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# TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

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# TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

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## Abstract

This article describes the concept of cohesion, coherence, the relationship of cohesion and coherence to comprehension, and several strategies to improve reading comprehension, and infer ability, the way to improve questioning. Educators must be aware of the factors within a text that effect understanding, in fostering reading development. In fact cohesion helps the reader achieve coherence and therefore facilitates comprehension.

Teachers can teach students about cohesion and coherence factors in their textbooks, and teachers can predict comprehension problems and facilitate successful comprehension with a quick, informal analysis of the cohesion in reading assignment.

Key words: reading, understanding, method, infering performance

## INTRODUCTION

Sue ask Lucila to go to the corner store with her. She bought a cholate for her sister and one for herself.

Sue'mother was very angry at her for spending money on cholate

To understand who is she in the second sentence, the reader should know cohesion, coherence, and comprehension

A clear understanding of cohesion, coherence can help educators to predict comprehension problems, write comprehension material, and teach cohesion comprehension process. This article describes the concept of cohesion, coherence, the relationship of cohesion and coherence to comprehension, and several strategies to improve reading comprehension, and infer ability, the way to improve questioning. Some techniques to help student to comprehend the text are elaborated in this article too, such as; comprehension monitoring, hierarchy of comprehension problems solving strategies, teaching the monitoring process through modeling. Teacher questioning and guided

reading procedure

## COHESION AND COHERENCE

Different scholars give different definition of cohesion.

Gutwinsk, and Halliday and Hasan argue that cohesion is achieved through relationships in which the interpretation of one idea in the text depends on successful interpretation of another. Cohesion may also be viewed as a type of redundancy which links one sentence or phrase with another. It is important to note that the term “ cohesion in text” was introduced by Halliday” explicitly for the purpose of linguistic analysis” and .as such ,should be thought of as something that exists within text but not necessary within the reader mind. It is also important to emphasize that cohesion is not another name for discourse structure. Rather, cohesion is used to “show how sentences, which are structurally independent of one another may be link together”

The link that establish cohesion are called ties, and a single instance of cohesion is a cohesion ties. Cohesion may intra- or inter sentential; both types are fond in the following sentences:

Herry is going to buy his wife a new car

She wants a new garment for her birthday

All intrasentence cohesion ties is found in the first sentence, connecting Herry and his. Intrasentence ties exist between she and his wife, new and car new and garment and her and wife. All of this ties are anaphoric (related beck). As most cohesive ties are although cataphoric (related forward) tie also provide cohesion in text.

Halliday and Hasan have identified five distinct types of cohesion; reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Each of the five categories is represented by particular feature such as repetition, omission, uses a certain words, or the occurences of certain construction. Halliday and Hasan also provide a rather elaborate coding scheme for analyzing text in term of a number and type of cohesion ties. Their system allows for the qualification of a total number of cohesion ties and the identification of types of cohesive ties in a text.

The following is examples of types of cohesion ties:

Reference:

include many types of pronoun :

Mary went to the bookstore. She bought a dictionary

Substitution:

the replacement of the word or phrase within another

Newman already know. Everyone does

Ellipsis:

The omission of a repeated word or phrase

(implied repetition of apple )

Conjunction: Include additive, adversative, causal, and temporal link

Peter went to the market after the rain stop

Lexical- Reiteration:

A kiwi fruit is a fruit. All fruit contain seeds

Lexical –collocation

Co-occurrence of words which regularly co-occur in the language

The banana cost fifty cent. I had a dollar

Coherence is only one component of cohesive. In addition to cohesion, at least one other factor must be present for a text to have coherence; that factor is organization. Other factor like situational consistency add coherence to text.

Linguistics consider cohesion to measurable linguistic phenomenon. Whereas coherence is considered to be more global and is not as directly amenable to evaluation.

This is similar to distinction that can be made between “local” and “global” coherence. While “global coherence” refers to the relationship between each sentence and the general topic of the whole passage, “local coherence” refers to the relationship between specific adjoining sentences. Thus, operationally, “cohesion” usually refers to the same thing as “local coherence or “local connectedness”

Cohesion exist within text and adds to the coherence text. It may be useful to think of coherence as something the reader establishes- or hopes to establish- in the process of reading connected discourse; in the respect. Coherence may be viewed as the cognitive correlate of cohesion. Generally, however. Cohesion is a text related phenomenon, coherence is both a text related and a reader related phenomenon, and they are not synonymous.

