

## Analyzing the Use of Cohesive Devices in the Writing of Sudanese Students at Sudan University of Science and Technology

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### Abstract:

*This study was intended to explore and classify the use of the cohesive devices in the writing of the Sudanese undergraduate students at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The number of candidates has amounted to 60 students at the College of Languages. All errors have been collected from the students' essays ranging from two to three paragraphs. Six chief divisions were at first adopted for the classification of errors, which were then narrowed down to subcategories to help facilitate their investigation. Errors relating to wrong use of contrastive devices such as however, but have formed the major part of their mistakes. Other most challenging areas have included: grammatical devices shown in articles, active and passive, morphology, verbs and adverbs. One of the most salient outcomes of the study is the implication it has come up with for classroom practitioners, syllabus designers and textbook writers.*

**Key words:** Cohesive Devices, Writing of Sudanese Students, Sudan University of Science and Technology

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF COHESION:

The notion of cohesion is the semantic relationships that exist within the text and which qualifies it as a text. It includes five

categories: Conjunctions, reference, lexical, ellipsis and substitution (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 4).

Accordingly, cohesion is the network of lexical and grammatical relation that organizes and creates a text. This relation is considered to be a surface relation which connect words or expressions that we see or hear.

In another attempt to explain the concept of cohesion Widdowson (1987: 26) stated,

"The notion of cohesion, then refers to the way sentences and parts of sentences combine so as to ensure that there is a prepositional development."

This definition explains that cohesion is a achieved by certain tools which we can refer to as cohesive devices. Moreover, Mathews etal (1990) defined cohesion as " the overt relation of one sentence to another through the use of reference devices and logical connectors".

According to them, student may, for instance, produce a composition in which all the sentences are grammatically correct, but which lack coherence. So that in a piece of writing the ideas should move in a smooth line through the ordering of ideas in the paragraph and linking the sentences with transitional devices.

In other words, cohesion is the connectivity on the surface or sentential level and coherence is the connectivity in terms of content and organization and on a broader level such as paragraph or discourse level. In(1998: 2).

On the other hand, there may be no use of cohesive ties in a text but it may be still coherent. It seems that cohesion is controversial concept in writing. There is a dispute on the role cohesion plays in textual coherence.

Generally, there are two types of cohesion: sentence cohesion and discourse cohesion. Where the former category is concerned, Crystal (1997) points out that cohesion is a property of words that constitute a unit, within a sentence or

individually into which no other word can be inserted. This can be illustrated by the case of superlative form " the most intelligent " where no word is permitted between " the " and " most" or between "most" and "intelligent" without violating the well formedness of the phrase. Another kind of cohesion that takes place within the sentence is reported by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 7-8). They point out that in a sentence such as:

*\*If you happened to meet the admiral, don't tell him his ship's gone down.*

The cohesion effect given rise by the pronoun ' him' and ' his' attracts less notice within a sentence because of cohesive strength of grammatical structure. Thus since the sentence hangs together already, the cohesion is not needed in order to make it hangs together.

Many linguists have discussed the issue of cohesion, but their opinions on this linguistic phenomenon vary. Some (such as Crystal 1987: 119) argue that the cohesion is achieved between its meaning and its superior forms, and to call a series of sentences a text means to assert that the sentences show a certain kind of mutual dependence. Others (such as Leech et al. 2001: 82) refer to cohesion as a way of combining ideas into arrays using clauses and phrases in order to form the text.

## **2. TYPES OF COHESION**

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:29), cohesion is classified into two broad types: grammatical and lexical. While the grammatical type is realized by various grammatical devices used to make relations among sentences more explicit, the lexical one is established through the structure of vocabulary; by relating words in terms of their meaning. Both types of cohesion and their divisions are presented in table 1, based on (Halliday & Hasan 1976 in Hussein 2014: 17). Since

the main focus of the current study is on examining the use of grammatical cohesive devices by Sudanese university learners of English as a foreign language, an elaborate explanation of grammatical cohesion only will be presented.

