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# Cohesion and coherence in the final project abstracts written by undergraduate students

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#### **Abstract**

Writing an abstract was not different from writing other kinds of text. As a part of the final project, an abstract should be written clearly, cohesively and coherently. This study aimed to examine cohesion and coherence of the students' final project abstracts. It also focused to reveal the factors which influenced the quality of the students' final project abstracts. This study concerned with text analysis. The investigation approach of this study used written discourse analysis. The data of this study were thirty abstracts which were taken from final project abstracts of English Department undergraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang in the academic year of 2017-2018. The findings showed that the students did not utilize the five types of cohesive devices to build cohesion in their abstracts. However, it was sufficient to utilize at least three types of cohesive devices to make the abstracts cohesive. Based on Theme and Rheme theory by Halliday, the abstracts were written coherently because they applied the use of cohesive devices. This research also found that there were two factors which influenced the quality of the abstracts. They were the usage of cohesive devices to build cohesion in the abstracts and the usage of Theme and Rheme and thematic progression to build coherence in the abstracts. In conclusion, it was clear that the usage of cohesive devices and Theme and Rheme helped the students write the abstracts cohesively and coherently. The abstract should be written in one paragraph of 150-250 words. Calisto MT font size 9 single spacing. It should contain general statement about the primacy of the topic under investigation, research gap, the objectives, method, main findings, and the conclusions.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Writing ability is very important for everyone especially students of the English Department. One of the reasons is that they are going to write their own final project in English as one of the graduation requirements. They also learn how to write well from the beginner level to the advanced one to improve their writing ability. For example, the students learn how to create a good paragraph in Paragraph based Writing. On the next level, they learn how to compose good texts based on generic structures in Genre-based Writing. For the final, they learn how to write an essay and critical review based on an article in Academic Writing.

Writing in English also has some characteristics. They are cohesion and coherence. Cohesion defines as all the supporting sentences connect to each other in their support of topic sentence (Boardman, 2008). The ways of connecting sentences to each other are called cohesive devices. Cohesive devices have four important things. They are connectors, definite articles, personal pronouns, and demonstrative pronouns. In addition, cohesion is the tie and connection that exist within the text (Yule, as cited in Poudel, 2018). While coherence, When the supporting sentences are ordered according to a principle and the sentences are put in order so that the reader can understand your ideas easily. Furthermore, the capacity of a text to make sense is called Coherence (Thornbury, 2005). Since the concepts are interconnected and meaningful to the readers, that is the objective of cohesion and coherence in a text. Poudel (2018) indicated to help the readers in constructing meanings from the text, cohesion and coherence have a significant role as they create a text such that it has a contextual adjustment of ideas connectedly in an orderly sequence. Furthermore, a text with cohesive ties and coherence is more comfortable for the readers to comprehend and interpret the message of the writer as well. Besides helping the readers in comprehending the text, cohesion and coherence should occur in the text in order to achieve good writing. Thus, the writer is able to develop the paragraph in a clear and coherent way by using cohesive devices and the Theme & the Rheme.

However, for some reason, it is not easy to be able to write well. The lack of grammar and vocabulary may assume the complexity of the foreign language. This assumption is correct enough since the vocabulary and grammar in English are exactly different from them in Indonesian. The difficulty in mastering these language components will cause to write well. In addition, the early learners of a new language were dominated by difficulty in vocabulary, while the advanced learners as students in universities are dominated by genres and rhetorical organization problems. Consequently, the text they write often does not show its unity or incoherent for they do not know much how to link one sentence to the other or one paragraph to the other cohesively (Kern, as cited in Suwandi, 2016). Thus, not all students are able to write cohesively and coherently.

