The Analysis of English Department Students' Ability in Using Transition Signals at Padang State University

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the students' ability in using transition signals. This research used descriptive qualitative. The population of this research was the second year students of English Department UNP of Padang State University, Faculty of Languages and arts, who registered on 2011. This research sample is K2 (Educational Class) which is 25 students. Samples were taken using cluster sampling technique. Data were collected using written test. Based on data obtained, the students' ability in using transition signals is average (60%)

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendiskripsikan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan transisi. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif. Populasi penelitian adalah mahasiswa tingkat II Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris tahun masuk 2011, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang. Sampel penelitian adalah K2 (Kelas Kependidikan) yang berjumlah 29 orang. Sampel diambil dengan menggunakan teknik cluster sampling. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan tes tertulis. Berdasarkan data yang diperoleh, hasil kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan sinyal transisi adalah sedang (60%).

Keywords: ability, transitions.

A. Introduction

Writing plays an important role in a modern society. The fact states that writing is the primary basis in which people's work, learning and intellect will be judged such as in college, in the workplace, and in the community. Through writing, people can express who they are and promotes their other ability. Besides, writing stimulates people's thinking skill to demonstrate their ideas. Therefore, it is crucial for everyone to learn and master in writing skill in order to be literate. Hedge (2000) states that writing is a complex process which is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second language writers. It involves a number of activities: setting goal, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate

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language, making a draft, reading and reviewing it, then revising and editing. According to Chakraverty and Gutum (2000) writing an important part of language learning, is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic, to analyze, and to classify any background knowledge.

Being competent in writing is needed for students whose second language and foreign language is English. Nevertheless, since English is not their first language, it is most likely students would make some mistakes. In the English Department of Padang State University, writing, one of the skill courses which is divided into Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, and Paper Thesis Writing. The main aim of the skill courses especially is to enhance the students' competence in communicating ideas through written language. Boardman and Frydenberg (2002:11) define writing as a continuous process of thinking and organizing, rethinking, and recognizing.

Moreover, Perkins (2005) says that writing is a process that requires writers to develop a cognitive awareness of the writing choices available to them. There are some aspects of writing which should be recognized by writers, awareness, as well as how researched information and their own claims about that research can most effectively and efficiently help them communicate to a listening audience

Unfortunately, there are problem that students have in writing. Based on an interview with some writing lecturers of English Department on March 20, 2012, the problem is in applying transitions into their writing tasks. This interview was done to know the main problem faced by the students on transitions. First, most of the students cannot use transitions well. Second, they sometimes use conjunctions as transitions, for example: *We live in the same building but we hardly see each other (*incorrect*). Although we live in the same building, we hardly see each other* (correct). The last is the students seem to use transition "on the other hand" for additional idea, whereas it is transitions to show contrast.

In fact, writing is not an easy activity. It needs process from putting down ideas until results a written work. Writing begins from word, phrase, sentences, paragraph and discourse. In making sentences and developing them, students need to pay attention on how to make good sentences and what kind of areas that should be noticed in writing.

There are many things that students should notice in writing. One of them is about transition. Oshima and Hogue (1983) say that transition signals are words and phrases that connect the idea in a sentence with the idea in another sentence. They add that transition signals are also used in multi-paragraphed components to make the movement from one paragraph to the next paragraph logical and smooth.

Besides, Reid (2000:116) states transitional words and phrases help the readers easy to read and understand from one sentence, paragraph, or idea to another. Also, it helps to establish the relationships between parts of the sentences and paragraphs in an essay. The placement of transition signals is usually placed at the start of sentences and they may also appear in the middle or end of

sentences. They are always separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. In academic writing, the use of transitional words is sometimes difficult for students because written material in some culture does not require the use of transitions and many transitions in English have limited meaning and some are used differently depending on their context.

