

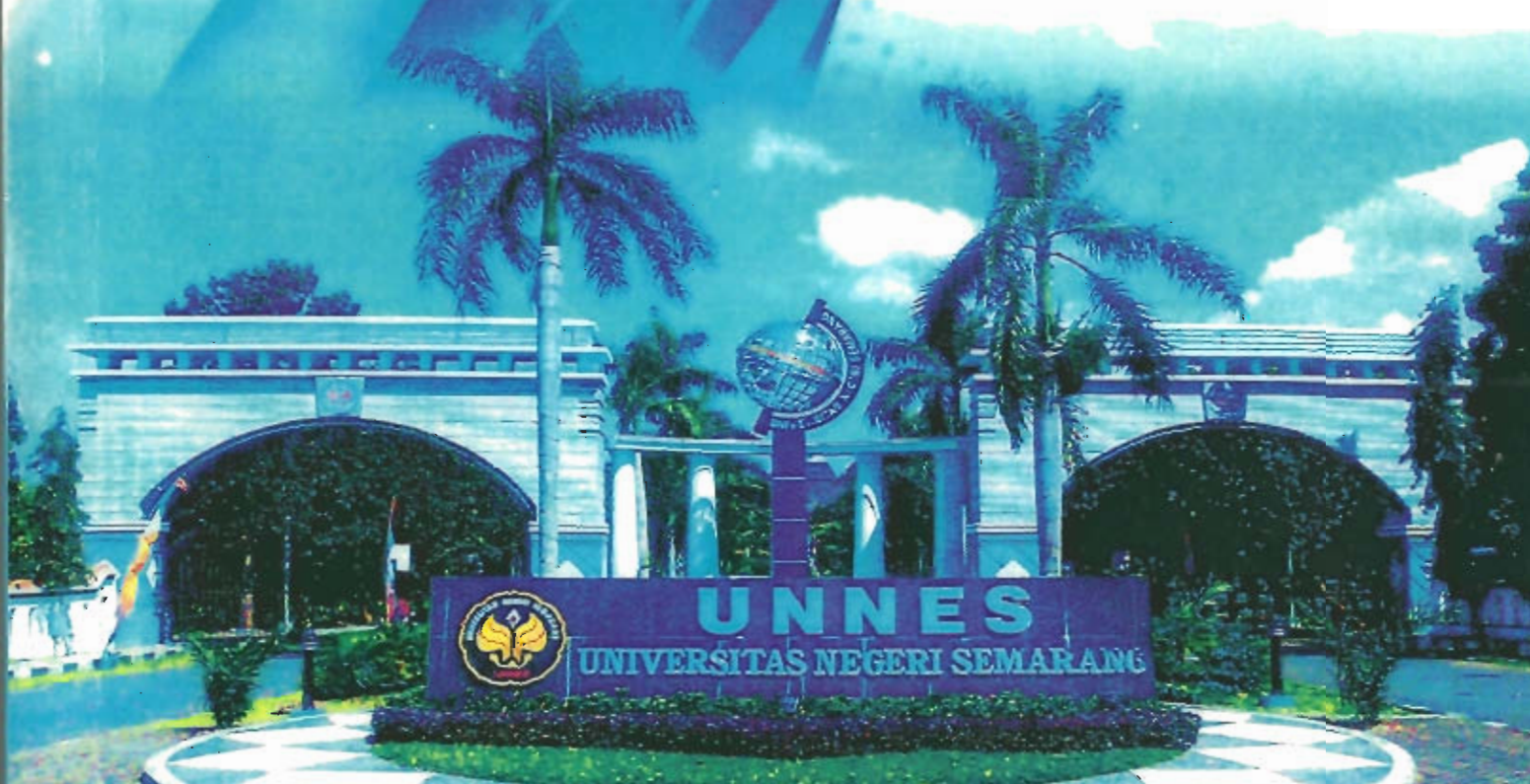
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PROCEEDING

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

**Enhancing Academic Literacy
to Foster Conservation Values
in Character Education**



**POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM
SEMARANG STATE UNIVERSITY**



INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ENHANCING ACADEMIC LITERACY TO FOSTER
CONSERVATION VALUES IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

**Postgraduate Program
Semarang State University**

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COHERENCE-BASED TEACHING TO ADVANCED WRITING, TO FOSTER THE STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN THEIR STUDY AND THE PROFESSIONALS' SUCCESS IN THEIR CAREER

