PROBLEMS OF COHERENCE IN THE WRITING OF VIETNAMESE EFL STUDENTS AND AN INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS’ WRITING PERFORMANCE

BY

THI ANH DAO, PHAM

A thesis submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

Victoria University of Wellington
2021
Coherence has been claimed to be one among the difficult aspects of writing to teach and learn. Both teachers and learners find it hard to explain why one piece of writing is incoherent and another is not. There have been a few studies (Gramegna, 2007; Wikborg, 1990) investigating the types of coherence breaks in EFL/ESL writing and a few studies (Johns, 1986; Lee, 2002b) investigating the effects of teaching aspects of coherence on students’ writing performance. However, there have been no studies identifying the coherence problems in students’ writing and then using these to teach students how to avoid these coherence problems. In addition to teaching students to avoid coherence problems, an approach called topical structure analysis (TSA) (Liangprayoon, Chaya, & Thep-ackraphong, 2013; Schneider & Connor, 1990) has been considered as an effective technique to help improve students’ writing coherence. Some studies (Attelisi, 2012; Connor & Farmer, 1990) have examined the effect of teaching TSA in promoting EFL students’ awareness of coherence, but investigating the effect of the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA on EFL students’ writing performance has not been done in any previous studies. My study fills both of these gaps.

There are two main phases in my study. In Phase 1, I developed a system of coherence problems based on the analysis of 69 essays written by Vietnamese EFL students. Then, this system of coherence problems was used to identify the types and frequency of coherence problems in the writing of Vietnamese EFL students. In Phase 2, an intervention was conducted in a university in Vietnam. Fifty-eight students participated in the intervention and were divided into a control group and a treatment group. While the combination of teaching the system of coherence problems developed in Phase 1 and teaching TSA was delivered to the treatment group in the intervention, the control group was taught other aspects of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, etc. The aim of Phase 2 of this study was to examine the effect of the intervention on students’ writing performance, especially on coherence and overall writing quality.

Data for Phase 1 was 69 essays on a single topic. Using this set of essays, the types of coherence problems and their frequency were identified. Data for Phase 2 included three sets of writing. The first set of writing was 58 essays written by students in both the treatment group and the control
group before the intervention was conducted. The second set of writing involved the students revising their first draft right after the intervention finished. The third set of writing was 58 new essays on a different topic from the first and the second sets written by students in the control and treatment groups four weeks after the intervention. These three sets of writing were analysed and rated by the same raters as in Phase 1. In addition, students completed questionnaires and participated in focus group interviews in Phase 2.

Findings of Phase 1 show that there were five main types of coherence problems that Vietnamese EFL students had in their writing. These were macrostructure-related problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and metadiscourse-related problems. Of these five main types of coherence problems, paragraph unity-related problems were the most frequent ones, and “no/ little elaboration of the proposition made” was the most frequent subtype of paragraph-unity problems.

Findings from Phase 2 show that there was a significant difference in terms of coherence problems, types of topical progression, and writing quality between the two groups after the intervention finished. To be specific, there were significantly fewer instances of coherence problems in the writing of the treatment group than in the writing of the control group, and the scores for coherence and overall quality achieved by the treatment group were significantly higher than those achieved by the control group. Also, the focus group interviews suggest that most students found the intervention helpful in improving their writing performance. This means the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA to students had a positive impact on students’ writing coherence and writing quality. Based on the findings, some suggestions are made for teaching writing to EFL students in general and for the teaching of coherence in the Vietnamese university context in particular.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my two supervisors: Dr. Jean Parkinson and Dr. Rachael Ruegg for their excellent supervision. Their wisdom and knowledge has enlightened my perception of doing research on language teaching, of language teaching and learning. I am always thankful to their extremely useful and insightful feedback that has contributed to shaping my thesis.

I would like to thank MOET Vietnam, Victoria University of Wellington, and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for their financial support as well as for research grant provided. Especially, I would like to express my thanks to Ms. Hoang Kim Oanh for her kind assistance relating to my administration procedures and allowances.

I am grateful to my colleagues at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI), especially Dr. Tran Duc Quy, Head of Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) who gave me the opportunity to pursue my PhD studies; Dr. Hoang Ngoc Tue, Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) - HaUI whose support and understanding has been precious to me during my data collection. I especially would like to send my thanks to Ms. Vu Thi Nhung, one of teachers of writing at FFL for helping me collect data for my study’s Phase 1

I also thank all the participants at HaUI for their time and efforts as well as their enthusiastic and supportive participation so that my study can be successfully completed.

I extend my thanks to Dr. Derek Wallace for his helpful writing course when I was at the early stage of my PhD and to Dr. Lisa Woods (School of Mathematics and Statistics) for her assistance in my data analysis.

Thank you to Pham Thi Phuong Ha for her help as my second coder. Her hard work was really helpful during my the process of establishing reliability of my data.

To my fellow PhD students: Say Phonekeo, Elvie Annabelle M, Zine Pansa, Fai Chinpakdee, Mengzhu Yan, Le Hong Phuong Thao: I thank you for your friendship and support. The wonderful memories from our lunches and dinners will be forever in my heart.
Thanks goes to all my friends here in Wellington and New Zealand, especially for Ha Do and Huong Nguyen, for your continuous support and kindness. You have become my previous part of my life. Thank you all my friends in Vietnam, particularly Ngoc Bui, Ba Duy, Nhan Bui, Lan Tran. You all have supported me so much from my home country. Thank you Hang-Tuyen for your precious support right at the time my family first arrived in New Zealand.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my parents in law who have encouraged me a lot during my study. Thanks to my brother in law who has helped me to take care of my parents in law while I am away. Your sacrifices have greatly helped me to focus on my study.

Last, to my husband, Loi Trinh, and my two daughters, Nhi Trinh and Nhung Trinh. I would like to thank you, Loi Trinh, for being my pleasant companion and constant inspirer. Your choice to come to New Zealand to support my study despite countless barriers is the biggest support to me. I am and will be always remembered and highly appreciated for your support. To my beloved daughters, thank you, Nhi, for your little but precious things you have done for Mom when Mom was really in need. Thank you Nhunng for your cheerfulness; your sweet voice and smiles always cheered me up.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgement.......................................................................................................................... iii

List of Tables ................................................................................................................................... x

List of Figures and Appendices ...................................................................................................... xii

List of Abbreviations .................................................................................................................... xiii

Chapter 1. Introduction ................................................................................................................... 1

1.1. Motivation for the study ........................................................................................................... 1

1.2. Research context ....................................................................................................................... 2

1.3. Aims and scope of the study ..................................................................................................... 4

1.4. Overall research design .......................................................................................................... 5

1.5. Significance of the study ......................................................................................................... 6

1.6. Organization of the dissertation ............................................................................................... 7

Chapter 2. Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 9

2.1. Process-based approach to teaching EFL/ESL writing ......................................................... 9

2.2. Coherence in EFL writing ...................................................................................................... 11

  2.2.1. Defining coherence ........................................................................................................... 11

  2.2.2. Features of coherence ....................................................................................................... 15

  2.2.3. Coherence and coherence problems .............................................................................. 18

  2.2.4. Teaching coherence ........................................................................................................... 22

  2.2.5. Assessing coherence ......................................................................................................... 23

  2.2.6. Relationship between cohesion, coherence and writing quality ................................. 25

2.3. Culture conventions, academic writing, and coherence ................................................... 26

  2.3.1. Contrastive rhetoric and its significance ....................................................................... 26

  2.3.2. Differences in English academic writing and Vietnamese academic writing ............ 27

2.4. Topical structure analysis ....................................................................................................... 29

  2.4.1. Definitions and concepts ................................................................................................. 30

  2.4.2. Implementation of topical structure analysis ................................................................. 32

  2.4.3. Teaching topical structure analysis ................................................................................. 33
Chapter 4. The application of the framework .................................................................93
4.5. Limitation of the framework ..................................................................................102
4.6. Summary ..................................................................................................................102

Chapter 5. Types and frequency of coherence problems .............................................103
5.1. Introduction .............................................................................................................103
5.2. Types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing ....................103
5.2.1. Macrostructure-related problems ........................................................................105
5.2.2. Topic unity-related problems ..............................................................................105
5.2.3. Paragraph unity-related problems .......................................................................106
5.2.4. Cohesion-related problems ................................................................................109
5.2.5. Metadiscourse-related problems .......................................................................110
5.3. Frequency of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing ..........111
5.4. Discussion ..............................................................................................................113
5.4.1. Macrostructure-related and Topic unity-related problems (Essay level problems) ...114
5.4.2. Paragraph unity-related problems (Paragraph level problems) ........................115
5.4.3. Cohesion-related and metadiscourse-related problems ....................................119
5.5. Summary ..............................................................................................................122

Chapter 6. Impacts of the intervention ........................................................................123
6.1. Introduction ...........................................................................................................123
6.2. Students’ writing performance before the implementation of the intervention ......126
6.2.1. Analysis of coherence problems ........................................................................127
6.2.2. Topical structure analysis (TSA) .......................................................................128
6.2.3. Scores of coherence and overall quality ............................................................133
6.2.4. Summary ...........................................................................................................135
6.3. Changes in students’ writing performance in each group ....................................135
6.3.1. Control group ....................................................................................................136
6.3.2. Treatment group ...............................................................................................141
6.3.3. Summary ..........................................................................................................146
6.4. Differences in the writing performance of students in two groups ....................146
6.4.1. Differences in types and frequency of coherence problems..........................................147
6.4.2. Differences in types of topical progression .................................................................151
6.4.3. Differences in scores of coherence and overall quality ............................................157
6.5. Discussion .......................................................................................................................159
   6.5.1. Changes in students’ writing performance in each group ........................................160
   6.5.2. Difference in the writing performance of the students in both groups ....................164
6.6. Summary .........................................................................................................................167

Chapter 7. Relationship between writing quality, coherence problems and topical structure
analysis (TSA) .......................................................................................................................168

7.1. Introduction .....................................................................................................................168
7.2. Relationship between writing quality and coherence problems ...................................169
   7.2.1. Relationship between the scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence
          problems .......................................................................................................................170
   7.2.2. Relationship between the score of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence
          problems .......................................................................................................................175
   7.2.3. Summary ................................................................................................................177
7.3. Relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression ......................178
   7.3.1. Relationship between the scores of coherence and types of topical progression .......178
   7.3.2. Relationship between overall quality scores and types of topical progression ........184
   7.3.3. Summary ................................................................................................................186
7.4. Discussion .......................................................................................................................188
   7.4.1. Relationship between writing quality and frequency and types of coherence problems
          .................................................................................................................................188
   7.4.2. Relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression ..................189

Chapter 8. Students’ perception of the intervention ..............................................................192

8.1. Introduction .....................................................................................................................192
8.2. Students’ previous performance and experience .............................................................193
8.3. Students’ previous knowledge of coherence ...................................................................196
8.4. Students’ perception of the intervention ........................................................................196
8.4.1. Results from the questionnaire ................................................................. 196
8.4.2. Results from the focus groups .............................................................. 199
8.5. Difficulties/problems following the intervention ........................................ 201
8.6. Discussion ................................................................................................. 202
  8.6.1. Students’ perceptions of the intervention .............................................. 202
  8.6.2. Students’ difficulties/problems following the intervention ..................... 203
8.7. Summary ................................................................................................. 204

Chapter 9. Discussion ...................................................................................... 206
  9.1. Types and frequency of coherence problems in students’ writing ............... 207
    9.1.1. Types of coherence problems in students’ writing (Research Question 1) 207
    9.1.2. Frequency of coherence problems in students’ writing (Research Question 2) 210
  9.2. Changes found after the intervention ...................................................... 216
    9.2.1. Changes found in students’ writing performance in each group .......... 216
    9.2.2. Differences found between the two groups ........................................ 221
  9.3. The relationship between writing quality and coherence problems and TSA 226
    9.3.1. Relationship between writing quality and coherence problems ........... 226
    9.3.2. Relationship between writing quality and TSA .................................. 228
    9.3.3. Summary ....................................................................................... 231
  9.4. Students’ perception of the intervention and difficulties following the intervention .... 232
  9.5. General summary .................................................................................. 235

Chapter 10. Conclusion .................................................................................... 237
  10.1. Summary of the findings ....................................................................... 237
  10.2. Contributions of the study .................................................................... 238
  10.3. Pedagogical recommendations of the study .......................................... 241
  10.4. Limitations .......................................................................................... 244
  10.5. Future research directions .................................................................... 245
  10.6. Final remarks ...................................................................................... 246

References ....................................................................................................... 247

Appendices ...................................................................................................... 263
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1. Process of developing the framework................................................................. 77
Table 4.2. Definitions/explanations and examples of the coherence breaks ...................... 83
Table 4.3. The framework applied to the Essay ID. PH 135 from the data .......................... 95
Table 5.1. Main types of coherence problems in the essays in Phase 1 .............................. 104
Table 5.2. Macrostructure-related problems in the essays in Phase 1 ............................... 105
Table 5.3. Topic unity-related problems in the essays in Phase 1 ..................................... 106
Table 5.4. Paragraph unity-related problems in the essays in Phase 1 .............................. 108
Table 5.5. Cohesion-related problems in the essays in Phase 1 ....................................... 109
Table 5.6. Metadiscourse-related problems in the essays in Phase 1 ............................... 111
Table 5.7. Three most frequent coherence problems in terms of discourse level ............... 111
Table 5.8. Five most frequent coherence problems at paragraph level .............................. 112
Table 5.9. Four most frequent coherence problems in terms of cohesion and metadiscourse. 113
Table 6.1. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) of the two groups in Task 1 .............. 127
Table 6.2. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) of the two groups in Task 1 .... 128
Table 6.3. Types of topical progression and their percentages of the two groups in Task 1 ...... 130
Table 6.4. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 1 .... 131
Table 6.5. Descriptive statistics of scores of the two groups in Task 1 .............................. 134
Table 6.6. Types and frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the control group .............................................................................................................. 136
Table 6.7. Descriptive statistics of frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the control group .............................................................................................................. 136
Table 6.8. Summary of significant changes in terms of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the control group .............................................................................................................. 138
Table 6.9. Types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group .......... 138
Table 6.10. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group .............................................................................................................. 139
Table 6.11. Summary of significant changes in terms of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group

Table 6.12. Descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing of the control group

Table 6.13. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Table 6.14. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Table 6.15. Types of topical progression and their percentages in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Table 6.16. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Table 6.17. Descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Table 6.18. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 1 revision of the two groups

Table 6.19. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 1 revision of the two groups

Table 6.20. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 2 of both groups

Table 6.21 Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 2 of both groups

Table 6.22. Types of topical progression and their percentages of the two groups in Task 1 revision

Table 6.23. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 1 revision

Table 6.24. Topical progression and their percentages in Task 2 of the two groups

Table 6.25. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 2

Table 6.26 Descriptive statistics of scores of the two groups in Task 1 revision

Table 6.27. Descriptive statistics of the scores of the control and treatment groups in Task 2

Table 7.1. Summary of the relationship between writing quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the two groups

Table 7.2. Summary of the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the two groups
Table 8.1. Descriptive analysis of students’ opinions on the intervention ..........................197

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Overview of the study design .................................................................................46
Figure 2. A brief overview of Phase 2 ....................................................................................54
Figure 3. Coding guide for t-unit identification .....................................................................64
Figure 4. Coding guide for topic identification in the t-units .....................................................64
Figure 5. Guidelines for identifying topical progressions .........................................................66
Figure 6. Analytical framework for the data analysis ...............................................................81
Figure 7. The topical structure analysis of the essay ID. PH 201CF .......................................132
Figure 8. The topical structure analysis of the essay ID. PH 202TS .......................................155

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Ethics Approval from Victoria University of Wellington ..................................263
APPENDIX 2. Letter of support from the Head of Hanoi University of Industry .....................264
APPENDIX 3. Student Information Sheets .............................................................................265
APPENDIX 4. Student Consent Forms .....................................................................................268
APPENDIX 5. Student Survey Questionnaire .........................................................................271
APPENDIX 6. Student Interview Questions .............................................................................279
APPENDIX 7. TSA-based scoring scale for coherence ............................................................281
APPENDIX 8. Scoring scale for overall writing quality ............................................................282
APPENDIX 9. Students’ writing samples .................................................................................285
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPs  Coherence problems
TSA  Topical structure analysis
PP   Parallel progression
SP   Sequential progression
EPP  Extended parallel progression
ESP  Extended sequential progression
UP   Unrelated progression
EFL  English as a foreign language
ESL  English as a second language
L1   First language
L2   Second language
HaUI Hanoi University of Industry
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Effective writing is of critical importance for success in a wide variety of situations. It is particularly essential in allowing university students to communicate persuasively with teachers or peers. Coherence is considered a crucial quality in producing good writing (Lee, 2002b; Liangprayoon et al., 2013) and numerous studies have been conducted to investigate effective ways to teach students to produce coherent texts. While some studies suggest teaching coherence to students via features that contribute to coherence (Lee, 2002b), others have suggested teaching revision strategies to improve coherence in students’ writing (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). However, there have been no studies investigating the problems of coherence in student writing and then combining the teaching of coherence problems and an approach called topical structure analysis (TSA) to improve coherence and writing quality. This study will be conducted to fill in this gap.

In this introductory chapter, I will present my personal motivation for carrying out the study, the context of the study, and the aims and scopes of the study. Then the significance of the study will be presented. Finally, the chapter will summarize the organization of the thesis.

1.1. Motivation for the study

In Vietnam, at tertiary level, students majoring in English are expected to reach level C1 of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) by the time they graduate from university. Recently Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) decided that, in order to graduate, students’ English proficiency level needs to be at IELTS overall band score of 6.5 (equivalent to C1 of CEFR). This is difficult not only for students but also for teachers who are responsible for teaching the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As a teacher of writing with nearly ten years’ experience, I am aware that students find it difficult to produce coherent and well-organized writing. Students themselves know their writing is problematic but they have no idea how to revise it. Teachers’ feedback is sometimes ambiguous, or students sometimes receive no feedback on their writing from teachers due to the heavy workload that teachers have to suffer. As Lee (2002b) points out, teachers’ comments on
coherence seem too abstract and vague and provide no guidelines showing students ways to improve coherence in their writing. In my university context at the present, producing coherent writing is particularly essential to English major students because their writing quality will be measured using IELTS-oriented writing descriptors which cover 4 major criteria: task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy (IELTS, 2020).

Although coherence is important in writing, it has not received enough attention from either teachers or students. From my own teaching experience as well as by talking with other teachers of writing, I am aware that it is hard to explain clearly to students what coherence is and what causes lack of coherence in their writing. So, instead of trying to find solutions to deal with this difficult aspect, many teachers choose to ignore it and pay more attention to other aspects such as grammar and vocabulary.

My concerns about teaching coherence to English majors were stimulated when nearly 90% of English majors failed to get a writing band score of 5.5 in an IELTS-oriented exam organized by Faculty of Foreign Languages at my university. I realize that more focus should go on teaching and learning coherence in writing. In particular, problems of coherence should be investigated in students’ writing, after which teaching should respond to those coherence problems. A new approach to teaching coherence to students is needed.

1.2. Research context

Recently, research on coherence, cohesion, and judgements of writing quality has been conducted in ESL contexts (Crossley, Kyle, & McNamara, 2016; Crossley & McNamara, 2012, 2014; Kim & Crossley, 2018; Tywoniw & Crossley, 2019). Referring to ESL/EFL contexts in Asia, studies on coherence have been conducted in Western Asian countries (Ghazzoul, 2008; Masadeh, 2019) while there remains scant research in Southeast Asian countries like Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Therefore, a study on coherence and an intervention to improve coherence in student writing carried out in Vietnam would provide important grounds for other future research.
In the context of Vietnam, as mentioned in several studies by Vietnamese researchers such as Pham (2019), Nguyen (2019), and Nguyen (2011), the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) have witnessed significant changes over time. During the period from 1954 to 1975, although English was taught as a foreign language in the South of Vietnam, Chinese and French were taught in schools as foreign languages in the North (Nguyen 2019). After 1975, when Vietnam was reunified, English was not popular anymore; instead, French was the nationwide foreign language. However, a dramatic change happened after the Vietnamese government started an economic reform known as *doi moi* in 1986 (Pham 2019; Nguyen, 2019). With this economic reform, English regained popularity. This popularity has grown since Vietnam joined such organizations as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), and WTO (World Trade Organization) (Nguyen, 2011).

In 2008, a national education project called Project 2020 was launched by the Vietnamese government with the aim of revitalizing foreign language teaching and learning at all levels. One of the project aims was that university graduates would be able to use a foreign language confidently in communication, study, and work. In other words, this aim of the project is to train university graduates to be able to listen, speak, read, and write well in a foreign language. Of foreign languages mentioned in the project, English is the most preferred foreign language. English is also indicated as a medium of communication in a foreign language program launched by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2014 (MoET, 2014). However, listening and speaking skills received most focus in teaching and learning English at universities in Vietnam. Other skills such as writing have not received as much attention, although the project’s preliminary goals for English users are to be able to both speak and write in English independently and confidently.

As a teacher of English for 10 years, I think that writing is an essential skill for optimal success not only at schools but also in the workplace. As a result, I believe that the teaching and learning of writing in Vietnam should be carefully taken into consideration. An important issue in teaching and learning writing at universities in Vietnam is how to teach students to produce a coherent and good quality piece of writing. This study on coherence problems and an intervention to
improve coherence and writing quality carried out at university level in Vietnam aims to help solve the problem.

1.3. Aims and scope of the study

This study is conducted with four main aims. The first is to investigate coherence problems in the writing of Vietnamese EFL university students. In detail, it examines the main types as well as subtypes of coherence problems that students display in their writing. Also, it explores how frequent the problems (main types and subtypes) are.

The second aim of this study is to investigate the effects on students’ writing performance of an intervention to teach students how to avoid coherence problems as well as teaching them topical structure analysis (TSA). In particular, it explores the effects of the intervention on types and frequency of coherence problems identified; types of topical progression employed; and writing quality in students’ essays.

The third aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between writing quality and types and frequency of coherence problems as well as the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression. The purpose of investigating the association between writing quality and types and frequency of coherence problems is to help teachers and learners get a fuller understanding of how to avoid coherence problems in order to improve the quality of their essay writing. Similarly, the investigation of the association between writing quality and types of topical progression aims to help teachers and learners have a clearer picture of what types of topical progression can be employed in order to improve essay quality.

The fourth aim of the study is to explore the student participants’ attitudes toward the intervention they took part in. The purpose of doing this is to get a fuller understanding of the impacts of the intervention on students’ writing performance as well as the difficulties students might encounter in following the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA).
The thesis aims to find answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?
RQ 2. What are the most frequent coherence problems found in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?
RQ 3. What are the impacts of the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) on students’ writing performance?
RQ 4. What is the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems?
RQ 5. What is the relationship between writing quality and types of topical structure?
RQ 6. How do Vietnamese EFL students perceive the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA)?

To reach the aims, this study is conducted in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on analyzing problems of coherence based on the system of coherence problems developed in Phase 1. Phase 2 aims at investigating the effects of an intervention that involved the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis on students’ writing performance. So the study explores the effects of the intervention in three aspects: (1) types and frequency of coherence problems identified; (2) types of topical progression employed; and (3) writing quality (scores of coherence and overall writing quality). Regarding the investigation of students’ attitudes towards the intervention, the study focused on exploring students’ perceptions of the intervention and their difficulties following the intervention.

1.4. Overall research design

To achieve the aims of this study, there were two phases conducted at a university in Vietnam. In Phase 1, 69 essays written by second year students were collected for textual analysis to develop a taxonomy of coherence problems, and then this taxonomy was used to check types and frequency of coherence problems in students’ writing (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5). In Phase 2, 58 student participants were randomly grouped into a treatment group and a control group. Students in the treatment group participated in an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) while students in the control group took part in a writing course that included the teaching of fundamental writing aspects such as
grammar and vocabulary. One hundred and seventy-four (174) essays written by students in the two groups were collected for (1) textual analysis to indicate types and frequency of coherence problems as well as types of topical progression, and (2) statistical analysis to investigate the impacts of the intervention on student writing performance. A survey questionnaire and focus groups were conducted in Phase 2 and data collected from survey questionnaire and focus group were analyzed to explore the student participants’ attitudes toward the intervention they participated in (see Chapters 3, 6, 7, and 8).

1.5. Significance of the study

This present study is significant in several considerations. First, to my knowledge, in the Vietnamese setting, there have been no previous studies examining problems of coherence in student writing and no studies exploring the teaching of coherence to Vietnamese students; my study is the first study to investigate problems of coherence and propose an intervention to improve students’ writing performance. In the context of Vietnam, where teaching writing skills is popularly teacher-led, it is hoped that the study will pave the way for new methods in which students are the center of writing teaching and learning and students can write, revise, and rewrite their own writing coherently.

Secondly, this study extends the literature on the definitions of coherence as well as problems that interfere with coherence in writing. In addition, to my knowledge, in EFL writing research, although there have been some studies on teaching coherence to students (Lee, 2002b), or teaching topical structure analysis (TSA) to improve coherence in students’ writing (Attelisi, 2012), no previous studies have combined the teaching of coherence and the teaching of TSA. It is the first time an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and TSA has been conducted in EFL writing research. Therefore, this study is expected to provide grounds for future research on coherence problems and TSA as well as the effects on student writing performance of teaching coherence problems and TSA simultaneously.

Finally, the study provides information about the relationship between writing quality, coherence problems, and TSA. Together with the investigation of the relationship between writing quality
and types of topical progression, the relationship between types and frequency of coherence problems and writing quality is also examined. This is the first time the association between problems of coherence and writing quality has been investigated in EFL writing research; therefore, this type of information can inform the practice of teachers of writing who are struggling with how to help their students produce a coherent and good quality piece of writing. In addition, the information will be of value to students of writing who are having difficulty producing well-organized essays.

1.6. Organization of the dissertation

This present thesis has ten chapters. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, provides a review of extant literature related to coherence, topical structure analysis (TSA), and writing assessment. It also notes the research gaps in existing literature and research questions of the study. Chapter 3, the Methodology, first discusses the overall research design, student participants, and ethical considerations; then methodology for Phase 1 and Phase 2 are presented including methods employed for data collection and data analysis as well as how to measure the validity and reliability of the thesis.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of Phase 1. Chapter 4 describes how the analytical framework of coherence problems was developed, explains terms with examples, and illustrates an example of how the framework was applied in an actual essay written by a student in Phase 1. Chapter 5 presents the analysis results of data analysis in Phase 1 to give answers to questions concerning types and frequency of coherence problems in student writing (Research Questions 1 and 2).

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present the results of data analysis in Phase 2. In Chapter 6, I describe the results of textual analysis and statistical analysis and a comparison is made between tasks within group as well as between groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems, and types of topical progression. Results presented in this chapter give answers to the Research Question 3, which concerns the impact of the intervention on student writing performance. Chapter 7 reports the results of statistical analysis about the relationship between writing quality
and types and frequency of coherence problems as well as types of topical progression. Chapter 8 investigates students’ attitudes to the intervention conducted in Phase 2 by means of a survey questionnaire and focus groups. It reports how students perceived the intervention as well as difficulties they encountered when following the intervention. Results presented in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 give answers to the Research Questions 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 9, the Discussion, discusses in detail the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in chapters 4 to 8. Chapter 10, the Conclusion, ends the study with a summary of the main findings and a discussion on the contributions of the study as well as pedagogical implications, limitations, and future research directions.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, a brief review of previous research on coherence in EFL writing, topical structure analysis (TSA), and assessment in EFL writing performance will be presented. First, a brief review of process-based approach and the role of revising step in EFL/ESL writing will be presented, and then issues of coherence in EFL writing will be presented, including the definitions of coherence, features that contribute to coherence, concepts of coherence breaks/problems, the teaching of coherence, and how to assess coherence in writing. Next, I will introduce topical structure analysis (TSA) with a focus on the definitions and/or concepts related to TSA, the implementation of TSA, TSA in EFL writing, the teaching of TSA, and the relationship between TSA and writing quality. Third, I will discuss scoring systems of EFL writing assessment and the advantages of analytic scoring in EFL/ESL writing assessment. Finally, I will present the research gaps and my study’s research questions.

2.1. Process-based approach and role of revising step in EFL/ESL writing

Recent decades have witnessed the spread of process-based approach in ESL/EFL writing and its growing impacts on ESL/EFL writing. Flower and Hayes (1981) provided a framework of writing processes which has been the most influential theory in writing instruction for more than 30 years and has been widely accepted by ESL/EFL writing teachers. This framework consists of three stages: Planning (Pre-writing), Translating (Drafting), and Reviewing (Revising and Editing). In the planning (pre-writing) stage, students are provided with opportunities to generate and weigh up different possibilities while they are writing as well as before they start writing. In this stage, students’ writing might be sentences, phrases, or even words as long as they reflect the students’ thoughts, ideas, and experience. In the translating (drafting) stage, students are enabled to get some of their thoughts, ideas, or experience written down that can then be crafted into a text that is worth reading. In this stage, students need to choose appropriate words, discourse coherence, and rhetorical functions in relation to their ideas, purposes for writing, and the audience(s) they address (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2008). In the reviewing (revising and editing) stage, students re-read their texts, correct any problems, and then develop, select, and shape
their ideas. In the revising step, students have to re-read and evaluate the text as it will be perceived by the reader. According to Keen (2010), revising is important (but challenging) for many students. It can be the point in the process where writers most fully engage with the composition of their text and where they make some of the most interesting discoveries. Two subcomponents of the revising stage include problem detection and repair (Beal, 1987). According to Beal (1993), developing writers seem to have more problems with problem detection than repair; if specific areas of the text that would benefit from revision are pointed out to students, they often can repair them successfully. Editing is the stage in which students polish their ideas as well as consider the correct use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

According to Macarthur (2012), revision is an important focus of writing instruction. Revision is important because it is a “critical aspect of skilled composing” (p. 461) and it is necessary for students to learn to revise. In addition, revision is important because teachers, through revision, have opportunity to give instruction and guidance about the qualities of effective writing to students, which not only help students to improve their current piece of writing but also to transfer to future writing tasks. Despite the important role of revision in writing, most writers revise their writing very little (Englert, Hiebert, & Stewart, 1988; Hull, 1987), and according to several previous studies (Can, 2017; J. Liu & Sadler, 2003; Saeed & Ghazali, 2016; So & Lee, 2012), L2 students tend to make local revisions, i.e., changes to grammar, vocabulary, spellings, and mechanics, rather than global revisions such as changes to content, coherence, and organization.

Taking into account the important role of revision in EFL writing, my study is to focus on the revising step of the process-based approach, not the pre-writing step as my study is an in-depth consideration of coherence, an important aspect of writing as well as the one that can be addressed in the revising step. In addition, at the university where I conducted my study, students rarely revise their writing as they do not know what problems are in their writing although they can feel that their writing is problematic. They also do not know what changes they should make in terms of content, coherence, and organization; as a result, they do not revise. My study is going to provide students with a tool to revise and make their draft more coherent.
2.2. Coherence in EFL writing

2.2.1. Defining coherence

What exactly is meant by coherence remains a vague and unclear concept which is hard to define, learn, and teach (Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014; Lee, 2002b). According to Basturkmen & von Randow, not only may student writers struggle to produce sufficiently coherent writing but also teachers/lecturers may have difficulty explaining why their students’ writing is incoherent. To clarify the notions of coherence, it is necessary to take into consideration the notions of “cohesion” and “unity” which share some characteristics with “coherence”.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to “the term for overt links on the textual surface” (Enkvist, 1990, p. 14) and it is one aspect of the notion of textuality in a text (Connor, 1984). Halliday and Hasan (1976) defined cohesion as “a semantic unit; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4). Cohesion is expressed through grammatical and lexical items that make text hang together. In other words, cohesion involves explicit linguistic devices that make the elements within the text inter-related and inter-dependent. However, the view of coherence as cohesion by Halliday and Hasan (1976) was criticised both theoretically and empirically.

From a theoretical perspective, equating cohesion with coherence was criticised from the perspective that purely text-based analysis cannot provide a full description of coherence because there always exists a relationship between reading and writing and the decisions the writer makes in the text cannot be fully understood if the reader is unable to bring his/her knowledge of the topic into the text. This view is based primarily on the basis of schema theory (Carrell, 1982, 1983). Schema theory places the reader’s prior background knowledge in the forefront of discourse comprehension. According to this theory, schemas refer to the readers’ prior background knowledge (background knowledge of the content area of the text and background knowledge of the rhetorical structure of different types of the text) which they use to interpret the text. When readers read texts, the knowledge that pre-exists in the memory of the readers interacts with the knowledge presented in the texts, helping readers make sense of
the texts. In this view, coherence is not intrinsic to the text; it is the product of text interpretation (Bublitz, 2011; Bublitz, Lenk, & Ventola, 1999; Reboul & Moeschler, 1997).

Empirically, studies on the relationship between cohesion (cohesive devices) and coherence produced mixed results. While some support cohesion (cohesive devices) as promoting coherence (M. Liu & Braine, 2005; W. Yang & Sun, 2012; A. Zhang, 2010), others show that there is no necessary causal relationship between cohesion (cohesive devices) and coherence (Alarcon, 2013; McNamara, Crossley, & McCarthy, 2010; Tierney & Mosenthal, 1981). In addition, several recent studies have revisited Halliday and Hasan’s cohesion framework and found that cohesion is different from coherence (Crossley et al., 2016; Crossley & McNamara, 2016; Graesser, McNamara, & Louwerse, 2003; Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004; McNamara, 2001; McNamara, Kintsch, Songer, & Kintsch, 1996; McNamara & Kintsch, 1996). Cohesion refers to “the presence or absence of explicit cues in the text that allow the reader to make connections between the ideas in the text” (Crossley et al., 2016, p. 2) while coherence refers to “the quality of the mental representation of the text that is created by the reader” (McNamara et al., 2010, p. 60). This means cohesion has a relationship with coherence as it assists the development of a coherent mental representation (McNamara et al., 2010), but cohesion is not coherence because coherence not only depends on cohesion cues but also other factors such as prior background knowledge and reading skill (Crossley et al., 2016; O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007). In other words, coherence is broader than cohesion as it entails two elements to be established: the reader and the text.

In summary, cohesion is not coherence, but cohesion contributes to coherence (Graesser et al., 2003; Louwerse, 2001). In my study, cohesion is regarded as one component of coherence and is considered both locally (between sentences) and globally (between paragraphs). As stated in Witte and Faigley (1981), of all the cohesive devices, only three types namely reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion appear frequently in written discourse. Therefore, in my study, cohesion-related problems are the problems related to the use of three types of cohesive devices mentioned above: reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.
Unity

Unity and coherence are two elements of good writing (Fajri, 2016), with unity being one component of coherence (Attelisi, 2012; Ghazzoul, 2008). Oshima and Hogue (2006) view unity as an important element of a good paragraph and a good essay. Oshima and Hogue (2006, p. 18) define unity as follows: “Unity means that a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from the beginning to the end”. This means that a paragraph has unity when it has one main idea (controlling idea) in the topic sentence and all supporting sentences must support, demonstrate, prove, or develop the main idea in the topic sentence (Davis & Liss, 2006; Savage & Mayer, 2005). Similarly, an essay has unity when it has one topic in the thesis statement and each body paragraph in the essay contains a topic sentence and supporting sentences that strengthen the topic (thesis) of the essay (Davis & Liss, 2006).

While unity in writing refers to the “connection of all ideas to a single topic, where all the supporting sentences should relate to the topic sentence” (Fajri, 2016, p. 105), coherence means “all the ideas are conveyed logically and the writing flows smoothly in building up the main idea” (Fajri, 2016, p. 105). As with cohesion, in my study, unity is one aspect that is necessary, although not sufficient, for coherence. The definitions of paragraph unity and topic unity employed in my study were based on Davis and Liss (2006), and details about problems related to paragraph unity and topic unity will be presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Coherence

As discussed above, neither cohesion nor unity comprehend coherence, but both cohesion and unity are important aspects of coherence. In order to define coherence and explore its features, I consider it from the perspectives of different theories. Apart from cohesion theory in which coherence is viewed as cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) as mentioned above, I will view coherence under two other theories: schema theory and interactive theory of discourse.

Schema theory states that understanding a text is an interactive process between the text and the reader. Schema theory explains that coherence is “an aspect of comprehension that is established in the mind of the reader as a result of a perception of relatedness among a text’s
propositions and between the text and the knowledge that the reader possesses of the world” (McCagg, 1990, p. 113). There are two types of schema: content schema and formal schema (Carrell, 1987; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Content schema refers to “background knowledge of the content area of a text” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 560). It indicates that in order for the reader to understand a text, the content of the text needs to be consistent with the reader’s previous knowledge and experience or his/her expectations based on his/her world knowledge. Formal schema refers to “background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organizational structures of different types of text” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 560). Readers need to have background knowledge about, experiences of, and expectations of different rhetorical structures to fully understand the text. Coherence between the writer (and the text) and the reader may not be established when there are differences in rhetorical background. In brief, in order for coherence to be established in a text, it is necessary to have a match between the writer (and the text) and the readers. That is, the writer(s) provide(s) enough hints to activate an appropriate schema, and readers need to have an appropriate schema anticipated by the writer(s).

The concept of coherence employed by many researchers draws on an interactive theory of discourse in which coherence is viewed as both text-based and reader-based (Abeywickrama, 2007; Johns, 1986; Lee, 2002b; O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007; Tanskanen, 2006; Todd, Khongput, & Darasawang, 2007). In this perspective, coherence is based on the structure of the text itself, on the writer’s intention to create a coherent text, and on the reader’s acceptance and assumption of the text as coherent (Lee, 2002b). In other words, in order to create a coherent text, the writer needs to employ strategies that involve consideration of the background knowledge that readers possess as well as intratextual features that the writer builds into the text (Abeywickrama, 2007, p. 12).

As Lee (2002b) puts it, “whether coherence is regarded as text-based or reader-based, it is necessary to emphasize that the writer, the text, and the reader all need to interact in the construction of coherence” (p. 138). This means that when teaching or measuring coherence, it is necessary to consider it from both a linguistic and non-linguistic view. In this study, from a linguistic perspective, a piece of writing is regarded as coherent if its elements are locally and
globally related. Local coherence here means the inter-relationship between a sentence and the one that precedes or follows it. Global coherence means all sentences in the writing need to logically and smoothly support, demonstrate, explain, or develop the overall topic (thesis) of the writing. Both local coherence and global coherence can be achieved explicitly by the use of cohesion (cohesive devices) or implicitly by logical and smooth distribution of information in the writing. For example, Crossley and McNamara (2016) found that improved cohesion led to the increase in human judgements of text coherence.

It should be noted here that in my study both writers and readers share the same first language (Vietnamese), so there is less of a gap (culturally for example) than that which might exist between the writer and a reader who speaks the target language as first language. However, there still exists a gap from the different views of the writers and the readers about coherence in the target language (English) writing. In order to clarify for students what coherence is, what the problems of coherence are, and how to create a coherent piece of writing, an intervention that involves the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) is conducted in this study with a hope that students (writers) may have a clear view of what makes their writing in the target language (English) coherent as well as what they need to do to produce a coherent text.

2.2.2. Features of coherence

Although it is hard to have a concrete definition of coherence, it is crucial for students to understand exactly what features contribute to coherence in writing so that they know ways to produce coherent writing. Johns (1986) mentioned three interacting features that are shared by well-known text analytical models in Grabe (1985) and essential to coherence, including “(1) a discourse thesis, (2) a set of relevant assertions relating logically among themselves by means of subordination, coordination, and superordination, and (3) an information structure imposed on the text to guide the reader in understanding the thesis or intent of the writer including cohesion and other features such as metadiscourse” (Johns, 1986, p. 250). Grabe’s (1985) view is modified and clarified by Lee (2002a, 2002b) who suggested that there are five features that contribute to coherence in writing, that is “(1) a macrostructure; (2) an information structure; (3) connectivity
of the underlying content evidenced by the relations between propositions; (4) connectivity of the surface text evidenced by the presence of cohesive devices, and (5) appropriate metadiscourse features” (Lee, 2002a, p. 33)

Based on the above features, Lee (2002b, p. 139) proposes “an operational definition of coherence” that EFL students can refer to. This definition includes “(1) connectivity of the surface text evidenced by the presence of cohesive devices; (2) an information structure which guides the reader in understanding the text and contributes to the topical development of the text; (3) connectivity of the underlying content evidenced by relations between propositions and overall discourse; (4) a macrostructure with a characteristic pattern or shape appropriate to its communicative purpose and context of situation, and (5) reader-based writing signalled by appropriate metadiscoursal features” (Lee, 2002b, p. 139)

Gao (2012), however, views this definition as lacking indication of the factual aspect of the concept of coherence. In Gao’s (2012) view, coherence is “first a philosophical concept and then a concept in linguistics” (Gao, 2012, p. 26) while the definition by Lee (2002b) only attempts to illustrate coherence as discourse features (linguistics). The definition of coherence used in Gao’s (2012) study is based on both the philosophical and linguistic views with a focus on linguistic, semantic, and logical features. Linguistic features (form) refer to cohesive devices which indicate explicit signals to show the way students manifest coherence in their writing. Semantic features (meaning) refer to the semantic relationship of topics in sequential sentences, and logic features (reasoning) enable the text to deliver trustworthy meaning. From the philosophical view, Gao argues that coherence is related to “the identification of truth embodied in a statement and is one of the features that helps identify the truthfulness of the statement” (Gao, 2012, p. 25).

Gao’s (2012) concept of coherence is based on Enkvist’s (1990) viewpoint of coherence, who stated three dimensions of coherence including cohesion, interpretability (semantic relationships between topics in sequential sentences of a text) and justifiability (the way propositions link so as for the text to be logically sound on the whole). The different view of coherence between Gao’s (2012) and Enkvist’s (1990) is that the concept of coherence used in Gao’s study is examined
regardless of audience (reader) and reader-based features of coherence are not considered in his study while Enkvist stresses the communicative aspect of coherence. Enkvist states that a text aims to communicate to the reader and this purpose is only realised if there is coherence in the text. Coherence, therefore, needs to be viewed as having both text-based features and reader-based features which include the reader’s knowledge of the topic to the text as well as the understanding of the reader about the structure of the text.

From my point of view, coherence needs to have both text-based and reader-based features. It is through the interaction between text, writer, and reader that coherence can be established (Johns, 1986; Lee, 2002b; O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007).

In terms of text-based coherence, cohesion (lexical devices) is regarded as part of the convention of coherence which indicates the ties between sentences and points being made; thus creating the connectivity of the surface text (Lee, 2002a, 2002b). As mentioned above, in my study, cohesion is limited to the use of three types of cohesive devices, namely reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Together with cohesion, unity is considered as another feature of coherence in my study. It is unity that creates the connectivity of the underlying content in the text (Lee, 2002a, 2002b). Unity in my study is considered at two levels, the discourse level (topic unity) and the paragraph level (paragraph unity), to avoid a narrow interpretation of coherence in terms of sentence-level connectedness (McCrimmon, 1980) or paragraph unity only (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Apart from cohesion and unity, macrostructure is also regarded as another feature of coherence (Ghazzoul, 2008; Lee, 2002a, 2002b; Richards, 1990). Macrostructure refers to the overall structure of a text and occurs mainly at the discourse level (Hall-Mills, 2010; Hall-Mills & Apel, 2015; Lee, 2002b; Scott, 2009). Macrostructure can be approached either through three functional units of a text: introduction, body, and conclusion, which is an easy way to see how the text is structured, or through the writer’s communicative purpose (Lee, 2002a).

In terms of reader-based coherence, metadiscourse is considered as a feature contributing to coherence (Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014; Jones, 2011; Lee, 2002a). Lee (2002a, p. 33) stated that “metadiscourse markers in texts help readers organize, interpret, and evaluate information”.

17
Basturkmen and von Randow (2014) agreed with Lee (2002) when emphasizing that metadiscourse is a means to “guide and direct readers so that they can understand the content and the writer's attitude to the content of the text” (p. 16). Due to the important role of metadiscourse in creating coherence in text, in this study, metadiscourse is regarded as one aspect of coherence. However, because cohesion includes textual metadiscourse, in order to avoid the overlap between cohesion and metadiscourse, the type of metadiscourse considered in this study is limited to interpersonal metadiscourse which signals the writer’s stance on the content and the reader (Ken Hyland, 2005).

In conclusion, in my study, coherence is considered from both text-based and reader-based perspectives with the emphasis on four features that are agreed by many previous researchers to contribute to the construction of coherence in text, that is, macrostructure, unity, cohesion, and metadiscourse. A system of coherence-related problems in my study will be developed based on problems related to these four features in students’ actual writing.

2.2.3. Coherence and coherence problems

Distinguishing between coherent and incoherent text is not too difficult for most readers but explaining why a text is incoherent is quite difficult for them. As Lee (2002b) states, it is hard to teach students to improve their writing coherence by just telling them that their writing is not coherent. This means students need help from teachers to identify coherence-related problems in their writing.

Bamberg (1983) initially aimed to compare coherent and incoherent essays written by 17-year-old L1 writers using ratings from the analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but she discovered that the coherence scoring guide in the rubric did not cover all coherence features and did not help identify specific features that result in perceived incoherence. To deal with the limitations of the rubric, she developed a new one which can be used to assess coherence at both local and global levels. When using the new rubric to re-score the NAEP essays, she found that failing to identify the topic, failing to establish a context, and selecting an inadequate organizational plan were three major factors that caused the incoherence
in students’ writing. Although the results cannot be regarded as a general pattern due to the short length of the essays in Bamberg’s study, they are helpful to students to understand what makes their writing coherent and incoherent; as a result, students can find ways to improve their writing.

Shamsher (1995) conducted his study to investigate the problems associated with cohesion and coherence in the writing of advanced non-native speakers of English. Based on a detailed analysis and investigation of a number of controlled and authentic writing tasks, he found that students faced such coherence problems as failing to indicate the paragraphing boundaries, failing to group the required information into the most appropriate paragraphs, lack of relevant world knowledge, etc. More importantly, the failure to group information in sequential order resulted in lots of topic jumps. Although these problems are not clearly categorized, they are useful to guide students in the ways to produce coherent and well-connected writing. Furthermore, these problems seem to overlap with the types of coherence breaks by Wikborg (1990). For example, failing to indicate paragraphing boundaries can be understood as misleading paragraph division or topic jumps can be understood as unjustified change of/ drift in topic.

Wikborg (1990) used the term “coherence breaks” for the reader’s loss of thread of the argument while reading attentively. She analyzed 114 essays written by students ranging from beginners to graduate students from five departments at the University of Stockholm including business administration, law, journalism, comparable literature, and English. The essays were in Swedish except for those written by students of the English Department. The essays in Swedish were translated into English and no attempt was made to improve on the style. Wikborg developed a comprehensive system of coherence breaks including topic-structuring problems (six subtypes) and cohesion problems (five subtypes). Of the eleven subtypes investigated in the research, she noticed that “the five most frequent types of coherence breaks were: uncertain inference ties, misleading paragraph division, missing or misleading sentence connection, unjustified change of/drift in topic, and unspecified topic” (Wikborg, 1990, p. 135). Although data for this study were essays in Swedish which had been translated into English and the types of coherence breaks need to be verified with other student writing before being applied to ESL/ EFL writing situations,
Wikborg (1990)’s taxonomy has served as the base for several studies (e.g. Ghazzoul (2008); Gramegna (2007); Watkinson (1998)).

Watkinson (1998) developed an analytical framework of coherence breaks based on Wikborg (1990) to investigate the frequency of coherence breaks in first-year ESL students’ essays. 100 expository essays were used for analysis. The new taxonomy by Watkinson (1998) is grouped into two main categories: topic-related coherence breaks and cohesion-related coherence breaks. The topic-related coherence breaks consist of 8 subtypes, that is “(1) unspecified topic in introduction, (2) no elaboration of a statement made, (3) no integration of quote, (4) Topic drift, (5) Irrelevance of content, (6) misleading paragraph division, (7) misleading ordering of content, and (8) no sense of closure in conclusion” (Watkinson, 1998, p. 82), and the cohesion-related has 4 subtypes including “(1) unclear/incorrect use of a conjunction, (2) uncertain pronominal reference, (3) incorrect reference, and (4) too great a distance between cohesive ties” (Watkinson, 1998, p. 109). The findings of the study showed that there was a significant correlation between the frequency of coherence breaks, particularly topic-related coherence breaks, and holistic scoring of coherence. In general, this new taxonomy is not too different from the taxonomy by Wikborg (1990), so some factors such as inadequate organizational plan, unclear context establishment, or misuse of metadiscoursal markers which also lead to incoherence in writing are not included in this new taxonomy.

Also based on Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy, Gramegna (2007) aimed at identifying and classifying problems of coherence in the writing by fourteen Italian EFL writers who were in the last year of an Italian Language School. Gramegna (2007) extended Wikborg’s (1990) system of coherence breaks by adding two aspects of writing, the introduction and the conclusion, to topic-related types of coherence breaks. However, he excluded cohesion problems from the types of coherence breaks that his students performed in their writing, so the problems that he discovered from analyzing the students’ writing were only problems of topic-related types such as unjustified change of/drift in topic, misleading paragraph division, misleading disposition, irrelevance, etc.

Ghazzoul (2008) aimed at investigating the types of incoherence in the academic writing of Emirati and Syrian EFL students. In order to do that, a framework for analysis was developed in
part by the literature and in part by the types of coherence breaks identified in 70 texts of the data which were collected from exam sittings. This framework included types of coherence breaks at both macrostructural and microstructural levels. At macrostructural level, coherence breaks included breaks in paragraph unity, topic unity and text focus and organization. At microstructural level, coherence problems could be breaks in encapsulation (a process that looks back and includes the meaning of the preceding sentence in the current one), prospection (a process that looks forward from the current sentence to predict meaning in the subsequent one), and culturally-bound rhetorical choices (microstructural signals). Breaks in microstructural signals could be from repetition, coordination and parallelism, conjunction and textual markers, punctuation marks, and run-on sentences. The findings of the study showed that students had coherence problems at both global and local levels in which paragraph unity and topic unity were two major global problems of coherence and such problems as repetition, misuse of conjunctions, coordinators, run-on sentences and punctuation marks were local ones.

Supporting Gramegna (2007)’s findings was Ye (2013)’s study of coherence in persuasive discourse. In Ye’s case study, six Chinese ESL students were involved. Among the six participants, two received elementary and secondary education in Mainland China and the other four received secondary education in New York. Twenty-three essays including pre-test, post-test, and two drafts of a CATW (CUNY Assessment Test in Writing) were used for analysis. Ye’s study showed that her students had such global coherence problems as not maintaining paragraph unity, not organizing ideas in a discernible plan, or unjustified change of/ drift in topic. Together with those global problems, such local problems as few cohesive devices used to link sentences/ paragraphs or mechanical and/ or grammatical errors also contributed to incoherence in her students’ writing.

While some previous researchers view coherence breaks under topic-related and cohesion-related types (Gramegna, 2007; Watkinson, 1998; Wikborg, 1990), others view coherence breaks under macrostructure (global) and microstructure (local) types (Ghazzoul, 2008; Ye, 2013). However, in my study, I will clarify problems of coherence under five categories that are considered as features of coherence in writing including macrostructure, topic unity, paragraph
unity, cohesion, and metadiscourse, and problems of coherence will be problems that related to these five categories.

2.2.4. Teaching coherence

Coherence is considered a key indicator of the quality of text (Burneikaite & Zabiliute, 2003; Ghasemi, 2013), so the issue of how to teach students to produce a coherent text has been a crucial aspect of writing instruction. Lee (2002b) suggests that it is necessary to understand features that create coherence in order for the teaching of coherence to be effective.

Both Johns (1986) and Lee (2002b) suggested teaching coherence from more global to local considerations so that students avoid revising their work at sentence-level only. Johns (1986) suggested that in the classroom, coherence should be taught “systematically in terms of prompt requirements, thesis development, the relationships among assertions and to the thesis, and the adequacy of the information structure” (Johns, 1986, p. 252). Deconstructing the prompt and developing the thesis should be taught in the first lesson so that students could develop strategies for successfully analyzing the directions as well as the limitations of the assigned task. Goals for the second lesson should be how to analyse a thesis statement and the relationships between propositions in the writing in order for students to understand ways to avoid topic breakdown and how to support the main topic with more details. Finally, when students fully understand lesson 1 and 2, lesson 3 should be taught with the focus on the information structure. It can be inferred from this suggestion that if the tasks are divided into manageable parts, it will not too difficult to achieve success in teaching coherence in the writing classroom.

Sharing the same view with Johns (1986), Lee (2002b) conducted her teaching of coherence to 16 first-year ESL students at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. These 16 students speak Cantonese as their first language and had 16 – 17 years of exposure to English. Lee divided her teaching of coherence into six separate coherence topics: “(1) purpose, audience, and context of situation, (2) macrostructure, (3) information distribution and topical development, (4) propositional development and modification, (5) cohesion, and (6) metadiscoursal markers” (Lee, 2002b, p. 140), then taught these topics from globally to locally. This teaching intervention was
said to show a positive improvement of coherence in students’ writing. Also, students paid a lot of attention to the features of coherence taught prior to revision.

