

The Taxonomy of Reading Tasks for the Treatment of Strategies to Tackle Texts through Cohesive Devices

Farhad Ghorbandordinejad

Assistant professor, Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University

Abstract

Though there is no doubt about the importance of the role of students' control over the use of linguistic devices that contribute to textual cohesion in their reading and their ability to understand and interpret texts, there are very few reading tasks based on cohesive devices in the reading comprehension course books. This paper presents a study of the classification of the different reading comprehension tasks for the treatment of strategies to tackle texts through cohesive devices to be used in the ELT classes. The theoretical background of the suggested task taxonomy has the following assumptions: 1. a text is organized of relevant sequences of sentences/utterances. 2. Text processing requires considering a text as a process rather than a product. 3. Halliday and Hassan's taxonomy of cohesion (1976) is considered valid and reliable. 4. Appropriate reading activities increase the discourse awareness on the part of the students. These tasks are divided into two general categories: 1. Micro-information Reading Tasks and 2. Macro-information Reading Tasks. The first category can be answered by understanding only specific parts of the text; in these tasks bottom-up processing is very important. Questions related to the second category can be answered by reading the entire text and integrate information found in different parts of the message. In these tasks, the importance of top-down processing becomes evident. The tasks of the first category include:

Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction, Lexical Cohesion (Reiteration: Repetition Nets, Finding and Classifying Synonyms, Antonyms, Super-ordinates and

Hyponyms), Collocation, Exploring Cohesion, Cohesive Chains, Spatial Chains, Word Relation, Text Symbols and Abbreviations, Sentence Value. The tasks of the second category include: *Analyze, Inferring, Prediction, Paragraph Formation, Interpretation, and Topic Finding.* The paper offers 18 sample exercises to illustrate the way the strategies can be applied to the ELT classes.

Keywords: cohesion, cohesive devices, coherence, taxonomy, reading comprehension tasks.

1. Introduction

Many researchers have come to the conclusion that all types of textual cohesive devices facilitate reading comprehension (Stoodt 1972; Marshall & Glock 1978; Grellet 1981; Williams 1983; Chapman 1983; Cooper 1984; Britton & Gülgöz 1991; Britton 1994; Murray 1995; Nuttall 1996; Graesser, Millis & Zwaan 1997; Sanders & Noorman 2000; Chung 2000; Degand & Sanders 2002). In fact, reading is an interactive process of communication. The interaction between the writer and the reader is made possible via the text. It is through the text that the writer encodes his message, and it is also through the text that the reader gets the meaning of the message by decoding it. The importance of chain lies in the interpretation of text and systematic treatment through appropriate exercises helps the students improve their EFL reading by analyzing cohesive chains and using cohesive devices as signposts.

The relationship between a cohesive item and the item it presupposed in a text is referred to as a cohesive tie. Halliday and Hassan (1976) provide a detailed coding scheme for analyzing cohesive ties, which takes into account the distance between a cohesive item and the item presupposed. In general, the interpretation of patterns of cohesive ties depended in each study on the register, as had been predicted by Halliday & Hassan (1976: 23):

The concept of cohesion can therefore be usefully supplemented by that of register, since the two together

effectively define a text. A text is a passage of discourse which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of situation and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive.

In fact, 'cohesion is that part of grammar that reflects the coherence of the writer's thought and helps the reader to make the right connections between ideas.' (Nuttall, 1996: 86)

This study suggests the taxonomy of reading tasks based on the role of students' control over the use of linguistic devices that contribute to textual cohesion in their reading and their ability to understand and interpret texts.

2. The Task Taxonomy

The tasks, suggested in this study, can be divided into two general categories: 1. Micro-information and 2. Macro-information. Questions which belong to the first category can be answered by understanding or recognizing only specific parts of the text, the reader doesn't necessarily have to read or understand the entire text but must be able to identify those parts of the reading referred to in the questions, and in these tasks, bottom-up processing is very important. Questions of the second category can be answered by reading the entire text and integrate information found in different parts of the message. In these tasks, the importance of top-down processing becomes evident.

2.1 Micro-information Reading Tasks

This study suggests many tasks which a reader is asked to perform. Regarding vocabulary, a reader is asked to determine the meaning of a word based on the context in which it appears. In some tasks, the reader is asked to identify the word or phrase which a particular noun or pronoun refers to, thus establishing cohesive relationships of an anaphoric or cataphoric nature. In order to demonstrate the reader's comprehension of the relationships among the different propositions presented in the text, the reader is asked to select the appropriate connector or the appropriate usage of a given connector. The next tasks require the reader to recognize the sequence or

chronology. The reader is also asked to explore cohesion in a text; to find the omitted elements of a text and to know what the substitute words mean; also to find the repetition nets of a text; to recognize the word sets and collocations.