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ABSTRACT

English written form is badly needed by professionals and students for the success in their career and in their study. However, coherent writing is not an easy task, even for advanced writers because it is a complex work that needs complex skills. Based on this background, the study investigates the coherence of English advanced writings of Indonesian writers. The study is aimed at finding out (1) The coherence of English Arguments of Indonesian writers, (2) How the coherence concept can assist the teaching of Advanced Writing. This study is descriptive and qualitative. The data of the study are 14 English Arguments of Indonesian writers found in *The Jakarta Post* in the last three years (2009-2011). The research results reveal that (1) The English Arguments of Indonesian writers are mostly developed partly coherently. (2) The significance of the coherence concept is to design coherence-based teaching to Advanced Writing. It is suggested that English teachers apply coherence-based strategy to teach Advanced Writing. The coherence-based teaching can be explained as follows. The teaching materials comprise (1) Discourse organizational development, (2) Argumentative genre, (3) Cohesive and metadiscourse markers, (4) Fullness of paragraph development, (5) Clear and effective introduction, (6) Relevant title formulation, (7) Clear conclusion. The teaching materials are presented in the following stages: (1) Introductory activities, (2) Explicit teaching, (3) Students handouts, (4) Awareness-raising tasks, (5) Writing practice.

Key Words: coherence, coherence-based teaching, advanced writing, organizational pattern, cohesive devices, metadiscourse markers

INTRODUCTION

In this globalization era, English is established as the world language of research and publication. This makes the English language, especially that of the written type significant for students and professionals. McNamara et al. (2010: 58) states as follows: "Writing well is a significant challenge for students and professionals." Light (2001) in McNamara et al. (2010: 58) states that for professionals, writing skills are essential for their day-to-day work and critical for entry and promotion in their disciplines. Writing provides the ability to articulate ideas, argue opinion, and synthesize multiple perspectives. Geiser and Studly (2001) in McNamara et al. (2010: 58) state that for students, writings are among the best predictors of success in course work during their years of study.

Cameron (2007: 43) finds out that writing skill is not only difficult for the students but also for scientists, writers and editors. Similar with Cameron, Almaden states that writing is a highly complex process for novice and non novice writers alike since it involves advanced skills that include critical thinking, logical development, and coherence of ideas (2006: 127). Tangkiengsirasih (2010: 2) finds out that even advanced learners at a high proficiency level of English have problems with academic writing at the level of text organization and cohesion, even though they have started learning English since elementary school level throughout the school years.

According to Storrer (2002: 1), authors should design a text in such a way that the addressee may detect the relationships linking individual text constituents. In other words, the authors should write a coherent text. He further explains that the concept of text coherence is developed for linear text, i.e. text of sequentially organized content. Coherence is a key concept for text comprehension and text clarity. In transferring knowledge or information, the author intends to support the readers as best as possible, in arriving at coherent knowledge structure.

The author focuses on the models of coherence design on discourse production. These models describe the strategies the authors use in order to guide and promote the process of coherence building done by the readers. On the contrary, the reader focuses on the models of coherence building. These models describe how readers build coherent knowledge structures while processing text (Storrer, 2002: 1).

Moore (1971) cited by Almaden (2006: 127) states that writing puts the burden of achieving coherence on both native and non-native writers of the target language, since both have the responsibility to produce coherent discourse to indicate unobtrusively logical interrelationships of parts to their readers. Based on the considerations above, I would like to investigate the coherence of the English Argumentative Discourses of Indonesian writers. Tran (2007) states that the articles of opinion in newspaper are comparable to college writings and they are valid choices to represent advanced writings, besides they present a wide range of topics. Tran further explains that the articles are preferable data for advanced writing research because students' essays are usually short, and rigidly controlled by the organizational framework provided in class.