In conclusion, it could be speculated that together with teaching features of coherence to students, it would be helpful if students are introduced to a system of coherence breaks/problems that may make their writing incoherent. Johns (1986) suggested teaching coherence from “more global to more local considerations” (Johns, 1986, p. 252). In particular, students are first taught to understand the prompt and develop a discourse theme. Then they are guided how to analyse the thesis statement and the relationships between propositions in an essay. Finally, they are asked to examine the information structure. Following Johns (1986), Lee (2002b) suggested teaching coherence to students through teaching such coherence topics as “(1) purpose, audience, and context of situation; (2) macrostructure; (3) information distribution and topical development; (4) propositional development and modification; (5) cohesion; and (6) metadiscourse” (Lee, 2002b, p. 140). However, neither Johns (1986) nor Lee (2002b) mentioned types of problems that may cause incoherence in students’ writing. My study will fill this research gap by developing a system of coherence problems and then introducing this system to students in an intervention. Details about the development of this system of coherence problems are presented in Chapter 4. It is hoped that the teaching of the system of coherence problems developed in my study will help improve students’ awareness of what may make their writing incoherent and that students will be able to identify and correct problems of coherence in their own writing.

2.2.5. Assessing coherence

Todd, Thienpermpool, and Keyuravong (2004) argue that coherence is one of the most problematic aspects when assessing writing because it is by nature subjective. Bamberg (1984) developed a holistic rating scale for coherence which included descriptors for a number of different aspects of writing related to coherence such as organization, topic development and cohesion. However, this scale was still quite subjective and depended a lot on reader’s perception.
Todd et al. (2004) suggested that topic-based analysis is a relatively objective method for measuring coherence. According to Todd et al. (2004), assessment involved identifying key concepts through frequency, and identifying the logical relationships between concepts. Schemata of the logical relationships were drawn up and used to measure coherence. However, conducting topic-based analysis is a complicated and time-consuming process and is perhaps not worth considering for assessing writing. More importantly, it is difficult to apply this method in a study with a large amount of data, and in which topics greatly vary.

Campbell (1998) designed an analytic rubric, called the Composition Analysis Rubric (CAR) to assess coherence in his students’ writing. This CAR consists of three variables that were thought to be indicators of coherence: topical development, topical structure, and cohesive devices (Burneikaite & Zabiliute, 2003; Cerniglia, Medsker, & Connor, 1990; Flores & Kexiu, 2015; Knoch, 2007; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). The results of Campbell’s (1998) study indicated that some of the components of the CAR such as topical structure analysis (TSA) are strong components of global coherence, and Campbell’s (1998) study confirmed that it is possible to use topical structure analysis (TSA) to assess coherence in writing.

Supporting Campbell (1998)’s study, Knoch (2007) aimed at developing a new TSA-based rating scale that could assess coherence in students’ writing with high reliability and validity. This new rating scale was designed based on categories of parallel, direct sequential and unrelated sequential progression defined by Schneider and Connor (1990), but some changes were also made to better account for the data. For example, Knoch (2007) changed “extended parallel progression” to “extended progression”; “indirect sequential progression” to “indirect progression”. Also, she added two more categories for topical structure analysis (coherence break and superstructure). To check the reliability and the validity of the new scale, eight raters were asked to rate 100 writing samples using two rating scales, one was new – the TSA-based rating scale and the other was old – the DELNA rating scale. The results of the two rating rounds were analysed using multi-faceted Rasch measurement. The findings of the study showed that the new TSA-based rating scale can be considered to be an objective measure of coherence. Teachers are
able to divide students’ writing performances into different ability levels; as a result, teachers can find it easier to identify their students’ writing ability.

It seems that TSA is a potential tool for assessing coherence in writing. Also, it is easily adapted and sufficiently simple to be transferred into a rating scale (Knoch, 2007). In addition, it has been considered to be effective when being taught to students as a tool for improving coherence in their writing (Attelisi, 2012; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). That is the reason why, in this study, TSA was introduced to students in an intervention and a TSA-based scoring scale was developed based on the rating scale by Knoch (2007) to assess coherence in students’ writing. I will discuss TSA further in Section 2.3.

2.2.6. Relationship between cohesion, coherence and writing quality

In Applied Linguistics generally, cohesion and coherence are often discussed in conjunction. Cohesive devices can contribute to text coherence as they can guide the reader. For example, Lorenz (1999) shows that the use of cohesive ties can signal logical relations and thus signpost the path of coherence for the reader. Olateju (2006) states that the misuse of cohesive devices can have a bad effect on or even break the coherence of the text.

More and more empirical studies have been conducted to investigate how accurately cohesion features in the text relate to the quality of writing as assessed by expert raters (Castro, 2004; Crossley et al., 2016; Crossley & McNamara, 2011b, 2016; Ghasemi, 2013; M. Liu & Braine, 2005; Meisuo, 2000; W. Yang & Sun, 2012; A. Zhang, 2010) but the results have remained conflicting. On the one hand, some studies report a positive correlation between the use of cohesive devices and good writing quality (M. Liu & Braine, 2005; W. Yang & Sun, 2012). On the other hand, some studies do not show any significant link between the use of cohesive devices and the quality of writing (Castro, 2004; Meisuo, 2000; A. Zhang, 2010).

Studies by Crossley and McNamara (2010, 2011a, 2016) examined the relationship between cohesion, coherence and writing quality and provided some opposite findings. Crossley and McNamara (2010, 2011a) investigated the role of cohesion and coherence in the evaluation of essay quality. The results of the study emphasize the importance of coherence in writing quality.
The study asserted that coherence is a crucial attribute of human judgements of essay quality. In addition, the study denied the role of cohesion in the construction of coherence by stating that the majority of cohesive devices negatively correlated with human judgements of coherence and that coherence is not necessarily defined through the use of cohesive devices. However, the findings of Crossley and McNamara (2016) are counter to their previous study (Crossley & McNamara, 2010, 2011a). The study by Crossley and McNamara (2016) indicates that cohesion has a strong link with human scores of essays quality and text coherence and came to a conclusion that increasing the cohesion of an essay leads to gains in human judgements of essay quality and coherence.

Whether the relationship between cohesion and coherence and writing quality is positive or negative still remains controversial. However, most studies agree that coherence is an essential element of good writing – a crucial, contributory factor to effective writing and that the study of coherence is the study of writing quality.

2.3. Cultural conventions, academic English writing, and coherence

2.3.1. Contrastive rhetoric and its significance

Contrastive rhetoric, according to Connor (1996), is “an area of research in second language acquisition that identified problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetoric strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them” (Connor, 1996, p. 5). In addition, contrastive rhetoric is used to describe “the argument that the linguistical, organizational, and presentational choices” (Panetta, 2001, p. 3) that students of English as a second language or foreign language make are different from those made by students whose first language is English. Therefore, contrastive studies support the efforts of ESL or EFL teachers in understanding how L2 writing is influenced by the linguistic and the cultural conventions of the L1 context. They aim to examine the differences and similarities in ESL and EFL writing across languages and cultures, as well as across different contexts (Connor, 2002).
Kaplan (1966) collected samples of the English expository writing written by Anglo-American, Arab, Korean, French, and Russian students studying at an American university. By comparing ESL students’ English writing with English rhetoric textbooks, Kaplan identified five distinct rhetorical patterns: English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian. Thus, Kaplan suggested that rhetoric varies from culture to culture, and that the rhetoric in the first language can be transferred to students’ second language writing.

However, Kaplan’s finding was challenged by Yang and Cahill’s (2008) study. In their study, Yang and Cahill analyzed 200 expository essays written by Chinese and American university students and found that ancient Chinese rhetoric followed the linear pattern rather than the circular pattern as mentioned in Kaplan (1966). Such a contradiction alerts us to the importance of the interaction between big national cultures, such as cultural and rhetorical conventions, and small cultures, such as classroom culture and disciplinary culture (Connor, 2004). The same rhetorical conventions may be treated in different ways in different classroom or different disciplines by different instructors so as to result in different effects in students’ writing.

2.3.2. Differences in English academic writing and Vietnamese academic writing

When writing in English, like any EFL/ ESL learner, Vietnamese students are influenced by their language and its rhetorical tradition, which may interfere with the English language and its rhetorical tradition.

Phan (2001, 2011) suggested that politeness, literateness, and relevance can contribute to the differences in Vietnamese academic writing if compared with English academic writing. In terms of politeness, Phan (2001) stated that Vietnamese academic writing is uncritical, or at least “less critical than English academic writing” (Phan, 2001, p. 303), and cultural factors are the causes to this difference. For thousands of years, Vietnamese people have learnt to be flexible and compliant during their struggle for independence in the Asian region. It is the distinctive cultural characteristics of conditioned compliance/ flexibility of Vietnamese people that have influenced their style of writing, which is regarded as “uncritical, indirect, implicit, or circular.
In terms of literateness, Phan (2011) argued that “what is considered as linear in the rhetorical pattern in Vietnamese writing may be seen as digressive in English” (p. 26). Although “introduction”, “body”, and “conclusion” are three functional components in both English and Vietnamese essays, these two writing styles are different in the way information is included and arranged in each component. For example, the introduction in an English essay is said to “set out the key issues, maybe define a key term or set limits to the proposed discussion, and indicate the position the writer intends to take on the issues in question” (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, p. 30). In other words, the way the information is included and arranged in the introduction of an English essay is “direct and immediate” (Phan, 2011, p. 26). In contrast, a Vietnamese introductory paragraph is often lengthy with a lot of information. Very often historical background related to the issues is included in the introduction to support the topic context. So, introductory paragraphs written by Vietnamese students are often considered as “indirect”, “circular”, or even “redundant” (Phan, 2011, p. 30).

In addition, Phan (2011) indicated the differences between Vietnamese and English academic writing styles regarding the “linearity”. In English academic writing it is the writer’s responsibility to make effective communication. It means the writer needs to clarify everything to the readers so that the readers do not have to suffer from any strain from his/her writing. In contrast, in Vietnamese academic writing, it is the audience’s responsibility to “interpret the message underlying the text” (p. 27). This means different readers have different ways to encode a text and give different results. Another difference in regard to the “linearity” between Vietnamese and English academic writing argued by Phan (2011) is the order of the main points mentioned in a text. In English academic writing, the most important point precedes the less important points while, in Vietnamese academic writing, the less important points precede the most important point.

With regard to relevance, Phan (2011) stated that Vietnamese academic writing does not follow the requirements of “relevance “ as strictly as in English academic writing. In English academic writing, relevance means all ideas (controlling ideas and supporting ideas) need to be associated to the main point (the topic). However, in Vietnamese academic writing, readers sometimes
appreciate a piece of writing that employs “creative, complicated, beautiful but irrelevant words and structures” (p. 28). Very often such a piece of writing that sounds emotional, touches the readers’ feelings, or pleases the readers’ sense of romance is also highly appreciated.

With the differences between Vietnamese and English academic writing, Vietnamese students, like other EFL learners, may have problems when learning to write an English academic writing because they may be influenced by text conventions and discourse patterns from their native (Vietnamese) language. Therefore, it is necessary for Vietnamese EFL learners to understand the interrelationship between language and culture to ensure successful intercultural communication (Nick, 2015).

In brief, it is argued that culture does play an important role in the way learners of a foreign language write (Phan, 2011). To EFL learners in general and Vietnamese EFL learners in particular, it is obvious that there always exist the differences in the way they produce a piece of writing between their first language and their target (English) language. In order to reduce the language/culture dissonance in writing, a useful method suggested by Diaz (2013) is to raise students’ awareness of the culture-specific language schemas used in their own language as well as in English. In my study, the participants are third-year students and they, to some extent, are taught how to produce an English academic piece of writing. In addition, both participants and raters are Vietnamese, and they share the same first language and culture, which helps to reduce problems which may arise due to the miscommunication between the native and non-native English speakers. Finally, participants in my study are in same range of age, and all received the same teaching method from the same teacher of writing (the researcher), which may help to reduce the influences of small cultures such as youth culture or classroom culture (Atkinson, 2004).

2.4. Topical structure analysis

Teaching topical structure analysis (TSA) to students as a revision strategy has been found to be effective in raising students’ awareness of coherence in writing (Attelisi, 2012; Chiu, 2004; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013; Sakontawut, 2003). The following section will briefly
discuss some definitions and concepts of topical structure analysis as well as review literature on TSA-related studies.

2.4.1. Definitions and concepts

Topical structure analysis (TSA) was developed by Lautamatti (1987) based on the topic-comment theory of the Prague School of Linguistics to describe coherence in texts. As defined by Schneider and Connor (1990), TSA investigates “how topics repeat, shift, and return to earlier topics in discourse” (p. 413). In other words, the purpose of TSA is to describe coherence, clarifying the semantic relationships between topics of sentences and discourse topic and how these relationships are developed throughout the text by tracking the repetition, changes and reoccurrences of ideas. In order to fully understand topical structure analysis, such concepts as topic, comment, discourse topic, topical progressions, and topical depth need to be made clear.

The foundation for the topic-comment theory came from Prague School Linguists who used such concepts as old-new, given-new, theme-enunciation, and theme-rheme. The term theme used by Mathesius (1975) is to identify “what the sentence is about” and the term enunciation is used to refer to “what is said about the theme”. The theme refers to the main focus of the sentence and states something that is known or is supposed to be clear in a certain context while the enunciation concerns new pieces of information added to the discourse.

Firbas (1974) who developed the notion of “communicative dynamism” to indicate the relationship between old and new information in texts used the term rheme instead of the term enunciation. He maintained that the theme is the most prominent part of the sentence but gives less information and contributes less to the “communicative dynamism” than the rheme which conveys new information and contributes most to the “communicative dynamism”.

Later, the term rheme was replaced with comment and the theme changed to topic. Topic and comment are terms that refer to the arrangement of information within a sentence. Topic can be seen as what the sentence is about (the main idea or the topic of the sentence) and comment can
be explained as what is being said about the topic. Sentence topics are seen as units of meaning organised hierarchically in the text (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Schneider & Connor, 1990)

The concept of discourse topic stems from Daneš’s (1974) work in which he introduced the notion of hypertheme. He indicated that the topics of successive sentences can be shown in relation to a hypertheme, in effect “a discourse topic which is not explicitly expressed in the text itself “(Witte, 1983a, p. 315). The discourse topic is the topic that controls or governs the meaning of the topics of individual sentences. The discourse topic does not reside in the text alone, but rather reflects the interaction of text features with the reader’s knowledge; therefore, the particular sentence topics which appear in a text probably result directly from a writer’s implicit sense of the discourse topic and from the writer’s decisions about how to make the discourse topic accessible to the reader.

Lautamatti (1987) maintained that the semantic relationships between sentence topics and discourse topic could be studied by considering the sequences of sentences or progressions of topics in sentences or topical progressions, as she called them. She identified three types of topical progressions; parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), and extended parallel progression (EPP), which show how sentences are related to each other and to the discourse topic. In parallel progression, topics of the successive sentences are semantically identical, producing the repetition of the topic that strengthens the idea for the reader. In sequential progression, topics of successive sentences are always different because the comment of one sentence becomes the topic of the next. In extended parallel progression, a parallel progression is “temporarily interrupted by a sequential progression”(Connor & Farmer, 1990, p. 127)

Lautamatti (1987) used the term topical depth to indicate the relationship between the topical progressions and the semantic hierarchy where the sentence topic which started first in a text is at the highest level. The combination between topical progression and topical depth represents the topical structure of a text.
2.4.2. Implementation of topical structure analysis

Connor and Farmer (1990) introduced three steps to perform a topical structure analysis: (1) identifying sentence topics, (2) determining sentence progression, and (3) drawing a diagram to show the progress of sentence topics (p. 128). In the first step, students need to be familiar with the terms: “topic” and “comment” which refer to the information arrangement within a sentence. Students learn to identify sentence topics in single sentences first, and then in passages so that they can link sentence topics with the discourse topic after reading the whole text. Secondly, students learn to determine sentence progression. In this stage, students learn the way meaning can be built through topical progressions (either parallel, sequential, or extended parallel progression). For example, the parallel progression is meant to strengthen the idea for the reader because sentence topics in this progression are referentially identical while sequential progression helps to elaborate individual topics by providing more details to an idea. Finally, a diagram corresponding to the structure of the text should be drawn and interpreted. The purpose of this step is to help students check the coherence of the ideas and make changes where necessary.

While Connor and Farmer (1990, p. 128) executed a topical structure analysis using three steps, that is (1) identifying all the sentence topics, (2) determining sentence progression, and (3) constructing a diagram corresponding to the progress of the sentence topic, Attelisi (2012) suggested five steps to follow when executing a topical structure analysis. The first one is to construct the discourse topic by reading the text carefully. The second is to identify topics and comments in individual sentences. The third is to determine topical progression. The fourth is to draw a diagram corresponding to the way the text is structured. And the final one is to check for coherence using the diagram.

The five steps to implement a topical structure analysis suggested in the study by Attelisi (2012) are clear and easy to follow. Thus, these steps were used in my intervention when guiding my students to practice conducting a topical structure analysis.
2.4.3. Teaching topical structure analysis

As mentioned above, topical structure analysis is used to describe coherence in texts; thus researchers have been interested in investigating the effects of teaching topical structure analysis on the improvement of coherence in students’ writing as well as on students’ writing quality (Attelisi, 2012; Chiu, 2004; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). Connor and Farmer (1990) taught TSA as a revision strategy to ESL students at Indiana University for several years and received positive responses from students. They conducted their teaching in three crucial steps so that students could understand and follow easily: (1) identification of sentence topics; (2) determining sentence progressions; (3) charting the progress of sentence topics (Connor & Farmer, 1990, p. 128). After being taught TSA, it was remarked by many students that the procedure was helpful as they could examine the meanings of the sentences and relate the meanings to the main topic and purpose of their writing. Such improvement as clearer focus and better development of subtopics were clearly seen in students’ writing. This study found that TSA could be a useful check of coherence in writing because it illustrates graphically the development of an essay using the students’ own written words. In addition, this analysis was “easily internalized with carryover benefits to subsequent writing” (Connor & Farmer, 1990, p. 134). However, their study was not based on quantitative findings, but rather on students’ opinions from interviews.

Attelisi (2012) and Liangprayoon et al. (2013) also conducted studies to explore the impact of teaching TSA on improving EFL students’ writing quality. Attelisi (2012) invited 63 third-year Libyan EFL students to join his study and divided them into two groups, the control group and the treatment group. Both groups were taught the same syllabus in the same condition for three months. The only difference between the two groups was that the treatment group was explicitly taught TSA as a learning and revision strategy. Data for this study were from students’ compositions (pre- and post-tests), interviews, and observations. The results showed that TSA was a useful strategy to help students improve the coherence and the quality in their writing. To be specific, compositions written by participants in the treatment group achieved post-test scores
higher than their pre-test scores. Also, post-test scores achieved by the treatment group were higher than those achieved by the control group. In addition, participants in the treatment group were more aware of the importance of coherence and they tended to use a balance of parallel progression (PP), extended parallel progression (EPP), and sequential progression (SP) in their writing.

Liangprayoon et al. (2013) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of TSA instruction in improving third year Thai EFL students’ writing quality and exploring the proportions of types of topical progression in essays written by high and low proficiency students. The study included two groups of participants, an experimental group and a control group, with 20 students in each. Teaching for both groups employed a process approach, but in addition the experimental group was taught TSA. In order to reach the goals, data were collected from the pretest and the posttest written by students in the two groups. Also, in each group, the authors selected five high proficiency essays and five low proficiency essays from the pretest and then the same five high proficiency essays and five low proficiency essays from the post-test. The results of this study showed that TSA instruction had significantly positive impacts on students’ writing quality, especially on low proficiency students. The study’s results supported the findings of Attelisi (2012), confirming that TSA instruction was beneficial to improve students’ writing quality. One difference between Liangprayoon et al.’s (2013) study and Attelisi’s (2012) study was that Liangprayoon et al. (2013) found in their study the nearly equal proportion of sequential progression employed in both high proficiency and low proficiency essays.

Although studies by Attelisi (2012) and Liangprayoon et al. (2013) are based on both qualitative and quantitative findings, neither of them investigated problems of coherence that students had in their writing before teaching TSA to their students. So, students who participated in these two studies may have felt confused about what makes their writing coherent/incoherent.

In conclusion, most studies agree that topical structure analysis can be taught to EFL/ ESL students as a tool for improving coherence in their writing. However, none of the studies investigated problems of coherence in students’ real writing and then combined the teaching of the problems
that may make students’ writing incoherent with the introduction of TSA in the writing classroom. Thus, I would like to fill this gap in my research by investigating the coherence problems in my students’ writing and then conducting an intervention which involves the teaching of coherence problems and TSA.

2.4.4. Relationships between types of topical progression and writing quality

While some researchers focused on using TSA in the writing of EFL students (Almaden, 2006; Carreon, 2006; Kılıç, Genç, & Bada, 2016), other researchers conducted their studies to compare the use of TSA between English and other languages (Dumanig, Esteban, Lee, & Gan, 2009; Simpson, 2000) or to compare the use of TSA between EFL/ESL learners’ writing and English native speakers’ writing (Kim, 2012; Ouk, 2009). However, what has attracted researchers most is the use of TSA as a technique to distinguish high-rated writing from low-rated writing (Burneikaite & Zabiliute, 2003; Flores & Kexiu, 2015; Schneider & Connor, 1990; Witte, 1983a, 1983b).

Witte (1983b) is one of the pioneers in examining the relationship between a reader’s judgement of writing quality and topical structure features of student writing. Forty-eight texts were chosen from 180 essays written on a controlled assignment as part of an evaluation of the Freshman Writing Program at the University of Texas. These 48 essays were rated and grouped into a low-quality group and a high-quality group, and then analyzed. The results showed that topical structure variables were found useful in explaining the quality scores readers assigned to the texts. However, types of progression were differently used in high-rated essays and low-rated essays, that is more sequential progression was employed in low-rated essays than in high-rated essays while more parallel and extended parallel progression was employed in high-rated essays than in low-rated essays.

Following Witte’s research but in a different context, Schneider and Connor (1990) also conducted a study to find the answer to the question of whether topical structure analysis could distinguish among readers’ judgements of writing quality in ESL essays. Data for this study were 45 essays which were randomly selected from essays written on a Test of Written English (TWE); these were rated and grouped into high-quality, middle-quality, and low-quality essays. However, the
findings of this study were contrary to those of Witte’s research, indicating that high-rated essays employed more sequential progression and less parallel progression than either low-rated or middle-rated essays, and there was no difference in the proportion of extended parallel progression among high-, middle-, and low-rated essays. To explain this contradiction Schneider and Connor (1990) suggested that different criteria in coding progressions would lead to different results. Also in their study, Schneider and Connor (1990) gave specific criteria for coding progressions and these criteria have been employed by many other researchers (Attelisi, 2012; Knoch, 2007; Liangprayoon et al., 2013; Wu, 1997).

A study by Wu (1997) investigated the relationship between topical structure analysis and such variables as educational background, text quality, topic familiarity and writing stages such as brainstorming. Eighty texts written by 41 Southeast Asian refugee students were collected and rated by two raters using a holistic scoring rubric (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981). Then three researchers analyzed these texts using topical structure analysis including identifying t-units, topical subjects, and topical progressions. Inter-rater reliability was calculated both for topical structure analysis and text scoring. The findings of this study were similar to Schneider and Connor (1990)'s study, confirming that high-quality texts produced by Southeast Asian refugee students tended to use more sequential progression (SP) and extended parallel progression (EPP) than low-quality texts.

While Wu’s (1997) findings supported those of Schneider and Connor (1990), Burneikaite and Zabiliute (2003) found that a balance in the use of different types of progression with a particular emphasis on extended parallel progression was associated with writing judged to be of good overall quality. In their study, Burneikaite and Zabiliute (2003) analyzed 58 randomly selected essays written by intermediate Lithuanian learners of English with the purpose of establishing the relationship between the holistic evaluation of the essays and the types of information structuring (topical structure analysis was used to determine the type of information structuring). These essays were first rated using a multiple assessment scale of 20 points adapted from Tribble (1996), then grouped into three groups by level. The low-rated group included essays from 5 to 9, the medium-rated group from 10 to 14, and the high-rated group from 15 to 19. Then topical
structure analysis was applied in 4 steps: (1) numbering each sentence in the essay, (2) highlighting the topic in each sentence, (3) drawing a diagram of the passage sentences, (4) establishing the type of progression. The results showed that sequential progression has little impact on the holistic evaluation of the essays. There was no distinction between high-rated and low-rated essays in the use of sequential progression. However, the use of extended parallel progression characterized the overall high rating of essays and the overuse of parallel progression contributed to an overall low rating of essays. Although the results of this study were a little different from studies by Wu (1997) and Schneider and Connor (1990) due to using different unit of analysis and different way of identifying types of progression, Burneikaite and Zabiliute (2003) agreed that using topical structure analysis to revise writing drafts would greatly benefit students as this tool would help them arrange their ideas and make improvements where necessary.

Another study by Flores and Kexiu (2015) provided conflicting results to Burneikaite and Zabiliute (2003). In their study, Flores and Kexiu applied TSA to analyse 29 comparison-and-contrast essays (15 high-quality and 14 low-quality) written by first-year ESL students at a private university in Manila. The results showed that there was no significant difference between high-quality and low-quality essays in the use of parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), extended parallel progression (EPP), or extended sequential progression (ESP). Also, the study discovered that low-quality writing tended to employ more new topics than high-quality writing. This means low-quality writing used more unrelated progression (UP) than high-quality writing. This finding was new because few previous studies have taken unrelated progression (UP) into consideration when analyzing TSA in students’ writing.

In summary, previous studies have produced varied results concerning the relationship between types of topical progression and writing quality. Most studies divided students’ writing into two groups (high-rated and low-rated) or three groups (high-rated, middle-rated, and low-rated) and then investigated the use of types of topical progression in each group. In this study, I would like to investigate the effect of teaching TSA on the use of types of topical progression in students’ writing; therefore, instead of grouping students’ writing into high-rated and low-rated, I will compare the difference in the employment of types of topical progression in students’ writing.
before and after the teaching of TSA. Then, correlation between each type of topical progression employed in the essays and scores of coherence and overall quality given to the essays will be calculated to find the relationship between types of topical progression and writing quality. This approach to data analysis is expected to provide useful information to both teachers and students in writing teaching and learning.

2.5. Assessing EFL/ESL writing performance

In assessing EFL/ESL writing, different scoring methods is one of the factors that may cause differences in writing scores (Wiseman, 2008). In this section, I will first briefly review scoring systems in EFL/ESL writing assessment, and then explain the choice of the particular scoring scale used in my study.

2.5.1. Scoring systems of EFL/ESL writing performance assessment

There are four types of scoring scales/rubrics: holistic, analytic, primary trait, and multiple trait scales/rubrics; however, multiple trait and analytic scales/rubrics are categorized as the same by Weigle (2002). In this section, I will review the three most common scoring scales in writing assessment (Crusan, 2010) including primary trait, holistic and analytic scales/rubrics.

*Primary trait scale/rubric*

A primary trait scale/rubric is used to score one trait in writing (e.g. vocabulary). It is considered as a useful rubric, particularly in the classroom, because it provides more information about students’ writing ability than any other type of scale/rubric (Crusan, 2010, p. 46). However, this type of rubric is not commonly used in EFL/ESL writing assessment (Weigle, 2002) because it is time-consuming and uneconomical and it is unlikely that raters will focus on only one trait during the whole rating process (Crusan, 2010). As Crusan (2010, p. 46) stated, ‘although primary trait scoring looks at only one trait in writing, other features might be covertly or even unconsciously rated using this method.’

*Holistic scoring*
According to Hamp-Lyons (1991), holistic scoring refers to the general impression that the whole of a given text creates in the mind of a reader. In other words, the reader subjectively assigns the text a single score for its writing quality by reference to a scoring guide or rubric (Hamp-Lyons, 1991, pp. 243-244). Although holistic scoring is considered efficient and provides fast evaluation (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Weigle, 2002), it is “a closed system, no windows through which teachers can look in and no access points through which researchers can enter” (Hamp-Lyons, 1995, p. 761), so it is impossible for teachers or researchers to explain the strengths that illuminate the writing or the weaknesses that need to be worked on based on holistic scores as the holistic scale assigns the whole piece of writing a single score, giving little information about the quality or performance of each aspect of the writing. In addition, it is hard to interpret the holistic score because it is likely that raters use different criteria to reach the same score (K. Zhang, 2019).

**Analytic scoring**

In contrast to holistic scoring, analytic scoring clearly defines the features to be assessed by separating, and sometimes weighting, individual components. In other words, in analytic scoring procedures, a set of criteria which are important to good writing are employed by raters to grade a text. A score for each category must be given by raters to help ensure that features of good writing are not collapsed into one. Therefore, analytic scoring is regarded as effective in discriminating between stronger and weaker texts.

Although using analytic scoring is more time-consuming than holistic scoring, analytic scoring is preferred by researchers (Bacha, 2001; Chan, Inoue, & Taylor, 2015; Lumley, 2002; K. Zhang, 2019) because analytic scoring (1) provides more information about the quality of different aspects of the writing; (2) is useful in rater training and rating so that all raters use the same criteria to arrive in the same score; (3) is effective in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of writing (Hamp-Lyons, 1991; Weigle, 2002; K. Zhang, 2019).
In conclusion, each scoring scale has its own advantages and disadvantages. However, analytic scoring has been favored by researchers. In the following section, I will review a number of previous studies which supported the use of analytic scoring in EFL/ESL writing assessment.

2.5.2. Advantages of analytic scoring in EFL/ESL writing performance assessment

Such advantages of analytic scoring as the high reliability, the ease in rater training, and the provision of detailed information about students’ abilities in different aspects of writing have been supported by a number of studies which were conducted to clarify whether holistic scoring or analytic scoring should be used in EFL/ESL writing assessment. To be specific, Bacha (2001) randomly selected 30 essays from a corpus of 156 final exam essays written by L1 Arabic non-native students. These 30 essays were rated both holistically and analytically by two raters using one evaluation instrument, the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al. (1981). Spearman Correlation Coefficient was used to test the inter-rater reliability (relationship between the two raters’ scores) and intra-rater reliability (relationship between scores of the same rater on two occasions). The results showed that although holistic scoring was relatively reliable, it showed little about the performance of the students in the different components. In other words, holistic scoring is not as informative for the learning situation as analytic scoring and students do not learn much from this score.

Similarly, Ghalib and Al-Hattami (2015) wanted to find out if a holistic rubric or an analytic rubric was a more reliable instrument for evaluating EFL writing for achievement purposes. To reach the goal, a holistic rubric and an analytic rubric were used to rate 30 descriptive essays written by 30 Yemeni undergraduate students of English. Three experienced teaching staff were invited to rate the essays independently. The raters were first given the 30 essays and the holistic rubric to work with. Each essay was given a holistic score from 0 to 5, and the holistic score was then converted into 20. One month after the holistic rating had been completed, the raters were given the same 30 essays and the analytic rubric to work with. A score from 0 to 4 was given to each of five categories (content, cohesion, syntactic structures, vocabulary, and mechanics of writing) of the essay. The scores were then added and converted into a total of 20. Intra-class Correlation Coefficient test (ICC) was implemented to investigate the agreement among the raters and
measure the inter-rater reliability. The results show that both holistic and analytic scoring rubrics gave reliable scores, but scores given using the analytic rubric (ICC = .958) were more reliable and consistent than those obtained using the holistic rubric (ICC = .797).

A meta-analysis by Jonsson and Svingby (2007) also supported the use of an analytical rubric to improve the reliability of scoring performance assessments. In their study, Jonsson and Svingby reviewed 75 studies which explicitly reported on empirical research where rubrics were used for performance assessment, then analysed them according to the measurements used, and summarized the findings. They came to the conclusion that rubrics can improve the reliability of scoring performance assessments. In particular, rubrics can enhance the consistency of scoring by being analytic, topic-specific, and complemented with exemplars and/or rater training. This means analytic scoring can provide reliable scores, and rater training before the use of rubrics can improve the reliability and consistency of scoring performance.

Not only Jonsson and Svingby’s (2007) study but also a number of other previous studies (Lumley, 2002; Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010) emphasized the role of rater training in the use of rubrics. Lumley (2002) investigated the use of an analytic scale by raters in a large-scale assessment context. The analytic scale used contained four categories (Task fulfilment and Appropriacy, Conventions of Presentation, Cohesion and Organization, and Grammatical Control) with six levels (0 to 5) in each category. This analytic scale was used by four trained and experienced raters to rate two sets of 24 writing scripts. Results of the study showed that raters understood the rating process, but they differed in their application of features of the rating scale. Results of the study imply that it is necessary to provide raters with adequate training about the scale as well as sufficient guidelines to solve problems that may arise during the rating process to produce consistent and reliable measurement.

Similarly, Rezaei and Lovorn’s (2010) study concluded that raters were influenced by other features (mechanical characteristics) rather than content although they were using an analytical rubric. However, Rezaei and Lovorn’s study used inexperienced raters who received no specific training beforehand. This again confirms the important role of rater training in the use of rubrics.
Raters should receive appropriate rubric training to minimize personal judgement when grading (Dempsey, Pytlikzillig, & Bruning, 2009; Knoch, Read, & Von Randow, 2007).

Such advantages of analytical scoring shown in above-mentioned studies as the improvement of reliability and the enhancement of scoring consistency are the supports for the choice of analytic scoring in my study. In relation to the results of reviewing the literature, careful rater training will be given to raters in my study to improve the reliability and consistency of scoring performance. Details about rater training will be provided in Chapter 3 – Methodology.

2.6. Research gap

The review of the literature above shows that there is still much to study about coherence, especially coherence in EFL writing. First, researchers have conducted studies focusing either on developing a system of coherence breaks in writing or the teaching of coherence, but so far there has not been any study that focuses both on developing a system of coherence problems and on teaching coherence based on that developed system. Second, some researchers have reported on the effects of teaching topical structure analysis (TSA) on the improvement of coherence in students’ writing, but there have not been any studies which combine teaching coherence problems and TSA together; in addition, there have been no studies conducted to investigate the effects of this combination on students’ writing performance. Third, the relationship between coherence and writing quality has been explored by several studies, but the relationship between writing quality and frequency and types of coherence problems remains totally underexplored. Similarly, TSA and types of topical progression have been investigated by several previous researchers, but the relationship between types of topical progression and writing quality has not been taken into consideration. Finally, there has been no study on coherence and the teaching of coherence conducted in the Vietnamese university context nor any study on the introduction of TSA to Vietnamese EFL university students. My study aims to fill these research gaps.

2.7. Research questions

This study focuses on studying coherence in the writing of Vietnamese university students and investigating the impacts of an intervention concerning the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis, on students’ writing performance in terms of coherence and overall
writing quality. To be specific, a system of coherence problems is developed based on the analysis of a student writing set and is employed in the identification of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing. Then, an intervention is designed and conducted to teach coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) to Vietnamese university EFL students. Data collected after the intervention will clarify whether the intervention has any influence on the students’ writing performance in terms of coherence and overall quality. To achieve the goals of the study, I seek answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?
RQ 2. What are the most frequent coherence problems found in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?
RQ 3. What are the impacts of the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) on student writing performance?
   (i) What changes can be found in writing performance of students in a control group and a treatment group after the intervention?
   (ii) What differences can be found between the two groups (control group and treatment group) in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems after the intervention?
   (iii) What differences can be found between the two groups (control group and treatment group) regarding types of topical progression employed after the intervention?
   (iv) What differences in students’ writing performance in terms of coherence and overall quality can be found between the two groups (control group and treatment group) after the intervention?
RQ 4. What is the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems?
   (i) To what extent are scores of coherence associated with types and frequency of coherence problems?
   (ii) To what extent are scores of overall quality associated with types and frequency of coherence problems?
RQ 5. What is the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression?
(i) To what extent are scores of coherence associated with the types of topical progression?

(ii) To what extent are scores of overall quality associated with the types of topical progression?

RQ 6. How do Vietnamese EFL students perceive the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) - the intervention?

(i) Do they find it helpful in improving their writing coherence and writing quality?

(ii) What difficulties do they encounter following the intervention?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview of methodology

In this section, I will give an overview of methodology of the study. I will first describe the overall research design, then introduce student participants, and finally, I will discuss the ethical considerations.

3.1.1. Overall Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, mixed methods were employed in this study. To be specific, in Phase 1 of the study, a set of Vietnamese student writing was collected, and textual analysis was conducted to (1) help develop a new system of coherence problems and (2) identify the types of coherence problems and their frequency in the writing which were analyzed based on the newly developed system of coherence problems. Then, in Phase 2 of the study, an intervention, involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis, was conducted in a university in Vietnam. There were two groups of students participating in the intervention, the treatment group and the control group. Three sets of student writing (Task 1, revision of Task 1, and Task 2) were collected before and after the intervention. The analysis of these three sets of writing involved textual analysis to indicate types and frequency of coherence problems as well as types and frequency of topical progression. Then, statistical analysis (an Independent Sample t-test and ANOVA) was employed to investigate the impact of the intervention on the writing performance of students in the two groups. Also, statistical analysis was used to examine (1) the relationship between types and frequency of coherence problems and the ratings of coherence and overall quality of the writing; and (2) the relationship between types of topical progression and the ratings of coherence and overall quality of the writing. Qualitative data collected in interviews provided further details to explain the quantitative findings and explained in detail how the students perceived the intervention, the benefits they felt they got from the intervention, and the difficulties that they faced when involved in the intervention.
The gap between Phase 1 and Phase 2 was nine months because in this interim the data collected in Phase 1 was analyzed; (2) a system of coherence problems was developed; (3) the content to be included in each lesson of the intervention was decided; (4) lesson plans were designed, and (5) teaching materials were prepared for the intervention in Phase 2 which was to be conducted in Vietnam. See Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for more details about Phase 1 and Phase 2. Figure 1 below gives a brief overview of the study design.

**Figure 1. Overview of the study design**

---

**Ethics approval from HEC, Victoria University of Wellington**

---

**Phase 1**

Student participant recruitment

Data collection

Data analysis

Preparation of teaching materials for Phase 2

---

**Phase 2**

Student participant recruitment

Piloting

Task 1 collection

Main intervention

Collection of Task 1 revision

Maintenance period

Task 2 collection

Data collection from questionnaire and focus groups
3.1.2. Research Setting

English is a foreign language in Vietnam. In many universities including Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) where I conducted my study, English has been included in the curriculum as a separate and compulsory subject since 2008. University students majoring in English spend four years developing their language skills and learning different methods of teaching English as a foreign language.

Writing is one of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that students majoring in English at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) are required to develop. During a four-year’s study programme, the participants of my study, who were training to become teachers of English as a foreign language, had to take five writing courses (Writing 1 – 5). Sentence writing was the main focus of Writing 1 and 2 while paragraph writing was the main focus of Writing 2 and 3. Writing 4 and 5 were on essay writing. At HaUI, the essay format taught in Writing 4 and 5 was the five-paragraph essay structure as it is regarded as helpful to in order to prepare students for IELTS-oriented tests. It is typical that students have to submit two writing tasks in Writing 4 and Writing 5. One is in the middle of the course and the other is at the end of the course. In each writing task, students write on a given topic and are not allowed to do any research about the topic.

The kind of writing this present thesis targeted was the five-paragraph essay. At the time data of Phase 1 of this present research was collected, students had finished Writing 4. When Phase 2 of this study was undertaken, students had just finished Writing 5. Writing tasks in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this present study were conducted the same as most writing tasks in Writing 4 and Writing 5. That is, student participants are given a topic to write about in a specific time allowance (usually 60 minutes). When doing the tasks, students are not allowed to talk nor discuss with others. They are not allowed to access Internet to do any search, either. Also, they are not allowed to refer to dictionaries nor receive any support for outside sources. When time is up, they have to submit their writing to teacher.
3.1.3. Student Participants

In Phase 1, Vietnamese university students majoring in English who had already completed three writing modules at university were invited to contribute their writing. Having completed three writing modules meant students had fundamental knowledge of writing a paragraph and an essay. A total of 210 students were invited to voluntarily contribute their writing. At the time students were invited to submit their writing, they were in their final semester of their second year. They had already completed three writing modules and were enrolled in writing module 4 which focused on types of essays. Of the 210 students who were invited, sixty-nine accepted the invitation and volunteered to hand in their writing for Phase 1 of the study.

In Phase 2, the participants were third year students whose major was English. These students were also from the same university where data collection for Phase 1 was carried out. More than 200 third-year students including the sixty-nine students who had contributed their writing in Phase 1 were invited to join the Phase 2 study and fifty-eight students accepted the invitation to join the intervention. Of the fifty-eight students who agreed to join the Phase 2 study, thirty-five were from Phase 1 of the study. At the time of collecting data in Phase 2, the student participants were in their final semester of the third year and they had already taken five writing modules.

There were two reasons for the choice of third year students. First, at Faculty of Foreign Languages, English major students did not have any writing lessons in their normal classes in the second semester of the third year, so a supplementary writing course would not overload the students. Second, when students were in their third year, they were allowed to sit for an internal IELTS test, so participating in a voluntary writing intervention with a focus on coherence in writing would be attractive to students and was expected to give a lot of help to students before sitting for the test. The reason I chose to conduct my study at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry was that I have been employed as a lecturer at this university for 10 years and I have built a very good relationship with my colleagues who gave me a lot of help during my data collection.
3.1.4. Ethical Considerations

The project received ethics approval from the Human Ethics Committee from Victoria University of Wellington before the data collection began in Vietnam. In addition, the Head of Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI), where the data was collected, gave me permission to approach students to ask them to participate in the study, and to use the facilities for the study.

In Phase 1, the help of one of the writing teachers was sought to recruit students to contribute their writing. The teacher informed the students of the purpose of the study, explained the information sheet to them, answered all their questions, and invited them to contribute their writing. Students who accepted the invitation signed the forms and submitted them to the teacher.

In Phase 2, which took place nine months later, the researcher met the students in order to introduce the study and seek students’ participation on a voluntary basis. During the meeting, students were reminded that the data collection was for the sake of research and that confidentiality was guaranteed. I also emphasized that the test results would not affect their academic progress or assessment and that they were able to withdraw from the study if they wished. The potential participants were given information sheets and consent forms to read and sign if they agreed to participate in the study. After the meeting, fifty-eight students volunteered to join the study and signed the forms. These students were in the same level of study at the University and randomly assigned into two equal groups (29 students in each group), the treatment group and the control group, to make sure that the general level of the two groups was likely to be the same.

Important points emphasized with the student participants were that their participation in this present study was voluntary and should not interfere with their academic performance because this study was conducted outside of the students’ normal class hours and under the supervision of the researcher who at the time was not serving in the principal teaching role. In other words, the researcher has almost no power on students when carrying out this study, especially when distributing the survey and conducting the focus groups.
All of the documents including student information sheets and student consent forms were translated into Vietnamese to ensure full understanding. For copies of the ethics approval, student information sheets and student consent forms, see Appendices 1 - 4.

3.2. Phase 1 Methodology

The focus of Phase 1 was the study of coherence in the writing of Vietnamese students through identifying the coherence problems in their writing as well as investigating the frequency of the coherence problems found in the writing. Results from analysing data in Phase 1 aimed to answer the first two research questions of the study. In this section, I will first describe the task – method of collecting data, the data set and the coding of coherence problems in the writing. Then, I will discuss the issues of validity and reliability.

3.2.1. The task

In Phase 1, data was collected in the form of a writing task. One task topic was used because the task topic needed to be kept constant so that comparison between performance of different learners could be made (Tarone & Yule, 1989). All sixty-nine students in Phase 1 were asked to write an essay of 250-300 words giving their opinion on the following topic: “It is said that social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?”

The second-year students who contributed their writing in Phase 1 had learnt how to write argumentative essays as part of their writing modules at university; this topic was typical of what they were expected to be able to write about. In addition, the question in the topic implied the need for coherence because “do you agree or disagree?” meant that the students had to give their opinion on one side or the other and had to provide specific reasons or examples to support their ideas. In fact, the question “do you agree or disagree?” used in this topic was familiar to students because they had often worked with it in their writing classes, but the topic of “effect of social network” was totally new to students. The writing teacher who helped to collect the students’ writing affirmed that this was the first time that students had been asked to write about this topic.
Students were asked to produce the writing in 60 minutes under their writing teacher’s observation. They were not allowed to talk when they were writing. Also, they were not allowed to use the Internet nor refer to dictionaries. When time was up, all the writing was collected by the teacher. The teacher then scanned all the documents and sent them via email to the researcher for analysis.

3.2.2. The data set

In total, there were sixty-nine essays collected for the analysis in Phase 1. When all essays had been collected by the researcher via email, they were typed and double checked to make sure that all the typed versions reproduced the essays written by the students as they appeared in the original scripts with all the errors, slips, spellings, punctuation and grammatical mistakes. All the essays used for analysis in Phase 1 were indicated by the capital letters PH and number 1. The student writer was randomly allocated a number which ranged from 01 to 69, e.g. “Essay ID: PH 121” means it was written by the student number 21 and used for analysis in Phase 1.

3.2.3. The coding of coherence problems in the writing

‘Coherence break’ is the term used by Wikborg (1990) to refer to “what happens when the reader loses the thread of the argument while in the process of reading a text attentively” (Wikborg, 1990, p. 133). In this study, I first randomly read about 14 essays (equivalent to 20% of the writing collected) and used the term “coherence problems” for those that prevented me from following the line of reasoning or that caused a break in the flow of ideas. During the process of reading, spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were not considered as it was felt that they did not detract from the coherence of the essay. For example, in the following extract, although the word “Messenger” was incorrectly spelt and the word “convenient” was grammatically incorrect, readers were able to understand what the writer wanted to convey.

“No sensible person could deny that social network can help people communicate more convenient. By using some applications such as Massager, Zalo, Viber, etc, people can connect with others who are very far from” – extracted from Essay ID. PH 115 (see Appendix 6)
While reading, whenever a problem was encountered, it was marked. After reading, all problems marked were classified into five main groups in a system of coherence problems developed by the researcher. This newly developed framework was validated and used for analysis after inter-coder reliability was checked and discussion had taken place between the two coders (see Chapter 4 for more information about the development and operationalization of the framework).

3.2.4. Validity and reliability

Validity

In Phase 1, the writing task was the means by which the researcher identified the coherence problems in the writing of students. In order to obtain valid data from the writing task, students were given one topic to write about and the question in the topic was of a similar type to ones they had worked with in the writing class. Because students had studied three writing modules at university and were studying writing module 4 at the time they were asked to write the task, they were familiar with this type of task. In addition, students were given sufficient time to complete the writing task (60 minutes to write an argumentative essay of 250 – 300 words) and the topic did not require any specialist knowledge that students did not have.

Reliability

Great effort was made to maximise the reliability of the Phase 1 study. First, students were tested in the same place, at the same time, and under the same conditions. Second, students were given only one topic to write about and time allowance for completing the task was the same. Third, students’ writing was coded, using the same framework which was developed by the researcher (the first coder) and re-examined by the second coder. Most importantly, the Phase 1 study was carefully checked for inter-coder reliability. To be specific, a trained\(^1\) fellow PhD candidate doing

\(^1\) The researcher met with the PhD candidate, gave her the system of coherence breaks, introduced the system to her, explained some technical terms and answered all her questions related to the system. When she was clear about the system, she then proceeded with the job independently.
research in writing was asked to work independently as a second coder to re-examine the system of problems. She read the same essays as I did and marked every problem that hindered her from following the line of reasoning or that struck her as a break in the line of reasoning. After that she checked the problems that she had marked against the system that the researcher (the first coder) had developed. This enabled an assessment of any mismatch between the two coders in the identification and classification of problems. Once all the data from two coders was available, SPSS was used to calculate the percentage agreement, returning an agreement of 81.4% which is regarded as satisfactory (Stemler, 2004).

3.2.5. Summary

The aim of the Phase 1 study was to examine the types of coherence problems as well as investigate the frequency of these types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing. Data collection was conducted in a university in Vietnam with the help of a teacher of writing at the university. Textual analysis was employed, and coherence problems were coded per essay. The researcher was the first coder and the second coder, a fellow PhD candidate, was trained carefully before working with the data independently and inter-coder reliability was checked and yielded satisfactory results. Results of data analysis will be presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The system of coherence problems developed in Phase 1 was used as part of the intervention, the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis, in Phase 2 which was conducted at the same university to examine the impacts of the intervention on student writing performance. The following section presents the methodology for Phase 2 of the study before findings related to the types and frequency of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing are reported in Chapter 4.

3.3. Phase 2 Methodology

3.3.1. Research design

The purpose of Phase 2 is to examine the impact of an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) on the coherence as well as the overall quality of the writing produced by Vietnamese EFL students. Also, Phase 2 aims at exploring
students’ perceptions on the intervention in which they had participated. To reach the aim of Phase 2, three sets of writing were collected for textual analysis. The first set (Task 1) was collected before the intervention. The second set (Task 1 revision) was collected right after the intervention finished. And, the third set (Task 2) was collected four weeks later. After three sets of writing had been collected, survey questionnaire and focus groups were conducted to investigate students’ opinions about the intervention. Data from questionnaire and focus group would help further interpret quantitative data from textual analysis (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Figure 2 below gives a brief overview of Phase 2:

Figure 2. A brief overview of Phase 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Preparation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student participation recruitment (week 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The pilot (weeks 2 - 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intervention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 collection (week 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intervention (weeks 5 - 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teaching of coherence problems and TSA (treatment group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teaching of fundamental aspects in writing (control group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of Task 1 revision (week 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Maintenance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The maintenance of students’ involvement after the intervention (weeks 10 - 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teaching of other writing aspects (both groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2 collection (week 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires and interviews (week 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.2. Data collection procedures

Student participation recruitment (week 1)
The first thing that needed to be done before data collection was to recruit student participants. The researcher came to the university where the intervention was conducted and met with third year students. Students were introduced to the study and were invited to voluntarily participate in the intervention – a writing course aiming at helping them improve their writing performance. All the students’ questions about the study were answered and the student information sheet was explained carefully. At the end of this meeting, students were given a consent form emphasizing their rights as well as requirements and were asked to sign the form if agreeing to participate in the intervention. The meeting was successful with fifty-eight students volunteering to join the intervention and signing the form.

The pilot (weeks 2 - 3)

In this study, a pilot was used to test the feasibility of the main part of the intervention. Piloting with four lessons in two weeks was done with six third year students (who did not participate in the main study). Feedback from participants regarding their experiences while participating in the pilot were collected to evaluate the feasibility of the intervention and anticipate problematic areas in implementing the intervention. Results from the pilot showed that the planned intervention was feasible because students in the pilot could understand all the content taught by the researcher and also applied what they learnt to actual writing samples. Detailed understanding shown by students in the pilot was as follows.

In the first week of the pilot, two lessons of 90 minutes each were given. Students were guided to identify the types of coherence problems in actual writing samples. Then they were provided with explanations as well as examples to make coherence-related concepts clear to them. In Lesson 1, students worked with two sample essays (one good and one poor) in groups and then discussed good points and bad points of each essay. After that, they were asked to identify as many coherence problems as possible in the worse essay. In Lesson 2, students were taught about the features of coherence in writing and then the teacher provided them with some guides so that they could classify the coherence problems in terms of coherence features. As a result, students could fully understand the concepts related to coherence problems and could identify the coherence problems in actual writing samples without difficulty.
In the second week, another two lessons of 90 minutes each were given to students. They were introduced to a revision strategy, namely Topical Structure Analysis (TSA) which aims to help students write clearly and coherently (Attelisi, 2012; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). In Lesson 3, terms related to TSA such as topical progression, parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended parallel progression were introduced to students and then students practiced identifying the topical progressions in some writing samples. In Lesson 4, steps to conduct TSA were taught to students so that students could check for coherence in actual writing samples. As a consequence, students could apply TSA to check for coherence in other students’ writing without difficulty.

Students’ feedback after the pilot not only provided important information about the feasibility of the main intervention but also revealed one problematic area when conducting the pilot: that was time allocation. It was shown from students’ feedback that 90 minutes for each lesson was not enough for students to complete all activities designed and that it was better if they had more time for each lesson so that they got familiar with new concepts provided. In order for the main intervention to go smoothly as well as for students to have more time to practice what they would learn, it was determined to have eight lessons in the main part of the intervention instead of four lessons as in the pilot study and each lesson would be 90 minutes long.

In conclusion, the two-week pilot affirmed the feasibility of the main intervention and anticipated one problematic area when conducting the intervention – the time allocation. Immediate changes in the number of lessons per week and time allowance per lesson were made to ensure the success of the intervention.

*The intervention (weeks 4 – 9)*

Of the 58 students who agreed to participate in the intervention, 35 students had taken part in Phase 1 and 23 students were newly recruited before the main intervention. These 58 students were randomly assigned into two groups, a treatment group and a control group. The two groups had an equal number of students, that is 29 students. The two groups were taught by the same teacher (the researcher) to eliminate extraneous variables that are suspected to influence the
outcomes of the intervention such as teacher’s teaching style, personality, and accent (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015) as well as to ensure that the teaching for the treatment group would be consistent.

The intervention took place over 6 weeks from Week 4 to Week 9 and followed the timetable organised by the faculty so that there was no conflict with students’ class schedule. There was one 90-minute lesson in Week 4 for each group to collect Task 1. During Weeks 5-8 (the intervention for the treatment group and the writing course for the control group), there were two 90-minute lessons per week for each group. However, the content that was taught in each lesson given to both groups was different. To be specific, the treatment group was taught the system of coherence problems and Topical Structure Analysis (TSA) in the intervention while the control group were taught fundamental aspects of writing in the writing course. Week 9 had one 90-minute lesson for each group, which was used to collect Task 1 revision.