The fact that writing an abstract is not different from writing other kinds of text. An abstract is a concise summary of a research paper or the entire thesis (Koopman, 2010). As a part of the final project, an abstract must be written clearly, cohesively and coherently. Furthermore, it must be fully self-contained and make sense by itself, without further reference to outside sources or to the actual paper. Nevertheless, it is informative and completely clear, not to mention cohesive and coherent. Hence, the students must pay attention to their abstracts. It should be written coherently and cohesively. They need to study the use of cohesive devices and theme and rheme theory in order to help them in writing the paragraphs coherently and cohesively. Andayani & Marjohan (2013) all stated that cohesive devices are linguistic features which tie sentences together. These can make a text an efficient means of understanding and help the reader create a meaningful semantic unit of the text for textual interpretation. In addition, Khoirunnisa, Jufrizal, & Marlina (2018) all indicated that cohesive devices are the most important in writing. Since there is no relation between one sentence to another sentence there is no idea from text or sentence itself. Besides, cohesive devices, in approaching coherence and cohesion, some researchers show that theme and rheme also influenced in constructing texts to be cohesively and coherently. Leza (2012) indicated that by implementing the Theme and Rheme technique, the teacher or lecturer can stimulate and enable the students to produce good and coherent writing. In addition, Le (2013) stated that the effectiveness of theme and rheme in analyzing ESL learners' writing is useful to help them see their writing problems concerning cohesion within texts and master a good command of English writing skills.

Moreover, it is necessary to know the factors which influence the quality of student's abstract in term of cohesion and coherence. Since they are absolutely important for a good writing. Saragih & Septiani (2017) all stated that Cohesion and coherence were important elements for good writing. They were certainly important to the linkage between reader and writer in readable writing.

Thus, this study aims to find out how well the coherence and cohesion of the students' Final Project Abstracts. In addition, it also focuses to reveal the factors which influence the quality of the students' Final Project Abstracts.

#### **METHODS**

This study is concerned with texts analysis as the data analysis. It aimed to describe the cohesion and coherence final project abstract. Therefore, the investigation approach of this study used the descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research involves the analysis of data such as words, pictures, or objects (Neil, 2007, p.74). Furthermore, qualitative research is an exploratory approach emphasizing words rather than quantification in gathering and analyzing the data (Bryman, as cited in Devetak, 2010, p.79).

The object of this study was the final project abstract of the English Department undergraduate of Universitas Negeri Semarang in the academic year of 2017-2018. This study used cohesive devices by Halliday and Hasan as the tools to measure the cohesion of the text, and the theme and the rheme analysis as the tools to measure the coherence of the text. Furthermore, the thematic progression by Eggins was used in order to show the pattern which was used by students in writing an abstract. In addition, a questionnaire was utilized to find the factors which influence the quality of students' final project abstracts in terms of cohesion and coherence.

There were some steps in analyzing the data. First, the researcher read and re-read the final project abstracts to find the cohesion and coherence. Second, in analyzing the coherence and cohesion, the researcher focused on the investigation of the logical relationship by breaking up the paragraphs of the final project abstract into sentences and looking the cohesive devices which were used in connecting one sentence to the others. Third, after the process of analyzing the coherence and cohesion in the final project abstracts was done, the researcher made a conclusion as the end of a written report.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Cohesion

Based on the taxonomy of cohesive devices by Halliday and Hasan, the data analysis showed that the students did not use the five types of cohesive devices to build cohesion in their abstracts. The findings showed that the use of reference was the most dominantly used. Next, the use of substitution was rarely used. Then, the use of ellipsis was not found. Finally, the use of conjunction was occasionally higher than reiteration in the abstracts.

Table 1. The occurrence of cohesive devices used in the abstracts

Text	Reference	%	Subs.	%	Ellipsis	%	Conj.	%	Lexical	%
									cohesion	
1	37	70	-	-	-	-	13	24	3	6
2	38	53	-	-	-	-	29	40	5	7
3	40	65	-	-	-	-	16	26	5	8
4	47	65	-	-	-	-	20	28	5	7
5	35	67	-	-	-	-	14	27	3	6
6	29	54	3	5	-	-	16	30	6	11
7	41	71	-	-	-	-	12	21	5	9
8	34	62	-	-	-	-	17	31	4	7
9	24	70	-	-	-	-	6	17	4	12
10	54	54	-	-	-	-	34	34	11	11
11	54	76	-	-	-	-	10	14	7	10
12	34	64	-	-	-	-	11	21	8	15
13	37	66	-	-	-	-	17	30	2	4
14	45	64	-	-	-	-	19	27	6	9
15	37	63	-	-	-	-	14	24	8	14
16	31	55	-	-	-	-	16	29	9	16
17	30	53	-	-	-	-	18	32	9	16
18	17	57	-	-	-	-	6	20	7	23
19	25	59	-	-	-	-	9	21	8	19
20	17	57	-	-	-	-	7	23	6	20
21	63	58	-	-	-	-	24	22	24	22
22	23	45	3	6	-	-	17	33	8	16

