

Functions of Cohesion in Reading Text Comprehension

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Abstract: Cohesion is important to know the connection of meaning between words or sentences in a text. This study is purposed to know the cohesive devices used in the descriptive text within a 7th grade student's textbook and to know how the cohesion can build the understanding of the descriptive text in reading comprehension. This qualitative research used document analysis, literature review, observation and interviews to gather the data. The findings showed that the descriptive text has utilized grammatical and lexical cohesion to unify the words and sentences. Researchers only found reference, substitution, conjunction as grammatical cohesion, and reiteration as lexical cohesion. In addition, interviews with the apprentice teacher which aimed to find out the implementation of cohesion to teach descriptive text show that it was only explained to help students know the meaning of the text and comprehend it. To conclude, cohesive devices are crucial to be learnt and taught to know the link between the sentences, as well as understand the elements of grammatical and lexical cohesion.

Keywords: cohesion; descriptive text; reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Cohesive devices play an important role in understanding a reading text. It is very important to incorporate reading into writing to enhance students' understanding of coherence and cohesion [1]. Cohesion investigates the surrounding sentences in a text to get the interpretation. Differences in the use of cohesive devices by either native or non-native learners are imminent. Language users tend to use pronominal compared to the use of cohesive devices to display textuality between sentences. Furthermore, it may be affected by the lacking English proficiency of non-native learners, specifically the lack of knowledge on how to compose meaningful written material. Hence, they lack the capability in producing linguistically well-composed written material to make meaningful texts, which appropriately and accurately convey the information as coherently as possible. Moreover, they may have been taught by inexperienced teachers with inadequate discourse knowledge and experience in teaching cohesion and coherence [2].

On top of that, this study is purposed to examine the cohesive devices used in the descriptive text within a 7th grade student's textbook and to know how cohesion can build the understanding of the descriptive text in reading comprehension. To support this objective, the researchers carried out observation in class A1 of 7th semester students of the Discourse Analysis course at the University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. This class is chosen because they had studied cohesion and they did an apprentice program in the selected secondary school in Sidoarjo. The observation was made to measure their understanding of analyzing cohesive texts. At the same time, one researcher is the advisor of a student who teaches cohesion in the reading comprehension class.

Now the students' ability in understanding the descriptive text is not cohesive yet. Likewise, the problem of the lack of functioning of one very important aspect of learning English understands a coherent dis-

course. The discourse analysis concerns the analysis of the stretch of words in a text [3]. The analysis of the connection of every sentence and word in a text creates cohesion. In cohesion analysis, a text will be meaningful if all the sentences are mutually binding so that the meaning of the text can be understood properly by the reader. English education department students need to study cohesion in their learning material [4].

In contrast to a discourse, which mostly exists in a spoken, written, visual and audial form of the interactive nature of communication information, a text is in all certainty manifested in a non-interactive form of written communication information. A text may be linked into one discourse, which shows that any ideas within the text can be related to another in emphasizing the main idea, or in unifying several ideas to present a central concept that covers the entire discourse [3]. In an attempt to associate the ideas, most writers encounter several problems while writing, especially EFL learners who have not acquired all the required skills to transform their ideas into a coherent text yet. Writing itself is one of the most interactive and authentic ways of transferring ideas and thoughts to others, hence it is quite difficult for some [5], [6]. Learning to write takes a considerable amount of time in practice and sometimes formal or explicit instruction. Through writing, EFL learners may grow their cognitive capacity in knowledge and English proficiency, such as grammar and vocabulary [7].

In accord with the above-mentioned explanation, writing descriptively is one of the common lessons learnt by ESL/EFL learners. Identification and description are the two general structures embedded in every descriptive text. What these two hallmarks do is in essence provide the detailed characteristics for stuff, be it people, places, or things, by a writer as an effort to visualize the text [8], [9]. Additionally, this type of text also embodies grammatical features that include language features, vocabulary, and peculiar mechanics of descriptive text [10]. Consequently, a study which purposes to provide a suitable measure of the quality and effectiveness of a written text known as Cohesion Analysis has emerged [11].