**The maintenance (Weeks 10-13)**

Students in both groups continued to attend class three more weeks (from Week 10 to Week 12) after the intervention/writing course finished. The aim of maintaining the teaching for another three weeks was to keep students engaged in class and prevent students from dropping out. Also, it helped to rule out unexpected factors that could affect the outcome of the intervention. There was one 90-minute lesson per week. Students in both the treatment group and control group were taught the same knowledge during these three weeks which was unrelated to the teaching of coherence. Task 2 was collected, and questionnaires and focus groups were conducted in Week 13, the last week of Phase 2.

**Teaching materials (handouts)**

Writing samples that participants in both groups used for practice were essays written in Phase 1 by students who did not participate in the intervention in Phase 2. There were two reasons for using the essays written in Phase 1. First, I had permission from students in Phase 1 to use their writing for my research. Second, these essays were written by Vietnamese EFL students who were in their second year, so they would not be a big challenge for third year Vietnamese students to
work with. The reason for not using the writing in Phase 1 of the students who were involved in Phase 2 was to avoid students’ face loss and embarrassment when they recognised their writing used as handouts.

**Detailed implementation of the intervention/writing course and the maintenance**

*The intervention (weeks 5 – 8)*

In this part, students in the treatment groups were taught about coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA). In the first two weeks (Weeks 5 – 6), students were reminded of what makes good writing and taught about features that constitute coherence in writing. After being provided with guides, explanations and examples by the researcher, students could name types of coherence problems in terms of coherence features and started practicing identifying the coherence problems in actual writing samples. In the third and fourth weeks of this part (Weeks 7 – 8), students were taught about topical structure analysis (TSA), terms related to TSA and steps to apply TSA to check for coherence such as working out the discourse topic, identifying sentence topics, determining topical progressions, and checking for coherence. After illustration and teacher explanation, students began practicing applying TSA on actual writing samples provided by the researcher.

Students in the control group were taught about common grammatical categories in Week 5; sentence structure, sentence types, and common sentence errors in Week 6; paragraph structure, induction and deduction in writing a paragraph in Week 7; and argumentative essay writing in Week 8.

*The maintenance (weeks 10 – 13)*

In this part, students in both the treatment and control groups were taught some other writing aspects such as essay structures, essay types, how to write a good introduction paragraph, and how to write a good conclusion paragraph. During each lesson, students were provided with examples and joined in several activities so that they could practice and could fully understand the lesson. It should be noted here that the purpose of Weeks 10 - 12 was to keep the students engaged so that Task 2 was successfully collected in Week 13.
3.3.3. Data collection methods

The tasks

In Phase 2, there were two writing tasks: Task 1 and Task 2. Students wrote Task 1 in Week 4, revision of Task 1 in Week 9, and Task 2 in Week 13. I discuss these at greater length below.

In Week 4, the week after the pilot and before the intervention/writing course, students in the two groups were asked to write an essay of between 250 – 300 words about the topic “Despite the many timesaving devices in our homes, people today are working harder and longer. Do you agree or disagree?” In this writing task, students were given 60 minutes to write the essay on a provided sheet of paper and were reminded when they had 10 minutes left. When the time was up, students handed in their writing (Task 1) to me. The role of this first draft was to provide an overview of student writing performance before the intervention.

The revision of Task 1 was conducted in Week 9 after the intervention/writing course was finished. In this writing task, while students in the treatment were asked to revise their Task 1 by identifying as many coherence problems as possible in their writing, correcting them and then applying TSA to make changes to the writing if necessary, students in the control group were asked to revise their Task 1 by identifying as many grammatical errors and sentence errors as possible in their writing and correcting them. Then, they were asked to look at their essay, paragraph by paragraph, to check for paragraph structure and have a look at the whole essay and make changes if necessary. Students in both groups had 60 minutes to do the revision and then they had 30 minutes to rewrite the first drafts. Students were allowed to do peer review and to access their class notes and dictionary if they wished but were not allowed to access the Internet when doing the revision. When time was over, they submitted the revised writing (Task 1 revision) to me. The purpose of this writing task was to see the influence of the intervention on the coherence as well as the quality in the revised writing produced by students in both the treatment and control groups.
Task 2 was carried out in Week 13, four weeks after the collection of Task 1 revision. In this writing task, students were asked to write an essay of between 250 – 300 words about the topic: “Some people consider price as the most important thing to consider when buying a product (such as a cell phone) or a service (e.g. medical treatment). Do you agree or disagree?”. The writing type in this task was the same as in the first and second task, but the topic was new and different to encourage students to think and write about new things as well as create a chance for students to apply all the knowledge they had been taught in producing a piece of writing about a new and different topic. Similar to Task 1, students were allowed to write the essays in 60 minutes and were not allowed to ask for help from peers, Internet, notes nor dictionaries. They had to submit Task 2 to me when time was up. This task was conducted to see whether the intervention had any long-term impact on the writing of students after a delay of four weeks.

**Questionnaire**

The aim of using a questionnaire in this study was to investigate students’ previous writing experiences and explore their views on the effects of the intervention they took part in. Like the focus groups, the data from the questionnaire would help to interpret the quantitative data.

The questionnaire included three major sets of questions. The first set had six questions focusing on the student’s demographic information; the second set had seven questions asking about students’ writing experience before the intervention; and the third set had 24 questions focusing on information concerning students’ opinions about the intervention and these questions used a five-level Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” for each answer. (See Appendix 5).

The questionnaire was written in English and was translated into Vietnamese. The Vietnamese version was completed by students and students were allowed to use Vietnamese (their first language) to answer questions in the questionnaire. The aim of using Vietnamese in the questionnaire was to make sure that all the questions in the questionnaire were clear enough to students and that students fully understood them so that they could answer the questions clearly and thoroughly.
The questionnaire was carried out in week 13, right after Task 2 was collected. Students had about 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire and submitted it to the researcher after they finished answering all questions.

It should be noted here that it is practical in Vietnam that there are often names presented in the survey questionnaire. Although names were presented in the survey of this study, the researcher, before distributing the survey questionnaire, emphasized to students that participating in the survey was voluntary and students had their right not to submit the questionnaire as well as not to provide their names if they did not wish to. Also, the researcher emphasized that after students completed the survey, a unique identification would be assigned, and their names would be removed from the survey.

**Focus groups**

In this study, focus groups were conducted because they are more interactive and less threatening than individual interviews and they can produce richer data (Ken Hyland, 2016). The focus group questions (see Appendix 6) aimed at investigating the reactions of the students toward the intervention. Also, their second aim was to provide further data for interpretation of quantitative data.

There were two sets of focus group questions. The first one focused on students’ previous writing experience with the aim of investigating how students viewed the five writing modules they had been taught, what difficulties they faced when writing, what features they focused on when writing and when revising and why. It was anticipated that students’ responses would help understand their first written drafts in the intervention as well as help explain and interpret their writing scores in the study. The second set of questions involved questions relating to students’ perceptions of the intervention. They investigated what the students thought of the intervention, how the intervention influenced their way of writing, and whether they found it difficult to understand and follow the intervention.

Soon after all the drafts and data from survey questionnaire had been collected, focus groups were carried out to elicit students’ writing experiences as well as their perceptions of the
intervention. Only students from the treatment group were invited to join the focus groups. Among 29 students in the treatment group, 15 were randomly selected and were assigned into five groups with three students in each group. Each focus group lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and took place in a private room so that students could be free to respond openly. The Vietnamese language was used in the focus groups to help students express themselves as clearly as possible. Focus groups were recorded and then transcribed in detail. Data from focus groups is reported in Chapter 8.

3.3.4. Data analysis

a. Data coding

In total, there were 174 essays for the Phase 2 analysis, 87 essays written by students in control group and 87 by students in the treatment group. Among 87 essays written by students in the control group, Task 1 consisted of 29 essays collected in Week 4, one week before the writing course; Task 1 revision consisted of 29 revised essays from Task 1 and was collected in Week 9, right after the writing course finished; and Task 2 had 29 essays collected in Week 13, four weeks after the writing course finished. Similarly, 87 essays written by students in the treatment groups consisted of 29 essays of Task 1, 29 revised essays of Task 1 (Task 1 revision), and 29 essays of Task 2. All the essays were typed and checked again and again to make sure that the typed data were the same as the original ones. Student names were removed from the essays and an essay ID was assigned to each essay as an identification symbol. To be specific, capital letters PH and number 2 were used to code for essays in Phase 2. Essays written by students in the treatment group were referred to by the letter T; the control group by the letter C; first draft of Task 1 by the letter F; revision of Task 1 by the letter S; essays of Task 2 by the letter D. Each student in each group was randomly allocated a number, ranging from 01 to 29. This number was constant for all three sets of writing (Task 1, revision of Task 1, and Task 2). For example, Essay ID. PH 213CF referred to the first draft of Task 1 in Phase 2 written by student number 13 in the control group and Essay IDs. PH 204TF, PH 204TS, and PH 204 TD were the three essays written in Phase 2 by the same student number 04 in the treatment group. The data used for Phase 2 also included
data from the questionnaire and focus groups on their previous writing experience as well as their perceptions of the intervention.

b. Text analysis

**Identification of coherence problems**

The system of coherence problems which was developed by reading 69 essays collected in Phase 1 was used to identify coherence problems in all three drafts written by students from both groups. More information about the development of the system is presented in Chapter 4. For essay analysis, each essay was first scanned to work out the discourse topic (main topic of the essay). Then the focus of analysis moved from the whole text to paragraphs to determine every coherence problem in the essay. Finally, the total number of coherence problems were computerised for analysis.

**Topical structure analysis (TSA) of the student writing**

**Unit of analysis**

In topical structure analysis (TSA), t-units are used as the unit of analysis instead of sentences as they can provide a distinction between simple sentences and compound sentences; therefore, they give “a more valid basis of comparison among ESL essays of varying degrees of proficiency” (Schneider & Connor, 1990, p. 415). The use of sentence units when applying TSA may lead to lost or inaccurate information, resulting in wrong identification of topical progression. This is because there are different sentence types (simple, compound, complex) and improper punctuation, which leads to the wrong identification of sentence type, occurs commonly in ESL writing (Schneider & Connor, 1990).

The first step in topical structure analysis is t-unit identification. The t-unit identification in this study was based on the guidelines for identifying t-units developed by Schneider and Connor (1990) and Wu (1997) and slashes (/) were used to separate t-units in each essay. Figure 3 below gives the guideline for t-unit identification in my study. I have included some of my own examples in the guideline.
Figure 3. Coding guide for t-unit identification (Wu, 1997, p. 56)

T-unit

1. Any independent clause and all its required modifiers. An independent clause (or main clause) is a clause that can stand by itself as a simple sentence. E.g. It rained heavily
2. Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by end punctuation. E.g. If that is true).
3. Any imperative. E.g. Finish the job by 5.00, please!

Topical subjects (topics) of the t-unit

The second step in topical structure analysis was to identify topical subjects (topics) of each t-unit and underline them. According to Lautamatti (1987), each sentence has 3 basic elements including the initial sentence element (ISE), the mood subject, and the topical subject. The initial sentence element (ISE) refers to the initially placed discourse material in a sentence, no matter what its form or type; the mood subject is the grammatical subject of the sentence; and the topical subject refers to the idea discussed. The following guidelines (Figure 4) for identifying topical subjects (topics) of the t-units were used in this study based on the studies of Schneider and Connor (1990) and Wu (1997), and a new subcategory called “opinion phrase” was added into the category of Exceptions in order to avoid the confusion in the identification of topical subjects of the t-units in argumentative essays. Examples are given under the italic format, and italic and bold noun/noun phrase refers to the topical subject of the t-unit. All cases were given at least one example to make the guidelines clear. Some of the examples were taken from Wu (1997) and some were my own invented examples. Examples which were attributed from Wu (1997) were cited at the end of each example. Examples without citation were my own ones.

Figure 4. Coding guide for topic identification in the t-units (Wu, 1997, pp. 57-58)

1. Topics (topical subjects) of the t-unit are defined as the leftmost NP dominated by the finite verb in the t-unit. It is what the t-unit is about.
E.g. In the sentence: Although it rained heavily, Lisa went to school. “Lisa went to school” is an independent clause in the sentence and “Lisa” is the topical subject because it is dominated by the finite verb.

2. Exceptions

a. Cleft sentence

E.g.  (1) It is the scientist who ensures that everyone reaches his office on time (Wu, 1997, p. 57).
(2) It was Daisy (whom) I met on the way to school.
(3) It was in December that we first met.

b. Anticipatory pronoun “It”

E.g. (1) It is well known that a society benefits from the work of its members (Wu, 1997, p. 57).
(2) It is necessary that he should take the earliest flight to come home.
(3) It would be better if people could balance time for work and life.

c. Existential “There”

E.g. (1) There often exists in our society a certain dichotomy of art and science (Wu, 1997, p. 57).
(2) There are thousands of planets out there.
(3) There used to be a bookstore next to my house.

d. Introductory phrase

E.g. (1) I believe that art and science sustain and support each other (Wu, 1997, p. 57).
(2) Some people claimed that social networks have positive effects on our community.
(3) I think that he will not show up.

e. Opinion phrase

E.g. (1) I agree with the idea of moving to the rural area.
(2) I disagree with your point.

f. Metatextual structure

E.g. (1) Next, we shall discuss the problem of inflation (Wu, 1997, p. 58)
(2) the following essay will clarify the writer’s viewpoints of inflation.
Topical progression

The third step in topical structure analysis was the identification of topical progression. In this study, the following guidelines for identifying topical progressions were developed based on Schneider and Connor (1990), Wu’s (1997) and Knoch’s (2007) working models and definitions. In particular, the categories of parallel and sequential progression were used as defined by Schneider and Connor (1990) and Wu (1997), but the term “sequential progression” was used for both direct and indirect sequential progression. Secondly, the terms “extended sequential progression and extended parallel progression” were adopted from Wu (1997) working model, but more detailed cases were added and further explanations were provided to make the definitions of the categories clear. Finally, superstructure and unrelated progression were used as defined by Knoch (2007). Figure 5 below presents the guidelines for the identification of topical progression

Figure 5. Guidelines for identifying topical progression

A. Parallel progression (PP)

*General definition:* Topical subjects of the successive t-units are the same

Case 1. Any topical subject that exactly repeats, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding t-unit topic. *E.g.* John is walking in the street. He is carrying a very big backpack.

Case 2. Any topical subject that is a singular or plural form of the immediately preceding t-unit topic. *E.g.* A Dalmatian is a type of dog. Dalmatians are very popular in this country. (Wu, 1997, p. 59)

Case 3. Any topical subject that is affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding t-unit topic. *E.g.* Everyone in this class loves sports, but no one likes wrestling. (Wu, 1997, p. 59)

Case 4. Any topical subject that has the same head noun as the immediately preceding t-unit topic. *E.g.* The ideas of scientists are helpful, but the ideas of artists can’t be ignored.
B. Sequential progression (SP)

**General definition:** The comment of the previous t-unit becomes the topic of the following t-unit

Case 1. Any topical subject that is the comment of the previous t-unit. *E.g. I have a dog. The dog is cute.* *(Wu, 1997, p. 60)*

Case 2. Any topical subject that is a derivation of the previous t-unit topic/or comment (*e.g. Science, Scientists*). *(Wu, 1997, p. 60)*

Case 3. Any topical subject that is related to the previous t-unit topic/or comment by a part-whole relationship (*e.g. these groups, housewives, children, and old people*). *(Wu, 1997, p. 60)*

Case 4. Any topical subject that repeats a part but not all of the previous t-unit topic/or comment (*e.g. science and art, science, art*).

Case 5. Any topical subject that is related to the previous t-unit topic/or comment by semantic sets (*e.g. scientist, their inventions and discoveries, and the invention of the radio, telephone, and television*). *(Wu, 1997, p. 60)*

C. Extended parallel progressions (EPP)

**General definition:** A topic before the previous t-unit(s) becomes the topic of the new t-unit

Case 1. Any topical subject that is interrupted by at least one different topic (either sequential topic or unrelated topic) before it returns to a previous t-unit topic (either exact repetition or a pronominal form, or a synonym). *E.g. Spring is a beautiful season. Trees and grass turn green everywhere. Spring is a lovely season.* *(Wu, 1997, p. 61)*

Case 2. Any topical subject that is a singular or plural form of the topic before the previous t-unit(s). *E.g. A Kiwi is a type of bird. I have heard about New Zealand. Kiwis are very popular in this country.*
Case 3. Any topical subject that has the same head noun as the topic before the previous t-unit(s). E.g. **The ideas of scientists are helpful, and people are so lucky about that. But the ideas of artists can’t be ignored.**

D. Extended sequential progression (ESP)

*General Definition:* The comment of one t-unit becomes the topic of a non-consecutive t-unit.

Case 1. Any topical subject that is the comment of the t-unit before the previous t-unit(s). E.g. *I have a dog, but I don’t like its behavior. It always barks whenever it sees me.*

Case 2. Any topical subject that is a derivation of the t-unit topic/or comment before the previous t-unit(s). E.g. *I’m interested in science, but I’m not good enough to follow scientific subjects. In my opinion, scientists are born, not nurtured.*

Case 3. Any topical subject that has a part-whole relationship with the t-unit topic/or comment before the previous t-unit(s). E.g. **Timesaving devices are becoming more and more popular in our home. People are enjoying more and more benefits from them. Washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners help save time and reduce labor.**

Case 4. Any topical subject that repeats a part but not all of the t-unit topic/or comment before the previous t-unit(s). E.g. **There are two main points in this essay. The first point is __. (other text). The second point is __. (Wu, 1997, p. 60)**

Case 5. Any topical subject that is related to the t-unit topic/or comment before the previous t-unit(s) by semantic sets. E.g. *In my opinion, scientists are born, not nurtured, so sometimes it is not easy to fully understand their way of thinking. However, their inventions and discoveries are not too difficult to be accepted.*

E. Superstructure
General definition: Coherence is created by a linking device instead of topical progression. *E.g.* Reasons may be the advance in transportation and the promotion of New Zealand’s natural environment and “green image”. *For example,* the filming of “The Lord of the rings” brought more tourists to explore the beautiful nature of NZ. (Knoch, 2007, p. 115)

**F. Unrelated progression (UP)**

General Definition: Any topical subject that is not related to the previous t-unit topic/comment or discourse topic. *E.g.* Summer is a lovely season. *I saw a bird in a tree.*

*Charting the topical progressions*

The final step in the topical structure analysis was to chart the topical progressions on a diagram. The way the ideas were developed in each essay was clearly shown in the visual representation of the types of progression used. See Chapter 4 for more details about the procedure of topical structure analysis as well as examples of how topical structure analysis was operationalized in this study.

**c. Rating scales and raters**

**Rating scales**

As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, one of the purposes of Phase 2 was to investigate the influence of the intervention on the coherence as well as the overall quality of the writing produced by Vietnamese EFL students. In order to reach this goal, a set of rating scales were developed to score the coherence and the overall quality of writing produced before and after the intervention. The scale for measuring coherence was developed based on topical structure analysis (TSA) because TSA is considered as “an objective discourse analytic measure of coherence” (Knoch, 2007, p. 121). As stated by Knoch, using the TSA-based scale would help raters to rate the writing with more accuracy, therefore, the TSA-based rating scale for coherence used in this study was
adopted from the TSA-based scale by Knoch (2007, p. 117). However, some modifications were made to make the scale clearer and easier to users (raters) when they employed the scale to score students’ writing. Details about this scale can be seen in Appendix 7.

The scale for measuring overall writing quality was developed based on criteria that have been found to be important in previous research on assessing writing (Connor-Linton & Polio, 2014; East, 2009; Ken Hyland, 2003) as well as based on the analysis of students’ actual writing in Phase 1 of this study. The scoring rubric for overall quality focuses on assessing four criteria: content, organization and coherence, vocabulary, and language use. Content and organization and coherence account for 60% of the total mark with an equal distribution of 30% each. Vocabulary and language use account for 40% with 20% each (see Appendix 8 for more details about this scale).

*Raters*

Two raters rated the compositions. I was the first rater and the second was a fellow PhD candidate doing research in writing. Prior to scoring the writing, the researcher conducted two rater-training sessions.

In the first training session, the second rater was given the scoring scale for overall quality developed by the researcher and was asked to focus on four main criteria in the scale when they rated the writing. For the purpose of norming the raters, three essays were selected for pilot rating. First, the raters discussed the four criteria that they were to focus on when rating the essay. Then, the raters individually rated an essay using the scale criteria. Afterwards, the raters compared the scores and discussed the rating. If the scores given on the essay were similar, the raters went on to rate another essay, but in the event that there were differences of more than one point, the two raters analysed the essay again, focusing on the four criteria and rated the task. This process was repeated until the two raters reached agreement. This procedure of rater training followed that used by Shohamy, Gordon, and Kraemer (1992). Then the two raters rated a random sample of 30 essays written by participants in Phase 2. Cronbach’s alpha was used to check the inter-rater reliability and the result is reported in the following section.
After the second rater finished rating 30 essays using the scale for overall writing quality, the second training session was conducted. In this training section, the researcher introduced topical structure analysis (TSA) to the second rater. Definitions, explanations and examples were given to clarify the terms used in the topical structure analysis. Similar to the first training session, three essays were selected for piloting the topical structure analysis (TSA). First, the two raters discussed the guideline for the identification of t-unit, topical subject, and topical progression. Then the raters individually identified the t-unit, the topical subject, and the topical progression in an essay. If the two raters shared the same identification of t-unit, topical subject, and topical progression, they continued to analyse another essay. If there were differences in the identification of t-unit, topical subject, and topical progression between two raters, they analysed the essay again until they reached an agreement.

When the second rater was clear about applying TSA in the writing, she was given the TSA-based scale for coherence and was asked to focus on the types of topical progression in each essay before rating it. Also, the two raters together rated three essays and discussed if the difference of more than one point occurred until they arrived at a norm. Thirty essays that the two raters rated using the scale for overall quality were analysed using TSA and were rated using TSA-based scale for coherence by the two raters. Cronbach’s alpha was again used to check the inter-rater reliability and the result was reported below.

3.3.5. Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are two essential qualities of both quantitative and qualitative research. However, these criteria are differently interpreted in the two types of research, and, accordingly, the strategies used to ensure they are also different. This section will describe strategies which are used to ensure the validity and reliability of the study are included.

Validity

Two types of validity that need to be taken into consideration in both quantitative and qualitative methods are internal validity and external validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). While internal validity is related to “accuracy and correctness”(Cohen et al., 2000, p. 252), external
validity refers to “the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases, settings or situations, i.e. to the transferability of the findings” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 254). In this study, great effort was made to maximise both internal validity and external validity of the research.

**Internal validity**

There are several kinds of threats to interval validity such as “participant characteristics, participant mortality, participant inattention and attitude, participant maturation, data collection (location and collector), and instrumentation and test effect” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 161). In order to minimize threats to internal validity, there were a number of ways adopted to compromise internal validity in the study.

First, the research used careful procedures for selecting students. All students in Phase 2 were 3rd year students; they had been taught five writing modules (1-5) at university and were not studying any writing course at the time the treatment was conducted. This means students had the same background, learning experience, and approximately the same proficiency level.

Second, in order to deal with dropout rate, the researcher always checked attendance twice, before the lesson and after the lesson. At the first meeting with the researcher, students were told that there were two main parts in the treatment. If they missed any lessons in the first part of the treatment, their names would be removed from the class list and they were not allowed to join the treatment anymore. They were allowed to miss one lesson in the second part of the treatment, but not allowed to miss the last lesson, or else their writing would not be used in the study.

Third, in order to prevent the Hawthorne and halo effects, the experiment was conducted blind, and the participants were not told whether they were in the control group or in the treatment group. In addition, both groups were taught by the same teacher (the researcher) and all activities given in each lesson were interactively designed to minimize fatigue and boredom in the class.
Finally, the tasks used in the study were equivalent and comparable: (1) they were essays based on argumentation, a type of essay that students had been taught before; (2) the length of the essays was 250 – 300 words, the length that students were familiar with when producing an argumentative essay; (3) effort was made to ensure that instructions/ questions in the tasks were clear and easy to understand.

**External validity**

With external validity, researchers are concerned with the generalizability of the findings. In other words, they are concerned “with the extent to which the findings of the study are relevant not only to the research population, but also to the wider population of language learners” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 172). Because the basis of generalizability is the particular sample selected (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 172), in my study the participants were randomly assigned into two groups and they had no idea about what group they belonged to. In addition, the setting of the study was stated clearly (at university level); the size of 29 students per group was sufficient to allow for generalization of results (15-30 per group is enough in experimental studies according to (Fraenkel et al., 2015); such biodata information as age, gender, previous academic experience, level of proficiency were also collected. Students’ real names were excluded from their writing to guarantee confidentiality.

**Reliability**

Reliability in its simplest definition refers to consistency (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 180). In my study, reliability was achieved as follows.

First, writing tasks given were equivalent in terms of length, genre, and level. This means the type of writing in the two tasks was argumentative writing at the intermediate to high intermediate level (topics for writing tasks were taken from *Effective Academic Writing 2* by Savage and Mayer (2005) and *Effective Academic Writing 3* by Davis and Liss (2006)) and the length requirement was between 250 – 300 words. In each task, students were given only one topic to write about, and clear and accurate instructions were provided. In addition, writing tasks were given to students in the same place, at the same time (Weeks 4, 9, 13) and under the same conditions (in
class under the teacher’s supervision; allowance to use class notes and dictionary, but no allowance for Internet access, and so on).

Second, three sets of students’ writing (Task 1, Task 1 revision, and Task 2) were rated by two raters, the researcher (Rater 1) and a fellow PhD candidate (Rater 2) who was also the second rater/coder in Phase 1. Rater 2 was carefully trained in the use of two rating scales and in the implementation of topical structure analysis (TSA) in student writing. Cronbach’s alpha was used to check inter-rater reliability and the result ($\alpha = 0.83$) yielded a satisfactory agreement between two raters.

3.3.6. Summary

The aim of Phase 2 was to investigate the effects of the intervention, involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis, on students’ writing performance. The intervention was conducted in a Vietnamese university in 13 weeks. Data in Phase 2 includes three sets of students’ writing collected before and after the intervention, survey questionnaires, and focus groups. Data from survey questionnaires and focus groups were collected after the intervention. For data analysis, textual analysis was conducted first, and then statistical analysis was employed to examine the impacts of the intervention on the writing performance of students who participated in the intervention. Results of data analysis will be presented and discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.
CHAPTER 4. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will present the way the analytical framework that was used for identifying coherence problems in the student writing was developed and operationalized. Also, I will provide explanations and examples of the framework and provide an example to illustrate the way the framework was applied to student writing.

4.1. The Development of the Framework

A framework was developed to analyse the types and frequency of coherence problems in the writing of Vietnamese students. The reasons behind choosing this framework relates to the nature of the data under investigation and the types of coherence breaks that Vietnamese students produce when writing in English. A total of 69 students agreed to contribute their writing for analysis in Phase 1, so the framework was developed based on studying 69 collected essays.

I used Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy to develop the analytical framework for my study. In Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy, there were two main types of coherence breaks: topic-structuring coherence breaks and cohesion-related coherence breaks and eleven subtypes. Of eleven subtypes, six subtypes including unspecified topic, unjustified change of/drift in topic, misleading paragraph division, irrelevance, misleading ordering of material, and misleading heading were topic-structuring coherence breaks and five subtypes including uncertain inference ties, missing or misleading sentence connection, misleading distribution of given and new information within the sentence, too great a distance between the cohesive items in a cohesive chain, and the type of cohesive tie does not actually hold were cohesion-related coherence breaks.

As mentioned above, Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy was used as a basis for the development of the framework in my study, so I analysed my data in the same way that Wikborg did. Wikborg started by reading about 30 out of 144 collected essays (equivalent to 20% of the writing collected), I also started by analysing 20% of the essays that I had collected. Whenever I encountered a problem that prevented me from following the line of reasoning or that caused a break in the flow of ideas, I marked it and tried to classify it under the categories suggested by Wikborg (1990).
During the process, I realized three major issues. First, some of the categories in Wikborg (1990)’s taxonomy were inapplicable in my students’ writing. For example, headings were not used in the Vietnamese students’ writing, so the category of misleading headings was excluded from the framework I developed. Second, I had difficulties in explicating clearly some categories of problems such as unspecified topic or unspecified change/ drift of topic. Take the category of unspecified topic as an example. This category which could appear both in the introduction and at paragraph level could cause a loss of topic control. In the introduction, the unspecified topic could be the failure to provide the thesis statement which orients the reader to the discourse topic. At paragraph level, unspecified topic could be the result of the change of/ drift in topic or the result of no/ little elaboration of the statement made, making it difficult for the reader to relate the information to the topic developed previously. This means there were sometimes overlaps among some of Wikborg’s categories that are difficult to describe clearly and precisely. Finally, I found that there existed some categories of coherence breaks in my students’ real writing but were not pointed out in Wikborg (1990)’s taxonomy such as macrostructure-related problems or problems related to metadiscoursal markers. Due to these major issues, the framework was adjusted to take account of these. To be specific, I reviewed the published literature (Bamberg, 1983; Ghazzoul, 2008; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; K. Hyland, 2004; Lee, 2002b; Wikborg, 1990) on coherence and coherence problems again and again and I realized that the problems in the Vietnamese EFL students’ writing were caused by breaks related to macrostructure, topic unity, paragraph unity, cohesion, and metadiscourse. Therefore, instead of two main types of problems (Topic-Structuring Problems and Cohesion Problems) and 11 subtypes under these two main types as in Wikborg (1990), the framework used in my study consisted of five main types, that is macrostructure-related problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and metadiscourse-related problems, and 29 subtypes under these five main types. The categories listed in the analytical framework below in Section 4.3 covered such types of breaks. After three times of revision, the framework was ready to use and repeatedly checked against the data. Below table summarizes the process of developing the taxonomy that was used in my present study.
Table 4.1. Process of developing the framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Things to be done</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Step 1** | • Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy as a basis for the development of the framework;  
• Analyse 20% of the total essays | • Mismatches were found between categories in Wikborg’s taxonomy and problems identified in students’ actual essays |
| **Step 2** | • Review the published literature to find out categories that fit problems identified in students’ actual writing. | • First draft of the framework was developed |
| **Step 3** | • A second coder was invited to analyse the same 20% of the total essays as the researcher did.  
• A first meeting between the researcher and the second coder took place before the second coder did the analysis.  
• At the meeting, the first draft of the framework was introduced to the second coder. Explanations of terms in the framework were given. Questions raised by the second coder were answered. | • The second coder was clear about the framework and started analysing 20% of the essays |
| Step 4 | • A second meeting between the researcher and the second coder took place after the second coder completed the analysis of 20% of the essays  
• Mismatches between the two coders in the ways of their ways of identifying the problems, in the constituents of the framework, and in the procedure of analysis were discussed.  
• Changes to the framework were made | • Second draft of the framework was developed at the end of the second meeting |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>• The researcher analysed the rest of the essays using the second version of the framework. Some changes to the terms used in the framework were made</td>
<td>• Third draft of the framework was developed after the total essays were analysed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Step 6 | • A third meeting between the two coders took place when the analysis of 69 essays was completed.  
• A pilot of applying the framework to three randomly selected essays from the data was carried out.  
• Discussion took place and changes were made. | • The final draft of the framework was developed at the end of this meeting. |
| Step 7 | • Total 69 essays collected in Phase 1 were reanalysed using the final draft of the framework | • Answers to Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 were found out and presented in Chapter 5 |
4.2. The Operationalization Procedure of the Framework

The overall aims of operationalizing the framework were to see if others could apply it easily, if the process of its application was consistent, and if it could help users - both teachers and students - to identify coherence problems in student writing.

In order to reach the goals, three meetings between me and the second coder were conducted. The first meeting was in August 2017 when the first version of the framework had been developed based on the analysis of 20% of the collected essays as well as Wikborg’s (1990) taxonomy. Details of the constituents of the framework were introduced to the second coder and explanation of all the linguistic terms in the framework was given. The second coder was asked to raise questions and give feedback about the framework. Such questions as “should grammar errors be marked” or “should sentence fragments be marked”, etc. raised by the second coder were answered and in the light of the feedback received, the first version of the framework was revised.

Then, the second coder was asked to analyse the same 20% of the collected essays using the revised framework as I had to see whether there was any mismatch between the problems she discovered and the system I developed. A second meeting took place in September 2017 when the second coder had finished analysing 20% of the essays. The purpose of this meeting was to revise and refine the first version of the framework based on two raters’ analysis of 20% of the total essays. At the meeting, the two raters discussed the mismatch between their ways of identifying the problems, the constituents of the framework, and the procedure of analysis. Two issues that needed adjustment in order to improve the framework were also discussed. The first one was one subtype of paragraph unity-related problems namely “Loose connection between propositions within paragraph” which was an overlap of other subtypes such as “Topic drift within paragraph”, “Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph”, or “No/little elaboration of the proposition made”. As a result, the subtype called “Loose connection between propositions within paragraph” was excluded from the framework. Another issue related to the terms used in cohesion-related problems. At first, such terms as underuse and overuse were used to name problems related to conjunctions, content lexical ties, and collocations. However, it was hard to
decide what constituted underuse and overuse. As a consequence, the terms *underuse* and *overuse* were replaced with such terms as *misuse* and *missing*. At the end of the meeting, the second version of the framework was developed.

I continued to analyse the rest of the collected essays using the second version of the framework. Based on the analysis of all 69 collected essays, some changes were made to the framework and the final version of the framework was developed. A third meeting took place in November 2017 when the analysis of all 69 essays was finished. At this meeting, both the researcher and the second coder together operationalized the framework by applying it to three essays from the data. A detailed discussion of the terms used and the meaning of the constituents of the framework took place before the application. Discussion took place right after the coders had finished applying the framework to three essays and can be summarised as follows:

1. This study focuses on the problems of coherence at the inter-sentential rather than sentential level, so grammar/ spelling mistakes were not considered as coherence breaks.

2. The framework was not difficult to apply, and no more issues arose during the process of its application. This affirmed the consistency of the application procedure.

3. Both the coders were able to identify instances of coherence breakdowns when applying the framework to the data. This showed that others, including students, should be able to use the framework to identify the problems of coherence in the writing if they were carefully trained with the framework.

After three meetings with detailed discussions and suggestions and after the operationalization of the framework using students’ actual writing, the theoretical and analytical framework was finalized and ready for application.
4.3. The Framework

The following framework (Figure 6) was developed based on the previous studies of the characteristics of coherence, the problems of coherence in the writing for data analysis, and the analysis of Vietnamese EFL students’ writing. Explanations and examples are provided to make the framework clearer and easier to understand.

*Figure 6. Theoretical and analytical framework for the data analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of coherence problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Macrostructure-related problems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Missing introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Missing conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No/ unclear overall structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Topic unity – related problems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No/ unclear communicative purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No/unclear topic specified in the whole text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Misleading disposition in the whole text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Paragraph unity-related problems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1. No lead-in statement(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. No thesis statement(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. No map statement(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Poor body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1. No/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2. Topic drift within paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3. Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4. No/little elaboration of the proposition made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5. Repetition of idea(s) within paragraph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.6. Misleading paragraph division
   9.6.1. Long paragraph with topic change
   9.6.2. Paragraph change without change in topic

10. Poor conclusion
   10.1. No sense of closure in conclusion

IV. Cohesion-related problems
   11. Incorrect use of reference
   12. Uncertain use of pronominal reference
   13. Too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent
   14. Misuse of conjunction
   15. Missing conjunction
   16. Too much use of conjunction
   17. Too much repetition of content lexical ties
   18. Misuse of content lexical ties
   19. Missing content lexical ties
   20. Misuse of collocations

V. Metadiscourse-related problems
   21. Misuse of stance markers
   22. Repetition of stance markers

The following table (Table 4.1) presents explanations and examples to illustrate the terms used in the framework. Examples were extracted from students’ writing in Phase 1. Please see Appendix 9 from 9.1 to 9.15 for examples of students’ essays in Phase 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of coherence problems</th>
<th>Definitions/explanations</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Missing introduction</td>
<td>There is no introduction paragraph in the text</td>
<td>Essay ID. PH 121 (Appendix 9.7) is an example of an essay missing an introduction. This essay has three paragraphs. The first paragraph discusses the advantages of social network, the second paragraph discusses the disadvantages. The last paragraph is considered as the conclusion paragraph. There is no introduction paragraph to tell readers what the writer is going to write about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Missing conclusion</td>
<td>No conclusion paragraph is included in the text</td>
<td>Essay ID. PH 118 (Appendix 9.6) is an example of an essay missing a conclusion. This essay has three paragraphs. The first paragraph is considered as the introduction paragraph because it tells the readers that the writer will discuss two sides of social network: the advantages and the disadvantages. One paragraph in the body discusses the advantages of social network and the other the disadvantages. There is no conclusion paragraph to summarize the main points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No/ unclear overall structure</td>
<td>No overall structure is provided, or the overall structure is unclear.</td>
<td>Essay ID. PH 108 (Appendix 9.4) is an example of having unclear overall structure in the text. Readers find it difficult to follow the structure of the essay. There are three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall structure can be viewed as the essay outline which consists of three functional units, that is, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Also, the overall structure can be viewed in terms of the content included in the essay. Such structures can be problem-solution, compare-contrast, cause-effect, etc.</td>
<td>paragraphs in the essays, but readers do not know which paragraph is the introduction, which is the body, and which is the conclusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Topic unity-related problems</td>
<td>4. No/ unclear communicative purpose</td>
<td>There is no/unclear communicative purpose in the writing. The writer’s purpose in writing the essay can be teaching readers something new or persuading readers to see his/her point of view or entertaining readers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No/unclear topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>Reader finds it difficult to understand the overall topic presented in the text</td>
<td>Essay ID. PH 129 (Appendix 9.9) is an example of unclear topic specified in the whole text because there are at least 2 topics discussed in the essay. The first one is to provide guidance to the use of Facebook and the second one is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of fusing Facebook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>That topic/ideas in one or more paragraphs in the essays do not support the overall thesis topic in the text</td>
<td>Paragraph 4 in the essay ID. PH 138 (Appendix 9.12) is an example of Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text. The idea discussed in this paragraph is about the harm of using cell phones while the overall topic is about the advantages and disadvantages of social network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Misleading disposition (ordering of content/ materials) in the whole text</td>
<td>The organization/ the order of points to be discussed in the essay does not serve the development of the topic</td>
<td>Essay ID. PH 158 (Appendix 9.14) is an example of misleading disposition. Paragraph 3 in this essay acts as a rebuttal paragraph, so it should be after Paragraph 4, before the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Paragraph unity-related problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Poor introduction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1. No lead-in statement(s)</td>
<td>there is no brief definition or introduction of the main element of the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. No thesis statement(s)</td>
<td>there is no sentence stating the main idea of the essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. No map statement(s)</td>
<td>there is no statement indicating the direction the essay is going to take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Poor body paragraph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1. No/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph</td>
<td>Readers are confused about the topic discussed within paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2. Topic drift within paragraph</td>
<td>Drift from one aspect of the topic to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3. Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph</td>
<td>The writer supplies irrelevant content/materials to the paragraph topic, causing difficulty in relating the content/materials provided to the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4. No/little elaboration of the proposition made (e.g. no example, no illustrations, no justification to back up opinions or generalizations)</td>
<td>Writer does not support or develop the proposition made with explanation, illustration, or example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5. Repetition of idea(s)within paragraph</td>
<td>Writer does not elaborate the idea, but repeats it again and again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6. Misleading paragraph division</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6.1. Long paragraph with topic change</td>
<td>The writer discusses more than one topic in a single paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6.2. Paragraph change without change in topic</td>
<td>The writer changes the paragraph while still discussing the same topic as the paragraph before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Poor conclusion</td>
<td>Readers do not recognize that the writer is making a conclusion and/or remain unclear about what the writer aims to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1. No sense of closure in conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Incorrect use of reference (pronouns/ demonstratives)</td>
<td>When the writer uses a reference item incorrectly, readers may be puzzled as to what the writer means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Uncertain use of pronominal reference</td>
<td>Readers find it difficult to establish the relationship to a noun/ noun phrase as indicated by the pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent</td>
<td>The distance between a pronoun and its antecedent is too great to establish the relationship which is being indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Misuse of conjunction</td>
<td>The wrong use of conjunction may lead to a lack of logical meaning relationships within paragraph or text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Missing conjunction</td>
<td>No conjunction is used where it is needed to introduce the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Too much use of conjunction</td>
<td>The excessive use of conjunctions makes readers confused about the writer’s meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Too much repetition of content lexical ties</td>
<td>words or phrases are repeated without adding much to the argument. In other words, this repetition does not make any semantic contribution to the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Misuse of content lexical ties</td>
<td>the writer fails to provide a correct content lexical tie making readers puzzled about the writer’s meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Missing content lexical ties</td>
<td>missing an important content lexical tie can cause bafflement to readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Misuse of collocations</td>
<td>The incorrect use of collocation makes the writing sound weird and unnatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>misuse of stance markers makes the ideas discussed in the text unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of coherence problems</td>
<td>Definitions/explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Repetition of stance markers</td>
<td>A particular stance marker is repeated again and again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. The Application of the Framework

In this section, I will apply the framework to an essay from the data in Phase 1 to show how coherence breaks are noted. Table 4.2 below presents the results in the analysis of the Essay ID. PH 135 from the data in Phase 1.

**Essay ID. PH 135**

**TOPIC:** it is said that social media has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Nowadays, social network like Facebook, Twitter... is used by hundreds of people in the world. (S2) It is growing rapidly which affects us in different ways. (S3) Despite negative aspects, I believe that there is a benefit impact in social network nowadays.

(Pa 2)

(S4) First of all, the first advantage is social network helps people have good communication. (S5) We may stay in touch with our family and friends in Facebook, Twister... (S6) Social network helps people share our emotion, thinking, information, photos and so on along with our friends. (S7) Because of its, we can know what my friends doing and how they feel everyday. (S8) It provides a way to connect with people living far away by making friends. (S9) It can help us connect with new friends and reconnect with old friends.

(Pa 3)

(S10) Secondly, because of social network, companies may gain business. (S11) As we know, people use social network more and more. (S12) Therefore, the best way is advertised on social network to attract attention of customers. (S13) And social network which provides free advertise, can helps them to do it. (S14) We may see the large amount of promotion of companies on social network. (S15) Besides, social network also increases competitiveness among them. (S16) We can find lots of products of different companies by social network. (S17) So, companies need improve the quality of their products to sells more. (S18) It helps companies develop.
(Pa 4)

(S19) Furthermore, social network which is a huge knowledge, is useful. (S20) Todays, we can learn everywhere and whenever we want thanks to social network. (S21) We can find any interesting information on it quickly. (S22) It helps us spread and obtain information fast. (S23) It likes encyclopedia online.

(Pa 5)

(S24) Some people said that social network makes us waste time. (S25) Especially, young people has trend which depends on social network such as Facebook, Instagram, twister, ... (S26) However, I think we can awake and control it by ourselves.

(Pa 6)

(S27) Although it has some negatives effect, social network may bring more positive in our lifestyle. (S28) Using social network is the useful way to make our life better.
Table 4.3. The framework applied to the Essay ID. PH 135 from the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of coherence problems</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Macrostructure-related problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Missing introduction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Missing conclusion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No/ unclear overall structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Topic unity – related problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No/ unclear communicative purpose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No/unclear topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specified in the whole text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Misleading disposition in the whole text</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Paragraph unity-related problems</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor introduction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1. No lead-in statement(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. No thesis statement(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. No map statement(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Poor body paragraph</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1. No/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In Paragraph 4, the topic sentence is unclear, so readers do not understand which point the writer would like to support: social network is a huge knowledge or social network is useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2. Topic drift within paragraph</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In Paragraph 3, the writer changes topic at sentences 15, 16, 17, 18 moving from advantages to companies in gaining business to advantages to customers because companies become more competitive and having to improve their products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3. Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In Paragraph 5, S25 is a kind of irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph because it neither explains the topic sentence nor develops the idea expressed in the topic sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9.4. No/little elaboration of the proposition made                   | 4     | **Case 1.** In Paragraph 3, the writer provides little explanation to explain why social network can increase the competitiveness among online companies.  
**Case 2.** In Paragraph 4, the writer presents no evidence to support the idea that social network is like an encyclopedia (S23).  
**Case 3.** In Paragraph 5, the topic sentence is that social network makes us waste time, but no evidence is provided to back up this idea. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Case 4. Also in Paragraph 5, the writer mentioned that we can control it (“it” here can be either the waste of time when using social network or the young people’s dependence on social network), but no evidence was given to clarify the idea of by what way we can control it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.5. Repetition of idea(s)within paragraph</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Paragraph 2, the writer keeps repeating the idea that social networking sites help people get in touch/connect with their family and friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6. Misleading paragraph division</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6.1. Long paragraph with topic change</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6.2. Paragraph change without change in topic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Poor conclusion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.1. No sense of closure in conclusion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paragraph 6 is the conclusion paragraph, but readers are unclear about the writer’s aim when writing this paragraph. The writer neither restated the main argument nor suggested implications based on evidence presented. In addition, the use of the hedging marker “may” in S27 shows that the writer is not sure about the positive effects of social network, which fails to make last effort to convince readers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11. Incorrect use of reference | 3 | **Case 1.** The possessive adjective “our” in S6 in Paragraph 2 is not used to refer to the noun “people”. Instead, “their” should be used to replace “our”

**Case 2.** The adjective “its” in S7 is wrongly used. Instead, the pronoun “it” should be used.

**Case 3.** The possessive adjective “my” in S7 in paragraph 2 has no relationship with the subject pronoun “we”. “Our” would be the correct choice, not “my”.

| 12. Uncertain use of pronominal reference | 4 | **Case 1.** In S7, readers will feel confused with the use of “its” because they do not know whether “its” here refers to “social network” or “the sharing of emotion, thinking, information, and photos”.

**Case 2.** Readers will be confused about the use of object pronoun “it” in S13 in Paragraph 3 because it is not clear whether “it” here refers to “gain business” or “attract attention of customers”.

**Case 3.** The subject pronoun “It” in S18 in Paragraph 3 is considered as uncertain pronominal reference because readers are confused about whether “It” here refers to “social network” or “competitiveness among businesses” or “improving the quality of the products”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 4. The object pronoun “it” in S26 in Paragraph 5 also makes readers confused about whether it refers to “social network” or “people’s trend to depend on social network” or “the waste of time of social network”.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Misuse of conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Missing conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difference between Paragraph 5 and other paragraphs is that it acts as a rebuttal paragraph. So, transition marker is needed to introduce the topic of this paragraph. Also, the transition marker helps readers know about the change to a new topic. In this case, such transition markers as “however”, “nevertheless”, or “yet” can be used at the beginning of the paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Too much use of conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Paragraph 3 from S10 to S14, the use of such conjunctions as secondly, because of, as we know, therefore, and does not help make the idea clearer but more confused. The writer can reduce the excessive use of conjunction by combining two or more sentences into one using complex or compound sentence. For example, S10 to S14 can be rewritten as follows: “Second, companies may gain business based on the increasing number of social network users. Because social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
network provides free advertising, enterprises can make use of it to offer a large amount of promotion to attract customers’ attention.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17. Too much repetition of content lexical ties</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>The words “friends” in Paragraph 2, “social network” and “companies” in Paragraph 3 are used repetitively without adding much to the arguments. Instead, the writer should use pronouns or synonyms to make the links.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Misuse of content lexical ties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In Paragraph 4, the verb “likes” in S23 “It likes encyclopedia online” is the misuse of content lexical ties because it makes readers confused about the sentence meaning. Instead, the adjective “like” should be used and the sentence should be “It is like an encyclopedia online”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Missing content lexical ties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Misuse of collocations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In S3, the phrase “impact in social network” is wrongly used. Instead, “impact from” should be used or the sentence can be rewritten as “Despite negative aspects, I believe that social network has a beneficial impact on us nowadays”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Misuse of stance markers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The use of the hedging marker “may” in S27 in Paragraph 6, the conclusion paragraph, shows that the writer is not very sure about the positive effects of social network on life, leading to the failure in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
convincing readers. Omitting this hedging marker would make the conclusion sentence more persuasive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. Repetition of stance markers</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of coherence problems in the essay</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5. Limitations of the Framework

Despite the usefulness of the framework in the teaching of coherence in writing, it has its limitations. First, the very specific genre I analysed, argumentative writing, might make it inappropriate to apply the framework to other genres. However, future researchers can go back to the framework and make changes if necessary, to suit their purposes. Second, the framework was developed based on analysis of the essays with the length of 200 – 300 words, so it might be inappropriate to apply the framework to long essays with headings or quotations. Instead, the framework can be used as a reference to develop another one. Third, Vietnamese EFL students’ writing was used to develop the framework, so those who wish to apply it to the writing of students from different countries may need to modify it to suit their students’ background. Finally, the framework is studied carefully to cover important aspects that cause a coherence breakdown. This does not mean that the framework has the final word; instead it is a trial based on what other researchers have started in the field of coherence analysis in ESL or EFL contexts. Other researchers can modify the framework and upgrade it with the aspects that they find are leading to coherence breakdowns.

4.6. Summary

In this chapter, I first presented the way the analytical framework for this study was developed. Then, the detailed explanations/examples of the categories in the framework so that teachers and students can easily apply it to identify the coherence problems in their writing were given. Also, I provided an example of applying the framework to a particular essay to show teachers and students how instances of coherence breakdown were identified and counted. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, I will present the findings of Phase 1, in which the types and frequency of coherence problems will be described and discussed.
CHAPTER 5. TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF COHERENCE PROBLEMS

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4, I presented the way the framework was developed. Also, I applied the framework to a sample from the data to illustrate how the framework was used to identify instances of coherence problems in students’ writing. This chapter deals with the results of analyzing 69 essays written by students in Phase 1, using the framework of coherence problems. To be specific, I first describe the types of coherence problems identified in students’ writing. Then I report the most frequent coherence problems found in the writing. Finally, I present a discussion of the findings. This chapter attempts to answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

RQ 1. What are the types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?
RQ 2. What are the most frequent coherence problems found in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?

5.2. Types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing

The taxonomy of coherence problems (see Figure 6 in Section 4.3) was implemented in the analysis of 69 essays written in Phase 1 in order to determine the types and frequency of coherence problems. It should be noted that very often more than one instance of a particular coherence breakdown was found in an essay, so I counted them more than once. For example, an essay might have two instances of topic drift, so I counted both; or a paragraph may have two instances of incorrect use of reference, so both were counted.

The application of the framework to 69 essays in Phase 1 showed an overall picture of the types of coherence problems that Vietnamese EFL students were most likely to display in their writing at university. Findings from the analysis of 69 essays in Phase 1 indicate that there was a total of 965 instances found related to five main types of coherence problems: macrostructure-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, topic unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and metadiscourse-related problems.
As shown in Table 5.1 paragraph unity-related problems were the most frequent problems in students’ writing. Of the total of 965 instances found in the analysis of 69 essays written in Phase 1, there were 619 instances related to paragraph unity, accounting for 64.2%. In addition, out of 69 essays, 68 were found to have this type of problem, accounting for 98.6%. In contrast, macrostructure-related problems were the least frequent problems when analyzing the 69 essays, with only 5 instances, accounting for 0.5% of the total 100% and only 3 essays (4.3%) had this type of problem, much fewer than paragraph unity-related problems.

Table 5.1. Main types of coherence problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main types of coherence problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each type</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each type</th>
<th>Number of essays with each type</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity-related problems:</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems:</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems:</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total instances of coherence problems:</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohesion-related problems are the second most frequent problem identified in students’ writing with 303 instances out of 965 instances in total, accounting for 31.4%. Although, nearly twice as many instances were related to paragraph unity compared with the number of instances related to cohesion, nevertheless almost all essays had both cohesion-related problems (67, or 97.1%), and unity-related problems (68, or 98.6%).

Although instances of the other two types of problems, topic unity-related problems and metadiscourse-related problems were more frequent than macrostructure-related problems in the analysis of 69 essays, they were not very frequent in the students’ writing when compared with paragraph unity-related problems and cohesion-related problems. There were 25 instances of topic unity-related problems (2.6%) and 13 instances of metadiscourse-related problems
(1.3%) in comparison with 619 instances (64.2%) of paragraph unity-related problems and 303 instances (31.4%) of cohesion-related problems. In addition, the number of essays with these two types of problems were also relatively small: 19 essays with topic unity-related problems (27.5%) and 11 essays with metadiscourse-related problems (15.9%), fewer than the 68 essays (98.6%) with paragraph unity-related problems and 67 essays (97.1%) with cohesion-related problems.

5.2.1. Macrostructure-related problems

Table 5.2 below indicates that there were 5 instances of “macrostructure-related problems” found in 3 essays in the data in Phase 1. Among 3 subtypes of macrostructure-related problems, there were two instances each of “missing introduction” and “missing conclusion” and one instance of “no/unclear overall structure” in the data. Similarly, the number of essays with “missing introduction” and “missing conclusion” were the same (2 essays each subtype) while only one essay had the problem of “no/unclear overall structure”.

