



Coherence and Cohesion in Narrative Text Written by EFL Students

Ni Luh Wiji Adnyani Putri, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Indonesia

Dewa Putu Ramendra, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Indonesia

Putu Adi Krisna Juniarta, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to provide analysis and presentation related to coherence and types of cohesion in narrative texts of grade eleven at SMA Negeri 1 Seririt in the 2024/2025 academic year. This study employs a mixed-method design, specifically an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. The findings of the analysis indicate that students have good abilities in building coherence in their writing, with details of 53% of students having very good abilities, and 47% of students having good abilities. students also frequently use employ various type of cohesion, such as references, Conjunction, substitutions, and lexical cohesion. This is indicated by the number of students who use the words she, he, they, and, since, but, day and others, all of these words are forms of cohesion. Furthermore, the type of cohesion most widely used by students is references, which reaches 50.3%. conjunctions were found as much as 28.2%, substitution as much as 0.18% and lexical cohesion as much as 21.2%. From the overall analysis it was concluded that the coherence in the texts can be influenced by the generic structure of the texts, the relationship between paragraphs, and the appropriateness and consistency of the topic of each paragraph. The cohesion observed in students' writing also demonstrated their existing comprehension of the development of relationships between words, phrases and sentences.

Keywords: Coherence; Cohesion; Narrative text; English

Corresponding: wiji@undiksha.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Communication is the process of creating meaning through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols, which are influenced by a wide range of contextual elements (Leonard, 2012). Oral and written communication are types of communication. Oral communication can be defined as the process of conveying information through the use of verbal and visual aids, such as presentations and speeches (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). Another type of communication is written communication, the term "written communication" encompasses any form of recorded and written correspondence between the sender and the recipient (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). Because written communication is about conveying information through writing, it is important to ensure that the information should be complete, clear and accurate so that there are no misunderstandings.



Communication is the dynamic process of creating and sharing meaning through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal signs, symbols, and signals, all of which are heavily shaped by various contextual elements such as culture, environment, and interpersonal relationships (Leonard, 2012). This process can be broadly divided into two primary types: oral communication and written communication. Oral communication entails the transmission of information through spoken words, often supported by visual aids like presentations, gestures, and speeches, which help clarify and emphasize key points (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). This form of communication is typically immediate and interactive, allowing for real-time feedback and adjustment of messages. Conversely, written communication includes any form of recorded or documented correspondence between a sender and a recipient and encompasses emails, letters, reports, and official documents (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). Because written communication relies solely on the written word to convey messages, it demands a high level of precision, clarity, and completeness to ensure that the intended meaning is accurately understood without ambiguity or misinterpretation. Effective written communication also considers the audience and purpose, using appropriate tone, style, and structure to facilitate understanding and engagement. Both forms of communication play vital roles in personal, academic, and professional contexts, serving as foundational tools for information exchange and relationship building.

In written communication, writing skills play a crucial role in effectively conveying ideas. Writing is not merely the mechanical act of putting words on paper but a valuable skill that allows learners to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a clear and organized manner (Srinivas Rao, 2017). Beyond expression, writing fosters creativity and critical thinking, serving as a cognitive process that enhances literacy skills (Suwartini et al., 2022). The process of writing is inherently complex; it involves more than just constructing grammatically correct sentences—each sentence must be logically and contextually connected to create a coherent text that makes sense to the reader (Otta et al., 2022). Context within sentences is especially important because it aids readers in understanding the intended message and prevents confusion (Wahyuni & Syamsudin, 2021). Thus, mastery of writing in written communication demands not only knowledge of language mechanics but also an awareness of context, audience, and purpose to ensure effective transmission of ideas.

When writing, it is also necessary to consider the logical organization of existing ideas and their comprehensibility to the reader. This concept is referred to as coherence. The coherence of a text is associated with its unity of meaning. Coherence can be defined as integration of a text's semantic knowledge (Brown & Yule, 1983). Apart from ensuring that ideas are arranged logically, another thing that needs to be considered is the relationship between the elements in the writing, which is called cohesion. According to Halliday & Hasan (1976) Cohesion is a device that connects elements in a text.