Halliday & Hasan by far presented the most comprehensive work on the connection between cohesion and coherence of discourse to date. They claimed that within connections creation in every part of a text, as well as a unity establishment of meaning in a text, cohesive devices shape the text's structure into a discernible form and are responsible for its entire structure [12]. Thus, cohesion analysis looks for a connection between words in a part of the discourse, instead of observing a word by its meaning [13], [14]. Such a process involves an analysis of both lexical and grammatical elements.

Concerning grammatical cohesion, it is divided into three main categories, namely reference, substitution and ellipsis. Reference or co-reference in texts is obtained through the help of cohesive devices that cover pronouns, definite articles, demonstratives and comparatives. The interpretation of these items mostly depends on forward-referents (cataphora), or backwards-referents (anaphora) in a text. Referring expressions support the unity of a text, which saves writers from redundancies [13], [15]. Substitution emerges when a word, phrase, or clause in a text substitutes for another word, phrase or clause. As for ellipsis, it refers to words, phrases or clauses omission that has been mentioned prior, yet later implied by a reference back to the original statement instead of reiterated. Despite being assumed as an integral part of text cohesion, Halliday and Hasan regard conjunction as a separate item from the said devices. The devices mentioned prior connect parts of clauses to other parts of other clauses, while conjunction is responsible for connecting complete clauses. In the other words, linking adverbials purposes to state the speakers or writers' perception of the connection between two discourse units [16].

Whereas, lexical cohesion encompasses two categories, namely reiteration and collocation. Reiteration emerges when the same stuff, be it persons, places, or events, is referred to more than once, yet in different ways by using the same word repetition of these devices, the use of synonyms, and the use of the

superordinate or general word. On contrary, collocation refers to how related words emerge in a text, despite not inevitably referring to the same event as with reiteration. The words may refer to related events, people or simply ideas which are linked with a particular person or event. There are words that one can use to create collocation in a text, such as synonyms, antonyms, complementary, metonyms, or words that are causally related.

Yang and Sun who investigated the similarity and differences of the incorrect use of cohesive devices by 2nd-year and 4th-year undergraduates Chinese EFL learners within their argumentative writing discovered that the use of cohesive devices linked significantly positive with the writing quality, regardless of the EF proficiency levels. Even so, the amount of cohesive devices employed in composing a text does not influence the writing quality, so long as the text is intelligible [17]. The most crucial thing is the students' aptitude in employing the devices and producing a cohesive text [18]. In accord with the recent studies, which display the reference is dominantly employed by EFL learners to create cohesion in descriptive text, followed by conjunction, reiteration, substitution and ellipsis. Cohesion offered valid proof that contributed to writing readability [19]. Cohesion may be adopted into the assessment of compositions for advanced EFL learners.

Several cohesion researchers have limited the scope of the cohesive elements in argumentative writing. There have been limited studies concerned with the study of cohesion in descriptive writing. Therefore, this study intends to know the cohesive elements in descriptive text and how those are implemented in reading comprehension carried out by the apprentice teacher.

METHOD

The typical goal of qualitative research is looking for the reason for a certain topic through the analysis of the materials to gathering the information [20]. In this research, researchers used document analysis and literary research as an approach to gather data comprehensively. To strengthen the data, researchers conducted observations which can foster an in-depth understanding of the setting and the behaviour of the participants in that setting, as well as structured and unstructured interviews with the apprentice teacher. The data, then, were interpreted descriptively.

Data Collection

The primary source is an interesting descriptive text "I'm Proud of Indonesia" within the English student's textbook "When English Rings a Bell" for 7th graders. The data were collected through reading, selecting and classifying the cohesive devices in accord with the cohesion theories. Additionally, researcher did observation to know students' understanding of cohesion in class A1 of the 7th semester of the English Education Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. Moreover, the researchers conducted structured and unstructured interviews with a student who is currently an apprentice teacher and teaches about cohesion in a reading comprehension class, specifically to the 7th graders of SMP 1 Porong Sidoarjo. The interview questions include indicators of cohesive devices found in the reading comprehension text entitled "I'm proud of Indonesia"; what types of cohesion are explained to the students, and the elements of each cohesion's types. The list of questions has been validated by a discourse analysis expert.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by looking for some references of cohesion in learning reading comprehension. In the process of analysis and interpreting, the structure of certain words and sentences produces a coherent text

and enables its comprehension. After that, the recordings of the interviews with the interns were transcribed and written on the findings, which were then added to the data from the observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the analysis result of cohesive devices in the descriptive text. Researchers find that cohesion is commonly used to join sentences together grammatically and lexically, to make ideas more meaningful and understandable. There are two types of cohesion; grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Whereas lexical cohesion is related to the lexical choice in constructing sentences and connecting them, including reiteration and collocation.

