not safe and will invite such crimes, such as kidnappings of children caused by hackers who tracked that child's phone, celebrities who have fanatical fans can be fatal because the fans will become their stalker and their privacy is threatened, etc. (Retrieved from Essay 6, P5/S2-S3)*

The conjunctive item in the sentence was expressed by the item *however*. It was also categorized as an external adversative conjunction because it contained the idea against the idea in the previous sentence. In the first sentence, the student mentioned that Google Maps was useful to find other routes that can help its users in avoiding traffic jams. In other words, he/she was talking about the advantages of using Google Maps. On the contrary, the student argued in the next sentence by mentioning some examples that are shown as disadvantages for the users by using Google Maps.

The clausal conjunction items found in the data of EFL earners' argumentative writings are *so, because, therefore, because of, thus, hence, for, and aside from*. The illustration can be seen in the example below.

*It also enables you to set the time limit to detect your location as long as you want. **So**, those who you sent the link to your home or office address are able to discover and detect your location or position in the period of time that is specified. (Retrieved from Essay 7, P4/S3-S4)*

The causal conjunctive item in the sentence was expressed by the item *so*. It was used in order to link two different sentences. As it was shown, the student used the conjunctive item *so* as to imply the result of the idea that has been mentioned. At first, he/she mentioned that Google Maps was able to help the user to make a limitation of the user's friend or family member to locate him or her through Google Maps. Then, he/she mentioned the benefit by setting time limitations when using Google Maps for the user. This made the causal conjunctive item in the sentence identified as an external conjunctive item.

Next, the temporal conjunction items found in the data were **then, next, meanwhile, first, firstly, second, third, after that, finally, last, and lastly**. One of the data showing the use of temporal conjunction could be seen in this sentence.

*If you already installed Google Maps on your phone, **then** it is just automatic that you also have your GPS turned on. (Retrieved from Essay 1, P2/S2)*

The temporal conjunction item in the sentence was expressed by the word **then**. It was used to show there is a sequential relation within the sentence. The student mentioned the situation when Google Maps users installed the application as the first event. The second event explained what happened after the users install it. In other words, the meaning that was carried by using the conjunctive **then** is *the GPS will turn on automatically if the users had already installed the Google Maps on their phone*.

Based on the findings, in general, there were no significant problems found in the use of substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. The students could apply those devices in the sentence better than using references. The data also showed that EFL learners frequently used grammatical cohesive devices in argumentative essays. The conjunction is used by the EFL learners in their argumentative essays to connect every sentence or paragraph that contains the idea or argument they intend to express in their essays. It showed that the learners used conjunctive items in their essays variously. It shows that the EFL learners understand how conjunction needs to be adequately used in argumentative essays.

Furthermore, the data also show that EFL learners used substitution and ellipsis in their argumentative essays. However, neither substitution nor ellipsis is

found not as many as reference and conjunction. The students used substitution in their argumentative essays in order to replace words and clauses in their argumentative essay that mentioned previously. However, it is only for nominal ellipsis, which is used to avoid repetition in their essays.

However, the reference was the type of grammatical cohesive devices that were predominantly used by the learners rather than other types of grammatical cohesive devices. Generally, it was used to refer to an item mentioned previously in the text by interpretation. The total of references in the argumentative essay were divided into three types; personal Reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference.

It could be said that the learners had been familiar with the use of references when they are conducting argumentative essays. Nevertheless, it was found that some reference items used by the students as the writers of the argumentative essay are not following the theory of Halliday and Hasan. It included how the learners shift the functions of reference items with other reference items. It could be said the EFL learners still need to understand better how to use reference item properly in their writing since they are still inconsistent with how it is supposed to be used in sentences.

Thus, it can be said that writing is difficult to achieve for learners (Blanchard & Root, 2010). Other than writing organization, the students' prior knowledge, related to vocabulary and grammar determine the writing quality as stated by Azizi et al., (2017). Thus, the application of grammatical cohesive devices displayed the complexity of writing faced by the students in order to lead the readers in composing related argument to one another (Emah & Omanconu, 2018) because the cohesive devices used created relation of arguments between sentences. It proved the relations of meaning in sentences of the students writing (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). It also proved that in writing skills, students' competence in grammar determined the works produced (Richards, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, EFL learners in this study can use grammatical cohesive devices, such as conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution. However, reference is a different case. Eventhough the most cohesive devices applied in the writing is reference, there are some misuse of it. Thus, they need to improve the use of grammatical devices, specifically for the use of reference in order to create cohesive and coherent arguments.

The results from this study suggest that teachers be aware of teaching grammatical cohesive devices in their class to encourage the learners to apply them in their writing activity. Additionally, this will give more opportunities for the learners to practice conducting unity of an essay. Moreover, as the students who wrote the argumentative essays for this research come in their second year in college, they should be accustomed to using the grammatical cohesive devices in their writing appropriately to conduct a better essay. Furthermore, this study is open for further researchers to investigate another cohesion study in different types of writing in the hope of finding other existence of the type of grammatical cohesive devices found less in this study.

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