Table 5.2. Macrostructure-related problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macrostructure-related problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Missing introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Missing conclusion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No/unclear overall structure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2. Topic unity-related problems

As shown in Table 5.3, 19 essays in the data in Phase 1 were found to have the problem of “topic unity-related problems” and there were 25 instances of “topic unity-related problems” in these essays. Among 4 subtypes of topic unity-related problems, “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text” accounted for the most, with 12 out of 25 instances identified and “no/unclear communicative purpose” accounted for the least, with 1 out of 25 instances.
Table 5.3. Topic unity-related problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic unity – related problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. No/ unclear communicative purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No/unclear topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Misleading disposition in the whole text</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“No/unclear topic specified in the whole text” was the second most prominent subtype of topic unity-related problems, with 8 instances. “misleading disposition in the whole text” ranked the third with 4 instances, one-third compared with the problem of “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text”.

Similarly, among 19 essays having topic unity-related problems, “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text” was also the subtype with the highest number of essays (10 essays) in comparison with the other 3 subtypes, and “no/ unclear communicative purpose” was the subtype with the smallest number of essays (1 essay). Also, “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text” was the subtype with the second biggest number of essays (8 essays) and the problem of “misleading disposition in the whole text” ranked the third (4 essays).

5.2.3. Paragraph unity-related problems

Findings from the analysis of 69 essays in Phase 1 showed that there was a total of 297 paragraphs, in which there were 67 introduction paragraphs, 162 body paragraphs, and 68 conclusion paragraphs. Table 5.4 below displays the findings regarding paragraph unity-related
problems. It shows that 619 instances of “paragraph unity-related problems” were identified in 247 paragraphs and in 68 essays.

Among problems related to the introduction, the body, and the conclusion, problems related to “poor body paragraph” accounted for the most, with 489 instances found in 145 paragraphs and in 68 essays. Problems related to “poor introduction” ranked the second (103 instances) and problems related to “poor introduction” ranked the third (49 instances).

Regarding subtypes related to the body paragraph, “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” were the most prominent problem with 139 instances found in 124 paragraphs and 63 essays had this problem (91.3%). In contrast, “misleading paragraph division” accounted for the least, with 7 instances in 7 paragraphs and only 6 essays had this problem (8.7%)

“Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph” was the second most frequent problem with 120 instances identified in 117 paragraphs and 60 essays in the data were found to have this problem. “topic drift within paragraph” was the third most frequent problem with 117 instances found in 117 paragraphs and in 57 essays.

Although “no/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph” and “repetition of ideas within paragraph” were not in the top three most frequent problems, they were still big problems that students in Phase 1 encountered when writing the body paragraph, with the evidence of 44 instances of “no/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph” found in 44 paragraphs and 40 instances of “repetition of ideas within paragraph” found in 40 paragraphs. In addition, 35 essays (50.7%) had the problem of “repetition of ideas within paragraph” and 33 essays (47.8%) had the problem of “no/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph”, confirming that these two problems were challenging problems to students in the study because approximately half of the students had this problem in their writing.

Regarding the problems in the introduction and conclusion paragraph, Table 5.4 indicates that students had the most problems with “no map statement(s)” in the introduction (48 instances in 48 essays) and “no sense of closure in conclusion” in the conclusion (49 instances in 49 essays). Also, “no lead-in statement(s)” in the introduction was a big problem which challenged students in the study, with 42 instances found in 42 essays
Table 5.4. Paragraph unity-related problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph unity-related problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each type</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each type</th>
<th>Number of paragraphs with each type</th>
<th>Percentage of paragraphs with each type</th>
<th>Number of essays with each type</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor introduction</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1. No lead-in statement(s)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. No/unclear thesis statement(s)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. No map statement(s)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Poor body paragraph</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1. No/ unclear topic sentence within paragraph</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2. Topic drift within paragraph</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3. Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4. No/little elaboration of the proposition made</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5. Repetition of ideas within paragraph</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6. Misleading paragraph division</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6.1. Long paragraph with topic change</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6.2. Paragraph change without change in topic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Poor conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1. No sense of closure in conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.4. Cohesion-related problems

As shown in the Table 5.5, 303 instances of “cohesion-related problems” were identified in the data in Phase 1 and 67 essays were found to have these problems, or 97.1%. Among 10 subtypes of cohesion-related problems, “incorrect use of reference” was the most frequent (72 instances) and “too much use of conjunction” was the least frequent (only 2 instances found).

“Uncertain use of pronominal reference” was the problem with the second most instances found (67 instances in 38 essays); “misuse of conjunction” was the third with 48 instances; and “misuse of content lexical ties” was the fourth with 43 instances.

Table 5.5. Cohesion-related problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohesion-related problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Incorrect use of reference</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Uncertain use of pronominal reference</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Misuse of conjunction</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Missing conjunction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Too much use of conjunction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Too much repetition of content lexical ties</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Misuse of content lexical ties</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Missing content lexical ties</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Misuse of collocations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>303</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted here that among 10 subtypes of cohesion-related problems, the instances of “incorrect use of reference” accounted for the most, but it does not mean that the problem of “incorrect use of reference” was the most widespread problem among students in the study. Instead,
“uncertain use of pronominal reference” was the most widespread subtype of cohesion-related problems with 55.1% of students having this problem in their essays (38 essays). “Misuse of conjunction” was the second most common subtype with 52.2% of students encountering this problem (36 essays) and “misuse of content lexical ties” was the third most common subtype with 50.7% of students having it in their essays (35 essays). The problem of “incorrect use of reference” ranked fourth with 49.3% of students having it in their essays (34 essays).

While “incorrect use of reference”, “uncertain use of pronominal reference”, “misuse of conjunction”, and “misuse of content lexical ties” were the four most prominent problems related to cohesion in the analysis of 69 essays, “too much use of conjunction” (2 instances). “too much repetition of content lexical ties” (3 instances), “missing content lexical ties” (8 instances), and “too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent” (15 instances) were the four least frequent problems of cohesion-related problems.

Regarding the problems of “missing conjunction” and “misuse of collocations”, although there were not many instances of these two problems identified (20 instances of “missing conjunction” and 25 instances of “misuse of collocations”), students still struggled with them. To be specific, 18 out of 69 essays had the problem of “missing conjunction” in their writing, accounting for 26.1%, and 17 essays (24.6%) had the problem of “misuse of collocations”.

### 5.2.5. Metadiscourse-related problems

Table 5.6 below presents the problems related to metadiscourse. In the analysis of 69 essays in Phase 1, 13 instances of metadiscourse-related problems were identified, and 11 essays were found to have these problems. Of two subtypes of metadiscourse-related problems, students had more problems with “misuse of stance markers” (12 instances) than with “repetition of stance markers” (1 instance). In addition, the number of essays having the problem of “misuse of stance markers” (10 essays) was ten times more than the number of essays having the problem of “repetition of stance markers” (1 essay).
Table 5.6. Metadiscourse-related problems in the essays in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metadiscourse-related problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. Misuse of stance markers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Repetition of stance markers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Frequency of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing

There were five main types of coherence problems identified in 69 essays written by Vietnamese EFL students, in which macrostructure-related problems and topic unity-related problems were considered as essay level problems (discourse level) and paragraph unity-related problems as paragraph level problems.

In terms of discourse level, there were 7 subtypes of problems, that is “missing introduction”, “missing conclusion”, “no/unclear overall structure”, “no/unclear communicative purpose”, “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text”, “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text”, and “misleading disposition in the whole text”. Table 5.7 below displays the three most frequent subtypes of coherence problems in terms of discourse level.

Table 5.7. Three most frequent coherence problems in terms of discourse level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtypes of coherence problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No/unclear topic specified in the whole text</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Misleading disposition in the whole text</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 5.7, the problem of “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text” was the most frequent regarding discourse level with 12 instances found in 10 essays. The problem of “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text” was the second most frequent with 8 instances identified in 8 essays and the problem of “misleading disposition in the whole text” was the third most frequent with four instances found in 6 essays. All the three most frequent subtypes of coherence problems in terms of discourse level were from topic unity-related problems.

At paragraph level, there were 11 subtypes of problems including three subtypes of “poor introduction paragraph”, seven subtypes of “poor body paragraph”, and one subtype of “poor conclusion paragraph”. Table 5.8 below shows the five most frequent subtypes of coherence problems at the level of paragraph.

Table 5.8. Five most frequent coherence problems at paragraph level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtypes of coherence problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each type</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each type</th>
<th>Number of paragraphs with each type</th>
<th>Percentage of paragraphs with each type</th>
<th>Number of essays with each type</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No/little elaboration of the proposition made</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Irrelevant content/materials within paragraph</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Topic drift within paragraph</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No sense of closure in conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No map statement(s)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 shows that the problem of “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” was the most frequent in terms of paragraph level with 139 instances identified in 124 paragraphs and in 63 essays. The second most frequent problem was the problem of “irrelevant content/materials within paragraph” with 120 instances found in 117 paragraphs and in 60 essays. The third most frequent problem was the problem of “topic drift within paragraph” with 117 instances identified in 117 paragraphs and in 57 essays. All the three most frequent problems were subtypes of “poor body
The problem of “no sense of closure in conclusion”, the subtype of “poor conclusion”, ranked fourth with 49 instances in 49 paragraphs and the problem of “no map statement(s)”, the subtype of “poor introduction” ranked the fifth with 48 instances in 48 paragraphs.

Regarding cohesion and metadiscourse, there were 12 subtypes of problems, in which there were 10 subtypes of cohesion-related problems and two subtypes of metadiscourse-related problems (misuse of stance markers and repetition of stance markers). Table 5.9 below shows the four most frequent problems in terms of cohesion and metadiscourse.

Table 5.9. Four most frequent coherence problems in terms of cohesion and metadiscourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtypes of coherence problems</th>
<th>Number of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of instances in each subtype</th>
<th>Number of essays with each subtype</th>
<th>Percentage of essays with each subtype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Incorrect use of reference</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Uncertain use of pronominal reference</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Misuse of conjunction</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Misuse of content lexical ties</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5.9, all the four most frequent problems were subtypes of cohesion-related problems. The problem of “incorrect use of reference” was the most frequent with 72 instances in 34 essays. The second most frequent problem was “uncertain use of pronominal reference” with 67 instances in 38 essays and the third most frequent problem was “misuse of conjunction” with 48 instances in 36 essays. The problem of “misuse of content lexical ties” ranked the fourth with 43 instances in 35 essays. No subtypes of metadiscourse-related problems were on the list because the instances of the two subtypes of metadiscourse-related problems found in the data were a lot fewer than those of cohesion-related problems.

5.4. Discussion

In this section, I discuss the findings of Phase 1 to find answers to the first two research questions. Findings of Phase 1 show that there were five main types (macrostructure-related problems, topic
unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and metadiscourse-related problems) and 30 subtypes of coherence problems in the writing of the 69 Vietnamese EFL students who participated in the study.

5.4.1. Macrostructure-related and Topic unity-related problems (Essay level problems)

First, some of students in the study had trouble creating a well-organized outline of the main functions of the writing (macrostructure). Such problems as missing introduction or missing conclusion were found in some essays. According to Ye (2013), the introduction paragraph is “effective in introducing the reader to the subject or the central idea that the writer will develop throughout the essay” (p. 280), so a missing introduction causes a breakdown in coherence of the writing because readers fail to understand the focus of the writing. Similarly, the role of the conclusion paragraph is to summarize the information in the writing (Crossley, Dempsey, & McNamara, 2011), so a missing conclusion makes readers confused about the strength of the arguments in the writing because of no summarization of the main idea and supporting arguments.

Second, such topic unity-related problems as “no/unclear communicative purpose”, “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text”, “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text”, and “misleading disposition in the whole text” were found in students’ writing. The findings show that, of the four subtypes, “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text” occurred with highest frequency. In other words, students in the study tended to change the topic in a new paragraph without noticing that the topic in the new paragraph did not relate to the discourse topic. For example, in Essay ID. PH 138 (Appendix 12), the topic discussed in Paragraph 4 is about the harm of using cell phones while the discourse topic is about the advantages and disadvantages of social networking.

Together with “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text”, “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text” was another topic unity-related problem that challenged students in the study. According to Ye (2013), one of the features that construct coherence in writing is that “the writer’s overall point of view is clear”(p. 280). When the writers fail to specify the topic in the writing, it shows that the writers “have not yet discovered the main point they wish to make about the subject” (Bamberg, 1983, p. 425) and the readers are hindered from integrating the writing into
a coherent whole. Of the students in the study, eight students (11.6%) displayed this problem in their writing, which indicates that these students failed to create expectations in the readers’ mind of what the writing was about, causing the lack of overall coherence. This finding is also consistent with the results of other previous studies (Ahmed, 2010; Masadeh, 2019; Wikborg, 1990). For example, Wikborg (1990) found that unspecified topic was in the top five subtypes of coherence breaks that were the most frequent in Swedish students’ writing.

5.4.2. Paragraph unity-related problems (Paragraph level problems)

Paragraph unity-related problems were the most frequent problems found in the students’ writing. Eleven subtypes of problems relating to paragraph unity were highly frequent in the writing of the students in the study, including three subtypes of coherence breaks resulting in a poor introduction paragraph, seven subtypes of breaks resulting in poor body paragraph, and one subtype of breaks resulting in poor conclusion paragraph. Three subtypes of breaks resulting in poor introduction were no lead-in statement(s), no/unclear thesis statement(s), and no map statement(s). Seven subtypes of breaks resulting in poor body paragraphs consisted of no/unclear topic sentence within paragraph, topic drift within paragraph, irrelevant content/materials within paragraph, no/little elaboration of the proposition made, repetition of ideas within paragraph, misleading paragraph division, and missing or misleading paragraph connection. No sense of closure in conclusion was the subtype leading to a poor conclusion. However, such problems as “no/little elaboration of the proposition made”, “irrelevant content/materials within paragraph”, “topic drift within paragraph”, “no sense of closure in conclusion”, and “no map statement(s)” occurred the most frequently in students’ essays. Details about these five most frequent subtypes are discussed as follows.

No/little elaboration of the proposition made

The findings in Phase 1 show that the biggest proportion of students (91.3%) fail to include elaboration in the proposition made. In other words, “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” was the most frequent problem found in the data analysis in Phase 1. Elaboration, like examples, illustrations, or justifications, are often used to develop the idea expressed in the topic sentence (Hogue, 2008; Savage & Mayer, 2005). However, students in Phase 1 of the study tended to merely generalize the proposition without any support or development and this was one of the main sources
of the breakdown of coherence in student’s writing. This finding supported the results of a previous study by Masadeh (2019) who stated that most essays in his study “lacked intensive and comprehensible use of supporting details” (p. 206). The following paragraph, extracted from Essay ID. PH 135 (see Appendix 9.11), is an example of *no elaboration of the proposition made* within a paragraph. In this paragraph, the controlling point in the topic sentence is about *the waste of time when using social network*, but there were no explanations provided to clarify this point. In addition, the student writer mentioned another two supporting points: the trend of young people’s dependence on social networking and the control of either the waste of time when using social networking or the young people’s dependence on social networking, but without explanations being given to make these two points clear.

(S24) Some people said that social network makes us waste time. (S25) Especially, young people has trend which depends on social network such as Facebook, Instagram, twister, ... (S26) However, I think we can awake and control it by ourselves.

*Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph*

According to Savage and Mayer (2005), the supporting sentences must support, demonstrate, prove, or develop the main idea in the topic sentence. If they do not, they will be irrelevant and destroy the unity of the paragraph. In the present study, “irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph” was the second most prominent problem with 87% of the students in Phase 1 having this problem in their essays. This means students in the data have difficulty in controlling the content of some supporting sentences in the paragraph such that it either contains more general information than the topic sentence or it does not maintain the same focus of attention as the topic sentence. The finding is in line with Gramegna (2007) and Masadeh (2019) who confirmed that their students had difficulties providing relevant information in creating a meaningful whole that a reader can understand. The following paragraph, extracted from Essay ID. PH 138, is an illustration of *Irrelevant content/ materials within paragraph*. The focus of the topic sentence of the paragraph is about “the negative effects of social networking sites on health”, but all the supporting points are irrelevant because they support the idea about “the negative effects of using cellphone on health”. In other
words, the student writer failed to control the content of the supporting sentences, leading to the break of paragraph unity.

(S13) Besides, social networking sites also have negative effects on our health. (S14) The number of people using cell phone is increasing, so the problem with mobile phones have been found such as brain, eyes, body, etc. (S15) A survey claimed that cell phones can cause cancer from the electromagnetic radiation which comes out of cell phones.

**Topic drift within paragraph**

Topic drift is one of the sources that constitute a breakdown of coherence in writing because it indicates a change in dealing with the topic by the writer that is not deliberate, showing that the writer is “unsure of how to tackle the topic” (Watkinson, 1998, p. 95). In this study, “topic drift within paragraph” is the third most frequent problem found in the data in Phase 1 with 82.6% of students having this problem in their writing. Students tended to drift from one topic to another without noticing the digression of the topic, so no clear indication of the drift was given to readers, making them confused about what was discussed in the writing. The findings echo those raised by Wikborg (1990), who concludes that “unjustified change of/ drift in topic” is one of five most frequent types of coherence breaks in the writing of Swedish-speaking students. In addition, the findings are also consistent with the results of other previous studies (Gramegna, 2007; Watkinson, 1998; Ye, 2013). The following paragraph, extracted from Essay ID. PH 135 (Appendix 9.11), is an example of topic drift within paragraph. In this paragraph, there is a topic drift from sentence 15 to sentence 18. The student writer changed the topic from advantages to companies in gaining business to advantages to customers because companies become more competitive and have to improve their products. This drift in topic leads to the loose connection within the paragraph.

(S10) Secondly, because of social network, companies may gain business. (S11) As we know, people use social network more and more. (S12) Therefore, the best way is advertised on social network to attract attention of customers. (S13) And social network which provides free advertise, can helps them to do it. (S14) We may see the large amount of promotion of companies on social network. (S15) Besides, social network also increases competitiveness among them. (S16) We can find lots of products of different companies by social network.
So, companies need to improve the quality of their products to sell more. It helps companies develop.

No sense of closure in conclusion

The conclusion is an important part of an essay. It provides “a final condensed version of the essay’s core argument and in the progress to provide an overview of the state of current knowledge or current opinion on the given topic” (Redman & Maples, 2011, p. 92). In other words, a good conclusion should leave the reader with a clear impression of the writer’s argument as well as the writer’s aim to achieve in the conclusion. In this study, the problem of “no sense of closure in conclusion” ranked the fourth in the top five most frequent problems in terms of paragraph unity. To be specific, 85.5% of the essays written by students in Phase 1 had poor conclusions because they do not help the reader understand what effect the student writers wanted to achieve and do not imply much focused reasoning. For example, in the conclusion paragraph below, extracted from Essay ID. PH 113 (Appendix 9.5), the student writer, first, gave the wrong signal to the reader when using the phrase “Honestly speaking” instead of “In conclusion, To conclude, To sum up, etc”. Second, the conclusion neither summarizes the key points raised by the question nor restates the writer’s opinion on the question.

Honestly speaking, in the modern world, people are making acquaintance with social network which is an indispensable thing in our life. People can achieve a lot of benefits from making use of this in spite of its disadvantage.

No map statement(s)

“No map statement(s)” is one of the subtypes leading to a poor introduction in an essay. According to Redman and Maples (2011), a basic introduction should “identify the subject of the essay and define key terms; highlight any major debates that lie behind the question; signpost the essay’s key argument” (Redman & Maples, 2011, p. 68). In short essays, while the lead-in may be an introduction to the subject of the essay and a brief definition of key terms, the map functions as the statement of direction for body of the essay argument, which gives the orientation to the reader about the
structure of the essay. Although map statement(s) is important, 69.6% of the essays in Phase 1 of this study had no map statement(s), which indicates that students in the study failed to orient the readers to the discourse topic as no indication of the direction the essay was going to take was provided. The following introduction paragraph, extracted from Essay ID. PH 131 (Appendix 9.10), is an example of an introduction without map statement(s).

(S1) Some people say that the social networking sites have a positive effect on our community.
(S2) I personally agree with this statement.

5.4.3. Cohesion-related and metadiscourse-related problems

With regard to cohesion and metadiscourse, ten subtypes of cohesion-related problems (incorrect use of reference, uncertain use of pronominal reference, too great a distance between the pronoun used and its antecedent, misuse of conjunction, missing conjunction, too much use of conjunction, too much repetition of content lexical ties, misuse of content lexical ties, missing content lexical ties, and misuse of collocations) and two subtypes of metadiscourse-related problems (misuse of stance markers and repetition of stance markers) were found in the study. However, cohesion-related problems occurred more frequently than metadiscourse-related problems and such problems as incorrect use of reference, uncertain use of pronominal reference, misuse of conjunction, and misuse of content lexical ties were found most frequently. Details of these five most frequent subtypes of cohesion-related problems are further discussed below.

Incorrect use of reference

The most frequent types of coherence problems are “incorrect use of reference”. This happens when the writer does not use a pronoun or an adjective correctly and the readers are confused about what the writer wants to refer to. In some cases, the “incorrect use of reference” may affect the construction of the overall coherence. Nearly half of the students (49.3%) in the study had this problem in their writing, showing that they failed to use a correct pronoun for a preceding referent. The outcome is consistent with several previous studies (Watkinson, 1998; Wikborg, 1990; Ye, 2013). In the paragraph below, extracted from the Essay ID.PH 135, there were three cases of “incorrect use of reference” because the writer failed to use a correct pronoun/possessive adjective to refer
the preceding subject, that is “our” in sentence 6, “its” and “my” in sentence 7. In the case of sentence 6, “their” is the correct possessive adjective to the noun “people”, not “our”. Similarly, “its” and “my” in sentence 7 should be replaced with “it” and “our”.

(S4) First of all, the first advantage is social network helps people have good communication.
(S5) We may stay in touch with our family and friends in Facebook, Twister... (S6) Social network helps people share our emotion, thinking, information, photos and so on along with our friends. (S7) Because of its, we can know what my friends doing and how they feel everyday. (S8) It provides a way to connect with people living far away by making friends. (S9) It can help us connect with new friends and reconnect with old friends.

Uncertain use of pronominal reference

Similar to “incorrect use of reference”, “uncertain use of pronominal reference” was one of the most frequent problems in terms of cohesion. Reference items in English include pronouns (he, she, they, etc.) and demonstratives (this, that, these, those) (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The case of “uncertain use of pronominal reference” happens when the writer fails to identify a referent before referring back to it using a pronoun. That 55.1% of the students in this study had this problem in their writing means that they did not know how to use pronominal reference to indicate readers what they wanted to refer to. The following paragraph, extracted from Essay ID.PH 135, has a case of “uncertain use of pronominal reference”. It is the use of “its” in sentence 7 because readers may feel confused of whether “its” here refers to “social network” or “the sharing of emotion, thinking, information, and photos”.

(S6) Social network helps people share our emotion, thinking, information, photos and so on along with our friends. (S7) Because of its, we can know what my friends doing and how they feel everyday.

Misuse of conjunction and Misuse of content lexical ties

Conjunctions serve a functional role in the creation of semantic unity of a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). According to Karadeniz (2017), writing quality can be directly affected by conjunction
elements. The misuse of conjunctions may lead to the writing displaying a wrong direction of argument. More than half of the students (52.2%) in this study had this problem in their writing. This means students were aware that they should use conjunctions to link ideas, but they did not know which conjunctive items were the right choice(s). This problem was also found in several previous studies (Masadeh, 2019; Ye, 2013).

According to D. Liu (2000), the lack or misuse of content lexical ties often leads to confusion or misunderstanding and causes the incoherence in a text. Approximately half of the students (50.7%) in the study had the problem of “misuse of content lexical ties” in their writing, which shows that students may lack the understanding of the vocabulary being used in the writing. The following example is an illustration of misuse of content lexical ties.

(S4) I use Facebook- a specific social media- represent for example. (S5) Firstly, about communication it is easier to get connected. (S6) Everything you have to do that you download Facebook application to your service and then log in your account you can get more friends by press “add friend” button. (S7) After that you can chat with them for hours in spite of far distance. (S8) In addition, Facebook is convenient and free. Facebook was designed in simple themes for users both young and old people. (S9) It is very clear for everyone to understand its features such as: newfeed, add friend, livestream, notification and personal account. (S10) Besides, we use Facebook for free, we just need a smart phone and an Internet access to use Facebook.

Both “misuse of conjunction” and “misuse of content lexical ties” occurred in the above paragraph extracted from Essay ID.PH 129 (Appendix 9.9). To be specific, “Besides” is the wrong use of conjunction in this paragraph because it is often used to suggest a conclusion of one arena of argument and a move to a different one and it is not an equivalent of “In addition”. And, the phrase “social media” is the case of “misuse of content lexical ties” in the paragraph because “social network” and “social media” are two different terms and are not interchangeable. “Social media” is a broader term than “social network”, and Facebook is more social network than social media as it is more about mutual communication.
5.5. Summary

In this chapter, five main types of coherence problems as well as their subtypes were first presented. Second, frequent problems in terms of discourse level, paragraph level, and cohesion and metadiscourse were presented. Finally, discussion of the types of coherence problems as well as frequent subtypes of coherence problems were given. The findings showed students in the data had the most difficulty producing paragraphs with good unity. In particular, students had difficulties providing proposition(s) with explanations/examples: supporting the main ideas with relevant information (details); and avoiding topic drift. In order to help students produce good quality essays with few coherence breaks, an intervention was delivered to students in Phase 2. The findings and discussion of Phase 2 will be presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.
CHAPTER 6. IMPACTS OF THE INTERVENTION

In this chapter, I will present the analysis of the data collected in Phase 2 and discuss the results of the analysis. First, the students’ previous performance and experience before the intervention is presented. Then changes in students’ writing performance in each group and differences in the writing performance of the two groups are given. Finally, I discuss the findings and end with a summary. This chapter attempts to answer Research Question 3.

RQ 3. What are the impacts of an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA)?

(v) What changes are found in writing performance of students in the control group and the treatment group after the intervention?

(vi) What differences are found between the two groups (control group and treatment group) in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems after the intervention?

(vii) What differences are found between the two groups (control group and treatment group) regarding types of topical progression employed after the intervention?

(viii) What differences are found in students’ writing performance in terms of coherence and overall quality of the two groups (control group and treatment group) after the intervention?

6.1. Introduction

The aim of the Phase 2 of this study is to investigate the impact of the intervention on students’ writing performance as well as explore students’ perceptions of the intervention. This chapter aims at examining the effects of the intervention on students’ writing performance. In order to reach the aim, fifty-eight students, who joined the study and were divided into two groups (the treatment group and the control group), were asked to produce three sets of writing: Task 1, Task 1 revision, and Task 2. Task 1 was collected before the implementation of the intervention. The purpose of collecting Task 1 was to see whether both groups were similar in terms of level of writing performance.
Following Task 1, the control group writing course for students in the control group and the intervention for students in the treatment group were conducted. While students of the treatment group were taught the system of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA), one of the techniques to improve coherence in writing, students of the control group were taught other aspects of writing such as grammar and vocabulary. After four weeks, both groups were asked to revise and rewrite Task 1 and submit Task 1 revision (the second set of writing). The purpose of collecting Task 1 revision was to see the impact of the intervention on the treatment group and the writing course on the control group.

After the intervention and the writing course finished, other writing aspects were taught to the students for three weeks, with the aim of discouraging students from dropping out before Task 2 (the third set of writing) was collected. The purpose of collecting Task 2 was to see if there were any changes in students’ level of writing performance four weeks after the intervention finished.

All three sets of writing produced by students of the two groups were analysed in terms of frequency of coherence problems and types of topical progression used. Also, the three sets of writing were scored for coherence and overall writing quality by two raters using two scoring scales (see Appendix 8). Statistical tests (one-way ANOVA) were carried out to investigate if there were any significant changes in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems; types of topical progression used; and scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing of students in each group. Similarly, statistical tests (t-tests) were also carried out to examine whether there were any significant differences between the two groups regarding types and frequency of coherence problems; types of topical progression used; and scores for coherence and overall quality in the three sets of writing. The analysis of quantitative data is presented in the next three sections of this chapter.

Section 6.2 analyses Task 1, which was produced before the intervention. Three analyses are presented including (1) the analysis of coherence problems in Task 1 of the two groups; (2) topical structure analysis of Task 1 of the two groups; and (3) three types of scores for Task 1 of the two groups obtained by two different scoring scales. Assumptions of t-tests were carefully checked before Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the two groups to ensure that an
independent-sample t-test was a valid test to show any significant difference between the two groups.

Section 6.3 analyses and presents the changes in the writing performance of students in each group. Data for this analysis consists of (1) types and frequency of coherence breaks in three sets of writing; (2) types of topical progressions employed in three sets of writing; (3) scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing. Assumptions of the one-way ANOVA, especially assumptions of independence, homogeneity of variance, and normality, were carefully checked before the one-way ANOVA test was conducted to find if there were any significant difference among the three sets of writing of each group in terms of frequency of coherence problems, types of topical progression used, and scores of quality.

Section 6.4 analyses and presents differences between the two groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems; types of topical progression used; and scores obtained from two scoring scales. Data obtained right after the intervention finished (Task 1 revision) and four weeks after the intervention finished (Task 2) were analyzed. This data consists of (1) types and frequency of total coherence problems in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the two groups; (2) types of topical progressions employed in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the two groups; and (3) scores of coherence and overall quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the two groups. Assumptions of t-tests were also carefully checked before independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the two groups.

Section 6.5 discusses the findings from the analysis. Previous studies were mentioned to support the findings. And, finally, Section 6.6 summarises the whole chapter.

It was necessary that assumptions of statistical tests such as assumption of independence, assumption of normality, and assumption of homogeneity of variance be carefully checked before Independent-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA test were used in this study. First, because students were randomly assigned into two independent groups: the control group and the treatment group, data collected from these two groups were independent. In addition, essays collected from the two groups were assigned Essay IDs before being analysed and rated by two raters, so the two raters were not aware of which group each essay fell into. In other words, data in this study satisfied the assumption of independence. Second, to check for the assumption of normality, a graphical
method, Normal Q-Q Plot, was used. Visual results from Q-Q plots show that data used in this study were normally distributed because the points (quantiles) in the data seemed to fall about a straight line. Finally, to check for the assumption of homogeneity of variance, Levene’s test for equality of variances was used. The p-value in Levene’s test for equality of variances in all cases was much bigger than 0.05. This suggests that data used in this study met the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

6.2. Students’ writing performance before the implementation of the intervention

Task 1 written by students in both control group and treatment group reflects students writing performance before the intervention and data from the questionnaire and the focus groups reflect students’ previous experience. In this section, the data acquired from both groups is presented and analysed as follows.

First, data obtained from the identification of coherence problems is presented. A t-test is conducted to find out whether the two groups are similar in terms of the frequency and types of coherence problems employed by the students.

Second, topical structure analysis of Task 1 is presented. Descriptive and statistical t-test analyses are conducted to show whether the study groups are similar in terms of the students’ use of different types of topical progression. A sample of essay analysis is given to show how TSA is implemented in this study.

Finally, the scores obtained from two scoring scales are compared to have an overview of the students’ level of writing as well as the distribution of the scores. Then, a comparison of the two groups is carried out to show whether they are similar in terms of writing performance.

An independent-sample t-test was used in this study. Before running this test, its assumptions were checked carefully. As reported in Section 6.1, data in this study satisfied the assumptions of independence; assumption of normality; and assumption of homogeneity of variances. This means it is appropriate to use the independent-sample t-test in this study.
6.2.1. Analysis of coherence problems

The identification of coherence problems in Task 1 of both groups was conducted based on the system of coherence problems (see Chapter 4). Table 6.1 reveals that 29 essays written by students in the control group contained 420 instances of coherence problems ranging from 8 to 21 instances per essay. Paragraph unity-related problems and cohesion-related problems are the two most frequent problems in the essays with 273 instances and 110 instances respectively. Similarly, in 29 essays written by students in the treatment group, there were 391 instances of coherence problems ranging from 7 to 19 instances per essay. Again, paragraph unity-related problems (265 instances) and cohesion-related problems (87 instances) are the two most predominant problems in the essays of this group.

Table 6.1. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) of the two groups in Task 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>420</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>273</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive analyses provide an initial overview of the two group. The results indicate that the two groups were appropriately similar in terms of frequency and types of coherence problems encountered by students. However, in order for the conclusion to be confirmed, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to show whether the difference between the two groups was insignificant.
Table 6.2. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) of the two groups in Task 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td>14.48 (3.302)</td>
<td>13.48 (3.158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td>1.10 (.976)</td>
<td>1.31 (1.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>9.41 (2.044)</td>
<td>9.14 (1.959)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>3.79 (1.840)</td>
<td>3.00 (2.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>.14 (.581)</td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the independence-samples t-test in Table 6.2 show that there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of total coherence problems (p = 0.244), macrostructure-related problems (p = 0.322), topic unity-related problems (p = 0.474), paragraph unity-related problems (p = 0.602), cohesion-related problems (p = 0.129), and metadiscourse-related problems (p = 0.365). Therefore, it is concluded that the two groups were similar in the frequency and types of coherence problems.

6.2.2. Topical structure analysis (TSA)

Procedure

Topical structure analysis (TSA) is used in this thesis to assess and check for coherence in writing. In this section, TSA was applied to Task 1 to find out: (a) if the two groups were similar in terms of types of topical progression used and (b) what the preferred types of topical progression in the writing of students in both groups were.

When applying topical structure analysis (TSA) in the essays of the two groups, categories of topical progressions were defined based on coding guidelines used in previous studies (Knoch, 2007; Schneider & Connor, 1990; Wu, 1997); however, some changes were made to better account for the data (see Chapter 3 for more information about the coding guides). The following steps were applied:

- Each essay was read carefully to work out the discourse topic.
• Each essay was divided into t-units.
• Topic of each t-unit in each essay was identified and formatted in bold.
• The topical progressions of t-unit topics were determined.
• The topical progressions of the topics in each essay were charted for a visual representation of the types of progression employed in the essay.
• The frequency of each type of progression was counted and computed for each essay and then across all the essays of each group. Then the frequency of each type was expressed as a percentage of the total number of progressions.
• A t-test was conducted to compare the two groups

**Essay Analysis**

Table 6.3 below indicates the results of topical structure analysis in Task 1 written by students in the control and treatment groups. To be specific, the topical structure analysis of Task 1 of the control group showed that there were 459 t-units, ranging from 10 to 21 t-units per essay, and there were 181 new topics in a total of 29 essays. This means that an average of 2.5 t-units was used to develop each new topic. As shown in Table 6.3, the three most frequent types of topical progression employed by students in this group were parallel progression (PP) with 34.2%, extended parallel progression (EPP) with 28.6% and unrelated progression (UP) with 23.7%. Sequential progression (SP) was not regularly used with 10.1%. The least frequently used types of topical progression were superstructure with 1.1% and extended sequential progression (ESP) with 2.3%.

Similarly, 29 essays in Task 1 written by students in the treatment group contained 466 t-units ranging from 12 to 24 per essay. In terms of new topics, there were 212 new topics, representing an average of 2.2 t-units per new topic. Like students in the control group, students in the treatment group also preferred the parallel progression (PP), making it the most frequent type of topical progression employed in Task 1 with 32.7%. The second and third most common types of topical progression used by students in the treatment group were unrelated progression (UP) (28.1%) and extended parallel progression (EPP) (24.2%). Sequential progression (SP) was not commonly used by students with 9.9%. Superstructure (2.4%) and extended sequential progression (ESP) (2.7%) were the two least frequent types of topical progression in the treatment group.
Table 6.3. Types of topical progression and their percentages of the two groups in Task 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topical Progression</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td></td>
<td>459</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New topics</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>146 (34.2%)</td>
<td>135 (32.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>43 (10.1)</td>
<td>41 (9.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>122 (28.6%)</td>
<td>100 (24.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (2.3%)</td>
<td>11 (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (1.1%)</td>
<td>10 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>101 (23.7%)</td>
<td>116 (28.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although it can be seen from Tables 6.3 that the two groups were similar in terms of types of topical progression employed in the writing of Task 1, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there were significant differences in terms of types of topical progression employed in the writing of students of the two groups.

The results of the t-test in Table 6.4 showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in the use of t-units (p = .745) as well as in the use of types of topical progression before the intervention (p = .562 in the use of PP; p = .801 in the use of SP; p = .077 in the use of EPP; p = .815 in the use of ESP; p = .139 in the use of superstructure; and p = .351 in the use of UP) because the p-value in all cases was greater than the threshold value of 0.05.
Table 6.4. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-units and Types of Topical progression</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td>15.8 (3.048)</td>
<td>16.07 (2.549)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>5.03 (2.625)</td>
<td>4.66 (2.319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>1.48 (.738)</td>
<td>1.41 (1.350)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>4.21 (1.780)</td>
<td>3.45 (1.404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>.34 (.614)</td>
<td>.38 (.494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>.17 (.384)</td>
<td>.34 (.484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>3.48 (1.920)</td>
<td>4.00 (2.252)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To show how TSA was implemented in this study, below is the analysis of an essay Task 1, written by a student from the control group. The t-units were numbered (slashes are used to separate t-units) and the topical subjects (topics) are in bold and underlined. All elements were charted for a visual representation of the types of progression employed in the essay. In the diagram (Figure 7), the t-unit number appears to the left and the topic number appears to the right. Topical depth refers to the different topics introduced in each sentence. The arrows refer to the direction of the progression.

**Essay ID. PH 201CF**

**Topic: Despite the many timesaving devices in our homes, people today are working harder and longer. Do you agree or disagree?**

(1) Nowadays, there is a large number of the time saving devices that make people’s lives become more comfortable such as washing-machine, vacuum cleaner…./ (2) Some people believed that despite these equipment in our homes, human beings are working harder and longer./ (3) From my view, I totally agree with this opinion because of the following reasons./

(4) Firstly, the demand of life is higher and higher./ (5) Human race is living in the modern world-industrialization and modernization stage (6) Hence, providing the save labors machines is
an essential of lives./ (7) However, people spend a large of money to own them./ (8) This required people to work diligently and longer./

(9) Secondly, the many time-saving tools do not replace people totally./ (10) People still work daily chores like clean the house, clean the plates./ (11) Moreover, replacing spend time our chores, people will spend time for jobs, projects./

(12) In short people are working longer and harder in order to respond the standard quality in the modern life./

**Figure 7. The topical structure analysis of the essay ID. PH 201CF**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-unit No.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A large...time-saving devices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>human beings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>this opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the demand of life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Human race</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing...machines</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The...time-saving tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main idea (discourse topic) of this essay can be understood with difficulty through reading the title and the whole essay. It was “why people (human beings) have to work harder and longer although there are many timesaving devices in homes”. Thus, “timesaving devices” and “people/human beings” occupied the highest levels of the topical depth, level 1 and level 2 respectively. The
topic “timesaving devices” was repeated again in t-unit 9, creating an extended parallel progression (EPP). Two other EPPs appeared when the topic “human beings/people” was repeated in t-units 7 and 10. “people” was also repeated again and again in t-units 10 – 12, representing parallel progression (PP). Sequential progression (SP) appeared when the comments of the t-units 2, 7, and 9 became the topical subject of the t-units 3, 8, 10 respectively. New topics in t-units 4, 5, 6 were raised but were not developed appropriately, representing unrelated progression (UP).

The visual representation of the types of progression employed in the essay above shows clearly the way ideas were developed. Figure 8 indicates that the discourse topic was developed in 12 t-units in which seven new topics were introduced. Out of 12 t-units, there were five t-units used to develop only one topic (human beings/people) and the other seven t-units were devoted to developing the other six new topics. This shows that the writer’s strategy was to develop the ideas by repeating the same topic, using PP and EPP. This is why in this essay the predominant progressions are PP and EPP (41.7%). In contrast, the student used SP 3 times, indicating that he/she knows how to develop individual topics by adding details using SP, but it was not his/her preferred way of developing the topic.

The diagram also shows that there were some new topics (e.g. t-units 4, 5, and 6) that were not developed appropriately. They have no relation to the preceding or following topics. This could cause the difficulty for the readers to follow the development of the main idea (discourse topic)

**6.2.3. Scores of coherence and overall quality**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, essays written by students in the two groups were rated by two raters, using two scoring scales: TSA-based scoring scale for coherence and scoring scale for overall writing quality. Both the scoring scales are numerical, ranging from 1 point (very poor) to 5 points (very good), with gradations of 0.5 points. For overall writing quality scoring, four categories (content; organization and coherence; vocabulary; language use) were rated separately, and the final overall scores were calculated as follows:

\[
\text{Final overall score} = (\text{content}) \times 30\% + (\text{organization and coherence}) \times 30\% + (\text{vocabulary}) \times 20\% + (\text{language use}) \times 20\%.
\]
Taking into account the aim of this study, the score for organization and coherence and the final overall quality score are analysed; the scores for the other categories are not analysed. Descriptive statistics of the TSA-based coherence score, the score in the organization and coherence category, and the final overall quality score of the two groups were presented below.

Table 6.5. Descriptive statistics of scores of the two groups in Task 1 draft 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of scores</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA-based coherence scores</td>
<td>2.121 (.2177)</td>
<td>2.155 (.3019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and coherence scores</td>
<td>2.086 (.2696)</td>
<td>2.172 (.2419)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality scores</td>
<td>2.266 (.1818)</td>
<td>2.276 (.2695)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.5, students in the two groups had similar scores. The means and standard deviations are nearly the same. This indicates that the general writing proficiency of the students in the two groups was similar before the intervention was conducted. This similarity could be presumed to be due to the random assignment of the students into the control group and treatment group. Also, this result helps strengthen the reliability of the scoring and suggests that the level of the students in two study groups was not high because no student had a score of over 3.0 (Excellent: 5; Good: 4; Modest: 3; Poor: 2; and Very poor: 1).

The descriptive analysis provides an initial idea about the level of the students in the two groups. The results show that the students in the two groups were similar in terms of writing performance. However, this conclusion cannot be confirmed until it is tested statistically. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out if the difference between the two groups was significant. Results from the independent-Samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of writing performance. The p-value of 0.620 in TSA-based coherence score, 0.205 in organization and coherence score, and 0.865 in overall quality score is greater than the threshold value of 0.05. Therefore, students in the two groups were similar in writing proficiency before the intervention was conducted.
6.2.4. Summary

Results of Task 1 draft 1 of the two groups indicate that there was no significant difference either in the frequency or in the types of coherence problems identified in the essays written by students of the two groups. Also, no significant difference was found in terms of writing performance between the control and treatment group. This suggests that before the intervention, the writing performance of the students in both groups was similar.

Task 1 of the two groups was also analysed using the TSA procedures. The results show that there was no significant difference in the use of t-units as well as types of topical progression between the two groups, and that parallel progression (PP), extended parallel progression (EPP) and unrelated progression (UP) were the three most common types employed in their writing. This suggests that Task 1 of the two groups would not be considered as very coherent essays because the infrequent use of sequential progression (SP) is likely to result in the underdeveloped ideas.

From the results of analysis of Task 1, it is suggested that students of the two groups were similar in their writing performance before the intervention. Any improvements in the performance of students in the treatment group after the intervention in comparison with students in the control group after the writing course can be considered as the effects of the intervention. The following section presents the results of the analysis of three sets of writing (Task 1, Task 1 revision, and Task 2) of each group before and after the intervention.

6.3. Changes in students’ writing performance in each group

This section aims at investigating the impact of the intervention on the writing performance of the students in each group. Comparison of types and frequency of coherence problems, types of topical progression, and scores of coherence and overall quality was conducted to find out if there were any changes in each group. One-way ANOVA was used to carry out the comparison. Before conducting the one-way ANOVA test, three main assumptions of one-way ANOVA were checked carefully: assumption of independence, assumption of normality, and assumption of homogeneity of variance. As stated in Section 6.1, data used in this study appropriately meet the requirements of the assumptions of the one-way ANOVA; therefore, the one-way ANOVA is a valid test to determine any significant difference between tasks of each group. It should be noted here that the three sets of writing were similar in length (between 250 and 300 words) and were the same type of writing.
(argumentative). The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference in the writing performance of students of the control and treatment groups in three sets of writing.

6.3.1. Control group

Types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing

Tables 6.6. and 6.7 below present types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing written by students in the control group.

Table 6.6. Types and frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7. Descriptive statistics of frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td>1.10 (.976)</td>
<td>1.41 (1.427)</td>
<td>1.07 (1.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>9.41 (2.044)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.649)</td>
<td>6.79 (1.989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>3.79 (1.840)</td>
<td>3.28 (1.386)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>.14 (.581)</td>
<td>.14 (.351)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of CPs</td>
<td>14.48 (3.302)</td>
<td>9.62 (3.212)</td>
<td>10.31 (3.001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in the frequency of total coherence problems in three sets of writing written by the control group ($F(2, 84) = 19.921, p < .001$). Also, a significant difference was found in the frequency of paragraph unity-related problems ($F(2, 84) = 42.432, p < .001$) and cohesion-related problems ($F(2, 84) = 5.847, p = .004$). However, there were no significant differences in the frequency of macrostructure-related problems ($F(2, 84) = .500, p = .608$); topic unity-related problems ($F(2, 84) = .774, p = .465$); nor metadiscourse-related problems ($F(2, 84) = 1.198, p = .307$).

To provide more detail about the difference in terms of total coherence problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems between three sets of writing of the control group, a multiple comparison post hoc test (Bonferroni) was conducted. With regard to the frequency of total coherence problems, there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 1 revision ($p < .001$) and between Task 1 and Task 2 ($p < .001$). However, there was no significant difference in the frequency of total coherence problems between Task 1 revision and Task 2 ($p = 1.000$). In terms of frequency of paragraph unity-related problems, results of the post hoc test showed that there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 1 revision ($p < .001$); between Task 1 and Task 2 ($p < .001$); and between Task 1 revision and Task 2 ($p = .001$). Regarding the frequency of cohesion-related problems, results of the post hoc test indicated that there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 2 ($p = .003$). However, there were no significant differences between Task 1 and Task 1 revision ($p = .588$) nor between Task 1 revision and Task 2 ($p = .120$).

In brief, changes were found in total coherence problems and two main types of coherence problems (paragraph unity-related problems and cohesion-related problems) in the three sets of writing of the control group. The following table (Table 6.8) summarizes the significant changes in three sets of writing of the control group.
Table 6.8. Summary of significant changes in terms of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Between Task 1 and Task 1 revision</th>
<th>Between Task 1 and Task 2</th>
<th>Between Task 1 revision and Task 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total coherence problems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. “Yes” means there was a significant change between the two sets of writing. “No” means there was no significant changes between the two sets of writing.

Types of topical progression used in three sets of writing

Tables 6.9 and 6.10 present types of topical progression used in three sets of writing written by students in the control group. Results of the ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in all types of topical progression except extended parallel progression (EPP) in the three sets of writing of the control group. To be specific, there was a significant difference in the use of parallel progression (PP) (F(2, 84) = 7.059, p = .001); sequential progression (SP) (F(2, 84) = 15.986, p < .001); extended sequential progression (ESP) (F(2, 84) = 3.174, p = .047); superstructure (F(2, 84) = 4.303, p = .017); and unrelated progression (UP) (F(2, 84) = 8.472, p < .001). However, no significant difference was found in the use of extended parallel progression (EPP) (F(2, 84) = 1.439, p = .243).

Table 6.9. Types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Topical Progression</th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.10. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>5.03 (2.625)</td>
<td>4.14 (3.044)</td>
<td>2.59 (1.659)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>1.48 (.738)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.192)</td>
<td>1.48 (.911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>4.21 (1.780)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.620)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.429)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>.34 (.614)</td>
<td>.52 (.688)</td>
<td>.83 (.889)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>.17 (.384)</td>
<td>.76 (.951)</td>
<td>.48 (.829)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>3.48 (1.920)</td>
<td>2.69 (1.948)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.713)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A post hoc test (Bonferroni) was also used to get more details about how different the three sets of writing were in terms of each type of topical progression. Results of the post hoc test indicated that there was a significant difference in terms of parallel progression (PP) between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .001). However, no significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p = .533) nor between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p = .063). In terms of sequential progression (SP), results of the post hoc test showed that there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p < .001) and between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p < .001). However, there was no significant difference between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = 1.000). Regarding extended sequential progression (ESP), results of the post hoc test showed the same results as in parallel progression (PP), that is, a significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .045), but no significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p = 1.000) nor between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p = .341). With regard to superstructure, a significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p = .013). No significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .373) nor between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p = .514). In terms of unrelated progression (UP), results of post hoc test showed that there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .047) and between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p < .001) while no significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p = .326).
To sum up, there were significant changes in the use of almost all types of topical progression (except extended sequential progression) in three sets of writing of the control group. The following table summarizes the significant changes in three sets of writing of the control group.

**Table 6.11. Summary of significant changes in terms of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the control group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Between Task 1 and Task 1 revision</th>
<th>Between Task 1 and Task 2</th>
<th>Between Task 1 revision and Task 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. “Yes” means there was a significant change between the two sets of writing “No” means there was no significant changes between the two sets of writing.*

**Scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing**

Table 6.12 presents descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing written by students in the control group. Results of the ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing of the control group. In particular, a significant difference was found in TSA-based coherence scores \( F(2, 84) = 10.570, p < .001 \); in the scores of the organization and coherence category \( F(2, 84) = 11.715, p < .001 \) and in the overall quality scores \( F(2, 84) = 10.307, p < .001 \).

A post hoc test (Bonferroni) was conducted to provide more details about the difference in scores of coherence and overall quality in the three sets of writing of the control group. Results of the post hoc test showed that in terms of TSA-based coherence scores, a significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision \( p < .001 \) and between Task 1 and Task 2 \( p = .009 \), but no significant difference was found between Task 1 revision and Task 2 \( p = .468 \). Similarly, in terms of scores in the organization and coherence category, a significant difference was also found between
Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p < .001) and between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .011). There was also no significant difference between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p = .228). Also, post hoc test provided the similar results in terms of overall quality scores as in the two other coherence scores. That is, a significant difference was found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (p < .001) and between Task 1 and Task 2 (p = .027), but no significant difference was found between Task 1 revision and Task 2 (p = .210).

Table 6.12. Descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean (SD)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA-based coherence score</td>
<td>2.121 (.2177)</td>
<td>2.500 (.3780)</td>
<td>2.379 (.3447)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; coherence score</td>
<td>2.086 (.2696)</td>
<td>2.500 (.3780)</td>
<td>2.345 (.3301)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality score</td>
<td>2.266 (.1818)</td>
<td>2.579 (.3133)</td>
<td>2.452 (.2811)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, similar changes were found in the scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing. In particular, there were significant changes in the scores of coherence and overall quality between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2. However, no change was found between Task 1 revision and Task 2.

6.3.2. Treatment group

Types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing

It should be noted here that no macrostructure-related problems were found in the analysis of the three sets of writing in the treatment group; therefore, no results related to macrostructure are displayed and discussed in this section. Tables 6.13 and 6.14 present types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing written by students in the treatment group. Results of the ANOVA test indicated that except that there was no significant difference found in the frequency of metadiscourse-related problems (p = .372), there were significant differences in the frequency of total coherence problems as well as the other three main types of coherence problems. To be specific, a significant difference was found in the frequency of total coherence problems (F(2, 84) =
69.049, p < .001); in the frequency of topic unity-related problems (F(2, 84) = 17.037, p < .001); in the frequency of paragraph unity-related problems (F(2, 84) = 82.862, p < .001); and in the frequency of cohesion-related problems (F(2, 84) = 10.277, p < .001).

Table 6.13. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the treatment group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in three sets of writing of the treatment group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td>1.31 (1.198)</td>
<td>.21 (.620)</td>
<td>.24 (.435)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td>9.14 (1.959)</td>
<td>2.38 (2.162)</td>
<td>3.55 (2.277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td>3.00 (2.070)</td>
<td>1.17 (1.441)</td>
<td>1.69 (1.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of CPs</td>
<td>13.48 (3.158)</td>
<td>3.76 (3.661)</td>
<td>5.48 (3.247)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Bonferroni post hoc test was conducted to provide more detail about the differences in the frequency of total coherence problems and three main types of coherence in three sets of writing of the treatment group. Results of the post hoc test showed significant differences between Task 1 and Task 1 revision in terms of total coherence problems (p < .001), topic unity-related problems (p < .001), paragraph unity-related problems (p < .001), and cohesion-related problems (p < .001). Similarly, there were also significant differences between Task 1 and Task 2 regarding total
coherence problems ($p < .001$), topic unity-related problems ($p < .001$), paragraph unity-related problems ($p < .001$), and cohesion-related problems ($p = .007$). However, no significant differences were found between Task 1 revision and Task 2 with regard to total coherence problems ($p = .163$), topic unity-related problems ($p = 1.000$), paragraph unity-related problems ($p = .119$), and cohesion-related problems ($p = .650$).

In brief, there were dramatic changes in frequency and all types (except metadiscourse-related problems) of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the treatment group. Dramatic changes were found in frequency of total coherence problems; frequency of topic unity-related problems; frequency of paragraph unity-related problems; and frequency of cohesion-related problems between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2, but there was no significant change between Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2.