Various studies have been carried out regarding coherence and cohesion in students' English language tests in Indonesia. According to Wahyuni & Syamsudin (2021) in the research entitled an Analysis of Coherence and Cohesion on the Student's Descriptive Writing



at Senior High School in Cirebon. The results of this research show that most of the students have the ability to organize text in a good coherence manner, and students are able to apply the principles of cohesion to make text easier to understand, but there are still students who are not able to convey the meaning of a text effectively and coherently. Furthermore according to Putra et al. (2022) in the research entitled cohesion and coherence: an analysis of the students' narrative writings. The result of this research demonstrates that students can arrange their thoughts in a logical and cohesive manner. It is clear that the use of cohesion and coherence devices helps the students' writing skills to be appropriately developed.

Further investigation into writing produced by Indonesian students warrants a focused examination of coherence and cohesion as integral components of textual quality. In particular, understanding the specific challenges that learners encounter in constructing coherent texts is imperative for advancing pedagogical practices. This study concentrates on analyzing the coherence of narrative texts authored by eleventh-grade students at SMA N 1 Seririt. The research is guided by two primary questions: firstly, to what extent do the narrative texts exhibit coherence; and secondly, what types of cohesive devices are employed by the students in their writing. Accordingly, this study aims to systematically explore and elucidate the coherence levels in students' narrative compositions and to identify the varieties of cohesion utilized. Through this inquiry, the research intends to contribute to the broader discourse on writing proficiency among Indonesian learners and to inform instructional strategies that enhance textual coherence and cohesion.

2. Method

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, wherein quantitative data collection and analysis are conducted initially, followed by a more detailed qualitative exploration to complement and elucidate the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, this research integrates both quantitative descriptive and qualitative descriptive approaches. The study was carried out at SMA Negeri 1 Seririt, located in Seririt District, Buleleng Regency, Bali. The selection of this site was based on geographic relevance within the Buleleng area and the incorporation of narrative text material within the school's curriculum. The population of the study comprised 389 eleventh-grade students distributed across 11 classes. Using cluster random sampling, a sample was drawn for detailed examination.

Data were collected primarily through document analysis. The research process began with classroom observation to ascertain the material students had received and to identify challenges encountered during the writing process. Following this, the sample was finalized. Students were then assigned a narrative writing task by their teacher, which they completed independently within one week at home. Upon collection, the researchers performed a systematic analysis of the submitted texts.

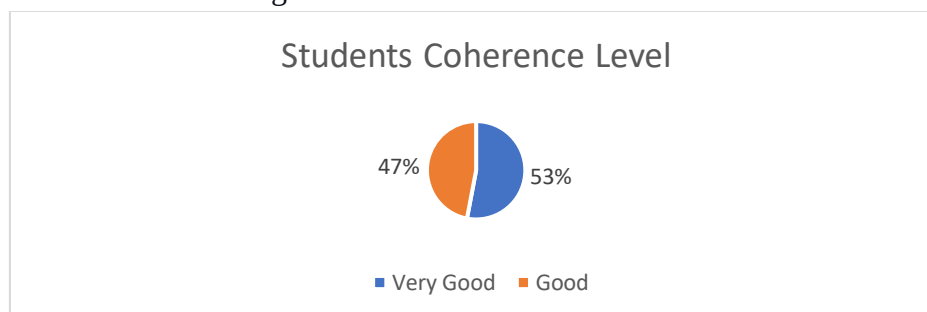
The assignment itself served as the principal data collection instrument. For data analysis, two key tools were employed: an assessment rubric and a frequency table. The rubric

facilitated quantitative evaluation of coherence in students' narrative texts, with two experienced English teachers acting as raters. The raters' scores were aggregated and averaged before being compared to the Criterion-Referenced Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis was conducted focusing on the narrative texts' components—examining topic development, inter-topic relationships, and alignment with the generic structure of narrative writing. To investigate cohesion, a frequency table was utilized to quantify the various cohesive devices employed by students. Following this quantitative identification, a qualitative reanalysis was carried out to provide a more nuanced and detailed interpretation of the cohesion types manifested in the writings.