Coherence refers to the concepts and relations underlying text's meaning that contribute to the text theme. Coherence builds text unity by being consistent in the context of situation,

context of culture, by continuity of ideas/ of sense/ of concepts. A text lacks of situational coherence if we cannot think of one situation in which the sentences occur. There is no coherence of field, there is a change from one field to another. There is no coherence in mode, e.g. some clauses reflect written language, other clauses reflect spoken language. There is no coherence of tenor, e.g. we cannot determine what role the writer/ sayer of the text is playing. A text lacks of generic coherence when there is no identifiable generic structure, e.g. each clause seems to come from a different genre. And, in the text there is no clear schematic structure. It should be born in mind that the coherence of a text will lead the readers or listeners to effective comprehension and interpretation of the text. And therefore it will lead to optimal relevance, i.e. adding the readers' existing knowledge, strengthen the readers' existing knowledge, or contradicting the readers' existing knowledge (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 3; Eggins, 1994: 87; Almaden, 2006: 128; Storrer, 2002; Moreno, 2003: 116; Celce Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 125).

The coherence of a text can be classified into 3 levels: coherent, partly coherent, incoherent. A coherent text has the following criteria: (1) Linear organization, (2) Does not shift topics or digress, (3) Generic coherence (clear schematic structure with a clear purpose), (4) Situational coherence (clear context of situation), (5) Skillfully uses metadiscourse markers/ cohesive ties, (6) Fullness of paragraph development, (7) Begins with clear and effective introduction, (8) Concludes with a statement that gives the reader a definite sense of closure, (9) Makes few or no grammatical errors that interrupt the discourse flow or the reading process, (10) Relevant title formulation (Eggins , 1994: 87; Storrer , 2002; Bearsdly, 1976; Celce Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 125; Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 3; Ngadiman, 1998: 152-153; Almaden, 2006; Lee, 2002: 36-37; Bamberg, 1983).

A partly coherent text fulfills enough of the criteria above so a reader will be able to make at least a partial integration and comprehension of the text. Incoherent text has the following criteria: (1) Non linear organization, (2) Shifts topics or digresses frequently from the topic, (3) Unclear schematic structure, (4) Unclear context of situation, (5) Uses few metadiscourse markers/ cohesive ties, (6) Incomplete paragraph development, (7) Begins with an unclear and an ineffective introduction, (8) Creates no sense of closure, (9) Makes numerous grammatical errors resulting in a rough or irregular discourse flow, (10) Irrelevant title formulation.

This research is aimed at finding out the coherence level of the English Arguments of Indonesian writers. It investigates the English Arguments of Indonesian writers found in the *Opinion Forum of The Jakarta Post*. The current study is expected to give pedagogical significance. Pedagogically, the research findings will be beneficial for developing strategy for teaching writing, i.e. coherence-based strategy to teach Advanced Writing, in order that the teachers can offer more explicit and constructive help or guidelines to their students to revise their own writing.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is a descriptive and qualitative in nature. It describes the observed phenomena in the form of words rather than numbers. The coherence of the English Argumentative discourses written by Indonesians will be identified and analyzed. The study belongs to Discourse Analysis. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 4) state that discourse study is the study of language in use that extends beyond sentence boundaries. This section will discuss research design, object of the study, method of data collection, data validation and enhancement, method of data analysis.

Research Design

To achieve the goal of the research, the study will be conducted in three stages: exploratory stage, descriptive stage, explanatory stage. In the exploratory stage, some phenomena will be observed. It is conducted by referring to the research objective. In the descriptive stage, careful descriptions will be developed. It is conducted by describing patterns obtained in the exploratory stage. In this stage, an empirical generalization will be formulated. In the explanatory stage, explanation concerning the empirical generalization will be developed. In this explanatory stage, a theory used to explain the empirical generalization is developed.

Object of the Study

The study analyzes 14 articles from *The Jakarta Post* in the last 3 years (2009, 2010, 2011). Various topics with writers of various professions are taken.

Data of the Study

Since the objective of the study is to find out the coherence of the English Argumentative Discourses written by Indonesians, thus, the data of the study are the threads of ideas of the English Argumentative Discourses written by Indonesians. The objects of the study from which the data are taken are articles in the *Opinion Forum of The Jakarta Post* newspapers.

Method of Data Collection

Coherence can only be learnt through what the writers express and the sequence of ideas they express in the text. Thus, threads of ideas of the texts will be collected. The investigator will make field notes concerning the profile of the Argumentative Discourses, i.e. the title, controlling idea (both the thesis statement and topic sentences), supporting ideas, the relationship between controlling and supporting ideas, paragraph unity, the metadiscourse markers/cohesive devices.

