A Contrastive Study of Lexical Cohesion in English Short Story Books Written by Native English and Iranian Authors

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Abstract

The present study aimed at probing into the use of lexical cohesion sub-devices in English short story books written by native English and Iranian authors. To this end, the researcher selected two short stories, i.e. Joseph Conrad and Simin Daneshvar as the native and Iranian corpus of the study respectively. Then, he used Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomy of lexical cohesion for analyzing the samples of lexical cohesion was used. After collecting the data from the two sets of corpora, the researcher estimated the frequency and density of lexical cohesion ties. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the use of lexical ties in two corpora. In addition, the results revealed that in native English short story book the density of lexical ties was more than in the Iranian short story book. The findings have several implications for language instructors, university students and Iranian authors.

Keywords: Lexical cohesion, short story, English native author, Iranian author

INTRODUCTION

Authors of written texts, since they cannot rely on immediate interaction with recipients of messages incorporated in their texts (unlike the possibility to ask for clarification in most types of spoken discourse), must plan and construct the texts carefully to secure their comprehensibility. For this reason, they employ a repertory of lexical, grammatical and structural means to express the relations between text components clearly and communicate thus the content and purpose of the text to the readers successfully. As Dontcheva- Navratilova (2006) puts it concisely, "The writer's role in this interaction is to anticipate the reader's reaction and to use different signals and strategies to guide him/her in lifting the range of possible interpretations and support the interpretation".

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This paper looks into one type of means which achieve connectedness and ensure understanding of written texts. Namely the devices of lexical cohesion. Moreover, since the distinction of the medium of communication does not provide a complete characteristic of considerations that must be made while constructing a target text, the remaining two aspects of Halliday's triad of register variation (1978) have to be defined as well. The present paper assumes that two types of short story books written by native English and Iranian writer, reveal different frequencies of occurrence of and density of lexical cohesion sub-types.

Discourse in any field of activity is characterized by existence of two relations, namely semantic connectedness, referred to as coherence, and syntactic connectedness, known as cohesion (Urbanova, 2008). Contrary to coherence, dependent on the result of interplay between the chosen cohesive features and subjective factors associated with the personality of the recipient is a more objective and identifiable concept. Halliday and Hassan (1976) stress its fundamental importance for the construction of texts: "Typically, in any text, every sentence except the first exhibits some form of cohesion with a preceding sentence, usually with the one immediately preceding. In other word, every sentence contains at least one anaphoric tie connecting it with what has gone before.

Haliday and Hassan distinguish two basic types of cohesion: revise lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion (Urbanova, 2008, Halliday and Hassan 1976). Expanding this division, some linguistic also point out to structure cohesion as a specific type of cohesion (Dontcheva- Navratilova 2005), although Halliday and Hassan acknowledge its role as well. Lexical cohesion is thus one of the main types of cohesion. Halliday and Hassan distinguish two related aspects of lexical cohesion. Reiteration and collocation (1976). The former one, reiteration divided: repetition, synonymy, antonymy, meronymy, hyponymy, and general noun. Collocation achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly tend to appear in similar environments, such words don't have any semantic relationship.

 Urbanova (2008) lists two lexical devices among cohesive devices. Viz. reiteration, which is seen as a repetition of key words or derivatives thereof, and sense relations, especially synonymy and antonymy. Similarly, Dontcheva – Navratilova (2005) employs a classification of sub-types of lexical cohesion which is derived from semantic, namely various sense relations.

Urbanova's conception splits reiteration, as defined by Haliday and Hassan (1976) in to two, separating synonymy and joining it with other semantic relations into a large set based on similarity of meaning. As Urbanova (2008) points out, lexical cohesive device contributes to approximation of meaning. Explanation and connectivity of the content of text parts, whereas the tools of grammatical cohesion help to achive surveyability and comprehensibility via arrangement of the grammatical structure of a text.

Zmrzla (2009) attempted at a synthesis of the above- mentioned classification of grammatical, lexical as well as structure cohesion by ltaliday and Hassan (1976),

Tanskanen 1995 Dontcheva- Navratilova 2005 and Combined them into a single hierarchy. Leaving grammatical and structural cohesion aside, lexical cohesion is divided into reiteration and collocation (identically with Halliday and Hassan 1976), and reiteration is further divided into repetition, synonymy, antonymy, meronymy, hyponymy and general noun while collocation has two subtypes, viz. ordered set and implication However, English short story book which are written by native versus non-native authors need to be studied in more detail. For this purpose, the following research questions and Hypothesis were posed:

- Q1: Are there any significant differences in English short story books written by native English and Iranian authors in terms of lexical cohesion sub-types (Youth and city like paradise)?
- Q2: Are there any significant differences between English short story books written by native English and Iranian authors regarding to density of lexical cohesion sub-devices (Youth and city like paradise)?

Considering the aforementioned research questions, the following null hypothesis have been formulated:

- H1: There aren't any significant differences in English short story books written by native English and Iranian authors in terms of lexical cohesion sub-types (Youth and city like paradise).
- H2: There aren't any significant differences between English short story books written by native English and Iranian authors regarding to density of lexical cohesion sub-devices (Youth and city like paradise).