3. Findings

The descriptive quantitative analysis involved the assessment of 17 students who attained average scores between 85 and 91.5, and 15 students who achieved average scores between 70 and 84, based on the evaluation conducted by two raters. According to the criterion-referenced assessment of student learning outcomes, a score of 0-39 is classified as “very poor”, a score of 40-54 is classified as “poor”, a score of 55-69 is classified as “fair”; a score of 70-84 is classified as “good”, and a score of 85-100 is classified as “very good.” The results of this assessment indicate that 17 students have demonstrated a “very good” level of coherence in their writing, while 15 students have demonstrated a “good” level of coherence in their writing. The average overall student score is 83.5, which is included in the “good” level.

Figure 1. Students' coherence Level



In the following section, an analysis of the narrative text structure is presented. This analysis includes the following elements: orientation, complication, reorientation, and coda. The analysis of coherence in the text is based on the main idea and the relationship between ideas in the text. The text under consideration, entitled "Kancil," aligns with its title, addressing the kancil, an intelligent and clever animal. The following is a structural analysis of the text:

First paragraph:

“In a dense forest, there lived a clever mouse deer named Kancil. He was famous for his cleverness and always managed to escape from various problem. One day, Kancil was walking along the riverbank when he saw lots of fresh fruits on the other side of the river. However, the river was very deep and fast, so Kancil couldn't cross it.” (Orientation)



The initial paragraph of the text provides an introduction to the character known as Kancil, or, in the context of narrative text, it is referred to as orientation. ***“In a dense forest, there lived a clever mouse deer named Kancil.”*** This sentence indicates that the narrative has entered its initial phase, during which the primary character is only introduced.

Second paragraph:

“Kancil really wanted to eat fresh fruit. He thought hard about finding a way to cross the river. Suddenly, he saw a crocodile sunbathing in the riverbank. Kancil had a brilliant idea. He approached the crocodile and said “Hi crocodile I have good news for you! The king of the jungle wants to give gift to all crocodiles, but he wants to first how many crocodiles are in this river.” (Complication)

In the second paragraph, the narrative consistently focuses on the Kancil and its intelligence. This relationship is further exemplified by the opening sentence of the second paragraph, which states, ***“Kancil deer really wanted to eat fresh fruit.”*** This sentence indicates that the subject matter of the second paragraph remains consistent with that of the first, focusing once again on Kancil. However, in this second paragraph, the narrative has started to introduce complications.

Third paragraph:

“The crocodile was very happy to hear the news. He called all his friends to line up in the river. After all the crocodile were line up, Kancil jumped on to the back of the firs crocodile and started counting while jumping from one crocodile to another until he reached the other side of the river”. (Complication)

The third paragraph is included in the complication section because it represents a continuation of the preceding paragraph, with an emphasis on the perspective of the crocodile character.

Fourth paragraph:

After reaching to other side of the river, Kancil immediately devoured the fresh fruits. The crocodiles felt cheated and angry. They plan to take revenge on Kancil. One day when Kancil was sleeping under the tree, the crocodiles came and surrounded him. However, Kancil did not lose his mind. He pretended to be dead and made himself look like corpse. The crocodiles thought Kancil was dead and left him. After the crocodiles left, Kancil woke up and run away. (Reorientation)

The fourth paragraph constitutes the reorientation section. It marks the initiation of the conflict resolution process, wherein the crocodile becomes aware of Kancil falsehood.

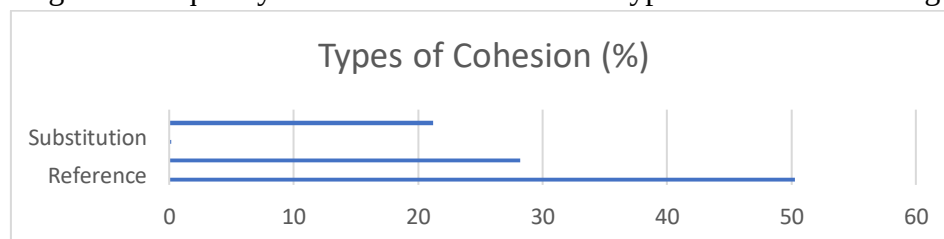
Fifth Paragraph

Since then, Kancil become more careful and no longer deceived the crocodiles. He learns that intelligence must be used wisely and must not harm others. The mouse deer and crocodiles finally lived side by side peacefully in the forest. (Coda)

The fifth paragraph is part of the coda section, which contains the moral value of the narrative text entitled Kancil. The moral value of Kancil is that intelligence must be used wisely. A close examination of the Kancil story reveals a good level of coherence, with the topic remaining consistent throughout and each sentence providing support for the topic. The storyline is characterized by its clarity and structural organization, aligning with the generic structure of narrative text.