23	34	56	-	-	-	-	12	20	15	25
24	37	57	-	-	-	-	21	32	7	11
25	35	47	-	-	-	-	20	27	19	26
26	37	51	-	-	-	-	18	25	17	24
27	21	41	-	-	-	-	16	31	14	27
28	35	65	-	-	-	-	10	19	9	17
29	24	46	-	-	-	-	11	21	17	33
30	31	50	-	-	-	-	15	24	16	26
Total	1,046		6		-		468		267	

## Reference

The findings indicated that reference was mostly used by the students to make their abstracts cohesive. There were 1,046 references which occurred in the thirty abstracts. They consisted of personal reference and demonstrative reference. Based on the findings, it was able to be assumed that the students know very well in using references in their abstracts. Abdurahman (2013) indicates that the students are more familiar with the use of reference although they are able to use other types of grammatical cohesive as well. In addition, Nugraheni (2017) stated that learners will not avoid the use of the words when they are familiar with the use of words.

## Personal reference

There were a lot of personal references which occurred in the abstracts such as personal pronouns and possessive pronouns. They were presented in the example below.

This final project is based on the condition of the students that have some problems in pronouncing -ed ending in regular past verb.  $\underline{It}$  is focused with the use of Odd One Out game in teaching students' pronunciation of -ed ending in regular past verb.

The word 'it' is called personal pronouns and possessive pronouns. It is also called anaphora because it refers to the word in the preceding sentence. Therefore, the word 'it' in the example above made the text cohesive.

## Demonstrative reference

There were also a lot of demonstrative references which occurred in the abstracts such as this, there and the. They were presented in the example below.

*This research* is an experimental one using two groups with pre-test and post-test design.

Therefore, the word 'this' in the examples above made the text cohesive by a form of verbal pointing.

#### Substitution

The findings indicated that substitution was rarely used by the students to make their abstracts cohesive. There were 6 substitutions which occurred in the thirty abstracts (see appendix 1). They consisted of nominal substitution and clausal substitution. It was probably the lack of the students' understanding of substitution to make their writing cohesive. Mawardi (2014) indicated that substitution and ellipsis were not used much in the essays because of the fact that the students overused the repetition of lexical items, or they were confused between ellipsis and substitution since there is no clear cut between them. However, it is not that way. Nilopa, Miftah & Sugianto (2017) all stated that substitution and ellipsis are more characteristically found in spoken discourse dialogue.

## Nominal substitution

In nominal substitution, the item which occurred as the substitute was one. It is functioned as the head of nominal groups. It was presented in the example below.

The average score of the pre-test for the experimental group was 67.47, and the control one was 66.10.

The word 'one' substitutes only for an item which is itself as the head of the nominal group. It also made the simple sentence and avoids repetition in the sentence.

#### Clausal substitution

The other type of substitution which occurred in the abstracts was clausal substitution. It occurred only in one abstract which was 'so'. It was presented in the example below.

Judy was the <u>one</u> who strong enough to bear the double-edge side of ambition and utilized it into her achievement, while Bellwether was the <u>one</u> failed to do <u>so</u>.

The word 'so' substitutes the whole previous clause. The complete sentence is 'bear the double-edge side of ambition and utilized it into his achievement'. Therefore, the use of substitution made the text cohesive because it showed a relation between linguistic items, such as words or phrases in the text.

#### Conjunction

The findings indicated that the occurrence of conjunction was occasionally higher than lexical cohesion in the abstracts which were 468 conjunctions (see appendix 1). They consisted of additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. While the type of conjunction which mostly occurred was additive. It happened because this conjunction marked any additional information added by the students to complete the ideas. Afrianto (2017) stated that the most occurring type is additive conjunction which appears 6 times, it happens because the student describes and elaborates a topic by often giving more additional information. In addition, Linda & Ismail (2018) all indicated that the use of additive devices is a very simple and staple use of a cohesive device which can indicates that the writer is still at the novice level. Furthermore, the use of additive conjunction is similar to the use of conjunction in Indonesian.

#### Additive

The additive conjunction mostly occurred in every abstract which was expressed by the words and, or, moreover, besides, furthermore, and in addition. They were presented in the example below.

