

## THE REALIZATION OF COHESION IN READING TEXTS

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### Abstrak

Membaca adalah proses berfikir, karena aspek utamanya adalah memahami makna dari bacaan. Bagian paling penting dari makna adalah ide, konsep, pola pikiran, gambaran, dan perkataan. Makna tidak hanya muncul dari kumpulan kata tetapi dari tautan makna dari setiap kata didalam sebuah konteks di pikiran pembaca. Teks bacaan disebut pasif karena pembacalah yang harus aktif menemukan makna dari sebuah teks bacaan. Pembaca harus dapat memahami sebuah pesan didalam teks berdasarkan unsur-unsur semantiknya. Salah satunya adalah kohesi. Kohesi dapat digunakan untuk mengetahui apakah sebuah teks bacaan tersebut bermakna atau tidak. Sebuah teks bacaan dikatakan baik jika ditulis dengan kohesif sehingga terbentuk jalinan makna yang tidak lepas dari konteks teks tersebut. Kohesi dapat memudahkan siswa dalam memahami sebuah bacaan karena siswa dapat mengetahui jalinan makna bagaimana kalimat ataupun paragraph terhubung didalam sebuah konteks.

Key words: *cohesion, reading text*

### 1. Background

Second language learners usually find difficulties in comprehending a reading text. It is probably difficult for them in understanding the text well. The text will be understandable if it has good cohesion and coherence. The use of internationally-published book will help the students learn English naturally so that it is easier to understand. Moreover, some of the reading texts in the local textbook are difficult to understand. This happens not only to the students but also to the teachers. Although the teacher has already translated the reading passages, the students still cannot understand well and it is very time consuming. They are overwhelmed by the messages contained in the reading texts although they have translated them. Probably, this is because those reading texts contain some ambiguities and are hard to understand.

One contributing factor that helps students in understanding the reading texts is cohesion. It may be easier for the students to understand the reading texts which are written cohesively. Cohesion can reduce confusion in understanding a text because the students will know how sentences or paragraphs are related. This will help them understand the plot of the reading text and also the character of the story. The other factor that can contribute to readability of texts is coherence. Coherence means that a group of sentences relate to the context.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence can be defined as the knowledge that enables someone to use a language effectively and his ability to actually use this knowledge for communication. To Hymes (1972), such competence involves not only knowing the grammatical rules of a language but also what to say, to whom, in what circumstances, and how to say it; it means, the rules of grammar are useless without the rules of language use. Thus, the real objective of linguistic research should be the study of how language is performed in different contexts, with different people, on different topics, and for different purposes. Hymes included both rules of grammar and rules of use into it, which he generalized into four questions as the framework of communicative competence, as follows:

- (1) Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible.
- (2) Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible.
- (3) Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate.
- (4) Whether (and to what degree) something is done.

According to Widdowson (1978) and Savignon (1990), communicative competence can be based on the basis of communicative language teaching (CLT) implicitly or explicitly. Widdowson (1972:7) explains:

Communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from stretch as and when occasions pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and

being able to apply rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual standards.

In addition, Canale and Swain (1980:9) explain:

Communicative competence consists of four components, they are; grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is the knowledge of the language code (grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc), sociolinguistic competence is the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use (appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness, and style in a given situation), discourse competence is the ability to combine lingual structures into different types of cohesion texts. Strategic competence is the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur.

Based on the two quotations above, students should develop communicative competence in order to be able to read a reading passage well. This communicative competence here includes competencies on; grammatical rules, vocabulary, spelling and also pronunciations. Besides those communicative competencies above, there is another factor that makes students read reading passages well, that is, cohesion of texts. A cohesive text is the text that is tied closely by some components, such as pronouns, conjunctions, ellipses, and so on.

The componential model of Swain is then developed by Murcia et al; they develop the components into five, that are; linguistic competence, actional competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence. Firstly, linguistic competence is the knowledge of the basic elements of the language code (syntax, morphology, vocabulary, phonology, orthography). Historically, the most thoroughly discussed/analyzed component of this competence needs no further specification, though distinctions may not be as clear-cut as often assumed. Secondly, actional competence is the ability to understand and convey communicative intent by interpreting and performing language functions (complimenting, reporting, agreeing/disagreeing, predicting, suggesting,

etc.). There is no one-to-one relationship between linguistics forms and function. Thirdly, discourse competence is the ability to combine language structures into different types of unified spoken and written discourse (dialogue, political speech, poetry, academic paper, cookery recipe, etc). This happens as an interplay of two levels; microlevel of grammar and lexis which is called cohesion and macrolevel of communicative intent and sociocultural context which is called coherence. Although cohesion and coherence are interrelated, it occurs that (I) a cohesive text may appear to be non-coherent, or (II) that a coherent text has no cohesive ties. Fourthly, sociocultural competence is the mastery of the social rules of language use; that is the appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness, and style in a given social situation within a given culture. It has some variables such as social contextual, stylistic appropriateness, task, cultural, and non-verbal communicative.

