CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based upon the literature review on cohesion and coherence, there are five major sections summarized herein. First, the terminology of cohesion and coherence is reviewed. Second, related research studies carried out on cohesion and coherence both in Thailand and abroad are presented. Third, linguistic and cultural as factors which affect ESL/EFL language learning are documented. Fourth, literature related to writing skills and writing assessment is analyzed. Fifth, the variation of writing modes in relation to is presented.

2.1 Terminology: Cohesion and Coherence

2.1.1 Cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is how words and expressions of a text are connected via use of devices such as: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

The term 'reference' is basically used in semantics for the relationship that exists between a word and what it points to in the real world. For instance, the reference of "house" would be a particular house that is being identified on a particular occasion. However in Halliday and Hasan's model of cohesion, reference is used in a similar approach but more restricted way. Instead of denoting a direct relationship between words and extra linguistic objects, reference is limited in their model to the relationship between two linguistic expressions which exist in a text. For example, "*Ms. Prissana has resigned. She announced her decision this morning.*" The pronoun "she" in this example points to Ms. Prissana within the textual world itself. So, reference, in the textual rather than the semantic sense, occurs when the reader has to retrieve the identity of what is being talked about by referring to another expression in the immediate context. The resulting cohesion lies in the continuity of reference,

whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time. Hence, reference is a device which allows the reader or hearer to trace participants, entities, events, etc. in a text.

Substitution and ellipsis, unlike reference, are grammatical rather than semantic relationships. In substitution, an item is replaced by another item. The sentence, "*Did you come yesterday? Yes, I did.*" is a good example of substitution. The word "did" is a substitute for "came yesterday." Items commonly used in substitution in English include "do", "one" and "the same" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Ellipsis, on the other hand, involves the omission of an item. In other words, in ellipsis, an item is replaced by nothing. This happens when leaving something unsaid which is nevertheless understood. A good example of an ellipsis is for example, "*Lek ordered a cup of tea, and her mom a bowl of soup.*" The word "ordered" in the second clause is ellipted.

Another type of cohesion is conjunction which involves the use of formal markers to combine clauses, sentences and paragraphs. Unlike reference, substitution, and ellipsis, the use of conjunction does not guide the reader to supply missing information by looking for it elsewhere in the text. Instead, conjunction signals the way the writer wants the reader to relate what is about to be said to what has already been said. The combined markers of conjunction can be additive, comparative, adversative, causal, etc., as seen in the following:

 a. additive: and, also, in addition, besides

 b. comparative: likewise, similarly, compared with, in contrast

 c. adversative: but, yet, on the other hand, instead

 d. causal: so, consequently, for, because, etc.

(See also Appendix D.)

In the following sentences, the underlined words are examples of conjunction. *"two years ago Tsunami happened in Thailand. <u>As a result</u>, many local and international*

tourists died <u>and</u> it destroyed a number of tourist attractions. <u>However</u>, after a few months the government worked hard to reconstrict the new buildings in those place."

The last type of cohesive devices identified by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is lexical cohesion which involves either the reiteration of an item, repetition of an item, or the use of a synonym, near synonym, or superordinate term. Lexical cohesion could also be used in reference to lexical collocation. Collocation involves the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur, for instance, *climb / ascend; order / obey; laugh / joke; garden / dig;* and *beach / waves / sand / swim / lifeguard.*

Collectively, these five types of cohesive devices are linguistic features, which 'tie' sentences together. These devices help readers to create a meaningful semantic unit or text and prove essential for textual interpretation. Halliday and Hasan (1976) maintained that it is the property of these features that allow the reader to comprehend the overall meaning of a text, and to understand the author's intention. In fact, the concept of cohesion as elaborated by Halliday and Hasan is similar to that of coherence since it emphasizes the semantic element of language. Halliday and Hasan suggested that there is a strong relationship between cohesion and coherence such that the attainment of cohesion ensures writing quality. However, their explanation of this relationship does not clearly distinguish cohesion from coherence. Since then, there have been several studies showing that it is possible to produce texts that are cohesive in sentence structures but make little or no sense to readers (Lautamatti, 1990; and Johnson, 1992).

