

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Writing is one of the most important language skills students need to master. Through writing, people can express their ideas, opinions, and feelings in a way that is clear and understandable for others (Puspitasari et al., 2024). In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing isn't just about putting thoughts into words. It also requires careful thinking, accurate language use, and the ability to organize ideas logically. To produce good writing, students need to understand grammar, have enough vocabulary, and know how to structure their ideas clearly and coherently. Brown (2001) states that writing is a productive skill that takes consistent practice and effort. Harmer (2004) explains that the writing process includes several steps: planning (pre-writing), drafting, revising, editing, and finally sharing the final version. Each of these stages involves different strategies to help make the writing more effective and well-structured.

The quality of a piece of writing largely depends on two important aspects: coherence and cohesion. Coherence is about how well the ideas in a text are connected, so that the writing flows smoothly and makes sense to the reader (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Even if a text has no grammar mistakes, it can still feel confusing if it lacks coherence. On the other hand, cohesion is about how parts of a text are linked together using language tools such as pronouns, conjunctions, repetition, and other linking words. Halliday and Hasan (1976) describe five types of cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. According to Renkema (2004), cohesion acts like the “glue” that helps hold the text together and makes it easier for readers to understand the overall message.

Both coherence and cohesion are essential in writing descriptive texts. A descriptive text is a kind of writing that aims to clearly describe a person, place, thing, or event, so that the reader can visualize it. Boardman and Frydenberg (2008) say that a good descriptive text includes specific details and often uses sensory

language to make the description come alive. To achieve this, the writer needs to organize the information clearly starting with general information and moving into more specific details. The writing should also follow a logical order, and the ideas must be connected smoothly using cohesive devices like reference words, location phrases (e.g., "next to," "behind"), or repetition when needed. Without good coherence and cohesion, descriptive texts may become unclear or hard to follow.

Despite the emphasized importance of coherence and cohesion in writing, initial observations at SMA Lab Undiksha, Singaraja, indicate challenges faced by tenth-grade students in producing descriptive texts that meet these criteria. Many students still struggle to connect their ideas logically, often resulting in fragmented and difficult-to-understand writing. Furthermore, the use of cohesive devices such as conjunctions or pronoun references is frequently inaccurate or even absent, leading to less cohesive and repetitive descriptions. This impacts the overall quality of students' descriptive writing, which often fails to convey clear and vivid imagery as expected. This condition indicates that students may not yet fully understand how to effectively apply the principles of coherence and cohesion in their writing.

Although coherence and cohesion are widely discussed in academic writing studies, there are still only a few studies that focus on how these two aspects appear in high school students' descriptive writing. Most past research focuses on other types of texts like argumentative essays or is done at the university level. For example, Suryani and Putra (2021) analyzed the use of lexical cohesion (such as repetition and synonyms) in descriptive texts and found that varied vocabulary helped make descriptions more vivid. However, their study didn't fully explore students' understanding of how cohesion relates to coherence, or how to teach these concepts more effectively. Similarly, Dewi and Santoso (2020) studied grammatical cohesion (such as pronouns and conjunctions) in university students' texts. They found common issues like unclear references or misuse of conjunctions, which weakened the coherence. Meanwhile, a study by Rahman et al., (2021) investigated cohesion and coherence in descriptive paragraphs written by university students. They found that reference was the most commonly used cohesive device, while ellipsis and substitution were rarely applied. Although the study presented clear quantitative results on students' use of cohesive devices and levels of coherence, it

focused on university students and did not explain how cohesion contributes to coherence in descriptive writing at the high school level.