Cohesion			
Grammatical			Lexical
Reference	Exophoric (situational)		Reiteration
	Endophoric(textual)		
	Anaphoric(to preceding text)	Cataphoric(to following text)	
Substitution			
Ellipsis			
conjunction			

**Table 1: Types of cohesion based on Halliday and Hasan (1976). Taken from (Hussein 2014: 17).**

## 2.1 Grammatical cohesion:

Assuming that any sentence in a text is grammatically structured, researchers presuppose that all individual sentences in a text are linked together in a way which contributes to the construction of the whole text. Thus, denoting the linguistic structure established in a text as whole, grammatical cohesion can be achieved by using GCDs to fix pieces of text together in a particular way, so that the reader can perceive the items referred to, replaced or omitted (Harmer 2006). Table 2 illustrates these GCDs according to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 31), who classify them into four categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. These categories have a theoretical basis which provides researchers with practical means to describe and analyze texts in terms of grammatical cohesion.

Grammatical Cohesion				
Reference		Substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction
Existential	Possessive	Nominal	Nominal	Additive
I / me, you, we/us, he / him, she / her, it, they / them, one	My / mine Your / yours, our / ours, his, her / hers, its, their / theirs, one's	One / ones, same		And, and also, nor, or, or else, furthermore, by the way, in other words, likewise, for example, on the other hand and thus.
Demonstratives	Verbal	Verbal	Adversative	
This / that, these / those, here / there and definite article: the	Do		Yet, though, only, but, however, at last, in fact, rather, on the contrary, I mean and in any case	
	Clausal	Clausal	Clausal	
	So, not		So, then, therefore, because, otherwise, apart from this.	
Comparatives			Temporal	
Some, identical, similar(ly), such, different, other, else More, so many, better			Then, next, before that, first ... then, first, formerly ...finally, at once, soon, to sum up, in conclusion	

**Table 2: Types of Grammatical cohesion based on Halliday and Hasan (1976).(Adapted from Tsareva 2010: 13).**

## 2.2 Reference

Reference is one of the options used to create surface links between sentences. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 37), the features of reference cannot be semantically interpreted without checking some other features in the text. Similarly, Nunan(1993) confirms that referential cohesion plays a significant role in constructing cohesive ties between the elements which can be difficult, or even impossible to interpret if a single sentence is isolated from context. While pronominalisation is the most common referring device, there are other linguistic elements used to fulfill the same function, such as demonstratives and comparatives.

As illustrated in table 2, reference can serve exophoric and endophoric functions. Regarding the first one, the reader is required to look out of the text so as to interpret the referent. In other words, through exophoric reference, the reader is directed out of the text towards an assumed world shared between him/her and the writer ( McCarthy 1991: 35) in order to retrieve the meaning of the sentences (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 33). An example of exophoric reference presented by Flower dew( 2013: 34), is " ... that picture is beautiful" in which that may refer to a picture hanging on the wall. The picture in this example is part of the context of situation, even if it does not appear in the text anywhere else. Although it interacts with the cohesion system and contributes to text coherence ( Flower dew 2013), exophoric reference is not incorporated as a component of cohesion since it does not connect two elements together in a text ( Halliday and Hasan 1976).

Pertaining to endophoric reference, it exists when readers refer to elements within the text itself to recognize it (Brown and Yule 1983). It is categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976:33) into two types: anaphoric and cataphoric. In the first type, readers review previous sentences to discover the referent, such as in the example: " look at the sun. It is going down quickly " ( Brown and Yule 1983: 193), where" it" indicates the previously mentioned noun; the sun. In contrast, readers in the second type examine the following sentences to realize the referent, as in the example: " it's going down quickly, the sun" (Brown and Yule 1983: 193), where " it" refers to the subsequently - mentioned noun; the sun.

As illustrated in Table 2, referential cohesion is classified by Halliday and Hasan (1976:37) into three sub-categories: personal, demonstrative and comparative. They enable writers to make several references to people and things within a text. Employed to identify people, objects or other things that are mentioned somewhere in the text. Personal

reference items include: personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns. In the example: "*wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish*" (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 2), 'them' expresses an anaphoric reference which creates grammatical cohesion between the two sentences and can be interpreted only when readers refer back to the previous text.

