

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter is principally concerned with a background of cohesive study within nursing articles. To make sense of the text, the readers need to understand the connections within the text, the way writers create cohesion that helps readers relate ideas in the text. This study explores the uses of different types of textual relations and compares the use of cohesive devices which display and create meanings in the articles. Reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion are the focused types to be analyzed following Halliday and Hasan's framework.

Background of the Study

At present the spread of modern technology influences people's life. It brings people to world communication and global information. Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2007 : 2-7) state that communication is information transfer; a message is sent by a source through a channel to a receiver. Messages are the words, sounds, actions and gestures that people express to one another when they interact. Messages may be expressed verbally in words or non verbally in sounds. The most common of verbal symbols we use is language. Language is used to make messages and utterances in the form of words and translates them into meaning. Meaning is the interpretation of people to messages. Messages are set through media such as newspaper, text, cell phone, fax, and the Internet. Hence we can get new information, concept, idea, knowledge and opinion from these resources. In addition, we manage the process of creating, receiving and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages and media. These are used via language for communication.

Language is considered to be a system of communication. We get global information through language. The English language is increasing in demand for global communities, international relations, commerce, studies, and international laws. Furthermore, English also provides access to global knowledge and educational opportunities. Hence the English language is agreed to be used as the current globalized second language. It is utilized in business, science,

industry and education as well as personal exchange between people. Crystal (1977 : 2-3) views that the English language is used as news and this language continues to make news daily in many countries. Not everyone in the world speak English. English is not always an official language but what does it mean to say “English is a global language?” He notices that the English language has many facets such evidence in countries where large numbers of the people speak the language as a mother tongue. In addition, the English language is used as an official language, such as government, the court, the media, and education system in many countries. Thus, it is essential for people to master in daily life. Such a language is often described as a ‘second language’.

Regarding the role of English in Thailand, the increasing demand for the English language is a direct response to both government policies and private sectors. English facilitates political activity, international trade, international law, education, industry and helps people gain knowledge and skills. Therefore, the English language is needed for the development of government systems and stimulating government officials toward development of English communication in their work through studying as a foreign language by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, reading is the one needed to understand a variety of text to be further translated into Thai.

In recent years, research studies were widely conducted to improve the work in different ministries in Thailand. Researches are a very important factor that government officials use for systematic investigation of their work. Under different circumstances, different needs and interests of government officials create researches for many different reasons. They use research-based knowledge to improve the quality of their work. Thus, the English language is needed to read research reports, enabling them to draw facts, knowledge, ideas, and concepts from authors who provide different kinds of reports, textbooks, journals, and reviews. Since research reports are written in the English language, graduate students, academics, school teachers, health care professionals, researchers and engineers need to understand and appraise what they can find. However, there are problems that readers encounter in reading and interpreting the original reports such as specialized jargon, perceived level of intellectual demand, lack of self- evident validation and difficult retrieval. These problems are discussed by Locke, Silverman and Spirduso. (2004 : 3). They further explain that a related problem rests on

the belief that one needs both specialized training in academic subject matter and exceptional cognitive skills to understand the information that reports contain.

The preceding problem is supported by Flowerdew (2002 : 1). He points out that the study of academic discourse in English has been short history with developments in the preparation of non-native speakers for study in English. While English is well established as the world language of research and publication and more universities and institutes of learning are using it as a language of instruction, English for academic purpose is truly international phenomenon, linked the overall trend toward globalization of information exchange, communication and education. With this great expansion of the English language, there has been a parallel growth in preparation of non-native speakers to conduct research in academic journals.

