

## The Effects of Cohesive Devices Used in the Background of the Study of English Department Students' Undergraduate Theses

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### Abstract

This study entitled *The Effects of Cohesive Devices Used in the Background of the Study of English Department Students' Undergraduate Theses* aims to analyse the effects of the overuse, underuse, and misuse cohesive devices employed by the English Department students in the background of the study in their undergraduate theses. The data of this study is taken from ten backgrounds of the studies written by the English Department students, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University submitted in 2021 in various topic. This study is conducted using descriptive qualitative method. In collecting the data, documentation method utilized by a checklist instrument and note-taking technique are used to collect the data. The method for presenting the data analysis in this study could be formal and informal. In analysing the data, this study employs the theory from Halliday and Hassan (1976) about the cohesive devices and supporting theory by Ong (2011). The results of this study show that there are several types of cohesive devices are overused, underused, and misused. The overuse of cohesive devices is dominated by the overuse of repetition, conjunction, reference, and synonym. Then, the underuse of cohesive devices found in conjunction and reference. Lastly, the misuse of cohesive devices is found in reference and conjunction. The effects from these overuse, underuse, and misuse of cohesive devices affect the text, especially the connections of the ideas become not in cohesion. Those cases also affect the effectiveness, clarity, and the way the reader comprehend the meaning of the text.

*Keywords: Cohesive Devices, Background of the Study, Overuse, Underuse, and Misuse*

### INTRODUCTION

Cohesive device as a part of discourse analysis is raised as the topic of this study has a correlation with the phenomenon of writing that sometimes faced by students especially for foreign language learners both the use of the types and the effects of the usage of cohesive devices. As stated by White (1986), writing is the process of expressing the ideas, information, knowledge, or experience and understand the writing to acquire the knowledge or some information to share and learn. There are different types of writing, one of which is the production of academic writing.

In discourse analysis, Halliday and Hassan (1976) emphasize the importance of cohesion in writing is to achieve well-constructed and understandable writing. The concept of connecting the sentences and the link on each word, which influences the text itself, is known as cohesion. The tools to make a text cohesion is called cohesive devices. Grammatical and lexical cohesion are the two kinds of cohesion or cohesive devices. Substitution, ellipsis, reference, and conjunction

are all types of grammatical cohesive. While reiteration and collocation are types of lexical cohesive devices (Halliday and Hasan 1976). A writer supposedly has a clear picturization of those types of cohesive devices in order to execute a better application in the writing process.

Cohesive devices usage, on the other hand, should be appropriate, meaning that they are not overused, underused, or misused. Cohesive devices are frequently overlooked, and the application is occasionally misinterpreted. This occurrence is rather a fatal mistake in producing a writing as the quality, value, and result of the writing less reliable.

This study will be conducted on the background of the study of English Department students' undergraduate theses as the object of the study. College students occasionally struggle in composing a well-structured text in portraying their ideas, therefore their writing skills are showcased through the ideas behind the production of the theses. To achieve the goal of this study, the problem that is concerned in this study is:

1. What are the effects of the overuse, underuse, and misuse cohesive devices employed by the English Department students in the background of the study in their undergraduate theses?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The primary data of this research was based on the data taken from ten backgrounds of the studies of English Department students' undergraduate theses submitted in 2021 in Faculty of Humanities Udayana University. The theses which were used in the research were collected from various respected topic of studies from English Department undergraduate theses regardless the object of the study. the background of the study was chosen to be the data since it reflected the undergraduate students' writing skill in the form of their purest reasons and ideas in generating their theses. This was also to learn more about the capacity of college students, particularly foreign learners, in developing the undergraduate thesis as one of the qualifications for graduation that obviously requires suitable cohesion and coherence in order to be approved as academic writing.

