Analysis of cohesive devices in the esp textbook on accounting at university of labor and social affairs

Cao Thị Huyền Nga

University of Languages and International Studies
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Supervisor : M.A Nguyen Quynh Trang
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Abstract: This study is mainly aimed at analyzing cohesive devices in the reading texts on Accounting at ULSA, finding out teachers’ attitudes towards cohesion teaching. Four reading texts were chosen as core materials for the analysis of the cohesive devices. Five teachers from English Department were asked to take part in the interview in order to give ideas about their attitudes towards teaching cohesion. The analysis reveals that lexical cohesive devices are used more often in the textbooks than grammatical cohesive devices. The data from interview indicates that the teachers often teach cohesion in class but they can not cover all types of cohesion. Based on the findings, significant suggestions were provided for future applications in learning and teaching cohesion. It is hoped that the results of this research would be of some use for further study in the field.

Keywords: Tiếng Anh; Phương tiện liên kết; Giáo trình

Content
PART 1: INTRODUCTION
1. Rationale
After several years teaching ESP for students of Accounting, I have come to realize that most of ULSA students lack the adequate linguistic knowledge in English to read and understand a slightly complex written text, especially texts related to Accounting. So, students tend to make errors at sentences which lead to misinterpret the correct content of the texts. Moreover, students are poor in recognizing sentence, word relation and transferring ideas. They find it difficult to find suitable words to express their ideas, or even their vocabulary is fairly good, they still don’t know how to connect words to form a complete meaningful sentence. They are, consequently, not well-organized in their own reading and writing. It’s mostly due to students’ insufficient language base. They do not pay full attention to the cohesive devices used in the context of the text.
To understand thoroughly the use of cohesive devices as linguistic means in the text is very essential for non-major students of English, especially for students of ULSA. The demand for analyzing cohesive devices used in ESP textbook becomes extremely urgent. Thus I have decided to study cohesive devices used in the English textbook on
Accounting. I do hope that this study partially helps both teachers and students at ULSA improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning ESP

2. Aims of the study
Firstly, the study mainly aims at describing and analyzing cohesive devices in the ESP textbook on Accounting in terms of grammar and lexis. Secondly, it attempts to find out teachers’ attitudes towards teaching cohesion. Thirdly, giving out implications to teaching and learning reading skill in ESP is the last aim of the study.

The following research questions are raised to reach the aims of the study:
1. What are the frequencies of occurrence of cohesive devices in the ESP textbook on Accounting?
2. What are teachers’ attitudes towards teaching cohesion?
3. Scope of the study
The source of the study takes the current course book at ULSA: “English for Labor and Social Affairs”, Labor and Social Affair Press, Hanoi 2009. Due to limited time and within the framework of a minor MA thesis, the study just mainly focuses on grammatical and lexical cohesion in the ESP textbook for third- year and fourth- year Accounting students at ULSA in which texts from unit 17 to unit 25 are taken and used as written discourse.

4. Methods of the study
Firstly, the methods of description, analysis and statistics in linguistics are used in this study. The study will base on reviewing materials used in the ESP course for Accounting at ULSA in order to collect and classify cohesive devices so as to point out the frequency of occurrence of cohesive devices used in the reading texts.

Secondly, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to find out teachers’ attitude towards teaching cohesion and student’s perception of understanding cohesive devices to do reading exercises. Data from the interview and questionnaire will be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to achieve the objectives of the study.

Thirdly, the findings from data analysis are inductively presented, that is, to move from less general to more general statements.