Based on the problems faced by tenth-grade students at SMA Lab Undiksha in writing descriptive texts, this research becomes important to conduct. Tenth-grade students are at a key stage in learning different types of texts, including descriptive texts, as part of the national "Kurikulum Merdeka". Writing descriptive texts clearly and logically is an essential skill for them. Therefore, this study specifically aims to analyze the level of coherence and the types of cohesion present in descriptive texts written by tenth-grade students at SMA Lab Undiksha, Singaraja, during the 2024/2025 academic year. This school was chosen because of its relevant student background and academic environment. The results of this research are expected to show how well students can write coherent and cohesive descriptive texts, and what types of cohesive devices they use.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the research background, several significant problems have been identified in the context of descriptive text writing by tenth-grade students at SMA Lab Undiksha, Singaraja. One of the main challenges faced by students is the difficulty in logically and cohesively connecting their ideas in writing. This often results in the descriptive texts produced appearing fragmented, lacking a clear flow, and ultimately becoming difficult for readers to understand. Furthermore, observations indicate that students' use of cohesive devices, such as conjunctions, pronouns, or word repetition, is still suboptimal or even frequently inaccurate. This condition leads to less cohesive descriptions, feeling repetitive due to a lack of variation in connectors between sentences or paragraphs, and overall reduces the quality of students' descriptive writing, which often fails to convey clear and vivid imagery as expected.

Although coherence and cohesion are fundamental aspects of effective writing, it is evident that there is still limited research specifically examining how these two aspects manifest in descriptive writing by high school students, particularly at the tenth-grade level. The ability to write clear and logical descriptive texts is an essential competency for tenth-grade students, especially within the framework of

the "Kurikulum Merdeka" which emphasizes students' ability to master various types of texts. Thus, the problems in mastering coherence and cohesion in tenth-grade students' descriptive writing highlight the urgency for in-depth research to comprehensively understand their abilities in both these aspects.

1.3 Problem Limitation

This study has several limitations to keep the research focused and clear. First, the subjects of this study are only tenth-grade students at SMA Lab Undiksha during the 2024/2025 academic year. Second, the data used in this study are descriptive texts written by those students as part of their at-home writing assignments (turns). Third, the analysis of coherence only focuses on how well the ideas in the texts are connected and how smoothly they flow from one to another (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Fourth, the analysis of cohesion is limited to identifying and classifying the types of cohesive devices used by the students, both grammatical and lexical, based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the explanation that has been presented above, several existing problem can be formulated as follows:

- 1.4.1 How is the coherence in the descriptive text of tenth-grade students of SMA Lab Undiksha?
- 1.4.2 What types of cohesion are used by tenth-grade students of SMA Lab Undiksha?

1.5 Research Objective

Based on the research question that has been presented, the purpose of this study is to present an analysis and description related to:

- 1.5.1 To analyze students competence in producing coherence in writing descriptive text
- 1.5.2 To identify the types of cohesion used by tenth-grade students of SMA Lab Undiksha

1.6 Significance of the Research

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to enriching the understanding of applied linguistics, particularly in the fields of discourse analysis and functional grammar. By analyzing how tenth-grade students at SMA Lab Undiksha create coherence and utilize cohesive devices in their descriptive texts, this study will produce specific empirical data. This data is important for validating and elaborating on existing theoretical understandings regarding the acquisition and use of cohesive mechanisms and strategies for achieving coherence by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Furthermore, this research explicitly contributes to filling the identified research gap (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), which is the limited study of coherence and cohesion in the context of descriptive texts written by secondary school students in Indonesia. Thus, these findings will provide a foundation of more specific and contextually relevant data, which can serve as a valuable reference for the development of textual analysis models and theories of EFL writing skill acquisition in the future.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

This result of this study can make a practical contribution to teacher, students, and other researchers.

1.6.2.1 For the teachers

This research will provide a deeper and more specific understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of tenth-grade students in building coherence and cohesion in descriptive texts. This information is essential as a basis for designing more effective teaching strategies, developing teaching materials focused on enhancing coherence and cohesion, and providing more targeted and constructive feedback to students

1.6.2.2 For the students

The results of this research can serve as self-reflection for students regarding the quality of their descriptive writing. By understanding the aspects of coherence and cohesion that need improvement, students can be more proactive in enhancing

their writing skills, particularly in composing texts that are logical, cohesive, and easy to understand.

1.6.2.3 For other researchers

The data and findings from this research can serve as a foundation and initial reference for subsequent studies that wish to explore coherence and cohesion in other types of texts, different educational levels, or with more varied methodological approaches.