This study employed descriptive qualitative method. The documentation method utilized by a checklist instrument and note-taking technique are used to collect the data in this research. Next, in analysing the collected data are interpreted using the theory of cohesive devices by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and the supporting theory by Ong (2011) about the cohesive inaccuracy criteria to support the analysis of cohesive devices overuse, underuse, and misuse. Then, the method and technique of presenting the data analysis is using informal way or presented descriptively. Descriptive explanation is needed to present the analysis in order to make the reader understand the detail of this research.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part is used to present the findings on the analysis of the effects of cohesive devices overuse, underuse, and misuse which are used in the background of the study of English Department students' undergraduate theses by using cohesive devices theory which was proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and the supporting theory by Ong (2011) about the cohesive inaccuracy criteria to

support the analysis of cohesive devices overuse, underuse, and misuse.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) categorized the notion of cohesive devices into two major types, grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion or grammatical cohesive device is a semantic relationship articulated via the grammatical system, which includes reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. While the lexical cohesion or lexical cohesive device consists of reiteration and collocation. Ong (2011) explained overuse cohesive devices happens when it employed in the text in an unnecessary addition. Cohesive device underuse happens when a specific cohesive device is expected in the text but is not there. Cohesive devices misuse occurs when a certain cohesive device is used incorrectly. The effects of cohesive devices whether overuse, underuse, or misuse are affected to the reader and to text itself. It can also affect whether the idea or value of the text are conveyed to the reader or not.

### 1. Overuse of Cohesive Devices

Data 1

*Hence, the phenomena it's very interesting to study, particularly idioms found in the selected song lyrics of Katy Perry's entitled "Roar and Dark Horse".*

The overuse of personal reference has been occurred in the sentence above. Overuse is the unnecessary addition of cohesive devices that is employed in the text in an unnecessary or redundant manner. The sentence above contains unnecessary personal reference *it* that should be omitted due to it does not have any meaning and function in the text. The personal reference *it* in this sentence is used as a subject. However, in this case there is already a subject in the sentence, it is *the phenomena*. Then, it is appropriate to put the verb that functions as a predicate after the subject and before the adjective. Therefore, it is improper if the writer uses two subjects which one of them is a personal reference specifically for an object at the same time in one sentence. The use of subject *the phenomena* is clear to understand the meaning of the sentence. On the contrary, the existence of personal reference *it* is obviously unclear what subject it refers to. The effects of this overuse of personal reference may lead to misunderstanding on the reader when read the sentence. It delivers multiple presuppositions which add the element of

ambiguity in its use. Moreover, the sentence can be categorized as an ineffective sentence.

Data 2

*Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in discussing this topic to find out what **kind of type** of idioms are found in Katy Perry's "Roar and Dark Horse" song lyrics and also to know about what is the meaning of idioms found in Katy Perry's "Roar and Dark Horse" song lyrics.*

The overuse of synonym is found in the first sentence. It is called overuse the synonym due to the use of the same word applied in one sentence. This case is also can be analysed as the underuse of additive conjunction in order to avoid the redundant of the synonym. The words *kind* and *type* have the same meaning which is a category of people or things having common characteristics. The phrase *kind of type* is inappropriate so that it is called as overuse synonym. It would be different if the writer puts the conjunction *or* between the words *kind* and *type*, it is not categorized as the overuse anymore because the use of the words would be appropriate. It means that there is alternative of the word whether *kind* or *type*. However, if the existence is *kind of type*, it is better to choose one of them in order to avoid the unnecessary plurality of options which drives the text to be farther than how it may be as punctual.

Data 3

*That's how language works in our calm dialogue **and** the media we face, **and** the presence of norms, policies, and citizen laws that address language.*

The sentence in the data above shows that there are overuses additive conjunctions *and*. The use of these additive conjunctions *and* as to add information are categorized unnecessary and those should be omitted in order to make a clear and effective sentence. The sentence presents that there is more than one information about how the language works. The sentence is appropriate when the use of additive conjunction *and* only put before the last option and use comma to separate between one information to another to clearly emphasize the additional information and the other is enough to separate with comma. The proper sentence would be *That's how language works in our calm dialogue, the media we face, the presence of norms,*

*policies, and citizen laws that address language.* Thus, by these overuses of additive conjunctions, the sentence belongs to ineffective sentence and monotonous due to the redundant repetition of the same conjunction in the sentence. The unnecessary repetition also reduces the reliability of the idea in the sentence due to the lack of punctuality in the sentence contained in an academic writing.