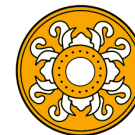
The results of the analysis revealed the presence of four distinct types of cohesion within the students' narrative texts. Initial examination identified a total of 540 instances of referential cohesion. These referents were categorized into exophoric and endophoric types, with the latter further divided into anaphoric and cataphoric references. Anaphoric referents predominated, occurring 537 times, whereas cataphoric referents were rare, with only 3 instances recorded. Considering all cohesive devices employed by students, referential cohesion accounted for 50.3% of the total usage. In addition to referential cohesion, conjunctions constituted a significant proportion of the cohesive devices, appearing 303 times in total. Among these, additive conjunctions were the most frequent (184 occurrences), followed by adversative conjunctions (67 occurrences), temporal conjunctions (40 occurrences), and causal conjunctions (12 occurrences). The overall contribution of conjunctions to cohesion was 28.2%. The third category identified was lexical cohesion, noted 228 times, representing 21.2% of all cohesive devices observed. Within lexical cohesion, the use of common words was predominant, with 182 examples, supplemented by 45 instances of repetition and a single instance of superordinate lexical relation. Finally, substitution cohesion was minimally present, evidenced only twice (0.18% of the total). The substitutions identified were classified into nominal and verbal subtypes. This comprehensive analysis highlights the distribution and types of cohesive devices Indonesian students employ in narrative writing, illustrating their predominant reliance on referential cohesion and conjunctions, with comparatively limited use of substitution.

Figure 2. frequency of occurrence of cohesion types in students' writing.



The following is an example of a sentence in a student's narrative text that contains various types of cohesion.

Table 1. Cohesion in Students' Narrative Text



Types of Cohesion	Example sentences	Analysis
Referent	Kancil really wanted to eat fresh fruits. He thought hard about finding a way to cross the river. After defeating the giants with his cleverness. The tailor ventured to the king's castle, boasting about his victory.	The word he in this sentence is categories as an anaphoric referent, because the word he is refer to Kancil, which previously mentioned in the previous sentence. The word his in this sentence is categories as cataphoric referent, because refer to the something that mentioned afterward. The word his in thi sentence is refer to the tailor which mentioned in the next sentence.
Conjunction	In the magnificent kingdom surrounded by vast gardens and sparkling rivers, there live a kind and beautiful princess named princess rose. To follow the lesson of Sunan Kalijaga, the chief had to leave everything behind. But the wife didn't agree so she brought her jewelry in bamboo. If I choose one, war will break out, and that is not what I want. Therefore, I have decided to become something that can be shared by everyone, without causing conflict. Since that day, he often returned to that place, but the golden bird never appeared again.	The sentences is use the word and to add more information to the sentence, so and in the sentences above is part of an additive conjunction. The word but in this sentence shows the contradiction between the desire to follow the lessons of Sunan Kalijaga by leaving everything behind and his wife who disagree with this. The word but in this sentence indicating adversative conjunction. The word Therefore in this sentence functions as a causal conjunction, indicating the reasons and solutions that must be implemented to prevent the occurrence of war. The word since in this sentence is functions as a temporal conjunction, serving to indicate a specific time period. In this case, since signifies the day he never returned to that place again, thus serving as a temporal description.
Lexical cohesion	He started at her reflection, but something felt off. The reflection moved just a little slower than she did. One day, Dayang Sumbi asked Sangkuring to hunt a deer for her.	This sentence contains lexical cohesion, namely repetition of words. The word reflection in this sentence is emphasizes the concept and topic being discussed, so repetition of word reflection is important to show the consistence of the topic. The word day in this sentence is general word because the term day is typically employed to denote a 24-hour period. It can also be used to denote daytime hours or to specify particular days, such as Sunday and Monday.
Substitution	Slowly, she turned back to face the mirror. This time, her reflection smiled, even though she hadn't.	Substitution is used to reduce excessive repetition and make the text easier to understand. hadn't in this sentence is included in verbal substitution, in this sentence hadn't refers to the phrase her



reflection smiled, where this phrase contains a verb.