The study was started with initial pre-test <u>and</u> ended with final post-test.

Based on the example above, it can be said that the additive conjunction is functioned to give additional information to the related sentences as a complex sentence and to link one sentence to another. The students used this conjunction to make the text cohesive by linking one sentence to another or give additional information.

## Adversative

The adversative conjunction was expressed by the words yet, but, however, and nevertheless. They were presented in the example below.

The results of this study showed that the mean score of the pre-test in the experimental group was 59.8, while in the control group was 58.5. **However**, the result of post-test is increased.

Based on the example above, it can be said that the adversative conjunction is functioned to give a contrary connection which means that it indicates the contrary to the preceding clauses.

## Causal

The causal conjunction was expressed by the words for this reason, then, therefore, consequently, because. They were presented in the example below.

The result was that limited human imagination happened <u>because</u> the lack of knowledge that the person had.

Based on the example above, it can be said that the causal conjunction is functioned to link the causal connection in one clause to another. It provided a cohesive relation with previous clauses. It also can be interpreted as the reason related to the clauses that have been said in the previous ones.

## **Temporal**

The temporal conjunction was expressed by the words finally, at last, then, next, first, second, after and before. They were presented in the example below.

**Firstly**, the processes found are Relational, Mental, Material, Existential, Verbal, and Behavioral process. **Secondly**, the dominant Participants found in this study are Carrier, Attribute, Senser, and Phenomenon.

Based on the example above, it can be said that the temporal conjunction is functioned to link sentences with a sequence of time. It can be interpreted that the second sentence happened after the preceding sentence or clause.

#### Reiteration

The findings indicated that the occurrence of reiteration was occasionally lower than conjunction in the abstracts which was 267 (see appendix 1). It was a form of lexical cohesion which involved the repetition of a lexical item or the use of a synonym. The repetition provided continuity and creates coherent in the text. Nurul (2017) indicates that lexical cohesion contributes to the coherence of the text. The cohesive relations that occur in the text contribute to the continuity and also set up the context for the interpretation. The examples were presented in the sentences below.

<u>This research</u> is about using Alphabet Island Game in Hyponymy Technique for teaching vocabulary in the first grade of junior high school. <u>Alphabet Island Game in Hyponymy Technique</u> is an interactive technique that encourages the participants to be more creative and active in team work. <u>This research</u> aimed to find out whether or not <u>Alphabet Island Game in Hyponymy Technique</u> is effective to teach vocabulary at the first graders of SMP N 6 Blora in the academic year of 2016/2017. <u>The research design</u> used was quasi experimental research.

The repetition in this sentence was 'this research'. This type of repetition was a nominal repetition. It was one of the attempts to make sentences cohesive and coherent in the text by the authors.

It clearly showed that the bold items above some kinds of repetition such as this research, this research design, the purpose of the study, and the study were repeated continuously. They occurred to make the text more cohesive and coherent. The repetition helped the text to be consistent with the context.

#### Coherence

Based on theme and rheme theory by Halliday and Hasan to show the coherence of the text, it indicated that the abstracts are written coherently (see appendix 2). Besides, the coherence theory by Halliday and Hasan to support the coherence in the text, it is necessary to show the pattern which is used by students in writing an abstract. Some researchers showed that thematic progression contributed to the cohesive development of a text and it can strengthen the text's coherence and cohesion. Xiao (2017) stated that thematic progression is the movement of theme and rheme in the sentences to develop into a cohesive text. It is important for a good writer to consciously control the flow of information from theme to rheme in the writing process. In addition, Jing (2015) also indicated that Thematic progression helps students become aware of how information and ideas should flow in a text so that it could be easily understood by the reader.

Table 2. The occurrence of thematic progression used in the abstracts

No.	Thematic progression type	Number of occurrence
1	Reiteration	26
2	Zig-zag	16
3	Multiple	18
	Total	60

The findings showed that the pattern which was the most dominantly used was reiteration. However, the multiple and zig-zag pattern was used as well in the abstracts. The pattern of theme and rheme indicated that it was correlated to make the coherence in the text. The example was presented in the sentences below.

This final project is an experimental study to find out whether there is any learning achievement of students who are taught writing descriptive text using photographs as media which is significantly different from those who are taught without photographs.

