

RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF GRAMMATICAL COHESION IN WRITTEN DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the extent of awareness of Junior High School students on grammatical cohesion in written discourse. The study used the descriptive correlational research design that specifically described the extent of awareness of students in recognizing and using grammatical cohesive devices and investigated the relationship between the extent of awareness of students to recognize grammatical cohesive devices and to use them correctly in their written discourse. Four selected paragraphs were used for the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices while four topics were provided for the use of grammatical cohesive devices in their written discourse. The students were asked to use the different types of grammatical devices in their written discourse. Frequency counts, mean, and Pearson Product Moment of Correlation were used in analyzing the data gathered. Results show that on the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices, the students had a great extent of awareness for conjunction. Students displayed a moderate extent of awareness for reference and substitution. Ellipsis was recognized at a little extent. On the use of grammatical cohesive devices, it is noticed that the most used grammatical cohesive devices were conjunction and reference. On the contrary, there is a little evidence on the use of substitution and ellipsis in the students' written discourse. In general, the students have a moderate extent of awareness in both the recognition and use of grammatical cohesive devices. Furthermore, results showed that among the four grammatical cohesive devices only the recognition of substitution is significantly related to its use in written discourse. Based on the foregoing findings, it seems obvious that the students are not familiar with all types of cohesive devices to the same degree, so they only recognize and utilize those that they are familiar with because they find them easy to recognize and use.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. It has come to be seen as a process of exploration and an opportunity for learners to develop confidence in using the language. It gives the learners the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings freely. Discourse unity, according to Tanskanen (2006) can only be established via the use of cohesive devices that contribute to text cohesion. However, cohesion needs to be distinguished from coherence, which is concerned with the overall interpretation of a text as a unified piece of discourse, not just the formal links (Flowerdew, 2013). As many linguists have argued (for example, Brown and Yule, 1983) it is possible to have coherence without cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976) describe cohesion as follows: Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it.

When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into the text. Writing needs to have a good style. Cohesion and coherence are essential for aiding readability and idea communication. Coherence is about the unity of ideas and cohesion is the unity of structural elements. One way to do this is through the use of cohesive devices. The use of cohesive devices is the most useful way to produce meaningful text. According to Vali and Kiampara (2010) cohesive devices are those tools which contribute to provide links between parts without any difficulties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cohesion: Cohesion is a semantic property of a text sticking together in some way; i.e., a cohesive text tends to link its sentences together semantically. This semantic aspect of cohesion has a relation with the reader who interprets the elements in a given co-text depending on the other element within the same co-text. Halliday and Hassan assert that: "Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively

decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated in the text." In fact, the presupposition is an important aspect in cohesion because it extracts the unrelated sentences by the connected one. Thus relations in meaning of any sentence depending on the surrounding elements. In other words "cohesion refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking something with what has gone before. Since this linking is achieved through relations in meaning". (Halliday and Hassan 1976:10). Cohesion is a significant element in good paragraph writing. Baker (1992) has defined cohesion "as a set-off connection between lexical, grammatical and other relation which join various parts of text to each other". Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide precise information about cohesion which they point that for this term, it refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking sometimes with what has come before and they add that cohesion is a relation in the system where the writer opts for sets of possibilities to make a text hang together. Connor (1984) defined cohesion "as the use of explicit cohesive devices that signal relations among sentences and parts of text. This means, the appropriate use of cohesive devices enables the reader and listener to capture the connectedness between what precedes and what follows" as cited in Abdul Rahman (2013).

Cohesive Devices

Cohesive devices are essential mechanisms to improve writing. They are considered the formal links that hold the text together; they are used to connect sentences within a clear and logical manner to create strong communication. Hedge (2005) defined cohesive devices "as the means by which parts of the text are linked as logically related sequences; they signal the relationship between ideas in such a way that the writer's intentions are made clear". Harmer (2004) states that "cohesive devices help to bind elements of a text together, so that we know what is being referred to and how the phrase and sentences relate to each other". Cohesive devices help the writing to flow better and show how information in one sentence or paragraph relates to the previous one. Like all the components of the semantic system, cohesion is realized through grammar and vocabulary (Tanskanen⁴, 2006). Cohesion can therefore be divided into grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, while lexical cohesion is divided into reiteration (repetition, synonymy etc.) and collocation (co-occurrence of lexical items).

Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion refers to the various grammatical devices that can be used to make relations among sentences more explicit. Cohesive devices are used to tie pieces of text together in a specific way. The aim is to help the reader understand the items referred to, the ones replaced and even the items omitted (Harmer 2004). Furthermore, the combination of sentences using cohesive devices which have semantic relation need a shared linguistic environment to interpret items. A sentence such as "he said so" is semantically correct as it is grammatically in that it means what it means though we do not know who is meant by "he" and what is meant by "so". To analyze a sentence, we have to seek in the

surrounding environment what "he" and "so" refer to many other examples on the various cohesive situations are going to be dealt within the forth coming sections covering types of cohesive devices.

Types of grammatical cohesive devices

Grammatical cohesion refers to the linguistic structure. The highest structural unit in the grammar is the sentence (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 28). The structure determines the order in which grammatical elements occur and the way they are related within a sentence. Cohesive relationships with other sentences create a certain linguistic environment, and the meaning of each sentence depends on it. Various linguistic means help to identify whether a text can function as a single meaningful unit or not. Grammatical cohesion is constructed by the grammatical structures each component tie each other. Halliday and Hassan (1976) provide the basic categories of grammatical cohesion pointing that this concept can be systematized by classifying it into a small number of distinct categories. They refer to them as: reference, substitution ellipsis and conjunction; these categories have a theoretical basis and specific types of grammatical cohesion, which has also provided a practical means for describing and analyzing texts.

Reference: Certain items of language in English have the property of reference, i.e. they do not have meaning themselves, but they refer to something else for their meaning. In English these reference items are personals, demonstratives and comparatives (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Substitution: Substitution is the replacement of one linguistic item by another. Differs from the reference substitution is more on the wording while the reference is more on the meaning. Substitution includes nominal, verbal and clausal. This substitution is aimed at avoiding the similar words to be repeated exactly at the next sentences or clauses.

Ellipsis: Ellipsis is the process in which one item within a text or discourse is omitted or replaced by nothing. It occurs when something that is structurally necessary is left unsaid, as it is has been understood already. Where there is ellipsis, there is a presupposition, in the structure that something is to be supplied or understood. An item is elliptical if its structure does not express all the features that have gone its make-up – all the meaningful choices that are embodied in it." (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Alike substitution there are also three types of ellipsis namely nominal, verbal and clausal ellipses.

Conjunction: Conjunction refers to a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before. Conjunctions usually structure a text/discourse in a precise way and bring the presented elements into a logical order. Brown and Yule (1983) mention four types of conjunctions namely, additive, adversative, causal and temporal. These cohesive devices are used to link different parts of a text together, creating a logical ordered piece, rather than a series of random and unconnected sentences. In other words, they create cohesion. They help the writing to flow better and show how information in one sentence or paragraph relates to the previous.

Cohesion in discourse writing: Every text has a structure. It is not just a random collection of sentences. The parts that make

up the text are related in a meaningful way to each other. In order to make these relationships in the text clear, it is necessary to show how the texts are related. Words like “it”, “this”, “there”, “that” etc. refer to other parts of the text. Halliday as cited in (Tsareva, 2010) introduced the main idea of cohesion saying that we need to establish relationships between sentences and clauses in order to construct discourse (1994: 309). The number of grammatical items in a sentence determines its length. However, these grammatical items or the number of sentences in a paragraph or the whole text are only a characteristic feature of discourse structure, but they do not determine whether a text is coherent or not. What helps to interpret cohesion in written discourse is the study of semantic resources used for linking across sentences in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected. What can be observed within sentences are structures which define the relations among the parts (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 10). In terms of cohesion, what can be observed across sentences in written discourse are not structures but links that have particular features that are to be interpreted on the part of a reader.

Empirical Studies: Cohesion has been widely studied by different researchers. Enkvist (1990) for example, considered the achievement of cohesion in writing as an indefinable, obstruct and controversial concept which is difficult to teach and difficult to learn. This claim has been supported by a number of studies focusing on cohesive devices that have been conducted in different countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Liu and Braine (2005) investigated cohesive features in argumentative writing produced by 96 1st-year Chinese undergraduate students. The study showed that students were incapable of using cohesive devices proficiently in their writing. In Saudi Arabia, Al-Jarf (2001) investigated the use of cohesive devices by 59 Arab EFL students from King Saud University. Substitution was deemed to be the most problematic form of cohesion for the students followed by reference and ellipsis. In Nigeria, Olateju (2006) examined the use of cohesive devices in the essays of 70 final-year students of Ooni Girls High School in Osun State. The researcher concluded that although the students had six years of intensive English instruction at the secondary-school level, they lacked the ability to properly use cohesive devices in their essays. In Iran, Parazaran & Motahari (2015) investigated grammatical cohesive devices in narrative texts and their translation.

