

Cohesive Ties and Their Impact on Children's Story Comprehension

Bikhtiyar O. Fattah

Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Koya University, Koya 44023, Kurdistan Region – F.R. Iraq

ABSTRACT

This study examines the significance of cohesive ties in constructing children's stories and their influence on children story comprehension. Simplicity is one of the essential conditions by which children's stories are recognized. This study aims to determine the occurrence frequency of cohesive ties in two children's stories, illustrate the impact of their uses on the degree of clarity and ambiguity children's stories and point out their influence on the children's comprehension to such kind of genre. The stories employed are 'Golden Windows' and 'The Pig Brother' by Laura Richards. This study adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is quantitative as it finds out the frequency of the use of cohesive ties in the selected children's stories. It is qualitative as it determines the influences of the use of cohesive ties on the construction of children's stories, and on the process of conveying messages in such stories. This study adopts Halliday and Hasan (1976) cohesion model for the recognition of cohesive ties. One of the significant concluding points this study has come up with is that the simplicity and the clarity of the children's stories are mainly connected to the avoidance certain cohesive ties such as exophora, clausal substitution, verbal ellipsis and clausal ellipsis.

KEY WORDS: Children's Stories, Cohesive Ties, Narrative Coherence, Semantic Cohesion, and Ellipsis

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Although children's stories look simple on the surface, writing children's stories is a very challenging task. Children story writers must encounter various factors to convey the intended message simply, clearly and educationally. Children's stories are categorized as a unique form of literature compared to other forms, particularly in terms of language complexity and audience comprehension. The nature of linguistic elements, the types of sentence structure, the logical flow of the ideas, and the connections between different linguistic elements have a considerable influence on the degree of clarity and ambiguity in children's stories. Thus, this study considers the linguistic structure of children's stories, mainly with the respect of using cohesive ties.

Cohesive ties play a noticeable role in the construction of both written and spoken discourses to provide a sense

of connection and flow among ideas, sentences, and paragraphs. Cohesive ties, according to Canary and Dainton (2003), have four main functions which are maintaining continuity, showing relationships between different pieces of information, enhancing clarity of the text, and avoiding repetition. However, the case in children's stories is different. The study hypothesizes that anaphora, conjunctions and lexical cohesion enhance simplicity, whereas ellipsis and substitution increase complexity in children's stories.

Halliday and Hasan cohesion model (1976) engendered a considerable number of researchers and linguists to examine cohesive ties in many texts of different genera and registers. They introduced the cohesion model as an approach to the text analysis from a linguistic orientation, and for this it is regarded as one of the prominent models of discourse analysis.

This study aims at identifying the occurrences of cohesive ties in children's stories, examining the

¹. Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS) Volume 8, Issue 2, 2025.

Received 1 January 2025

Accepted 27 January 2025

Regular research paper: Published 6 October 2025



Corresponding author's e-mail: bikhtiyar.omar@koyauniversity.org

Copyright ©2025 Bikhtiyar O. Fattah. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

influences of recurrences of cohesive ties on the children comprehension, and categorizing cohesive ties into those that enhance the degree of simplicity and clarity, and those that boost complexity and ambiguity in the children's stories. This study tries to answer these three research questions:

1. How frequent are the cohesive ties in the selected stories?
2. How do cohesive ties affect the construction of children's stories in terms of simplicity and complexity?
3. What are the reasons behind the diversity in the degree of using cohesive ties?

For conducting this study, two children's stories were selected: 'The Golden Windows' and 'The Pig Brother'. These stories were written by the American female author *Laura E. Richards*. The main themes of "The Golden Windows" revolve around perspective and perception, contentment and gratitude, as well as the contrast between illusion and reality. The protagonist is a curious and adventurous young boy who is fascinated to explore the reason behind a shining window of a faraway house which he perceives as a golden window. One day, he decides to pay a visit to the house, so when he arrives he finds that it is just a very normal window mirroring the shine of the sunlight. He also finds that the windows of his house are shining like gold when seen from a distance. The second story 'The Pig Brother' demonstrates the importance of moral and self-improvement in humans' life. The main characters in this story are a pig, an untidy boy, and a tidy angel. It is about an untidy boy that behaves selfishly and thoughtlessly; therefore, he was not accepted as a brother by different tidy animals except an untidy pig.

The selection of these two stories is based on the following characteristics: 1. The stories are neither too short nor too long; 2. They are written by a well-known native English author; 3. The nature of the stories and their structure determine that these stories are written for children aged from 8 years to 12 years as they are literate children. This study illustrates the extent to which cohesive ties are observed in children's stories, and how the cohesive ties could be bases for clarity, on the one hand, or for ambiguity, on the other hand. The problems of using cohesive ties in children's literary works usually arise from the use of some of the cohesive ties such as clausal ellipsis, clausal substitutions and synonyms that are mostly used in professional academic writings. Thus, this study figures out the extent to which these complicated types of cohesive ties are avoided in children's stories.