For the reader who must establish a coherent memory structure, cohesive ties can be very helpful.: it is the

continuity provided by cohesion that enable the reader to supply all missing places, all the picture which are not present in the text but are necessary to its interpretation. If a text display cohesion, that is if the reader can find measurable semantic relationships in the text, it follows that the reader will establish coherence more easily than if little or no cohesion exists recent research suggests that this is indeed the case.

For the fluent reader, comprehension is usually an automatic process and makes low demands on the reader's cognitive resources. When unable to establish coherence from the text, the reader will stop normal cognitive processes to search long term memory or to make linking inferences. Research indicates that the more linking inferences the text requires, the heavier the reader's processing load.

In addition, the ability to infer implicit cohesion relations may be related to reading ability to prior knowledge.

#### COMPREHENSION MONITORING

Successful comprehension of text which lack explicit cohesion requires skill in two particular areas: the reader must first recognize a textual violation which disturb comprehension, and then apply a strategy to overcome the difficulty. The first step in resolving any comprehension problem is, of course recognizing that problem exists. Beginning reader, in particular may not always be aware of their own comprehension process and may not realize when even simple difficulties arise. The proficient reader on the other hand would be more likely to be aware that he initial assignment of anaphoric reference was tentative and to revisw that assignment if the later text conflicted with it.

In addition to recognizing comprehension problem caused by cohesion breaks, the proficient reader has well developed strategies for solving the]at problem. Proficient reader typically solve such problem in one of the following ways, organized un order of implementation, difficulty, and the degree to which remedy distrupts reading. These strtegies are normally learned during the process of becoming a proficient reader. They are rarely taught, though they can be taught in a systematic manner (Clark. C.H )

<sup>1</sup> Unoriginal text: 13 words  
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## HYERARCHY OF COMPREHENSION PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES

The following we will discuss some problem strategies (Clark.C.H)

1. Ignoring the position of the text in question and continuing to read is the first, easiest, and least descriptive effective with relatively minor problem not crucial to the text. If the ignore information turn out to be important, the ignored text can be reread. It is particularly advantageous for students to learn that they can repeal any comprehension judgment (such as that to ignore a section of the text ) one can always retreat and reread t5he material.
2. Suspending judgment on immediate text portion is a logical extension of the first strategy. However, instead of totally ignoring the content, the reader continues in hopes later text clearly the difficulty. This is frequently viable since author of clarify and develop issues after their initial introduction.
3. Successful reader may form tentative hypothesis in the face of ambiguity. This trial comprehension or memorial representation depends heavily upon both the reader's background knowledge and his/her understanding of the text. Typically, the more knowledgeable the reader is in the subject area and the better the reader's general skills, the more likely that the hypothesis formulated will be sufficiently correct. Both the request and guided reading Procedure instructional techniques discussed later are particularly helpful in teaching students to develop and monitor such interpretations,
4. Rereading the current or prior text is rather more disruptive than the previous strategies, but it provides an opportunity to reinterpret the text. This is particularly helpful when ambiguities or contradictions are not resolvable any other way.
5. Going to the expert source, leaving the text for help, is the most disruptive technique used by proficient reader. The following paragraph will be used to illustrate these processes and strategies.  
Faslur's father ask him to go to the book store to buy dictionary, On his way there (1) he saw his friend Anggi.

He(2) was on his way home from a baseball game. He(3) liked to translate something Faslor asked Anggi to go to the bookstore with him. They walked around the bookstore talking about the expensive dictionary. As they were leaving Faslor noticed something in Anggi' jacket. The jacket was tight. (4) The zipper slipped down. Out come a small dictionary, right in front of the owner, He(5) was arrested for stealing. Faslor's father was angry when they (6) called him.

With the exception of 4 and 6, which mark implicit connective, all of the above number indicates anaphoric references. Pronoun number 3 above could be successfully ignored since the remainder of the text in no way refers to the information in the sentence. i.e no information makes an incorrect referent assignment at this point or assign the pronoun to either referent without encountering any conflict later in text. The reader can suspend judgment with number 2 since the remainder of that sentence clarifies the referent- Faslor was on his way to the store, not on his way home from a baseball game, so Anggi must be the correct referent. The proficient reader encountering item number 1 would probably make tentative referent assignment to the bookstore, and later text would support this. Item number 4 indicate the position of an applied connective. The proficient reader will hypothesize this missing causal connective, and later information would not contradict this guess. The last three items are interrelated. The most logical hypothesis for item 5 is the referent Anggi, since Anggi had something in his jacket. However, upon finishing the first part of the sentence, indicating that it was Fazlur' father who was upset, the reader may want to revise the hypothesis and use Faslor as a referent for 5. Item 6 also require a causal inference that Fazlur's father was angry because he (Faslor or Anggi) had been arrested.

