

## **COHERENCE AND COHESION: AN ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS WRITTEN BY ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA NEGERI 2 GEROKGAK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to examine aspects of cohesion and coherence in descriptive paragraphs written by grade XI students of SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak. Both aspects play an important role in conveying information in a clear and structured manner. This research uses a mixed method approach with an explanatory sequential design that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Sampling was done through cluster random sampling method with a lottery system, and class XI-3 was selected as the research sample. The results showed that the majority of students were quite capable of writing descriptive paragraphs that were quite coherent and used cohesion devices appropriately. However, there were still students who had difficulty in maintaining consistency and logical flow in their writing. This finding emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in instilling an understanding of cohesion and coherence in the writing learning process. With proper application of these two concepts, students can produce more systematic and communicative writing. Therefore, writing lessons that emphasize cohesion and coherence need to be continuously developed to improve the overall quality of students' writing.*

*Keywords: Coherence, Cohesion, and Descriptive Paragraph*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, English is one of the most important subjects taught in various schools and included in the national curriculum. In learning English, there are four main skills that students must master, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the four skills, writing is one of the important aspects because it is needed for academic purposes and the world of work (Durga & Rao, 2018). To be able to write well, students need to understand several important elements such as vocabulary, grammar, ideas, content, mechanism, and structure (Brown, 2001).

The ability to write is not only limited to composing sentences, but also about conveying ideas, feelings, and information clearly. According to (Jayanti, 2020), writing is the process of conveying ideas. Phelps (2014) adds that writing involves critical thinking, processing information, and organizing it logically and coherently. In other words, good writing must have meaning, a clear purpose, and be easily understood by the reader. This is in line with the opinion of Gie (1992) who states that writing is the process of conveying ideas to readers through written language so that they are easily understood. In addition to practicing language skills, writing can also support the development of thinking and cognitive skills (Hardianty et al., 2023).

In writing, there are two skills that need to be considered, namely the ability to arrange sentences correctly, and the ability to organize ideas so that they are coherent and interconnected. A writer must have a topic or argument to discuss and be able to organize it coherently so that the reader can follow the flow of thought. Coherence is one of the characteristics of good writing, because it shows the relationship between one sentence and another (Wahyuni & Syamsudin, 2021). Oshima & Houge (1998) mentioned that coherence in writing means that all sentences in the text are interrelated and form a complete logical flow. This is also reinforced by the opinions of Butt (1995) and (Suwandi, 2016) who emphasize that coherence can be seen from the unity between ideas, contexts, and writing situations.

Alongside coherence, cohesion is another essential component of effective writing. Cohesion refers to how different parts of a text are connected using linguistic elements. Halliday and Hasan (1976) describe cohesion as the relation of meaning that links elements of a discourse, ensuring the text forms a unified whole. According to their theory, cohesion involves various devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion. These tools operate within the textual function of language and work at both grammatical and semantic levels. Without cohesion, even coherent ideas may seem disjointed. In essence, cohesion is what enables the writer to “put meaning into words, and words into writing” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:5). Therefore, for writing to be effective, both coherence (logical flow) and cohesion (linguistic ties) must work together harmoniously.

(Gunas, 2020) investigated students’ descriptive and narrative texts in Langke Rembong District and found that most students showed weaknesses in both cohesion and coherence. Similarly, (Leli, 2020) found that students in the English Education Program at IAIN Bukittinggi struggled to develop their ideas fluently and accurately, often due to low motivation and limited exposure to English. Another study by (Putra et al., 2022) at SMA Negeri 3 Praya showed that students could write cohesively but still faced difficulties in maintaining coherence across their paragraphs. Moreover, (Nur Rahman et al., 2021) studied university students

in Makassar and revealed that although some students showed strong writing abilities, many still used only a limited range of cohesive devices and struggled to connect their ideas logically.

Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that students' understanding of cohesion and coherence in writing is generally lacking. This highlights the important role of teachers in guiding and supporting students to improve the structure and clarity of their writing. Given this condition, further research on this topic needs to be conducted. Research that specifically examines how students, particularly at the secondary school level, construct coherent texts is limited.

Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting this research with the title "Coherence and Cohesion: An Analysis of Descriptive Paragraphs Written by Eleventh Grade Students of SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak" This school was chosen because it is located in a suburban area and has different characteristics from schools in the city center, especially in terms of student motivation and exposure to English. Based on initial observations, it is also known that students' understanding of coherent and cohesive writing is still relatively low, and there has been no previous research in this school focusing on coherence and cohesion in writing. The results of this study are expected to be able to provide a more in-depth and comprehensive picture of the writing ability of grade XI students at SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak, especially in terms of applying aspects of coherence and cohesion in writing.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses an explanatory sequential mixed method design that combines quantitative and qualitative descriptive approaches to obtain more comprehensive and objective data. In line with the opinion (Soegiyono, 2011) states that mixed method is a research method that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in one study to obtain more comprehensive, valid, and objective data. This approach was used to answer the two main focuses of the study, namely the level of coherence and types of cohesion in students' descriptive paragraphs. First, to answer the first question in this study, quantitative data was collected through the assessment of students' writing, then the results were analyzed by descriptive statistics in the form of percentages and score categories to measure the level of coherence. Furthermore, qualitative analysis was conducted to clarify the results by looking at how students organized topic sentences, supporting details, and logical flow in paragraphs. Second, for the cohesion aspect, data were collected by identifying the types of cohesion such as reference, conjunction, lexical, substitution, and ellipsis used in students' writing, then the percentage was calculated. Qualitative analysis was then conducted to see what types of cohesion the students used.

Data was collected using the assignment method. The data in the form of student paragraphs had previously been made by students as part of the midterm exam. The researcher obtained the data from the teacher as the main data source. The sample in this study was selected using cluster random sampling method with a lottery system, 28 students from eleventh grade 3 were selected from 4 existing eleventh grades. The researcher obtained permission from the teacher and school when collecting data. The data in the form of students' paragraphs were then analyzed using the rubric of table coherence and frequency cohesion markers. The first rubric, namely the descriptive paragraph coherence assessment table, is used to see the level of student coherence, while the frequency table is made to record the frequency of cohesion that appears in students' descriptive writing.

## FINDINGS

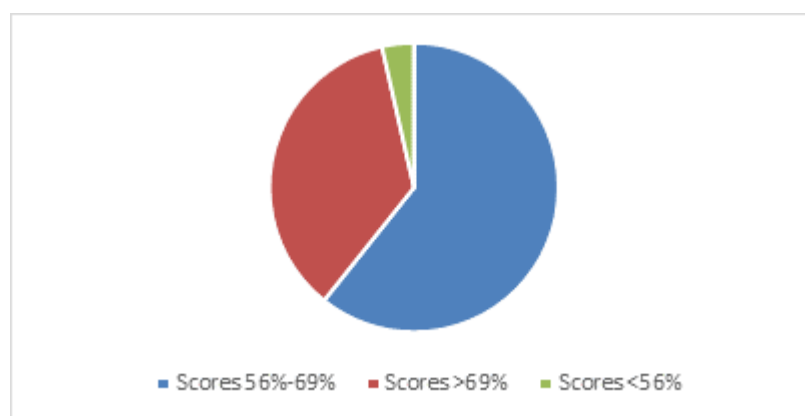
The analysis showed that the average score of students' descriptive paragraph coherence was 68%, categorized as "fair" based on PAP (*Penilaian Acuan Patokan*) standards. Of the 28 students, 61% showed sufficient basic understanding of coherent paragraph structure, although some of them still struggled in making smooth transitions or strong conclusions. Meanwhile, 36% showed better organization and a clearer flow of ideas. Only 3.57% showed weak topic development and lack of supporting details. Overall, SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak students are quite capable of writing coherent paragraphs, although there are some who are not yet consistent. The results of this study indicate that students need continuous guidance and practice to improve paragraph unity and logical order of ideas in writing.

The analysis also showed that the type of cohesion most often used by students is lexical cohesion (59.7%), followed by reference and conjunction at 20% each. Meanwhile, the use of substitution is very minimal (0.3%) and ellipsis is not used at all. Students tend to use pronouns, connectives and synonyms to link ideas and avoid repetition. This shows that they are quite familiar with basic cohesion devices. However, the minimal use of substitution and ellipsis shows that students' understanding of these types of cohesion is still limited.

