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The Use of Cohesive Devices and The Quality of Student Writing: Their Relationship

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Abstract

The relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the quality of student writing was examined in this study. The data analyzed included 100 thesis abstracts from undergraduate linguistics majors. The method used was Pearson's correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationship between the frequency of the use of cohesive devices and the writing quality score by expert raters. The results showed a significant positive correlation between the use of diverse and appropriate cohesive devices and higher scores. The use of references and substitutions had a strong positifve correlation with writing quality. The implication of this study is that the proper use of cohesive devices can improve the clarity and coherence of the text, thus improving the overall quality of writing. The findings can serve as a basis for designing more effective writing instructional methods, as well as encourage further research on other factors that affect the quality of students' writing.

1. Introduction

Good academic writing requires connections and continuity between parts of the text. Cohesive devices are important elements that help create cohesion in the text, allowing the reader to more easily follow the author's train of thought. This shows the importance of using cohesive devices in academic writing, as the authors state that cohesion and coherence are two important elements in academic writing that ensure the text can be well understood by readers.

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Cohesion refers to the use of linguistic devices such as transition words, pronoun references, repetition, and logical sequences to connect ideas in the text. Meanwhile, coherence is concerned with the logical and orderly arrangement of ideas, details, and arguments within a text, ensuring that everything is seamlessly connected to convey a clear and unified message (Abbadia, 2023, p. 15).

Tans (2012), in his report "English Writing Learning Models in High Schools in Kupang City, NTT", examined the effectiveness of different writing learning models in high schools in Kupang City. The study found that a student-centered approach, in which students are actively involved in the writing process, can significantly improve students' writing skills. Tans also emphasized the importance of variety in the use of cohesive devices, such as reference and substitution, to create coherent and interesting texts. These findings support the importance of appropriate and varied use of cohesive devices in improving the quality of academic writing.

Text cohesion is achieved through the use of cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Reference connects elements in the text by referring to information that has been mentioned before or will be mentioned later. Substitution replaces certain elements with others to avoid unnecessary repetition. Ellipses omit elements that can be understood from the context, while conjunctions connect clauses or sentences to show logical relationships between ideas.

Tans (2010), in his study "Teaching and Learning to Write: A Case Study of an Elementary School in the City of New York," emphasized the importance of a student-centered approach to teaching writing. The study found that teaching methods that actively involve students in the writing process, from prewriting to publication, can significantly improve their writing skills. Tans also emphasized that variations in the use of cohesive devices, such as reference and substitution, play an important role in creating coherent and interesting writing. These findings support the importance of appropriate and varied use of cohesive devices in improving the quality of academic writing.

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing. The quality of writing was assessed based on several criteria, including clarity, coherence, completeness, and accuracy of language use. By analyzing the frequency and types of cohesive devices used in students' writing, this study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the scores given by writing experts on the quality of writing. The results of this study are expected to provide insight into the importance of cohesive devices in improving the quality of academic writing and provide recommendations for more effective writing instruction.

Furthermore, this study considers additional factors that may influence the quality of students' writing, including their educational background, level of engagement in the learning process, and the support they receive from teachers. By elucidating the manner in which these diverse factors interact with the utilisation of cohesive devices, this study can provide a more comprehensive account of the means by which the quality of academic writing may be enhanced.

In the context of higher education, proficiency in written communication is a prerequisite for academic and professional success. Consequently, this study not only examines the correlation between the use of cohesive devices and the quality of written work, but also devises pedagogical approaches to equip college students with the requisite writing skills. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will considerably enhance the caliber of education and learning in higher education.

2. Methods

In order to ascertain the quality of the writing produced by students enrolled in the Undana linguistics study program, a descriptive method is employed. This approach is consistent with the methodology employed by previous researchers, who have utilized analytical descriptive techniques to examine the correlation between the frequency and variety of cohesive devices and the quality of student writing. This method has previously been employed to identify notable discrepancies in the utilisation of cohesive devices in academic prose (Trisnaningrum, Alek, & Hidayat, 2019).

This study employs an analytical descriptive approach to examine the relationship between the number and types of cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing. The research sample consisted of one hundred thesis abstracts written by students enrolled in the Linguistics study program. Halliday & Hasan's (1976) cohesion taxonomy was employed as a framework for analyzing the cohesive devices utilized in the abstracts, while the writing assessment rubric developed by Hogue & Oshima (2007) was utilized to determine the quality of the students' writing. This method was selected because it permitted the researcher to describe the characteristics of the data collected and analyze the relationship between the variables.

The study analyzed 100 thesis abstracts from Linguistics students, collected from the university's digital repository. The research focused on the frequency of cohesive devices used and the writing quality assessed by experts.