The number of the studies that examine the impact of cohesive ties on the construction of children's stories is

very restricted. Puurtinen (1998) conducted a study concentrating on the syntactic structure, readability and ideology in English and Finnish children's literature. In his study, Puurtinen (1998) gives a deep insight into some of the lexico-grammatical patterns and their interpretations in English and Finnish children's literature. However, lexico-grammatical patterns that are investigated by Puurtinen cover some of the cohesive ties, whereas many others such as clausal ellipses and clausal substitutions which play a noticeable role in the composition of children's literature are ignored. Shapiro and Hudson (2014) examine children's ability to utilize cohesive ties and establish coherent narratives in the stories written by children. Shapiro and Hudson's work concentrates on the use and types of cohesive ties without considering their diversity in the frequency and their contributions in enhancing clarity or ambiguity in the children's literature. Moini and Kheirhah (2016) compare children's literary works to the adults' literary works in consideration with the frequency of lexical cohesive markers and conjunctions. However, they ignored the occurrence frequency of grammatical cohesive ties in children's stories, and their influence in terms of clarity or ambiguity on them. Moreover, Irawati et al. (2019) conducted a study to explain and analyse the application of cohesion to children's story books and figure out the contribution of cohesion in the construction of children's stories. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to identify the frequency of using cohesive ties in children's stories without providing a logical reason for having diversity in such a genre. The only concluding point that is mentioned by Irawati et al. (2019) is that *references* are the most frequently used cohesive ties among the grammatical cohesion markers, and the *repetition* is the most frequently used cohesive ties among lexical cohesion.

It can be concluded that the previous studies conducted on children's stories and literature are mostly descriptive studies. They have not examined the contribution of cohesive ties in enhancing the clarity and ambiguities in the children's stories in which they are used. What distinguishes the current study from the conducted ones is that this study determines the occurrence frequency of each cohesive tie, and demonstrates the influence of each type of them on the degree of simplicity, clarity and ambiguity in the selected children's stories. Thus, the findings of this study could highly contribute to identifying the role of cohesive ties in children's stories. Moreover, these findings will be of considerable significance for children's story writers and those interested in children's literature.

1. Cohesion Model

Cohesion is a model introduced by Halliday and Hasan in 1976 as an attempt to analyse the nature of text from a linguistic orientation. Cohesion model embraces four essential components to show how it works as a linguistic approach to discourse analysis, and the pillars are text, texture, cohesion, and cohesive ties. The cohesion model covers all the components of the written discourses including cohesive ties as they play a significant role in the construction of written texts. Moreover, cohesive ties highly contribute to enhance the degree of clarity or ambiguity in the texts in which they are used. Therefore, this module is selected to analyse the role of cohesive ties in the construction of Children's stories to determine those cohesive ties that enhance the degree of clarity and those that increase the degree of ambiguity in Children's stories.

2.1. Text

Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that text "is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence; and it is not defined by its size", but it is realized by the cooperation that sentences have and the nature that they are gathered to operate together to produce a set of meanings. Simply, for Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.2) "text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning". Thus, it is not a representative of grammatical combination units, but it is a semantic entity that conveys meaning. For example, any meaningful piece of writing or oral interaction is regarded as a text. To identify the nature of text, this module provides the concept of texture.

2.2. Texture

Texture is another component of Halliday and Hasan model, which is regarded as "the property of being a text" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). For Halliday, texture is quality that makes a set of sentences a cohesive and coherent text rather than a random collection of sentences. In order to clarify how sentences are made cohesive, Halliday's cohesion model illustrates cohesion in detail.

2.3. Cohesion

The notion of cohesion for Halliday and Hasan (1976) is restrictedly counted as a semantic phenomenon that gains insight into relations of meaning that are usually seen within text, and it "occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another". Halliday and Hasan believe that it is the cohesive relations among the lexicons, clauses and sentences that determine how a text is constructed. Rahimi and Ebrahimi (2012) elaborated on the function of cohesion by stating that cohesion makes a great contribution in connecting different parts of a text via a

network of lexical, syntactic, and semantic relations. Moreover, Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) and Fattah (2000) state that not only is cohesion concerned with internal organization of discourse, but also in relating the internal organization to the functions of language. In order to maintain cohesion in any sort of text, Halliday identifies all the types of cohesive ties.

2.4. Cohesive Ties

Cohesive ties are the essential component of Halliday and Hasan's model. It consists of a number of ties which actively engage in the process of characterizing any segment of a text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) cohesive ties are of five types: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

2.4.1. Reference

Reference refers to specific items within a text in a way that their meanings derive from the items they refer to (Fattah, 2004), i.e. they are not meaningful by themselves. References fall under three different forms: personal, demonstrative and comparative, and can be either Exophora or Endophora (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

i. Exophora

Exophoric reference points to the situational context for the interpretation of a specific item. It always refers to something that is not part of a given text and is therefore not cohesive (e.g. *That* is amazing.) (Crystal, 2003).

ii. Endophora

Endophoric reference usually refers to other items within a given text or discourse and it is of two types: Anaphora and Cataphora. Anaphora covers those reference words whose interpretation depends upon an earlier expression in context, e.g. Marry attended the party, but nobody saw *her*. Cataphora is the use of a reference word that co-refers with a later expression in the discourse, e.g. When *she* arrived at university, *Mary* had gone to her office (Crystal, 2003).

