A survey of the cohesive ties - reference and lexical cohesion- in history books of the second and third grades in guidance school in Iran

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Abstract

Halliday and Hassan believe that cohesion is one of the most important characteristics of a text and using cohesive ties –reference and lexical cohesion – make a text easy to understand. Providing school books that are easy to understand has always been the primary concern of education. The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether using cohesive ties in history books of the grades 2 and 3 in guidance school in Iran-Tehran make it easier to understand or not. The corpus of the study was about 10000 words from the second and third grade in guidance school. Odd lessons of every book were selected systematically so 5000 words of every book were analyzed according to Halliday and Hassan's pattern. After investigating the frequency of cohesive ties in texts through SPSS, K² test was used to analyze whether the relationship between decreasing the number of cohesive ties and increasing the difficulty of a text is meaningful. The results of the study revealed that the lexical cohesion of the second grade had more cohesive ties than history book of the third grade and this change was meaningful. It is recommended that the authors specially the authors of school books utilize linguistic ideas and findings in writing the texts to make them more understandable for students.

Keywords: cohesion, reference, lexical cohesion, lexical cohesion, guidance school students

1. Introduction

This paper is based on a research entitled" A survey of the cohesive ties - Reference and Lexical cohesion- in History books of the second and third grades in guidance school in Iran". The research was basically aimed at investigating the relationship between the number of cohesive ties and the ease of a text. In addition to that all kinds of Reference and Lexical ties in these books were counted and their frequencies in the book of the second and third grade were compared with each other. Considering the findings some suggestions were recommended to make the text specially school books easier to understand. Salehi (1382) investigated ellipsis in Farsi books of the first and second grade in elementary school in Iran and he observed that there was a meaningful relationship between going up the grade of students and the number of ellipsis. It means that with going up the grade, the number of ellipsis increased and text became easier. Rasoolzade (1380) in his thesis-discourse analysis and novel of the manager of school-investigated all lexical ties there and found that this text was cohesive and readers could understand it well. Shiri (1381) prepared two texts with comprehension questions. In one text he omitted thirty percent of cohesive ties

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and gave them to two groups of students. He concluded that students can understand the one including more lexical ties better than the other one. Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field in which the structures larger than a sentence are investigated. Cameron (2001:13) believes that discourse is the language in use. Discourse analysis isn't restricted to the description of linguistic forms separated from the roles they are come about (Brown and Yule, 1983:1). According to this definition in Discourse analysis the emphasis is on the roles of language: Farrokhpey (2000:18). One of the issues of discourse analysis is "cohesion". Cohesive ties are a part of cohesion. Cohesive ties make a text cohesive. Cohesive ties are divided into five categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical ties. Here in this paper reference and lexical ties were investigated. Wekker and Haegeman (1993:37) considers pronoun as proper substitute for noun phrases that prevents the repetition of that noun such as "He" in this sentence: "The tramp read the diary. He laughed". "He" substitutes The tramp. Reference is divided into two types endophora and exophora. The first type can be divided into two parts: cataphora in which reference is mentioned after the referential element and exophora in which reference is mentioned before the referential element. Sometimes the reference is in situational context and it is called exophora. In English reference is divided into three main parts: personal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference including general and specific.Givi and Anvari (1379:182) categorize the pronouns in Farsi: personal pronoun(I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they), demonstrative pronoun(in "this" an "that", inha and inan "these", anha and anan "those", ham "this one", haman "that one"), question pronoun kodam "which", ki "who", key "when" etc, exclamative pronoun che "what", ambiguous pronoun (bazi" some", harkas "everyone"). Halliday and Hasan (1976:279) divide lexical cohesion into two parts: reiteration and collocation. According to Solki (1995:3) Reiteration itself consists of: repetition in which a word is repeated (Halliday, 1985:310) synonymy: synonym are words which has the same or very similar meaning such as boy/lad. Using super ordinate words such as country/Pakistan. Using general words such as living beings/animal Solki (1995:15). collocation includes: opposition north/south, member-collocation (tree and jungle), co-hyponymy ship/lamb (Safavi, 1383:100). From time to time we notice that students or even other readers have difficulty in understanding a text and it is thought that the matter under consideration is difficult to understand but sometimes it isn't really so. It is the writing of the text that has problem. The hypothesis of this paper are: 1. according to Halliday and Hassan (1976) every text is engaged with cohesive ties and the authors of history books in guidance school have considered this point and have used them in their writings. 2. Halliday and Hassan's classification of reference and lexical cohesion can be generalized to Farsi. 3. with going up the grade of students the number of cohesive ties - Reference and Lexical cohesion decreases this change was meaningful and makes the text more difficult to understand. lexical cohesion of the second grade had more cohesive ties than history book of the third grade and this change was meaningful and made the text more difficult to understand.

