# LEXICAL COHESION IN BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH USED IN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS:
## A Case Study in Madako University

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## Abstract

This research is aimed to get a detailed description and analysis about the representation of lexical cohesion in the background of research in undergraduate thesis from English Language Education students at Madako University. The researchers employed quantitative model to analyze the frequency and percentage of lexical cohesion which is used by the students in their writing. The data in this research were obtained from English Language Education undergraduate thesis of students at Madako University. The data collection which is used by the researchers is note taking. The data of this research were analyzed by using categorization of cohesion namely lexical cohesion. The result of this research indicates that the repetition component becomes the most dominant from the three components; the percentage of repetition is 93%, followed by synonym, collocation and superordinate with their percentage 4%, 2%, and 1% respectively.

**Keywords:** lexical cohesion, cohesive device, writing, background of the research

## Introduction

The primary things to consider in writing are continuity and relation between sentences or paragraphs to make the writing product be cohesive. The writers may use two kinds of cohesive devices: lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. According to Baker (1992), both give links and tie various part of a text to show a relation or organize the text well in order to make readers get the intention and direction of the text easily. Other, it can help writers in organizing and connecting ideas in their writing products.

The use of cohesive devices is important in academic writing. It is supposed to be able to identify the quality and the way of students' thinking and organization of their academic writing well by analyzing students' undergraduate thesis. Further, this research will focus on lexical cohesion in background of research used by English Language Education students of Madako University in their undergraduate thesis year 2017 as background of research becomes the guideline of research which can represent

whole of research. Related on this important point, we choose it as the object of research. ,

Three kinds of previous studies that would be reviewed in this research; Assessing Cohesion In Children's Writing: Development of a Checklist (Struthers et al 2013), The Use of Lexical Cohesion among TESL Post Graduate Students in Academic Writing (Fatimah & Yunus, 2014), and A Comparative Analysis of Frequency Rates of Cohesive Markers Used in Thai and English Written Text of Graduate Students Who are Speakers of Thai (Petchprasert 2011). We review those in order to illuminate how lexical cohesion is really important in academic writing. The difference of this research is the object of the research and the analysis. This paper is conducted under two research questions. They are: how is the representation of lexical cohesion in background of the research used by English Language Education of Madako University's students in their undergraduate thesis year 2017? And what are lexical cohesion, coherence, and continuity in background of the research used by English Language

Education Madako University's students in their undergraduate thesis year 2017?

In this research, we focus on two main points: the representation of cohesive devices, background of research in undergraduate thesis from English Language Education Madako University's' students, and preferences. To gain the result, we employ quantitative way to analyze the frequency and percentage of lexical cohesion devices use or occurrence. To get a detailed description and analysis, this research will use categorization of cohesion namely lexical cohesion that was proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) where in lexical cohesion, there are two kinds of lexical cohesion, and those are reiteration and collocation. The outcomes of this research, theoretically, it is expected to have contribution in the study of language evaluation and language testing by giving understanding about analysis of lexical cohesion in writing skill. Practically, (1) for the teachers, this research will be useful for teachers to develop his or her skill in assessing lexical cohesion in writing, (2) for the readers, this research can enlarge knowledge, open new world view, and become a reference for further research in analyzing lexical cohesion in writing.

**Methodology**

This research is a kind of quantitative research where a quantitative research is often associated with something very scientific, justifiable, and facts. Quantitative researches are also most often used to collect, analyze and summarize data. The emphasis of quantitative research is on collecting and analyzing numerical data; it concentrates on measuring the scale, range, frequency etc. of phenomena (Neville, 2007:3). As in this present researcher, we will analyze the frequency of lexical cohesion occurrence in students' writing.

The data that are used in this research are English Language Education undergraduate thesis of Madako University students where

the researchers focus in analyzing the use of lexical cohesion devices. Considering the data's novelty, this research used 10 theses year 2017. The theses were selected by using simple random sampling under lottery technique since the students' writing are generous, so the theses could be selected and representative for all theses in 2017.

The data collection covered the way the researchers take the data for this research, as follows:
1. Taking the theses that had been selected using simple random sampling
2. Numbering the theses for easy identification and analysis
3. Reading the theses especially Background session
4. Collecting all the words indicate the lexical cohesion devices
5. Presenting the data in a table to make it easy to analyze

The data of this research were analyzed using categorization of cohesion namely lexical cohesion that was proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) where in lexical cohesion, there are two kinds of lexical cohesion, and those are reiteration and collocation. Reiteration means that the writer refers back to the previous thing had been mentioned in the previous sentence or paragraphs. We analyze the use of repetition, synonym, super ordinate item, and general word to see the reiteration used by students. Besides reiteration, then we also analyze the existence of collocation in students' writing. Since it is a quantitative research, the researchers calculate the data quantitatively to analyze the frequency and percentage of lexical cohesion devices use or occurrence.