2.4.2. Substitutions

Substitution is one of the cohesive ties which deal with the process in which a word is substituted by another one in a text or discourse; for example, *Mary's bag is very old. She must buy a new one*, here we can notice that the word 'bag' is replaced by 'one' (Trask, 2013). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), substitutions are classified into three types: Nominal substitution, Verbal substitution, and Clausal substitution. These types of substitution are clarified in the following examples.

1. a. He studied the **whole text last night**.

I did the **same**. (Nominal)

b. He likes **playing tennis** more than

I would ever **do**. (Verbal)

c. **They have failed**, then?

I regret **so**. (Clausal)

In the above examples, the types of substitutions are simply illustrated. In the example (1.a) the word 'same' stands for 'whole text last night' to function as a nominal substitute, in the (1.b) the word 'do' substitutes 'likes playing tennis' to stand as a verbal substitute, whereas in (1.c) the word 'so' is the representative of the independent clause 'they have failed' to represent the clausal substitution.

2.4.3. Ellipsis

It is the process of leaving out a word or phrase or a clause in order to avoid repetition in a text or discourse without affecting the meaning or causing misunderstanding and it is of three types: Nominal Ellipsis, Verbal Ellipsis and Clausal Ellipsis (Burviana, 2018). The abovementioned types of ellipsis are clarified in the following three examples.

2. a. A: Have some juice
B: There is not any? (Nominal)
- b. A: Is he *talking*?
B: Yes, he is. (Verbal)
- c. A: Are you coming?
B: Yes (Clausal)

The above three examples simply identify the types of ellipses. In the example (2.a), the common noun 'juice' is left out in the second part of the example, and for this it is recognized as nominal ellipsis. In the example (2.b), the present participle verb 'talking' is not repeated in the second part of the example; therefore, it is categorized as a verbal ellipsis. In the example (2.c), the independent clause 'Are you coming' is left out in the second part of the example, so this example represents clausal ellipsis.

2.4.4. Conjunctions

Another type of cohesion is conjunction. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 226),

Conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.

Moreover, Conjunctions are categorized into four types: additive (and, moreover, on the other hand, in other words, for example, etc.), adversative (however, but, actually, in fact, instead, in any case, etc.), causal (because of, for this reason, then, in this respect, etc.) and temporal (next, at once, the last time, at first, finally, in the end, up to now, etc.). The following examples show the use of conjunctions as a sort of cohesive tie.

3. a. They fought a battle. *Afterwards*, it snowed.
- b. John says he does not know Mary.
Further, he denies ever having seen her or

spoken to her.

- c. She failed. *However*, she did not give up.
- d. I was not informed. *Otherwise*, I should have taken some action.

2.4.5. Lexical cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion is another sort of cohesion that is concerned with the semantic relationships between words, and it consists of two types: Reiteration and Collocation. For Halliday and Hasan (1976), reiteration is represented in four types which are: repetition, synonym, superordinate, and general word as they are clarified in the following examples extracted from Halliday and Hasan (1976):

The basic example: John caught a **snake** underneath a bucket.

4. a. The **snake** is going to suffocate if it stays there very long. (Repetition)
- b. The **serpent** is going to suffocate if he does not let it go. (Synonym)
- c. The **animal** is going to suffocate if he does not let it go. (Superordinate)
- d. The **poor thing** is going to suffocate if he does not let it go. (General word)

The above examples (from 4.a to 4.d) show the semantic relations among the words 'snake', 'serpent', 'animal', and 'poor thing' that are successively stands as 'repetition', 'synonym', 'superordinate', and 'general word' for the word 'snake' in the basic example.

Regarding collocation, Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 284) define collocation as "the most problematic part of lexical cohesion.... that is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur".

5. Why does this little boy wriggle all the time? Girls do not wriggle.

In the above example 'little boy' is a collocation, and while the word 'boy' can be replaced by 'child' and, the cohesion remains intact. Additionally, there is lexical relationship between the word 'boy' and the word 'girl'.

3. LANGUAGE AND COHESIVE TIES IN CHILDREN'S STORIES

Despite numerous studies examining the nature of language in children's stories and the use of cohesive ties by primary school pupils, I have not encountered any research that applies Halliday and Hasan's cohesion model to identify the frequency of all cohesive ties in these texts. Rutter and Raban (1982), Fitzgerald and Spiegel (1986), Cameron et al. (1995) and many others investigated the occurrence of one or two of the cohesive ties in primary pupils' writings and speaking, but no study examined the diversity of cohesive ties in children's

stories.

Regarding the language and linguistic structure of children's stories, they are typically characterized by simplicity, enabling children to easily understand them and effectively receive the messages inherent in the stories. According to Karmiloff-Smith (1981) and Pappas (1991), child literary works are generally recognized by simplicity in terms of idea and structure and the manipulated words are simple and clear. In the other words, the types of used sentences are mostly simple and compound as they are easier to comprehend compared to complex sentences.