**Types of topical progression used in three sets of writing**

Tables 6.15 and 6.16 below presents types of topical progression used in three sets of writing written by students in the treatment group. Results of the ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in the use of parallel progression (PP) ($F(2, 84) = 10.125, p < .001$); sequential progression (SP) ($F(2, 84) = 17.909, p < .001$); superstructure ($F(2, 84) = 9.030, p < .001$); and unrelated progression (UP) ($F(2, 84) = 7.178, p = .001$) in three sets of writing of the treatment group. However, in order to know exactly whether the differences were statistically significant in the three sets of writing of the treatment group, a post hoc test (Bonferroni) was carried out.

Results of the Bonferroni post hoc test showed significant differences between Task 1 and Task 1 revision in terms of parallel progression (PP) ($p = .015$), sequential progression (SP) ($p < .001$), superstructure ($p = .001$), and unrelated progression (UP) ($p = .001$). Also, significant differences were found between Task 1 and Task 2 regarding parallel progression (PP) ($p < .001$), sequential progression (SP) ($p < .001$), superstructure ($p = .003$), and unrelated progression (UP) ($p = .036$). However, no significant differences were found between Task 1 revision and Task 2 with regard to parallel progression (PP) ($p = .381$), sequential progression (SP) ($p = .712$), superstructure ($p = 1.000$), and unrelated progression (UP) ($p = .783$).
Table 6.15. Types of topical progression and their percentages in three sets of writing of the treatment group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Topical Progression</th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.16. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the treatment group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Topical Progression</th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>4.66 (2.319)</td>
<td>3.10 (1.952)</td>
<td>2.28 (1.830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>1.41 (1.350)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.703)</td>
<td>3.10 (1.205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>3.45 (1.404)</td>
<td>3.66 (1.261)</td>
<td>3.79 (1.971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>.38 (.494)</td>
<td>.72 (1.162)</td>
<td>.83 (.928)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>.34 (.484)</td>
<td>1.07 (.704)</td>
<td>.97 (.865)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>4.00 (2.252)</td>
<td>2.31 (1.198)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.605)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, no significant differences were found in the use of extended parallel progression and extended sequential progression in the three sets of writing of the treatment group. Significant changes were found in the use of parallel progression, sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2; however,
no significant change was found in the use of these types of topical progression between Task 1 revision and Task 2.

**Scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing**

Table 6.17 below presents descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing written by students in the treatment group. Results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in the scores of coherence and overall quality in the three sets of writing of the treatment group, that is, TSA-based coherence scores: $F(2, 84) = 67.098, p < .001$; scores of organization and coherence category: $F(2, 84) = 73.958, p < .001$, and overall quality scores: $F(2, 84) = 71.701, p < .001$. A post hoc test (Bonferroni) was also conducted to provide more detail about the difference in scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing of the treatment group.

**Table 6.17. Descriptive statistics of scores in three sets of writing of the treatment group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Task 1 (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 1 revision (N=29)</th>
<th>Task 2 (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA-based coherence scores</td>
<td>2.155 (.3019)</td>
<td>3.224 (.3916)</td>
<td>3.034 (.4211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; coherence scores</td>
<td>2.172 (.2419)</td>
<td>3.276 (.4137)</td>
<td>3.086 (.4240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality scores</td>
<td>2.276 (.2695)</td>
<td>3.328 (.3900)</td>
<td>3.107 (.3854)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of a Bonferroni post hoc test indicated that there was a significant difference in terms of scores of coherence and overall quality in three sets of writing. To be specific, significant differences were found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2 in terms of TSA-based coherence scores, scores in the organization and coherence category, and overall quality scores as p-value ($p < .001$). However, there were no significant differences between Task 1 revision and Task 2 regarding TSA-based coherence scores ($p = .172$), scores in the organization and coherence category ($p = .162$), nor overall quality scores ($p = .058$).
In brief, dramatic changes were found in scores of coherence and overall quality in the three sets of writing, in which significant changes were found between Task 1 and Task 1 revision as well as between Task 1 and Task 2, but no significant change was found between Task 2 and Task 1 revision.

6.3.3. Summary

Results of One-way ANOVA test and Bonferroni post hoc test indicate that significant changes were found in the students’ writing performance of each group in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems; types of topical progression used; and scores of coherence and overall quality. Section 6.4 below will compare the two groups to see if there was any difference in students’ writing performance after the intervention finished.

6.4. Differences in the writing performance of students in two groups

This section presents the differences in terms of coherence problems, types of topical progression used, and scores of coherence and overall quality between the two groups after the intervention finished. Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the two groups were analysed to find out whether the performance of the students in the two groups was still the same as before the intervention or changes had taken place after the intervention finished. To determine any such changes as well as to detect any improvement in the performance of the students in both groups, Task 1 revision and Task 2 were analysed in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems; topical structure analysis (TSA), and scores of coherence and overall quality obtained from two scoring scales.

The aim of the analysis of Task 1 revision was to investigate the effect of the intervention on students’ writing performance right after they finished. The analysis of types and frequency of coherence problems, topical structure analysis (TSA), and scores of coherence and overall quality was conducted to see if there were any differences in the performance of students between the two groups. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of frequency and types of coherence problems; types of topical progression employed; and scores of coherence and overall quality.

Similarly, the purpose of analysing Task 2 is to examine the impact of the intervention on students’ writing performance four weeks after they finished. The analysis of types and frequency of
coherence problems, topical structure analysis (TSA), and scores of coherence and overall quality was carried out to find any differences between the two groups. As in the analysis of Task 1 revision, the null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference between the two groups.

I planned to use Independent-sample t-test in this section. After checking all the assumptions of the Independent-sample t-test, it was reported that data in this study met all the assumptions and requirements of this test, so this test was conducted in this section.

6.4.1. Differences in types and frequency of coherence problems

Task 1 revision

Like Task 1, the identification of coherence problems in Task 1 revision was also based on the system of coherence breaks developed in Phase 1. The descriptive statistics shown in Table 6.18 below indicate that although paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and topic unity-related problems were the three most frequent problems found in the analysis of essays written by students in the two groups, students in the control group produced Task 1 revision with more coherence problems than students in the treatment group. The difference is evident in the frequency of the total coherence problems; the topic unity-related problems; the paragraph unity-related problems; and the cohesion-related problems. To be specific, 279 instances of coherence problems were identified in the essays written by students in the control group while there were only 109 instances found in the essays of the treatment group. With regard to the topic unity-related problems, 41 instances were identified in the essays of the control group in comparison with only 6 instances in the treatment group. Regarding paragraph unity-related problems, the instances found in the essays of the control group (139 instances) were twice as many as those found in the treatment group. And, in terms of cohesion-related problems, the instances identified in the control group (95 instances) were nearly 3 times as many as those in the treatment group (34 instances).
Table 6.18. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 1 revision of the two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>279</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To check whether the students in the two groups were similar in terms of frequency and types of coherence problems found in their writing in Task 1 revision, t-test analysis was carried out. An independent-samples t-test was calculated comparing the frequency of the total coherence problems and five main types of problems of the two groups.

Table 6.19. Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 1 revision of the two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.62 (3.212)</td>
<td>3.76 (3.661)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrostructure-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>.03 (.186)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.41 (1.427)</td>
<td>.21 (.620)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.83 (1.649)</td>
<td>2.38 (2.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.28 (1.386)</td>
<td>1.17 (1.441)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiscourse-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>.14 (.351)</td>
<td>.00 (.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the independent-samples t-test in Table 6.19 indicate that there was a significant difference between frequency of total coherence problems (p < 0.001), frequency of the topic unity-related problems (p < 0.001), frequency of the paragraph unity-related problems (p < 0.001), frequency of the cohesion-related problems (p < 0.001), and frequency of metadiscourse-related
problems (p = .039). No significant difference was found in frequency of the macrostructure-related problems (p = .322) of the two groups.

**Task 2**

The system of coherence problems developed in Phase 1 was also used to identify coherence problems in Task 2 of the two groups. Because no instances of macrostructure-related problems and metadiscourse-related problems were found in the writing of students in the two groups, no information about macrostructure-related problems and metadiscourse-related problems in Task 2 of the two groups were reported.

Table 6.20 below shows that the writing of students in the control group had nearly twice as many coherence problems in Task 2 as the writing of the treatment group. In particular, 297 instances of coherence breaks were found in essays written by 29 students in the control group in comparison with 159 instances of coherence problems identified in essays written by students in the treatment group. Paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and topic unity-related problems were the three most frequent problems in the analysis of essays written by students in both groups. However, the number of instances of these three problems in the essays of the treatment group was much less than in the essays of the control group. While 195 instances of paragraph unity-related problems were found in the essays of the control groups, there were only 103 instances identified in the essays of the treatment group; 71 instances of cohesion-related problems in the writing of students in the control group compared with 49 instances in the treatment group; and there were 4 times more instances of topic unity-related problems in the control group (31 instances) than in the treatment group (7 instances).

It can be seen from Table 6.20 that there was a difference in the frequency of the coherence problems identified in Task 2 of the two groups. However, in order to check whether the difference was significant, a t-test was carried out. An independent-samples t-test was used to compare the frequency of the total coherence problems and the frequency of the three main types of coherence problems of the two groups.
Table 6.20. Frequency of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 2 of both groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Coherence Problems (CPs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>297</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the independent-samples t-test in Table 6.21 show that there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of the frequency of total coherence problems (p < 0.001). Similarly, significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of topic unity-related problems (p < .001), paragraph unity-related problems (p < .001), and cohesion-related problems (p = .016).

Table 6.21 Descriptive statistics of coherence problems (CPs) in Task 2 of both groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence Problems</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of CPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.31 (3.001)</td>
<td>5.48 (3.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic unity – related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.07 (1.033)</td>
<td>.24 (.435)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph unity-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.79 (1.989)</td>
<td>3.55 (2.277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.45 (1.242)</td>
<td>1.69 (1.072)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems after the intervention finished. In particular, Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 produced by students in the control group had more coherence problems than Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 produced by students in the treatment group. This was particularly the case for problems related to topic unity, paragraph unity, and cohesion.
6.4.2. Differences in types of topical progression

Task 1 revision

Topical structure analysis was conducted to analyze Task 1 revision of the two groups using the same procedures applied in Section 6.2.2. The aim of this analysis is to see if there are any changes in the use of types of topical progression in Task 1 revision produced by students in both groups, especially students in the treatment group.

Analysis of essays

The topical structure analysis shows that in Task 1 revision, the two groups had almost the same number of the t-units, but there was a slight difference in the number of new topics. Table 6.22 shows that while students in the control group used 487 t-units to develop 213 new topics, students in the treatment group used 493 t-units to develop 194 new topics. This means students in the treatment group used more t-units per new topic than students in the control group. To be specific, students in the treatment group used an average of 2.54 t-units to develop a single new topic in comparison with the control group’s 2.28 t-units.

Table 6.22. Types of topical progression and their percentages of the two groups in Task 1 revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topical Progressions</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td></td>
<td>487</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New topics</td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>120 (27.6%)</td>
<td>90 (21.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>79 (18.2%)</td>
<td>103 (24.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>120 (27.6%)</td>
<td>106 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 (3.5%)</td>
<td>21 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 (5.1%)</td>
<td>31 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>78 (18%)</td>
<td>67 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another slight difference was in the percentage of parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), and unrelated progression (UP) employed in Task 1 revision of the two groups. In the essays written by students in the treatment groups, the percentage of sequential progression (SP) was higher, whereas the percentages of parallel progression (PP) and unrelated progression (UP) were lower than in the control group. The difference in the use of parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), and unrelated progression (UP) of the two groups is also indicated in the mean and standard deviation of these types of topical progressions (Table 6.23).

Table 6.23. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 1 revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-units and Types of Topical progression</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td>16.79 (2.846)</td>
<td>17.00 (2.405)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>4.14 (3.044)</td>
<td>3.10 (1.952)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.192)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.703)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.620)</td>
<td>3.66 (1.261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>.52 (.688)</td>
<td>.72 (1.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>.76 (.951)</td>
<td>1.07 (.704)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>2.69 (1.948)</td>
<td>2.31 (1.198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To check whether the difference in the use of types of topical progressions of the two group is significant, an independent-samples t-test was carried out. The results of the independent-samples t-test analysis show that there was a significant difference between the two groups in the use of sequential progression (SP) (p = .036). However, no significant difference was found between the two groups in the number of t-units (p = 0.766); in the use of parallel progression (PP) (p = .129); extended parallel progression (EPP) (p = .211); extended sequential progression (ESP) (p = .413); superstructure (p = .163); nor unrelated progression (UP) (p = .376)

These results suggest that right after the intervention finished, students in the treatment group showed some improvement in the use of sequential progression. They increased their use of
sequential progression (SP) to add details to ideas, one of the requirements for good prose (Connor & Farmer, 1990).

To illustrate the way TSA was operationalized in this study, the following shows an analysis of a second draft of Task 1 written by a student from the treatment group. The t-units were numbered and separated by slashes (/) and the topical subject (topic) of each t-unit was bolded and underlined. All the elements were charted on a diagram (Figure 8) to give a visual representation of the types of topical progressions employed in the essays. In the diagram, the t-unit number appears to the left and the topic number appears to the right. Topical depth refers to the different topics introduced in each sentence. The arrows refer to the direction of the progression.

**Essay ID. PH 202TS**

*Topic: Despite the many timesaving devices in our homes, people today are working harder and longer. Do you agree or disagree?*

(1) Together with the social development, there are **variety of timesaving appliances** like washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaner, etc. being created to help people save labor and time. (2) Despite their helpfulness, **lots of people** still work harder and longer today. (3) Personally, I agree with **that point** for several reasons discussed as follow. (4) It is no denying that **time saving devices** help people save a lot of time. (5) With the help of timesaving gadgets, **people** today can save 3 or 4 hours per day not not having to do housework. (6) For example, **washing machine** can help people save at least 2 hours for not having to wash dirty clothes by hand, / (7) or **vacuum cleaner** can save at least 1 hour for cleaning. (8) However, despite having timesaving appliances at home **lots of people** nowadays still work harder and longer because of high job requirements and high living standard. (9) With the development of society, **job requirements** are becoming higher and higher. (10) So instead of using time saved from supporting machines for relaxing, **people** use it to study to meet the requirements and improve themselves. (11) Besides, **the high living standard** also urges people to work hard. (12) **People** have to spend their own saved time working overtime to earn more money so that they can keep up with the modern living standard. (13) As a result, **they** seem not to have any free time despite the help of timesaving devices at home.
In conclusion, people are still busier although there are timesaving devices at home. I believed that timesaving devices will do great support if people could balance time for work and time for entertainment effectively.

This essay is taken as an example of the second drafts of Task 1 written by students in the treatment group. Task 1, second draft, is the revision of Task 1, first draft, so the discourse topic of the two drafts was the same; that was “why people (human beings) have to work harder and longer although there are many timesaving devices in homes”. Because the writer wanted to discuss the relationship between “timesaving devices” and “people”, “timesaving devices” and “people” or any of their semantic equivalents (other nouns or pronouns) appear at the highest levels of topical depth (level 1 and level 2 respectively). To be specific, the writer mentioned “timesaving devices” in t-unit 1 and then repeated it in t-unit 4 after using t-units 2 and 3 to develop two new topics – “people” and “that point”, creating an EPP. SPs were created in t-units 2 and 3 because each of the topics was derived from the comment of the preceding one. “Timesaving devices” was repeated by the writer one more time in t-unit 15 to reinforce the main discourse the writer wanted to focus, creating another EPP.

“People” was repeated after every elaboration of any of the other topics. For example, t-units 6 and 7 were used to give examples to the idea raised in t-unit 5, creating Superstructures. After that the writer referred back to the main idea by repeating “people” in t-unit 8, creating an EPP. Similarly, in t-unit 9, a new topic was developed by using a SP and then the writer returned to the main topic by mentioning “people” in t-unit 10, employing an EPP. Again, the same thing was repeated in t-units 11 and 12. PPs were created when the main topic was repeated and repeated in t-units 13 and 14. One more SP was employed in t-unit 15 when the writer wanted to connect the two main topics (“timesaving devices” and “people”) together, reinforcing the relationship between the “timesaving devices” and “people” as mentioned in the discourse topic.
Figure 8. The topical structure analysis of the essay ID. PH 202TS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-unit No.</th>
<th>Topical Depth</th>
<th>Topic No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>variety...appliances</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>lots of people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>That point</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timesaving devices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>lots of people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Job requirements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Living standard</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Timesaving devices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, in this essay the predominant types of progression are sequential progression (SP) (6 cases) and extended parallel progression (EPP) (6 cases). Parallel (PP) and superstructures ranked the second with 2 cases of each type. Extended sequential progression (ESP) was the third one with only one case and there was no UP in the essay. Such usage of the types of topical progressions shows that the writer was aware of the function of each type and was able to manipulate each type appropriately in emphasizing and elaborating the main discourse topics.

**Task 2**

As in Task 1 revision, the procedures of topical structure analysis (TSA) in Section 6.2.2 were also used to analyze Task 2 of the two groups. The aim of this analysis is to see if there are any changes in the use of types of topical progression of the two groups four weeks after the intervention finished.
Analysis of essays

Table 6.24 shows that the number of t-units identified in Task 2 of the two groups were the same (478 t-units), but the number of new topics used by students of the two groups was different. In particular, with 251 new topics in 29 essays, students in the control groups used an average of 1.9 t-units to develop a single new topic while there were 200 new topics in 29 essays of Task 2 written by students in the treatment group, showing an average of 2.39 t-units used to develop a single new topic. This means there was a slight difference in the number of t-unit per new topic between the two groups.

Table 6.24. Topical progression and their percentages in Task 2 of the two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topical Progression</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Control group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td></td>
<td>478</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New topics</td>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>75 (19%)</td>
<td>66 (16.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>43 (10.9%)</td>
<td>90 (22.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>103 (26.1%)</td>
<td>110 (27.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 (6.1%)</td>
<td>24 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (3.5%)</td>
<td>28 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>136 (34.4%)</td>
<td>82 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another difference was found in the use of sequential progression (SP), superstructure, and unrelated progression. To be specific, in Task 2, students in the treatment group used more sequential progression (SP) (90 cases) and superstructure (28 cases) than students in the control group with 43 cases of sequential progression and 14 cases of superstructure. However, they used less unrelated progression (UP) (82 cases) than students in the control group (136 cases).

However, in order to see if the differences in the use of types of topical progression between the two groups were significant, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. The results of the independent-samples t-test in Table 6.25 below show that there were significant differences.
between the two groups in the use of sequential progression \((p < .001)\), in the use of superstructure \((p = .034)\), and in the use of unrelated progression \((p < 0.001)\). No significant differences between the two groups were found in the use of parallel progression \((p = .501)\), extended parallel progression \((p = .595)\), nor extended sequential progression \((p = 1.000)\).

Table 6.25. Descriptive statistics of types of topical progression of the two groups in Task 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-units</td>
<td>16.48 (2.148)</td>
<td>16.48 (3.236)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Progression (PP)</td>
<td>2.59 (1.659)</td>
<td>2.28 (1.830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Progression (SP)</td>
<td>1.48 (.911)</td>
<td>3.10 (1.205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.429)</td>
<td>3.79 (1.971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)</td>
<td>.83 (.889)</td>
<td>.83 (.928)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>.48 (.829)</td>
<td>.97 (.865)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Progression (UP)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.713)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.605)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In brief, there was a significant difference in the use of sequential progression (SP) in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 of the two groups. There was more sequential progression (SP) in the writing of students in the treatment group than in the control groups. One more thing is that while there was no significant difference in the use of superstructure and unrelated progression (UP) in Task 1 draft 2 between the two groups, a significant difference was found in Task 2 in the use of superstructure and unrelated progression (UP) between the two groups. In particular, students in the treatment employed more superstructure and less unrelated progression (UP) in the writing of Task 2 than student in the control. These were important changes in the writing of students in the treatment. Discussion about these changes will be presented in Section 6.5.

6.4.3. Differences in scores of coherence and overall quality

Task 1 revision

In this section, the scores of coherence and overall quality obtained from two scoring scales were analysed. As in Task 1, in Task 1 revision two types of coherence scores (TSA-based coherence score
The highest score for each type is 5 (points) and the lowest is 1 (point) with gradations of 0.5 point.

The results shown in Table 6.26 indicate that students in the treatment group recorded higher scores than students in the control group. The difference can be seen in the mean and standard deviation of the three types of scores: the TSA-based coherence scores, scores in the organization and coherence category, and overall quality scores. A t-test analysis was conducted to check whether the difference was statistically significant.

Table 6.26 Descriptive statistics of scores of the two groups in Task 1 revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of scores</th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA-based coherence scores</td>
<td>2.500 (.3780)</td>
<td>3.224 (.3916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and coherence scores</td>
<td>2.500 (.3780)</td>
<td>3.276 (.4137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality scores</td>
<td>2.579 (.3133)</td>
<td>3.328 (.3900)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the scores of the two groups. The results show that there was a significant difference in the scores obtained by students of the control group and by students of the treatment group. The p-value (p < 0.001) for all three scores was much smaller than the threshold value of 0.05, showing that the students in the treatment group achieved different progress from students in the control group when the intervention finished.

Task 2

As in Task 1 and Task 1 revision, the two scoring scales were also used to score essays in Task 2. The results obtained from these scoring scales were then analyzed to see if there was any difference in the performance of students in the two groups four weeks after the intervention finished. As in Task 1 and Task 1 revision, three scores – TSA-based coherence score, score in the organization and coherence category, and final overall quality score – were analysed. In line with the focus in this study on coherence, the scores for other categories (content, vocabulary, and language use) were
not analyzed. The scores used for analysis were numerical, ranging from 1 point (very poor) to 5 points (very good) with gradations of 0.5 points.

*Table 6.27. Descriptive statistics of the scores of the control and treatment groups in Task 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group (N=29)</th>
<th>Treatment Group (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TSA-based coherence scores</td>
<td>2.379 (.3447)</td>
<td>3.034 (.4211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and coherence</td>
<td>2.345 (.3301)</td>
<td>3.086 (.4240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scores</td>
<td>2.452 (.2811)</td>
<td>3.107 (.3854)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.27 shows that students in the treatment group got higher scores than students in the control group. An independent-samples t-test was carried out to see if the difference was statistically significant. Results from the independent-samples t-test indicate that there were significant differences in the performance of students in the two groups in terms of coherence and overall quality (p < 0.001 for all three types of scores).

To sum up, significant differences were found in terms of writing performance between the two groups in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2. Students in the treatment group received higher scores of coherence and overall quality than students in the control group. This means after the intervention, there was a bigger change in the writing performance of students in the treatment group than that of students in the control group.

**6.5. Discussion**

Findings of Phase 2 show that there were significant differences in three sets of writing of each group. Also, there were significant differences between the two groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems, types of topical progression employed, and scores of coherence and overall quality. This section will discuss these findings to seek answers to Research Question 3.
6.5.1. Changes in students’ writing performance in each group

a) Control group

*Types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the control group*

The results of analysing the three sets of writing of the control group show that there was significant improvement in terms of total coherence problems and paragraph unity-related problems between Task 1 and Task 1 revision. That is, frequency of total coherence problems and paragraph unity-related problems in Task 1 revision was less than in Task 1. One explanation for this change is that Task 1 revision was not a new piece of writing, so students may be familiar with the topic as well as ideas to write about. What students needed to do when producing Task 1 revision was merely to have a look at Task 1, correct errors, and make changes where necessary. Another explanation is that when producing Task 1 revision, students were allowed to use notes and a dictionary, which could have provided some help with reducing writing problems. More importantly, students were allowed to ask for help from peers (peer review) when doing the revision, so this may have contributed to their producing a better Task 1 revision than Task 1. Both the use of the dictionary and the help from a peer are limitations of this data set.

Results of analysing the three sets of writing of the control group indicate that significant changes were found regarding total coherence problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems between Task 1 and Task 2. In other words, Task 2 had fewer coherence problems than Task 1, especially problems related to paragraph unity and cohesion. It should be noted here that when producing Task 2, the topic was totally new and students were not allowed to use notes, dictionary, nor peer check, but there were significant changes. So, such factors as topic familiarity and peer help were not factors that could affect the progress of students in the control in Task 2. Although Task 2 was produced four weeks after the writing course finished, and students received no help from peers nor dictionary, it was better than Task 1 draft 1. This suggests that the writing course appears to have had an impact on students’ performance.

One thing that needs discussing was the significant change in terms of paragraph unity-related problems in three sets of writing of the control group. That is, frequency of paragraph unity-related problems in Task 1 revision was less than in Task 1 and Task 2, but frequency of paragraph unity-
related problems in Task 2 was less than in Task 1, but more than in Task 1 revision. One explanation for this may be that in Task 2 students did not get help from peers or other support as they had in Task 1 revision, so there was an increase in frequency of paragraph unity-related problems. However, Task 2 was still an improved piece of writing when compared with Task 1.

**Types of topical progression employed in the three sets of writing of the control group**

Results of analysing the three sets of writing of the control group show that there was significant improvement in the use of sequential progression (SP) and superstructure in Task 1 revision in comparison with Task 1. That is, in Task 1 revision, students in the control group employed more sequential progression and superstructure than in Task 1. The changes in the use of sequential progression (SP) and superstructure in Task 1 draft 2 may be due to the topic familiarity to students, so they were able to provide examples (superstructure) or details (sequential progression) to main ideas. Another possible explanation of these changes is the help from peers that students received during the revision. It seems that without help from other support, students in the control could not use sequential progression (SP) independently in their writing. To be specific, the number of sequential progression employed in Task 2 was less than in Task 1 revision. Reasons for the reduction in the use of SP in Task 2 may be that students had to write about a new topic and were not allowed any other help from peers or notes/dictionary.

One thing that needs discussing here is the use of unrelated progression (UP) in the three sets of writing of the control group. Significant changes were found in the use of UP between Task 1 and Task 2 and between Task 1 revision and Task 2. In particular, unrelated progression (UP) was employed more in Task 2 than in Task 1 and Task 1 revision. In other words, students in the control group may not be aware that they were using more and more unrelated progression (UP) (new topics) in their writing. Or, students in the control may be aware about unrelated progression (UP), but they may not know how to avoid it. The increase in the use of unrelated progression (UP) may be explained by the fact that students had to write about a new topic in Task 2 and that students in the control were not taught about topical structure analysis, so they may not be aware that unrelated progression (new topics) may be one of the causes leading to the incoherence in their writing.
Writing quality in three sets of writing of the control group

Results of analysing the three sets of writing indicate that there was significant improvement in writing quality between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2. Students in the control group increased achievement both in Task 1 revision and in Task 2. As discussed above, the improvement displayed by students in the control group in their production of Task 1 revision cannot definitely be attribute to the effects of the writing course, in which the focus was the teaching of fundamental aspects of writing, because other factors (topic familiarity and peer help) might have been influential in this improvement. However, it is possible to attribute the improvement in Task 2 to the impact of the writing course because when producing Task 2, students did not receive any help from peers nor other sources.

b) Treatment group

Types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the treatment group

Results of analysing the three sets of writing of the treatment group show that there was significant improvement in terms of total coherence problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2. Students in the treatment group produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with fewer coherence problems than Task 1. Similar to the control group, when revising Task 1 to produce Task 1 revision, students in the treatment group were allowed to refer to notes/dictionaries as well as ask help from peers, so it is not certain that the improvement that students achieved in Task 1 revision is attributable to the effects of the intervention, which involved the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis, because such factors as peer review may have had an influence on students’ improvement. However, when writing Task 2, students had to write about a new topic and they did not receive any help from other sources such as peers, notes, or dictionaries, so the improvement that students achieved in Task 2 was not dues to peer review or other support. In other words, it is possible to attribute this improvement to the impacts of the intervention, the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis.

One thing that should be noted here is that although Task 2 was collected four weeks later than Task 1 revision, there were no significant changes between these two sets of writing regarding total
coherence problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems. This means that students in the treatment group were able to apply what they had learnt in the intervention independently in a new piece of writing despite the gap in time (four weeks). In other words, the intervention seems to have had lasting impacts on the performance of students in the treatment group, and students made progress despite the end of the intervention four weeks previously.

*Types of topical progression employed in three sets of writing of the treatment group*

In contrast to the control group, students in the treatment group were taught topical structure analysis during the intervention; therefore, they had some knowledge about types of topical progression as well as their functions in writing.

Results from analysing three sets of writing of the treatment group show that there were significant changes in the use of parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), superstructure, and unrelated progression between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2. To be specific, students in the treatment group employed less parallel progression (PP) and unrelated progression (UP) in Task 1 revision and Task 2 than in Task 1. In contrast, they employed more sequential progression (SP) and superstructure in Task 1 revision and Task 2 than in Task 1. This means students in the treatment group could add more detail to ideas by increasing the use of sequential progression (SP) or use more superstructure to give clear illustration to ideas. On the other hand, they used less parallel progression (PP) and unrelated progression (UP) in both Task 1 revision and Task 2. This may be because they understood that unrelated progression (UP) does not help develop the main idea and may create coherence breaks. The changes in the number of PP, SP, superstructure, and UP in the writing of Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 indicate that the performance of students in the treatment group improved. However, as I discussed above, the improvement in Task 1 revision cannot definitely be attributed to the intervention, because other factors such as peer review may have had impacts on this improvement. But it is possible to attribute the improvement in Task 2 to the effects of the intervention because when producing Task 2, students did not get help from other factors such as peer review.
One more thing is that there were no significant changes in the use of types of topical progression between Task 1 revision and Task 2. This means that students were able to types of topical progression that they were taught in the intervention in the writing of Task 2 although the intervention finished four weeks before. In other words, the intervention seems to have had positive effects on the performance of students in the treatment and students seem to have made progress in their writing performance despite the difference of the period of four weeks.

*Writing quality in three sets of writing of the treatment group*

As in the control group, the results of analysing the three sets of writing of the treatment group showed significant changes in terms of writing quality between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 and Task 2. In particular, students in the treatment group produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with higher scores of coherence and overall quality than Task 1. While it is hard to claim that it is the intervention that effected the performance of students in Task 1 revision because the factors discussed above may have had an impact on this improved performance, it is possible to claim that the intervention influenced the performance of students in Task 2. When producing Task 2, students were asked to write about a new topic, not a revision of an existing piece of writing as in Task 1 revision. Also, when producing Task 2, students were not allowed to use notes/dictionaries as in Task 1 revision. More importantly, when producing Task 2, students were not allowed to ask for help from peers as in Task 1 revision. As a result, the improvement that students achieved in Task 2 can be attributed to the effects of the intervention.

In summary, both groups had significant changes in terms of coherence problems, topical structure analysis, and writing quality when the intervention finished. While the effects of the intervention may be clearly seen in Task 2, they seem not to be clearly seen in Task 1 revision because other factors such as peer review and topic familiarity may have had impacts on Task 1 revision.

**6.5.2. Difference in the writing performance of the students in both groups**

* Differences in types and frequency of coherence problems*

Results of analysing Task 1 show that before the intervention, there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems. However, after the intervention, significant differences in types and frequency of coherence problems were found
between the two groups in both Task 1 revision and Task 2. To be specific, students in the treatment group produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with fewer coherence problems than students in the control group. This means that students in the treatment group may achieve better improvement than students in the control group.

Regarding Task 1 revision, results indicate that students in the treatment group produced Task 1 draft 2 with fewer topic unity-related problems, fewer paragraph unity-related problems, fewer cohesion-related problems, and fewer metadiscourse-related problems than students in the control group. One explanation for the improvement in the writing performance of students in the treatment group in Task 1 revision is that during the intervention students were introduced to the system of coherence problems and were given writing samples to practice working with. As a result, it is probable that they had an understanding of what types of coherence problems they often make in their writing and what should be done to minimize the problems. Another explanation is that students were allowed to refer to notes that they wrote down during the intervention and also allowed to ask peers for help when they revised Task 1 to produce Task 1 revision. This may have assisted them in identifying problems of coherence in Task 1 and correcting the problems before writing Task 1 revision. Although students in the control group were also able to refer to notes and ask friends for help when revising Task 1, they did not know about the system of coherence problems; as a result, notes or peers are less likely to have given them much help to reduce the problems of coherence in Task 1 revision.

With regard to Task 2, results showed that there were fewer topic unity-related problems, fewer paragraph unity-related problems, and fewer cohesion-related problems in the treatment group than in the control group. When producing Task 2, students of the two groups had to write about a new topic, and they were not allowed to get help form any sources, so the improvement that students in the treatment group achieved in comparison with students in the control group can be able to be attributed to the effects of the intervention which students in the treatment group participated in. While students in the control group were taught fundamental aspects of writing during the intervention, students in the treatment group were taught the system of coherence problems during the intervention. It is probable that the difference in the content of the intervention
that each group took part in led to the difference in the writing performance of the two groups in Task 2.

**Differences in types of topical progression**

In terms of types of topical progression employed in three sets of writing of the two groups, results of analyzing Task 1 show that the two groups were similar in the use of types of topical progression. They tended to employ more parallel progression, extended parallel progression, and unrelated progression, but less sequential progression, extended sequential progression and superstructure. However, results of analyzing Task 1 revision and Task 2 indicate that there was a significant difference in the use of sequential progression in Task 1 revision and a significant difference in the use of sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression in Task 2 between the two groups.

The difference between the two groups in the use of types of topical progression may be attributed to the fact that students in the control group were not taught topical structure analysis, so they were not aware of types of topical progression nor how to apply these in writing. In contrast, students in the treatment group were taught about topical structure analysis. So it is probable that students in the treatment group were aware of types of topical progression as well as the function of the types of topical progression in writing. In particular, students in the treatment group are likely to have understood that they could add more detail to ideas by increasing the use of sequential progression (SP); they were also likely to know that unrelated progression (UP) can cause the breakdown of coherence in the writing. As a result, they may have tried to increase the use of sequential progression and decrease the use of unrelated progression in their writing. These findings are in line with Attelisi’s (2012) study wherein he claimed that that the teaching of TSA helped increase the percentage of sequential progression in his students’ post-test essays.

**Differences in writing quality (scores of coherence and overall quality)**

While results of analyzing Task 1 of the two groups indicate that before the intervention students in the two groups had the same level of writing proficiency, significant differences in writing performance were found between the two groups in Task 1 revision and Task 2. In particular,
students in the treatment group achieved higher scores of coherence and overall quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 than students in the control group.

It should be noted here that when producing Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2, students in the two groups were writing under the same conditions. For example, Task 1 draft 2 was the revision of Task 1 draft 1 and students in the two groups were allowed to refer to notes/dictionaries or ask peers for help to complete it. In contrast, Task 2 was a new one and students were not to ask for any help from other sources when producing it. In addition, the two groups were taught by the same teacher and were supervised by the same teacher when producing Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2. The only difference between the two groups was the content of the lessons each group received during the intervention. As mentioned above, the writing lessons that students in the control group received during the writing course were about fundamental aspects of writing while the writing lessons that students in the treatment group received were about coherence problems and topical structure analysis. This suggests the improvement in the performance of students in the treatment was due to the difference in the content of the intervention. In other words, the intervention that students in the treatment group took part in appears to have had more effects on their writing performance in terms of coherence problems, topical structure analysis, and writing quality than the writing course students in the control group participated.

6.6. Summary

Students in both groups were found to have improved in their performance when the intervention finished. To be specific, students in both groups produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with fewer coherence problems and higher scores of coherence and overall quality than Task 1. Significant differences in students’ writing performance were also found between the two groups at the end of the intervention as well as four weeks later. In particular, students in the treatment group produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with fewer coherence problems and higher scores of coherence and overall quality than students in the control group. The improvement in the writing of Task 1 revision of the two groups may be due to topic familiarity and peer review. But the improvement achieved in Task 2 indicates the effects of the intervention that each group participated in.
CHAPTER 7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING QUALITY, COHERENCE PROBLEMS AND TOPICAL STRUCTURE ANALYSIS (TSA)

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the results of the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA). First, the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems is presented with the focus on the association of the scores of coherence and the scores of overall quality with types and frequency of coherence problems. Then, the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression is presented. Finally, I will discuss the findings and finish with a summary. This chapter focuses on answering Research Questions 4 and 5:

RQ 4. What is the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems?
   (iii) To what extent are scores of coherence associated with types and frequency of the coherence problems?
   (iv) To what extent are scores of overall quality associated with types and frequency of the coherence problems?

RQ 5. What is the relationship between writing quality and types of topical structure analysis?
   (iii) To what extent are scores of coherence associated with the types of topical progression?
   (iv) To what extent are scores of overall quality associated with the types of topical progression?

7.1. Introduction

It was shown in Chapter 6 that the intervention had significant impacts on students’ writing performance. However, in order for the intervention to be applied in teaching writing skills, it may be that changes and amendments are needed. Potential grounds for the changes and amendments in the intervention may be evident in the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems or types of topical progression, the two aspects which were introduced in the intervention.

The aim of this chapter is to find out if there is any association between writing quality and coherence problems or TSA. The Pearson correlation test was used in this case. The purpose of using the
Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was to understand the strength of associations. There are two types of correlation: positive correlation and negative correlation. A positive correlation means that an increase in the value of two variables co-occurs and a negative correlation means an increase in the value of one variable co-occurs with a decrease of the other variable (Puth, Neuhäuser, & Ruxton, 2014). Before the Pearson correlation test was used in this chapter, assumptions of this test such as level of measurement, related pairs, absence of outliers, and linearity were carefully checked. Results showed that data used met all the assumptions of the Pearson correlation test, so this test was used in this study.

In this study, students’ writing quality was assessed by scores of coherence and scores of overall quality. Two measures of coherence were used in the analysis. The first measure was the TSA-based coherence score. The second measure was the organization and coherence category from the analytical scoring rubric (see Appendix 8). TSA-based coherence scores are the scores awarded by the two raters using the TSA-based coherence scoring scale to score students’ essays (see Appendix 8). Scores in the organization and coherence category were one of four categories making up the score for overall quality awarded by the two raters using the overall quality scoring scale to score students’ writing (see Appendix 8.2). There are four categories in the overall quality scoring scale; however, taking into account the aim of this study, only scores for overall quality and scores for the organization and coherence category were used for analysis.

It should be noted that as was shown in Chapter 6, no macrostructure-related problems were identified in Task 1 of the treatment group; no macrostructure-related problems and no metadiscourse-related problems were identified in Task 1 revision of the treatment group; and no macrostructure-related problems and no metadiscourse-related problems were identified in Task 2 of the control group or the treatment group, so there was no data to conduct a correlation test; therefore, there were nothing to report for these categories.

**7.2. Relationship between writing quality and coherence problems**

This section presents the results of the relationship between writing quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in the three sets of writing. First, associations between scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence problems are presented. Then presentation of the
relationship between scores of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence problems is given.

7.2.1. Relationship between the scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence problems

As mentioned above, there were two coherence scores used in this study: TSA-based coherence scores and scores in the organization and coherence category. The null hypothesis was that there was no relationship between two coherence scores and the types and frequency of coherence problems.

a) Relationship between scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 1

i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types and frequency of coherence problems

The results of the Pearson Test show that there was a strong negative correlation between the total coherence problems and the TSA-based coherence scores ($r(28) = -0.457$, $p = 0.013$) in Task 1 of students in the control group. This means the fewer the coherence problems identified in the writing, the higher the TSA-based coherence score. However, no significant correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and macrostructure-related problems ($p = 0.582$); between TSA-based coherence scores and topic unity-related problems ($p = 0.232$); between TSA-based coherence scores and paragraph unity-related problems ($p = 0.057$); between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems ($p = 0.196$); nor metadiscourse-related problems ($p = 0.481$).

Similarly, results of the Pearson Test show that there was a strong negative correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and total coherence problems ($r(28) = -0.587$, $p = 0.001$) in Task 1 of the students in the treatment group. However, no significant correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and topic unity-related problems ($p = 0.133$); between TSA-based coherence scores and paragraph unity-related problems ($p = 0.103$) nor metadiscourse-related problems ($p = 0.610$). A significant negative correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems ($r(28) = -0.429$, $p = 0.020$) in the treatment group, which was different from the control group where no significant correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems was found.
ii. Relationship between the scores in the organization and coherence category and types and frequency of coherence problems

Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that there was a strong negative correlation between the scores in the organization and coherence category and total coherence problems in Task 1 of students in the two groups (r(28) = -.731, p < .001 in the control group and r(28) = -.697, p < .001 in the treatment group). This means the more coherence problems there were in the writing, the lower the score for the organization and coherence category of the writing.

Another similarity between the two groups is that a negative correlation was also found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and topic-unity related problems (r(28) = -.442, p = .016 in the control group; r(28) = -.438, p = .018 in the treatment group) and between the scores in the organization and coherence category and paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.650, p < .001 in the control group; r(28) = -.467, p = .011 in the treatment group). However, no significant correlation was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and cohesion-related problems (p = .088 in the control group; p = .058 in the treatment group) or metadiscourse-related problems (p = .639 in the control group; p = .478 in the treatment group).

There was no correlation between the scores in the organization and coherence category and macrostructure-related problems in the writing of the students in the control group (p = .685), but no comparison can be made in the treatment group as there were no macrostructure-related problems identified in the writing of students.

b) Relationship between scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 1 revision

i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types and frequency of coherence problems

For the control group, results of the Pearson correlation show that there was a strong negative correlation between total coherence problems and TSA-based coherence scores (r(28) = -.544, p = .002). Also, a significant negative correlation was found between topic unity-related problems and TSA-based coherence scores (r(28) = -.397, p = .033) and between paragraph unity-related problems and TSA-based coherence scores (r(28) = -.716, p < .001) in the writing of Task 1 revision. However,
no correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and macrostructure (p = .183); between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems (p = .861); nor metadiscourse-related problems (p = 1.000) as the p-value for these three cases was much higher than 0.05.

Similarly, in the treatment group, there was a strong negative correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and total coherence problems (r(28) = -.696, p < .001); between TSA-based coherence scores and topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.639, p < .001), and paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.547, p = .002). One difference between the two groups was that while there was no significant correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems in the control group, a strong negative correlation was found in the treatment group (r(28) = -.672, p < .001).

ii. Relationship between scores in the organization and coherence category and types and frequency of coherence problems

Similar to TSA-based coherence scores, in the control group, a strong negative correlation (r(28) = -.603, p = .001) was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and total coherence problems in Task 1 revision. Also, a strong negative correlation (r(28) = -.688, p < 0.001) was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and paragraph unity-related problems and a negative correlation (r(28) = -.497, p = .006) were found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and topic unity-related problems. No correlation was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and macrostructure-related problems (p = .183); between the scores in the organization and coherence category and cohesion-related problems (p = .861) nor metadiscourse-related problems (p = .486).

Results of correlation in Task 1 revision of the treatment groups show that there was a strong negative correlation between the scores in the organization and coherence category and types and frequency of coherence problems. This means the scores in the organization and coherence category strongly correlate with total coherence problems (r(28) = -.685, p < .001) as well as three main types of coherence problems: topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.648, p < .001), paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.521, p = .004), and cohesion-related problems (r(28) = -.682, p < .001).
The difference between the two groups was in the correlation between the scores in the organization and coherence category and cohesion-related problems. No correlation was found in the control group, whereas a strong negative correlation was found in the treatment group. This means that in the treatment group, those with high scores of organization and coherence had fewer cohesion-related problems. This association was not found in the control group. For example, in the treatment group, there were 17 essays with scores of organization and coherence that were ≥ 3.5, and in each of these essays, there was only one or even no cohesion-related problems.

c) Relationship between scores of coherence and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 2

i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 2

In the writing of Task 2 of the students in the control group, a strong negative correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and total coherence problems (r(28) = -.601, p = .001); between TSA-based coherence scores and topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.778, p < .001); and between TSA-based coherence scores and paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.741, p < .001). However, there was no significant correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems (p = .976).

In the writing of Task 2 of the treatment group, a strong negative correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and total coherence problems (r(28) = -.626, p < .001) as well as between TSA-based coherence scores and the three main types of coherence problems, that is topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.534, p = .003), paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.635, p < .001), and cohesion-related problems (r(28) = -.450, p = .014).

There was a slight difference in the correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems between the two groups. While there was no significant correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and cohesion-related problems in the control group, a strong negative correlation was found in the treatment group.
ii. Relationship between scores in the organization and coherence category and types and frequency of coherence problems In Task 2

Results of the Pearson correlation show quite similar results in the two groups. To be specific, a strong negative correlation was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and total coherence problems \( r(28) = -0.598, \ p = .001 \) in the control group; \( r(28) = -0.667, \ p < .001 \) in the treatment group; between the scores in the organization and coherence category and topic unity-related problems \( r(28) = -0.806, \ p < .001 \) in the control group; \( r(28) = -0.600, \ p = .001 \) in the treatment group; and between the scores in the organization and coherence category and paragraph unity-related problems \( r(28) = -0.649, \ p < .001 \) in the control group; \( r(28) = -0.698, \ p < .001 \) in the treatment group. One difference between the two groups was in the correlation between the scores in the organization and coherence category and cohesion-related problems, that is, no correlation was found in the control group \( (p = .504) \), but a negative correlation was found in the treatment group \( (r(28) = -0.410, \ p = .027) \).

In conclusion, a significant negative correlation was found between scores of coherence and total coherence problems in three sets of writing of the two groups. In Task 1 of both groups, while no significant correlation was found between TSA-based coherence scores and topic unity-related problems nor paragraph unity-related problems, a significant negative correlation was found between scores in the organization and coherence category and topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. In Task 1 revision and Task 2, the two groups were similar in terms of the relationship between scores of coherence and topic unity-related problems as well as paragraph unity-related problems. That is, a significant negative correlation was found between scores of coherence and topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. However, a difference was found between the two groups in terms of the relationship between scores of coherence and cohesion-related problems, that is, there was a significant negative correlation between scores of coherence and cohesion-related problems in the treatment group in Task 1 revision and Task 2, whereas no significant correlation was found in the control group.
7.2.2. Relationship between the scores of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence problems

a) Relationship between the scores of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 1

Results of the Pearson correlation show that there was a strong negative correlation between the overall quality scores and the total coherence problems in the writing of Task 1 of the students in the two groups (r(28) = -.601, p = .001 in the control group; r(28) = -.540, p = .003 in the treatment group). Also, a strong correlation was found between the overall quality scores and topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.824, p < .001 in the control group; r(28) = -.573, p = .001 in the treatment group) as well as between the overall quality scores and paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.642, p < 0.001 in the control group; r(28) = -.460, p = .012 in the treatment group) in the writing of the two groups. No significant correlation was found between the overall quality scores and cohesion-related problems (p = .786 in the control group; p = .792 in the treatment group) nor metadiscourse-related problems (p = .678 in the control group; p = .780 in the treatment group) in the writing of the two groups. There was also no significant correlation between the overall quality scores and macrostructure-related problems in the control group (p = .721).

b) Relationship between the scores of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 1 revision

Similar to scores of coherence, in the writing of Task 1 revision of students in the control group, a strong negative correlation was found between the overall quality scores and the total coherence problems (r(28) = -.565, p = .001); between the overall quality scores and topic unity-related problems (r(28) = -.499, p = .006); and between the overall quality scores and paragraph unity-related problems (r(28) = -.705, p < .001). No significant correlation was found in terms of macrostructure (p = .176), cohesion (p = .682), nor metadiscourse (p = .384).

In the writing Task 1 revision of the students in the treatment group, there was a strong negative correlation between the overall quality score and the total coherence problems (r(28) = -.663, p < .001) as well as between the overall quality scores and three main types of coherence problems:
A difference between the two groups was that while no significant correlation was found between the overall quality scores and cohesion-related problems in the control group ($p = 0.682$), there was a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.615$) between the overall quality scores and cohesion-related problems in the treatment group. This difference will be further discussed below.

**c) Relationship between the scores of overall quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in Task 2**

Again, the correlation results between the overall quality scores and the frequency of coherence problems in the writing of Task 2 of the two groups are similar. That is, a strong negative correlation was found between the overall quality score and the total coherence problems ($r(28) = -0.600$, $p = .001$ in the control group; $r(28) = -0.679$, $p < .001$ in the treatment group); between the overall quality scores and topic unity-related problems $r(28) = -0.739$, $p < .001$ in the control group; $r(28) = -0.564$, $p = .001$ in the treatment group); and between the overall quality scores and paragraph unity-related problems ($r(28) = -0.606$, $p < 0.001$ in the control group; $r(28) = -0.725$, $p < .001$ in the treatment group) in the two groups. One difference between the two groups was in the correlation of overall quality scores and cohesion-related problems. While no significant correlation was found in the control group ($p = .294$), a significant negative correlation was found in the treatment group ($r(28) = -0.383$, $p = .040$).

In short, in the three sets of writing of the two groups, there was a strong negative correlation between scores of overall quality and frequency of coherence problems. This means the fewer coherence problems the writing had, the higher the overall quality score of the writing. In addition, scores of overall quality negatively correlated with paragraph unity-related problems and topic unity-related problems, two of the five main types of coherence problems. One difference was found between the two groups in Task 1 revision and Task 2, that is, a significant correlation was found between scores of overall quality and cohesion-related problems in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group whereas no significant correlation was found in the control group.
7.2.3. Summary

The above findings show that, in Task 1, writing quality had a strong negative association with frequency of coherence problems. Also, writing quality was negatively associated with topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. Similarly, in Task 1 revision and Task 2, the writing quality was negatively associated with total coherence problems; with topic unity-related problems; and with paragraph unity-related problems. However, one difference between two groups in Task 1 revision and Task 2 was found in the association of writing quality and cohesion: a significant negative association was found between writing quality and cohesion in the treatment group, but no significant correlation was found in the control group.

A summary of the relationship between writing quality and types and frequency of coherence problems in three sets of writing of the two groups is presented in Table 7.1. As I mentioned before, no macrostructure-related problems were identified in Task 1 of the treatment group; no macrostructure-related problems and no metadiscourse-related problems were identified in Task 1 revision of the treatment group; and no macrostructure-related problems and no metadiscourse-related problems were identified in Task 2 of the control group and the treatment group; therefore, no data for these two types of problems are displayed in the table.
7.3. Relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression

This section presents the findings of the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression employed. First, the association of scores of coherence and types of topical progression is presented. Then, the relationship between scores of overall quality and types of topical progression is given.

7.3.1. Relationship between the scores of coherence and types of topical progression

As mentioned in Section 7.2.1, there were two types of coherence scores used to analyze the writing of the control group and the treatment group. One is the TSA-based coherence scores and the other
is the scores in the organization and coherence category. There are six types of topical progression used in the analysis of this study (see Section 3.3.4) and the aim of this section is to find out the association between the two types of coherence scores and six types of topical progression.

**a) Relationship between the scores of coherence and types of topical progression in Task 1**

**i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types of topical progression**

Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that in the writing of Task 1 of the control group, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .514, p = .004 \) and between extended sequential progression (ESP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .613, p < .001 \). There was a significant negative association between unrelated progression (UP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = -.401, p = .031 \). However, no significant association was found between TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression \( p = .842 \) nor extended parallel progression \( p = .544 \).

Similarly, results of the Pearson correlation also indicated that in the writing of Task 1 of the treatment group, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .450, p = .014 \) and between extended sequential progression (ESP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .669, p < .001 \), and a significant negative association between unrelated progression (UP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = -.604, p < .001 \). However, there was no significant association between TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression \( p = .420 \) nor extended parallel progression \( p = .669 \). One difference between the two groups was that there was a significant positive correlation between TSA-based coherence scores and superstructure in the treatment group \( r(28) = .599, p = .001 \), while no significant correlation was found in the control group \( p = .178 \).

**ii. Relationship between scores in the organization and coherence category and types of topical progression**

Similar to TSA-based scores, results of the Pearson correlation indicate that in the writing of Task 1 of the control group, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \( r(28) = .412, p = .026 \); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category
(r(28) = .785, p < .001). Also, a significant negative association was found between unrelated progression (UP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category (r(28) = -.394, p = .035). However, there was no significant association between the scores in the organization and coherence category and parallel progression (p = .680) nor extended parallel progression (p = .843).

Similarly, in the writing of Task 1 in the treatment group, results of the Pearson correlation showed a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category (r(28) = .594, p = .001) and between extended sequential progression (ESP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category (r(28) = .779, p < .001). Also, a significant negative association was found between unrelated progression (UP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category (r(28) = -.492, p = .007). However, results of the Pearson correlation indicated no significant association between the scores in the organization and coherence category and parallel progression (p = .675) nor extended parallel progression (p = .889).

One difference was found between the two groups in terms of relationship between the scores in the organization and coherence category and superstructure. That is, a significant positive correlation was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and superstructure in the treatment group (r(28) = .695, p < .001), whereas no significant correlation was found in the control group (p = .442).