Data 4

*Locutionary act is the act of saying something. It contains a statement or information when communicating with others. **Therefore**, others. **Therefore**, the utterance only has one meaning without any reference to the hearer.*

The overuse of causal conjunction *therefore* occurred in the third sentence. It should be omitted due to the existence of the conjunction there is unnecessary, and the sentence is also incomplete. So, the function of conjunction *therefore* as to show the cause-effect relation does not appear in the sentence. In addition, the use of conjunction *therefore* is also used in the next sentence but in appropriate sentence. Hence, this overuse of causal conjunction *therefore* can make the sentence become disconnected to the previous one and aside from causing ambiguity, the sentence also drives the reader away from the constructed idea in the previous sentence.

Data 5

*This study discussed the types of figurative language based on the theory of interpreting literature proposed by, **and** Knickerbocker and Renninger (1974) and Mezo (1999) also analyzing the meaning based on the theory of meaning proposed by Leech (1974).*

The sentence above is overusing the additive conjunction *and*. In the conjunction, *and* belongs to additive conjunction due to the function is to give additional information. The second *and* in *Knickerbocker and Renninger (1974)* used to indicates that the theory of interpreting literature was made by two authors together in the specific year. Then, another *and* also used to indicates the second theory with different author. However, the use of additive conjunction *and* after the preposition *by* is categorized as overuse because it is unnecessary, and it does not link the preposition *by* with the proper nouns. Moreover, it does not have any functions in the sentence. Therefore, it is

improper to put the conjunction *and* after the preposition *by*. As a result, the sentence becomes unclear and does not perform as effectively as how it should be.

## 2. Underuse of Cohesive Devices

### Data 1

*When someone feels happy, they listen to or sing happy songs like what they feel, and when someone feels sad or angry, they also choose the song they want **to hear to describe** their feelings.*

The sentence above shows the underuse of additive conjunction *and* between the words *to hear to describe*. It should be placed there because the words *to hear to describe* give two information contain in the text. The appropriate sentence would be *they also choose the song they want to hear **and** to describe their feelings*. The sentence contains additional information that the listener of the song chooses the song not only the song they want to hear, but also the song that can describe their feelings. So, the additive conjunction *and* between those words is needed in order to emphasize the information. The effect of this underuse of additive conjunction is that the sentence is unclear because the words *to hear to describe* are only two verbs or in the context of the sentence are two activity that can be done by the listener to the song. The two information could have been effectively emphasized to deliver broader meaning to the reader.

### Data 2

*There are two kinds of language: informal language and formal language. Formal language used **professional, literal wording, informal** used figurative language (such as metaphors and similes).*

Two underuses of cohesive devices are found in the sentences. The first one is the underuse of additive conjunction *and*. It should be put between the words *professional* and *literal wording* to emphasize that there are two additional information about the formal language. Then, the second one is the underuse of additive conjunction *on the other hand* before the sentence *informal used figurative language (such as metaphors and similes)*. To connect the sentence with the previous one and also to emphasize the message conveyed

by the text, the use of additive conjunction *on the other hand* is important in order to point another information or idea about the topic of informal language that is related to the first sentence. As a result, the underuses of these additive conjunctions make the points of the sentences unclear and not properly emphasized. So, the ideas of the text are not conveyed properly to the reader.