The last but not least is strategic competence. It is the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enable us to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur. Moreover, it is the ability to express oneself in the face of difficulties or limited language proficiency. Competent language users employ different types of strategies in order to cope with real-time interaction, e.g. achievement/compensation, self monitoring or interactional or time-gaining strategies.

The following will discuss only the discourse competence and the role of cohesion in the text.

## **2.2. Discourse Competence**

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1995:10), discourse competence concerns the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text. Bachman (1996:13) states that discourse competence concerns the selection, sequencing and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken and written text, this is the bottom-up lexicogrammatical microlevel of communicative intent and sociocultural context to express attitude and passages and to create texts. In addition, there are

many sub-areas that contribute to discourse competence: cohesion, deixis, coherence, generic structure, and the conversational structure, the conversational structure inherent to the turn-taking system in conversation. Bachman suggests that a good text should be cohesive. The paragraphs in the text should tie together. They link one another closely by using discourse components. A text will be considered to be a unified text, if it is written by using the bottom-up lexico-grammatical microlevel interest the top-down signals of the macrolevel of communicative intent and sociocultural context to express attitude and passages.

The following are the suggested components of discourse competence, according to Murcia et.al. (1995:13)

- a. Cohesion includes reference (anaphora, cataphora), substitution/ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical chains, parallel structure.
- b. Deixis includes personal pronouns, spatial (here, there, before)
- c. Coherence:
  1. Organized expression and interpretation of content and purpose.
  2. The thematization and staging (theme and rheme development)
  3. Management of old and new information
  4. Prepositional structures and their organizational sequences.
  5. Temporal, spatial, cause-effect, condition-result, etc.
  6. Temporal continuity/shift (sequence of tenses)
- d. Genre/generic structure includes narrative, interview, service encounter, research report, sermon, etc.
- e. Conversational structure:
  1. How to perform opening and reopenings
  2. Topic establishment and change
  3. How to hold and relinquish the floor
  4. How to interrupt
  5. How to collaborate and backchannel
  6. How to perform preclosings and closings
  7. Adjacency pairs
  8. First and second pair parts

### **2.3. Cohesion**

The term cohesion is familiar in the study of language. It is part of the system of a language. The simplest definition of cohesion proposed by Halliday and Hasan is that “it refers to relation of meaning that exists within the text and that defines it as a text”. Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) state that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. That one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by resource 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 a text.

Moreover, cohesion is area of discourse competence that most closely associated with linguistic competence. Halliday and Hasan (1976:15) explain:

It deals with the bottom-up elements that help generate the texts, accounting for how pronouns, demonstratives, article and other markers signal textual co-reference in written and oral discourse. Cohesion also accounts for how conventions of substitution and ellipsis allow speakers/writers to indicate co-classification and to avoid unnecessary repetition, the use of conjunction (e. g. ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘however’) to make explicit links between propositions in discourse is another important cohesive morphology device. Lexical chains and lexical repetitions which relate to derivational, semantics, and content schemata, are a part of cohesion and also coherence. Finally, the conventions related to the use of parallel structure (also an aspect of both cohesion and coherence) make it easier for listeners/readers to process a piece of texts such as ‘I like swimming and hiking’. That is to process an unparalleled counterpart such as ‘I like swimming and to hike’.

From the quotation above, we can see that a text may be easier for the students to understand if it is written cohesively. A cohesive text is a text which consists of paragraphs that tie together. The paragraphs can be linked by cohesive ties such as, co-referentiality, co-classification, and co-extension.

Halliday and Hasan (1989:80-81) classify cohesion into two types. Firstly, Grammatical cohesive devices which consist of (a) Reference:

pronominal, demonstrative, definite article and comparative, (b) Substitution and ellipsis: nominal, verbal and clausal, and (c) Conjunction: adversative, additive, temporal and causal. Secondly, Lexical cohesive devices which consist of repetition, synonymy, antonymy, and meronymy.