Moreover, Sunderland (2010), in his book '*Language, gender and children fiction*', simply state that any children fiction is expected to be written and organized in a very plain language and a simple structure in order to: avoid ambiguity, convey the theme clearly, and keep the children concentration on the track. Sunderland (2010) adds that children's stories are usually filled with the forms or elements of language that lead to simplicity and clarity, because children story authors usually try to avoid the linguistic form or/and the linguistic elements that result in complexity and ambiguity.

Furthermore, Fitzgerald and Spiegel (1986) gain a deeper insight into the nature of children's works, and they admit that some types of cohesive ties play a great role in establishing clarity, smoothness, and simplicity in such works. To support what is stated above by Fitzgerald and Spiegel, a study conducted by Hickmann and Hendriks proves that one can easily observe the incredible contribution of reference, particularly anaphora, in the construction of stories that are written for children (Hickmann & Hendriks, 1999). For instance, below is an example from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter:

6. a. Peter sat down to rest; he was out of breath and trembling with fright, and he had not the least idea which way to go. Also, he was very damp while sitting in that can.

In the above example, Peter was replaced by the referential pronoun 'he' in two followed sentences without causing any sort of ambiguity.

To conclude, all the types of cohesive ties that are introduced by Halliday take part in constructing children's stories with a different degree of occurrences. However, no study has examined the contributions of all of them in constructing clarity or ambiguity in children's story yet. This is due to the researchers' preference to concentrate on one or a couple of cohesive ties because the enrollment of all of them requires a thorough analysis. Moreover, examining all the cohesive ties makes the study an interdisciplinary one and this requires the researcher to be well familiar with syntax and semantics.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study considers the use of the cohesive ties in two children's stories to determine the cohesive ties degree of use, their constructional roles, and their influence on the degree of simplicity and ambiguity in such a genre. This study adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is a quantitative study for underlining all the cohesive ties and determining the frequency occurrence of each type of them in the selected stories. It is a qualitative study for administering a questionnaire of open-ended questions, and for having an experimental group of children.

4.1 Model of Analysis

This study makes use of two moral stories as data for investigating cohesive ties in children's stories. The first story is '*The Golden windows*' and the second one is '*The Pig Brother*' in which both of them were written by the American writer Laura E. Richards. This study draws on the Halliday and Hasan (1976) model 'cohesion' to analyze the data taken from the above two Children's stories in connection to cohesive ties (see Section 2). And this will be fulfilled by underlining all the cohesive ties in the selected short stories to figure out the sort and the occurrence frequency of each cohesive tie, and to identify the factors behind the diversity in the frequency of cohesive ties in these two selected stories.

4.2 The Data

The data are collected in three different ways.

i. Identifying and categorizing all the used cohesive ties in two selected children's stories: *The Golden Windows*, and *The Pig Brother* by the American author Laura E. Richards.

ii. Administering a questionnaire that includes open-ended questions to identify the reasons behind the diversity in the degree of using cohesive ties.

iii. Examining the comprehension competence of a group of children of some selected statements in a selected children story. Therefore, a story that includes almost all the cohesive ties was selected. 36 statements were highlighted by the researcher. These statements include different types of cohesive ties. The children were asked to read the whole story and underline all the highlighted statements that they cannot understand, and leave the others as they are. This experimental attempt is helpful to identify the cohesive ties that result in clarity and those cohesive ties that lead to ambiguity in constructing Children's stories.

4.3 The Participants

The participants are categorized into two groups. The

first group consists of 21 participants including Eight PhD holders specialized in discourse analysis, 7 children story writers, and 6 short story writers have been engaged in the questionnaire. The second group consists of ten Kurdish children aged between 8 to 12 years and can speak and read English fluently. These children have been engaged to identify the statements that they can easily comprehend, and the statements that they cannot within the employed stories. This procedure will be helpful to figure out the role of cohesive ties in this respect, and identify these types of cohesive ties.

4.3.1 The Rationale behind the Selection of Participants

The rationale behind the selection of the participants is clearly justified below.

i. The reason behind the selection of PhD holders specialized in discourse analysis is that they can highly contribute in the process of analyzing any sort of discourse with making use of various approaches to discourse analysis including cohesion model. Moreover, they are also aware of the influence of each type of cohesive ties on children's stories in terms of clarity and ambiguity.

ii. Story writer and children story writers are enrolled in the process of data collection in order to take their view about the frequent use of certain cohesive ties such as anaphora, repletion, additive conjunctions, nominal

substitution, nominal ellipsis, and about the restrictions in the use of some other cohesive ties such as cataphora, exophora, verbal and clausal substitution, verbal and clausal ellipsis, etc. in the children's stories.

iii. Kurdish children who can fluently speak and read English were also enrolled in this study.