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

One of the outstanding characteristics of a text is the concept of texture. Halliday and Hassan (1976) consider texture as a property which gives unity to the text with respect to its environment. Text can be defined with reference to the concept of cohesion. In this case a text is a passage of discourse which in coherent either with respect to the context of situation or with respect to itself.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), the concept of cohesion is a semantic one and refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text. They believe that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements 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. Halliday and Hassan (1976) assume that when this process happens, a relation of cohesion is set up and the two elements are integrated into text. Thus, the concept of cohesion as being lexical cohesion needs to be studied in detail.

Kavoosi Nejad (1993) examined, conjunctions as cohesive devices in Persian at children and adults level to see whether there are differences in the application of conjunctions in such texts. She concluded that writers at both levels use all four kinds of conjunctions. In addition, statistics showed that in both groups the frequency of additive conjunctions

were higher that other conjunctions. The frequency of causatives in adults' stories was twice as much as children's stories. The use of adversative was almost the same in the corpus. Furthermore, temporal ones in children's stories were 205 than their adults' counterparts. Therefore, he concluded that when writing a story, writers should pay attention to who their audiences.

Mozaffar Zadeh (1998) analyzed ellipsis and substitution in science books at guidance level and concluded that Halliday and Hassan's classification (1976) on ellipsis and substitution can be extended to Persian.

Tseng and Liou (2006) inquired about the effect of online conjunctions materials on college EFL students writing. They argued that inappropriate utilization of conjunctions in English, which leads to incoherent writing, is because of first language interface, misleading lists of connectors, and improper exercises.

Robert (2009) following Dooley and levinsohn's (2001) analytical methodology described different aspect of discourse analysis including introductory description of discourse studies in Persian language. They have stated that their study is just an introductory work which guide people in knowing how discourse studies in Persian can be managed based on Dooley and levinsohn (2001).

In analyzing cohesive ties in English as a foreign language student's writing, Rostami and Abu. Saeedi (2010) investigated about the most frequently used cohesive devices in his sample. He came to surprising conclusion, poor students were expected to have low density of cohesion, because they could not combine sentences together coherently e.g. by use of conjunctions. So, he realized that, in his study, conjunctions are not a discriminating factor between good and poor students. Also it was observed that the frequently of additives were higher in both group, followed by temporal. In addition, adversative and causals had almost the same frequency of occurrence.

Seddigh, Shokr-pour and Kafi- Pour (2010) analyzed lexical cohesion in English and Persian abstract based on Seddigh and Yarmohammadi's (1996) lexical cohesion framework. They used the SPSS package for contrastive analysis. The results indicated that there was some similarities and differences in the application of lexical cohesion in their corpus. All sub-types had near the same occurrences in the two sets of data and the two – tailed t-test revealed that differences between their application in English and Persian abstracts are not statistically significant. Both language reported repetition as the most frequent sub-type, but synonymy and meronymy were the least used sub-categories.

Gonzalaze (2011) investigated lexical cohesion in multiparty conversations. He presented an integrated model of lexical cohesion called associative cohesion. His research data consisted of 15, 83% word – corpuses of broadcast discussion. The analysis of 11/199 lexical ties illustrated that repetition (59%) is the most frequent sub-category of lexical cohesion, followed by associative cohesion (24%) and inclusive relations (8.2%).

More recently, Young and Sun (2012) explored the use of cohesive devices in argumentative writing by Chinese Sophomore and senior EFL learners. The results of ellipsis and substitution analysis revealed that two devices were mostly found in spoken language and were seldom used in formal written discourse. About 67% of the sophomores and 70% of the seniors had not used these devices; because they had become aware of the inappropriateness of using ellipsis and substitution of using ellipsis and substitution in formal writing. It is noteworthy as for as the authors of the present study bare searched, most of the studies on cohesion of language are based on Halliday and Hassan (1976). Also, Dooley and Levinnsohn's (2001) is just an introductory work. Thus, the authors did not find any similar paper that have chosen Dolley and Lerinsohn's (ibid) point of view. In order to compare their finding with the result of the present article, so, the author's purpose is to illustrate the presented concepts of Dolley and Levinsihn (ibid), by examining further text than those they have prepared, to see whether Dolley and Levinsohn (ibid) framework can be extended to Persian speech analysis or not.

METHOD

Corpus

Corpus of this study consist of 30 short stories from youth written by Joseph Conrad and city like paradise written by Simin Daneshvar. To have an almost equal amount of data in youth and city like paradise short story books which is written by Joseph Conrad and Simin Daneshvar, the number 20 words from every short story books were analyzed. The total number of words which analyzed will be about 600 for each one roughly.

Material

The use of lexical cohesion in youth and city like paradise written by Joseph Conrad and Simin Daneshvar will be identified and marked. To analyze the text concerned a two-tailed test is used. They will be analyzed based on Halliday and Hassan's framework (1976) and compared one- by one in order to investigate the frequency and density of lexical cohesion sub-types in youth and city like paradise for two months. Finally, the data will be analyzed by SPSS program.