2.1.2 Coherence

As elaborated above, cohesion and coherence are apparently related but by no means are the same thing. It is thus, essential for ESL/EFL teachers to have a clear understanding of the concept of coherence. This is because coherence is a component of the writing skill which is a crucial part of writing quality and a virtual guarantee of writing quality. Coherence has become the subject matter of many text linguists. They come up with interesting interpretations regarding the concept of coherence.

To repeat the aforesaid, Halliday and Hasan (1976) made no distinction between the concept of cohesion and coherence. According to them, coherence is recognized by the overt presentation of cohesive devices to connect sentences or paragraphs in the text. In other words, if there is cohesion in a text, there is certainly coherence. Such definition however, narrowly focuses the concept on coherence in terms of sentence level connectedness and paragraph unity rather than the whole discourse unity. Consequently, other linguists and researchers came up with a different definition with regards to the term coherence.

The term coherence is defined in Lee (2002a) as the relationship of the ideas in a text that link together to create a meaningful discourse for the reader. This will help the reader to move easily from one sentence to another without feeling that there are gaps in the thought, puzzling gaps, or points missing. Therefore, the interconnection of ideas in the text, rather than the individual sentences, is crucial in the production of a coherent text. The writer needs to be aware of transitions that bridge ideas presented and ideas to be presented next.

A similar view is proposed by Bamberg (as cited in Kigotho, 2002), who indicated that if the writer clearly states a thesis statement and topic sentences with good organization which indicates divisions of the text, then the reader will be able to integrate all details in a text into a coherent whole. If the reader fails to identify these linguistic cues (thesis statement and topic sentences) in the text, then he/she won't be able to make this integration.

So, the interpretation of coherence is from two divergent sources – linguistic and non-linguistic. It is important to note that the writer, the text, and the readers all interact in the construction of coherence (Pilus, 1996).

Thus, the term coherence of a text, either linguistically or non-linguistically is defined, containing the following five features as proposed by Lee (2002a).

1. The text has a macrostructure that provides a sense appropriate to its communicative purposes and functions. The macrostructure is an outline of the main categories or functions of the text. For example, when the writer's purpose is to tell a story, it is common to arrange the event in a chronological order.

2. The text has an information structure that guides the reader in understanding how information is organized and how the topic of the text is developed. This involves the providing of old information before new information.

3. The text shows connectivity of the underlying content evidenced by relations between propositions. A text is coherent if the propositions it contains are justified or exemplified with detail.

4. The text has cohesive devices to establish a relationship between sentences and paragraphs. This feature is associated with the surface structure of coherence which links between sentences and points being made.

5. The text contains appropriate metadiscourse features. Metadiscourse markers in texts help readers organize, interpret and evaluate information. Some examples of these markers are sequencers (first, second, finally), and certainty markers (certainly, no doubt), and so on.

2.2 Related Research on Cohesion and Coherence

The shortcoming of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) interpretation of cohesion and coherence is that they examined the text after it had been composed, the finished product, but ignored the process of writing the text. However, a significant number of researchers have found their work valuable in advancing further research related to cohesion. The following is a review of research that has been based upon a study of cohesive ties in written compositions.

Witte and Faigley (as cited in Kigotho, 2002) studied ten out of ninety freshman essays that had previously been rated holistically by two readers on a four-point scale. Five of the essays were selected from those given the lowest scores by both readers while five were selected from those with the highest scores. These ten essays were analyzed according to categories of error, syntactic features, as well as the types of cohesive ties. The researcher found that at the most general level of analysis,

the high-rated essays had more cohesive ties than the low-rated ones. Witte and Faigley concluded that cohesion and coherence interact to a great degree, yet they noted that not all cohesive texts would be coherent. In addition, the use of connective links in the text must conform to a reader's expectations for particular types of texts and to his/her world knowledge. Interestingly, Witte & Faigley found that the best overall writing ability is indicated by lexical collocation (the subcategory of cohesion) which ensures writing quality. Nevertheless, their study is instructive on two counts. First, it highlights the cohesive devices which may be considered instrumental in determining writing quality, namely lexical collocation. Second, the quality of writing depends so much on outside factors such as the reader's background information which is beyond cohesion analysis.

Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) on the other hand, asked two classes of 12th grade students to write essays based upon two topics. The students viewed filmstrips that had a clear topic and structure. Each student wrote two essays. The researchers found no correlation between the number of cohesive ties and the coherence rankings for the essays written. They concluded that although a count of cohesive ties helps identify cohesion in a text, a count of cohesive ties alone does not necessarily explain what makes a text coherent.

Bamberg (1984) agreed with the process of conducting detailed research on a small number of essays just as with Witte & Faigley (as cited in Kigotho, 2002) and Tierney & Mosenthal (1983) as a way of acquiring valuable information about the interrelationships among textual features that constitute coherence. However it is not possible to use these methods to assess coherence for a large group of essays such as those written for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) because the task would take a very long time to complete. To reexamine coherence in such essays, Bamberg developed a four-point holistic coherence scale based upon the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976). A subset of essays in his study were read and divided into four groups. Each group represented a different level of coherence achieved by the writers. The most successful essays were found to be fully coherent, and the least were virtually incomprehensible. A four-point rubric was constructed by comparing features previously identified. To further determine the relationship between essay

quality and coherence, a contingency table was constructed for each age group. The majority of good essays in both age groups received high coherence scores. Bamberg found that age and level of education ensure writing quality and textual coherence. He explained that both good and poor 17-year-old writers had greater control over textual features that created coherence than did 13-year-old writers. This means that there is a relationship between textual features and textual coherence. According to Bamberg (1984), good writing is achieved through the production of a coherent text.

Similarly, McCulley (as cited in Neuner, 1987) investigated the relationships among features of textual coherence, as identified by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and primary trait assessments of writing quality and coherence with manuscript length being held constant. A random sample of persuasive papers written by 17 year-olds during the 1978 –79 NAEP writing evaluation were analyzed. This study provides evidence strongly suggesting that textual cohesion is a sub-element of coherence in manuscripts of the same length. The cohesion indices of synonyms, hyponyms and collocational ties may be far more important attributes of coherence than some researchers have recognized (Tierney & Mosenthal, 1983). Also, McCulley's study suggests that coherence is a valid construct to judge writing quality.

Also, Fitzgerald and Spiegel (1986) examined the relationship between cohesion and coherence in 27 third grade and 22 sixth grade students' writing and investigated the degree to which this relationship would vary with quality of writing and grade level. Each child wrote two essays. Brief story stems were given, and the time frame was 30 minutes per essays for both planning and writing. Three students couldn't finish when the time had run out but were allowed to finish on another day. Fitzgerald and Spiegel used Halliday and Hasan's (1976) system for scoring cohesion. However, this study on cohesion and coherence differed from other studies in the way that the researchers interpreted the term "coherence" in two perspectives: one was called "coherence" itself and the other was called "quality," Therefore, in their study, they used three criteria to rate the students' essays: cohesion, coherence, and writing quality. For the coherence criterion, Fitzgerald and Spiegel used an holistic rating scale which is based on the interpretation of coherence by Vandijk and Hasan (as cited in Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1986). This scale was modified from Bamberg's (1984)

original version as shown in Appendix B. The quality, on the other hand, was assessed by using another holistic rating scale consisting of a range from 1-6. The results showed that there was some evidence of a significant relationship between cohesion and coherence in children's writing. This relationship varied according to textual content but didn't vary according to grade level.