According to the policy of Ministry of Public Health of Thailand, English skills of government officials are required for their work. Thus, Bureau of Nursing established competency in areas such as computer, English, calculation and data management for professional nurses. To support the policy, an English program was created for both graduate and undergraduate nurses. Also the Nurses' Association of Thailand creates the policy to promote and support research and publication to obtain a quality development model and quality nursing innovation that meets international standards. The other is to collaborate with other international and national professional for exchanging experiences and developing well-being of global communities (www.thainurse.org). For this reason, nurse anesthetists in the nursing field of Thailand with specialized training in anesthesia need to develop their work through research. Research is so important in their work that it is specified in the mission of every hospital. Research articles are important sources for nurses to draw information. For nurse anesthetists, research reports are important because there are new developments of drugs, equipment, procedures and new information in anesthesia created every year. Nurse anesthetists then must step forward to gain new information and knowledge for integrating with their work. Research reports can provide them guide decision about method of inquiry, designing the study, data collection procedures, detailed evidence providing information about the reliability and validity of measurement procedures, organizing data and specifying the means of analysis. Moreover, nurse anesthetists can get research findings as tentative and contingent upon further

investigation. Conclusion, assertions and recommendation are useful for their research. Thus, nurse anesthetists need to read good texts to help them understand and draw new knowledge, facts, and ideas to be integrated in their work. Good texts should be made up of units of connected discourse. Readable writing helps nurse anesthetists improve their comprehension. To catch the relationships among the parts of the articles and relation among ideas and concepts, there must be cohesiveness and consistency in the articles.

Researchers have given different reasons for readable writing. In the field of applied linguistics, researchers have attempted to define cohesive devices in English which provide basis for coherence. Schema theoreticians have argued that coherence is primary that readers look for coherence that exists in their schemata and world knowledge and then they recognize cohesion. It is suggested that these two approaches would benefit the reading process. Nevertheless, many researchers are interested in studying cohesion that is the first key feature that connects the reader and the writer in a text.

Cohesion is the syntactic coherence. It connects sentences and contributes most strongly to creating a text. Cohesion is studied in different terms. Halliday and Hasan (1976 : 2) define the concept of text as a semantic unit; the parts of text are linked together by cohesive ties. Cohesion, therefore, defines a text as text. Cohesion is described as a semantic concept which refers to relation of meaning that occurs within the text. Within text, if a previous element is referred to again and is dependent upon another element, it is considered a tie. Without a semantic tie, sentences or utterances would seem to lack any type of relationship to each other, since the writer or speaker uses cohesion to signal texture, the reader or listener has to react to it in order to interpret it. Cohesion, the different perspectives of concept, is the first standard among the seven standards of textuality suggested by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981 : 3). For them, cohesion concerns the ways in which the components of the surface text are mutually connected with a sequence.

Van Dijk (1977 : 11) introduces the concept of macro and microstructures of text as a way of describing the textual features of discourse with focus on literacy texts. Macrostructures refer to overarching links in text (or coherence). Microstructures, on the other hand, refer to the smaller units of the text that provide continuity (cohesion). Cohesive devices are what help

create texture. According to Witte & Faigley (1981 : 202), cohesion is defined as “the surface mechanisms that bind a text together”. (cited in Tshotsho. 2006).

The similar perception is explained by Horning (1993 : 4). He claims that the major characteristic that makes possibility in comprehension is the connection of the reader’s expectation and the writer’s intention. According to him, cohesion plays a central role in the reading process of getting meaning from print. It connects a string of sentences to a text rather than a series of unrelated statements.

The developmental studies of cohesion are suggested in Nunan (1987). He refers to Chapman (1982) who studied the perception of cohesion among different age groups. His research showed that the perception of cohesion was a significant factor in successful reading performance. Chapman found that the subjects’ scores in doing standardized reading tests were high on cohesion passages. Moberly (1978) found that the distance of cohesive ties was significant factor in the comprehension of anaphoric relations. As Barnitz (1980) investigated the ability of different age groups in comprehending pronoun referents. He found that referent types and orders were significant, but the distance was not. (cited in Nunan.1987 : 13-15).

In Irwin’s studies, he also found that the perception of cohesive relation in the text developed over time as students mature as readers and found that increasing level of cohesion in text improved reading comprehension. It made clear that it had the relevance of cohesion to reading and comprehension. (cited in Horning. 1993 : 5).