4.3.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are maintained by informing the participants, especially children's parents with the research purposes, procedures and benefits. The participants including children's parents were assured that this study does not cause any physical, psychological or moral harm to the participants.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. Analysis and Discussion of the Selected Children Short Stories

The data are taken from two moral children short stories: The first story is 'The Golden window', and the second one is 'The Pig Brother'. In these two stories all the cohesive ties were identified in order to determine the types of cohesive ties that are used in these two stories and the frequency occurrence of each one of them. The following table illustrates the used types of cohesive ties and the number of each one of them.

Table (1)
The Occurrence Frequency of Cohesive Ties in the Selected Stories

	Cohesive ties	Subtypes of cohesive ties	Occurrence frequency of cohesive ties		
1	Reference	Exophora	0	108	108
		Endophora	108		
		Anaphora Cataphora	0		
2	Substitution	Nominal Substitution	9	11	11
		Verbal Substitution	2		
		Clausal Substitution	0		
3	Ellipsis	Nominal Ellipsis	22	28	28
		Verbal Ellipsis	4		
		Clausal Ellipsis	2		
4	Conjunctions	Additive	12	21	21
		Adversative	4		
		Temporal	3		
		Clausal	2		
5	Lexical Cohesion	Reiteration	13	13	16
		Repetition	0		
		Synonym	0		
		Superordinate	0		
		General word	0		
		Collocation	3		
	Total use of all the types of cohesive ties				184

Table (1) is designed to encompass all the cohesive ties that are used in the two selected children's stories. It illustrates the occurrence frequency of each cohesive tie

introduced in Halliday's cohesion model including references, substitutes, ellipses, conjunctions and lexical cohesions. Table (1) illustrates that the writer in her two

moral stories has used all the types of the cohesive ties that are introduced in the Halliday and Hasan Model 1976. According to the data collected from the two moral selected stories, the total occurrences of all the types of cohesive ties is 186 times, and we can observe that 'reference' is the most frequent type for being occurred 108 times, whereas the least frequent occurred type of the cohesive ties is 'Substitution' with 12 times. Moreover, the degree of using the other types of cohesive ties is restricted: Ellipsis is used 29 times, conjunctions are identified 21 times in the selected stories, and lexical cohesions are detected 16 times.

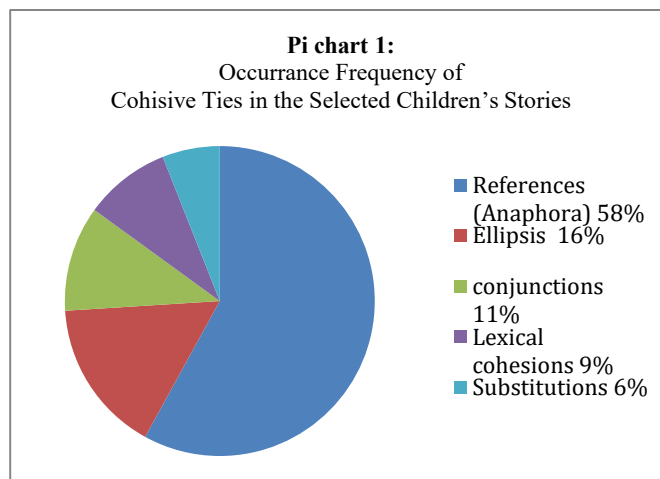
The first type of cohesive tie is reference. All the occurrences of reference in these two stories fall under 'anaphora'. In the other words, 'references' are classified into Exophora and Endophora, and endophora is further divided into cataphora and Anaphora, but the only type of reference that is used in these two stories is anaphora; the other types of reference exophora and cataphora have not been used at all. Thus, reference, represented by anaphora' occurred 108 times. The type of reference that is used frequently in the text is anaphora because its interpretation depends upon an earlier expression in context. This enables children to have easier access to the precise connection between the referent and the reference. However, catephora and endophora are not used in the examined stories at all because cataphora refers to a followed noun phrase and endophora to something that is not mentioned in the text at all. Thus, the use of cataphora and endophra enhances ambiguity in the text.

Substitution is another kind of cohesive ties that is detected in the selected stories although its occurrence by 12 times is regarded as the least frequent type among other cohesive ties. Substitution is of three kinds (nominal, verbal, and clausal), and the nominal substitution with 9 reoccurrence is the most frequent one. Verbal substitution and clausal substitutions impair children to track the ideas. Clausal substitutions are recognized by the substitution of a descriptive part in a sentence, and this disables children to understand that sentence (See Subsection 6.3).

The third type of cohesive ties found in the considered short stories is ellipsis by 29 occurrences. Ellipsis is also categorized into three types (nominal, verbal, and clausal), and all these three types have taken part in the construction of these moral children's stories. However, the occurrence frequency of the nominal ellipsis composes approximately 78% of all the ellipsis uses. Although the frequency use of ellipsis is to some extent restricted in the employed stories, the use of clausal and the verbal ellipses are the least. These two types of ellipsis are fulfilled by the omission of a very essential component of the sentence, and this enhances the degree of ambiguity in the sentences in which they are located.