## **2.4. Kinds of Cohesion**

### **2.4.1 Grammatical cohesion**

Halliday and Hasan (1989) explain that Grammatical cohesion consist of references, substitutions, ellipses, and conjunctions.

#### **a. Reference**

The term reference is traditionally used in semantics for the relationships, which holds between a word and what it points to in the real world (Baker 1992:181). According to Halliday and Hassan (1989:308-309), reference is the relation between an element of the text and something else by reference to which it is interpreted in the given instance. It is potentially cohesive relation because the thing that serves as the source of the interpretation may itself be an element of text. Halliday and Hasan (1989:82) classify reference into anaphoric and exophoric reference. Anaphoric reference is a reference which follows its linguistic reference. For example:

*My mom was going to pick me up, but knowing how she was always late, I realized I had some time to spare.*

The pronoun she in the paragraph above is anaphoric reference because it follows its linguistic reference of my mom.

Exophoric reference is that when the source for its interpretation lies outside the co-text and can only be found through an examination of the context. For example:

*When I was through with my doctor's appointment, I made my way down to the lobby.*

The message of the example is highly implicit, and none of the items the can be interpreted, except by reference to the immediate context of situation.

Gerot and Wignell (1994:82) explain that the reference refers to system that introduces and tracks the identity of participant through the text. Reference which is preceded by the object is called Anaphora. For example;

*Yet I longed to be able to share with my best friends something that would help them remember our friendships, even if it was just something little. (Anaphora)*

#### **b. Substitution**

Substitution is of a particular relation within the text. A substitution is a sort of counter which is used in place of the repetition of a particular item. For example:

*I took a seat in the lobby and smiled politely at three elderly people sitting near me. There were two women and one old man.*

Two women and one old man can be regarded as substitutes. It substitutes three elderly people.

#### **c. Ellipsis**

Halliday and Hasan (1989:74) say that ellipsis is a simple zero substitution. Ellipsis can be a familiar notion, that is, something left unsaid. There is no implication here that what is unsaid is not understood, on the contrary, “unsaid” implies but understood, where understood is used in the special sense of “going without saying”.

Halliday and Hasan (1989:75) say that ellipsis can be: nominal ellipsis, clausal ellipsis, and verbal ellipsis. For example:

*I eased them through both sets of doors and helped them to the elevator. (nominal ellipsis)*

*How many hours a day did you do a lesson? Said Alma.*

*“Four hours the first day”, said Ana, “Four the next, and so on”. (clausal ellipsis)*

*Would you like to hear another verse? I know twelve more. (verbal ellipsis)*



#### d. Conjunction

Conjunction looks at interconnections between processes: adding, comparing, sequencing, or explaining them. These are logical meanings that link figures in sequences. Gerot and Wignell (1995:170) explain that “conjunction is the semantic system whereby speakers relate clauses in the terms of temporal sequence, consequence, comparison and addition”. Temporal relations connect clauses depending on whether the actions they encode take place at the same time or one after the other. Consequential relations connect clauses as cause and effect. Comparative relations pick out contrasts and similarities between clauses. Additive relation simply adds or substitutes extra alternative clauses to a text.

Halliday and Hasan (1989:82) say that conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. For example:

*My backpack had nothing of value in it, just a wallet with fifty-nine cents in change, a small mirror, a comb, and some tissues. But then I remembered that my precious library book was also on the chair.*

#### 2.4.2 Lexical Cohesion

Gerot and Wignell (1989:177) say that lexical cohesion refers to relationship between and among words in a text. Here, they are concerned with content words and in the relationship among them; these can be either more or less permanent.

For example:

*I had been kind to a stranger, and in turn, a stranger had been kind to me.*

The word stranger is repeated in the second clause. It belongs to the lexical cohesion, repetition.

Halliday and Hasan (1985:80-81) define lexical cohesion as the cohesive function of the class of general noun. A general noun itself is a borderline case between a lexical item (member of an open set)

and a grammatical item (member of a closed system). The class of general noun is a small set of nouns having generalized reference within the major noun classes, such as “human noun”, “place noun”, and “fact noun”. They can be a repetition, synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy. The repetition of the same lexical unit creates a relation simply because a largely similar experiential meaning is encoded in each repeated occurrence of the lexical unit. In synonymy, the experiential meanings of the two lexical items are identical; this does not mean that there is a total overlaps of meanings, simply that so far as one kind of meaning goes, they ‘mean the same’. The standard literature in semantics, for example, mentions such pairs as ‘man’ and ‘male’, ‘thin’ and ‘skinny’, and ‘scream’ and ‘shout’ etc.