Spaventa (2001:118) adds that a transition sentence moves the reader from one idea group (paragraph) to another idea group (paragraph) by making a connection between the ideas. A transition sentence usually gives an idea of what the topic of the next paragraph will be. Afterward, the use of transitional words and phrases are within sentences and to begin or end paragraphs and sentences. Without transitions, writing will be firm and boring (Schorr, 2005). Moreover, transitions words give signals to the reader for understanding the relationships between sentences of the paragraphs easily, so the students must learn to use them appropriately.

Ruetten (2006) states that transitional words also called conjunctive adverbs connect two independent clauses or two sentences. The purpose of transitional word itself to the reader is able to follow the paragraph easily, because between one sentence and other is well connected by using transitional words. Sometimes, when writing a paragraph, transitional is needed to connect sentences or link one idea to the next. Because transitions provide valuable signals to the reader about the relationship between parts of the essay, students must learn to use them appropriately.

In other words, Hunt (2009:24) states that transition signals help to combine one idea with the next idea smoothly; without such signals in writing, there may be an abruptly moving or jumping from topic to topic or point to point; transition signals are verbal statements indicating that one idea is ending and another is beginning. Therefore, a transition signal alerts the students know how to move to a new topic or ideas in writing.

One of types of transitions is transition word. Turner (2008) points out that transition word is a word which shows how two sentences or paragraphs are linked. The examples below indicate that additional information is being added.

"Also, captions are widely used to depict titles, producers, actors, credits, and sometimes, the context of a story. Furthermore, text and symbols that are presented at specific locations in a video image can be used to identify the TV station and program associated with the video".

Yet, the ability of students in using transitions is still low. More than half students are not able to use and put transitions in sentences or paragraph correctly. Above all this study focused more on the use of transition signals. Hence, this research is conducted to analyze students' ability in using transition signals at English Department of Padang State University.

B. Research Method

This research was descriptive qualitative research which was done to see the second year English Department students' ability in using transition signals. The population of this research was the second year students of English Department of Padang State University who registered on 2011. They were chosen because they were studying the courses of writing and learning about transition signals. The second year students of English department had six classes and the number of the student is 168 students. This research used cluster sampling. Gay (2009:110) describes that cluster sampling selects the group randomly, not individuals. He adds that the number of the samples of the research is at least 15% of the population. Therefore, this research took 25 students of the population.

The instrument for this research is written test. The test consists of 32 items; 7 items for text completion, 13 items for write sentences, and 12 items for sentences combining. The allocated time of the test was 60 minutes. There were 13 indicators used in this test. Before giving the tests to the students, try out was done to see the reliability and validity of the test. The data from the test were collected by using some steps. First, the question and answer sheets were distributed to the students. Second, the direction for the test was explained to make students more understand. Next, the sample was asked to do the test. Last, the reliability and the item difficulties were found from the data. Then, the data were analyzed based on the indicators and were scored based on the key answers then helped by one of the lecturers English Department at Padang State University.

C. Research Findings

In this part, the use of transition signals of students was presented in the form table to make easier the reader in understanding this research. The presentation of data in table is divided into 13 parts. Students who answered questions correctly were given 1 point and the wrong answers were given 0 point.

I. Transitions to introduce additional idea

Table 4. Students' Score in Transitions

I. Transitions to introduce additional idea

No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Another	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
2	Moreover	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
3	Furthermore	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
4	Besides	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
5	Also	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
6	In addition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	Total	3	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	5	1	0	2	3	3	2	4	1	2	1	3	5	3	4	5	1

Table 1 presented the use of transitions to introduce additional idea by the students. The maximum score was 6. In fact, there was no one students got score 6. There were 3 students got score 5. There were 2 students got score 4. There

were 6 students got score 3. There were 7 students got score 2. There were 6 students got score 1 and there was only one student got score 0.

II. Transitions to introduce contrast idea

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No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	In contrast	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Instead	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
3	Otherwise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
4	Nevertheless	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
5	However	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Eventough	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Total	4	2	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	6	5	4	6	4	2	4	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	4	3

Table 2 presented the use of transitions to introduce contrast idea by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to introduce contrast idea was 6. In fact, there was no one students got score 6. There were 3 students got score 5. There were 11 students got score 4. There were 6 students got score 3 and there were 5 students got score 2.