### Data 3

*There are ten women's language features based on Lakoff (1975) study therefore specific topic has been chosen to be analyzed in this study which is intensifier and super-polite forms in Ocean's 8 movie based on the most frequent device used by women and the device believed to be used by **women** those devices are boosting devices is frequently used by women (intensifier) and **women** also believed to be more polite than men (super polite forms).*

The sentence is categorized as underuse of reference due to the same word is repeated several times. The word *women* (in bold) should be replaced by the reference specifically the personal pronoun in order to avoid repetition. The first *women* is better replaced by the personal pronoun *them* due to the function as the object in the passive clause. Next, for the second *women* also should be replaced by the personal pronoun *they* in reference which is functioned as the subject of the clause. Both of the words *women* are referred to the previous *women* in the previous clauses. The use of repetition is good in order to emphasize the specific subjects in the sentence. However, when the use of it is redundantly, might affect the effectiveness of the sentence. This underuse of reference brings the effect to the sentence such as make the sentence ineffective and monotonous.

### Data 4

*Moreover, **directive illocutionary act** was chosen as the topic of this study because they perform an action by using their language uttered by the character is very worth to be analyzed.*

The sentence belongs to underuse of the demonstrative reference *the* before the words *directive illocutionary act*. The demonstrative reference *the* as a definite article should be put in the sentence because the information about the



directive illocutionary act has already been explained in the previous sentences or paragraph. Hence, in order to make the text in cohesion with the previous sentences, the demonstrative reference *the* should be applied to make the reference of the subject which is directive illocutionary act signals back to the same subject in the previous sentences. The demonstrative reference *the* functions as a modifier and it is clear that the use of *the* helps to present the definite directive illocutionary act that is being discussed. The effect of underusing the definite article *the* in the sentence can bring ambiguity whether the directive illocutionary act that is being discussed in this sentence is the same as the directive illocutionary act that has been explained in the previous sentences.

Data 5

*Generally, signs can be divided into two types those are verbal and visual sign. Verbal sign relates to words or phrases that imply their meaning and usually messages that are conveyed both of oral and written forms. Visual sign is commonly referred to a picture or image and the information or message conveyed without a word but using gestures, facial expressions, and appearance that presented in the form of an image.*

There is an underuse of conjunction found in the third sentence. There should be put the adversative conjunction *on the other hand* in the beginning of the third sentence. The conjunction *on the other hand* functions as a contrastive relation between the second sentence which talk about verbal sign and the third sentence which talk about the visual sign. It is used when comparing two different ideas or two opposite things about a situation. The meanings of verbal and visual signs are in stark contrast to each other, so that the use of conjunction *on the other hand* is needed to emphasize and distinguish both of the signs. The effect of this underuse is that the information on the difference in meaning of verbal and visual signs are not clearly highlighted and the idea of separation is not properly delivered.

### 3. Misuse of Cohesive Devices

Data 1

*When people watch a movie that is not his own country, they can get various information that does not belong to his country. Therefore, the*

*existence of this print media helps the public to find out information in other countries and certainly adds insight for people, both those containing verbal signs and visual signs.*

There are two misuses of personal reference specifically the possessive determiner *his* are occurred in the sentences. Those possessive determiners *his* in the first sentence are placed incorrectly. The possessive determiner *his* should be used in referring to a singular male person that placed in front of nouns to express possession or belonging. However, the subject of this sentence is *people* which is categorized as plural noun. So that, the possessive determiner *his* should be replaced by possessive determiner *their* to make the sentences in cohesion and the reference of the possessive determiner is suitable. As a result, the effects of the misuse of personal reference can bring the ambiguity of the sentence that the meaning of the sentence is unclear. It also leads the misinterpretation about what subject of the personal reference *his* actually refers to.