Data Validation and Enhancement

Due to the fact that the key instrument of the study is the investigator herself, there is a possibility of invalid data and analysis. For this problem, triangulation is used to increase validity (Patton: 1983). Lincoln and Guba (1985: 219, 301) as cited by Purwanto (2007: 100) suggest that triangulation can be of methods, sources, investigators and theories. This dissertation uses investigator's triangulation. An academician from Sanata Dharma University is asked as an expert to evaluate the data (threads of ideas) and the data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data are analyzed at two levels of analysis, (1) at micro or paragraph level and (2) at macro or overall composition level. At the whole composition level, the complete picture of the text features is tried to be found out. The following points are successively analyzed at the whole composition or macro level: (a) title formulation, (b) thesis (in the thesis statement), (c) macro theme (Martin, 1992), (d) sub thesis/ sub topic (in the topic sentence) at every paragraph/ hyper theme, (e) coherence between paragraphs (relatedness between thesis [of the whole discourse] with the topics of the paragraphs), (f) the flow of ideas or the pattern of

organization, (f) the generic structure, (g) the situational variables (field, mode, tenor), (h) the cohesion, (i) the correctness of grammar.

At the macro level, the flow of ideas or the pattern of organization and the generic structure of every text will be analyzed. The pattern of organization can be straight linear pattern or non linear (circular, digressed, parallel) (Kaplan, 1987). The stages of the text will also be revealed, whether it fulfills the criteria of the generic structure of an Argumentative Discourse. The situational variables will also be revealed to find out whether the text reflects the context of situation. (Eggins, 1997)

At the paragraph level, the controlling idea which is called a topic (in the topic sentence) and the supporting ideas or sub topics (in supporting sentences) are identified. To determine the coherence at the paragraph level, how those ideas are organized is analyzed. The analysis includes: (a) topic, (b) sub topics, (c) fullness of development, (e) coherence within paragraph or paragraph unity.

From the explanation above, it is clear that the analysis of the data in this dissertation involves identifying topics and sequences of topics/ ideas. This analysis is called, topical/ organizational/ linear analysis (Lautamatti: 1987; Austin Community College: www.io.com/~tcm/structure/guides/subtopics - accessed on December 30th 2010; D'Angelo: 1980). After the topical analysis is done, the investigator contemplates the underlying coherence pattern of the entire essay. D'Angelo calls this activity as paradigmatic analysis. He says that paradigmatic analysis is done by rereading and contemplating the essay carefully and then the pattern of the essay is abstracted and put into a paradigm. Thus, this study applies topical, paradigmatic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data using coherence parameters proposed by scholars, it is found out that 3 articles (21%) are organized coherently, while 11 articles (79%) are organized partly coherently. Based on the research findings, the weaker features of the English Arguments by Indonesian writers are: the paragraph development, the insufficient use of textual cohesion markers, the flow of ideas, the introduction, the situational coherence. On the basis of these findings, in the following the coherence-based approach to teach advanced writing is proposed.

Coherence-based teaching means teaching the elements of coherence. When students understand how these elements of coherence work in texts, they are more likely to use them more appropriately to develop coherence in their writing. The elements/ parameters of coherence used in this study are (1) Linear organization, (2) Does not shift topics or digress, (3) Generic coherence (clear schematic structure with a clear purpose), (4) Situational coherence (clear context of situation), (5) Skillfully uses metadiscourse markers/ cohesive ties, (6) Fullness of paragraph development, (7) Begins with clear and effective introduction, (8) Concludes with a statement that gives the reader a definite sense of closure, (9) Makes few or no grammatical errors that interrupt the discourse flow or the reading process, (10) Relevant title formulation (Egins , 1994: 87; Storrer , 2002; Bearsdly, 1976; Celce Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 125; Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 3; Ngadiman, 1998: 152-153; Almaden, 2006; Lee, 2002: 36-37; Bamberg, 1983).

These elements can be refined into teaching materials as follows:

1. Discourse organizational development

This refers to parameters 1 and 2. In this part, the students are taught with the flow of ideas of an essay, i.e. linear and non linear flows of ideas.

2. Argumentative genre

This refers to parameters 3 and 4. Since advanced writings are comparable with argumentative genres, i.e. both need arguments to support the thesis, thus Argumentative genre needs to be taught. In this part, the students are taught to start with a communicative purpose in writing, then thinking of what kind of schematic structure or genre to achieve the communicative purpose. Afterwards, the students decide the register or the context of situation which gives the abstract schematic structure the "details".