A conjunction is the fourth type of cohesive ties, and its use is noticed 21 times in the concerned theories. The conjunctions are of four types (Additive, Adversatives, Causal, and temporal), and these four types were found in the adopted stories; however, the additive one is the more frequent one and the clausal one is the least frequent one. Additive conjunctions enable children to track the ideas smoothly; therefore, their frequent use boosts the degree of clarity in the texts. However, the use of clausal conjunctions is very restricted because it is directly connected with the use of complex sentences. The authors avoided complex sentences; therefore, clausal conjunctions are avoided automatically.

The last type of the cohesive ties is lexical cohesion, and it is further classified into two types (Reiteration and Collocation). Lexical cohesion has been observed 16 times: 13 as reiteration repetitions and 3 as collocations. Reiterations fall under four categories (repetition, synonym, superordinate and general word), but only repetition (13 occurrences) is used by the author in her stories. The repetition of the words enables children to have easier access to the information, whereas the use of lexical cohesions such as subordinate and general word impedes the conceptualization process by children. Concerning the proportion of each type of cohesive ties, the following pie chart is designed to illustrate them.



Pie chart (1) shows that the proportion of frequent occurrences of anaphora as one of the types of reference is nearly 58% of all the identified cohesive ties in the concerned stories. The use of ellipsis comes in the second position at the percentage of 16%, and conjunctions in the third position with the ratio 11%. Finally, 9% and 6% of all the used cohesive ties in the adopted moral stories were associated with the lexical cohesion and substitutions successively to stand as the fourth and the fifth position in the diversity range of cohesive ties.

5.2. Analysis and Discussion of the Open-ended Questionnaire

The questionnaire that has been administered consists of five open-ended questions. These questions were administered to PhD holders specialized in Discourse Analysis, short story authors, and writers of children's story to identify the reasons behind the diversities observed in the employed children's stories, and determine their influence on the degree of simplicity and ambiguity. The questions are these:

5.2.1. Question One

The first question is designed to investigate the frequent use of anaphora with (108 occurrences), and the avoidance of using cataphora and exophora by the author in her short stories. According to the participants' responses, pronouns (references) in general are common in everyday interactions, so children become familiar with them early on and they can easily understand them. However, the

participants add that types of references are different in terms of providing clarity; anaphora is very helpful to keep the children on the track without causing any sort of misunderstanding whereas cataphora and exaphora cause ambiguity and consequently lead to misunderstanding among the readers which they are mostly children. According to the participants, in the case of cataphora, it is difficult for children to hold a pronoun like *it* in memory until the referent is clarified later because it creates a higher cognitive load to children to resolve the meaning retroactively, unlike anaphora, where the referent is already known. Regarding, exaphora, the participants believe that it even causes more ambiguity compared to cataphora. Children's ability to interpret exophoric references depends on their cognitive development. Children usually struggle with tracking what a pronoun like *it* refers to, especially when the reference is outside of a text or story. Therefore, cataphora and exophora are usually avoided in children's stories.

5.2.2. Question Two

The second question is concerned with the reasons behind the frequent use of the reference (108 times), and the non-frequency in using all the other cohesive ties (Ellipsis: 29 times, conjunction: 21 times, lexical cohesion 16 times, and substitution: 12 times. There is a sort of consensus among the respondents that the use of ellipses (namely, verbal and clausal ellipsis), conjunctions (namely, clausal conjunction), substitutions (namely, verbal and clausal substitutions), and lexical cohesion (namely, synonym, subordinate and general word) can negatively contribute in the construction of children's stories in terms of simplicity and clarity. For example, the

participants believe that understanding a sentence with an elided verb or clause requires the ability to infer the missing information from context. Children are still developing these inferential skills; therefore, they cannot easily fill in the gaps left by omitted verbs or clauses because children usually depend on explicit information for comprehension. Regarding the non-frequent use of substitutions, the participants admit that children have restricted mental processing abilities, so using substitutions in children's stories may cause ambiguity or make the connection between clauses less clear, and these potentially cause confusion. Concerning the restrictiveness in the use of clausal conjunctions, the participants believe that clausal conjunctions are the source of constructing long and complex sentences that demonstrate cause-effect relationships, conditions, or contrasts, which they require a developed mental process from children to comprehend sentences with causal conjunctions. Therefore, according to the responses, the respondents believe that cohesive ties such as substitutions, ellipsis and some types of conjunctions and lexical cohesions are widely avoided in children's stories.

5.2.3. Question Three

The third question is about the high frequency in the use of both nominal substitutions and nominal ellipsis compared to the restriction in the use of verbal substitution, clausal substitution, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis. All the respondents believe that nominal substitutions and nominal ellipsis are easy to comprehend by children but verbal and clausal substitutions, and verbal and clausal ellipsis are regarded as four difficult linguistic processes in terms of use and interpretation. Therefore, these four linguistic aspects are widely avoided in this kind of genre. The participants admit that Nominal substitution and nominal ellipsis keep the language straightforward and repetitive, which aligns with children's cognitive processing abilities. They help children follow the story easily without overloading the content of the story with complex structures. In contrast, verbal and clausal substitutions require a good level of familiarity with syntax.

