

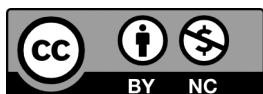
How to Apply Cohesive Devices to Senior High School Writing

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Abstract: With the continuous development of the new college entrance examination reform, English writing has become a key but difficult point in senior high school English teaching. Based on Halliday and Hasan's discourse cohesion, this article puts forward some suggestions for English writing in senior high school. However, there are still some shortcomings in this study, and it is expected that further studies can further improve this study.

Keywords: Cohesive devices; Senior high school; English writing



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1 Research Background

The new college entrance examination reform has set higher requirements for senior high school students' English writing, but right now, some high school English teachers in their teaching still focus more on students' accumulation of advanced vocabulary and correct use of grammar rules. They often overlook the cohesion and coherence of students' texts and the cultivation of students' creative and critical thinking. This leads to problems in students' compositions, like poor conception and expression, unclear logic, and improper connections between the context. The new college entrance examination reform requires students to be able to write more logical articles with coherent discourse. So, it's really necessary to introduce the discourse cohesion theory into high school English writing.

2 Research Process

Cohesion is a semantic connection, referring to the phenomenon where different components in a text are semantically related. If a certain part of the text plays a crucial role in the understanding of another part, then there is a cohesive relationship between those two parts (Halliday, 1976). Cohesion is a concept to do with discourse or text rather than with syntax; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text and defines it as a text (Hu, 2015). During the process of teaching English writing, the teacher first introduces the discourse cohesion theory and explains it by using examples from the guiding cases. The teacher guides the students to explore the role of discourse connection

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Article Citation: Chen, K. X. (2025). How to Apply Cohesive Devices to Senior High School Writing. *Guide to Education Innovation*, 5(3), 53-55.

on their own and instructs them to mark the usage of discourse connection methods in the material. This was intended to help students better understand the discourse connection theory and lay a foundation for the detailed explanation and practice of various discourse connection methods in the subsequent class. During the teaching process, in order to enhance students' interest in learning, group cooperation or free discussion methods can be adopted for them to absorb the learned knowledge. Subsequently, the teacher presented and explained the functions of various cohesive devices in the form of examples to the students, and told them that they can be roughly divided into conjunctions, grammatical cohesive devices and lexical cohesive devices. In the subsequent class, each discourse connection method was studied in detail, and corresponding example exercises and continuation writing training were conducted (Sun, 2024).

3 Research Implications

Besides, this study offers some implications for the teaching of English writing for senior high school students. First, it is the writing teachers' responsibility to first comprehend and then explain the marking and assessing criteria in the class, and thereby enhance students' awareness of what contributes to the quality of writing. And explicit instruction with examples should be provided by the writing teachers in class instead of accumulated awareness through learning. In addition, focused activities should be developed in combination with explicit instruction. The students can be required to write a paragraph for 3-5 minutes, using different cohesive devices. Following that, peer review could be used to analyze the cohesive devices used in each other's writing and comment on the effects of using those cohesive devices. After each task is finished, it is necessary for the writing teacher to choose a sample composition for critique, stressing the importance of using cohesive devices effectively and appropriately and reminding the students to avoid overusing or underusing cohesive devices. Besides, students should be encouraged to read as extensively as possible in order to raise their syntactic and semantic awareness. By doing this, they will not only extend their vocabulary but also better understand the use and meaning of words in different contexts. Finally, because reading is closely linked to writing, reading should be integrated into the teaching of writing.

For language learners, particularly middle school students, mastering cohesive devices can be a formidable challenge. Given the significance of guiding students through this complex landscape, especially from the perspective of English education, it is essential to summarize strategies that may help facilitate middle school students' proficiency in utilizing cohesive devices effectively in their writing.

First, from a linguistic standpoint, it is crucial to understand the types and functions of cohesive devices. Cohesion can be achieved through grammatical devices like reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions (Halliday, 1985), as well as lexical devices such as repetition, synonyms, and antonyms. For instance, conjunctions like "and", "but", "so", and phrases like "on the one hand, on the other hand" help connect clauses and sentences, thereby establishing a logical flow. Similarly, lexical cohesion through the use of related words or phrases reinforces themes and ideas across paragraphs.

Understanding these devices is the first step; however, applying them correctly within the context of writing requires deliberate practice and guidance. As an English Education major, I believe that embedding cohesive device instruction within a meaning-focused curriculum is essential. This means teaching cohesive devices not in isolation but within the context of writing assignments that require students to express complex ideas and arguments. For example, when assigning an essay on the pros and cons of social media, I would explicitly discuss how to use "on the one hand, on the other hand" to structure contrasting viewpoints effectively.

Moreover, modeling good writing practices is indispensable. Demonstrating how cohesive devices can be seamlessly integrated into a piece of writing through teacher-authored examples or exemplary student work can provide students with a tangible understanding of their application. During class discussions, we can analyze texts, highlighting instances of cohesive devices and discussing their impact on the overall coherence of the piece. This active engagement fosters a deeper appreciation for the role of cohesion in effective communication.

From a pedagogical perspective, incorporating interactive and student-centered activities can enhance learning results. Role-playing exercises, where students take on different perspectives and use cohesive devices to articulate their viewpoints, can be particularly engaging. By providing constructive feedback on the use of cohesive devices, students learn to recognize and rectify errors, thereby refining their writing skills.

Furthermore, incorporating technology can enrich the learning experience. Software tools designed to analyze writing for cohesion and coherence can provide instant feedback, highlighting areas where students might lack coherence. Encouraging students to use these tools responsibly can augment their self-assessment capabilities and enhance their understanding of cohesive devices.

Lastly, fostering a growth mindset among students is vital. Encouraging them to view mistakes as opportunities for growth and emphasizing the process of writing over the final product can alleviate anxiety and encourage experimentation with cohesive devices. Celebrating small victories, such as correctly using a conjunction to link two sentences, can build students' confidence and motivate them to continue improving.

In conclusion, helping middle school students master cohesive devices in English writing requires a multifaceted approach that combines linguistic understanding, pedagogical innovation, and a supportive learning environment. By embedding cohesive device instruction within meaningful contexts, modeling good practices, engaging students through interactive activities, leveraging technology, and nurturing a growth mindset, we can empower students to craft coherent and compelling essays that reflect their growing proficiency in English. As future educators, it is our responsibility to equip students with these essential skills, enabling them to communicate their ideas effectively and confidently in a global language.

4 Research Deficiencies and Prospects

This article has certain significance, but there are still certain limitations and deficiencies because of the limitations of my theoretical level and teaching practice experience. It is expected that future studies can further supplement and improve the study.

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