5. Design of the study
The thesis consists of three parts:
Part A: Introduction
This part introduces the rationale, aims, scope, significance and methods of the study
Part B: Development
Chapter 1 deals with theoretical background of the research with three main section: discourse with spoken and written discourse, cohesion with coherence, cohesive devices in terms of grammar and lexis.
Chapter 2 gives out the methodology used in the study.
Chapter 3 supplies the findings and discussion of analyzing cohesive devices used in written discourse of textbook on Accounting: grammar cohesion and lexical cohesion to find each subtype of cohesion’s frequency of use; investigating teacher’s attitudes towards teaching cohesion and student’s perception of understanding cohesive devices to do reading exercises
Part C: Conclusions
This part consists of a summary of the findings, conclusion remarks, implications and suggestions for further study
PART 2: DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW
Cohesion and coherence
The distinction between cohesion and coherence has not always been clarified partly
because both terms come from the same verb cohere which means sticking together. In
fact, cohesion is the network of different kinds of formal relations that provide links
between or among various parts of a text, and is expressed partly through the grammar
and partly through the vocabulary. Coherence, on the other hand, is understood as the
quality of being meaningful and unified. As for Nunan (1993), coherence is “the feeling
that sequences of sentences or utterances seem to hang together”. Coherence refers to the
type of semantic and rhetorical relationship that underlines texts.
Coherence refers to the type of semantic of rhetorical relationships that under texts.
Richards, Platt, Webster (1985) stated that: “Coherence refers to the rhetorical devices, to
ways of writing and speaking that bring about order and unity and emphasis. Coherence
can obtain on the basis of relevance, the co-operative principle, the common shared
background knowledge between participants in a speech event, and how discourse is
structured, as well”. Moreover, they also add that coherence is the relationships which
link the meanings of utterances in discourse or of the sentences in a text. In addition,
Nguyen Hoa (2000) states that coherence is built upon semantic ties in discourse.
Therefore, if cohesion refers to the linguistic elements that make a discourse semantically
coherent, then coherence involves with what makes a text semantically meaningful. In
short, coherence is embodied by a system of cohesive devices and cohesion is mainly
used to ensure coherence.
Main types of cohesion
Halliday and Hasan recognize five types of cohesive devices in English and in the
lexicogrammatical system of the language. They are reference, substitution, ellipsis,
conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical;
lexical cohesion is lexical; conjunction stands on the border line between the two
categories. In other words, it is mainly grammatical but sometimes involves lexical
selection.
Grammatical cohesion: Grammatical cohesion may be defined as the surface marking the
semantics links between clauses and sentences in written discourse, and between
utterances and tunes in speech. These links can be grouped in four types: reference,
ellipsis, substitution and conjunction.
(1998) reference in its wider sense would be the relationship between a word or phrase
and an entity in the external world” and “reference in its narrower sense is the
relationship between a word or phrase and a specific object
- Substitution: According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), substitution is “a relation on the
lexico-grammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary, or linguistic form”
- Ellipsis: Ellipsis, as for Halliday and Hasan (1976) is an omission of certain elements
from a sentence or a clause and can only be recovered by referring to an element in the
proceeding text
- Conjunction: As grammatical items, Cook (1989) defined: “Conjunctions are words or
phrases which explicitly draw attention to the type of relationship between one sentence
and clause and another”
Lexical cohesion: Lexical cohesion occurs when two words in a discourse are semantically related in some way. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify lexical cohesion into two main categories: reiteration and collocation
- Reiteration: According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) is “the repetition of a lexical item, or the occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference; that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent.”
- Collocation: Halliday and Hasan (1976) stated that collocation as an important part of creating cohesion in connected text
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY
This chapter presents the definition as well as the conducting steps of textbook analysis and the interview. Firstly, description, analysis and statistics are methods used in the textbook analysis to reach its main aims. The textbook analysis is based on statistical tool, then table and chart demonstrations are used to analyze the statistical data. In this way, the author can describe grammatical and lexical cohesion from the text corpora. Secondly, a persona; semi-structured interview which consisted of six specific questions was used.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings from the textbook analysis: The percentage of lexical cohesion is twice more than the percentage of grammatical cohesion: grammatical cohesion with 141 items and lexical cohesion with 271 items. The unequal distribution of these two kinds of cohesion is due to the feature of English itself and also to the distinct features of economic language. In grammatical cohesion, the difference in frequency of reference, conjunction, substitution and ellipsis is obvious. All of these grammatical cohesive devices are used in the reading texts but with clear discrepancy in density among certain devices

The highest frequency of occurrence in reading texts on English for Accounting is reference (43.97 %). This is because in terms of reference, the information to be retrieved is the referential meaning, the identity of the particular things or class of things that is being referred to and the cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time.