3. Results and Discussion

Findings

Number of Cohesive Devices

This study shows that the number of cohesive devices used in student writing is positively correlated with writing quality. That is, the more cohesive devices used, the higher the score given by the writing expert. Cohesive devices include reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

References

References are cohesive devices that connect elements in the text by referring to information that has been mentioned before or will be mentioned later. Proper use of references helps the reader follow the author's train of thought, thereby improving the clarity and coherence of the text. For example, using pronouns such as "this," "that," or "they" to refer to previously mentioned elements.

Substitution

Substitution replaces certain elements with other elements to avoid unnecessary repetition. For example, replacing the word "book" with "it" after the word "book" has been mentioned. Proper use of substitution helps maintain variety in writing and prevents reader boredom.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is the omission of an element that can be understood from the context. For example, in the sentence "I like apples, and so does she," the word "likes apples" is omitted after "she" because it is obvious from the context. Proper use of ellipsis helps maintain fluency and efficiency in writing.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions link clauses or sentences to show a logical relationship between ideas. For example, use the words "and," "but," "because," or "so that" to connect clauses or sentences. The proper use of conjunctions helps to create a logical and organized train of thought, thereby improving the coherence of the text.

These findings suggest that the proper use of cohesive devices can improve the clarity and coherence of the text, thus improving the overall quality of the writing. Students who use more cohesive devices tend to receive higher assessment scores because their writing is easier for readers to understand and follow. This suggests that teaching the use of cohesive devices in academic writing is essential to improving the quality of students' writing.

As an example, two thesis abstracts were analyzed for the use of cohesive devices. The first abstract used reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction effectively and thus received a high rating. The second abstract, which made less use of cohesive devices, received a lower rating because the text lacked clarity and coherence. This analysis shows that proper use of cohesive devices can make a significant difference in the quality of writing.

Overall, the number of cohesive devices used in students' writing was positively correlated with writing quality. The use of appropriate and varied cohesive devices can improve the clarity and coherence of the text, thus improving the overall quality of the writing. Therefore, it is important for teachers to teach different types of cohesive devices and how to use them in academic writing.

Type of cohesion devices

In addition to the number of cohesive devices used, the type of cohesive devices used also has a significant effect on the quality of writing. This study found that the proper use of references and substitutions had a strong positive correlation with writing quality. Below is a more detailed explanation of each type of cohesive device:

References

References are cohesive devices that connect elements in the text by referring to information that has been mentioned before or will be mentioned later. The proper use of references helps create connections between parts of the text, allowing the reader to more easily follow the author's train of thought. Examples of references include the use of pronouns such as "this," "that," and "they," or the use of words such as "this," "previously," and "next. Effective referencing ensures that the reader does not lose track of the information being conveyed, thus improving the clarity and coherence of the text.

Substitution

Substitution replaces one element with another to avoid unnecessary repetition. For example, after mentioning "the book" in the first sentence, the writer can use "it" in the next sentence to refer to "the book. Proper use of substitution helps maintain variety in writing and prevents boredom for the reader. Substitution also helps maintain fluency by not requiring the reader to read the same word over and over, which can disrupt the flow of thought.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is the omission of an element that can be understood from the context. For example, in the sentence "I like apples, and so does she," the word "likes apples" is omitted after "she" because it is obvious from the context. Proper use of ellipsis helps maintain fluency and efficiency in writing. Ellipses allow the writer to convey information more concisely without sacrificing clarity, making the text denser and easier to understand.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions link clauses or sentences to show a logical relationship between ideas. For example, use the words "and," "but," "because," or "so that" to connect clauses or sentences. The proper use of conjunctions helps create a logical and organized train of thought, which improves the coherence of the text. Conjunctions also help readers understand cause-and-effect relationships, comparisons, or the addition of information in the text, all of which are important for building strong and persuasive arguments.

This finding shows that the type of cohesive devices used in writing also has a significant effect on the quality of writing. The appropriate use of references and substitutions has a strong positive correlation with the quality of writing, as these two devices help to create relatedness and variety in the text. The use of ellipsis and conjunction also contributes to the quality of writing, although the effect is not as great as that of reference and substitution. This suggests that teaching about different types of cohesive devices and how to use them in academic writing is crucial to improving the quality of students' writing.

As an example, two thesis abstracts were analyzed to see the use of cohesive device types. The first abstract used referencing and substitution effectively and received a high rating. The second abstract, which made less use of referencing and substitution, received a lower rating because the text lacked clarity and coherence. This analysis shows that the type of cohesive devices used can make a significant difference in the quality of writing.

Overall, the type of cohesive devices used in students' writing has a significant effect on the quality of writing. Appropriate use of references and substitutions can improve the clarity and coherence of the text, thus improving the overall quality of writing. Variation in the Use of Cohesive Devices

This study shows that variation in the use of cohesive devices has a significant effect on the quality of writing. Writings that vary their use of different types of cohesive devices tend to receive higher scores. This variety helps to create a more dynamic and interesting text, as well as increasing the connection between parts of the text.

