

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing skills are very challenging for students because many students still have difficulties in producing their writing. One argues that writing skills are the abilities in providing an amount of clear information to readers (Bardos, 2006) such as in supplying necessary background information, explaining the context, grouping relevant information, focusing the purpose, selecting matching words, and using appropriate grammar. Bardos (2006) also states, "Bright children can have difficulties with this (writing) even though they are verbally competent." In line with, Frederick (2011) adds there are three situations which make the students challenged to write: building a clear understanding about something to write, avoiding sentence fragmentation, and concerning on grammar issue.

Because writing skill is about providing an amount of clear information effectively, there should be a medium in order that the information is clear for the readers. Cali and Bowen (2003) describe that the clear information of writing lies on how the information is appropriately organized. In this concern, Hedge (1988) in Al-Abri (2008) states that writing effectively "...requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so that there is no ambiguity of meaning..." Hedge (1988) concludes that an effective writing is determined by high organization in

developing ideas and information. In other words, to be able to write effectively, a writer must be able to organize their ideas.

Many students still face difficulties in writing effectively (Hanuri, 2011), one of which is to maintain the coherence of the text as what Akhadiah, Arsjad, and Ridwan (1991) point out that the sentences of a good paragraph must be coherent. Regarding this, Richards (1990) in Lee (1998) describes that the quality of writing is based on coherence among clauses and sentences. This is confirmed by Kim (2004) stating that more than fifty percent students have problems in writing, especially in maintaining the coherence. According to Kim, this is the most difficult part of other parts in writing such as contents, language, academic style, and mechanics. Another research, conducted by Msanjilla (2005) in Kiswahili, Tanzanian secondary school, shows that thirty two percent of the students have poor ability in maintaining text coherence. In conclusion, the students' problem in writing, especially in maintaining the text coherence is a serious problem and must be solved.

Writing coherently is perceived as writing by concerning on a good organization in each paragraph. Based on what Coffey (1987) describes, someone's writing could be clearly understood by the readers if the writing is coherent. In this respect, Oshima and Hogue (1999) in Matiini (2011) point out that one way to achieve a coherent writing is by using transitional phrases. Furthermore, Meyers (2003) in Sabila (2008) describes that the

transitional phrases role as the link of clauses and sentences. This will be further discussed in the literature review chapter.

To show the concrete inappropriate uses of transitional phrases, below is a paragraph in which it is categorized as spaghetti writing based on what McDevitt (1989) in Hung (2000) exemplifies:

My name is Brenda Chou. I am the only daughter, (1) so I often listen to music (2) or read some books alone in my free time. Reading novels is my favorite. I also like to write, because I want to be a writer and an interpreter. I am trying hard to write some articles; (3) therefore, I believe that I can improve my skills in writing day by day. (4) Otherwise, I am fond of western popular music. All of the exercise, swimming is my specially.

The underlined phrases above are categorized as the misuse of transitional phrases. In this case, there are four misuses of transitional phrases. Firstly, the transitional phrase in the example should be omitted because the transitional phrase “so” shows a cause-effect meaning between the first sentence and the second one. However, both sentences do not show any cause-effect meaning at all. Another case, the second transitional phrase “or” seems not suitable used in the sentence because “or” is used to show an option. Nevertheless, the sentence seems to show two activities in the similar time. The third case is the use of “therefore” is also not appropriate because “therefore” shows a cause-effect meaning, while the sentence doesn’t show any cause-effect meaning. The fourth transitional phrase “otherwise” should be replaced with “in addition” because “otherwise” is used to show contrast between two sentences, while the sentences “I believe

that I can improve my skills in writing day by day” and “I am fond of western popular music” do not show any contrast meaning.

Based on what McDevitt (1989) described that all the correction above shows the writing sample is hard to understand because of the inappropriate use of transitional phrases in the early time. After the text is corrected, the writing could make sense because it is coherent already.

In other words, one way for establishing the coherence in writing is through the use of transitional phrases (Wyrick, 1999 in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong, 2008). Conrad (1990) states, “Help your readers...Make sure by supplying transitions: says “*although*” or “*but*” or “*on the other hand*”...” Through the use of transitional phrases, the link between clauses and sentences could be coherent (Oshima and Hogue, 1998 in Brata, 2011). In addition, transitional phrases make the readers understand the ideas among clauses and sentences (UNC Writing Center, 2012). Those are supported by Sobociński’s (2010) statement, “Coherence means that your paragraph is easy to read and understand because...your ideas are connected by the use of appropriate transition signals.” As a conclusion, transitional phrases are important in maintaining coherence writing.

Considering transitional phrases are important in maintaining text coherence, yet there are many high school students still have difficulties in accustoming themselves to use transitional phrases in their writing (Palmer, 1994). A previous study, conducted by Chung (2000), shows that the wiping out of transitional phrases in a text influences much how students

understand a text. Another else study, conducted by Serebenjapol (2003) as quoted in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008), finds out that most of students' error of Mahidol University in writing activity lies on their ability in using transitional phrases. This infers that the use of transitional phrases is still difficult among students.

1.2 Research Question

Considering the difficulties of using transitional phrases in English writing among high school students, the researcher was eager to find out how the students can use transitional phrases in their writing. Therefore, the researcher proposed a question: "*How is the use of transitional phrases in students' writing of SMA IT Darul Hikmah (YAPIDH) Bekasi?*"

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to find out the empirical data which describe how the students of SMA IT Darul Hikmah (YAPIDH) Bekasi used transitional phrases in English writing. In finding out the empirical data describing how the students used transitional phrases, this study describes the occurrence of the transitional phrases in the students' writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to have benefits for three parties: all EFL high school students, English teachers, and the SMA IT Darul Hikmah

(YAPIDH) Bekasi. For all EFL high school students, this study is a kind of information which describes the importance of transitional phrases. For English teachers, this study emphasizes them to give more concern on teaching students about transitional phrases during writing class. And for the SMA IT Darul Hikmah (YAPIDH) Bekasi, this study is a kind of report which describes how the students of the school use the transitional phrases in writing English.