2. Method

Applied method was used in this study and the content was analyzed through Content analysis. The data of this study was about 6000 words elicited from history books of the second and third grade in guidance school in Iran. The odd lessons of every book were chosen accidentally so 3000 words of each book were analyzed based on Halliday and Hassan's (1976) pattern. According to Halliday and Hassan cohesive ties beyond the sentences not in sentences should be regarded because the relationships in the sentences are affected by the structure of the sentence (Halliday and Hassan ,1976:28). For example" The king used to travel a lot. The queen enjoyed it, too." King and queen in these sentences can be regarded as cohesive tie but they aren't in this sentence "The king and queen were cruel and hard-hearted". For this reason in this paper the title of the paragraphs and footnotes were ignored. After investigating the frequency of cohesive ties in texts through SPSS, $x^2$ test was used to analyze whether the relationship between decreasing the number of cohesive ties and increasing the difficulty of a text is meaningful.
3. Discussion

At first frequency of cohesive ties –reference and lexical ties – in history books of the second and third grade was investigated and after that frequency of them were compared to each other. In the data chosen from the second grade, 962 ties were used: personal reference: 38(singular: 33 and plural: 5), demonstrative reference: 52(pointing to near: 28 and pointing to far: 24), comparative reference: 9(quantitative comparison:4 , difference:5, qualitative comparison:0 , identity:0 and similarity:0), reiteration: 665(general word:23 and superordinate:1 and repetition:485), collocation: 198. In the data chosen from the third grade 713 ties were used: personal reference:20(singular:20,plural:0),demonstrative reference:23(pointing to near: 20 and pointing to far:13), comparative reference:20(quantitative comparison:0,difference:4,qualitative comparison:0 and identity:0),reiteration:468(general word:14,superordinate:10 and repetition:366,synonymy:78),collocation:198.

Comparison of frequency of reference and lexical cohesion in history books of second grade: history books of second grade had 18 personal reference( 13 singular reference and 5 plural reference), 19 demonstrative reference (8 pointing to near and 11 pointing to far),5 comparative reference(1 difference and 4 qualitative comparison)119 repetition,78 synonymy,9 general word more than those in third grade but there were more super ordinate words(9) in third grade. In addition to that in each book 198 collocations were used.

Rasoolzade (1380) in his thesis-discourse analysis and novel of the manager of school-investigated all lexical ties there and found that as it is a cohesive text ,readers can understand it well. Shiri (1381) prepared two texts with comprehension questions. In one text he omitted thirty percent of cohesive ties and gave them to two groups of students. He concluded that students can understand the one including more lexical ties better than the other one.

It was concluded that: according to Halliday and Hassan (1976) every text is engaged with cohesive ties so the authors of history books in guidance school have considered this point and have used them in their writings.2. Halliday and Hassan's classification of reference and lexical cohesion can be generalized to Farsi.3. With going up the grade of students the number of cohesive ties - Reference and Lexical cohesion –decrease this change was meaningful and makes the text more difficult to understand.

It is recommended that writers especially the authors of school books consult linguists and employ their findings in their writings for example using lexical ties makes a text easier to understand so employing these ties is a means to make a text easy to understand.

4. Tables

x² test was used to investigate the difference of frequency in second and third grade. Frequency of the number of Reference and Lexical cohesion as cohesive ties in our discussing data is shown through diagrams. Table 1 shows observed frequency, expected frequency and difference. The difference of observed frequency of reference and lexical ties in the text equals 239. But the question is "is that difference meaningful?" the results of x² is shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grade</th>
<th>Observed frequency</th>
<th>expected frequency</th>
<th>reminder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>second grade</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>842/5</td>
<td>119/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third grade</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>842/5</td>
<td>-119/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1685</td>
<td>1685</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of $x^2$ test in table 2 shows that for with the degree of freedom 1 and $\alpha$ level 0.01 is bigger than $x^2$ in the table(6/63), and obtained significance (sig=0.000) is less than $\alpha$ level 0.01, so with 0.99 percent of confidence it can be said that the difference between observed frequency and expected frequency is meaningful. So with going up the grade of students from second to third, which is supposed to raise the difficulty level of the text, the number of cohesive ties –reference and lexical ties – has changed. It means that with going up the grade of students the number of cohesive ties –reference and lexical ties – reduces and this change is meaningful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical index</th>
<th>Obtained value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$x^2$</td>
<td>33.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of freedom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance level</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