In Thailand, Klangchane (1986) first introduced a study of cohesion when she studied and analyzed contribution of schema theory and discourse analysis, combining the two theories to explain interactive comprehension process possibly experienced by ESL and EFL readers. She analyzed a text of a typical sample study report in predicting how a typical advanced Thai reader would interact with the text. In her analyses, she pointed out the important signals/discourse markers available in the text. Also, Klangchane made suggestions in her study for developing a reading program in Thailand.

In Thailand, cohesion has been studied in different perspectives and purposes of diverse disciplines. Kaewlai (2003) examined cohesion between English and Thai editorial columns. She found that there were differences in the occurrence of reference and conjunction in both languages. Dueraman (2006) studied cohesion and coherence in English essays written

by Malaysian and Thai medical students. Her study showed that there were no differences in the number cohesive devices used between the high and low-rated essays of the two groups.

Also, international studies of cohesion were interested in different perspectives. Meisuo (2000) studied the use of cohesive features in expository compositions of Chinese undergraduates from two Chinese universities. In South Africa, Ramasawmy (2004) investigated the relationships between conjunction cohesion and relational coherence in students' narrative composition and writing quality. Yankova (2006) was interested in studying of cohesion in statutory texts between English and Bulgarian. A contrastive study of cohesion and coherence between English and Chinese was examined by Chun Yeh (2004) in Taiwan. He found that the two languages had different system of cohesive devices. While Innajih (2006) investigated the impact of textual cohesive conjunctions on the reading comprehension of Libyan university students studying English as a foreign language. The results revealed that conjunctives facilitated the reading comprehension. Also these findings may require explicit teaching of conjunctions in order to improve reading comprehension.

In brief, although linguists have slightly different concepts of cohesion, a similar purpose is to connect sentences and create textual coherence. As mentioned before, cohesion provides links between sentences and creates semantic coherence within the text. It can be said that cohesion and coherence are needed for good writing to help the reading comprehension process : The writer encodes his message through the text and the reader gets the meaning of message by decoding it. The communication will be successful when a linking device provides appropriate clues leading to comprehension of the text's message. Hence, cohesive devices are used in linguistic analysis of texts because they can be counted as cohesive elements. It is assumed that the communicative success of the text relates to cohesion that creates semantic coherence within the texts.

The present study therefore aims to investigate the uses of different types of cohesive devices in anesthetic articles as categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976). The focus is on reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion that are displayed in the articles.

Purposes of the Study

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the uses of different types of textual relations found in anesthetic articles.
2. To compare the uses of textual relations found in anesthetic articles.

Research Questions

The present study focuses on the following specific questions.

1. What are the uses of different types of cohesive devices displayed in anesthetic articles?
2. What are the differences in using cohesive devices found in anesthetic articles?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the analysis of language use in terms of different types of textual relations that appear in anesthetic nursing articles. Five articles are drawn from The American Association of Nursing Anesthetists (AANA) and selected those published from February to June 2007 for analysis.

Definitions of Terms

To achieve mutual comprehension of this study, the definitions of terms are provided as follow:

1. Textual relations

Textual relations are networks of grammatical and lexical relations which connect various parts of a text. These relations refer to relations of meaning displayed through use of cohesive devices.

2. Grammatical cohesion

Grammatical cohesion refers to certain features of the syntax that tie sentences together. They consist of reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction.

3. Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion refers to the connections based on the words used. It is established through lexical items or vocabulary. There are two types of lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation.

4. Anesthetic articles

Anesthetic articles refer to research articles from The American Association of Nursing Anesthetists that are written by English writers and made available on www.aana.com.

Benefits of the Study

1. This study can help nurse anesthetists to get better understanding of English texts.
2. The study can be an illustration for studies of cohesion in other texts.
3. The study can provide guidelines for studies of cohesion among native and non-native English writers.

Conclusion

This chapter explains the importance of the English language used for communication involving reading of nurse anesthetists' materials. Reading is a way to help readers to gain new information and knowledge for developing their work. Studying connected discourse of the texts can help nurse anesthetists get better understanding of the texts. The key feature that connects sentences together is called cohesion, perceived by many linguists who describe it as creative textual coherence that enhances comprehension. This study will investigate and compare the uses of different types of cohesive devices used in anesthetic articles as categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976).