Classified as the second type of reference, "demonstrative" is regarded as "...a form of verbal pointing ". It is expressed through determiners and adverbs and it is realized by means of location (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 57); i.e. nearness in time, place, occurrence or relation. In the text: "*I like the lions, and I like the polar bears. These are my favorites*" (ibid), these is a demonstrative reference element acting as a grammatical cohesive device, i.e. linking the two sentences and expressing proximity to the speaker by referring to the animals mentioned in the first sentence. As for the definite article " the", which is included in the class of demonstrative reference, it cannot specify anything on its own because it has no content. Though it does not contain information in itself; as it depends on something else in the text, "the" signals definiteness by creating a cohesive link between the sentence it occurs in and the link it refers to (Halliday and Hasan 1976:57).

Regarding comparative, the third type of referential cohesion, Nunan (1993) elucidates that, it is expressed by using adverbs and adjectives in order to compare and contrast items within a text. Including examples, Table 3 shows that comparative reference is categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976:76) into two sub- categories: general and particular. While the general subcategory expresses resemblance between things with regard to identity, similarity or difference. The particular one demonstrates comparability between things in terms of quantity or quality.

Comparative Reference			
General		Particular	
Identity	We have received exactly the <u>same</u> report as was submitted two months ago	Quantity / numerative	There twice <u>as many</u> people there <u>as</u> last time.
Similarity	The candidates gave three <u>similar</u> answers	Quality/ epithet	There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy
Difference	A: would you like these <u>seats</u> ? B: NO, I'd like <u>the other seats</u>		

**Table 3: Types of comparative reference based on Halliday and Hasan (1976:76).**

### 2.3 Ellipsis:

Cohesive relation of ellipsis is a relation within the text and in almost every case, what is left unsaid is present in the text. In other words, if something is ellipsis, then there is a presupposition in a sentence that something must be understood or reconstructed.

In spoken and written English, ellipsis and substitution are used as linguistic mechanisms which help specific linguistic structures to be expressed more economically, at the same time maintaining their clarity and comprehensiveness. These mechanisms include mainly those linguistic structures that enable the avoidance of repetition, either by choosing alternative (usually shorter) words, phrases or by complete omission of words, phrases or clauses. These two cohesive relations will be defined and their overlapping will be limited here, since they are closely related (Vera M. 2010: 407).

The relation between substitution and ellipsis is very close because it is merely that ellipsis is "substitution" by zero. What is essential in ellipsis is that some elements are omitted from the surface text, but they are still understood. Thus, omission of these elements can be recovered by referring to an



element in the preceding text. (Harmer 2004: 24) defines it: "(...) words are deliberately left out of a sentence when the meaning is still clear". On considering the following example: "*penny was introduced to a famous author, but even before, she had recognized him*" It appeared that the structure of the second clause indicates that there is something left out "introduced to a famous author", the omission of this feature kept the meaning still clear and there is no need of repetition. Carter et al (2000: 182), state that " ellipsis occurs in writing where usually functions textually to avoid repetition where structures would otherwise be redundant".

Starkey (2004) points out that on some occasions; ellipsis is used instead of substitution for the sake of conciseness.

**For example:**

*e.g.1- Everyone who (can) donate time to a charity should do so.*

*e.g.2- Everyone who can donate time to a charity should (0).*

In the first example, where substitution was used, the sentence was somehow wordy in comparison to the other sentence (e.g.2) which seems quite concise as Starkey explains.

**CONCLUSION:**

Grammatical cohesion is found to be a multitype concept. From a structural view, it is a number of cohesive devices governing the organization of the text in terms of the devices used from the sentence level to the discourse level. Grammatical cohesion is used to produce a comprehensive discourse concerning both the writer and the reader. In addition, any written discourse is supposed to use the necessary connectors as grammatical cohesion to have a cohesive discourse and to help the reader understand the text as much as possible.

What we have done up to know is that we have sought to present a systematic knowledge about cohesive devices. While doing this, we have stated how important cohesive devices are for an efficient communication. We have attempted to draw the attention of writers to the importance of using all of these devices.

As a matter of fact, we always use these devices both in speaking and writing. Therefore, what must be done is to supply the readers with a clear and satisfactory understanding of those devices to understand written texts better.

In short, we can say that it is the writer's job to be sure that he conveys both the signification and value of every utterance in the text, and he needs to be actively aware of his responsibility for the meaning he conveys within and out of the text.

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