**b) Relationship between the scores of coherence and types of topical progression in Task 1 revision**

**i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types of topical progression**

In the writing of Task 1 revision of the control group, results of the Pearson correlation indicate a significant positive association between TSA-based coherence scores and sequential progression (SP) (r(28) = .753, p < .001) and between TSA-based coherence scores and superstructure (r(28) = .547, p = .002). Also, the results show a significant negative association between TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression (PP) (r(28) = -.450, p = .014) and between TSA-based coherence scores and unrelated progression (UP) (r(28) = -.606, p < .001). No significant association was found between TSA-based coherence scores and extended parallel progression (EPP) (p = .547) nor extended sequential progression (ESP) (p = .723).
Results of the Pearson correlation showed that in the writing of Task 1 revision of the treatment group, there was a significant positive association between TSA-based coherence scores and sequential progression (SP) \( r(28) = .879, p < .001 \); between TSA-based coherence scores and extended sequential progression (ESP) \( r(28) = .612, p < .001 \); and between TSA-based coherence scores and superstructure \( r(28) = .720, p < .001 \). There was a significant negative association between TSA-based coherence scores and unrelated progression (UP) \( r(28) = -.839, p < .001 \). However, there was no significant association between TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression (PP) \( p = .871 \) nor extended parallel progression (EPP) \( p = .782 \).

The difference between the two groups is that a significant negative association was found between parallel progression (PP) and TSA-based coherence scores in the writing of the control group, but no significant association was found in the treatment group. On the other hand, there was no significant association between extended parallel progression (EPP) and TSA-based coherence scores in the control group, but a significant positive association was found in the treatment group.

**ii. Relationship between scores in the organization and coherence category and types of topical progression**

Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that in the writing of Task 1 revision of the two groups, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \( r(28) = .793, p < .001 \) in the control group and \( r(28) = .866, p < .001 \) in the treatment group) and between superstructure and the scores in the organization and coherence category \( r(28) = .398, p = .033 \) in the control group and \( r(28) = .791, p < .001 \) in the treatment group). Also, there was a significant negative association between unrelated progression (UP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \( r(28) = -.534, p = .003 \) in the control group and \( r(28) = -.899, p < .001 \) in the treatment group). In both groups, there was no significant association between the scores in the organization and coherence category and parallel progression (PP) \( p = .101 \) in the control group; \( p = .703 \) in the treatment group) nor extended parallel progression (EPP) \( p = .547 \) in the control group; \( p = .423 \) in the treatment group).

The difference between the two groups was in the association between extended sequential progression (ESP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category. While there was a
significant positive association in the treatment group \( r(28) = .498, p = .006 \), no significant association was found in the control group \( p = .723 \).

**c) Relationship between the scores of coherence and types of topical progression in Task 2**

**i. Relationship between TSA-based coherence scores and types of topical progression**

Similar to Task 1 revision, results of the Pearson correlation in the writing of Task 2 of the control group showed a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .818, p < .001 \); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .571, p = .001 \); and between superstructure and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .649, p < .001 \). Also, a significant negative association was found between unrelated progression (UP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = -.821, p < .001 \). However, there was no significant association between TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression \( p = .197 \) nor extended parallel progression \( p = .872 \).

In the writing of Task 2 of the treatment group, results of the Pearson correlation indicate a strong association between TSA-based coherence scores and all types of topical progression except for extended parallel progression. To be specific, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .802, p < .001 \); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .838, p < .001 \); and between superstructure and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = .591, p = .001 \). Also, there was a significant negative association between parallel progression (PP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = -.569, p = .001 \) and between unrelated progression (UP) and TSA-based coherence scores \( r(28) = -.916, p < .001 \). However, no significant association was found between extended parallel progression and TSA-based coherence scores \( p = .129 \).

The difference between the two groups was in the correlation of TSA-based coherence scores and parallel progression (PP). There was a significant negative association in the treatment group, whereas no significant association was found in the control group.
ii. Relationship between scores in the organization and coherence category and types of topical progression

Results of the Pearson correlation in the writing of Task 2 of the control group showed that there was a significant positive correlation between sequential progression (SP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .852, p < .001)\); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .636, p < .001)\); and between superstructure and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .479, p = .009)\). There was also a significant negative association between unrelated progression (UP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = -.877, p < .001)\). However, there was no significant association between the scores in the organization and coherence category and parallel progression and \((p = .772)\) nor extended parallel progression \((p = .851)\).

Similarly, in the treatment group, a significant positive association was found between sequential progression (SP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .820, p < .001)\); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .810, p < .001)\); and between superstructure and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = .495, p = .006)\). Also, a significant negative association was found between parallel progression (PP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = -.469, p = .010)\); and between unrelated progression (UP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category \((r(28) = -.896, p < .001)\). No significant correlation was found between the scores in the organization and coherence category and extended parallel progression (EPP) \((p = .316)\).

The difference between the two groups was that while there was a strong negative association between parallel progression (PP) and the scores in the organization and coherence category in the treatment group, no significant correlation was found between the two in the control group.

To sum up, in Task 1, the two groups were similar in the correlation between scores for coherence and sequential progression (positive), extended sequential progression (positive), and unrelated progression (negative). However, there was a difference in terms of correlation between scores of coherence and superstructure between the two groups. While no significant correlation was found between scores of coherence and superstructure in the control group, a significant positive
association was found in the treatment group, In Task 1 revision, a significant positive correlation was found between scores for coherence and sequential progression and superstructure and a significant negative one was found between scores of coherence and unrelated progression. A difference was found between the two groups in the correlation between scores for coherence and extended sequential progression, that is, a significant positive correlation between the two was found in the treatment group while no significant correlation was found in the control group. In Task 2, the two groups were similar in the association between scores of coherence and sequential progression (positive), extended sequential progression (positive), superstructure (positive) and unrelated progression (negative), but different in the correlation between scores of coherence and parallel progression (PP). The difference was that there was a significant negative correlation between the two in the treatment group whereas no significant correlation was found in the control group.

7.3.2. Relationship between overall quality scores and types of topical progression

a) Relationship between overall quality scores and types of topical progression in Task 1

Results of the Pearson correlation showed that in the writing of Task 1 of the two groups there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and overall quality scores \( r(28) = .448, \ p = .015 \) in the control and \( r(28) = .833, \ p < .001 \) in the treatment) and between extended sequential progression (ESP) and overall quality scores \( r(28) = .590, \ p = .001 \) in the control and \( r(28) = .608, \ p < .001 \) in the treatment). Also, a significant negative association was found in the two groups between unrelated progression and overall quality scores \( r(28) = -.503, \ p = .005 \) in the control and \( r(28) = -.565, \ p = .001 \) in the treatment). In both groups, no significant association was found between overall quality scores and parallel progression (PP) \( p = .598 \) in the control and \( p = .920 \) in the treatment); between overall quality scores and extended parallel progression (EPP) \( p = .228 \) in the control and \( p = .631 \) in the treatment). One difference between the two groups was that while no significant correlation was found between overall quality scores and superstructure in the control group \( p = .385 \), a significant positive correlation was found in the treatment group \( r(28) = .450, \ p = .014 \).
b) Relationship between overall quality scores and types of topical progression in Task 1 revision

In the writing of Task 1 revision of the two groups, results of the Pearson correlation indicated quite similar results between the two groups in the correlation of overall quality scores and types of topical progression. To be specific, a significantly positive association was found between sequential progression (SP) and overall quality scores (r(28) = .759, p < .001 in the control group; r(28) = .918, p < .001 in the treatment group) and between superstructure and overall quality scores (r(28) = .390, p = .036 in the control group; r(28) = .852, p < .001 in the treatment group). Also, a significant negative association was found between unrelated progression and overall quality scores (r(28) = -.491, p = .007 in the control; r(28) = -.913, p < .001 in the treatment). However, no significant association was found between overall quality scores and parallel progression (PP) (p = .156 in the control group; p = .958 in the treatment group) nor extended parallel progression (EPP) (p = .739 in the control group; p = .435 in the treatment group). The difference between the two groups was in the correlation of overall quality scores and extended sequential progression. While there was no significant correlation between overall quality scores and extended sequential progression (ESP) in the control group (p = .222), a significant positive was found in the treatment group (r(28) = .553, p = .002).

c) Relationship between overall quality scores and types of topical progression in Task 2

In the writing of Task 2, results of the Pearson correlation showed that the two groups were similar in terms of correlation between overall quality scores and almost all types of topical progression. To be specific, in both groups, there was a significant positive association between sequential progression (SP) and overall quality scores (r(28) = .861, p < .001 in the control group and r(28) = .836, p < .001 in the treatment group); between extended sequential progression (ESP) and overall quality scores (r(28) = .637, p < .001 in the control group and r(28) = .802, p < .001 in the treatment group); and between superstructure and overall quality scores (r(28) = .441, p = .017 in the control group and r(28) = .451, p = .014 in the treatment group). Also, there was a significant negative association between unrelated progression and overall quality scores (r(28) = -.944, p < .001 in the control group and r(28) = -.887, p < .001 in the treatment group). No significant correlation was found in either groups between extended parallel progression and overall quality scores (p = .482 in the control group, p = .361 in the treatment group). The difference between the two groups is that there
was a significant negative association between parallel progression and overall quality scores in the treatment group \((r(28) = -0.489, p = .007)\), whereas no significant correlation was found between the two in the control group \((p = .776)\).

In brief, similar to scores for coherence, the two groups were similar in the association between overall quality scores and sequential progression (SP) (positive), extended sequential progression (ESP) (positive), and unrelated progression (UP) (negative) in Task 1. The two groups were also similar in the association between overall quality scores and sequential progression (SP) (positive), superstructure (positive), and unrelated progression (UP) (negative) in Task 1 revision. Similarly, the two groups were the same in the association between overall quality scores and sequential progression (SP) (positive), extended sequential progression (ESP) (positive), superstructure (positive), and unrelated progression (UP) (negative) in Task 2. The difference between the two groups was (1) in the association between overall quality scores and superstructure in Task 1 (positive correlation in the treatment group but no correlation in the control group); (2) in the association between overall quality scores and extended sequential progression (ESP) in Task 1 revision (positive correlation in the treatment group but no correlation in the control group); and (3) in the association between overall quality scores and parallel progression (PP) in Task 2 (negative correlation in the treatment group but no correlation in the control group).

**7.3.3. Summary**

The findings show that writing quality correlated strongly with some types of topical progression. To be specific, in Task 1 draft 1, there was a significant positive association between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) and extended sequential progression (ESP). Also, a significant negative association was found between writing quality and unrelated progression (UP). The two groups were different in the correlation between overall quality scores and superstructure (positive correlation in the treatment group but no correlation in the control group). In Task 1 draft 2, a positive significant correlation was found between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) and superstructure, and a significant negative correlation was found between writing quality and unrelated progression (UP). The difference between the two groups in Task 1 draft 2 was that while there was a significant correlation between writing quality and extended sequential progression (ESP) in the treatment group, no significant correlation was found in the control group. In Task 2, there was a significant
positive correlation between writing quality and sequential progression (SP); extended sequential progression (ESP); and superstructure. Also, there was a significant negative correlation between writing quality and unrelated progression (UP). The difference between the two groups was that a significant negative correlation was found between writing quality and parallel progression in the treatment group; however, there was no significant correlation in the control group. A summary of the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the two groups is displayed in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2. Summary of the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression in three sets of writing of the two groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Task 1</th>
<th>Task 1 revision</th>
<th>Task 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TSA-based scores</td>
<td>Scores in organization and coherence category</td>
<td>Overall quality scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel progression (PP)</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential progression (SP)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended sequential progression (ESP)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated progression (UP)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Task 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Parallel progression (PP)</th>
<th>Sequential progression (SP)</th>
<th>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</th>
<th>Extended sequential progression (ESP)</th>
<th>Superstructure</th>
<th>Unrelated progression (UP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Task 1 revision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Parallel progression (PP)</th>
<th>Sequential progression (SP)</th>
<th>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</th>
<th>Extended sequential progression (ESP)</th>
<th>Superstructure</th>
<th>Unrelated progression (UP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Task 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Parallel progression (PP)</th>
<th>Sequential progression (SP)</th>
<th>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)</th>
<th>Extended sequential progression (ESP)</th>
<th>Superstructure</th>
<th>Unrelated progression (UP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>UP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential progression</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Parallel Progression</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(EPP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended sequential</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progression (ESP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated progression</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. “-” shows significant negative correlation
“+” shows significant positive correlation
“ø” shows no significant correlation

7.4. Discussion

7.4.1. Relationship between writing quality and frequency and types of coherence problems

Previous studies (Crossley & McNamara, 2016; McNamara et al., 2010) concluded that coherence is a crucial attribute of human judgements of essay quality. That is, the more coherent an essay is, the better quality it is. In my study, the findings from the analysis of three sets of writing of the two groups showed that writing quality had a strong negative relationship with frequency of coherence problems, which means the fewer the coherence problems an essay had, the more coherent and better quality it was; as a result, the higher score it achieved. This may explain why essays written by students in the treatment group received higher scores for writing quality than students in the control group when the intervention finished. In particular, in the treatment group there were far fewer instances of coherence problems (Task 1 revision (109 instances) and Task 2 (159 instances)) than in the control group (Task 1 revision (279 instances) and Task 2 (297 instances)).

Similarly, the findings revealed that writing quality correlated strongly and negatively with paragraph unity-related problems and topic unity-related problems. This suggests that if an essay has few problems related to topic unity and paragraph unity, it is likely to be rated as a good quality essay. This is another explanation for the improvement in the quality of Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group, as the instances of problems related to topic unity and paragraph unity in these two sets of writing of the treatment group were significantly fewer than those of the control group.
Regarding the relationship between writing quality and cohesion-related problems, there have been debates on the issue of whether cohesion positively or negatively correlates with writing quality (Crossley & McNamara, 2012; Guo, Crossley, & McNamara, 2013; M. Liu & Braine, 2005; W. Yang & Sun, 2012). In my study, there were also conflicting results about the relationship between cohesion-related problems and writing quality between the two groups after the intervention. In particular, there was no significant correlation between cohesion-related problems and writing quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the control group, but a significant negative association was found in these two sets of writing of the treatment group. One explanation for this is that students in the treatment group were introduced to cohesion-related problems during the intervention, so they are likely to have been aware that problems related to cohesion negatively affect writing quality. This is likely to be the reason why the instances of cohesion-related problems in Task 1 revision (34 instances) and Task 2 (49 instances) of the treatment were fewer than in Task 1 (87 instances), and also fewer than those in Task 1 revision (95 instances) and Task 2 (71 instances) of the control group.

In brief, it was clear that writing quality had a clear relationship with frequency of coherence problems. Also, writing quality strongly associated with topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. However, results of the association between cohesion-related problems and writing quality between the two groups after the intervention finished were different. That is, writing quality negatively correlated to cohesion-related problems in the writing of Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group while there was no significant correlation between writing quality and cohesion-related problems in the writing of Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the control group.

### 7.4.2. Relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression

The findings show that in three sets of writing of the two groups, there was a significant positive correlation between writing quality and sequential progression (SP). This shows sequential progression plays an important role in creating coherence in writing. The more sequential progression was employed in the writing, the higher scores of quality it achieved. This result supports the results of several previous studies (Carreon, 2006; Fan & Hsu, 2008; Liangprayoon et al., 2013; Schneider & Connor, 1990) which mentioned a link between sequential progression and writing quality. The positive relationship between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) found in this present study supports Schneider and Connor (1990) who concluded that having a high
A proportion of sequential progression (SP), which “helps to develop individual topics by adding details to an idea” (Schneider & Connor, 1990, p. 416), was often found in highly-rated essays.

While the relationship between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) was significant and positive, the correlation between writing quality and unrelated progression in three sets of writing of the two groups was always significant and negative. This indicates the more unrelated progression employed in an essay, the worse quality the essay was and the lower scores it got. As Knoch (2007) states, unrelated progression appears when the topics of the t-unit are not “clearly related to either the previous sentence topic or the discourse topic” (Knoch, 2007, p. 115). Also, unrelated progression was claimed as a characteristic of low-rated essays (Schneider & Connor, 1990, p. 422). The relationship between writing quality and unrelated progression may be one of the explanations for the high scores of quality that students in the treatment group achieved in Task 1 revision and Task 2, as the number of instances of unrelated progression employed in Task 1 revision (67 instances) and Task 2 (82 instances) were fewer than that of Task 1 (116 instances).

As Knoch (2007) notes, superstructure is a way to “create coherence using a linking device instead of topic progression” (Knoch, 2007, p. 115). It can be understood that superstructure is considered as one criterion of coherence. In my study, a significant positive correlation was found between superstructure and writing quality in the writing of Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 of the two groups. This means the more superstructure was employed, the higher the scores of quality the writing achieved. This may be one of the explanations for the higher scores that students in both groups achieved in Task 1 revision and Task 2 as there was an increase in the use of superstructure in the writing of Task 1 revision and Task 2 when compared with Task 1. To be specific, in Task 1, essays written by students of the two groups were relatively low-rated (mean < 2.3) and the appearance of superstructure was rare (only 5 cases in the control group and 10 cases in the treatment group); however, more superstructure was employed in Task 1 revision (22 cases in the control group and 31 cases in the treatment group) and in Task 2 (14 cases in the control group and 28 cases in the treatment group) and essays were higher rated in Task 1 revision (mean = 2.5 in the control group; mean > 3.2 in the treatment group) and in Task 2 (mean > 2.3 in the control group; mean > 3.0 in the treatment group).
To sum up, there were significant positive associations between writing quality and sequential progression and superstructure and a significant negative correlation between writing quality and unrelated progression. More use of sequential progression and superstructure and less use of unrelated progression in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 of the treatment group may explain the high scores of writing quality achieved in these two sets of writing of the treatment group.
CHAPTER 8. STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTERVENTION

In this chapter, I will present the analysis of qualitative data collected at the end of the intervention. First, students’ previous experience and knowledge of coherence before the intervention started is reported. Then students’ perceptions of the intervention after the intervention finished and students’ difficulties following the intervention are presented. Finally, I will discuss the findings and end with a summary. This chapter focuses on answering research question 6.

RQ 6. How do Vietnamese EFL students perceive the intervention? Do they find it helpful in improving their writing coherence and writing quality?

8.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate students’ perceptions of the intervention they took part in. In order to achieve the aim, qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The qualitative data in this study were from questionnaires and focus groups. Taking the aim of the study into account, the qualitative data were collected only from the treatment group. In other words, only students in the treatment group completed the questionnaire and participated in the focus group interview.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there were three sets of questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix 5) and two sets of questions in the focus group interviews (see Appendix 6). Three sets of questions in the questionnaire included 5 questions about student’s demographic information; 8 questions about student’s writing experience before the intervention; and 24 questions about students’ opinion on the intervention. The questionnaire was carried out in week 13, right after the writing of Task 2 was collected. Two sets of questions in the focus groups consisted of 7 questions about students’ previous writing experience and 10 questions about students’ perceptions of the intervention. Fifteen out of 29 students in the treatment group were randomly selected to join the focus groups. They were then assigned into five focus groups with three students in each group. The focus groups were also conducted in week 13, but on a different day from the day that the questionnaire was collected. Each focus group interview was 20 to 30 minutes long and took place in a private room where students could express the answers as they wished.
In order to answer questions in the questionnaire and in the focus groups, students were allowed to use their first language (Vietnamese) so that they could express themselves as clearly as possible. Data collected from the questionnaire and focus groups were translated into English by the researcher to ensure the confidentiality of students’ answers. In the process of translation, key issues were noted and classified into categories such as students’ previous experience/ knowledge of coherence, students’ perceptions of the intervention, and students’ difficulties following the intervention. It should be noted here that the translation from Vietnamese to English was checked again and again by the researcher to ensure the accuracy in content, but no independent checking of the translation of the data from Vietnamese into English was undertaken due to financial issues. Below are the results from the analysis of the questionnaire and the focus groups.

8.2. Students’ previous performance and experience.

In terms of overall academic performance level, in their answers to the questionnaire, students reported that before taking part in the intervention 79% (23 students) had a GPA\(^2\) of 2.5 – 3.1 and 21% (6 students) had a GPA of 2.0 – 2.4.

In terms of writing performance, in their answers to the questionnaire students in the treatment reported that they had been taught five writing modules and writing module 5 had been taught right before this study was carried out. Almost all students in the treatment group had the same writing performance. Specifically, 27 students (93%) got level C (5.5 – 6.9) and 2 students (7%) got level B (7.0 – 8.4) at the end of writing module 5.

Regarding students’ previous experience, all students who completed the questionnaire reported that in five writing modules they were taught aspects of writing such as grammar (tenses, mood, voice, etc.), sentence (sentence structure, sentence types), paragraph (paragraph organization, coherence, etc.), cohesion (coherence, cohesion, etc.), and rhetorical devices (rhetorical devices, etc.).

---

\(^2\) In Vietnam, GPA is used to assess student overall academic performance. GPA (3.6-4.0) = Excellent; GPA (3.2-3.5) = Good; GPA (2.5-3.1) = Satisfactory; GPA (2.0-2.4) = Pass; GPA (<2.0) = Fail

Levels A, B, C, D, and F are used to assess student performance in a particular academic subject.
A = 8.5 - 10; B = 7.0 - 8.4; C = 5.5 – 6.9; D = 4.0 - 5.4; and F = <4.0.

Levels A, B, C, D, and F are converted into GPA as follows:
A = 4 GPA; B = 3 GPA; C = 2 GPA; D = 1 GPA; and F = 0 GPA.
coherence and unity in paragraph), and essay (essay organization, essay types, coherence and unity in essay). However, most of the students who participated in the focus groups claimed that they could not remember all the writing issues they were taught (11 students) and that teachers did not have enough time to explain or clarify what they taught (10 students). They said their teachers also had no time to check students’ understanding (14 students). For example, one student in focus group 4 stated that “there were many issues that teachers did not clearly explain because of the limited time in class”.

One aspect of students’ previous experience that was a focus in both the questionnaire and in the focus groups was the features students focused on when writing. Vocabulary and grammar were the features that students first focused on (26 students in the survey questionnaire and 14 students in the focus group interviews). Content (main ideas) was the feature that received students’ second focus (23 students in the survey questionnaire and 12 students in the focus group interviews). Organization (overall structure) was the feature with the third focus by students (13 students in the survey questionnaire and 7 students in the focus group interview). For example, one student in Focus group 3 explained “When writing, I focused on finding ideas, then vocabulary and grammar. My teacher told me to try to find academic vocabulary and use complicated grammar to make the writing interesting and have a chance to get better marks.” Such features as cohesion and coherence were also mentioned by some students, but these features were not their priority. To be specific, eight students in the survey questionnaire and two students in the focus group interviews mentioned that coherence and cohesion were the features they focused when writing.

Another topic that was also asked in both the questionnaire and the focus groups was whether students often revised the writing. Fifteen out of 29 students who completed the questionnaire said “No”; the common reason for not revising the writing was that they were lazy. Some said they did not know what to do in the revision process. There was one student who stated that she “did not have motivation to revise the writing” and another said, “I supposed that revising my writing couldn’t help me improve my writing level.” Fourteen out of 29 students said they did revise their writing and what most of them did when revising the writing was to check grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes. Similarly, 10 out 15 students who took part in the focus groups said they often revised their writing and what they did in the revision process was focusing on correcting grammar and
spelling mistakes. One student in the Focus group 4 explained that “when doing the revision, I only checked the grammar and spelling mistakes because I only knew how to correct grammar and spelling mistakes.” Five students participating the focus groups said they never revised their writing because they were lazy, or they did not know what to revise.

One more topic in both the questionnaire and the focus group interviews was whether students had difficulties when writing. All students (29 in the questionnaire and 15 in the focus groups) said “Yes”. In other words, all 29 students in the treatment group had difficulties when writing. There were five main difficulties mentioned by students in the survey questionnaire and in the focus group interviews.

The first difficulty was the organization of ideas. Twenty-five students in the questionnaire and 13 students in the focus groups reported that they did not know how to arrange ideas in the writing. For example, one student (S17) stated in the questionnaire that she “did not know how to arrange ideas logically”. Another student in the Focus group 2 said “I had difficulty organizing ideas. I did not know how to arrange supporting points to support the main point so that the writing was clear and persuasive.”

The second difficulty was the lack of vocabulary. Twenty-three students in the questionnaire and 12 students in the focus groups reported that their vocabulary was limited, and they could not find words and phrases to express their ideas. For example, one student in Focus group 1 stated that “It was difficult for me to find academic words to express the ideas.” Another student (S3) mentioned in the questionnaire that “I did not know how to express the ideas due to the lack of vocabulary.”

Use of irrelevant ideas was the third difficulty mentioned by 17 students in the questionnaire and 8 students in the focus group interviews. Student 15 stated in the questionnaire that her choice of ideas was not good, and very often the supporting ideas she included in the writing were not related to the main topic.

The fourth and fifth difficulties reported by students were the lack of elaboration and the repetition of ideas. Fifteen students in the questionnaire and six students in the focus groups mentioned that they did not know how to use specific examples to support the ideas. For example, student 22
claimed in the questionnaire that “the most difficult was to arrange ideas clearly. In each idea, I still couldn’t find specific and clear examples to support.” Twelve students in the questionnaire and five students in the focus groups said the ideas in their writing were often duplicated.

8.3. Students’ previous knowledge of coherence

When asked about the knowledge they had about coherence, almost all students who completed the questionnaire stated that they knew the equivalent meaning of the word “coherence” in Vietnamese. Many of them (19 students) were unable to differentiate between coherence and cohesion. For example, one student (S9) stated in the questionnaire that “I understand that coherence means cohesion between sentences and paragraphs in a text. So, I often use linking words to increase cohesion.” In addition, there was one important point related to coherence raised by some students (9 students) in the questionnaire. They argued that they did not understand what a coherent text was and how to make their writing coherent. “I knew what coherence meant, but I did not understand how coherent a text was and I did not know how to make my writing coherent. Nor did I know whether my writing was coherent or not.” (Student 14; questionnaire).

In summary, before the intervention students in the treatment group did not have a clear view on the concept of coherence in writing. They did not know what to do to make their writing coherent. However, after the intervention there was an improvement in the performance of students in the treatment group in terms of coherence (see Chapter 6 for more details). The following section will present students’ perceptions of the intervention as well as difficulties that students encountered when following the intervention.

8.4. Students’ perceptions of the intervention

8.4.1. Results from the questionnaire

In total, there were 24 statements asking students in the treatment group about the intervention: 18 statements asked about the benefits of the intervention and 6 statements asked about the weaknesses of the intervention. The questionnaire used a five-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” for each answer in which “strongly disagree” was equivalent to 1 point; “disagree” 2 points; “neutral” 3 points; “agree” 4 points; and “strongly agree” 5 points. The questions
were randomly ordered in the questionnaire to avoid biasing students’ opinions. Students gave their opinions by ticking the box that showed their agreement level.

Results from the questionnaire revealed that students had positive opinions on the implementation of the intervention in their writing class. To be specific, the total mean of agreement level of students on the perceived benefits of the intervention was 4.23 (SD = .506) and the total mean for all statements prompting students to judge the intervention as not useful (Statements 4, 5, 8, 16, 17, and 18 in Table 8.1) was 1.65 (SD = .482).

*Table 8.1. Descriptive analysis of students’ opinions on the intervention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Positive impacts of the intervention Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Negative impacts of the intervention Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  The lessons in the intervention are interesting to understand and follow</td>
<td>4.55 (.506)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  As a result of the intervention, I know how to organize the ideas in your writing coherently</td>
<td>4.24 (.511)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  As a result of the intervention, I am able to identify the coherence breaks in my writing</td>
<td>4.00 (.707)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  The lessons in the intervention make me feel stressed</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.55 (.506)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention is complicated and I find it difficult to follow</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.90 (.489)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  The lessons in the intervention show me a clearer picture of what good writing is.</td>
<td>4.38 (.561)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  I learn from the lessons in the intervention the importance of coherence in writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.62 (.494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  The teaching materials used in the intervention are not helpful to my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.38 (.494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  The lessons in the intervention help me identify which sentences are relevant or irrelevant to the main topic of the text</td>
<td>4.45 (.632)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention is effective for revising written texts</td>
<td>4.07 (.458)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Positive impacts of the intervention</td>
<td>Negative impacts of the intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The lessons in the intervention are easy to understand and follow</td>
<td>4.38 (.622)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. As a result of the intervention, I am able to correct the coherence</td>
<td>4.00 (.463)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breaks in my writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. As a result of the intervention, I am able to minimize the coherence</td>
<td>4.00 (.463)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breaks in my writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the</td>
<td>4.10 (.310)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intervention is helpful in helping me check for coherence in my writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I learn from the lessons in the intervention that there is</td>
<td>4.21 (.412)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fundamental knowledge to be improved in order to write a more coherent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The lessons in the intervention do not help much with my writing skill.</td>
<td>1.72 (.455)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. As a result of the intervention, I am confused about what I need to</td>
<td>1.86 (.441)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do to improve my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The lessons in the intervention are boring</td>
<td>1.48 (.509)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the</td>
<td>4.14 (.351)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intervention helps me focus on the scope of the main topic when writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The lessons in the intervention help me write better</td>
<td>4.24 (.577)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. As a result of the intervention, I am able to identify the topic of</td>
<td>4.17 (.468)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each sentence as well as the topic of the whole piece of writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the</td>
<td>4.28 (.591)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intervention should be officially used to teach writing skills in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The teaching materials used in the intervention are beneficial to</td>
<td>4.34 (.484)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. As a result of the intervention, I am able to make all the ideas in</td>
<td>4.03 (.499)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the writing relate to the main topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.4.2. Results from the focus groups

a) Students’ perceived benefits of the intervention

All students who participated in the focus group interviews agreed that the intervention was helpful to their writing. Some explained that they now knew the important role of coherence in writing and that they knew what to do to make their writing coherent. For example, one student in a focus group said that “Before the intervention, I did not pay much attention to the coherence in my writing. I thought coherence was not important. However, after the intervention, I realized that it was very important.” Another student added that, “Now, I can check the coherence in my writing. I can identify the problems of coherence in my writing and do the correction to make my writing more coherent.”

When asked about the difference between Task 1 and Task 1 revision, all students said there was a difference between these two pieces of writing. Twelve students reported that their Task 1 revision was totally different from their Task 1 because a lot of changes were made. This view was supported by the significant changes in the scores of coherence and overall quality between Task 1 and Task 1 revision (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.2 for more details). One student in Focus group 1 said that when she looked back at her Task 1, she viewed it as messy because there were too many ideas in a paragraph and some of the ideas were not related to each other. She made lots of changes in Task 1 revision by discussing one main point in each paragraph and using examples to support the point.

All students mentioned that after participating in the intervention there were some changes in the way they produced a piece of writing. For example, one student in Focus group 2 said “Now, I often plan/ make an outline before I write. I always try to make my writing clear by providing examples to support the main points.” Another student added, “I do not focus too much on vocabulary and grammar. Instead, I focus more on the coherence of my writing. In the introduction paragraph, I always remember to write lead-in statements before stating the thesis statement. In each body paragraph, only one point is discussed, and examples are used to explain that point.”

In particular, all students in the focus groups reported that as a result of the intervention, they had become used to revising their writing because they knew what they needed to do in the revision process. They reported that they did not focus too much on checking grammar mistakes and spelling.
mistakes anymore. Instead, they focused on checking the organization of ideas in the writing as well as the relevance of ideas to the main topic.

b) Students’ perceptions of learning the problems of coherence and the TSA

When asked which part of the intervention they thought most beneficial to their writing, whether the teaching of coherence problems and TSA or the teaching of other writing aspects, most of students’ responses conveyed positive attitudes towards the teaching of coherence problems and TSA. Twelve students reported that they found the teaching of coherence problems and TSA helpful to their writing. One student in Focus group 4 said, “I found the teaching of coherence problems and TSA helpful to my writing. Before the intervention, I did not know what to check in my writing, so I never revised the writing. Now, I understand the importance of coherence in the writing and know what makes the writing incoherent.” Some students (10) said that topical structure analysis (TSA) was a new approach to them and it was really helpful when applied to check for coherence in their writing.

When asked about the ability to identify problems of coherence in their writing, 67% of students (10 students) in the focus groups confidently stated that they could identify problems of coherence not only in their writing but also in other students’ writing. In addition, they could correct their writing to make it clearer and better-organized. One student in Focus group 5 mentioned, “Before the intervention, I depended on teacher’s correction/feedback, but teachers were so busy and they did not have time to check all the writing. As a result, I did not know what I needed to do to improve my writing. However, after the intervention, I now can do self-correcting based on the system of coherence problems provided in the intervention.” The other 33% of students (5 students) said that they could identify some of the coherence problems in their writing but could not correct all the problems because they still needed more practice.

Similarly, when asked whether they could use topical structure analysis (TSA) to check for coherence in their writing, 73% of students (11 students) stated that TSA was a very beneficial approach to revise coherence in their writing. One student reported, “By applying the TSA in my writing, I know how coherent my writing is and I know what I need to do to make my writing more coherent. For example, I know that I should use more sequential progression to provide more details to the main
point and reduce the use of unrelated progression leading to the irrelevant ideas to the main point. Now, I do not mind revising my writing anymore.”

All students in the focus groups agreed that the teaching of coherence problems and TSA should be applied to teaching writing skills in the university context. One of the reasons given was that when students were taught the problems of coherence and TSA, they would have a clear picture of what made their writing good. They would understand the important role of coherence in writing as well as know what they needed to do to make their writing better. It was suggested by students that the teaching of coherence problems and TSA should be applied in teaching writing skills when students started learning writing module four (the second semester of the second year) to encourage students to write, revise, and rewrite their writing.

In brief, most of the students in the treatment group reported that they had positive attitudes toward the intervention they participated in. However, there remained some problems related to the intervention reported by students and these problems will be reported in the following section.

8.5. Difficulties/ problems following the intervention

When asked about the difficulties/problems following the intervention, eight students reported that they sometimes found it difficult to identify problems related to paragraph unity and three students said it was hard for them to remember all the problems of coherence. One student in Focus group 3 said, “At first, I couldn’t remember all the problems of coherence, but now I can. However, the identification of problems related to paragraph unity is sometimes still a bit challenging to me and I need time to practice more.” Of eleven subtypes of paragraph unity-related problems, six students reported that they were struggling with justifying or exemplifying a proposition with elaboration; four students said they were, in some cases, confused about selecting relevant supporting ideas; as a result, they sometimes used irrelevant supporting points in their writing. Another four students mentioned that they found it hard to avoid topic drift in their writing due to the habit of not planning before writing.

Regarding difficulties related to topical structure analysis (TSA), students in the focus group interview said it was a new approach to them and they needed a relatively long period of time to employ this approach to improve their writing. Seven of the fifteen students mentioned that they
had difficulty identifying the topics of t-units. Another six students mentioned that determining types of topical progression when applying the TSA was challenging to them. One student in Focus group 3 said, “Sometimes, I identified a wrong topic of a t-unit, leading to the wrong identification of type of topical progression. The reason is that this approach (TSA) is new to me and it takes time to remember all the coding guidelines.”

In short, although students had positive attitudes toward the effect of the intervention, there still remained difficulties that challenged students when they participated in the treatment. Discussions about students’ perceptions of the intervention will be presented below. Some suggestions to deal with students’ difficulties will also be mentioned in the following discussion.

8.6. Discussion

8.6.1. Students’ perceptions of the intervention

Results from the questionnaire and focus groups showed that most students in the treatment group viewed the intervention as helpful in assisting them to produce coherent essays. Many students said they learnt the important role of coherence in writing and learnt types of problems that may cause incoherence of their writing. Also, they reported that they could identify problems of coherence in their writing and correct them; as a result, they could minimize the problems of coherence in their writing. It can be inferred from students’ opinions that the intervention helped them to achieve improvement in their writing performance. This is also illustrated in the sets of writing which were collected right after the intervention finished (Task 1 revision) and four weeks after the intervention finished (Task 2). As Chapters 6 and 7 have shown, these were significantly more coherent than Task 1, written before the intervention.

In addition, many students viewed topical structure analysis (TSA) as a helpful approach that assisted them in checking for coherence in their writing as well as improving their writing’s coherence and quality. This view was supported by the quantitative data which show a significant difference in the use of types of topical progression between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group (see Chapter 6). Also, higher scores of coherence and overall quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 when compared with Task 1 may be considered as evidence for this view. For example, before the introduction of TSA, there was little use of sequential progression (SP) and superstructure in Task
1 and mean scores of coherence and overall quality achieved in Task 1 were between 2.0 and 2.5. However, after the TSA was introduced, the number of SP and superstructure employed in Task 1 revision and Task 2 was higher than Task 1 and mean scores of coherence and overall quality were also higher (between 3.0 and 3.5). This view of students in my study was consistent with the views of students in several previous studies (Attelisi, 2012; Liangprayoon et al., 2013; Schneider & Connor, 1990) in which TSA was considered as a useful approach to help improve coherence in writing.

8.6.2. Students’ difficulties/problems following the intervention

Despite their positive attitudes toward the intervention, students mentioned some difficulties they encountered when participating in the intervention. There were two main difficulties facing students when they learned about problems of coherence: some students found it hard to explicitly name all the problems and some students were unable to identify some subtypes of paragraph-unity related problems. The reason for students’ difficulties in explicitly naming all coherence problems may be that students had to study all types of problems in a short time, so it may have been an overload for them. A solution for this difficulty is that types of coherence problems could be divided up and taught in different stages. For example, at universities in Vietnam, students are often taught to write paragraphs before they are taught to write essays, so paragraph unity-related problems could be taught at an early stage (paragraph writing). Then, other types of coherence problems could be taught at a later stage (essay writing). Teaching the problems of coherence little by little would likely decrease students’ difficulties because students would not have to learn so many things at a time and they would have enough practice for new things.

With regard to the introduction of TSA, students in the treatment group experienced the difficulty of wrong identification of t-unit topics. A possible explanation for this difficulty is that students sometimes mistook the grammatical subject for the topical subject of a t-unit. This difficulty could be solved by teaching students to distinguish between the mood subject and the topical subject. According to Flores and Kexiu (2015), “the mood subject is the grammatical subject of the sentence and the topical subject refers to the idea discussed, i.e. what the sentence is about” (Flores & Kexiu, 2015, p. 108). These two subjects sometimes coincide and sometimes are separate. For example, in the sentence “Indoor games are very limited in terms of advantages compared to outdoor games”,
the two subjects coincide, but in the sentence “There are fifteen students in my class”, the two subjects are separate.

Together with the wrong identification of t-unit topics, students in the treatment group reported that they also had difficulty identifying the types of topical progression. A possible cause leading to wrong identification of types of topical progression is the wrong identification of t-unit topics. Another possible explanation of this difficulty is that sometimes the topic of the following t-unit was not lexically identical although it was semantically related to the topic of the preceding t-unit, but students considered the topic of the following t-unit as a new topic; as a result, types of progression were mistakenly identified. For example, when practicing identifying the topic of t-units in the following paragraph, most students thought “holding meetings and discussion forums” and “online shopping” were new topics:

(S1) One of these influences is that people will obtain more convenient ways of living. (S2) Holding meetings and discussion forums using social networks make time for the busy businessmen to spend more time with their family. (S3) Online shopping reduces the time consuming of housewives, when they can do other house chores.

As a result, unrelated progression (UP) was used to indicate the relationship between S1, S2, and S3. However, “holding meetings and discussion forums” and “online shopping” are semantically related to “convenient ways of living”, so types of progression for S1, S2, and S3 should be sequential progression (SP) and extended sequential progression (ESP).

To sum up, students reported some problems following the intervention such as difficulty in remembering all types of coherence problems or wrong identification of topical subjects when applying TSA in writing. Further discussion about difficulties that students encountered when following the intervention and possible solutions to the difficulties will be presented in Chapter 9.

8.7. Summary

Results from qualitative data revealed that students in the treatment group had positive attitudes toward the intervention. Before the intervention, students reported having experienced many problems, especially problems of coherence when writing. Also, they reported that they did not
know what to do with their writing to make it better; that was one of the reasons why students did not have a habit of revising their writing. However, after the intervention, students said they could identify the coherence problems not only in their own writing but also in others’ writing. Also, they could correct the problems to make their writing better. In addition, students reported that they could apply TSA to check the coherence in their writing and implement this approach to improve their writing’s coherence and quality. Students’ views were supported by evidence from the quantitative data which showed an improvement on the coherence and quality of students’ writing after the intervention. Although there remained some problems following the intervention, students’ positive attitudes suggest that the intervention may be helpful to both teachers and students in teaching and learning writing skills.
CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSION

This thesis has reported on two related studies which were carried out in order to study coherence in Vietnamese students’ writing. First, a system of coherence problems was developed and was used to identify types and frequency of coherence problems that Vietnamese students in this study encountered in their writing. Then, an intervention which involved the introduction of the system of coherence problems and the introduction of topical structure analysis (TSA) was conducted. The aim of the first study (Phase 1) was to identify the types and frequency of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL writing. The second study (Phase 2) aimed at identifying any changes in the types and frequency of coherence problems as well as any changes in the employment of types of topical progression in students’ writing after the intervention. Also, Phase 2 aimed to discover the relationship between writing quality and the frequency of coherence problems identified and types of topical progression employed in the writing.

In previous chapters, I have described how the theoretical analytical framework for the identification of coherence problems was developed and how it was applied in actual essays. Also, guidelines for t-unit identification; topical subject identification; and topical progression identification in TSA were developed to implement TSA in students’ essays. The findings resulting from using the theoretical framework to identify the types and frequency of coherence problems in the writing of Vietnamese students in this study showed some similarities as well as differences when compared with several previous studies, which will be further discussed in this chapter. Additionally, I will discuss the impacts of the intervention on students’ writing performance in detail with the focus on three aspects: types and frequency of coherence problems identified in students’ writing; types of topical progression employed in students’ writing; and the quality of the students’ writing.
9.1. Types and frequency of coherence problems in students’ writing

9.1.1. Types of coherence problems in students’ writing

Research Question 1. What are the types of coherence problems identified in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?

The findings showed that there were five types of coherence problems that Vietnamese EFL students in this study encountered: macrostructure-related problems, topic-unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, cohesion-related problems, and metadiscourse-related problems. Following Lee’s (2002, p. 139) definition of coherence in terms of macrostructure, information structure, propositional development, cohesion, and metadiscourse, any problems related to these features can be considered as coherence breaks causing coherence breakdown in the writing.

The first type of coherence problem that challenged students in the study was macrostructure-related problems. As stated in previous studies (Hall-Mills, 2010; Hall-Mills & Apel, 2015; Scott, 2009), macrostructure is at the discourse level. It refers to the overall structure of a text (Lee, 2002b). Such problems as omitting the introduction or the conclusion in a text might cause the failure to achieve a good macrostructure for a text. Some students in this study had this type of coherence problem in their writing and there is evidence that this was because they did not plan their writing, so they did not have any idea about what should be included in each functional unit when they began to write. Results from the focus groups supported this explanation as eight out of fifteen students in the focus groups reported that they never plan when they write. Bamberg (1983) also found that inadequately organizational planning was one of the three major causes of incoherence in 17-year-old writers when she compared coherent and incoherent essays using a holistic coherence scale.

The second and third types of coherence problems identified in the writing of students in this study were topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. As stated in several previous studies (Bamberg, 1983; Colomb & Griffin, 2004; Lee, 2002b; Wikborg, 1990), unity and coherence are related, and unity is considered as an essential condition of coherence.
Topic unity in this study refers to the way the meaning (information) was organized to contribute to the overall unity of the topic. Such features as clear communicative purpose, maintaining one specified topic, and logical disposition of sub-topics are fundamental to create topic unity. The findings showed that 19 (27.5%) students had topic unity-related problems in their writing, which means that more than one-fourth of the students in the study could not produce a coherent piece of writing. One of the reasons was lack of thesis statement raised in the students’ writing; as a result, readers did not understand what the writer aimed to argue. Students also had difficulty selecting core ideas for the writing; as a consequence, some ideas did not relate to the main line of the argument in the writing. This was supported by results of the focus groups in which eight out of fifteen students in the focus groups judged that their choice of ideas was not good. In other words, students in the study struggled to identify the main topic (discourse topic) in their writing. Failure to identify the topic was also a factor that caused incoherence in the writing of students in Bamberg’s (1983) study.

Paragraph unity in this study refers to the relationship between ideas presented in a paragraph. This means that the information in each paragraph must fit the focus of the paragraph in the first place and contribute to the development of the global meaning of the text. The findings showed that paragraph unity was the most frequent problem type for students in the study (641 instances). This may be due to the higher number of paragraphs (297 paragraphs) in comparison with number of essays (69 essays) - there were four or five paragraphs in each essay on average. The findings also indicated that almost all students (98.6%) in the study had paragraph unity-related problems in their writing, and they particularly had problems with body paragraphs. This means that writing a well-organized body paragraph was really challenging to students in the study and that they struggled to produce a coherent body paragraph. One of the causes of the incoherence of the paragraph was illogical organization of ideas in the paragraph. One of the reasons may be that many students do not have the habit of making an outline before they write, they often write down all what they think in their mind, leading to the disorganized development of ideas in the paragraph. Another reason may be the problems in selection of ideas to discuss in the body paragraph. Sometimes, some of the ideas that students put into their paragraphs were irrelevant to the main idea stated in the first place of the paragraph.
A study by Ghazzoul (2008), which investigated types and causes of incoherence in the English writing of L1 Arabic-speaking students, also identified problems related to topic unity and paragraph unity, but Ghazzoul (2008) classified problems of topic unity and paragraph unity under macrostructure categories. In the present study, I aimed to look at the problems of coherence in detail; therefore, problems related to macrostructure, topic unity, and paragraph unity were analysed separately. Macrostructure-related problems and topic unity-related problems were classified into discourse level/essay level problems and each essay was considered as a whole when analysed. Paragraph unity-related problems were classified into paragraph level problems and each paragraph in an essay was considered as a whole when analysed. These differences in the way problems were categorized led to differences in the findings of the two studies and made it difficult to compare the two studies.

The fourth type of coherence problem found in the writing of students in this study were cohesion-related problems. Cohesion is regarded as “a crucial linguistic resource in the expression of coherent meaning” (W. Yang & Sun, 2012, p. 32). According to W. Yang and Sun (2012) cohesion and coherence are “theoretically different from and conceptually inter-connected with each other”(p. 32). The better use of cohesive devices in a text, the more coherent it will be (Crossley & McNamara, 2011a; W. Yang & Sun, 2012). In this study, cohesion-related problems refer to problems related to the use of cohesive devices (excluding ellipsis and substitution) in students’ writing. The findings of this study show that 97.1% of students had problems with using cohesive devices. One explanation for this is that students may apply conjunctions inappropriately in their writing (Mohamed, 2016) or students’ mastery of cohesive devices may be insufficient (Kwan & Yunus, 2014). Problems of using cohesive devices were faced not only by the Vietnamese students in this study but also in previous studies by Saudi students (Masadeh, 2019) and Egyptian students (Ahmed, 2010).

Finally, the fifth type of coherence problem in students’ writing was metadiscourse-related problems. Metadiscourse is regarded as one of the features of coherence (Lee, 2002b). In this study, in order to avoid the overlap between identification of cohesive devices and metadiscoursal markers, metadiscourse-related problems were limited to the use of stance markers. The findings of this study were that some students had problems with using stance markers in their writing. Although the number of instances of metadiscourse-related problems was small, it is necessary for students to
take these problems into consideration to avoid coherence breakdown in writing. Wikborg (1990) did not include metadiscourse in her taxonomy of coherence breaks. One explanation for this difference may be the difference in types of writing that the two researchers collected for analysis as well as the difference in length of the writing. In my opinion, it would be better to consider metadiscourse-related problems when dealing with coherence-related problems, as metadiscourse is one aspect that contributes to coherence and writing quality (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996; Jones, 2011) and problems in using metadiscourse can make the arguments in writing unconvincing (Ho & Li, 2018).

In conclusion, types of coherence problems found in the writing of Vietnamese students in this study were related to macrostructure, topic unity, paragraph unity, cohesion, and metadiscourse. The findings not only support the results of several previous studies but also suggest that features of macrostructure, topic unity, paragraph unity, cohesion, and metadiscourse can contribute to the coherence of writing, and that any problems related to these features may lead to coherence breakdown in writing.

9.1.2. Frequency of coherence problems in students’ writing

Research Question 2. What are the most frequent coherence problems found in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing?

As mentioned above, five main types of coherence problem were found in the writing of Vietnamese students in this study. As noted, problems of macrostructure and topic unity occur at the discourse level, and paragraph unity-related problems occur at the paragraph level. There were 7 subtypes of coherence problems in terms of discourse level and 11 subtypes in terms of paragraph level.

The findings showed that, among seven subtypes of coherence problems in terms of discourse level, the most frequent subtype was “topic of the paragraph irrelevant to the topic specified in the whole text”. This problem occurred when the main topic discussed in one paragraph did not relate to the discourse topic discussed in the whole text. This is what Wikborg (1990) and Ghazzoul (2008) labelled topic shift/ drift in their studies. There are several ways to explain why students in this study encountered this type of coherence problem in their writing. The first one is that students may lack critical thinking skills when writing. For example, when writing about the negative impacts of using
social networking, some students thought that using social network too much can cause health problems such as weak eyesight, headache, backache, etc., but actually these health problems are the result of using electronic devices like smart phones or computers too much; as a result, they would produce at least one paragraph that was off topic. A second possible explanation is the habit of not planning/ outlining before writing that some students in this study mentioned in the focus groups. If students plan before writing, it is likely that some irrelevant ideas will be discarded, and relevant ideas will be chosen to include in the writing. In addition, outlining is recommended to enhance writing performance (Murray, 2011) because it allows “generating, clustering, and ordering ideas at an early stage in the writing process” (De Smet, Brand-Gruwel, Leijten, & Kirschner, 2014, p. 353). The lack of outlining, therefore, may lead to the topic of a paragraph being irrelevant to the topic specified in the whole text.

The second most frequent subtype at the discourse level identified in the writing of students in this study was “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text”, or “unspecified topic”, a problem also identified by (Wikborg, 1990). If a writer fails to specify the topic in his/her writing, this means that it is hard for readers to follow the writing as well as to integrate the writing into a coherent whole. The problem of unspecified topic was identified in eight out of 69 essays written by students in this study, meaning that these essays were not coherent pieces of writing because the writers failed to transmit their purpose of writing to readers. The possible reason behind this is that some students may have been confused with what ideas they should put into their writing. Several students (4 students) in the focus groups reported that they often had a lot of ideas in their head, but they did not know how to choose the most appropriate ideas; as a result, they tried to insert all the ideas in their writing without realizing that this may make readers confused about the overall topic of the writing. This problem may also be due to the lack of planning. As I mentioned above, if students make a plan before writing, they are likely to choose the most relevant ideas for their writing instead of including all ideas. The problem of failure to identify the topic found in this study was also found in several previous studies (Bamberg, 1983; Wikborg, 1990). For example, when Bamberg (1983) compared incoherent and coherent essays written by 17-year-old writers, she found that failure to identify the topic was a common problem among 17-year-old writers.
The third most frequent problem in terms of discourse level identified in the writing of students was “misleading disposition in the whole text”. This problem refers to the organization of the information to be discussed in the writing. According to Lee (2002b), writers need to be aware of the distribution of the information in the writing so that readers can understand how information is organized and how the topic of the writing is developed. Four students in this study had the problem of “misleading disposition in the whole text”. This means students failed to organize the previous and following information logically, making readers confused about where the writer was going. One possible explanation for this problem is that students do not have the habit of planning before writing; therefore, when they write, they often write down all that they can think of. They do not know how to choose the ideas and where to put them down; as a consequence, some of the ideas are in the wrong place or are irrelevant to the overall topic of the writing. As I mentioned above, if students plan ahead, they may avoid this problem as the irrelevant ideas will be discarded during the planning process, and relevant ideas will be chosen to include in the writing. This type of problem was not only found in this study but also found in several previous studies (Gramegna, 2007; Watkinson, 1998; Wikborg, 1990), confirming that “misleading disposition in the whole text” is one of the challenges that students need to deal with to make their writing coherent.

In terms of paragraph level, the most frequent subtype identified in the writing of students in this study was “no/little elaboration of the proposition made”. A proposition in a paragraph is an assertion, and paragraph coherence is established through the relationships between propositions within paragraph. In other words, paragraph coherence can be developed by making the propositions more explicit “by means of elaboration, illustration, exemplification, etc.” (Lee, 2002b). It should be noted here that in my study problem of “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” can happen in more than one per paragraph if, in a paragraph, there are two or three supporting points, but none or only some of the points are elaborated. For example, in the following paragraph extracted from essay ID. PH 101, such points as wasting time or leading to addiction are not elaborated with explanations or examples, so they are marked as no elaboration of the proposition made.

“On the other hand, there are several drawbacks of using social network. Firstly, using social network can waste your time. Second, it can lead to addiction. Finally, it can cause health problems such as backache, eye tension, or even myopic.”
In this study, 139 instances of “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” were identified, and 124 out of 162 body paragraphs had this problem. This means several students in this study may not have known how to elaborate the points/ideas with explanations and/or exemplification. One possible explanation for this may be that some students lack motivation and/or confidence when writing (Ahmed, 2010). This explanation is supported by focus group data: some students in the study reported in the focus groups that they rarely wrote at home; and that they only wrote when requested by teachers or when there was a writing test or exam. Because they did not write a lot and did not practice writing enough, they may not have known that they needed to support the main point with elaboration. Another explanation may be that students lack knowledge and understanding of the topic they are writing about (Ahmed, 2010). In this study, six out of fifteen students in the focus groups said that they sometimes wanted to use examples to support their points, but they were not sure which examples were good enough for the points; as a result, they ignored the use of examples. Similarly, five students in the focus group said they sometimes could not think of supporting points for the main point of their writing. The problem of “no/little elaboration of the proposition made” was also the one that challenged students in several previous studies (Masadeh, 2019), which confirms that this type of coherence problem is challenging and students need to focus on dealing with it in order to create paragraph coherence in their writing.