## DISCUSSION

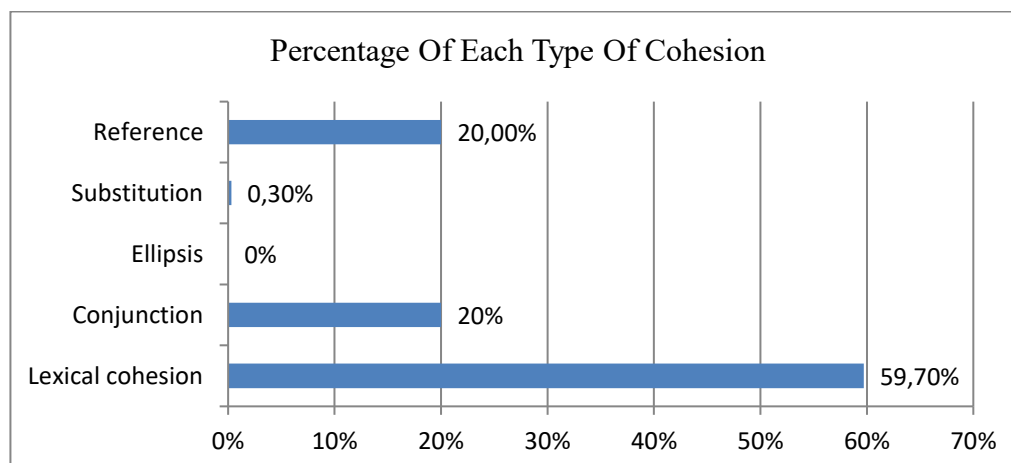
Based on the results of the analysis, the data shows that most students of SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak have sufficient ability in writing coherent paragraphs. This indicates that most students have understood the basics of paragraph coherence, such as the use of topic sentences and the presentation of relevant supporting details. Of the 28 students analyzed, 61% scored between 56% and 69%, which is an average score according to the PAP level, indicating that their ideas were fairly organized, although there were still weaknesses such as inadequately

strong conclusions and limited use of connecting words. Inquatelyseve fir which is classified as , inessjuon ingthere re still weackof a Meanwhile, 36% of students scored above 69% and showed better paragraph structure, with a smoother flow of writing and more effective transitions between ideas. Only 3.57% of students scored below 56%, which reflected difficulties in organizing ideas logically, such as the absence of a clear topic sentence and lack of supporting details, and the students' writing was difficult to understand.



**Graph 4. 1 Statistical Chart of the Mean of Coherence Rating of Students' Descriptive Paragraphs**

Overall, grade XI students at SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak showed an acceptable level of coherence in their descriptive writing. Although it is still in the average category, judging from the results of the assessment of student writing, most students have met some basic criteria of coherence, such as relevant topic delivery and the addition of appropriate supporting details. Although, there are some topic development that has not been maximized and the flow between sentences has not been completely smooth. With continuous practice and constructive feedback, students have the potential to improve their ability to compose more coherent and cohesive paragraphs. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Gunas, 2020) showed that most of the high school students sampled in Langke Rembong District were still at a low level in terms of writing coherence. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the finding that students still need further assistance in maintaining the relationship between ideas to improve the quality of their writing.



**Graph 4. 2 Statistical Chart of the Percentage of Students Using Types of Cohesion**

Based on Table 4.2, the type of cohesion most frequently used by students is lexical cohesion (59.7%), followed by reference and conjunction at 20% each, while substitution is only 0.3% and ellipsis is not used at all. Well-structured paragraphs generally show the use of cohesion devices such as conjunctions (e.g. “and”, “but”), pronomina (‘it’, “this”), as well as vocabulary variations that maintain the fluency and clarity of ideas. This finding is in line with the study of (Putra et al., 2022) at SMAN 4 Praya, which also found the dominant use of reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion in students' descriptive paragraphs. Even so, both studies show that substitution and ellipsis are still rarely used, indicating students' low understanding of these cohesion devices. Therefore, it is important for teachers to not only strengthen students' understanding of basic cohesion, but also introduce more diverse strategies so that students' writing becomes more cohesive, logical, and effective.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been presented in the previous chapter, of the 28 data that has been collected, and it can be concluded that, the coherence ability of grade XI students of SMA Negeri 2 Gerokgak is generally in the “fair” category with an average score of 68%. The majority of students have understood the basic elements of coherence such as the use of topic sentences and the preparation of supporting details. However, many still have difficulty in developing ideas in depth and composing a logical flow. A total of 61% of students wrote with a fairly organized paragraph structure, 36% showed better understanding, while the other 3.57% still had difficulty organizing ideas due to unclear topics and lack of supporting details. In terms of cohesion, the most frequently used type of cohesion was lexical cohesion (59.7%), followed by

reference and conjunction at 20% each. Meanwhile, cohesion types such as substitution and ellipsis were hardly used at all. This shows that students are not used to or do not understand how to apply more complex cohesion devices, so their writing tends to lack variety and the flow does not flow naturally.

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