Procedure

The researcher of this study made an attempt to compare the amount of lexical ties used in English short stories. In fact, he studied the use of lexical ties in two short stores; one written by a native English speaker and the other short story written by Iranian writer, for this purpose, he selected youth which is a short story written by Joseph Conrad. The other short story is city like paradise written by Simin Daneshvar an Iranian writer. Moreover, he investigated the type of lexical ties in English short stories written by native English and Iranian writer.

The two short stories have communalities in their length and stage. The length is important since the analysis of lexical ties is highly related to the length of two stories. In order to estimate the use of lexical ties, the research used Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive ties for analyzing the samples of lexical ties. Later on the researcher compared the native English and Iranian short story writer's use of lexical ties through the use of t-test.

RESULTS

This section focuses on the quantitative analysis of the obtained data in this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software. Table (1) shows the frequency of lexical cohesion sub-types and the density of lexical cohesion sub-types in youth and city like paradise written by Joseph Conrad and Simin Daneshvar.

Table 1. The average percentages of lexical cohesion sub-types in youth and city like paradise short story books

Type of lexical cohesion	R	S	M	C	G	H	A
Youth short story book	16.80	3.33	5.90	4.40	4.20	6.50	1.00
City like paradise Short story book	16.30	2.20	4.40	3.50	2.80	4.80	1.00

R= Repitition, S= Synonymy, M= Meronymy, H= Hyponymy, G= General noun, A= Antonymy, C= Collection.

Table 2. The density of lexical cohesion sub-types of youth and city like paradise short story books.

Group	A	C	G	H	S	R	M	Word number	Number of text	Group
Native English mean	30	990	401	180	69	80	190	300	15	40.90
Iranian mean	30	880	390	160	60	70	180	300	15	40.80

In Table 2, Repetition is the most frequently used sub-type of lexical cohesion. The next frequently sub-types is Hyponymy followed by Meronymy, Collocation, General Noun, Synonymy and Antonymy i.e.: R, H, M, C, G, S, A. The density of English group is 40.90 and Iranian group is 40.80 and we can say that English group is denser than Iranian group.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As displayed in Table 1 and Table 2, in youth short story book. Repetition is the most frequently used sub-type of lexical cohesion. The next frequently sub-types is Hyponymy followed by Meronymy, Collocation, General Noun, Synonymy and Antonymy i.e., R, H, M, C, G, S, A.

In the case of city like paradise book, repetition has the highest percentage of occurrence as well. The next frequently used sub-type is Hyponymy followed by Meronymy, Collocation, General noun, Hyponymy and Antonymy, i.e. R, H, M, C, G, S, A. It is noteworthy that the orders of the sub-types are almost the same in both groups.

The results indicated, occurrences of all sub-types are almost the same in both texts. The two groups of all sub-types are almost the same in both languages. The two groups of text exhibit a general tendency toward the use of repetition, i.e, 16.8 Vs 16.3. But synonymy and Antonymy play minor roles in producing cohesion in both texts.

To see whether the differences between them the percentage of lexical cohesion sub-types in youth and city like Paradise short story books are statistically significant or not, for each case two – tailed t-test was run and a significant different in its use was referred to Hyponymy and Meronymy. So, it can be concluded that the occurrences of sub-type are approximately the same in both group of texts. The densities of lexical cohesion in the texts were determined by dividing the total number of lexical cohesion in each language by the total number of sentences in that language. The obtained figures are 4.90 and 4.80 for youth and city like paradise short story books respectively. By doing two- tailed t-test, it became clear that the difference is statistically significant. Thus youth short story book is denser than city like paradise short story book ones.

In a research conducted by lee (2003), the same results have been achieved. In fact, lee (2003) studied Chinese student's L1 and EFL writing and concluded that there was a remarkable difference in connector density.

As the non- native English author of this study who used lexical ties to create cohesion in his text, Chinese colleague students do the same. In his study Zhang (2000) reported that Chinese college students employed a variety of cohesive ties in their English compositions, among which lexical category had the highest percentage, followed by the categories of references and conjunction.

Also, one study was conducted in Iranian context by focusing on the use of cohesive ties in IELTS writing tasks. In this study Majeddin's (2012) results after analysis of the data indicated that overt instruction is a predictor of success in the use of cohesive ties in IELTS writing tasks. In fact, non – native Iranian EFL learners used cohesive ties in their English language. This is the same as using lexical ties by non- native English authors.

Neglecting this pattern (cohesion) is one of the reasons that many Iranian students can't read and comprehend the text outside the class because reading is not treated as it is by Iranian teachers. The same is true for the students' writing skill. Many students who have graduated from high school cannot write a coherent paragraph. Even though they can write correct sentences in isolation, a coherent text not isolated sentences is frequently used. The issue that students cannot communicate via written language can be explained by the assumption that sentences elements which create cohesion have not been taught. We should bear in mind that good writers are usually good readers.

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