A rather large number of high-encounter grammatical cohesion is conjunction (32.62 %). That conjunction plays an important role in expressing organization of a text is the reason for this. The conjunctive words or phrases describe the logical relationship of phrases, sentences and paragraph that help to create a cohesive text. It is relevant to use many conjunctions in the reading texts which make it more easily comprehensible to readers

Third place belongs to ellipsis with 21.99 % which can be explained by the certain situation happening in the reading texts on English for Accounting. The conversation with question-answer structure makes it possible to raise the ellipsis. The readers easily find ellipsis in question-answer and other rejoinder sequences and ellipsis in direct response and Wh-questions.

The lowest frequency of occurrence is substitution (1.42 %). This may result from the characteristics of English for Accounting in particular and ESP in general, which is required to be accurately and clearly stated otherwise ambiguity is likely to arise and misunderstanding can lead to a far-reading consequences.
In lexical cohesion, collocation makes up the highest percentage in the corpus (74.17 %) and then collocation (25.83 %). This result proves the importance of collocation in economic English and the tendency of employing items of collocation in English for Accounting. After analyzing cohesive devices used in the reading texts, the researcher
found out that there are four dominant devices that are most frequently used cohesive devices in the reading texts are collocation (74.17 %), reference (43.98 %), conjunction (39.72 %) and reiteration (25.83 %). These devices accounts for highest frequency of occurrence in the textbook which have great influence on the cohesion of the text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), those above cohesive devices perform the function of helping readers to “identify the field dimension of the context of culture and the experiential aspect of the text’s meaning”, they also “enables the readers to supply some of the missing items necessary for the interpretation of a text”.

Findings from the interview: Almost all teachers are aware of the importance of teaching cohesion in class and they often include teaching cohesion, both grammatical and lexical cohesion while teaching reading, writing or speaking. However, in fact they can not cover all the types of grammatical cohesion as there are many patterns in cohesion.

PART 3: CONCLUSION
1. Recapitulation

cohesion is regarded as an essential textual component not only to create organized texts but also to render the content comprehensible to the reader. In order to reach the aim of the research, the development of the research is divided into four main parts. Chapter 1 provides readers with theoretical knowledge about cohesion and main types of cohesion which grammatical and lexical cohesion are especially focused. Chapter 2 is supplied with methodology used in the research, that’s the statistic analysis, the interview and the questionnaire. Chapter 3 is firstly carried out to answer research question 1. It is the analysis of cohesive devices in the English textbook on Accounting at University of Labor and Social Affairs. The analysis is mainly on grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion consists of reference, conjunction, ellipsis and substitution. Lexical cohesion involves reiteration and collocation. Frequency of occurrence each type and each subtype is given out to analyze and to compare with other types and subtypes. Chapter 3 supplies readers with findings and discussion from the interview. It aims to answer research question 2, which is to find teacher’s attitude towards teaching cohesion.