Data 2

*By analyzing lexical cohesion within the text, this study will know the types of lexical cohesion in an article entitled culture of Indonesia and how lexical cohesion creates coherence in a text. To gain a deeper understanding of an article, lexical cohesion elements consisting of reiteration and collocation play a very important role.*

Misuse of demonstrative reference is found in the second sentence. The article *an* in the sentence is considered as misused due to its function is to point the indefinite singular noun. However, the word *article* after indefinite article *an* is referred to the article entitled Culture of Indonesia. So, the proper article to place in front of the word *article* is the definite article *the* which is also categorized as demonstrative reference. The definite article *the* should be used because the article that is used as a data of the text has been specified. It is also used to indicate that the word *article* being discussed is the same as the article in the previous sentence which is Culture of Indonesia. Hence, by misusing the definite article *the* may lead to misunderstanding about the existence of the article whether similar with the previous article or not. In addition, the text can be

considered as incomprehensible text and incoherent with the previous sentences.

Data 3

*Code-switching is mostly used within bilingual or multilingual groups, and there are functions why speakers' code switch the language, such as the need to fit in in the group to make them understand, to convey or opinions that might be easier to explain in a specific language. **This** ensures that the meaning of the message to be conveyed is able to be understood properly.*

The misuse of demonstrative reference occurred in the second sentence. The word *this* is not suitable to be used in referring to the previous subject which are the functions of code switching by the speakers. It should be replaced by using *these*. The demonstrative reference *this* is only used for the singular object and for the plural one is *these*. However, to refer to the functions of code switching that have more than one function belong to plural object. So, instead of using the demonstrative reference *this*, using the plural one will lead the text into more comprehensible. Due to the misuse of demonstrative reference *this* can make the sentences ambiguous and its reference in the previous sentence become unclear.

Data 4

*And the "Dark Horse" song talks about an Egyptian Queen searching for her love. Kings from all over the world come confidently to make the Queen their "one and only" true love. A long line of men bearing gifts awaits **their** decision, whether they are genuinely hers or not, and meet their end.*

In the data above, there is a misuse of personal reference *their*. As stated by Ong (2011), cohesive device misuse happens when a certain cohesive device is used incorrectly. The word *their* in the last sentence is not suitable with the meaning of the sentence. The word *their* in the context of the sentence *A long line of men bearing gifts awaits **their** decision, whether they are genuinely hers or not, and meet their end* should be replaced with the possessive determiner *her* due to the word *their* in the sentence refers to the **Queen**. As a result, the misuse of this personal reference drives toward ambiguity on the sentence and misinterpretation about the meaning of the text. The message of the

text cannot be delivered completely due to the unclarity of the text, and it does not stand firmly as the background of an analysis carried upon.

Data 5

*A text is a passage of discourse which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of the situation, and therefore consistent in the register, **and** it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive.*

The sentence is misusing the conjunction. The conjunction *and* which is used to indicate the second regard of the coherent in a text is improper. Although the use is to inform the additional information, but it makes the sentence incomprehensible for the reader due to the repetition of the conjunction *and* itself. It should be replaced by using the temporal conjunction *then* or *the second* to emphasize the next thing of coherent and separate the sentence into another sentence. Therefore, this misuse of conjunction can make the sentence lost its narrative aspect which directs the reader on specific sequence, resulting in a difficulty to understand the information as it cannot be highlighted or emphasized properly.

## CONCLUSION

Deriving from the discussion on cohesive devices used in ten backgrounds of the studies of English department students' undergraduate theses, the finding signifies that there are several types of cohesive devices are overused, underused, and misused. The overuse of cohesive devices is dominated by the overuse of repetition, then continued by conjunction, reference, and synonym. The overuse of other types such as substitution, ellipsis, superordinate, general word, and collocation are not found. Then, for the underuse of cohesive devices only found in conjunction and followed by reference. Last one, the misuse of cohesive devices is similar to the underuse only found in reference and followed by conjunction. The effects derived from the overuse, underuse, and misuse of cohesive devices affects the text themselves especially the effectiveness, clarity, interpretation, and the comprehension of the text. Aside it affects to the meaning of the text, the case of cohesive devices overuse, underuse, and misuse also resulting in the failure of bridging one sentence to the other which elevate the clear picture that the

sentences are not in cohesion. This puts the text off the rail and the intention of the writer is not entirely comprehensible to the reader.

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