Antonymy can be described as the oppositeness of experiential meaning; the members of our co-extensional tie silver and golden are an example of this kind of relation. Hyponymy is a relation that holds between a general class and its sub-classes. The item referring to the general class is called super-ordinate; those referring to its sub-classes are known as its hyponyms. If we take flower as an example of super-ordinate then its hyponyms are rose, jasmine, orchid, etc. Meronymy is the term that refers to a part-whole relation as in the case of part of face, eyes, and nose, where eyes and nose are meronyms, naming parts of the subordinate face.

## **2.5. Reading Text**

In learning a new language reading appears to be an essential thing since it helps people think in the new language and it also builds better vocabulary. It means that in order to deeply internalize the language learners learn, they need to read much. Reading itself is defined as the cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message. It means, in the process of reading there must be a written material. Halliday and Hasan (1989:10) give definitions about text as the following:

A text is a language that is functional. By functional, we simply mean language that is doing some job in some context. So, any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of situation, we call

a text. It would be either spoken or written or indeed in any other medium of expression that we like to think of.

They further propose that the important thing about the nature of a text refers to the following: 1) a text is really made of meaning, 2) a text is essentially a semantic unit, 3) a text is a product and process, and 4) a text is a social exchange of meanings. The four components of text cannot be separated from one another.

From those definitions, it can be deduced that a text can be defined as something that is in the reader's mind. Different readers can have different understanding about the text. Reading is an active process; it does not happen to the students and it is not done for him. Since it requires attention or a favorable attitude or set, it is not mechanical. An aroused interest or a felt need starts it and keeps it going. The readings feeling of purpose is the motivating and effective, sustaining force.

### **3. Discussion**

Reading texts may be easy for the readers to understand if they are written cohesively. It means that the sentences and the paragraphs in the text tie together by cohesive ties. The reading texts that are written not cohesively may create ambiguity to the readers. It may make the readers misunderstand the messages. It can be said that cohesion is an important factor that makes reading texts readable. Reading texts will function as a medium in the instruction if they are good in cohesion. The cohesion in the reading texts must be compatible.

Reading is a thinking process, since its central aspect is extracting meaning from points. The essential unit of meaning is the idea, the concept, the thought, the image, the statement. Meaning does not emerge from an arbitrary string of words, but from words in relationship. The sum total of these relationships make up the context of the reading material, and only within a context do words (or other symbols) have meaning.

The text has a meaning if it contains the idea, the thought, and the statement. The relationship of words in a text can form a context. A text is passive, so students should be active. They should pay attention to the text to

grasp the meaning. The text should be a medium where readers can find information that they need. The text can be in the form of a spoken or written text. It can also be short or long. The text only consists of instructions of how to catch the meaning. The text is something in the reader's mind, which means that readers are able to comprehend the text based on its semantic properties. The messages of the text can be different when it is read by different people.

Cohesion can be used to be a consideration whether the text is good or not. The text is considered to be a good reading text if it is written cohesively and vice versa, the text will be considered not to be a good one if it is not written cohesively. Grammatical cohesion consists of references, substitutions, ellipses, and conjunctions. Reference can be pronominals, demonstratives and definite article, and comparatives. Substitution can be nominal substitutes, verbal substitutes, and clausal substitutes. Ellipsis can be nominal ellipses, verbal ellipses, and clausal ellipses. Conjunction can be additive, adversative, causal, temporal, continuative, and intonation. Lexical cohesion can be a repetition, synonymy (woman-lady, buy-purchase, smile-grin, etc), antonymy (good-bad), hyponymy (cat, dog, bear, etc are the hyponyms of animal), and meronymy (limb and root are co-meronyms of tree).

#### **4. Conclusion**

A text is considered to be a good text if it is linked closely between one sentence to the other ones or one paragraph to the other ones. In order to link sentences in a paragraph or paragraphs in a text, the paragraphs can be linked by cohesion. Cohesion can be used to tie one sentence to the other ones. If the text is written cohesively, the text will be coherent. It means that the clauses or sentences in the text relate to the context. The text is considered to be a good text if the text does not confuse the reader.

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