III. Transitions to sequence ideas

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No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	First	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
2	Second	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
3	Then	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
	Total	3	2	2	0	3	3	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	0

Table 3 presented the use of transitions to sequence idea by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to sequence ideas was 2. In fact, there were 17 students got the highest score 2. There were 6 students got score 1 and there were 2 students got score 0.

IV. Transitions to indicate consequence/result

IV. Transitions to indicate a consequence/result

No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	As a result	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Thus	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
3	Therefore	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	Accordingly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	3	2	1	3	2	2	3	4	4	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	4	3	3	4	4

Table 4 presented the use of transitions to indicate a consequence/result by the students.
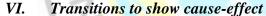
The maximum score for transitions to indicate consequence/result was 4.In fact, there were 5 students got the highest score 4. There were 7 students got score 3. There were 8 students got score 2 and there were 5 students got score 1.

V. Transitions to add similar idea

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No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Likewise	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
2	Similar to	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
3	Together with	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	Total	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	3

Table 5 presented the use of transitions to add a similar idea by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to add similar idea was 3. In fact, there were 2 students got the highest score 3. There were 9 students got score 2. There were 9 students got score 1 and there were 5 students got score 0.

VI. Transitions to show cause-effect

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No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Due to	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2	Hence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table 6 presented the use of transitions to show cause-effect by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to show cause-effect was 2. In fact, there were 12 students got the highest score 1 and there were 13 students got the lowest score 0.

VII. Transitions to show definition

VII. Transitions to show definition

No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Is a term that	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	That is	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

Table 7 presented the use of transitions to show definition by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to show definition was 2. In fact, there were 12 students got highest score 1 and there were 13 students got lowest score 0.

VIII.   Transitions to show time

No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Meanwhile	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	By the time	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1

Table 8 presented the use of transitions to show time by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to show time was 2. In fact, there were 17 students got highest score 1 and there were 8 students got the lowest score 0.

IX.   Transitions to show classification

No	Transitions	Students																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Type	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
2	Divisions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 9 presented the use of transitions to show classification by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to show classification was 2. In fact, there were 10 students got highest score 1 and there were 15 students got the lowest score 0.

X.   Transitions to introduce a restatement/explanation

No	Transitions																									
1	In fact	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Specifically	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 10 presented the use of transitions to introduce a restatement/explanation by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to introduce restatement/explanation was 2. In fact, there were 20 students hot highest score 1 and there were 5 students got the lowest score 0.

XI.   Transitions to emphasizes/clarify a point

No	Transitions	Students																								
1	Evenmore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
2	Indeed	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Table 11 presented the use of transitions to emphasize/clarify a point by the students. The maximum score for transitions to emphasizes/clarify a point was 2. In fact, there were 4 students got the highest score 1 and there were 21 students got the lowest score 0.

XII.   Transitions to show concession

No	Transitions	Students																									
1	Yet	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
2	Despite the fact	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 12 presented the use of transitions to show concession by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to show concession was 2. In fact, there were 6 students got the highest score 1 and there were 19 students got the lowest score 0.

XIII.   Transitions to draw summarize

No	Transitions	Students																									
1	In conclusion	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	Finally	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1

Table 12 presented the use of transitions to draw summarize by the students.

The maximum score for transitions to draw summarize was 2. In fact, there were 20 students got the highest score 1 and there were 5 students got the lowest score 0.

After this, the students' ability in using transitions was put in percentage and was classified into rating quality. There are five rating qualities; they are excellent, good, average, poor and very poor. The percentage of students' ability in using transitions can be seen clearly in these following tables.