The researchers have distinguished the mark between initial reference and its references. The initial reference is the word that will be pointed back is marked with the italic word(s), and its references are the bold ones. In grammatical cohesion, three types cannot be identified: ellipsis, causal substitution, and temporal relation. However, the researchers can only find reiteration in the lexical cohesion. The outcomes are explained in the following tables (Reference in Table 1; Substitution in Table 2; Conjunction in Table 3, and Reiteration in Table 4):

Table 1 The findings of Reference

Reference
a. Personal
(P1) <i>Indonesia</i> is a big country. It is between two <i>continents</i> , Asia and Australia, and between two <i>oceans</i> , the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. It is the largest archipelago in the world.
(P2) <i>Farmers</i> grow many kinds of vegetables and fruits. They also grow coconuts. <i>Indonesian people</i> eat a lot of <i>vegetables</i> like spinach, carrots, long beans, eggplants, cabbages, cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, garlic, chillies, kangkung and many others. We also grow many kinds of fruit. We call them local <i>fruits</i> , like guavas, bananas, rambutans, durians, mangosteens, soursops, papayas, pineapples, and <i>salak</i> . Some people call it a snake fruit. They are all very nice, sweet, and juicy. We eat them fresh.
(P7) We also make delicious juice of them . We also dry many kinds of fruit to make crackers. Indonesia is also rich in <i>spices</i> , like pepper, coriander, ginger, clove, cinnamon, turmeric, galanga, lemon grass, bay leaf, and so on. We use them to cook very spicy Indonesian foods. People also make nice healthy drinks from them . They are useful for our health.
b. Demonstrative
(P6) The land is very fertile.
c. Comparative
(P1) There are more than 17 thousand <i>islands</i> in Indonesia.

Drawing on the findings in Table 1, researchers just take several paragraphs to be explained in detail. In (P1), there are personal references and demonstrative references. Indonesia as an initial reference must be pointed back, again and again, using the pronoun [it] as a personal reference. And then, oceans that are referred to by using demonstrative reference [the]. [The] can also be used to show specific things such as the archipelago and world. While [there] refers to Indonesia, and [more] as a comparative reference shows the number of the islands is not only 17. In (P6) farmers are the initial reference and are linked back using a personal pronoun for a plural [they]. And then, in (P7), the personal references [we] refers to Indonesian people; [them] refers to kinds of fruit; whereas [it] refers to salak.

Table 2 The findings of Substitution

Substitution

- a. Nominal
(P3) We have a lot of *islands*. The big *ones* are Papua, Kalimantan, Sumatera, Sulawesi, and *Java*. Of the five islands, Java is the smallest, but it is the most populated *one*.
 - b. Verbal
(P4) When they *erupt* they **bring out** very hot lava from inside the earth.
-

In Table 2, we can see in Table 2 the word ‘islands’ are substituted by using nominal [ones], and ‘Java’ using [one]. The use of nominal substitutions must pay attention to the noun’s form, singular or plural. Whereas in (P4), the substitution of the verb ‘erupt’ is [bring out]. It is called verbal substitution.

Table 3 The findings of Conjunction

Conjunction

- a. Additive
(P3) The big ones are Papua, Kalimantan, Sumatera, Sulawesi, **and** Java.
(P4) Many of them are still active and can erupt at any time. We call them volcanoes, like Sinabung **and** Marapi in Sumatra, Merapi in Java, **and** Lokon in South Sulawesi.
(P5) It has two seasons, the rainy season, **and** the dry season.
 - b. Adversative
(P3) Of the five islands, Java is the smallest, **but** it is the most populated one.
 - c. Causal relation
(P5) The sun shines brightly every day, **so** it is mostly hot.
-

In Table 3, researchers just take the certain paragraphs that use additive, adversative, causal relation and temporal. In (P3), [but] is adversative conjunction that is used to show the opposite interpretation that Java as the smallest island can be the most populated too. The additive conjunction [and] in (P4) is to connect between two words as well as give additional information; whereas the temporal [when] shows the specific condition; when volcanoes erupt. In (P5), [so] is a causal relation that shows that the weather is hot because the sun shines brightly.

