SUCCESSFUL USE OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN STUDENTS' ESSAYS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN UZBEKISTAN

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Introduction

Cohesion defined as "the way certain words or grammatical features of a sentence can connect that sentence to its predecessors and successors in a text" is a cornerstone in effective communication (Hoey, 1991, p.3). A cohesive text not only enhances readability but also reflects the writer's proficiency in organizing and connecting thoughts. This, in turn, can be a significant marker of the writer's overall skill in language use, impacting how their message is received and understood. Hence, examining cohesion offers valuable insights into the quality and clarity of L2 writing (Stoddard, 1991). In this paper, I will aim to analyze the successful use of cohesive elements in a 304-word essay which was written by a fourth-year student highlighting areas of strength.

Literature Review

Cohesion, as introduced by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in their seminal text *Cohesion in English*, refers to the linguistic mechanisms that link sentences and clauses within a text, fostering unity and clarity in meaning. They categorized cohesion into two primary types: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is further divided into reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, while lexical cohesion is subdivided into reiteration and collocation. In contrast to Halliday and Hasan's foundational framework, Hoey (1991) expanded on the concept, proposing more nuanced classifications of lexical cohesion. Thus, while this review discusses grammatical cohesion based on Halliday and Hasan's model, lexical cohesion will be examined using Hoey's more detailed approach.

R*eference* serves as a cohesive device that establishes semantic relationships between linguistic elements in a text. It is categorized into exophoric reference, which links to elements outside the text (contextual), and endophoric reference, which pertains to elements within the text. Endophoric reference is further subdivided into anaphoric reference, where a term refers back to a previously mentioned item, and cataphoric reference, where a term anticipates an element yet to be introduced. For example, in the sentence "When Maria arrived, she was excited," *she* is an anaphoric reference to *Maria*. On the other hand, in "Although he seems calm, John is actually nervous," *he* is cataphoric, referring forward to *John*. Halliday and Hasan (1976) identified three key forms of endophoric reference: personal pronouns (e.g., we, them), demonstratives (e.g., these, those), and comparatives (e.g., more, different).

***Substitution*,** as explained by Halliday and Hasan (1976), is a cohesive strategy in which one linguistic element replaces another to avoid redundancy. It differs from simple repetition or synonymy, relying on pro-forms to replace specific words or phrases. Substitution is classified into three types: nominal (e.g., replacing a noun with *one* or *the same*), verbal (e.g., substituting a verb phrase with *do* or *did*), and clausal (e.g., replacing a clause with *so* or *not*). For instance, in the sentence "I prefer this chair, but you might like the other one," *one* substitutes for *chair*.

***Ellipsis*, by contrast, involves omitting elements that are implied by context, streamlining the text. Three forms of ellipsis are identified: nominal (e.g., "She has several dresses, but I don't like any"), verbal (e.g., "He studies math, and she does too," where *studies math* is omitted), and clausal (e.g., "If you're going, I'll join," where *going* is understood).

Conjunctions provide explicit signals that connect ideas within a text, guiding the reader through its logical structure. Unlike substitution or ellipsis, conjunctions do not replace or omit elements but instead indicate relationships between sentences or clauses. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify conjunctions into four main types: additive (e.g., moreover, besides), adversative (e.g., yet,

nevertheless), causal (e.g., thus, consequently), and temporal (e.g., meanwhile, afterwards). For example, the sentence "She was tired; nevertheless, she finished her work" illustrates adversative conjunction. Paltridge (2006) builds on this framework, offering refinements and adding distinctions such as comparative and consequential conjunctions.

Lexical cohesion arises from the selection of vocabulary that creates connections within a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define two principal forms: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration includes repetition (e.g., "The mountains were serene. The serene view was breathtaking," where *serene* is repeated), synonymy (e.g., *difficult* and *arduous*), and superordinate use (e.g., *vehicles* as a general term for *cars* and *bicycles*). Hoey (1991) refines this concept by categorizing reiteration into specific types such as antonymy (e.g., *dark* vs. *bright*), hyponymy (e.g., *rose* as a type of *flower*), and meronymy (e.g., *handle* as part of *door*).

Collocation refers to the habitual pairing of words that frequently occur together, contributing to cohesion. For example, phrases like *heavy rain* or *fast food* demonstrate collocation. Although Halliday and Hasan's definition of collocation has been critiqued for its ambiguity (Tanskanen, 2006), it remains a foundational concept in analyzing scientific texts.