Table 6. The percentage of students' ability in using transitions			
Students	13 Types of Transitions	Frequency (%)	Classification of Score Level
1	21	65.6	Good
2	14	43.8	Poor
3	7	21.9	Very Poor
4	14	43.8	Poor
5	11	34.4	Very Poor
6	12	37.5	Very Poor
7	17	53.1	Poor

8	17	53.1	Poor
9	20	62.5	Average
10	16	50	Poor
11	13	40.7	Very Poor
12	13	40.7	Very Poor
13	22	68.8	Good
14	16	50	Poor
15	8	25	Very Poor
16	14	43.8	Poor
17	8	25	Very Poor
18	13	40.6	Poor
19	6	18.8	Very Poor
20	13	40.6	Poor
21	22	68.8	Good
22	17	53.1	Poor
23	11	34.4	Very Poor
24	23	71.9	Good
25	10	31.3	Very Poor
		60%	**Average**

To make it clearer, see the table below:

From the table 6, it was found that the percentage of the students' ability in using transitions was 60 % (average).

Table 7. Classification of Score Level

Categories	Number of Students
Good	4 students
Average	1 students
Poor	10 students
Very Poor	10 students

a) Good

Table 7 shows that there are 4 students categorized *Good.* These students could do the test well and their score were 21, 22, 22, and 23. Those score were the highest score of 25 students and the most correct of 32 questions.

b) Average

There are only 1 student categorized *Average.* This student got score 20. The student in this category had most errors on write sentences by using transitions; (to show time, to introduce contrast idea, to show similarity, to show definition, restatement/explanation, emphasize/clarify a point, and concession. Therefore, this student could not be categorized into Good.

c) Poor

There are 10 students categorized *poor.* Their score were 13 until 17. These students had most errors on write sentences and sentences combining. Students had errors in using transitions addition, list in order/time, contrast, similarity,

classification, definition, consequence, emphasize/clarify a point, restatement/explanation, concession, result, and summarize.

d) Very Poor

There are 10 students categorized *very poor*. Their score were 6 until 12. Students in this category had many errors almost on every part of the test; on text completion, write sentences, and sentences combining.

From those facts above, it can be seen that the second year English Department students of Padang State University still had difficulties in using transitions signals. First, most of them could not use some transitions correctly and even they could not write sentences by using transitions. Second, problem in using transitions was the placement of transition signals and the use of commas. Some students could put the transitions correctly, but they didn't put comma, some students neither did; hence, they got mistakes in the test. Last, the highest errors students made were on transitions: 1) cause effect, 2) definition, 3) classification, 4) concession, 5) emphasize /clarify a point.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the second year English Department students have shown average mastery in using transitions signals. More than half of the students were not able to use transitions well. The finding is indicated by the fact that the students had mistakes in putting transitions in a paragraph; write sentences using transitions given, and combine the sentences by adding transitions, the last, many of them ignore the use of commas when they put transitions. The finding showed that there were 4 students that got score more than 65 or good. There was only 1 student with average category and 10 students with poor category. In brief, less than half of the second year English Department students who got score under 55 (very poor). Besides, based on research which has been done, it can be found that most students could not use transitions well and had errors in using them. Those transitions are: transition to show cause effect, transition to show definition, transition to show classification, transitions to show concession, and transition to emphasize /clarify a point.

Suggestion

The suggestions from this research are the lecturers should explain in details how to put transitions well in a paragraph, how to write transitions in sentences, and how to combine sentences by adding transitions. Specifically, on the transitions to show cause effect, transition to show definition, transition to show classification, transitions to show concession, and transition to emphasize /clarify a point. For the next research can be focused in finding the different problem, the students' ability in using transition signals in writing essays or the errors students made in using transitions signals. For the students should learn more and have a lot of practices in using transition signals; especially put transitions in a paragraph, use transitions in sentences, and combine sentences by

adding transitions. They must pay more attention to the placement of transitions in using them in sentence or paragraph.

Note: this article was written based on Thesis of the writer with her advisors Drs. Jufri, M.Pd and Fitrawati, S.S, M.Pd.

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