Table 4 The findings of Reiteration

Reiteration

- a. Repetition
(P1) **Indonesia** is a big country. There are more than 17 thousand islands in **Indonesia**.
 - b. Hyponymy
(P6) Indonesian people eat a lot of **vegetables** like *spinach, carrots, long beans, eggplants, cabbages, cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, garlic, chillies, kangkung* and many others.
 - c. Metonyms
(P6) They are all very *nice, sweet, and juicy*. We eat them **fresh**.
 - d. Antonyms
(P8) Many kinds of fish, **big and small**, live in the Indonesian seas.
-

In Table 4, the word [Indonesia] and [Indonesian] are mentioned repeatedly in (P1). It shows that the text tells about Indonesia and its belonging. These are called repetition. Secondly, in (P6), the word [vegetables] is known as hyponymy. It is a particular term that can be used to refer to the reality named of a more general term. Thirdly, in the next (P6), these words [nice, sweet, juicy] can be defined as metonyms, which are

referred to as the taste (of the local fruits). The last, in (P8), between these two words [big] and [small], are called gradable antonyms.

Additionally, the second outcome gained from the interviews with an apprentice teacher who teaches cohesion in reading comprehension class. To hold the interview flow as more of a conversation, here are seven structured questions, often interspersed with unstructured questions to follow up on the teacher's answers. In the Table 5 below are the questions and answers during interviews.

Table 5 Interviews with the apprentice teacher

Researcher	:	Did you explain the grammatical and lexical cohesion to the students?
Teacher	:	The elements in the text make it easier for students to understand the meaning because the students only need to see there is meaning in the text.
Researcher	:	Did you explain the meaning of reference in the reading text?
Teacher	:	I just explained the reference of the reading text; only some sentences, by asking and discussing with the students, which one is not understandable.
Researcher	:	Did you explain the substitution in the text to the students?
Teacher	:	I did not explain nominal, causal or verbal. I only explained it when one student asked about the meaning.
Researcher	:	Did you explain the conjunction in the text to the students?
Teacher	:	I did not explain conjunction because the students did not have any problem with meaning related to the connection of the sentences.
Researcher	:	What kind of reiteration is there in the text? For example repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and metonymy?
Teacher	:	I just explained the difficult words. It did not concern on specific kind of reiteration.
Researcher	:	What kind of collocation is there in the text?
Teacher	:	I did not explain about collocation, because there is no collocation in the reading text.
Researcher	:	Do you think the teacher should understand cohesion to teach reading comprehension?
Teacher	:	We must understand cohesion to understand the elements in the text to the smallest part of the words. When teaching reading comprehension it does not only convey the main idea of the paragraph but can dissect every word's meaning and the relationship between sentences.

Firstly, the researchers asked if she explained the grammatical and lexical cohesion, and she said she did not explain specifically about grammatical and lexical cohesion, only provided a glimpse of the cohesion elements to make it easier for them in understanding the meaning of the text. Secondly, the researchers asked if she explained the meaning of reference in reading the text, and she said she just explained a few sentences that used personal references, such as the word "them" referred to "mountains" while asking questions and discussing which parts could not be understood. Thirdly, researchers asked if she explained about the substitution and its elements to the students, and the answer is she did not explain the elements; nominal, causal or verbal substitution. She just explained when a student asked about the meaning of "ones" in the text. It is in line with the observation which had the same result; no question about ellipsis, because it could not be identified in the text.

Fourth, researchers asked if she explained the conjunction in the text to the students, and the answer is she did not explain conjunctions, because the students did not have any problem with the meaning of the sentence connectors. The observation also showed that there is no discussion about conjunction in reading the text. The fifth, the researchers asked if she found the kind of reiteration in the text, such as repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy or metonymy, and she said that she just explained the difficult words. It did not concern on specific kind of reiteration. When the researchers did observation, some of the students asked

about the meaning of “eggplant” and “garlic”. They did not discuss what reiteration is. Sixth, the researchers asked if she found the kind of collocation in the text, and the answer is she did not explain about collocation, because the collocation could not be found in the text. This showed that no discussion about collocation in the class. The last, researcher asked if she thought that the teacher should understand cohesion to teach reading comprehension, and the answer is the teacher must understand cohesion to understand the elements in the text as well as the smallest part of the words. This is caused by teaching reading comprehension do not only focus on finding the main idea of each paragraph but also on breaking down the meaning of each word and its relationship between sentences.