5.2.4 Question Four

The fourth question is raised to figure out the frequent occurrence of additive conjunctions over the restrictedness in the occurrence of the other types of conjunctions such as clausal, temporal and adversative conjunctions. According to the participants in the questionnaire, additive conjunctions like *and*, *or*, *besides that*, *likewise*, etc. are frequently used due to their positive role in keeping the ideas and information flow easily, and also due to their ease in comprehension. Additive conjunctions, unlike the other types of conjunctions, are

mostly used in simpler sentence structures that are easier for children to comprehend. They need less cognitive effort from the children to understand them compared to clausal, temporal or adversative conjunctions which demonstrate more complex relationships, such as cause and effect, condition or conflict in the context.

5.2. 5 Question Five

Question five is designed to figure out the reasons behind the frequent use of *repetition* as one of the types of lexical cohesion, and the reasons behind the avoidance of using the other lexical cohesion types which are synonyms, subordinates and general words. Based on the claims obtained from the participants' responses, the frequent use of *repetition* can highly engage in giving simplicity to any sort of text in which they are used. However, the participants add that the other types of lexical cohesion raise the degree of the ambiguity in any text in which they are utilized. In brief, what makes repetition different from the other lexical cohesion is that repetition helps to reinforce key vocabulary and concepts, helps children conserve new vocabulary by providing multiple exposures to the same term, and keeps the children engaged in the story.

5.3 Results and Discussion of the Test

As it is mentioned in the participants section, the test-takers group consists of ten Kurdish children aged between 8 to 12 years who can fluently speak and read English. The engagement of this group of children aims to examine their comprehension competence of some selected statements in the selected children's stories, and determine the role of cohesive ties in terms of enhancing the degree of clarity and ambiguity in such a kind of genre. The results below introduce all those cohesive ties that are detected in the selected story, and illustrate the extent to which they contribute to the clarity of the statement, and consequently to the story in which they are used.

The results derived from the experimental group show that 100% of the participated children (10 children) underlined the statements that include anaphora, nominal substitution, nominal ellipsis, verbal substitution, additive conjunctions, adversative conjunctions, temporal conjunctions, and lexical cohesion repetitions as easy statements to comprehend and understand. Moreover, 80% of the participated children (8 children) underlined statements that include Exophora, clausal substitution, verbal ellipsis, clausal ellipsis, clausal conjunctions, superordinate reiteration, general word reiteration and collocations as the statements that are difficult to understand.

For example, in the story *Golden Windows* the nominal substitution *one* is used to stand for *horse-chestnut* in the

phrase 'one white like milk'. The experimental children did not cause any problem in its interpretation by the experimental group children as they easily could make a link between *one* and *horse-chestnut*. However, in the same story, a clausal substitution in the sentence 'I know that' caused misunderstanding to the majority of the experimental group children as they could not deduce that the word *that* stands for 'the golden windows could only be seen at a certain hour'. For more elaboration, in the story *Golden Windows*, the clause 'seemed to be followed him' which appears in the preceding sentences is elided in this sentence 'His shadow, too'. This ellipsis caused ambiguity to the children in the experimental group. It is difficult for children to deduce that the word *too* in this sentence 'His shadow, too' is used to tell that *his shadow* did something (seemed to be following him) that had been done by *his fingerprint* earlier in this story. The children faced difficulty in making a linkage between *too* and *seemed to be following him*.

The second story *The Pig Brother* also includes some examples that make the process of comprehension difficult by the children in the experimental group. For instance, the phrase *such a question* in the sentence 'Why do you insult me by asking such a question?' is not precisely comprehended. The children in the experimental group were asked 'what the question is', but they could not retrieve the question because the distance between the question that is asked by the pig and the response that the pig had received from the squirrel is long. The question and the response are separated by two exclamatory sentences and lots of descriptive words inserted in a compound sentence that consists of four independent clauses. This example proves that nominal substitutions can also result in ambiguity in children's stories.

The results that are obtained from the children experimental group are to a large extent similar to the results that are obtained from the open-ended questionnaire that are administered with the engagement of some discourse analysts, story writers and children story writers. Thus, the participants have to a great extent confirmed the results achieved from the analysis of the selected story. They identified all the types of cohesive ties that enhance the degree of clarity from those cohesive ties that cause ambiguity and increase misunderstanding in the stories in which they are used.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study emphasizes the importance of simplicity and clarity in the construction of children's stories to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding, and to be able to convey the intended educational message clearly. Cohesion Model is an appropriate model to analyse

Children's stories in terms of structure. Some of the cohesive ties such as anaphora, nominal substitution, nominal ellipsis, verbal substitution, additive conjunctions, adversative conjunctions, temporal conjunctions, and repetition reiterations are those cohesive ties that enhance clarity in children's stories. Therefore, in the examined children's stories, the author used a simplified language in shaping their stories as she widely used anaphora, nominal substitutions, nominal ellipsis, additive conjunctions and reiterative repetitions. On the contrary, this study has concluded that exophora, clausal substitution, verbal ellipsis, clausal ellipsis, clausal conjunctions, superordinate reiteration, general word reiteration and collocations are those cohesive ties that enhance ambiguity in children's stories. Their avoidance in children's stories enhances the degree of clarity of the text and promotes the children's degree of comprehension of the stories. Although some of these cohesive ties are used in the examined children's stories, they are generally avoided. Thus, the use of cohesive ties plays a great role in determining the degree of clarity and ambiguity in the children's stories in which they are used.