The second most frequent problem regarding paragraph unity that students encountered in their writing was “irrelevant content/materials within paragraph”. Relevant content/materials within paragraph here refer to details, examples, facts, reasons, opinions, etc. that support the main idea of the paragraph. Any irrelevant content within a paragraph may lead to confusion (Ahmed, 2019). In this study, 120 instances of “Irrelevant content/materials within paragraph” were identified in 117 paragraphs out of 162 body paragraphs, and 87% of students had this problem in their essays (60 essays). This means most students in this study had difficulties writing supporting sentences to develop the topic sentence in their writing. They often added too many supporting points but did not notice that some of the points were off topic. Explanations for this may be due to lack of critical thinking skills. These were supported by the views of students in the focus groups. Eight out of fifteen students in the focus groups reported that sometimes they were not sure whether the supporting points in the writing were relevant to the main point. In line with my study, the problem of “irrelevant content/materials within paragraph” was also found in the writing of Saudi students.
and in the writing of Italian students (Gramegna, 2007). For example, Masadeh (2019) analysed 16 essays written by Saudi undergraduates majoring in English and found that Saudi undergraduates could not make all ideas in each paragraph relevant to the topic. The third most frequent problem in terms of paragraph level identified in this study was “topic drift within paragraph”. According to Strunk and White (2000), supporting sentences need to follow the idea mentioned in the topic sentence and must not deviate from it so that paragraph unity is achieved. Ahmed (2019) stated that “any idea that does not address the topic breaks paragraph unity. In other words, in order for a paragraph to maintain a sense of unity, the paragraph should not stray or develop new topics (Ahmed, 2019, p.131). In this study, 117 instances of “topic drift within paragraph” were identified, and 117 out of 162 paragraphs were found to have this problem. This means students in this study had a tendency to jump from one topic to another without recognizing that they were changing the topic. A sudden jump in topic tends to make readers confused about what is being discussed in the paragraph, causing paragraph coherence breakdown. One possible explanation for this type of problem is lack of planning/outlining before starting to write. Some students in the focus groups reported that they did not often make a plan/an outline when writing. They wrote all the ideas occurring in their head without realizing that not all the ideas they input in their writing were interrelated, and that they were digressing from the topic of the writing. This type of coherence was also found in the writing of Swedish students (Wikborg, 1990); of Italian students (Gramegna, 2007); and of Saudi students (Masadeh, 2019). Another possible explanation is that students did not read back over their writing when they had finished writing. As some students said in focus group that they hardly read their writing again, so if students read back over their writing, it is likely that they may find problems and revise them.

In terms of cohesion, the first and second most frequent problems identified in the writing of students in this study were “incorrect use of reference” and “uncertain use of pronominal reference”. The evidence of 72 instances of “incorrect use of reference” and 67 instances of “uncertain use of pronominal reference” identified in 69 essays shows that students had difficulty using Reference, one of five kinds of cohesive devices in (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Reference is said to “create cohesion by creating links between elements” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 605). Reference items in English include pronouns (he, she, they, etc) and demonstratives (this, that, these, those) (Halliday
The problem of “incorrect use of reference” happens when students do not use a pronoun or a demonstrative correctly when they want to refer to a preceding noun or a noun phrase. For example, in the following sentence extracted in the essay ID. PH 135: “Social network helps people share our emotion, thinking, information, photos and so on along with our friends”, the possessive adjective “our” in S6 is the wrong reference of the noun “people”. Instead, “their” should be used to replace “our”. This problem was found in nearly half of students (49.3%) in this study, indicating that this problem is challenging because it may affect the construction of overall coherence in the writing of students. Similarly, the problem of “uncertain use of pronominal reference” happens when students fail to identify a referent before referring to it with a pronoun. This problem is also quite challenging and may cause a coherence breakdown when students are unable to indicate to readers what they are referring to in their writing. Possible explanations for the two problems are carelessness of students and lack of revision. Some of the students reported that they did not often revise their writing when they completed it; as a result, they missed the chance to identify and correct their mistakes in using reference. Problems with using reference were also identified in the writing of students in several previous studies (Ahmad, 2019; Ahmed, 2019; Wikborg, 1990).

The third most frequent problem in terms of cohesion was “misuse of conjunction”. Conjunctions serve a functional role in the creation of semantic unity of a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Writing quality can be directly affected by conjunction elements (Karadeniz, 2017). The misuse of conjunctions may lead the writers off the topic they are focusing on. Forty-eight instances of “misuse of conjunction” were identified in 36 out of 69 essays indicating that students sometimes had difficulty using conjunctions appropriately. They may know the important role of conjunctions and may be aware of using conjunctions to link ideas in their writing, but they may not know how to use conjunctions properly; as a result, some of the conjunctions were incorrectly used, having a negative effect on the quality of the writing. This finding was in line with the results of several previous studies (Hamed, 2014; Mahmoud, 2014; Masadeh, 2019; Mohamed, 2016; Ong, 2011). For example, Mohamed (2016) investigated the use of conjunctions in argumentative essays written by Malaysian learners and found that students had problems with using such conjunctions as because and so. In other words, Malaysian learners had problems with inappropriate use of causal conjunctions.
In conclusion, the findings of this study support the results of several previous studies on the problems of coherence that EFL/ESL students encounter in their writing. However, there were also some differences between this study and other previous studies. The biggest difference was that while almost all previous studies focused on investigating the types of problems, no studies conducted the teaching of coherence based on the coherence problems that students encountered in their writing. In contrast, this study carried out the teaching of coherence (the intervention) based on the system of coherence problems which was developed by analyzing students’ actual writing. The following section will discuss the effects of the intervention on students’ writing performance.

9.2. Changes found after the intervention

9.2.1. Changes found in students’ writing performance in each group

Research Question 3: What are the impacts of the intervention?

(i). What changes were found in students’ writing performance in each group?

As shown in Chapter 6, before the intervention was conducted, students in the control and treatment groups were asked to complete Task 1. Results of analyzing Task 1 indicated that there was no difference in students’ writing performance between the two groups. This means, the proficiency level of students in the two groups were the same before the intervention was carried out. After the intervention finished, students in the two groups were asked to complete two pieces of writing: one right after the intervention finished (Task 1 revision) and the other four weeks after the intervention finished (Task 2). The purpose of collecting Task 1 revision and Task 2 was to see whether the intervention had any impact on revision of their writing (Task 1 revision) and subsequent writing task (Task 2). Results of analyzing Task 1 revision and Task 2 showed that although both groups of students achieved progress in their writing performance, the improvement gained by students in the treatment group was more remarkable, which is discussed as follows.

Changes in frequency of coherence problems

With regard to progress achieved by students in the control group, the findings showed that there was a significant difference in frequency of coherence problems between Task 1 and Task 1 revision. To be specific, fewer coherence problems were found in Task 1 revision (279 instances) in comparison with Task 1 (420 instances). Also, there was a significant difference in terms of paragraph
unity-related problems between Task 1 revision and Task 1. In particular, there were fewer instances of paragraph unity-related problems in Task 1 revision (139 instances) than in Task 1 (273 instances). One possible explanation why students in the control group had some improvement in Task 1 revision is that students were writing about the same topic in Task 1 and Task 1 revision; therefore, students were familiar with the topic and did not struggle with this aspect of it. Another possible explanation is the help of peer review in Task 1 revision as peer review may help improve students’ writing performance (Makela, 2012; Mamuna & Tahira, 2012). At the end of the control group writing course, students were asked to revise Task 1. They were first allowed to ask their peers to review Task 1, and then they revised and rewrote. Improvements in Task 1 revision are thus likely to have been the result of the combined peer reviewing and self-revising. Few students reported in the survey and focus groups that they routinely read and revised their writing after writing; therefore, the mere fact of being asked to reread and revise may have led to the improvement. In addition, the gap in time between Task 1 and Task 1 revision was five weeks, so when revising Task 1, students reread their writing with fresh eyes, making it easier for them to notice coherence problems.

Regarding the improvement in Task 2 of the control group, results show that there was a significant difference between Task 1 and Task 2 in terms of total coherence problems, paragraph-unity problems and cohesion-related problems. In particular, there were fewer coherence problems, fewer paragraph unity-related problems, and fewer cohesion-related problems in Task 2 when compared with Task 1. It should be noted here that when producing Task 2, students were not allowed to ask for help from peers nor notes/dictionaries. Also, they had to write about a totally new topic under the supervision of the researcher. In other words, students did not get any help from outside sources when producing Task 2. Despite no help from outside sources, students in the control group achieved some improvement in Task 2. This suggests that the control group writing course had some effects on the performance of students in the control group in Task 2. However, four weeks after the writing course finished, there was a significant difference in terms of paragraph unity-related problems in three sets of writing. That is, the instances of paragraph unity-related problems in Task 2 (195 instances) decreased significantly when compared with Task 1 (273 instances) but increased significantly when compared with those in Task 1 revision (139 instances). This again suggests that there may be not enough evidence to attribute the improvement in the
writing of Task 1 revision to the impacts of the writing course that students in the control group participated in.

Regarding the progress achieved by students in the treatment group, the findings indicated a significant decrease in coherence problems in Task 1 revision compared with Task 1. This significant decrease was found in instances of total coherence problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems. More importantly, there was no significant increase in frequency of coherence problems in Task 2 when compared with Task 1 revision. As explained in case of students in the control group, the progress gained by students in the treatment in Task 1 revision may be attributed to factors like same topic, peer review, notes/dictionaries, etc. However, in the writing of Task 2, the topic was new and unfamiliar, and no peer review nor notes/dictionaries were allowed, but students in the treatment group performed as well in Task 2 as they had done in Task 1 revision. In particular, there was a significant decrease in the number of total coherence problems, topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems in Task 2 when compared with Task 1. Also, there was no significant difference in the number of topic unity-related problems, paragraph unity-related problems, and cohesion-related problems in Task 2 when compared with Task 1 revision. This means students produced Task 2 with equally good quality as in Task 1 revision although the gap in time between the two sets of writing was four weeks. As mentioned in the case of the control group, when producing Task 2, students in the treatment group received no help from peers, notes, nor dictionaries. Also, they had to write about a totally new topic. However, they still produced Task 2 with fewer problems of coherence than Task 1. In other words, students in the treatment still made improvement in Task 2 although there was no help from peers, notes, nor dictionaries. Students’ good performance when writing Task 2 suggests that it is likely that the intervention that had a good impact on the performance of students in the treatment group. During the intervention, students in the treatment group were taught about features of coherence in writing and were introduced to a system of coherence-related writing problems; it seems that this improved their understanding about what makes coherent writing and coherence-related writing problems and improved their ability to minimize coherence problems in their writing.
Changes in types of topical progression

In terms of types of topical progression employed in the writing of students in the control group before and after the writing course, the findings showed that there was a significant change in the use of sequential progression between Task 1 and Task 1 revision and between Task 1 revision and Task 2. To be specific, in Task 1 revision students used more sequential progression than in Task 1, but in Task 2 students used less sequential progression than Task 1 revision. This means it is unlikely to be the effect of the writing course that students in the control group took part in because students in the control group were not introduced to topical structure analysis (TSA) in the intervention, so students did not have knowledge of types of topical progression; they also did not know how each type of topical progression functions in writing. One possible explanation for the greater use of sequential progression in Task 1 revision is the effect of peer review and self-revision and also because they had time for revision, so students understood the task properly; as a result, they used sufficient and detailed supporting points for the main one than in Task 1. Another change is the significant change in the use of unrelated progression (UP) in Task 2, that is more unrelated progression was employed in Task 2 when compared with Task 1 and Task 1 revision. However, the reason for this increase in Task 2 was unclear.

Regarding types of topical progression employed by students in the treatment group, the findings showed that there was a significant change in the use of parallel progression, sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression in Task 1 revision and Task 2 when compared with Task 1, but there was no significant change in the use of these types of topical progression when comparing Task 1 revision with Task 2. This means after the intervention students in the treatment group knew how to support the main ideas with details (sequential progression) or examples (superstructure). Also, they knew that they should not develop new topic(s) in the writing as unrelated progression appears when there is a new topic, which may lead to the incoherence in writing. This is the probable reason why the frequency of sequential progression and superstructure increased, and the frequency of unrelated progression decreased a good deal in Task 1 revision and Task 2. The changes in the use of parallel progression, sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression in Task 1 revision can be attributed to the effect of peer review and topic familiarity, but this was not the case in Task 2 because when producing Task 2, students were not
allowed to discuss with their peers and the topic they had to write about was totally new. So, the changes in the employment of types of topical progression Task 2 are likely to be effects of the intervention students took part in. During the intervention students in the treatment group were introduced to topical structure analysis. The function of each type of topical progression in the writing was explained to them, and they were given the chance to practice implementing topical structure analysis in actual writing samples. So, they understood that they could add more detail to ideas by increasing the use of sequential progression or use more superstructure to give clear illustrations to ideas. Also, their understanding that new topic development can cause unrelated progression was improved, and that unrelated progression does not help develop the main idea and may create coherence breaks. This explains the high frequency of sequential progression and superstructure and the low frequency of unrelated progression in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of students in the treatment group.

Changes in writing quality

With regard to changes in writing quality, the findings showed that both students in the control group and treatment group achieved improvement. In the writing of students in the control group, there was a significant change in scores of coherence and scores of overall quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 when compared with Task 1. As discussed above, there are some factors that may have effects on the students’ performance in Task 1 revision such as peer review and topic familiarity. But, in Task 2, students had a similar improvement without these factors. This means the writing course appears to have had a positive impact on students’ writing quality. It should be noted here that although there was a significant change in students’ writing quality before and after the intervention, students’ level of proficiency remained unchanged. What I mean here is that before the control group writing course, Task 1 was in-between “poor” and “modest” level because the means of coherence scores and overall quality scores were between 2.0 and 2.3. After the control group writing course, there was a significant improvement in scores of writing quality in Task 1 revision (mean score was 2.5) and Task 2 (mean score was between 2.3 and 2.5), but the mean score of between 2.0 and 2.5 was still in-between “poor” and “modest” level. In other words, students’ writing performance remained between “poor” and “modest” level after the intervention finished (see Appendix 8 for more details about scoring scales). In short, the writing course that students in
the control group participated in seems not to have significantly impacted on their writing performance because their performance level before and after the writing course was unchanged, that was in-between “poor” and “modest” level.

In contrast, the intervention that students in the treatment participated in appears to have had a good effect on their writing performance because a significant change was found in scores of coherence and scores of overall quality in Task 1 revision and Task 2 when compared with Task 1, and this change was significant. To be specific, means of coherence scores and overall quality scores in Task 1 were between 2.0 and 2.3 (in-between “poor” and “modest” level), but in Task 1 revision it was between 3.2 and 3.4 (in-between “modest” and “good” level) and in Task 2 it was between 3.0 and 3.2 (in-between “modest” and “good” level). In other words, the improvement that students achieved after the intervention was significant because their performance level moved from in-between “poor” and “modest” to in-between “modest” and “good”. This appears to confirm the effectiveness of the intervention that students in the treatment group took part in.

9.2.2. Differences found between the two groups

Research Question 3: What are the impacts of the intervention?

(iii). What differences were found between the two groups in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems?

Regarding the types and frequency of coherence problems in the two groups, the findings showed that students in the control group produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 with more coherence problems than students in the treatment group. To be specific, in Task 1 revision, instances of total coherence problems found in the control group (279 instances) were more than twice as many as those in the treatment group (109 instances); instances of paragraph unity-related problems were nearly twice as many; instances of topic unity-related problems were seven times as many; and instances of cohesion-related problems were more than twice as many. Similarly, in Task 2, instances of total coherence problems identified in the control group (297 instances) were nearly twice as many as those in the treatment (159 instances); instances of paragraph unity-related problems and cohesion-related problems were approximately twice as many; and instances of topic unity-related problems were more than four times as frequent.
It should be noted here that conditions under collection of Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the two groups were the same. The only difference between the two groups was the content of the intervention they took part in. Students in the treatment group were introduced to the system of coherence problems during the intervention. Also, they were given actual writing samples to practice the identification of problems. In addition, they were also asked to correct as many problems that they identified as possible. As a result, their understanding of what causes incoherence in writing is likely to have improved, and to some extent they are likely to have increased in understanding of what they need to do to avoid coherence breakdown in their writing.

It cannot be denied that in Task 1 revision, such factors as proficiency level, topic familiarity, or peer review, or low writing anxiety may have had an impact on the writing quality of students (Ahmed, 2010). However, these are unlikely to contribute to the progress achieved by students if they have the same proficiency level, or they all get help from peers, or they are asked to write about a familiar topic. In my study, findings of analyzing Task 1 showed that students in the two groups were similar in proficiency level before the intervention was conducted; therefore, it is not the proficiency level that affected the progress gained by students after the intervention. In addition, students in the two groups were in the same conditions during the intervention, that is, they were taught by the same teacher; they were asked to write about the same topic(s); they all got help from peers and allowed to refer to notes when doing the revision; they were allowed to produce each of their essays in the same amount of time, so it was not the peer review or topic familiarity that affected the difference in progress gained by students in the two groups.

As mentioned above, after the intervention, students in the treatment group achieved better improvement in terms of coherence problems than the students in the control group although students in the two groups were the same in proficiency level and enjoyed the same conditions during the intervention. For example, there were fewer coherence problems in the writing of students in the treatment group than in the control group, and the writing of the treatment group received higher scores of coherence and overall quality than that of the control group. This means it was the difference in the content of the intervention taught to students in the two groups that influenced the writing performance of students in the two groups. In other words, it was the
introduction of the system of coherence problems to students in the treatment that helped students substantially reduce the instances of problems in their writing (Task 1 revision and Task 2).

(iii). What differences were found between the two groups regarding types of topical progression employed?

With regard to the types of topical progression employed by students in the two groups, the findings showed that there was a significant difference in the use of sequential progression in Task 1 revision and a significant difference in the use of sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression in Task 2 between the two groups. To be specific, in Task 1 revision students in the treatment group used more sequential progression (103 instances) than students in the control group (79 instances). In Task 2 students in the treatment group employed more sequential progression (SP) (90 instances), more superstructure (28 instances) and less unrelated progression (UP) (82 instances) than students in the control group (43 instances in SP; 14 instances in superstructure; 136 instances in UP). This difference is likely to be due to the difference in the content of the intervention each group received. While students in the control group were not introduced to topical structure analysis (TSA), students in the treatment group were introduced to TSA and were given the opportunity to practice applying TSA in actual writing samples. So, students in the treatment may understand that sequential progression and superstructure are important to create coherent writing by adding more details to ideas and giving clear illustrations to ideas discussed in the writing. Also, they may understand that unrelated progression appears when a new topic is developed, and the development of an unrelated topic can cause the breakdown of coherence in the writing. This could conceivably explain the higher level of sequential progression and superstructure and the lower level of unrelated progression employed in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 of the treatment group than the control group.

As discussed above, before the intervention students of the two groups had the same proficiency level, and during the intervention they enjoyed the same learning conditions. The only difference between the two groups was the content of the intervention they participated in. While students in the control group revised some writing fundamentals like grammar in the intervention, students in the treatment group were introduced to topical structure analysis (TSA), types of topical progression and how each type functions in writing. Both the groups were provided with writing samples to
practice what was taught in the intervention. In particular, students in the treatment group were given writing samples to practice identifying types of topical progression and charting the types of topical progression on a diagram to give a visual presentation of how coherence is developed in the samples. This difference in the way the intervention was conducted in the two groups appears to account for the difference in the types of topical progression employed by students in the two groups after the intervention finished.

Students in the control were not taught TSA, so they did not know about types of topical progression nor how each type of topical progression functions in the writing. In contrast, students in the treatment group were introduced to TSA and were given opportunities to conduct TSA in writing samples, so it is not hard to explain why students in the treatment group used more sequential progression and less unrelated progression than students in the control group in Task 1 draft 2. However, four weeks after the intervention finished, students in the treatment group continued to use types of topical progression in Task 2. Their performance after four weeks was as good as it was in Task 1 draft 2. This means the introduction of TSA in the intervention was effective, and that the intervention that students in the treatment group participated in had a good impact on their writing performance.

(iv). What differences were found in students’ writing performance in terms of coherence and overall quality of the two groups?

It should be noted here that essays written by students in the two groups were rated by two raters, using two scoring scales: the TSA-based scoring scale for coherence and scoring scale for overall writing quality. The ratings of the essays produced by students of the two groups were blind, which means the two raters did not know which group each essay was from or which task each essay was in. In addition, the scores given by the two raters were from 1 (very poor) to five (very good), with gradations of 0.5. Findings of this study showed that in terms of coherence and overall writing quality, the progress achieved by students in the treatment group in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 was significant when compared with progress by students in the control group. To be specific, students in the treatment group achieved higher scores for coherence and overall writing quality in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 than students in the control group. In Task 1 draft 2, the difference in writing quality between the two groups was statistically significant because the means of scores of
coherence and overall quality achieved by students in the control group were between 2.5 and 2.6 (between “poor” and “modest” level) whereas in the treatment group they were between 3.2 and 3.4 (between “modest” and “good” level). Similarly, in Task 2, there was also a significant difference in the writing quality of the two groups. To be specific, the means of scores in the control group were between 2.3 and 2.5 (between “poor” and “modest” level) in comparison with between 3.0 and 3.2 (between “modest” and “good” level) in the treatment group. The mean scores of 3.0 or more gained by students in the treatment group in Task 1 draft 2 and Task 2 indicate improvement in the quality of these students’ writing. In other words, students in the treatment group made more progress in their writing performance than students in the control group.

Although students in the two groups had the same level of writing performance at the beginning of the intervention, the writing performance of students in the treatment group improved more than that of students in the control group. This improved achievement of students in the treatment group can be attributed to the system of coherence problems that they were introduced to and the fact that they were given the opportunity to practice applying this system to identify coherence problems in real writing samples. Through this practice, students’ understanding of the features of a coherent and good quality essay are likely to have improved and they learned ways to minimize problems of coherence as well as ways to improve coherence in their writing. In addition, students in the treatment were introduced to topical structure analysis (TSA), an approach to help improve coherence in writing (Attelisi, 2012; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013), and they were also provided with real writing samples to practice applying TSA. Identifying topical progression and charting topical progression on a diagram helped students to realize the role of each type of topical progression and how coherence is developed in writing. As a result, students were able to learn ways to employ types of topical progression to improve coherence in their writing.

In brief, results of the study showed that the combination of introducing a system of coherence problems and topical structure analysis in the intervention had good impacts on students’ writing quality. In other words, the combination of teaching the system of coherence problems and TSA resulted in students’ achievement in writing performance.
9.3. Relationship between writing quality and coherence problems and TSA

9.3.1. Relationship between writing quality and coherence problems

Research question 4. What is the relationship between writing quality and coherence problems?

Coherence has been considered an important attribute in judgments of essay quality (Crossley & McNamara, 2010, 2011a). In other words, coherence and essay quality are interrelated. In this study, the findings again affirmed the interrelationship between coherence and writing quality. In particular, a significant negative correlation was found between writing quality and frequency of coherence problems in the writing of students in the two groups. This means that the fewer coherence problems there were, the higher the scores of writing quality were likely to be. This relationship between writing quality and frequency of coherence problems provides a plausible explanation for why students in the treatment group achieved higher scores of overall quality than those in the control group by the end of the intervention. Evidence for this is that there were much fewer instances of coherence problems identified in Task 1 draft 2 (109 instances) and Task 2 (159 instances) of the treatment group than in Task 1 revision (279 instances) and Task 2 (297 instances) of the control group.

Also, the study shows that writing quality is not only significantly negatively correlated with the frequency of coherence problems but is also significantly negatively correlated with two main types of coherence problems: topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. This means that the fewer problems related to topic unity and paragraph unity an essay had, the higher the scores of quality it could gain. This suggests that there may be an interrelationship between writing quality and topic unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems, and confirms the important role of unity (topic unity and paragraph unity) in constructing good writing (Ghazzoul, 2018). The crucial role of topic unity and paragraph unity may also be one of the explanations for the improvement in the quality of Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group when compared with that of the control group. This is because there were significantly fewer instances of topic unity-related problems (6 instances in Task 1 revision and 7 instances in Task 2) and paragraph unity-related problems (69 instances in Task 1 revision and 103 instances in Task 2) of the treatment group than in the control group (topic unity-related problems (41 instances in Task 1 revision and 31
instances in Task 2) and paragraph unity-related problems (139 instances in Task 1 revision and 195 instances in Task 2)).

In regard to the relationship between writing quality and cohesion in second language writing, several previous studies have given conflicting results. While a study by Crossley and McNamara (2012) stated that local cohesion negatively correlated to human judgements of essay quality, others showed a positive relationship between essay quality and local cohesion (Chiang, 2003; Guo et al., 2013; Jafarpur, 1991; M. Liu & Braine, 2005; W. Yang & Sun, 2012). Despite the conflicting results from different studies, it is agreed that there are links between writing quality and cohesion, either negatively or positively. In other words, the use of cohesion in an essay appears to affect the rating the essay receives. In this study, no significant correlation between writing quality and cohesion-related problems was found in Task 1 of the two groups. However, in the writing of Task 1 revision and Task 2, there was a difference in the relationship between writing quality and cohesion-related problems of the two groups. While there was a significant negative correlation between writing quality and cohesion-related problems in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the treatment group, no significant correlation was found in these two sets of writing in the control group. It can be inferred from this that cohesion-related problems may not be an influencing factor in low-rated essays but may be an influencing factor in higher-rated essays because in Task 1 of the two groups and in Task 1 revision and Task 2 of the control group, most essays (23 essays in Task 1 revision and 25 essays in Task 2) were low rated (mean below 2.6) but most essays in Task 1 revision (26 essays) and Task 2 (22 essays) of the treatment group were highly rated (mean ≥ 3.0).

One explanation for the high rated essays of the treatment group after the intervention may be that students in the treatment group were introduced to problems related to cohesion in the intervention, and they were also given an opportunity to practice identifying the problems as well as practice correcting the problems. In other words, during the intervention, students’ knowledge of cohesion was likely to have been improved; as a result, students were able to write better. This aligns with findings by (Guiju, 2005) who found that the use of cohesive knowledge correlated significantly with the quality of students’ writing and that students with more knowledge of cohesion can write better than students with less.
In short, results from this study suggest that writing quality has negative relationship with frequency of coherence problems as well as two main types of coherence problems, that is, topic-unity-related problems and paragraph unity-related problems. In terms of the relationship between writing quality and cohesion-related problems, results show a conflict between the two groups in their writing after the intervention; that is, a significant negative correlation was found in two sets of writing (Task 1 revision and Task 2) of the treatment group whereas no significant correlation was found in these two sets of writing in the control group.

9.3.2. Relationship between writing quality and TSA

Research question 5. What is the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression?

Topical structure analysis has been found by a number of studies (Attelisi, 2012; Carreon, 2006; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Flores & Kexiu, 2015; Genç, Darmaz, & Ülkersoy, 2018; Liangprayoon et al., 2013; Schneider & Connor, 1990; Shabana, 2018) to be an effective approach to check for coherence in writing and as a way to assess written performance. Previous studies investigating the use of types of topical progression in second language (L2) writing were conducted by several researchers (Almaden, 2006; Flores & Kexiu, 2015; Kılıç et al., 2016; Kim, 2012; Simpson, 2000). In this study, not only were types of topical progression investigated but the relationship between types of topical progression and writing quality was examined.

Regarding the relationship between types of topical progression and writing quality, the findings of the present study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) in the writing of Task 1, Task 1 revision, and Task 2 of the two groups. This means that the more that sequential progression is employed in the writing, the higher the scores of quality that the writing is likely to achieve. One explanation for this is that sequential progression “helps to develop individual topics by adding details to an idea” (Schneider & Connor, 1990, p. 416); therefore, it helps fulfil the topic(s) the writer discusses.

In contrast to the significant positive correlation between writing quality and sequential progression (SP), a significant negative correlation was found between writing quality and unrelated progression in the writing of Task 1, Task 1 revision, and Task 2 of the two groups. This means that the more that
unrelated progression is employed in an essay, the more poorly-rated the essay will be. Unrelated progression appears when a new topic is created; therefore, it can be inferred that if more new topics are created in an essay, the essay is likely to be low rated. This is a possible explanation for the higher scores that students in the treatment group received in their writing after the intervention when compared with the writing produced before the intervention because the use of unrelated progression in Task 1 revision (67 instances) and Task 2 (82 instances) (the two sets of writing produced after the intervention) was smaller than in Task 1 (116 instances) (the writing produced before the intervention). Also, this may explain why after the intervention students in the treatment group achieved higher scores than students in the control group as unrelated progression in Task 2 of the treatment group was used 82 times while it was used 136 times in Task 2 of the control group. The findings were in line with Flores and Kexiu (2015) who conducted topical structure analysis (TSA) in 15 high quality essays and 14 low quality essays written by first-year university students in the Philippines. Although the type of writing in Flores and Kexiu’s study was comparison-and-contrast writing, different from argumentative writing in this study, the results of Flores and Kexiu’s study showed that low quality writing had a tendency to introduce more new topics than high quality writing which was corroborated by this study. One explanation for why unrelated progression is claimed as one of the features of low-rated essays is that unrelated progression appears when the topics of the t-unit are not “clearly related to either the previous sentence topic or the discourse topic” (Schneider & Connor, 1990, p. 422); as a result, the writing may be off topic.

Apart from the relationship between writing quality and sequential progression (SP) and unrelated progression (UP), this study found that there was a significant positive correlation between writing quality and superstructure. Knoch (2007) states that superstructure is the way to create coherence “using linking devices instead of topic progression” (Knoch, 2007, p. 115). For instance, in the following example, “Reasons may be the advance in transportation and the promotion of New Zealand’s natural environment and “green image”. For example, the filming of “The Lord of the rings” brought more tourists to explore the beautiful nature of NZ” (Knoch, 2007, p. 115), “For example” is the evidence of superstructure. Thus superstructure is one criterion to rate how coherent the writing is.
In this study, before the intervention, in the writing of Task 1, there was no significant relationship between superstructure and writing quality. This means superstructure may not be the influencing factor in low rated writing where the appearance of superstructure is rare. One reason for this is because in Task 1 essays written by the students in both treatment and control groups were relatively low rated (mean < 2.3) and the appearance of superstructure was rare (only 5 cases in the control group and 10 cases in the treatment group); as a consequence, no clear relationship between writing quality and superstructure was found. However, after the intervention, in the writing of Task 1 revision and Task 2, there was a significant positive correlation between writing quality and superstructure. This means the more superstructures there are, the higher the score of quality the writing is likely to achieve. In other words, superstructure may be an influencing factor in high rated writing where there are more superstructures employed. Findings discussed in Chapter 6 provide an explanation for this. To be specific, there was a significant difference in the use of superstructure of the two groups between Task 1 (4 cases in the control group and 10 cases in the treatment group) and Task 1 revision (22 cases in the control group and 31 cases in the treatment group). Although there was no significant difference in the use of superstructure between Task 1 and Task 2 of the control group, a significant difference was found between these two sets of writing in the treatment group (10 cases in Task 1 and 28 cases in Task 2). In addition, a significant difference was found between the two groups in the use of superstructure in Task 2 (14 cases in the control group; 28 cases in the treatment group). The increase in the use of superstructure in Task 1 revision of the two groups could be one contributing factor for the higher scores in Task 1 revision of the two groups (mean ≥ 2.5 in the control group and mean > 3.2 in the treatment group) when compared with Task 1 (mean score < 2.3 in both groups). Similarly, the increased use of superstructure in Task 2 of the treatment group may be a factor contributing to the the higher scores of writing quality (mean score > 3.00) when compared with the control group (mean score < 2.5)

In brief, among six types of topical progression, sequential progression has a positive relationship with writing quality, and unrelated progression has a negative relationship with writing quality. Also, writing quality positively correlates with superstructure, especially when there is more evidence of superstructure employed in the writing.
9.3.3. Summary

Findings of this study showed that writing quality negatively correlated with frequency of coherence problems and types of coherence problems. Also, to some extent writing quality had significant relationships with types of topical progression. As discussed above, there have been a number of previous studies which investigated coherence breaks in EFL writing (Ghazzoul, 2008; Wikborg, 1990), but these studies focused only on identifying frequency and types of coherence breaks. The present study not only focused on studying frequency and types of coherence problems in Vietnamese EFL writing, but also examined whether the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA impacted on students’ writing performance and the relationship between writing quality and frequency and types of coherence problems. The findings show that the teaching of coherence problems and TSA had positive impacts on students’ writing performance, and that writing quality correlated negatively with frequency and types of coherence problems are expected to provide help to teachers and learners of writing in Vietnam in particular, and to make a contribution to writing pedagogy in EFL contexts in general. Details about the contributions of my study will be presented in Chapter 10.

Similarly, while some previous studies only focused on investigating types of topical progression employed in EFL/ESL writing (Almaden, 2006; Kılıç et al., 2016; Kim, 2012; Schneider & Connor, 1990; Wu, 1997), others focused on examining the effect of teaching topical structure analysis on EFL/ESL writing (Attelisi, 2012; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013). Some studies examined the relationship between types of topical progression and human’s judgement of writing quality (Burneikaite & Zabiliute, 2003; Flores & Kexiu, 2015; Schneider & Connor, 1990). However, no studies investigated the effect of teaching coherence problems and TSA on the use of types of topical progression as well as the relationship between writing quality and types of topical progression. In the present study, not only were types of topical progression in Vietnamese EFL writing and the impacts of teaching coherence problems and topical structure analysis to students’ writing performances examined, but the relationship between the quality of writing and types of topical progression was investigated as well. The findings indicate that the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA had significant impacts on the use of types of topical progression, in particular sequential progression and unrelated progression; both this and the findings that writing
quality was positively correlated with sequential progression and negatively correlated with unrelated progression are expected to make a contribution to EFL/ESL writing teaching and learning as these findings provide teachers and learners with a clear picture of how to improve writing coherence and writing quality.

9.4. Students’ perceptions of the intervention and difficulties following the intervention

Research question 6. How do Vietnamese EFL students perceive the intervention? (i). Do they find it helpful in improving their writing coherence and writing quality?

The qualitative data obtained from survey questionnaire and focus groups indicated that the majority of students in the treatment group found the intervention helpful in assisting them to improve their writing coherence and writing quality. Students said that the intervention had made them more aware of coherence as well as its important role in their writing.

Results from the questionnaire and focus groups showed that students in the treatment group had positive attitudes toward the introduction of coherence problems in the intervention. Most students (twelve out of fifteen students in the focus groups) mentioned that the teaching of coherence problems in the intervention was really useful for them because they learnt what may cause incoherence in their writing, and they understood that they need to minimize the number of coherence problems in their writing to improve their writing coherence and quality. This may explain why in two sets of writing (Task 1 revision and Task 2) that students produced after the intervention, there were fewer coherence problems when compared with the writing (Task 1) they produced before the intervention. In addition, students reported that they learnt the important role of coherence in writing during the intervention and that lessons in the intervention helped them write better. This view of students may also help to explain why the Task 1 revisions and Task 2 were an improvement over Task 1.

Similarly, with regard to the introduction of topical structure analysis (TSA) in the intervention, results from the qualitative analysis indicated that students in the treatment group had positive opinions of the impact of the teaching topical structure analysis (TSA) on their writing quality. Several students reported that TSA was a helpful strategy that assisted them in checking for coherence in their writing and that they learnt ways to improve their writing coherence and quality when
implementing TSA. To be specific, some students said they learnt that a good piece of writing should not have too many new topics or unrelated progression, and that they could improve their writing coherence and quality by employing more sequential progression. These views of students may explain why there were significant changes in the use of sequential progression, superstructure, and unrelated progression in two sets of writing produced after the intervention, in which more sequential progression and less unrelated progression were employed in Task 1 revision and Task 2 in comparison with Task 1. In addition, students in the treatment group viewed topical structure analysis as effective for revising written text and helpful in checking for coherence. This may explain why scores of coherence and overall quality of Task 1 revision and Task 2 (the two sets of writing produced after the intervention) were higher than those of Task 1 (the set of writing produced before the intervention).

In brief, most students in the treatment group had positive attitudes toward the intervention they participated in. They perceived the intervention as a useful approach that not only helped them deal with problems of coherence in their writing but also helped them find ways to improve their writing performance.

(ii). What difficulties do they encounter following the intervention?

Although students showed positive attitudes to the intervention, there remained some difficulties that students reported encountering when following the intervention. The difficulties occurred when students learnt about coherence problems and TSA

First, several students mentioned that they encountered two main difficulties when learning about coherence problems; these were that they were unable to remember all the coherence problems and that they were sometimes unable to identify all paragraph-unity related problems. While the problem of not remembering all the coherence problems may be solved by frequent practice, the problem of not being able to identify the paragraph-unity related problems may take time and require a lot of effort to be solved. It seemed that the system of coherence problems developed in this study should be taught little by little to students in order to help students overcome the two above-mentioned difficulties. In particular, when teaching students about paragraph writing, teachers may include the introduction of paragraph unity-related problems in their teaching so that
students are aware of this type of coherence problem at an early stage. Then, when teaching students about essay writing, teachers can introduce the other text coherence problems in their teaching. Teaching coherence problems little by little would be likely to decrease students’ difficulties in learning and remembering so many things, because students would have enough time to become familiar with such problems as well as practice enough to overcome the difficulties.

Second, regarding the learning of TSA, some students reported that they had difficulty in identifying the t-unit topics, and sometimes made a wrong identification of t-unit topic(s). One explanation for this difficulty is that students sometimes mistake the topical subject of a t-unit for the grammatical subject or the mood subject (Flores & Kexiu, 2015). Therefore, in order to help students solve this difficulty, teachers need to clarify the difference between these two types of subjects. Understanding the difference between the two types of subject may help decrease students’ difficulty in the identification of t-unit topics. Another explanation for the difficulty in the identification of t-unit topic is that identifying the topical subject in complex sentences may be more challenging than in simple sentences because complex sentences have to have at least two clauses; as a result, students may find it hard to decide which topic is the topical subject, which may lead to wrong identification of t-unit topics. Teachers could help students solve this difficulty by giving clear instructions about the way to identify the t-unit topic in complex sentences, that is, the topic of the t-unit in a sentence is the topic of the independent clause in the sentence. Only when students can identify exactly which is the independent clause in a complex sentence, can they identify the correct topical subject of the sentence.

Also, some students mentioned that they experienced difficulties in the identification of types of topical progression. In fact, wrong identification of t-unit topics may be considered as one of the causes leading to wrong identification of types of topical progression. Another cause of this difficulty is that sometimes the topic of the following t-unit was not lexically identical, but rather was semantically related to the topic of the preceding t-unit; however, students considered the topic of the following t-unit as a new topic; as a result, types of progression were mistakenly identified. In order for students to overcome this difficulty, subcases of types of topical progression described in Chapter 3 of this study should be carefully considered by both teachers and students, and students should be given as many opportunities to practice TSA in authentic essays as possible. For example,
before applying TSA in writing, students can work in pairs or groups to list key words in the writing as well as possible semantic sets of the key words so that they can avoid wrong identification of topical subject.

In short, apart from some difficulties students in the treatment group encountered when following the intervention, qualitative data show students’ positive attitudes toward the effects of the intervention. Despite the positive results, it is possible that students’ answers may have been influenced by each other. There was also the potential that students could have made up answers that they thought would please the researcher, or they may have over-emphasized the positive benefits of the treatment (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Due to the fact that results from focus groups cannot be totally relied on (Krueger & Casey, 2014), in this study, questionnaires were employed together with focus groups. As the questionnaire was anonymous, it was likely to increase the chance of accurate and honest answers from students (Stewart, 2018). In addition, results from quantitative analysis were used to see if there were any mismatches between students’ answers in the questionnaires and focus groups and students’ real writing performance. However, there was no big difference in students’ answers in the questionnaire and in focus groups, and quantitative analysis of students’ writing after the intervention supported students’ answers in the questionnaire and in focus groups. This means that the potential limitations in the focus groups noted above are unlikely to be marked.

9.5. General summary

As mentioned above, the impacts of teaching TSA to EFL/ESL writers were found in several previous studies (Attelisi, 2012; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Liangprayoon et al., 2013), but there have been no studies examining the impacts of teaching coherence problems on EFL/ESL students’ writing performance. In this study, the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA to EFL students was conducted in an intervention for the first time. Results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis suggest that the intervention had good impacts on the writing performance of students in the treatment group. To be specific, after the intervention, students had fewer problems of coherence in their writing than before the intervention. Also, scores of writing quality in two sets of writing written after the intervention (Task 1 revision and Task 2) were higher than the writing written before the intervention (Task 1). Although it is hard to investigate the influence of the
intervention on the improvement of Task 1 revision as there were several different factors such as peer review, reference to notes and dictionaries that may have impacts on the improvement of Task 1 revision, it was clear to see that the intervention had effects on the improvement of Task 2 as students produced Task 2 with no help from other factors. Importantly, students in the treatment group were introduced to topical structure analysis (TSA), a helpful approach to check for coherence; as a result, after being taught TSA, students seemed to understand how to apply TSA in writing as well as the types of topical progression that they should and should not employ to produce a coherent piece of writing. In addition, qualitative data from questionnaires and focus groups show that students in the treatment group had positive attitudes towards the intervention they participated in. Their positive attitudes towards the intervention help to explain why students produced Task 1 revision and Task 2 better than Task 1. This demonstrates that it may be feasible to combine the teaching of coherence problems and TSA in the EFL writing context and suggests that this combination raises students’ awareness of coherence and its important role in writing as well as helping them learn ways to improve their writing coherence and quality.
CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the types and frequency of coherence problems in Vietnamese undergraduate student writing. It has also explored the effects of combining the teaching of coherence problems and the teaching of topical structure analysis to students’ writing performance in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems, types of topical progression, and writing quality. This chapter will summarize the findings of the study, and then discuss the contributions, the implications, the limitations of the study as well as directions for future research.

10.1. Summary of the findings

My study aimed to investigate coherence in the writing of Vietnamese EFL university students. In order to fulfil this aim, I conducted my research in two phases: Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 aimed at examining coherence in students’ writing through identifying types and frequency of coherence problems. Textual analysis was the main method used in this phase. Results of Phase 1 found five main types and 29 subtypes of coherence problems in students’ writing. Of the five main types, paragraph unity-related problems were the most frequent found in students’ writing. While “irrelevant topic of the paragraph to the topic specified in the whole text”, “no/unclear topic specified in the whole text”, and “misleading disposition in the whole text” were the three most frequent subtypes found in 69 essays in terms of discourse level, “no/little elaboration of the proposition made”, “irrelevant content/materials within paragraph”, and “topic drift within paragraph” were the three most frequent subtypes at paragraph level. In terms of cohesion, “incorrect use of reference”, “uncertain use of pronominal reference”, and “misuse of conjunction” were the three most frequent ones.

In Phase 2, an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) was conducted. The purpose of Phase 2 was to investigate the effects of the intervention on students’ writing performance in terms of types and frequency of coherence problems, types of topical progression employed, and overall writing quality. Fifty-eight students enrolled in Phase 2 and were divided into two groups: the treatment group and the control group. While the intervention the treatment group participated in involved the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA), the writing course the control group took part in involved the teaching of fundamental aspects of writing. Both groups produced three sets of writing:
one before the intervention (Task 1), one right after the intervention finished (revision of Task 1), and one four weeks after the intervention finished (Task 2). In total, there were 174 essays collected in Phase 2. Textual analysis and statistical analysis were the main data analysis methods. In addition, data from survey questionnaire and focus groups were analysed to understand how students perceived the intervention.

Results of Phase 2 show that there was an improvement in the writing performance of students in the treatment group when compared with students in the control group, especially in Task 2. First, there were fewer instances of coherence problems identified in Task 2 of the treatment group than in those of the control group. Second, students in the treatment group employed more sequential progression (SP) and less unrelated progression (UP) in Task 2 than the control group. Finally, scores of coherence and overall quality of Task 2 by the treatment group were higher than those by the control group. These findings suggest that the intervention which involved the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) had good effects on students’ performance level.

10.2. Contributions of the study

The present study has several contributions to research in the EFL context, literature, and methodology. In terms of context, coherence in writing is a well-researched topic in EFL/ESL language teaching and learning. There have been some studies investigating problems of coherence in EFL/ESL students’ writing (Ghazzoul, 2008; Masadeh, 2019), but these studies only focused on identifying the coherence problems in student writing, and no interventions were conducted. In contrast, there were some studies conducting the teaching of coherence (Johns, 1986; Lee, 2002b), but the teaching of coherence was the teaching of six coherence topics ((1) purpose, audience, and context of situation, (2) macrostructure, (3) information distribution and topic development, (4) propositional development and modification, (5) cohesion, and (6) metadiscourse) which were incorporated into an English Communicative Skills course (Lee, 2002b), or the teaching of a revision unit which involves teaching coherence systematically from more global to more local considerations (Johns, 1986). No studies have conducted the teaching of coherence based on problems of coherence identified in students’ actual essays. My study is the first study in EFL context to investigate the problems of coherence in students’ actual writing. It is also the first study in the EFL context to conduct an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) to examine the effects of the intervention on students’ writing coherence and quality. In addition, there
have been no studies investigating coherence problems in Vietnamese student writing. Also, no previous studies on the teaching of coherence nor studies on the teaching of topical structure analysis (TSA) have been conducted in Vietnam. More importantly, there have been no previous studies which combine the teaching of coherence problems and the teaching of topical structure analysis (TSA) in a single intervention. My study is the first study in Vietnam to investigate the problems of coherence in university students’ writing. It is also the first study to conduct the teaching of coherence problems to Vietnamese university students. In addition, the teaching of topical structure analysis (TSA) was introduced to Vietnamese university students for the first time in this study. By examining the coherence problems in students’ actual writing first, and then combining the teaching of coherence problems and TSA to students in a single study, I have pioneered a new method of teaching coherence to EFL students in general and to Vietnamese EFL students in particular.

In terms of literature, this study contributes theoretically to the way problems of coherence are identified and categorized. In previous studies (Ghazzoul, 2008; Wikborg, 1990), coherence breaks were categorized into two main types: topic-structuring problems and cohesion problems (Wikborg, 1990), or coherence problems were categorized into macrostructure, microstructure (Ghazzoul, 2008). Coherence problems in my study were categorized into five main types: macrostructure problems, topic unity problems, paragraph unity problems, cohesion problems, and metadiscourse problems. In other words, when analyzing students’ essays, I took into consideration problems that related to both essay (topic) level and paragraph level and problems that related to both cohesion and metadiscourse, not just essay (topic) level problems and cohesion problems as in Wikborg (1990). Similarly, my study is different from Ghazzoul (2008) in the way that coherence problems were identified and categorized. First, macrostructure problems in Ghazzoul (2008) included topic unity problems and paragraph unity problems, but in my study macrostructure problems were problems related to overall structure of the essay. Second, such problems as punctuation marks, run-on sentences identified as coherence problems in Ghazzoul (2008) were not considered in my study. More importantly, coherence problems in Ghazzoul (2008) were not categorized into particular subtypes. Instead, coherence problems were quite general and were decided based on the answers to posed questions. For example, to decide whether a paragraph had unity or not, a set of posed questions were raised like “(1) is there an unjustified paragraph shift without a similar topic shift? or (2) Are there underdeveloped paragraphs? or (3) which sentences do not fit the topic of the
paragraphs” (Ghazzoul, 2008, p. 122). In other words, the way coherence problems were identified in Ghazzoul (2008) was vague. In my study, problems of coherence were categorized into five main types as well as subtypes under each main type. So, it was not difficult for either teachers or students to apply the system of coherence problems developed in this research to essay writing.

Another theoretical contribution is that the present study was the first study to conduct the combination of teaching coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA). Several previous studies have investigated problems of coherence in EFL writing (Ghazzoul, 2008; Gramegna, 2007; Wikborg, 1990), but there have been no studies which have conducted interventions to help students recognize the coherence problems in their own writing as well as introduce a strategy to students to assist them to minimize problems of coherence in their writing. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on the teaching of coherence in writing through the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis (TSA) such as the order of types of coherence problems that should be taught to students as well as types of activities that should be used to maximise student benefit.

One more contribution of this study to the literature is that although there were several studies investigating the problems of coherence in student writing (Ghazzoul, 2008; Gramegna, 2007; Wikborg, 1990), no studies have examined the relationship between types of coherence problems and writing quality. My study is the first study to identify the relationship between types and frequency of coherence problems and writing quality. Understanding the relationship between types and frequency of coherence problems and writing quality will not only help teachers have clear strategies to make their writing lessons beneficial to learners, but also provide a potential way to assess students’ writing.

Regarding methodology, the biggest contributions of this study relate to the development of the analytical framework of coherence problems and the coding of coherence problems using this framework. The fact that this study concerned short argumentative essays written by EFL students makes the framework developed in this study more appropriate for application than previous frameworks. For example, this analytical framework can be applied to the argumentative writing genre to identify coherence problems in the writing of EFL students (intermediate level) from other countries. Similarly, the procedure of developing this analytical framework can be used to make
modifications to this framework so that it can be applied to either the argumentative writing of EFL students of other levels or other writing genres of EFL students of intermediate level.

Another methodological contribution of this study is the use of two analytical scales for scoring coherence. One was a TSA-based scale which was an adaptation of the scale by Knoch (2007) and the other was an analytical scale developed by the researcher. Two coherence scales were used to maximize the score reliability as the two raters were asked to use these two coherence scales in two different periods of time. That is, raters were trained on the use of the first scale (the analytical scale), and then they used this scale to rate students’ writing. Only when they had finished rating students’ writing using the first scale, were they trained to use the second scale (TSA-based scale) to rate students’ writing. Although the time difference of using these two scales was two weeks, results of Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 82$) confirmed the score reliability between the use of two scales. Also, my study was the first study that used the TSA-based coherence scale pioneered by Knoch (2007) to assess coherence in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing, and scores obtained using this scale were reliable as shown by results of Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 82$ between the two coherence scales and $\alpha = 83$ between the two raters), so my study has helped validate this scale.

10.3. Pedagogical recommendations of the study

This section discusses the pedagogical recommendations of this study to teaching and learning coherence in EFL/ESL writing. Below is the full discussion of the practical applications of this present thesis to both teachers and students

There are three important pedagogical recommendations suggested in my present thesis to teachers. First, my study provides teachers with clear guidelines for application of TSA in student writing (see Figures 3, 4, and 5 for more information). These guidelines are very helpful when teachers would like to teach coherence through TSA approach. In particular, students reported that they had difficulties identifying topical subject(s) when applying topical structure analysis (TSA). These difficulties can be solved when teachers include the teaching of t-unit in the teaching of sentence writing in Writing 1 and Writing 2. For example, when teaching students to distinguish between types of sentences such as simple, complex, compound, teachers may include the teaching of t-unit and explain to students the difference between types of sentence and t-unit. In addition, the teacher may help students distinguish between dependent clauses and independent clauses which are considered as t-units in
TSA. This not only provides students with a lot of help when they apply TSA in writing but also, to some extent, helps them with their sentence writing. For example, when students are clear about the difference between dependent clauses and independent clauses, this is likely to reduce the chance that they will produce sentence fragments in their writing. Similarly, when teachers teach students about elements of sentence such as subject, object, etc., they may include the teaching of elements of t-unit such as topic, comment, etc. as well as how to identify the elements in a sentence and in a t-unit.

The second practical application for teachers is that topical structure analysis can be used as a practical strategy to help students improve the coherence and quality in their writing. In particular, the positive correlation between writing quality and sequential progression and the negative correlation between writing quality and unrelated progression are helpful for teachers when teaching TSA to students. When teaching students paragraph writing and then essay writing, teachers may spend more time on teaching these two types of topical progression and provide students with strategies as well as in-class activities involving the use of sequential progression or unrelated progression so that students can work with these two types of progression and they themselves may find out ways to improve the use of sequential progression as well as to decrease the use of unrelated progression in their writing. For example, when teaching students paragraph writing, teachers may provide them with a short paragraph, and ask them to work in pairs or groups to: (1) identify the main topic of the paragraph; (2) identify the types of topical progression employed in the paragraph; and (3) make changes to maximize the use of sequential progression and minimize the use of unrelated progression without changing the topic of the paragraph. The teacher would monitor this process to provide help if necessary. It is suggested that activities should be designed in terms of difficulty level. Easy activities should be given to students before difficult ones, and activities at paragraph level should be given first, and when students are familiar with working with paragraphs, activities at essay level can be provided. The purpose of providing easy activities before difficult ones is (1) to encourage students to do the activities and (2) to build up students’ confidence from the beginning that they can do the job. Similarly, providing activities at paragraph level before activities at essay level serves to get students familiar with the task as well as avoiding fatigue and confusion when having to work with the whole essay from the start.
The final implication for teachers is that this study provided teachers with features that constitute coherence in writing and a system (framework) of problems that cause the incoherence in EFL students’ writing. This has the potential to raise teachers’ awareness of what coherence is and teachers may explain clearly to students what makes their writing coherent and what may cause the lack of coherence in their writing. In addition, findings of the present study show that paragraph unity-related problems were the most frequent ones identified in students’ writing; therefore, one of the most important recommendations of this study is to teach students to recognize and avoid this type of problem. Paragraph unity-related problems are problems at paragraph level, so it is suggested that paragraph unity-related problems should be included in the teaching of paragraph writing. This is helpful to encourage students to pay attention to the type of problem that they most encounter in their writing, and in teaching them how to avoid this problem. Similarly, coherence problems at discourse level (macrostructure-related problems and topic unity-related problems) should be introduced during the teaching of essay writing so that students can have an overall picture of the system of coherence they may encounter in their writing. In Vietnam, paragraph writing is taught to university students before essay writing. This means paragraph unity-related problems should be taught to students before other types of coherence problems.