In addition, Crowhurst (1987) used Halliday and Hasan's (1976) five categories of cohesion to investigate cohesion in argumentative and narrative essays at three grades levels (grade 6, 10 and 12) in order to determine the type of cohesive ties used at each grade level in each of the two modes writing. The five categories are given as the ties of: substitution, ellipse, reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. The students wrote in response to a color slide showing a performing whale in mid-air. Students were required to write two texts, one narrative and one argumentative within forty minutes. But there was no overall tendency for the frequency of cohesive ties to increase with grade level. Two types of cohesion increased with grade level, collocation and the use of synonyms. Two other types of cohesion decreased with grade level, namely references and conjunctive elements.

Next, Neuner (1987) studied cohesive ties and chains in 20 good and 20 poor essays written by 40 college freshmen which were rated by a panel of 12 professors using a four point holistic scoring scale. The essays were randomly chosen from a collection of over 600 papers written at the summer orientation session required for all new full-time students at a private college in New York. No education or background data were collected for the participants. The researcher found that none among the different types of cohesive ties, were used more frequently by the good writers than poor writers.

Later, Johnson (1992) carried out a study to investigate 3 types of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion categories, namely reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion in good and weak essays written in Malay and in English by native speakers of both languages and in ESL by Malaysian writers. The essays were written under pressure in a specified time length and evaluated holistically as "good" or "weak" by the three groups of teachers. In other words, essays written in Malay were evaluated by the Malay teachers, in English by American teachers, and in ESL by another group

of American teachers. The results showed that good essays written in Malay had more semantic ties through reiteration of words than weak essays. In contrast, good essays in English had more syntactic ties (conjunction and reference). However, the general findings suggested that the good essays were not more cohesive than the weak ones.

In addition, Palmer (1999) conducted a study on cohesion and coherence by observing English essays which were produced by 89 second year students of the Business Studies Diploma who had passed their English I examination. The subjects wrote about a similar topic which they had read. The students were given 1 hour to complete the tasks and were also asked to submit their essays together with the scrap paper they needed for writing their compositions. Palmer divided her subjects into 2 groups: A and B. Group A consisted of 42 students who had been told what textual coherence is and had done many exercises about the subject. Meanwhile, group B consisted of 47 students who had not received any explanation about this concept. In this study, Palmer focused on 4 different aspects of coherence: 1) overall length of the text; 2) the use of paragraphs to organize information; 3) lexical reiteration; and 4) the use of pronouns. The results showed that there was no differences in the overall length of most compositions written by the 2 groups. Group A students who had received some ideas about coherence and their group B counterpart used paragraphing on a very similar level (in showing introduction/contents and conclusion). However, group B students resorted to the use of lexical reiteration in order to increase the coherence in their compositions while group A resorted to the use of pronouns so as to avoid repetition of the same words to make the text coherent. Therefore, the results of Palmer's study suggested that the teaching of cohesive links could enhance students' writing performance in learning a second language.

Moreover, Lee (2002b) investigated the teaching of coherence to a group of 16 ESL university students in Hong Kong. This teaching inquiry was based upon six operational definitions of coherence which included cohesion, information distribution and topical development, propositional development, modification, macrostructure, and metadiscourse. The teaching was incorporated into the English Communication Skills Course. The instruction lasted for about 42 hours and the students were required to write four essays throughout the course. In order to investigate whether the teaching

of coherence was effective in this classroom inquiry, Lee used three sources of data: 1) pre and post revision drafts; 2) think-aloud protocol during revision; and 3) the students' teaching evaluation questionnaires and interviews after the study. The results suggested that students improved the coherence of their writing and paid greater attention to the discourse level of their essays while revising the drafts. The students also thought that the teaching of coherence made them aware of what effective writing should be.

The research on cohesion described above suggests that an analysis of cohesion alone is not sufficient in determining writing quality. The two other considerations are structure and coherence.