3. Cohesive and metadiscourse markers

This refers to parameter 5. Based on the research findings, even advanced writers have problems with cohesion in writing. Forty percent of the data have problems with textual cohesive markers. That is why, this material needs emphasis and obtains more teaching time allotment. In this part, the students are made aware concerning the differences between textual and point-to-point cohesion.

4. Fullness of paragraph development

This refers to parameter 6. Based on the research findings, 50% of the data have problems with paragraph development. Therefore, this material needs emphasis and more teaching time

allotment. Although the students have learned how to construct complete paragraphs when they were at the intermediate level, actually they still find problems in constructing full paragraphs. In this part, the teachers also need to explain the differences between the paragraphs that stand alone and those that become parts of the longer texts.

5. Clear and effective introduction

This refers to parameter 7. In this part, the students learn that an effective introduction is started with a general statement leading to a thesis statement.

6. Relevant title formulation

This refers to parameter 10. In this part, the teacher teaches how to get a topic and how to formulate the topic into relevant title.

7. Clear conclusion

This refers to parameter 8. In this part, the students learn how to make a conclusion or a claim after the thesis or proposition is supported by the data, reasoning, backing in the Argument stage.

Note: grammatical accuracy referring to parameter 9 will not be taught explicitly because this element is not problematic for the writers.

Lee (2002: 33-34) shares that to help the students understand how the elements of coherence function in a text and improve their writing, the materials on each of the coherence features are used in 5 stages of instruction, i.e. introductory activities, explicit teaching, student handouts, awareness-raising tasks, and follow-up writing practice. Based on Lee's ideas, the list of 7 materials mentioned above is presented in the five instructional stages.

Below I describe one of these materials and how it can be employed to teach Advanced Writing.

1. Introductory activities

Introduce the students to the topic and stimulate their interest in the role of coherence in writing. In the introduction to the schematic structure of Argumentative discourse, for instance, students can take turn writing/ telling about a problem that is familiar to them all, e.g. a case of corruption involving political elites. Then, the schematic structure, e.g. Background, Arguments (Warrant, Backing, Qualifier, Reservation), Claim are discussed. This is helpful to teach the students how to become more aware of the distribution of information in the text.

2. Explicit teaching

Provide students with explicit explanations, preferably using authentic texts and simple text-analysis tasks. For example: in teaching the schematic structure of Argumentative Discourse, the teacher can ask the students to analyze texts that contain Background, Argument, Claim structure. The teacher can also ask the students to rearrange jumbled sentences. Then, the teacher checks the students' answers and points out the correct answers.

3. *Students handouts*

After explicit teaching, the students need to internalize and consolidate understanding of the teaching materials. Unfamiliar terms can be explained and illustrated with examples in this stage. For example: a handout for schematic structure of Argumentative Discourse defines the meaning of schematic structure and illustrates the stages of Argumentative Discourse: Background, Arguments (Warrant, Backing, Qualifier, Reservation), and Claim.

4. *Awareness-raising tasks*

This is a crucial stage of teaching where the students do a range of text analysis tasks in order to apply the concept they have learned. These tasks require reading and some rewriting. For example: the students are asked to read an Argumentative Discourse and analyze its schematic structure. In this part, the students work in a small group in analyzing the text, and then revise it individually.

5. *Writing practice*

This stage allows the students to apply the concepts to their own writing. For example: the teacher can give the students a topic, and then tell them to plan their argumentative writing using the schematic structure they have learned.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After analyzing the data using the coherence parameters proposed by the scholars, it is found out that 21% of the Argumentative texts are organized coherently, while the other 79% are organized partly coherently. It means that English Arguments of Indonesian writers are mostly developed partly coherently. The main features that reduce the text coherence are the insufficient textual cohesion markers and the incompleteness of paragraph development. On the basis of the research findings, the coherence-based approach to teach Advanced Writing is designed. The teachers can apply the coherence-based teaching as an alternative teaching strategy in order that they can offer more constructive help to their students. The coherence-based teaching that demands the students to do text-analysis tasks will enable the

students to become critics for their own writings and in turn they will be able to revise their own writing. The coherence-based teaching will make the students aware the important role of coherence in their writings because they will be exposed with the features of coherence.

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