#### TEACHING THE MONITORING PROCESS THROUGH MODELING

The instructional goals for modeling (Clark, 1986) include making the students constantly aware of their comprehension and any comprehension difficulties and helping them learn to deal with these problem. The student should, therefore, be able to recognize and deal with

implicit cohesion relation by appropriately inferring cohesion relations and they should be able to designate an ambiguous anaphoric reference appropriately. Modeling instruction is ideal for cohesion instruction since students who do not deal with cohesion problem often lack specific strategies rather than ability. Modeling, as describe below, emphasizes such process originate learning.

In stage one instruction, the teacher read aloud and simultaneously makes comment about reading. The teacher should pause once or twice per paragraph to comment on his/her comprehension processes. In teaching cohesion inferring, the teacher should, for instance, generate any hypothesis that come to mind concerning cohesion relation. If a hypothesis turn out to be incorrect, the teacher should say so, explain why it now seems incorrect, and model and discuss process and reasoning behind its evaluation and revision. Using the paragraph about Fazlur and Anggi above, the teacer would probably pause at each marked place. The teacher monologue might, for instance, proceed as follow:

On his way there,” I wonder where “there” is? It must be the bookstore since that was only place mentioned.

In general the teacher should verbally monitor his/her comprehension, continuously asking question which a proficient reader must answer to maximize comprehension. While resolving those issues, the teacher should explain the issue involving cohesion problem, including the five strategies typically used by proficient reader (ignoring the text, suspending judgment, hypothesis formation, rereading, and using an outside resource). The teacher should make different referent assignment on a trial basis, discussing the effect on the meaning of the text for each, and testing all logical connective inferences. If something in the text is difficult to understand, the teacher should indicate this to the students and explain why the text is unclear. Honest doubt about a particular interpretation should be expressed when average would experience such doubt. The teacher should avoid always being right the first time.

After the students become familiar with this stage in the training, the teacher should encourage an increase in the

level of student participation in the verbalized comprehension process. This participation should naturally increase with encouragement from the teacher. The students can propose tentative cohesion ties, volunteer reason and justifications for particular interpretation and referet assignments, and suggest strategies for dealing with particular problems.

Once the students are participating, the second stage of the procedure has been initiated: the students participation stage. During this stage, the students should develop, evaluate, and revise their hypotheses, as the teacher is reading , by responding to questioning. They should also be encouraged to take responsibility for spotting cohesion relations in the text, indicating the nature of the problem, and indicating or initiating possible inferences. The teacher, at this point, should no longer take primary responsibility for comprehension monitoring or hypothesis development. Instead, the teacher should direct the students' own effort by pointing out the thing they may have missed and reinforcing student efforts

In the third and the last stage of technique the students apply the newly learned skills in structured silent reading activities. Students should read passage with specific difficulties to find out what is wrong. For cohesion lesson, the teacher can insert question periodically to require inferential integration. The following rewritten version of part of earlier passage conforms to these guidelines.

The jacket was tight. The zipper slipped down. Out come the nails., right in front of the owner. He arrested for stealing (who was arrested) John's father was very angry when they called him. (why was Joyn's father angry) was it because John had been arrested, for some other reason?

After these three stages, the students should begin independently using comprehension monitoring strategies. The teacher can then encourage transfer to other type of reading in other subjects

#### TEACHER QUESTIONING

The vast majority of question teachers ask after reading are literal or factual questions, which students can answer using a phrase or sentence from the text. The following sentences and questions, for instance, reflect the most

common type of question asked in the classroom.

(1) Sue went to the store. She intended to buy milk for her mother. On his way home, she fell. The bottle broke and she cried.

(2) where did Sue go ?

One can answer this literal question by re calling the first part of the first sentence and inserting the information required by question. No inference or integration is required.

Note that the group of simple sentences lack explicit cohesion, A purpose connective is missing between the first and the second sentences and a causal connective is missing between the third and the fourth sentences. In addition the reader must infer that it was the milk bottle that broke. Questions which reinforce comprehension strategies to overcome these textual limitation are very different from the typical literal questions. The following questions for example. Direct the reader's attention to the missing element and encourage the use of comprehension strategies.

(3) Why did Sue go to the store?

(4) Where did Sue buy the milk?

(5) What broke?