2.3 Linguistic and Cultural Factors Influencing Writing Patterns in ESL/EFL Learners

Kaplan (as cited in Takala, Purves and Buckmaster, 1982) was the first author to develop a deterministic hypothesis suggesting that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize discourse differently as a reflection of their native language and culture. Kaplan analysed compositions written in English by foreign students. The study made him conclude that a Western English expository paragraph usually begins with a topic sentence and proceeds to develop the main idea. However, an Asian English expository paragraph favors an indirect approach. For example, the writer prefer to discuss how things are not, rather than how they are. This difference can be identified in terms of the unique internal logic and textual organization within a culture. Since then, several authors (Carlson, 1988; Simpson, 2002; and Thongrin, 2002) explained the influence of cultural thinking patterns and one's native language on the worldviews, values, behavior and language use of ESL/EFL learners. These cultural thinking patterns are called "contrastive rhetoric" (Kaplan, as cited in Takala, Purves and Buckmaster, 1982; and Gonzalez, Chen, & Sanchez, 2001).

When mentioning about cultural and linguistic backgrounds which matter in the process of ESL students' learning how to write, it is worth mentioning three researchers here: Indrasuta (1988a & b), Simpson (2000) and Thongrin (2002).

Indrasuta (1988b) conducted a contrastive analysis of narrative writings by students of two languages (English and Thai) and two cultures (American and Thai). First, she investigated the degree to which the discourse patterns, styles, and to what extent the two languages were similar or different, i.e. English written by the Americans and Thai written by Thais. Then she compared the Thai and English compositions written by the same Thai group to find out whether the Thai native language was transferred to the second language. The subjects of this study were 30 American and 30 Thai high school seniors. Interviews and questionnaires were incorporated in order to investigate the functions and models of narrative in the two cultures. The analysis of data was based on 3 factors: cohesive ties, narrative components, and forms and functions of clauses. The results showed that the analysis of cohesive ties revealed the fewest differences among the 3 composition groups: American writing in English, Thais writing in Thai and Thais writing in English. However, when considering the essays written in Thai and English by the same Thai group, some differences in the use of cohesive devices were found as the writers transferred the Thai conventional style into English writing. Analysis of the narrative essays revealed the Thais using the referential "I" very often, other referential types on average, and lexical cohesive ties infrequently in their Thai and English essays, when compared to the American English essays.

Indrasuta (1988b) pointed out that the Thai writers used more verbs of mental states and moods to express their thoughts in Thai than American students did in their English essays. The Thai students tended to use verbs describing their mental states, such as *think*, *remember*, *feel*, *dream*, *decide*, *love* and *see*, as they were writing. The American writers, in contrast, used more verbs of action to present actions in their writings, not their feelings.

In addition, Simpson conducted a study of 40 paragraphs selected from academic articles in English and Spanish journals in order to examine the context of cultural differences in writing. The study focused on two levels of analyses: physical

and topical structures. The physical linguistic characteristics of the paragraphs included the number of words, sentences and clauses. The results revealed some English-Spanish differences. For the analysis of topical structure, Simpson examined the internal topical structure of each paragraph characterized by the repetition of key words and phrases used by professional writers in these two languages so as to develop organizational patterns in their writing. The results showed that English paragraphs tended to have a high use of internal coherence while Spanish paragraphs did not. In addition to Simpson's findings, Thongrin (2002) did a case study of a Korean undergraduate at an American university to find out whether previous experiences influence his writing patterns. It was found that the English writing patterns derived from instruction in Korea differed from the instruction in America. The major difficulties included rhetorical and linguistic features, direct translation, grammatical errors and incorrect lexical choices. As Thongrin's subject was from a country in which writing is viewed as the end product after: repeated practice, and grammar exercises, consulting a bilingual dictionary, thought in L1, and then translating into English when writing.

Also, Hinkle (as cited in Simpson, 2000) indicated that written texts represent the diversity of different stylistic, cultural, religious, ethical and social expressions, which deal with written discourse notions and frameworks. A good example of this diversity or cultural influence is characterized by Kaplan (as cited in Takala, Purves and Buckmaster, 1982) when stating that ESL students may write essays which are described as indirect and which include a sense of distortion when compared to the ideal model of English.