4. Discussions

The process of analyzing students' narrative texts to evaluate their ability to establish coherence involved the participation of two independent raters. The assessment results indicate that, on average, students possess a commendable ability to create coherence in their writing. Specifically, the overall mean score of 32 students was 83.5, which reflects a generally high level of proficiency. Further analysis revealed that 17 students demonstrated a very good ability to create coherence, while 15 students exhibited a good ability. This distribution corresponds to 53% of students achieving a very good rating and 47% attaining a good rating. Moreover, examination of the narrative texts highlights students' capacity to construct meaningful connections between sentences, thereby facilitating the logical flow of ideas. This coherence is evident in the presence of topic sentences supported by elaborative or contextual sentences that reinforce the main ideas. The students' narratives also conform to the generic structure of narrative texts, encompassing key elements such as orientation, complication, reorientation, and coda, though it is noted that the coda is an optional component (Sulistyo, 2013). This alignment with established narrative structure further underscores the students' competence in producing coherent, well-organized texts.

In the context of cohesion, the analysis of narrative texts revealed the utilization of four types of cohesion in the students' texts: referents, conjunctions, substitutions, and lexical cohesion. Referents were most commonly identified in the narrative texts of students, who frequently employed pronouns such as "he," "she," "they," and others. Of the total types of cohesion employed by students, 50.3% were referents, with 50% of these being anaphoric referents and 0.27% cataphoric referents. Referents were frequently employed by students in the composition of narrative texts, influenced by various factors, including the nature of narrative writing (Putra et al., 2022). Conjunctions are also frequently employed by students in their narrative texts. Words such as "since," "after," "because," and "but" are often found in students' writing. Conjunctions were identified in 28.2% of the data, including 17.1% additive conjunctions, 6.2% adversative conjunctions, 1.1% causal conjunctions, and 3.7% temporal conjunctions. In addition, students employ lexical cohesion in their writing. An analysis revealed that lexical cohesion accounted for 21.2% of the total, with 16.9% of that percentage consisting of common words such as "small," "people," "day," and so on. The data indicates a 4.1% prevalence of repetition words and a 0.09% prevalence of superordinate relations. The last type of cohesion is substitution, which was found in 0.18% of students' narrative texts. This included 0.09% of verbal substitutions and 0.09% of nominal substitutions. The identification of cohesive devices in students' writing reveals their capacity to employ these devices in their narrative text to link words, phrases, and sentences, thus creating a unified expression of meaning.



5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The relationship between paragraphs has been demonstrated to exert a significant influence on the coherence of students' writing, particularly in terms of the appropriateness and consistency of each paragraph's topic. In addition to paragraph-level factors, the generic structure of narrative texts also plays a crucial role in contributing to overall coherence. The evaluative findings from two independent raters further corroborate students' competence in establishing coherence, with 53% of students exhibiting very good abilities and 47% displaying good proficiency. During the text production process, students employ a range of cohesive devices, including references, conjunctions, substitutions, and lexical cohesion. Among these, referential cohesion emerges as the most frequently utilized device, accounting for 50.3% of all cohesion devices identified. This prevalence suggests that students have developed a reasonable aptitude for applying cohesive strategies in their writing. This study is expected to serve as a valuable reference for future research concerning coherence and cohesion in student writing. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations, such as the focus on narrative texts produced by eleventh grade students during the 2024/2025 academic year. Subsequent studies could extend this research by exploring different grade levels, educational institutions, text genres, or academic periods. For educators, the findings of this study offer a foundation for introducing and reinforcing the use of various cohesion types, alongside providing targeted feedback during the writing instruction process. For students, the study offers guidance on how to compose texts that are both coherent and cohesive, thereby enhancing their overall writing competence.

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