The results showed that reference is the most dominant category utilized in the same text type and ellipsis and substitution are scarcely exploited, corresponding to Halliday and Hassan (1976) who assert that they occur more frequently in language. In Oman, Rahman (2013) examined the college-level Arabic L1 users’ command of cohesive devices by exploring the extent to which Omani student-teachers of English and native speakers differ in their use of cohesive devices in descriptive writing. The study indicated that while L1 English users’ writing displayed a balance between the use and frequency of various types of cohesive devices, the students overused certain types (repetition and reference) while neglecting to use the others, thereby often, rendering their written texts non cohesive. In the Philippines, Garces (2000) determined the level of ability of college freshmen in recognizing and using lexical and grammatical cohesion in paragraph writing and if there was a significant relationship between their ability to recognize and to use them correctly in

controlled paragraph. She concluded that grammatical cohesive devices were found more difficult to recognize and use because the personal pronouns require concordance in number and gender with the antecedent in which their level of awareness is low. In the case of conjunctions, the low performance can be due to the inability to determine ideas equal in rank that require the use of conjunction. The ability of the students to recognize cohesive devices is not correlated to their ability to use them in controlled paragraph writing.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aimed to determine the extent of awareness of Junior High School students on grammatical cohesion in written discourse. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent do Junior High School students recognize grammatical cohesive devices in written discourse along
 - Reference
 - Substitution
 - Ellipsis
 - Conjunction
2. To what extent do they use grammatical cohesive devices in their written discourse along
 - Reference
 - Substitution
 - Ellipsis
 - Conjunction
3. Is there a significant relationship between the students’ extent of awareness in recognizing and in using grammatical cohesive devices in their written discourse?

Conceptual Framework

Although researchers have identified several types of cohesion (Brown & Yule, 1983; Cook, 1989; McCarthy, 1991; Renkema, 1993), Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) cohesion framework will be adopted in this study due to the comprehensiveness of its well-developed taxonomy. A cohesive device, Halliday and Hasan (1976) noted, comprises two interrelated elements that cross a minimum one sentence boundary. While one element is presupposing, the other is presupposed. For instance, a pronoun is the presupposing element, while its referent represents the presupposed element. Halliday and Hasan (1976) stated that grammatical cohesion can be established by four properties which are the following:

Grammatical Cohesion			
Reference	Substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction
Personal	Nominal	Nominal	Additive
Demonstratives	Verbal	Verbal	Adversative
Comparatives	Clausal	Clausal	Causal
Definite article			Temporal

It is a common observation of both teachers and researchers that students often write paragraphs that are poor and illogical. The qualities necessary in writing effective paragraph namely unity, coherence and emphasis are not properly observed or used when students are asked to write paragraphs. Sometimes, their sentences relate to a single idea but are not logically arranged. They are not presented in a way that makes the

connection between them easy to see. Written sentences must be linked in a coherent chain if communication is to flow between the writer's mind and the reader's. Hence, in this study, it is felt that the students' awareness of cohesion particularly the recognition and use of grammatical cohesive devices plays an important role in improving the writing process and the writing skills of students especially the development of coherent paragraphs. If the problem in expressing an idea logically through the use of cohesive devices no longer bothers the students, then their main concern is on what to write. The study further viewed that the students' ability in recognizing and using grammatical cohesive devices correctly manifest that they can write better and coherent paragraphs.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the extent of awareness of Grade 10 Magnolia students of Sampaguita National High School in recognizing and using grammatical cohesive devices in written discourse.

Specifically, it aimed to determine the following:

1. Extent of awareness of the students in the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices;
2. Extent of awareness of the students in the use of grammatical cohesive devices in their written discourse; and,
3. If there is a significant relationship between the extent of awareness of students in recognizing and using grammatical cohesive devices correctly in their written discourse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research methods, techniques and procedures that were used in the study. It includes the respondents as well as the measuring instruments, which the researcher availed of in gathering the data. The administration and collection were likewise presented. The steps to be undertaken in the study were discussed briefly but substantially.