2. Conclusion remarks

After analyzing reading texts and conducting the questionnaire and the interview, the researcher has achieved satisfactory results. Firstly, from the analysis, the most prominent finding is that lexical cohesion is used more often than grammatical cohesion. The statistics show that there are 141 items (34.23 %) of grammatical cohesion and 271 items (65.77 %) of lexical cohesion in the course book. In grammatical cohesion, reference accounts for highest percentage of frequency of occurrence (43.97 %) among which anaphoric contributes the greatest proportion (79.37 %). Referred from this statistics, it’s important for the teachers to teach students how to link grammatical items with anaphoric reference in reading texts. Conjunction also contributes quite a great part in text cohesion (32.62 %). Among conjunction types, additive takes the highest frequency which implies that reading texts on accounting fields are much concerned with adding more information. Ellipsis and substitution do not contribute much to the cohesion of the reading texts (21.99 % and 1.42 %) but they should not be ignored in teaching and learning ESP because they help with reading skills and writing skills as well. In terms of lexical cohesion, collocation overtakes the density with 74.17 %. Among collocation patterns, N +N patterns, A +N patterns and N + prep patterns are widely used. This is
probably because the reading texts on economics in general and accounting in particular mainly deal with the accurate facts and concise definitions. Although reiteration does not make up as high percentage as collocation (25.83%), it play an important role in achieving comprehension of the text. In reiteration, repetition is dominant to synonym, antonym, superordinate and general word (65%). It can be concluded that repetition proved to be a natural process in the reading texts on Accounting because economic English needs to be concise, specific and clear.

Secondly, from the findings of the interview, the researcher has found out that all teachers are aware of the importance of teaching cohesion but they can not cover all the types of cohesion.

In conclusion, the key aims of the study are achieved, in other words, the researcher has found out the answers to the research questions put at the beginning of the study.

3. Implications for teaching and learning ESP for Accounting students at ULSA

The students at ULSA in general are non-majors so their main purpose of studying English is to read materials in English and understand terminologies and apply them for their future work. Among four skills, reading is the most important skill to help students improve their specific knowledge. One of effective ways to promote reading comprehension is through the recognition of cohesive devices in the texts. There’s no coherent text without proper cohesive devise and the identification of the cohesive devices in reading texts helps students to obtain useful information and enrich their knowledge. In addition, there’s an urgent demand to have separated lessons on cohesion which helps the students understand thoroughly about cohesive devices, their use and their meanings. In details, teaching grammatical cohesion through teaching reading is very important as the data collected indicated that using grammatical cohesive devices is more difficult for the students to use than lexical cohesive devices. In teaching conjunctions, the students should be provided with conjunctive knowledge, especially four types of conjunctions with typical words. They should be aware of how to use the conjunctive words in the specific context. Only by doing exercise can the students make acquaintance with these types of conjunctions. A typical type of exercise related to conjunctions if that the teacher can give out a text with discourse markers omitted and replaced by gaps. In teaching reference, the teachers should point out to the students that the chaining of reference and referents contributes greatly to the cohesion of the text. In teaching ellipsis, the most popular type of exercises to train the students learning ellipsis is gap-filling exercise. In teaching substitution, the students should be encouraged to find out any substitute items preventing them from understanding the discourse. In general, teaching grammatical cohesion through teaching reading should be paid attention to all four types of grammatical cohesive devices, in which conjunctions and reference should be more taken notice of. Moreover, teaching lexical cohesion through teaching reading is also essential as without vocabulary, students hardly study well reading skills. In teaching reiteration, the teachers can supply the students with variety of exercises involving finding out synonyms, antonyms, matching of multiple-choice questions. In teaching collocation, gap-filling, sorting or multiple-choice questions are types of exercise helpful for students to practice collocation. It’s also necessary for the teachers to emphasize the difference of word acceptability between the mother tongue and the target language.

4. Suggestion for further research
As stated above, this research only focus on analyzing grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion and investigating problems faced by students in using cohesive devices in reading and writing. Yet, within the limited time and scope of the study, the researcher can not cover all the issues related to the study. The researcher does hope that the following issues will be studied:

1. An analysis of logical cohesive devices in the reading texts on Accounting
2. An analysis of topical cohesive devices in reading texts on Accounting
3. Teachers and students’ difficulties in teaching and studying cohesive devices

In brief, this research is the researcher’s first attempt to analyze grammatical and lexical cohesive devices and finding out students’ problems in using these devices in reading and writing. The researcher hopes that it will make useful contribution to teaching and learning ESP in general and teaching and learning cohesion in particular. Due to the constraint in time and knowledge, the shortcomings are unavoidable, so further comments and remarks on the study to improve it are warmly welcomed and highly appreciated.

REFERENCES