(6) What happened when Sue fell?

These four questions are still close to what most partitioners would call literal comprehension questions, but they actually require an integration of the text information that is not explicitly stated. Thus , answering these questions requires the reader to use background information in making inference. Additional Questions of this small group of sentences include :

(7) Did Sue actually buy the milk? How do we know?

(8) Who cried? Why?

(9) What do you think will happen when Sue gets home?

(10) How do you think Sue feels about breaking the milk bottle?

Notice that the sentences in number 1 do not indicate that Sue actually bought the milk, only that she intended to do so and that there is some relationship between her. Milk, and the breaking of the bottle. Question 8 is anaphora question, since the reader needs to link the pronoun "she"

with Sue. The second part of the question and question 9 and 10 all rely heavily upon the reader's background knowledge, but are not irrelevant, since understanding these issues is crucial for complete understanding of the sentences. The second part of the question 8 and question 7 are connective cohesion questions in that the information required for their answer could have been explicitly stated with connectives.

Question like these which require cohesion inference and encourage integration with background knowledge should be asked instead of, or at least in addition to, the more common literal recall questions. These questions are not more difficult to ask or to evaluate, although they do require more precise and creative thought on the part of the teacher or the designer of instructional materials. The derivation of this type of question depends upon the recognition of the cohesion relationships in the text. Once areas of text which may present difficulties due to lack of cohesion are identified, the specific questions needed to address the problem become obvious.

#### THE GUIDED READING PROCEDURE

The Guide Reading Procedure (GRP) can be used to improve students' reading comprehension and to help train students to deal successfully with non cohesion text. It is probably most successful from the middle grade to college level and with both small and large groups. The basic procedure is to prepare students for the reading, have them silently read the passage, ask for free recall from the passage, record the recall on the chalkboard, review the selection for missed information, organize or otherwise use the information, organize or otherwise use the information on the board for comprehension reinforcement and instruction, and discuss the passage.

1. Prepare the students for reading by discussing both GRP and its goal and passage itself. Particularly emphasize relating the content of the passage to information with which the students are already familiar
2. Read and recall the information in the passage. Silent reading is preferable, and the teacher should also act as a role model by reading the passage. Once everyone has read the passage, encourage the students to recall as much

information from the the passage as possible. As students volunteer the information from the passage as possible. As students volunteer the information write it on the board for all students to see. Don't evaluate responses at this time, since the single goal is to maximize recall.

3. Review the text to clarify points already recorded and to add omitted information. At this point, encourage students to go back over the text.

4. Manipulate the information recalled by eliminating duplicate recording and either sequencing the information or grouping it by topic or category (such as cause and effect-ideal for indicating cohesion inference). Do this as a group with discussion and debate centering around the reason for organization.

5. Take the students beyond the text by discussing the various connection and inference which are needed to understand the text. Discuss specific entries on the board: how the information item are linked, both explicitly and implicitly, and how the overall structure coordinates all of the information. Focus on the reasoning behind these connections and inferences, clearly indicating how to integrate information with prior knowledge to infer cohesion ties. Any recall information which was actually an inference (information which come from the students as a part of their contribution to the nature of the text) should be clearly indicated, and any additional inferences made during the discussion should be include on the board. The GRP can facilitate integration, inferencing, and comprehension of the noncohesive text in a number of ways. The recall and review of the text promote a well educated review of the material. Such a review will stimulate integration and understanding. The process of organizing and discussing the information on the board provides an opportunity for learning through modeling and will encourage the reasoning processes necessary for the development of the skills needed for understanding cohesion relations. Additionally, students will begin to understand the importance of being able to recall, organize, and infer.

## CONCLUSION

Educators must be aware of the factors within a text that

effect understanding, in fostering reading development. In fact cohesion helps the reader achieve coherence and therefore facilitates comprehension. Teachers can teach students about cohesion and coherence factors in their textbooks, and teachers can predict comprehension problems and facilitate successful comprehension with a quick, informal analysis of the cohesion in reading assignment.

Teachers should not force students to read difficult material. Noncohesion text in particular, requires a set of inference skills which are not normally taught in the school today. The techniques described in this article are design to help in teaching of those higher-level skills which are necessary for the successful independent reading of difficult text. These techniques can be used to help students read noncohesive text as well as to develop their general comprehension instructional technique, teacher questioning, can also help students learn to comprehend noncohesive text if the question asked are properly directed at the effering of cohesion relation

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<sup>2</sup> Unoriginal text: 7 words  
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