Methodology

Having defined cohesive ties in the above paragraphs, this paper now endeavors to analyze the essay in terms of the writer's successful applications of cohesive devices. To scrutinize grammatical cohesion, we will apply the framework established by Halliday and Hasan (1976). For lexical cohesion, our analysis will be guided by Hoey's (1991) categorization. It is important to note that due to space constraints, not all examples of cohesive ties in the essay can be discussed within this paper. The student was majoring Economics in a public university in Uzbekistan and was 23 years old when he wrote this essay. He was learning English in a private language learning center and preparing for an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam. He was asked to write a

250 to 350-word formal essay on the given topic by his English teacher according to provided criteria with the topic. The essay writing task was given as a home task and the student was allowed to spend a week to write it at home. Before analyzing this essay, the student was informed and the consent has been granted from the student. By integrating the frameworks proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), alongside Hoey (1991), the analysis will scrutinize how effectively the student employs cohesive devices identifying successful implementations and potential gaps in their usage of cohesive ties.

Results and Discussions

Despite the student's challenges with cohesion identified earlier, it is important to acknowledge instances where the student effectively utilizes cohesive devices in his writing. These instances contribute significantly to the essay's comprehensibility and fluidity. In the following paragraphs, we will explore examples of successful application of both grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. These examples not only illustrate the student's strengths in certain areas of writing but also highlight the nuanced nature of cohesion in text construction.

Grammatical cohesive devices

It should be noted that the writer has employed a range of references in the essay well. The personal pronoun "it' in line 2 is a good anaphoric reference to "studying history" while "they" refers to "children" and "pupils". The pronoun "another" is also used properly to refer back to "reason".

In terms of the use of substitution and ellipsis, the writer has selectively employed them, as evidenced in this section. The use of these cohesive devices appears to be moderately effective, potentially reflecting an effort to showcase a variety of grammar and vocabulary. It is noteworthy that these instances of substitution and ellipsis are free from significant errors. This suggests a level of proficiency in the writer's ability to utilize these devices, enhancing the essay's overall cohesion and demonstrating a grasp of complex linguistic structures.

Arguably, the most successful utilization of cohesive devices in the essay is evident in the use of conjunctions. While we previously noted certain issues with contrastive conjunctions, the writer demonstrates a commendable variety in employing other forms of conjunctions. This includes causal conjunctions like "thus", "as a result", and "as a consequence" respectively. Additionally, the writer skillfully incorporates additive conjunctions such as "for instance" and "to take an example", which are particularly apt for an academic context. This proficiency may be attributed to the writer's awareness of the assessment criteria, which emphasize grammar range and lexical resources. It also suggests that the writer had sufficient time to prepare and integrate these elements thoughtfully into their essay, thereby enhancing its cohesion and academic context.

Lexical cohesive devices

The writer used a good range of lexical cohesive devices successfully throughout the essay. It shows the entire range of examples which include repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy. Examples of repetitions are *history, school, children, local, historical, learn, measures, reason*. As we discussed above there are many examples of repetition, not all of which are problematic. Examples of synonymy are *children and pupils, learn and study, measures and solutions, dull and tedious* while examples for antonymy are *thrilling and tedious, dull and interesting*. There is also a case of hyponymy which the writer uses the word "subject" for the word "history". Meronymy is the only type of cohesive ties which is not present in the student's essay regarding the framework of analysis applied in this paper.

The final aspect of this analysis should be made on collocation. It appears that the writer made a conscious effort to range his vocabulary by using collocations related to the topic at hand. We could see the use of collocations such as *school curricula, learn history, school children, solutions taken, teach history, visit historical sites, school pupils, professional skills* and others in the essay. Such uses of lexical cohesive devices as collocation, in turn, can be a significant marker

of the writer's overall skill in language use, impacting how their message is received and understood (Stoddard, 1991).

Conclusion

Upon initial examination, the student's essay might seem to contain many cohesion errors. However, a more thorough examination reveals that the framework used effectively highlights the student's successful attempts at employing cohesive devices to construct a coherent and meaningful piece, with a wide array of these devices being utilized. The essay also aptly demonstrates that an abundance of cohesive devices does not inherently equate to high quality, especially considering the overuse of repetition and the ineffective application of conjunctions. This observation, however, does not imply that cohesion analysis is the sole indicator of the essay's merit. At the same time, the analysis distinctly points out that inadequate utilization of cohesion can disrupt the text's natural flow and result in ambiguous interpretation. Therefore, it is crucial for second language (L2) learners to cultivate an understanding of cohesive ties to enhance their writing skills.

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