2.4 Writing Skills and Assessment

2.4.1 Writing Skills

Writing skills are complex and difficult to teach and master. To be a good writer, one is required to master not only the physical features of texts and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgmental elements (Heaton, 1988). Heaton

classified the specific skills necessary for writing a good composition into five categories, as quoted below.

- language use skills: the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences
- mechanical skills: the ability to use those written conventions correctly when writing e.g. punctuation, spelling
- critical thinking skills: the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information
- stylistic skills: the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs and use language effectively
- judgment skills: the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information (p.135).

2.4.2 Assessment in Writing

Writing assessment may be used for a variety of purposes both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, it provides teachers, researchers and assessors with an understanding of students' writing performance, and this may open the way to help students improve their language proficiency, as the assessment results will indicate where and to what extent students are good or weak in writing. Assessment provides useful diagnostic information for both teachers and students (Bailey,1998). Furthermore, teachers and students must have access to the results in order to be able to use them, to revise existing and planned programs for individuals as well as for particular groups of students. In addition, language is always learned and used most effectively in environments where it accomplishes something the user wants to do for particular listeners or readers within that environment.

When grading compositions, there is the question of reliability (Heaton, 1988). Heaton said that several research articles indicate how extremely unreliable markers are, both in their own inconsistency and in their failure to agree with colleagues on the relative merits of students' compositions. In addition, different markers will have a different spread of marks, strictness and rank order. According to Heaton, markers may grade compositions according to:

- the content presented

- their beliefs about the ideas presented

- background information of the student

When considering the matter of subjectivity in grading writing compositions, it is essential to compile a banding system as a brief description of the various levels of achievement expected to be obtained by the students (Heaton, 1988). There are four models of scoring guides. The first two models are called traditional ESL Composition Scoring Guides and an ESL Composition Profile which is popular among the testers of ESL compositions post 1981. The third model is the Holistic Coherence Scoring Scale developed by Bamberg (1984, see Appendix B). The final model is the Test of Written English Scoring Guide suggested by Bailey (1998, see Appendix C).

In this study, the researcher will use the latest development of holistic scoring scale in testing writing which is called the Test of Written English Scoring Guide by Bailey (1998). Bailey identified six levels in this scoring guide. This Holistic Scoring Guide indicates a clearer scale for the markers in order to assess coherence of the students' essays when compared to the other types of scoring guides. At each level, there is an equal weight of analyzing the physical elements (cohesion) in the text and analyzing the coherence of ideas necessary for the analysis of compositions.

2.5 The Importance of Cohesion and Different Modes of Writing

Indrasuta (1988a) pointed out that cohesive patterning varies across textual content, and that writing quality also differs across topics. To illustrate this, it is worth examining at least two types of essays here, namely narrative and argumentative modes.

Hew (1994) explained that a narrative essay contains a story line or plot, and it is achieved via the use of cohesive devices. Also, this type of writing is regarded as easy for students to write when compared to other types of writing. Thus, the researcher first explored the cohesion and coherence of participants' narrative writings.

Whereas an argumentative essay requires the writer to organize his/her ideas in order to win the readers' interest and convince them of the writer's opinion (Hew, 1994). Also student's ability to write persuasively or to argue a point of view is essential in this type of writing. Argumentation is also considered an essential part of the English curriculum in America (Harland, 2003). In addition, argumentation is an indicator of success in national qualifying exams for English proficiency as noted by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (as cited in Harland, 2003). Also, argumentation is particularly important in our society, the real world beyond school requirements in which students will ultimately have to function. According to Harland, students' inability to achieve good argumentation is the result of their ignorance of the tasks required for this communicative purpose as it is important in written language. Writing is a kind of social interaction in order to fulfill social goals. So, to use language so as to represent and transform their own worlds, students need to master not only linguistic elements but also socio-cultural communicative purposes (Grasswell, Parr & Aikman, 2001; cited in Harland, 2005).

Thus, the researcher selected both narrative and argumentative modes of writing for analysis herein.