My present study provides students with two important implications. First, my study provides students with a clear framework of coherence problems. Students can work individually to identify coherence problems in their own writing. Especially, when teachers are too busy with their workload and have little time to look at their writing, students are still able to check their writing coherence based on this framework.

Second, my study provides students with clear guidelines of how to apply TSA approach which is a practical strategy to help improve coherence and quality in writing. So, students can check the frequent types of progression when they revise their own writing and then make changes where necessary to improve the coherence in writing. While some students in this study mentioned that they did not revise their writing because they did not know what to do, others said they often checked grammatical errors or spelling mistakes when they revised. It is expected that this study will help to pave a new way of thinking in EFL writing pedagogy in relation to helping students revise their writing. Also, it can be expected that students will revise their writing more often when they understand what they need to do to improve their writing coherence.
10.4. Limitations

There are several limitations in this thesis. In Phase 1, there are limitations in the development of the analytical framework of coherence problems. First, the framework was developed based on the analysis of argumentative essays only, so it may be inapplicable in other writing genres like narrative or expository. Second, argumentative essays that were analyzed to develop the framework were short essays (250 – 300 words in length); so it may be inappropriate to apply the framework to argumentative essays which are more than 500 words in length. Finally, argumentative essays used for the development of the framework were written by university students with Vietnamese as their first language; therefore, it may be unsuitable to use the framework in argumentative essays written by students whose first language is not Vietnamese.

In Phase 2, the second set of writing which was collected right after the intervention was a revision of the first set of writing instead of being subsequent writing (post-test). This can be seen as a limitation as it was hard to identify whether it was the intervention or the revision process that resulted in the changes in the second set of writing when compared with the first set of writing. In addition, my decision to allow peer review during the revision of the first set of writing was another limitation of my study as it made it hard to know where changes made by students in the second set of writing stemmed from, whether from the input of the peers, or the impact of the revision, or the writer’s own improved ability. Similarly, the fact that students were allowed to refer to notes/dictionaries when doing the revision also caused difficulties when explaining students’ improvement in the second set of writing. These limitations made this data set (the second set of writing) less useful than it would otherwise have been. Other researchers can use Task 1 (pre-test), Task 2 (post-test), and Task 3 (delayed post-test) instead of Task 1, revision of Task 1, and Task 2 as in my study. This would exclude the effects of peer review and reference to notes/dictionaries so that the effects of the intervention can be investigated with highest level of precision.

Another limitation was that as I was the one to conduct the intervention, it was hard for me to both teach and observe. In other words, I did not record any observation data. Due to the absence of observation data, I could not compare between what students said they had done and what they actually did. Thus, observation data should be included in future research direction.
In addition, I both taught and interviewed the students, so it is possible that students said what they thought I wanted to hear to avoid being rude. In other words, I found it hard to determine whether students provided their true opinions in the questionnaire and focus groups or whether the answers they provided were just to please me. Thus, an independent person should be invited to conduct the interviews so that students are more inclined to be frank.

Additionally, that no back translation nor checking by an independent party was undertaken in this study was also a limitation of this present study. If there had been independent checking of the translation of the data from Vietnamese into English, the equivalence of the translation would have been well ensured and there would have been no chance of mistranslation nor omission.

Finally, that no survey questionnaire and focus groups were conducted for the control group was another limitation of this study. Information from questionnaire and focus groups could help to provide further insights into what writing courses was the most effective as well as how students in each group understood about coherence changed. Similarly, no survey questionnaire and focus groups before the intervention was also a limitation of this study. In this study, information about students’ previous writing experience was collected after the intervention. This could make the information that students provided unclear as the researcher found it hard to know whether the information students gave was about their previous writing experience or based on their experience when the intervention finished. It is suggested that a quick survey questionnaire and short focus groups about students’ previous experience in writing should be done before the intervention is conducted so that researchers have a clear picture of students’ viewpoints before and after the intervention. This is important as researchers can investigate the effectiveness of the intervention as well as students’ perceptions of the intervention with higher accuracy.

10.5. Future research directions

Findings of the study prompt some directions for future research. First, this study examined the effects of teaching coherence problems and TSA on students’ writing performance, but no studies have investigated the effects of teaching coherence problems only to students’ writing performance. So, a study on the effects of teaching coherence problems to EFL students’ writing performance would be a good direction in the future as it would provide information to compare the effects of three ways of teaching to improve coherence in EFL students’ writing: the teaching of TSA, the teaching of
coherence problems, and the combination of teaching coherence problems and TSA. Also, such a study would contribute to the literature in the way the teaching of coherence in writing would be conducted.

Second, in this study, the researcher was the teacher of the intervention. However, future research could invite another teacher to do the teaching so that the researcher can act as an observer. The researcher would thus have further data from observation.

Finally, a case study could be another suggestion for future research. There have been some case studies on the teaching of coherence to EFL students (Lee, 2002b), but there has been no case study on the teaching of coherence problems and TSA to EFL students. A case study with such data as pre- and post- tasks, think-aloud protocols, observations, and interviews would be the first case study on the teaching of coherence problems and TSA in EFL context.

10.6. Final remarks

The present study was carried out to help solve an important issue in EFL writing teaching and learning at universities in Vietnam, that is how to teach students to produce a coherent and good quality piece of writing. First, this study has provided insight into potential sources of incoherence in EFL students’ writing and the types of coherence problems that challenge EFL students when writing. Second, this study has documented an intervention involving the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis on the coherence and the effects of this intervention on the quality of students’ writing. The findings of this study may be useful not only for teachers but also for students when teaching and learning coherence in EFL writing. As it was the first study in Vietnam to investigate coherence in EFL students’ writing, this thesis makes an important contribution to the Vietnamese teaching context. It was also the first study to examine the impacts of an intervention that combined the teaching of coherence problems and topical structure analysis in EFL writing research; it therefore makes a useful contribution to literature on EFL writing teaching and methodology. Finally, this study provides a good basis for future research on coherence-related issues and coherence teaching and learning in EFL writing research.
REFERENCES


doi: [https://doi.org/10.3860/taper.v15i2.84](https://doi.org/10.3860/taper.v15i2.84)


Crossley, S. A., & McNamara, D. S. (2016). Say more and be more coherent: How text elaboration and cohesion can increase writing quality. Journal of Writing Research, 7(3). doi:https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2016.07.02


Graesser, A. C., McNamara, D. S., & Louwerse, M. (2003). What do readers need to learn in order to process coherence relations in narrative and expository text. In A. P. Sweet & C. E. Snow (Eds.), *Rethinking reading comprehension* (pp. 82-98). New York: Guilford Press.


O'Reilly, T., & McNamara, D. S. (2007). Reversing the reverse cohesion effect: Good texts can be better for strategic, high-knowledge readers. *Discourse Processes, 43*(2), 121-152. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/01638530709336895


APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Ethics Approval Memorandum

MEMORANDUM

TO Dao Pham
COPY TO Jean Parkinson
FROM Dr Averil Coxhead, Acting Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE 29 May 2017
PAGES 1

SUBJECT Ethics Approval: 24590
Problems of coherence in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing and an intervention to improve coherence in their writing

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 31 December 2019. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Averil Coxhead,
Acting Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee
Appendix 2. Letter of support for data collection from the Head of Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI)

Hanoi, 26th May 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

As the Rector of Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI), I hereby approve Pham Thi Anh Dao, a PhD candidate of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand to have access to HaUI students and facilities for her doctoral project entitled “Problems of coherence in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing and an intervention to improve coherence in their writing”. The data collection will be administered in the academic year 2018. I do hope that the research findings will make a great contribution to help HaUI students not only improve their writing quality but also enhance their English language proficiency.

Pham Thi Anh Dao is the lecturer of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HaUI. I would like the Heads and staff of Faculty of Foreign Languages and The Department of Human Resource Management to give this research project your full support and participation.

Rector of HaUI

(Signed and sealed)

Associate Prof. Dr. Tran Duc Quy
Address: Room 201, Level 2, Building A1, Minh Khai-Tu Liem, Hanoi
Email: tdquy@hau.edu.vn
Mobile: +84-912181579
Phone: +84-47655644
Appendix 3. Student Information Sheets

Appendix 3.1. Student information sheet for voluntarily contributing the writing

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

Topic of the study: A STUDY ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ WRITING

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR VOLUNTARILY CONTRIBUTING THE WRITING

Thank you for your interest in my study. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to give your writing. If you decide to hand out your writing, thank you. If you decide not to contribute, thank you for considering my request.

I am a PhD student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. As part of this degree, I am conducting a study leading to a dissertation. My research is investigating the problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing and examining the influence of an intervention on improving them. My research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting you as a third-year university student at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry to voluntarily contribute your writing. Should you agree to hand out, you will be asked to write an essay of between 250 and 300 words in length about one topic. Your writing will be collected in June in both hard copy and soft copy and gathered by one of the writing lecturers, my colleague at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry. My colleague will send your writing to me via email and post. You can ask your writing returned at any time, without giving any reason. After you have given your writing, you will be given a $5 NZD (50,000 VND) top-up voucher and some souvenirs as a token of my appreciation. Please note that your writing contribution to this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect your study or grades of any course that you are taking in any way.

All material collected will be kept confidential. Data from you and other participants will be used in my study and will be put into a written report. No other person besides me and my supervisors, Dr Jean Parkinson and Assoc. Prof Peter Gu, will see the data. Your personal identity will be disguised by means of pseudonyms and these will not be disclosed to any other party.

The results of the study will be written up as a these and will be available in the University Library. The research may also be presented at academic conferences and published in scholarly journals without disclosing personal identity of participants. Data will be destroyed three (3) years after the end of the study.

You are free to ask any questions about the study at any time. If you wish to get your writing back, please let me know via email at any time. If you ask your writing returned, the writing you provided will be returned to you via your postal address and be destroyed from my study.

If you would like to receive further information, please contact me on +64 223649580 or at thianhdao.pham@vuw.ac.nz, or my primary supervisor, Dr Jean Parkinson, at Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480. Thank you for your cooperation.

Pham Thi Anh Dao
Appendix 3.2. Student information sheet for participating in the supplementary writing class

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

Topic of the study: A STUDY ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ WRITING

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY WRITING CLASS

Thank you for your interest in my study. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part in the supplementary writing class. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part in, thank you for considering my request.

I am a PhD student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. As part of this degree, I am conducting a study leading to a dissertation. My research is investigating the problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing and examining the influence of an intervention on improving them. My research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting you as a third-year university student at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry to participate in this study. Should you agree to participate, you will be allowed to join the supplementary writing class that will be conducted outside your class time in ten (10) weeks from February 26th to May 6th. You will be provided some strategies and techniques to help improve your writing skills during this class. Also, you will be asked to write three drafts and these drafts will be collected for analysis. Please note that this supplementary writing class is free and your participation in this class is entirely voluntary and will not affect your study or grades of any course that you are taking in any way.

All material collected will be kept confidential. Data from you and other participants will be used in my study and will be put into a written report. No other person besides me and my supervisors, Dr Jean Parkinson and Assoc. Prof Peter Gu, will see the data. Your personal identity will be disguised by means of pseudonyms and these will not be disclosed to any other party.

The results of the study will be written up as a these and will be available in the University Library. The research may also be presented at academic conferences and published in scholarly journals without disclosing personal identity of participants. Data will be destroyed three (3) years after the end of the study.

You are free to ask any questions about the study at any time. If you wish to withdraw from the class, please let me know via email at any time. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

If you would like to receive further information, please contact me on +64 223649580 or at thianhdao.pham@vuw.ac.nz, or my primary supervisor, Dr Jean Parkinson, at Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480. Thank you for your cooperation.

Pham Thi Anh Dao
Appendix 3.3. Student information sheet for participating in the focus groups

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Victoria University of Wellington  
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

Topic of the study: **A STUDY ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ WRITING**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE INTERVIEW**

Thank you for your interest in my study. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part in the interview. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

I am a PhD student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. As part of this degree, I am conducting a study leading to a dissertation. My research is investigating the problems in Vietnamese EFL students’ writing and examining the influence of an intervention on improving them. My research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting you as a third-year university student at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry to participate in the interview after the supplementary writing class finishes. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked some questions about the supplementary writing class you have participated in. The interview will take from ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes and will be conducted on Level 3, Building A2 at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry. I will record the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. After you have finished the interview, you will be given a $10 NZD (100.000 VND) top-up voucher and some souvenirs as a token of my appreciation. Please note that your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and will not affect your study or grades of any course that you are taking in any way.

All material collected will be kept confidential. Data from you and other participants will be used in my study and will be put into a written report. No other person besides me and my supervisors, Dr Jean Parkinson and Assoc. Prof Peter Gu, will see the data. Your personal identity will be disguised by means of pseudonyms and these will not be disclosed to any other party.

The results of the study will be written up as a these and will be available in the University Library. The research may also be presented at academic conferences and published in scholarly journals without disclosing personal identity of participants. Data will be destroyed three (3) years after the end of the study.

You are free to ask any questions about the study at any time. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please let me know via email at any time. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

If you would like to receive further information, please contact me on +64 223649580 or at thianhdao.pham@vuw.ac.nz, or my primary supervisor, Dr Jean Parkinson, at Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480. Thank you for your cooperation.

Pham Thi Anh Dao
Appendix 4. Student Consent Forms

Appendix 4.1. Student consent form for voluntarily contributing the writing

STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR VOLUNTARILY CONTRIBUTING THE WRITING

Please tick any of the following choices:

☐ I have read the Information Sheet in English and I have understood what will be required of me if I agree to voluntarily contribute my writing.

☐ The aim of the writing collection has been clearly explained and I have been given the opportunity to ask and have had my questions about this collection answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I understand that my writing contribution is entirely voluntary and I may choose to ask my writing returned at any time, without giving any reason.

☐ I understand that I have the right to ask further questions at any time.

☐ I understand that the writing I give and my identity will be kept under the conditions of strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used instead.

☐ I understand that my writing will be analyzed and used for a PhD thesis and a summary of the results may be used in academic articles and/or presented at conferences.

☐ I understand that the writing I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.

☐ I agree to give my writing and to provide any relevant information needed by the researcher.

Student’s Name : _____________________________________
Student’s Signature : _____________________________________
Date :    /    /    

If you would like to receive a copy of a written summary of this study at the end of this study, please tick here □ and provide me with your e-mail address to which this summary can be sent. Otherwise, you may leave it blank.

Note: Participant shall retain a completed and signed copy of this form
Appendix 4.2. Student consent form for participating in the supplementary writing class

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

Researcher: Dao Thi Anh Pham (thianhdpham@vuw.ac.nz)
Supervisors: Dr Jean Parkinson (Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz)
Dr. Rachael Ruegg (Rachael.Ruegg@vuw.ac.nz)

Topic of the study: A STUDY ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ WRITING

STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY WRITING CLASS

Please tick any of the following choices:

☐ I have read the Information Sheet in English and I have understood what will be required of me if I participate in this supplementary writing class.

☐ The aim of this supplementary writing class has been clearly explained and I have been given the opportunity to ask and have had my questions about this supplementary writing class answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I understand that my participation in this supplementary writing class is entirely voluntary and I may choose to withdraw my participation at any time, without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.

☐ I understand that I have the right to ask further questions at any time.

☐ I understand that any information I give and my identity will be kept under the conditions of strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used instead.

☐ I understand that the results will be used for a PhD these and a summary of the results may be used in academic articles and/or presented at conferences.

☐ I understand that the information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.

☐ I agree to participate in this supplementary writing class and to provide any relevant information needed by the researcher.

Student’s Name: _____________________________
Student’s Signature: ___________________________
Date: / /

If you would like to receive a copy of a written summary of this study at the end of this study, please tick here ☐ and provide me with your e-mail address to which this summary can be sent. Otherwise, you may leave it blank.

Note: Participant shall retain a completed and signed copy of this form
Appendix 4.3. Student consent form for participating in the focus groups

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand

Researcher: Dao Thi Anh Pham (thianhdao.pham@vuw.ac.nz)
Supervisors: Dr Jean Parkinson (Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz)
Dr. Rachael Ruegg (Rachael.Ruegg@vuw.ac.nz)

Topic of the study: A STUDY ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ WRITING

STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

Please tick any of the following choices:

☐ I have read the Information Sheet in Vietnamese and I have understood what will be required of me if I participate in this study.

☐ The aim of the study has been clearly explained and I have been given the opportunity to ask and have had my questions about this study answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I may choose to withdraw my participation at any time during the intervention, without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed

☐ I understand that I have the right to ask further questions at any time.

☐ I understand that the interview will be audio-taped.

☐ I understand that any information I give and my identity will be kept under the conditions of strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used instead.

☐ I understand that the results will be used for a PhD these and a summary of the results may be used in academic articles and/or presented at conferences.

☐ I understand that the information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.

☐ I agree to participate in this study and to provide any relevant information needed by the researcher.

Student’s Name: ________________________________
Student’s Signature: ________________________________
Date: / /

If you would like to receive a copy of a written summary of this study at the end of this study, please tick here □ and provide me with your e-mail address to which this summary can be sent. Otherwise, you may leave it blank.

□

Note: Participant shall retain a completed and signed copy of this form
Appendix 5. Student Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions
1. This questionnaire comprises 3 sections and it is expected that you will complete this survey approximately within 30 minutes.
   Section 1: Demographic information
   Section 2: Students’ writing experience
   Section 3: Students’ views on the intervention
2. The purpose of this survey questionnaire is to investigate the effect of the intervention on your writing skill
3. Below are some notes to your participation in this study
   • There will be no penalty for not participating in this study.
   • You do not have to provide your personal information if you do not wish, just provide your opinions about the intervention
   • Responses provided in this survey will have no effect on your grade.
   • After you complete this survey, it will be assigned a unique identification and your name will be removed from the survey.
   • Your name will not be used during and after the study.
   • Any personal information you provide will remain confidential and known only to the researcher and her supervisors.
   • Your answer will be used only for the purposes of this study.
   • You can choose not to provide your opinions if you do not wish.
   • If you have questions regarding this survey, please feel free to contact me, Ms. Dao Thi Anh Pham at +64 223649580 or thanhmao.pham@vuw.ac.nz

Thank you for your cooperation.
Section 1: Demographic information

Directions:

Please answer the following questions by writing an answer or marking “✓” in front of the appropriate option that best fits your answers.

1. Name: __________________________________
2. Age: ____________
3. Gender:  □ Male    □ Female    □ Others
4. How long have you been learning English? ______________________
5. What is your year of study now?
   □ first year   □ second year   □ third year   □ fourth year

Section 2: Students’ writing experience before the intervention

Directions:

Please answer the following questions by writing an answer or marking “✓” in front of the appropriate option(s) that best fit(s) your answers.

1. What was your GPA at the end of second year?
   □ lower than 2.00  □ 2.0-2.49  □ 2.5-3.19
   □ 3.2-3.59  □ 3.6-4.00

2. What writing modules have you completed? (You can choose more than one answer if you wish)
   □ writing module 1
   □ writing module 2
   □ writing module 3
   □ writing module 4
3. What mark did you get in your writing module 5?

☐ F (lower than 4.0)  ☐ D (4.0 – 5.4)  ☐ C (5.5 – 6.9)

☐ B (7.0 – 8.4)  ☐ A (8.5 – 10)

4. What categories have you been taught in writing modules? (You can choose more than one answer if you wish)

☐ Grammar

☐ Sentence

☐ Sentence types

☐ Sentence structures

☐ Punctuation

☐ Paragraph

☐ Paragraph organization

☐ Coherence in paragraph

☐ Unity in paragraph

☐ Essay

☐ Essay organization

☐ Essay types

☐ Coherence in essay

☐ Unity in essay

5. When you write, what are the most important features you usually focus on? Please write down the features in the order from more importance to less importance (You can use Vietnamese to express your ideas if you wish).
6. Do you often revise your writing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, what features do you often revise? (You can use Vietnamese to express your ideas if you wish)

........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................

If No, If No, please explain the reason why (You can use Vietnamese to express your ideas if you wish)

........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................
7. Do you have difficulty producing a good piece of writing?

☐ Yes    ☐ No

If Yes, please specify what difficulties you have below (You can use Vietnamese to express your ideas if you wish)

..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................

8. Before the intervention, what knowledge did you have about “coherence” in writing?

..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................

Section 3: Students’ views on the intervention

The statements below concern the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention on your writing skills. Please tick “✓” under the column which indicates your opinions about the lessons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention are interesting to understand and follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I know how to organize the ideas in your writing coherently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am able to identify the coherence breaks in my writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention make me feel stressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention is complicated and I find it difficult to follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention show me a clearer picture of what good writing is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I learn from the lessons in the intervention the importance of coherence in writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The teaching materials used in the intervention are not helpful to my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention help me identify which sentences are relevant or irrelevant to the main topic of the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention is effective for revising written texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention are easy to understand and follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am able to correct the coherence breaks in my writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am able to minimize the coherence breaks in my writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention is helpful in helping me check for coherence in my writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I learn from the lessons in the intervention that there is fundamental knowledge to be improved in order to write a more coherent essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention do not help much with my writing skill.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am confused about what I need to do to improve my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention are boing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention helps me focus on the scope of the main topic when writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>The lessons in the intervention help me write better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am able to identify the topic of each sentence as well as the topic of the whole piece of writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>The new strategy, Topical Structure Analysis, introduced in the intervention should be officially used to teach writing skills in university context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>The teaching materials used in the intervention are beneficial to my writing skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>As a result of the intervention, I am able to make all the ideas in the writing relate to the main topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your cooperation. If you wish to add any other opinion, please do so below.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Appendix 6. Student Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The aim of this interview is to ask you some questions about the intervention you joined. You may choose not to answer the questions if you do not wish to. Your answer will be used only for the purposes of this study.

Part 1. Students’ writing experiences

Q.1. You are third year students now. You have learnt five writing modules at university. What do you think about writing lessons you have been taught?
Q.3. What is the most difficult to you when writing?
Q.3. Do you often plan when you write? If yes, can you please tell me the way you plan when you write?
Q.4. What features do you often focus on when writing?
Q.5. Do you think writing revision is necessary? Why or why not?
Q.7. Do you often revise your writing? If yes, what features do you focus on when revising – grammar and spelling, organization, or content?
Q. 7.1. Why is revising grammar and spelling important to you?
Q. 7.2. Why is revising organization important to you?
Q. 7.3. Why is revising content important to you?
Q. 7.4. Which is the most important to you – grammar and spelling, organization, and content?

Part 2. The intervention

Q.1. Did you find the intervention useful to your writing? Why/ why not?

Q.2. There were two main parts in the intervention. The first was about types of coherence breaks and Topical Structure Analysis (TSA); the second was common types of essays Which do you think the more beneficial to your writing? Please specify its benefits.
Q.3. When the first main part of the intervention finished, you had to revise the first draft and submit the second draft, did you make any changes in your second draft in comparison with your first draft? If yes, please detail those changes/ If no, please explain why no change were necessary

Q.4. Did the intervention have any influence on the way you wrote the delayed test? If yes, please specify how it influenced your way of writing.

Q.5. Were you able to identify coherence problems in your writing when the intervention finished? Do you think the ability of identifying coherence problems in your writing helps you improve your writing? Why/ Why not?

Q.6. You learnt about TSA, when is the best time to use TSA: before you write, while you write, or after you write?

Q.7. Were you able to apply TSA to check for coherence in your writing when the intervention finished? Do you think applying TSA to check for coherence in the writing is helpful? Why/ why not?

Q.8. Do you think this intervention should be applied to teach writing skills at university context? Why/ why not?

Q.9. Do you have any problems or difficulties following the supplementary writing class? If yes, please describe those problems/ difficulties

Q.10. Any information you would like to add
### TSA-based Scoring Scale for Coherence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1 pts**<br>Very poor | • Frequent use of unrelated progression  
• Little use of parallel progression and extended parallel progression  
• No use of superstructure, sequential progression, extended sequential progression |
| **2 pts**<br>Poor | • Frequent use of parallel progression and extended parallel progression  
• Some unrelated progression  
• No use of superstructure  
• Rare/limited use of sequential progression and extended sequential progression |
| **3 pts**<br>Modest | • Frequent use of parallel progression and extended parallel progression  
• Little use of unrelated progression  
• Sequential progression and extended sequential progression occurs but not often  
• Rare/limited use of superstructure |
| **4 pts**<br>Good | • Frequent use of sequential progression and extended sequential progression  
• Infrequent use of parallel progression and extended parallel progression  
• Little use of unrelated progression  
• Superstructure occur but not often |
| **5 pts**<br>Excellent | • Regular use of superstructure, sequential progression, and extended sequential progression  
• Few incidences of parallel progression and extended progression  
• No unrelated progression |
### Appendix 8. Scoring scale for overall quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Level</th>
<th>Content (30%)</th>
<th>Organization and Coherence (30%)</th>
<th>Vocabulary (20%)</th>
<th>Language use (20%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Very poor** 1pts | - No understanding of the task;  
- Almost no development of thesis;  
- No position expressed;  
- Substantial amount of irrelevant information;  
- Very few words for the amount of time given;  
- Completely uninteresting; | - No evidence of organization  
- Introduction and conclusion may be missing  
- No discourse topic to follow  
- Topic drifts in all paragraphs  
- No elaboration of ideas/ no supporting details  
- No connection between paragraphs.  
- No use of cohesive devices  
- No knowledge of paragraphing | - Very simple vocabulary and inadequate for the task.  
- No variety in word choice  
- Unlimited errors in word choice often obscure meaning  
- No control of word formation and/or spelling | - Mostly dominated by grammatical errors  
- Severe errors in word order and/or complex structures  
- No use of complex sentences  
- No sentence variety  
- Serious errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization |
| **Poor** 2pts | - Limited understanding of the task;  
- Unclear development of thesis;  
- Unclear position expressed;  
- Quite a lot of irrelevant information;  
- Limited words for the amount of time given;  
- Somewhat uninteresting; | - Little evidence of organization  
- Poor development through introduction, body, and conclusion;  
- Discourse topic difficult to follow  
- Topic drifts in almost all paragraphs  
- Most supporting details are irrelevant and/or underdeveloped  
- A lot of disjointed connection between paragraphs. | - Simple vocabulary  
- Repetitive choice of word  
- Limited word choice with several errors obscuring meaning  
- Limited control of word formation and/or spelling | - Frequent grammatical errors  
- Serious errors in word order and/or complex structures  
- Rare use of complex sentences  
- Very limited sentence variety  
- Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modest 3pts</th>
<th>Good 4pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Adequate understanding of the task;  
  • Some development of thesis, but the development is not always clear;  
  • Relevant position expressed;  
  • Some irrelevant information;  
  • Adequate number of words for the amount of time given;  
  • Somewhat interesting; | • Good understanding of the task;  
  • Good and logical development of thesis;  
  • Clear position expressed;  
  • Almost no irrelevant information; |
| • Some pattern of organization  
  • Minimal development through introduction, body, and conclusion  
  • Discourse topic followed but with some difficulty  
  • Topic drifts in some paragraphs  
  • Supporting details evident but some are irrelevant and/or inadequately developed;  
  • Some disjointed connection between paragraphs  
  • Cohesive devices are used but some are inaccurate  
  • Paragraphing is appropriate | • Well-organized  
  • Satisfactory development through introduction, body and conclusion  
  • Discourse topic mostly followed with ease  
  • Few topic drifts  
  • Relevant supporting details  
  • Good connection between paragraphs |
| • Unsophisticated vocabulary, but not much repetition  
  • Limited range of vocabulary but this is minimally appropriate and/or adequate for the task  
  • Some errors in word choice that obscure meaning  
  • Some errors in word formation and/or spelling but not impeding communication | • Adequate range of vocabulary but some repetition  
  • Good choice of words with some errors that do not obscure meaning |
| • Several grammatical errors  
  • Several errors in word order and/or complex structures  
  • Minimal use of complex sentences  
  • Limited variety of sentences  
  • Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization | • Grammatical errors are of a minor nature  
  • Occasional errors in word order or complex structures  
  • Good use of complex sentences  
  • Good sentence variety |
| **Excellent 5pts** | • Excellent understanding of the task;  
• Thorough and logical development of thesis;  
• Fully developed position;  
• No irrelevant information;  
• A substantial number of words for the amount of time given;  
• Very interesting; | • Extremely well-organised;  
• Thorough development through introduction, body and conclusion;  
• Discourse topic followed with ease;  
• No topic drifts;  
• Relevant and convincing supporting details;  
• Excellent connection between paragraphs;  
• Excellent use of cohesive devices;  
• Very good knowledge of paragraphing; | • Excellent range of vocabulary  
• Excellent choice and usage of words with no errors or rare minor errors  
• Uncommon lexical items are skilfully used  
• Excellent control of word formation/or spelling with rare errors | • Few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization  
• No or very few grammatical errors  
• Rare minor errors in word order or complex structures  
• Excellent use of complex sentences  
• Excellent sentence variety  
• No errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization |
Appendix 9. Students’ writing samples collected in Phase 1

Appendix 9.1. Essay ID: PH 102

Topic: It is said that the social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1) The more society develops, the more social network popular. (S2) Many people believe that social network has affected positively to our society. (S3) Personally, I partly agree with them because social network has a vast of pros and cons.

(Pa 2) No sensible person could deny that social network has a positive impact. (S5) First, I will probably update information on all aspects of my life regarding to economy, entertainment or military. (S6) If I just turn on my mobile phone and connect with network, I can look for all news that I need. (S7) In addition, I can keep in touch with other people all over the world. (S8) According to a recent study, about 80% people suppose that they have many friends in other countries when they use Facebook or Instagram. (S9) What’s more, I can earn a lot of money by carrying out online business such as cosmetics or clothes. (S10) Besides, creating many webs makes a big profit for me.

(Pa 3) However, I personally feel that it has several disadvantages. (S12) The first one is easy to leak the personal information. (S13) We are curious about all things, so we always kick to poisonous link. (S14) As a consequence, mobile phone or computer is infected with viruses. (S15) Another drawback is affecting vision. (S16) If I see in a long period, my eyes will feel tied. (S17) Besides, back and bone is influenced.

(Pa 4) In conclusion, social network has not only advantages but also disadvantages, so we need to use in a selective way.
Topic: It is said that the social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?
(Pa 1)

(1) People have different opinion on the effect of social networks is a highly contention issue.
(2) Personally, I think social networks have both site of effect is positive and negative.

(Pa 2)

(3) No sensible person could deny that social networks have a lot benefits. (4) Firstly, social networking sites are helping education by allowing teachers and coaches to post club meeting time, school projects and even homework on these sites. (5) A large number of education websites and study pages is opened. (6) Network users can learn all kind of knowledge online. (7) We also can read newspapers and whatever we interested in the internet to widen our knowledge such as science, medicine, economic, politic, culture, travel, etc.

(Pa 3)

(8) Secondly, social networks are enabling advancements in entertainment and communicate. (9) Users can go to social networking site to listen to music; watch films, movies, funny clips; reading books; play games and so on. (10) All of this make us restart our brain after a hard-working day.

(Pa 4)

(11) Social networking sites allow people to communicate and remain in contact with friends as well as new people. (12) These sites allow people to find others with similar interests that they can create a relationship with and get to know another by chatting or sharing blogs, YouTube clips, idea, statuses or stories. (13) We can communicate by messages or video call with every person in the world.

(Pa 5)

(14) Finally, social networking wed sites are benefiting businesses- economically. (15) Users can establish their own business by create a website or page to sell products online. (16) These like a market services to a large audience and a profile is free to set up. (17) Users also can earn money by making clips and upload to social networking websites like YouTube, Facebook, etc. (18) If these clips have many views, this company will pay a sum of money for you.
However, I personally think that social networks have negative effects as well. Firstly, users depend on social networks too much, they use them all of time. After that, they get addicted in social networks. Using too much, we will waste of time. Users drunk in virtual world and forget the realitive world. According to a recent study, nearly 38% of world population addicted to social networks. Users can spent all day or night to use social networks. It is very harm four our health. A recent study reveals that using social network, we can suffer a lot of diseases like: insomnia, autism, stomach pain, headache, overweight, asthenia and harm to eyes, etc. Secondly, social networks have bad effects on communication. Users contacts with others just in front of a screen and do not use voice. It can be make us fell more difficult to communicate face to face. Finally, using social networks are easier to lack of personal information. The social networking sites encourage users to provide certain information. It is lead to many bad problem and stuation for users. According to a recent research, almost three of every four teenagers who use social networking wed sites are at rick due to thier lack of using online safety.

Social networking has its advantages and its disadvantages like everything else does. The sites are continuously advancing, and changing to fix the negative problems. The best choice is use it in the right way and right time. We should exploited all of its benefits effectively.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)
(S1) Today technology has been developing rapidly, that leads to the developing of social network. (S2) Someone says that the social network has a positive effect to human life. (S3) Personally, I am against this idea.

(Pa 2)
(S4) No sensible person can deny that social network has some advantages. (S5) Firstly, using social network can help us update information all categories of life such as economy, entertainment like music, movies and so on. (S6) A business man can update information about stock market by using social network. (S7) Secondly, we can connect to others people all over the world. (S8) For instance, we can use social network to log on Facebook, Instagram to contact with other people. (S9) Finally, we can earn a lot of money by creating website, selling business online. It is common that a lot of people sell things on Facebook such as clothes, foods.

(Pa 3)
(S10) However, it is also true that social network has some drawbacks. (S11) It is easy to leak the personal information. (S12) People sometimes click some links that have virus and this makes their computer to be pervaded and stolen documents. (S13) Moreover, it also affects our health. (S14) Because we sit before computer for a long time and this affects our vision, back and bone.

(Pa 4)
(S15) In short, social network has positive effect to society. (S16) I suggest that we should use social network thoughtfully to prevent us from negative effects.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Social media is getting more and more popular today. (S2) It even already became a part of our modern life while we did not notice that. (S3) For instance, Facebook – the most popular social networking has 1.94 billion monthly active users, now got a number of top 3 internet users in the world. (S4) The biggest and also the most common reason that encourages people to use Facebook is to keep in touch and make new friends worldwide. (S5) Thanks to the internet, it is now easier to connect to others whenever and wherever they are. (S6) Every Facebook user has their own personal page which allows them to share their latest information, status and photos, which also help their friends to update them, no matter how far they are from each other. (S7) My true story is an example, after primary school, my best girlfriend had moved to another province. (S8) At that time, we had no information about internet or social networking, so from then on I had never met her again. (S9) Until 2 years ago, through my friends on Facebook, I found her account. We chatted, talked and shared our photos. (S10) I am so glad that thanks to Facebook, I can reunite with my old friends.

(Pa 2)

(S11) Facebook has millions of users not only because of its convenience of connection but also its quickly speed to take and share information. (S12) Beside updating latest status from others, social media brings its most convenient thing that what it was not born to have, though. (S13) Online businesses are keeping taking this advantage. (S14) More and more shops are opened on Facebook, which allow users to go shopping online right in free time surfing to relax. (S15) Not only clothes, accessories, housewares but also electronic devices and office supplies are being sold everyday. (S16) This brings advantages to both venders and customers. (S17) Firstly, the online venders must not pay business tax, and secondly, the customers have convenience of all aspects, mostly time.

(Pa 3)

(S18) By the way, there are some still think that social media, especially Facebook, is too dangerous. (S19) Our personal information can be hacked and stolen away. (S20) Some of them can cause negative practical effects on our real life. (S21) In fact, a number of people have been cyberbullied all the time because of their information on the internet. (S22) However, there is danger in everything, we are all taught by parents how to keep ourselves safe, internet is not an exception. (S23) All users have to learn about what can and what can not be updated on the virtue society. (S24) Not only Facebook but also all online services include risks, it is completely depend on the way we use them.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Someone said that social networking sites bring numerous advantages to our community. (S2) From my point of view, I totally agree that social networking websites have significant influences on our daily life.

(Pa 2)

(S3) It is clear that social network becomes a huge source of information and entertainment. (S4) It creates favourable conditions for netizens to deepen their knowledge about various aspects of life. (S5) People will be able to get to know their beloved things very easily by doing researches on Internet newspaper. (S6) Moreover, individuals have opportunities to release the stress after the overloads of deadlines and assignments because of they can find a large number of interesting games online or listening their favourite songs. (S7) Furthermore, running a business namely selling clothes online gains popularity on social networking websites, among which Facebook and Instagram are typical examples. (S8) Due to its huge popularity, youths have the ability to escalate the ladders of success in business. (S9) Therefore, they have golden chances to improve their financial conditions and expose their talents in being an entrepreneur.

(Pa 3)

(S10) In addition, people also can expand their social circles with peers who have the same passions and hobbies. (S11) This is extremely a great place for everyone especially teenagers share their passions. (S12) Another point is that it is a piece of cake for us to keep in touch with friends and relatives living far away from home. (S13) We are able to post our daily images and comment on others photos. (S14) Every important event on our personal page will be saved forever, thus, we will be really happy when looking back unforgettable memories in the past on social network.

(Pa 4)

(S15) Of course, I can not deny the harm of abusing Internet. (S16) As far as I know, children are easy to be addicted to games online. (S17) At that time, youngsters have to face up with depression when spending a large amount of time on playing games with taking notice of having conversations with another person. (S18) Teenagers is also a problem we must focus on because they have to deal with a lot of social evils on the Internet. (S19) They regularly communicate with types of person and put themselves on unreal life day by day. (S20) However, social network is a part of our modern life, and people have to learn to control these drawbacks to get the best of its benefits.

(Pa 5)

(S21) Honestly speaking, in the modern world, people are making acquaintance with social network which is an indispensable thing in our life. (S22) People can achieve a lot of benefits from making use of this in spite of its disadvantage.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impacts on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Some people are of the opinion that the social network has a positive impact on our society. (S2) Personally, I partly believe that social networking site has both advantage and disadvantage side.

(Pa 2)

(S3) It is obvious that social network plays an essential role on communication, studying and business. (S4) First of all, social networking sites allow people to communicate and remain in contact with friends as well as meet new people. (S5) These sites also countenance people to find others with similar interests that they can create a relationship with. (S6) In addition, social network is not only serviceable for communication, but also effective for studying. (S7) Scientists suggest that social networking has increased the rate and quality of collaboration for students. (S8) They tend to better able to communicate meeting times or share information quickly and widely, which can progress productivity and improve teamwork skills. (S9) Moreover, spreading out of social network involves expansion in business. (S10) Traditional marketing mediums are completely obsolete now and demand for thousands of dollars. (S11) However, with social network, the businesses can connect with their targeted customers for free. (S12) For instant, through Facebook or Twitter the businesses can lower their marketing cost to a significant level.

(Pa 3)

(S13) Beside a numerous of benefits, there is no doubt that social network also has a ton of negative influences related to addiction and isolation. (S14) One of the negative effects of social network is that it seems to lead to addiction and make people neglect their duties. (S15) Spending countless hours on the social sites can divert the focus and attention from a particular task. (S16) Some researches show that social network lowers the motivational level of the people. (S17) They mainly rely on technology and the internet instead of learning the practical knowledge and expertise of the everyday life. (S18) Isolation is considered to be another disadvantage. (S19) While social networking brings people together across the Internet, in a larger sense it may create social isolation. (S20) According to a BBC News report, as people spend increasing amounts of time on social networks, they experience less face-to-face interaction. (S21) Scientists have evaluated social isolation in many studies, and have determined that it can lead to a host of mental, psychological, emotional and physical problems including depression, anxiety, somatic complaints and many others.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impacts on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) With the speedy development of the Internet today, the online social media has clear advantages on our lives. (S2) Firstly, the fact that social networking sites allow people to communicate and keep in touch with friends as well as meet new people. (S3) Thanks to these sites, people from different countries are brought together and we also can interact with each other without being face-to-face. (S4) Secondly, social networks are great markets for business to advertise their products. (S5) According to recent studies, there are about 65% companies start doing their business online. (S6) As a result, their profits of marketing online have increased rapidly.

(Pa 2)

(S7) On the other hand, the effects that social network have had on our societies can be considered as detrimental. (S8) One of these impacts is addiction to the networks. (S9) Study in this field shows that people under the age of 25 are getting addicted by using social media. (S10) Consequently, they tend to spend a lot of time online instead of experiencing outside. (S11) Moreover, there is no denying that many people today are lack of social communication as well as social skills. (S12) Another negative effect of social networks is that you can be hacked your individual information as well. (S13) There are various hackers who can infiltrate into your account so if you do not secure your account carefully, it will be hacked easily.

(Pa 3)

(S14) To conclude, although social networks are really beneficial to our societies, they also have had damaging effects on us. (S15) We should aware both pros and cons of them exactly in order to use it in a right way as well as avoid their disadvantages.
Appendix 9.8. Essay ID: PH 126

Topic: It is said that social network has a positive effect on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1) Nowadays, with the speedy development of information technology, social network was created and innovated to make condition and chance to connect and communicate people together. (S2) However, personally, I suppose to believe that everything has both, and social network is not an exception.

(Pa 2) First, there is no doubt about the benefits we get from social network. (S4) This is the best way to introduce yourself such as character, favourite, habit by your special style. (S5) Almost people who use social network regularly reckon that they really comfort to share their real thinking and personal opinion on it. (S6) By the way, you completely can make friends, exchange knowledge and skills. (S7) Information is spread speed, therefore, you have properties to gain and even learn more than you think. Last, social network is also an effective way to trading. (S8) This is an ideal environment that you can online sale or advertise company’s products.

(Pa 3) On the other hand, we cannot deny the dark sides of ‘wonderful’ social network you always believe in. (S10) Be famous is not really bad, as long as you are famous rightly. (S11) Sadly, a great number of famous teenager choose bad way to build up reputation for themselves. (S12) In addition, depending on social network makes you be its servants. (S13) There is the fact that people now cannot leave their device to use Internet. (S14) It means that the interaction between people will be interrupted in real life. (S15) Not including the range of evils to your health such as influence on eyesight, memory and even life span. (S16) And the most importance, your privation is being lost little by little when social network is developing day by day. (S17) Watch out your attitude and action when posting anything on Internet. (S18) What will be happening when your bosses, teachers or parents read them?

(Pa 4) Last, it is right to say about the benefits of using social network, however, it contains much bad effects more than you can see. (S20) To limit negative effects, we should be excellent users.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Social media has a lot of positive effects and it is used popularly. (S2) For instance, if Facebook were a country it would be the 3rd largest country and the same with Youtube, it is the 2nd largest country. (S3) There are two biggest advantages which can be explained why.

(Pa 2)

(S4) I use Facebook - a specific social media - represent for example. (S5) Firstly, about communication it is easier to get connected. (S6) Everything you have to do that you download Facebook application to your service and then log in your account you can get more friends by press “add friend” button. (S7) After that you can chat with them for hours in spite of far distance. (S8) In addition, Facebook is convenient and free. Facebook was designed in simple themes for users both young and old people. (S9) It is very clear for everyone to understand its features such as: newfeed, add friend, livestream, notification and personal account. (S10) Besides, we use Facebook for free, we just need a smart phone and an Internet access to use Facebook.

(Pa 3)

(S11) Secondly, Facebook is a great tool for shop owners make their business and for customers buy items conveniently. (S12) Nowadays shopping online is growing rapidly therefore shop owners can wide advertising range free, items can be well-known. (S13) Customers can enquire items they want to buy, they can know more information about items through feedbacks. (S14) Moreover, variety of items is also quite favourable, customers do not have to go out, waste time even they have lots of discounts and just buy items by make a payment through credit card. (S15) It is an excellent feature that social media bring to us.

(Pa 4)

(S16) But on the other hands, we will waste our time if we impose social media too much. (S17) For example, we do not know how to manage time how to be suitable. (S18) We always talk with friends that we should complete homework in day but what did we do? (S19) We only focus on Facebook, Facebook and Facebook and then when ours eyes are too tired because of getting in touch with smart phone and laptop, we sleep deeply. (S20) Furthermore, seldom communicate with strangers we just chat with them because of our shame so we lose the confidence gradually. (S21) Step by step, we will lose real friends outside instead of getting more friends in virtual world. (S22) No one stand by our side, we are lonely.

(Pa 5)

(S23) In short, social media has both positive and negative effects but in order to remove bad consequences people should expand the good side of social media. (S24) Because we don't have any choice the result depends on how we do it.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impacts on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Some people say that the social networking sites have a positive effect on our community. (S2) I personally agree with this statement.

(Pa 2)

(S3) There are several reasons why the social network gains the great benefits to people. (S4) Beginning at getting through the stone age to step into the modern world is to try to keep up with people on Earth. (S5) The first advantage is to connect people in the world. (S6) When people use the online powerful means or social network to propagate to people all round the world. (S7) For instance, they support poor children because they scatter a huge amount of information relating to which subjects they would like to show on a variety of main pages. (S8) The second one is to reduce the cost when saying each other. (S9) From the appearance of messenger or video calls, it has made the decrease of telephoning calls nowadays. (S10) The spending of a great sum of money is formed as a consequence. (S11) Moreover, running on your business is known as a key factor to lead to outshining of social media. (S12) Firstly, the maximum of using the advertisement and recruitment programmes is the way to bring to the limitless profits to the companies and corporations as they can post any requirements of their companies need to be met by the employees or interviewees. (S13) Secondly, using the Internet to implement the process of marketing from the company or corporation is the effective way to go down the rate of unemployment in any countries. (S14) Because the unemployed can find a good job suitable for them anywhere they have a chance and the employers can prepare quickly a new position of their company to the employees who have the qualified quality and ability.

(Pa 3)

(S15) In conclusion, the development of the social media has brought the significantly positive changes to the community because of the form of using the online mean.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impacts on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Nowadays, social network like Facebook, Twitter... is used by hundred and hundred people in the world. (S2) It is growing rapidly which affects us in different ways. (S3) Despite negative aspects, I believe that there is a benefit impact in social network nowadays.

(Pa 2)

(S4) First of all, the first advantage is social network helps people have good communication. (S5) We may stay in touch with our family and friends in Facebook, Twister... (S6) Social network helps people share our emotion, thinking, information, photos and so on along with our friends. (S7) Because of its, we can know what my friends doing and how they feel everyday. (S8) It provides a way to connect with people living far away by making friends. (S9) It can help us connect with new friends and reconnect with old friends.

(Pa 3)

(S10) Secondly, because of social network, companies may gain business. (S11) As we know, people use social network more and more. (S12) Therefore, the best way is advertised on social network to attract attention of customers. (S13) And social network which provides free advertise, can helps them to do it. (S14) We may see the large amount of promotion of companies on social network. (S15) Besides, social network also increases competitiveness among them. (S16) We can find lots of products of different companies by social network. (S17) So, companies need improve the quality of their products to sells more. (S18) It helps companies develop.

(Pa 4)

(S19) Furthermore, social network which is a huge knowledge, is useful. (S20) Todays, we can learn everywhere and whenever we want thanks to social network. (S21) We can find any interesting information on it quickly. (S22) It helps us spread and obtain information fast. (S23) It likes encyclopaedia online.

(Pa 5)

(S24) Some people said that social network makes us waste time. (S25) Especially, young people has trend which depends on social network such as Facebook, Instagram, twister,... (S26) However, I think we can awake and control it by ourselves.

(Pa 6)

(S27) Although it has some negatives effect, social network may bring more positive in our life style. (S28) Using social network is the useful way to make our life better.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)
(S1) To date, the social network become popular in our life. (S2) Some people believe that the social network has positive effects on our society. (S3) Personally, I partly agree with this idea.

(Pa 2)
(S4) In the first place, social networking sites allow people to communicate and remain in contact with friends as well as make friends. (S5) For example, people can chat with their friends even find old friend whom they have not seen for a long time on Facebook. (S6) Nowadays each person maybe has at least one account on social network not only on Facebook but also on Email, Yahoo, Instagram, etc. (S7) Hence, people are able to seek friends or relatives easily.

(Pa 3)
(S8) In addition, we are able to update news quickly thanks to social networking sites. (S9) Now it is easy for people to access. (S10) To date, social network is becoming mobile and can be accessed by a cell phone. (S11) People can use mobile phones to update their status, post comments, upload photos, etc. (S12) The top sites that are being visited using mobile phones are Facebook, Instagram, Twister.

(Pa 4)
(S13) Besides, social networking sites also have negative effects on our health. (S14) The number of people using cell phone is increasing, so the problem with mobile phones have been found such as brain, eyes, body, etc. (S15) A survey claimed that cell phones can cause cancer from the electromagnetic radiation which comes out of cell phones.

(Pa 5)
(S16) In a nutshell, what also have 2 sides: advantages and disadvantages, and social network, too. (S17) People should use these sites to make the best use of advantages such as communication, accessing news and avoid health issues.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Nobody can deny that, today people often spend much time on social media. (S2) Networking sites like Facebook, Zalo or Instagram are transforming the ways we interact, share and communicate. (S3) In my opinion, social media has made immense changes in our lives.

(Pa 2)

(S4) Firstly, immediate access to information. (S5) This morning, you stay at home and you can know everything that is going on our life with a phone or a computer connected to the network. (S6) And one of the things that attracted me to Twitter was the immediate access to other sources of information. (S7) I think that social network is really very helpful for expanding our knowledge.

(Pa 3)

(S8) On the other hand, Internet is very popular and everyone has an account. (S9) It allows them to share everything what is going on in their life in the most convenient way. (S10) Moreover, today there are many people are required to be in a different place or even work in other countries, so social media accounts enable people from all over the world to maintain relationships without letting distance become a barrier. (S11) We can contact anyone around the world, at any time, with just a few keystrokes and it is free.

(Pa 4)

(S12) Finally, social networks also have become a crucial part of many of businesses. (S13) We certainly no stranger to online business. (S14) Sites like Facebook and so on can be used for marketing and product or brand advertising. (S15) You just stay home, chose what you need, order and pay. (S16) Immediately there will be shipper ship it to your home.

(Pa 5)

(S17) To sum up, social networking is a huge part of society and has a positive effect on our society in many different way. I think that there are many reason to love social media.
Topic: It is said that social network has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Nowadays, social network, for instance Facebook is not only utilized widely in the world but it also has enormous affects on individual and our society. (S2) Personally, I assume that the disadvantages of Facebook outweigh the advantages.

(Pa 2)

(S3) To begin with, teenagers and adults are spending too much time logging in to such sites on social media. (S4) This leads to a phenomenon is most of them will become a addict easily. (S5) The average person has five social media accounts and spends around 1 hour and 40 minutes browsing these networks every day, accounting for 28 % of the total time spent on the internet. (S6) Instead of going out side to meet friends, they prefer chatting and sending instant message to friends.

(Pa 3)

(S7) Recently, many people have argued that social network plays a core role in mitigating communication gap with friends and families in remote areas by smart tools such as face time, update photos or video. (S8) This may be true; however, we have many way to interact with them including via smartphone. (S9) Furthermore, outdoor activities should be prioritized first instead of lying sofa and watching screen phone.

(Pa 4)

(S10) In addition, working on screen laptop or smartphone a long time will affect on our health. (S11) As you know, children have been approached electronic devices which can ruin their eyes. (S12) About 50 % of children has eye diseases such as: myopia, astigmatism, black eye and so on.

(Pa 5)

(S13) I believe that Facebook is amazing invention of human and has many benefits. (S14) Nevertheless, the majority of the people select using social media to get in touch with others which will increase the distance in their relationship.
TOPIC: it is said that social media has a positive impact on our society. Do you agree or disagree?

(Pa 1)

(S1) Today, the development of social network is unlimited. (S2) And there are a lot of opinions about the effect of it. (S3) It is said that social network has a positive impact on our society. (S4) Individually, I think it is true.

(Pa 2)

(S5) In present, almost people has a social network address such as: Facebook, twitter, Zalo and something like that. (S6) They bring various benefit for user especially about: contact with relative and make friends or enrich the knowledge. (S7) Firstly, social network helps people keep in touch with others by chatting, watching the photos or the videos about their friend although two people did not see for a long time. (S8) Besides, it is easy and convenient to make a new friend through social network, they maybe Vietnamese or foreigners. (S9) In addition, using social network also the good way to enrich the knowledge. (S10) If you want to find out any information, the social network google will help user with the fastest and cheapest ways instead of books, new papers and TV. (S11) User also can contact to others by sharing the information to increase the knowledge and confidence.

(Pa 3)

(S12) Still, some people accuse the social network of addiction. (S13) They said that they or their relatives depend on social network too much. (S14) They can not kick the online all day habit and do nothing else. However, in my opinion, we can control our behavior. (S15) People have to understand clearly about the shapes of social network and use it rightly.

(Pa 4)

(S16) In conclusion, the social network gives people number of benefit about friends and knowledge development. (S17) We should understand and have a right way when use this medium.