From the interview results, it can be concluded that the apprentice teacher has prior knowledge of the cohesion elements for reading the text. The reason why she did not explain all the elements, is because some elements could not be identified within the text. Therefore, she just discussed several difficult words to help them easier in reading comprehension.

Cohesive device analysis. Drawing on those findings, cohesive devices are used to build the meaning of understanding in reading comprehension. The analysis was carried out to clarify the students’ abilities in grammatical and lexical cohesion structures so that they can have a better understanding of the descriptive text. Even though the author of the descriptive text did use all cohesive elements, the text is arranged cohesively and coherently. As seen in text analysis, there is no ellipsis and collocation. The cohesive devices that are frequently used within the text are to adjust the proficiency level of the learners. For grammatical cohesion, the complete parts are the reference; there is personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference; and the conjunction, there is an additive, adversative, causal, and temporal relation. Whereas in lexical cohesion, there is reiteration, which consists of repetition, hyponym, antonym, and metonym. As a result, understanding the cohesion elements is crucial for the teacher before delivering the English materials to the students in reading comprehension class.

In line with Rohmawati’s research, she analyzes Chicken Soup for the Soul in the Classroom and the result showed that there are three types of cohesive devices which mostly occur. Meanwhile, there are a few occurrences of substitution and ellipsis. The reason for the problem is that the texts are in the form of written language [21]. The use of those kinds of cohesive devices indicates that the texts fulfil the requirements of becoming a reading material, such as recount text. From this result, the researchers assessed that the use of cohesive devices can also be very helpful for teaching descriptive text. Therefore, the text within textbooks must pay attention to the use of cohesion so that students can easily understand the unity of meaning. This is also emphasized in research that analyzed the cohesion and coherence of The Indonesian Textbooks for XI Grade Senior High School, and the results show that cohesive and coherent textbooks are appropriate to be used as instructional material [22].

The importance of teaching cohesion of descriptive text in reading comprehension class. From the perspective of the text’s system analysis, cohesion contributes to explaining how a text is written in a certain way and why a text can be interpreted depending on the coherence [23]. Cohesion is really important to negotiate to meaning between the reading text and the reader. The connection of the paragraph contains meaning grammatically and lexically, so the text coherence can be created. Crossley et al stated the links between the sentences both local and global cohesion affected the text quality [24]. This means that it is important for the teacher to understand the link between the sentences.

Here are a few empirical studies, whose outcomes showed the significance of cohesion in a text along with their influence on the evaluation of written production in EFL learners. The study aimed at examining how Business Studies Spanish-speaking students employ both cohesion and coherence to complete a written

task in the English language; Palmer found out that the use of varying cohesive devices indicates coherences in students' compositions [25]. The students instructed in textual coherence employed more pronouns as cohesive devices to avoid redundancy of the already-used terms, while students of the uninstructed group tend to resort to the use of lexical reiteration. To strengthen the result, Indriani has argued that students can see the interrelated meaning between sentences or paragraphs and the context through cohesion [26]. Tahsildar and Yusoff have also proven that teaching academic text cohesion devices can increase and gives a significant impact on language accuracy in written production [27]. Fu added that cohesion theory and cohesive devices have become benchmarks for improving scores on the College English Test (CET-4) in reading comprehension [28]. These studies show that cohesion and coherence are both needed for EFL when studying reading comprehension so that the text can be understood well by the students or the teacher.

CONCLUSION

In brief, the descriptive text within a 7th grade student's textbook employs grammatical and lexical cohesion. The elements of grammatical cohesion that can be found are reference, substitution and conjunction. Whereas lexical cohesion is only reiteration. These elements have contributed to forming the meaning of the descriptive text, so the teacher can easily explain the language features of descriptive text to teach reading comprehension. The teacher explained the elements of cohesion to emphasize the meaning of the reading text. As an English, it is a must to have a good understanding of cohesion to know the link between sentences and to elaborate on the coherence of the reading text.

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