On the first paragraph, the theme and rheme showed the correlation between one sentence to the other and also consistent with the context. The first sentence explained the objective of the study. Then, the second sentence explained the subjects of the study. While the pattern of the thematic progression on the first paragraph showed that the students used the zig-zag pattern. It was presented in the analysis below.

This final project is an experimental study to find out whether there is any learning achievement of students who are taught writing descriptive text using photographs as media which is significantly different from those who are taught without photographs. The subjects of the study were the 8th year students of SMP Negeri 1 Ungaran.

## The factors which influence the quality of the abstracts

Based on the questionnaire answers, they indicated that some factors influenced the quality of the students' final project abstracts. There were two factors which influenced the quality of the abstracts. First was the usage of cohesive devices to build cohesion in the abstracts. Second was the usage of theme & rheme and thematic progression to build coherence in the abstracts. Andayani & Marjohan (2013) all stated that cohesive devices are linguistic features which tie sentences together. In addition, theme and rheme also influenced in constructing texts to be cohesively and coherently. Leza (2012) indicated that by implementing the Theme and Rheme technique, the teacher or lecturer can stimulate and enable the students to produce good and coherent writing.

The findings showed that the usage of cohesive devices was the most dominantly used to build cohesive in the abstracts. However, the usage of thematic progression and theme and rheme were used as well to build coherence in the abstracts. The factors indicated that they were correlated to make the cohesion and coherence in the abstracts.

Table 3. The occurrence of factors which influence the quality of abstracts

Owestian	Response	2	—— Total		
Question	Yes	No	Total		
1	30	0	30		
2	10	20	30		
3	30	0	30		
4 5	30	0	30		
	2	28	30		
6	0	30	30		
7	30	0	30		
8	30	0	30		
9	10	20	30		
10	10	20	30		
11	10	20	30		
12	12	18	30		
13	6	24	30		
14	28	2	30		
15	25	5	30		
16	19	11	30		
17	16	14	30		
18	20	10	30		
19	17	13	30		
20	18	12	30		
21	24	6	30		

22	17	13	30	
23	15	15	30	
24	15	15	30	
25	14	16	30	
26	11	19	30	

The findings indicated that the usage of cohesive devices was the most dominantly utilized to build cohesion in the abstracts. The factors which influence the quality of the abstracts were the usage of reference, substitution, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. However, only two students utilized substitution within their abstracts.

Based on the questionnaire answers, it was caused by the students' comprehension of using cohesive devices. It showed that the students learned the cohesive devices in writing class. However, not all students had a deep knowledge of cohesive devices even though their lecture explained the material clearly. To improve the comprehension in learning cohesive devices, they did the exercise as well. In addition, they have enough sources to learn cohesive devices.

Moreover, the findings indicated that the usage of thematic progression and theme and rheme were utilized to build coherence in the abstracts. However, not all students utilized them within their abstracts

Based on the questionnaire answers, it was caused by the students' comprehension in using theme and rheme or thematic progression. It showed that the students learned theme and rheme or thematic progression in writing class. However, they faced some difficulties in learning theme and rheme. In addition, not all students had enough sources to learn the theme and rheme.

The result showed that the students do not have a deep knowledge of cohesive devices and Theme and Rheme because they face some difficulties in learning theme and rheme. It was possible that the students lacked knowledge about writing in English. Ghasemi (2013) stated that it could be emanated from the lack of nonnatives' English language proficiency, especially, because nonnatives may lack knowledge of what makes a written material a meaningful English text. Thus, it was clear why not all students utilized cohesive devices and theme & rheme in the abstracts.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, the conclusions were able to be drawn. First, the students did not utilize the five types of cohesive devices to build cohesion in their abstract. However, it is sufficient to utilize at least three types of cohesive devices to make the abstracts cohesive. Second, based on theme and rheme theory by Halliday and Hasan to show the coherence of the text, it indicated that the abstracts are written coherently because they apply the use of cohesive devices and it is consistent with the context in which it is created. Besides, the coherence theory by Halliday and Hasan to support the coherence in the text, it is necessary to show the pattern which is used by students in writing an abstract. It is called thematic progression. The findings showed that the pattern which was the most dominantly used is reiteration. Third, there are two factors which influence the quality of the abstracts. They are the usage of cohesive devices to build cohesive in the abstracts and the usage of theme & rheme and thematic progression to build coherence in the abstracts.

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