**Finding and Discussion**

This section will provide the representation of lexical cohesive devices that used by the students of English Language Education of Madako University. There are four components of lexical cohesive that will be presented as follows:

Table 1.
Numbers of Lexical Cohesion

| No | Samples | Repetition | Synonym | Superordinate | General Word | Collocation | Total |
|----|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| 1 | Student1 | 35 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 37 |
| 2 | Student2 | 42 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 48 |
| 3 | Student3 | 61 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 64 |
| 4 | Student4 | 77 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 84 |
| 5 | Student5 | 96 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 99 |
| 6 | Student6 | 40 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 45 |
| 7 | Student7 | 38 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 44 |
| 8 | Student8 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| 9 | Student9 | 48 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 53 |
| 10 | Student10 | 58 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 60 |
| | **Total** | | | | | | 563 |

In this research, the researchers find four components of lexical cohesion used by the students in their writing; those are repetition, synonym, superordinate, and collocation. Based on the calculation, there are 522 repetitions, 25 synonyms, 5 superordinate, 0 general word and 12 collocations. Altogether, there are 563 lexical cohesion elements in the 15 introduction texts used for the research. This indicates that most students used repetitions as a lexical cohesive in their writing and there are only small number of synonyms and collocation used by the students.

Figure 1.
The Percentage of Lexical Cohesive Devices
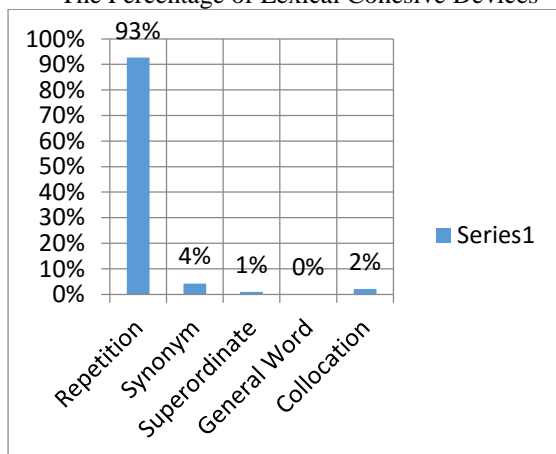


Based on the graphic above, the researchers found that the result of repetition becomes the most dominant from the three components. The percentage of repetition is 93%, followed by synonym, collocation, superordinate and general word with their percentage 4%, 2%, 1% and 0% respectively.

The researchers observe the students' lexical cohesion specifically the usage of repetition. The result is most of the students used repetitions quite a lot; they used the same word repeatedly. It makes their writing seems boring for the readers. The percentage of repetition used in the text is 93 %. The researchers in the data analysis tried to select two texts from fifteen texts which have the highest usage of repetition in order to make a justification.

For example in text 5, there were almost 96 repetitions of word made by one of the respondent. There was small number of substitution or versatility of words used by the respondent to make the writing becomes interesting to read. Based on the respondent's text, she always uses the word *'language', 'English',* and *'people'.* The usage of those three words is used repeatedly about 24, 21 and 18 times within 1418 words. This respondent repeatedly used the same word around 96 times in her writing. This indicates that the respondent does not try to make a variety in her writing. Look at the example below related to the repetition of word *'language' 'communication'* and *'people'.*

*'People* live in the society using language for *communication.* Since the *people* were born in the world […]. *Language* is the system of

*communication* in speech and writing used by the *people* of a particular country. It is used and needed by the *people* in everyday in their daily life. By using *language,* they can express everything in the *people* mind. […] and their feeling by using *language* […] by other *people. language* is the means of *communication* to convey message. […] *language* is the best and natural way to control the perspective of human *communication.* if *people* live without *language,* it may many difficulties in *communication.* […] produce different *language* in the world. Therefore, *language* give many chances […].'

Another example is from the student number 4, this respondent repeated the most words in her writing such as *'teacher'* and 'student' the number of repetitions are 40 for only word *'teacher'* and 12 times for word *'students'* within the 1150 words. This respondent repeatedly used the same word around 77 times in her writing. Look at the following example repetition of word *'teacher'* and '*students'*.