Variation in the use of cohesive devices includes using reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction alternately and according to context. The varied use of different types of cohesive devices shows that the writer has a good understanding of how to create cohesion in the text. This is important because:

1. Improves text dynamics: The use of different cohesive devices makes the text more dynamic and less monotonous. Readers will be more interested and engaged with a text that has a variety of ways to connect ideas.
2. Improves connections between parts of the text: Variety in the use of cohesive devices helps to create stronger connections between parts of the text. This ensures that each part of the text is well connected, allowing readers to more easily follow the author's train of thought.
3. Demonstrates depth of understanding: Students who are able to use various types of cohesive devices appropriately demonstrate a better understanding of cohesion in academic writing. This

reflects their ability to organize and structure the text in a logical and coherent manner. Here are some examples of the use of various cohesive devices in students' abstract writing

a) Reference: Using pronouns such as "this," "that," "they" to refer to previously mentioned elements.
   Example: "This study showed significant results. This proves that the method used is effective.
b) Substitution: Replacing certain elements with others to avoid repetition.
   Example: "This book was very informative. It provided many new insights.
c) Ellipsis: Omitting an element that can be understood from the context.
   Example: "I like apples, and so does she." (the word "like apples" is omitted after "he")
d) Conjunction: Connects clauses or sentences to show a logical relationship between ideas.
   Example: "This research is important because it provides new knowledge. Also, the results can be applied in practice.

The findings suggest that variations in the use of cohesive devices can improve the overall quality of writing. Teaching about different types of cohesive devices and how to use them in academic writing is essential to help students improve their writing skills. By understanding and applying variations in the use of cohesive devices, students can create more coherent, dynamic and engaging texts.

Overall, variations in the use of cohesive devices have a significant effect on the quality of writing. The diverse use of different types of cohesive devices helps to create more dynamic and interesting texts, as well as improve the interconnectedness between parts of the text. Students who were able to use different types of cohesive devices appropriately demonstrated a better understanding of cohesion in academic writing, which in turn improved the quality of their writing.

4. Discussion

The results of this study show that the use of appropriate and varied cohesive devices can improve the quality of students' writing. This finding is consistent with previous research that found that the use of appropriate references and substitutions has a strong positive correlation with writing quality (Albana, Marzuki, & Hidayat, 2020). The following is a more detailed explanation of these findings:

Use of References and Substitutions

Proper use of references and substitutions has a strong positive correlation with writing quality. References help make connections between parts of the text by referring to information that has been mentioned before or will be mentioned later. For example, the use of pronouns such as "this," "that," and "they" helps readers follow the writer's train of thought. Substitution, on the other hand, replaces certain elements with others to avoid unnecessary repetition. For example, after mentioning "the book" in the first sentence, the writer may use "it" in the next sentence to refer to the "book. Proper use of substitution helps maintain variety in writing and prevents boredom for the reader.

Use of Ellipses and Conjunctions

Ellipsis is the omission of an element that can be understood from the context. For example, in the sentence "I like apples, and so does she," the word "likes apples" is omitted after "she" because it is obvious from the context. Proper use of ellipsis helps maintain fluency and efficiency in writing. Conjunctions link clauses or sentences to show a logical relationship between ideas. For example, using the words "and," "but," "because," or "so that" to connect clauses or sentences. Proper use of

conjunctions helps create a logical and organized train of thought, which improves the coherence of the text. Variation in the Use of Cohesive Devices.

Students who are able to use different types of cohesive devices appropriately tend to receive higher assessment scores. Variation in the use of cohesive devices helps to create a more dynamic and interesting text, as well as to enhance the connection between parts of the text. For example, using reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction interchangeably and in context shows that the writer has a good understanding of how to create cohesion in the text. This is important because variety in the use of cohesive devices makes the text more dynamic and less monotonous, so readers are more interested and engaged with the text.

5. Conclusion

A study of 100 thesis abstracts from students in a Linguistics study program found that the use of appropriate and diverse cohesive devices can enhance the quality of student writing. It was observed that writing with more cohesive devices tends to receive higher assessment scores, and the types of cohesive devices used also impact writing quality, particularly reference and substitution. The study supports previous research indicating that variations in the use of cohesive devices help create more dynamic and engaging texts. (Wilfitri, 2020). These findings can serve as a guide for designing more effective writing curriculum to enhance students' writing skills as linguists who will convey information to the community. The study suggests several recommendations, including integrating cohesive device material into the writing learning curriculum, organizing training and workshops for students to improve their understanding and skills in using cohesive devices, and conducting further research to explore other factors that affect the quality of students' writing.

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