Research Design

The study made use of the descriptive-correlational method of research to measure the extent of awareness of students in the recognition and use of grammatical cohesive devices and to determine their correlation.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted among the Grade X Magnolia students of Sampaguita National High School at Sampaguita, Solana, Cagayan for the school year 2017-2018.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The respondents of the study were 41 students of Grade X Magnolia at Sampaguita National High School. Total enumeration sampling was used in the study.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study. One consisted of four paragraphs lifted from books and parallel studies containing grammatical cohesive devices and the other consisted of four topics for their written discourse. The first instrument was used to determine the extent of awareness of the students to recognize grammatical cohesive devices and the second determined their extent of awareness to use these cohesive devices in their written discourse. The first instrument has a total of 77 items and the second contained four topics for the respondents to write their discourse. The two instruments were validated to other Grade 10 students from the same school to determine the suitability of the paragraphs to the language experience of the students and the amount of time for test administration.

Data Collection and Analysis

A formal request for the final administration of the test was secured from the office of the Principal of Sampaguita National High School. Four selected paragraphs lifted from books and parallel studies were used as instruments for the test. These paragraphs were used for recognition of grammatical cohesive devices. The four paragraphs contained 77 items broken down as follows: 48 reference, 15 conjunctions, 11 substitution and 3 ellipsis. Four topics were provided for the use of grammatical cohesive devices in their written discourse. The students were asked to use at least 10 references, 10 conjunctions, 5 substitutions and 3 ellipses in their written discourse. The test was administered by the subject teacher without informing the respondents that the test will be used in a research study to put them in a normal setting. Before the actual writing activity, the subject teacher briefed the respondents on how to go about the activity. After the administration of the first instrument, free paragraph writing was administered the following day. The data gathered were consolidated and presented in a tabular form for discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter covers the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the data gathered from which conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

Table 1. Extent of awareness on the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices

Grammatical Cohesive Devices	Number of items	Mean	Extent of Awareness
Reference	48	30.10	moderate
Conjunction	15	13.07	great
Substitution	11	5.22	little
Ellipsis	3	1.10	little
Overall	77	49.49	moderate

Table 1 presents the extent of awareness of students on the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices. Among these devices, the students manifested a great extent of awareness for conjunction with a mean of 13.07, a moderate extent of awareness for reference with a mean of 30.10, and a little extent of awareness for ellipsis and substitution with a mean of 5.22 and 1.10 respectively. In general, the students have a moderate extent of awareness in the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices. The data above shows that students are able to recognize almost all the four types of

conjunctions namely additive, adversative, causal and temporal. This is due to the fact that 'conjunctions are often described as the most explicit and obvious cohesive devices in a text' (Christiansen, 2011:161) because, with this type of cohesion, the meaning relation is contained in the cohesive item itself and also students seem familiar with this type of grammatical cohesive device. Among the four types of reference, students recognize in a moderate extent personal references. The table further indicates that the students face difficulties in appropriately recognizing nominal and verbal substitution and ellipsis in written discourse. This difficulty may be attributed to their very limited background knowledge and little mastery of the concept. This has implication to the teaching of writing in the classroom as teachers are encouraged to enhance students' awareness. Heller (1995) and Hirvela (2004) posit that to enhance students' awareness of cohesion, it is essential to incorporate reading activities into writing classes. This enhances the students' awareness of the characteristics of good writing, including cohesion.

Table 2. Extent of awareness on the use of grammatical cohesive devices

Grammatical cohesive devices	Mean	Extent of Awareness
Reference	29.95	moderate
Conjunction	16.51	little
Substitution	.49	very little
Ellipsis	.02	very little
Overall	46.98	Little extent