> '[…] *teacher* plays an important role in teaching and learning process. *Teacher* teaches and guides *students* during the class. […] knowledge from *teacher* to *students. Teacher* should have skills […]. Even the standard of *teacher* competence is made by human.'

This current research is in accordance with the previous researches' result (Fatimah and Yunus, 2014) that repetition is the component of lexical cohesive devices that mostly used by the students. Students should try to use the other components of lexical cohesion to make their writing more attractive so that they do not merely used and repeat the same words in their writing. The use of same words especially in the same paragraph may trigger boredom from the reader. The over repeated words should be replaced with other words as well to make the writing product be more attractive.

Synonym is one types of lexical cohesion. Synonym in this research has the second position of the highest lexical after the position of repetition from the total 15 texts of the students' writing. The researcher calculated the synonym based on the fifteen texts, the total of synonym that can be found was 24 words. The percentage is 4 %. Look at the following list from some example of synonyms that was found by the researchers based on the students' writings.

Table 2.
Example of Synonyms

| 1. | Learning | / studying | | 8. | Human | / people |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | Obtain | / get | | 9. | Enhance | / improve |
| 3. | provide | / supply | | 10. | Obtain | / acquiring |
| 4. | Aim | / purpose | | 11. | Encourage | / motivate |
| 5. | Mankind | / man | | 12. | Attitude | / behavior |
| 6. | Spoken | / oral | | 13. | Assistance | / guidance |
| 7. | Introduced | / taught | | 14. | Students | / learners |

The use of synonym can be an alternative way besides using repeated words over and over again. The synonyms that were used by the students in this research found as cohesive ties to make interrelated meaning between sentences.

There are only five superordinates that the researchers find in the students' writing. Look at the following examples:

*'imperative sentences* in English and Javanese are used to give *command, request, permission, advice, invitation, prohibition, and compulsion'*
*'*[…] cited that teacher should have four *competences,* that is [sic] *pedagogical, personal, social and professional competence.'*

Superordinate has the smallest number within the component of lexical cohesion. There are only five superordinate found within the students' writing and only three from ten students who used this component. It

means that the students rarely used superordinate component in their writing.

The researchers found some collocation from the students' writing. This collocation has a close relationship with the topic itself. It is mostly related to the topic areas where the meaning is interrelated one another that the students write about. Look at the following examples of the collocation that the students used in their writing.

> ¹[…] so they just learn *English patterns* including *vocabulary, grammar etc.*
> ¹Based on *BSNP rules*, teachers can arrange *appropriate method, lesson plan, materials, and assessing.*
> ²There are many media that can be used for teaching vocabulary, for example like using *games, song, lyrics* and even *pictures.*
> ²Teacher can use any pictures *like posters, paintings or any printed pictures* as they are very easy to find.

The collocation is used when we have to group some words that have interrelated meaning under the same topic. In this research, the students also use collocation when they have to mention words linking to each other under the same area for example from the sentence above, when the students mention *BSNP rules,* they also mentioned some words related to that BSN rules such as *appropriate method, lesson plan, materials* and *assessing.* Those words has been mentioned are interrelated to each other under the topic of BSNP rules. The use of collocation is useful when the students have to mention examples or elements of something. The use of collocation also can be an alternative way in writing variation.

Actually there are four items of lexical cohesion that included in reiteration: repetition, synonym, superordinate and general word. But in this research, the students only used three of them: repetition, synonym and superordinate. There was no student used general word in their writing. General words correspond to major classes of lexical items. It may be used to substitutes something has been mentioned before but the

substitution is in the general form as has been given by Halliday and Hasan (1976:280)

> *There's a boy climbing the **old elm**. **That old** isn't very safe*

It is a kind of substitution actually but the one that substitutes come in the form of more general word. This kind of lexical cohesion is not found in this research. So, despite of using repetition in writing, it is important for the students to try to use other lexical cohesion as well to create more qualifying written product.

## Conclusion

As this research focuses on the lexical cohesion elements which the students used in their writing (research background), the result showed that students mostly used repetition in their writing compared to other lexical cohesive devices. Repetition was found in all of the students' writing. Unlike the repetition, other components as synonym, superordinate and collocation were rarely used by them and even there are some students did not use synonym, superordinate,or collocation in their research background. This kind of writing may trigger boredom to the readers when they find the writer use the same words over and over again. It is sure that the lexical cohesive devises use is very important in writing to maintain the meaning's continuity. Hence, it is important for the students to be introduced more about the use of lexical cohesion especially other components besides repetition to produce better and qualified writing.

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