Based on the findings achieved in this study further studies are recommended to examine the influence of clausal substitutions and clausal ellipsis on the degree of clarity in children's stories.

REFERENCES

- Burviana, S., 2018. An Analysis of Grammatical Cohesion: Ellipsis and Substitution in Barack Obama's Speeches (Doctoral Dissertation).
- Cameron, C.A., Lee, K., Webster, S., Munro, K., Hunt, A.K. & Linton, M.J., 1995. Text cohesion in children's narrative writing. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 16(3), pp.257-269.
- Canary, D. J., & Dainton, M. 2003. Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations. New York: Routledge.
- Crystal, D., 2003. A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics (Vol. 5). Blackwell.
- Fattah, B.O., 2024. A Boundary among Reference, Sense and Meaning: An Essence for Translating Rhetorical Statements. *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(1), pp.557-568. <https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v7n1y2024.pp557-568>
- Fattah, B.O., 2023. Novel Metaphor Recognition, Interpretation and Construction: Barriers Face Kurds as Non-native English Speakers. *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(1), pp.259-270. <https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v6n1y2023.pp259-270>
- Fattah, B.O., 2020. Giving and interpreting compliments in English and Kurdish: Private-sector workplace as a sample. *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), pp.21-30. <https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v3n1y2020.pp21-30>
- Fitzgerald, J. and Spiegel, D.L., 1986. Textual cohesion and coherence in children writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, pp.263-280.
- Halliday, M. A.K. and Hasan, R., 1976. *Cohesion in English*. Longman.
- Hickmann, M. and Hendriks, H., 1999. Cohesion and anaphora in children narratives: A comparison of English, French, German, and Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of Child Language*, 26(2), pp.419-452.
- Irawati, T., Nababan, M., Santosa, R. & Kristina, D., 2019, July. Cohesion Markers in Children's Story Books. In *Proceedings of the 3rd English Language and Literature International Conference, ELLiC*, 27th April 2019, Semarang, Indonesia.
- Karmiloff-Smith, A. 1981. The grammatical marking of thematic structure in the development of language production. In W. Deutsch (ed.) *The child's construction of language*. NY: Academic Press.
- Moini, M.R. & Kheirkhah, F., 2016. Use of cohesive devices in children and regular literature: Conjunctions and lexical cohesion. *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, 4(4), pp.12-23.
- Pappas, C.C., 1991. Young children strategies in learning the "book language" of information books. *Discourse Processes*, 14(2), pp.203-225.
- Puurtinen, T., 1998. Syntax, readability and ideology in children's literature. *Meta*, 43(4), pp.524-533.
- Rahimi, A. & Ebrahimi, N.A., 2012. Lexical cohesion in English and Persian texts of novels. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(11), pp.569-577.
- Shapiro, L.R. & Hudson, J.A., 2014. Coherence and cohesion in children's stories. In *Processing interclausal relationships* (pp. 23-48). Psychology Press
- Struthers, L., Lapadat, J.C. & MacMillan, P.D., 2013. Assessing cohesion in children writing: Development of a checklist. *Assessing Writing*, 18(3), pp.187-201.
- Sunderland, J., 2010. *Language, gender and children fiction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Tierney, R.J. & Mosenthal, J.H., 1983. Cohesion and textual coherence. *Research in the Teaching of English*, pp.215-229.
- Trask, R.L., 2013. *A dictionary of grammatical terms in linguistics*. Routledge: New York.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: The Link of the Examined Children's stories

1. The Golden Windows: <https://americanliterature.com/author/laura-e-richards/short-story/the-golden-windows/>
2. The Pig Brother: <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/68/fairy-tales-and-other-traditional-stories/5097/the-pig-brother/>

Appendix Two: The Questionnaire

1. Why has the writer, among the types of reference, used 108 anaphora without using any cataphora and exophora?
2. Why the reference with 108 times is the most frequently used cohesive tie, but the frequency of using all the other cohesive ties is restricted, ranging from 16 to 29.
3. Why nominal substitution with 9 occurrences, nominal ellipsis with 21 occurrences are most frequent types of cohesive ties compared to the restriction in the use verbal substitution (1 occurrences), clausal substitution (2 occurrences), verbal ellipsis (3 occurrences) and clausal ellipsis (5 occurrences) ?
4. Why additive conjunction with 9 occurrences is the most frequently used conjunction, but clausal conjunction is the least used type.
5. Why, regarding the lexical cohesion, repetition is 10 times used but synonyms, subordinate and general words are not used at all?