Table 2 indicates the extent of awareness of students on the use of grammatical cohesive devices. The students showed a "moderate extent" of awareness with a mean of 29.95 on the use of reference and a "little extent" of awareness with a mean of 16.51 on the use of conjunction. In contrast, the students demonstrated a "very little" extent of awareness with a mean of .49 and .02 on the use of substitution and ellipsis in their written discourse. In general, the students have a little extent of awareness in the use of grammatical cohesive devices. It is evident in the data above that the students do not achieve a balance among the use of the various types of cohesive devices; that is, they overuse some types and ignore others. They tend to use reference more than the other types of grammatical cohesive devices. The data above follows the study of Parazaran & Motahari (2015) and Alarcon & Morales (2011) whose findings showed that reference is the most dominant category utilized in the same text type. This is also supported by the study of Bahaziq (2016) whose findings showed that the most used grammatical devices are reference and conjunction. In the present study, the students dominantly used the additive conjunction among the four types of conjunctions followed by adversative and causal. However, there is a little case of temporal conjunctions. Alike conjunction, reference among others was also prominently used in their written discourse. The students use many instances of personal references and a little of demonstrative references and the determiner *the*. On the other hand, it is obvious that students have scarcely used substitution and ellipsis as shown by the data above. This is in line with the findings of Azzouz (2009), Parazaran & Motahari (2015) and Bahaziq (2016). In their studies, they stated that students are not familiar with the use of ellipsis and there is no evidence of substitution concerning the use of other grammatical cohesive devices. Ellipsis and substitution are scarcely exploited by the respondents. This might refer to the learners' avoidance in

using such types. Students usually avoid using ellipsis and substitution because they might fear about their appropriateness. Moreover, very limited instance of ellipsis was found because according to Halliday and Hassan (1976), ellipses appear more in oral discourse than in written discourse.

Table 3. Relationship between the students' extent of awareness on the recognition and use of grammatical cohesive devices

Grammatical Cohesive Devices	Correlation Coefficient	Probability	Statistical Inference
Reference	0.020	0.899	Not significant
Conjunction	-0.095	0.556	Not significant
Substitution	-0.322	0.040	Significant at .05
Ellipsis	0.163	0.310	Not significant
Overall	-.218	0.171	Not significant

The study tested the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the students' extent of awareness in recognizing and using grammatical cohesive devices. As shown in Table 3, correlation analysis resulted to one grammatical cohesive device i.e. substitution with coefficient where probability is lower than 0.05; thus, the hypothesis is rejected. Recognition and use of substitution are negatively correlated with r-value being -0.322 ($p=0.040$). It means that the students who are good in identifying substitution are rarely using them or they do not necessarily use them in their written discourse. They rely on using words which they casually know and never attempt to use substitute for the word, phrase or clause. All other grammatical cohesive devices did not indicate significant relationship between the students' extent of awareness to recognize and use them in their written discourse. This is in agreement with a parallel study by Garces (2000). Results of her study showed that the ability of the students to recognize cohesive devices is not correlated to their ability to use them in controlled paragraph writing. They may be able to recognize or identify the lexical and grammatical cohesive devices but it does not mean that the students are also able to use them as well because the act of recognizing cohesive devices is far much simpler than using them. Application or use of cohesive devices is a more difficult task because it requires knowledge of syntactic rules to be able to use them accurately.

Conclusions

The results of the study indicated that on the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices, the students had a great extent of awareness for conjunction. Students displayed a moderate extent of awareness for reference and substitution. Ellipsis was recognized at a little extent. In general, the students have a moderate extent of awareness in the recognition of grammatical cohesive devices. On the use of grammatical cohesive devices, it is noticed that the most used grammatical cohesive devices were conjunction and reference. On the contrary, there was a little evidence on the use of substitution and ellipsis in the students' written discourse. Furthermore, results showed that among the four grammatical cohesive devices only the recognition of substitution is significantly related to its use in written discourse. Based on the foregoing findings, it seems obvious that the students are not familiar with all types of cohesive devices to the same degree, so they only recognize and utilize those that they are familiar with because they find them easy to identify and implement. It

could be concluded that they lack understanding about cohesion especially grammatical cohesion. Afrianto (2017) reported the same findings. She noted that the lacking understanding and awareness about cohesion especially on grammatical cohesion leads the students to use inappropriate cohesive devices. It then problematizes the semantic relation among ideas in the text. In addition, the insignificant relationship between the students' extent of awareness on the recognition and use of grammatical cohesive devices except for substitution is attributed to the fact that recognizing is simply finding while using demands structural analysis.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusion made, the following recommendations are advanced: teachers need to conduct more intensive discussion of coherence and cohesion in the class especially in the writing class, exposing students to a wide range of cohesive devices to avoid overemphasizing certain types and ignoring other types because over-reliance on one or two strategies results in redundancy and misunderstanding. Moreover, students should be motivated "to read like a writer" and respond to what they read to make them aware of ways they, too, can write. Further research needs to be carried out to examine the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching these grammatical cohesive devices.

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