2.1.1 Reference Tasks

Certain items of language in English have the property of reference. That is, they do not have meaning themselves, but they refer to something else for their meaning. The words such as *this*, *that*, *it*, etc. are called *anaphora* when they refer to something already mentioned or called *cataphora* when they refer to something which is going to be mentioned. Failure to understand such anaphoric and cataphoric links will probably lead to a serious misunderstanding of the text. This type of tasks will be useful to help the students perceive these links through a careful study of the text.

2.1.1.1 A Reference Task

Aim: To train the students to recognize and understand reference.

Skills involved: understanding relations between parts of a text through reference.

Procedure: 1. Read the text. 2. Note the three boxed items (Rahman, Leila, Yusof). 3. Find all the other items in the text which refer to the same person as each of the boxed items. 4. Using a different color for each of the three people, circle each item with the same reference.

Note: In the figure, the items with the same reference as Rahman have been underlined.

Text: Last week, Rahman's wife Leila had an accident. Rahman's youngest child, Yusof, was at home when it happened. He was playing with his new car. His father had given it to him for his birthday the week before. Suddenly the little boy heard his mother calling 'Help! Help'. He left his toy and ran to the kitchen. The poor woman had burned herself with some hot cooking oil. She was crying with pain and the pan was on fire. Rahman had gone to his office. Both the other children were at school. The youngest was too small to help his mother and she was too frightened to speak sensibly to her son, but he run to a neighbor's house and asked her

to come and help his mother. Soon she put out the fire and took the victim to the clinic. When her husband came home, Leila told him what had happened. Of course Rahman was very concerned about his wife, but was also proud of his sensible son. When you are a man, you will be just like your father, ' he said. (Nuttall, 1996: 89)

2.1.2 Substitution Tasks

The aim of these exercises is to find the referent of some substitute words like one(s), *do*, *so* and *the same* in the text.

2.1.2.1 A Substitution Task

Aim: To train the students to find the nominal, verbal and clausal substitutions in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through substitution.

Procedure: Read the following sentences and find what the italic words substitute. The first one has been done as an example.

- I offered him a seat. He said he didn't want *one*.
- Did Mary take that letter? She might have *done*.
- Do you need a lift? If so, wait for me; if *not*, I'll see you there.
- She chose the roast duck; I chose *the same*.

<i>Substitute words</i>	<i>Their meanings</i>
<i>one</i>	A seat
<i>done</i>
<i>so</i>
<i>not</i>
<i>the same</i>

2.1.3 Ellipsis Tasks

These exercises deal with finding the omitted elements of a text from the context.

2.1.3.1 An Ellipsis Task

Aim: To train the students to supply all the missing items necessary for the interpretation of a text.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through the missing items.

Procedure: Read the following passage and find what can come in the blanks between the brackets.

Text: Some of the water which falls as rain flows on the surface as streams. Another part [] is evaporated. The remainder [] sinks into the ground and is known as ground water.

2.1.4 Conjunctions Tasks

This exercise mainly deals with semantic relations within the text. It prepares the students to look out for some of the relations that can exist between different parts of a text and the text is not just a random collection of sentences. Recognizing the way in which a text has been organized will help the students to understand the text better. Recognizing connective words are essential to the understanding of the ideas and facts mentioned in the passage.

2.1.4.1 A Conjunctions Task

Aim: to train the students understand the value of link-words.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through the use of logical connectors.

Procedure: In the following passage, find a conjunction, which shows that this statement is opposite to the ideas that have come before.

Text: *The whole Cabinet agreed that there should be a cut in the amount that the unemployed were receiving; where they disagreed was in whether this should include a cut in the standard rate of benefit. The opposition parties, however, were unwilling to accept any program of economics which did not involve a cut in the standard rate of benefit.*

2.1.5 Lexical Cohesion Tasks

This is a way of achieving a cohesive effect by the use of particular vocabulary items. That is, the same or different words can refer to the same idea.

2.1.5.1 A Lexical Cohesion Task

Aim: to train the students to recognize lexical cohesion.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between the words of a text, through the same or different words which refer to the same idea.

Procedure: Read the following passage carefully and then find the words which relate to each other.

Text: *Patients who repeatedly take overdoses pose considerable management difficulties. The problem-oriented approach is not usually effective with such patients. When a patient seems to be developing a pattern of chronic repeats, it is recommended that all staff engaged in his or her care meet to reconstruct each attempt in order to determine whether there appears to be a motive common to each act.*

2.1.6 Reiteration Tasks: Repetition Nets Tasks

Ideas can be linked by repetition. This does not necessarily mean that the same word is repeated several times. A word may be repeated in a different form (e.g. a noun instead of a verb), or may be replaced by a word with similar meaning. The repetition nets tasks aim to train the students to know the role of repetition in realizing lexical cohesion.

2.1.6.1 A Reiteration Task

Aim: To train the students to know the role of repetition in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding the relationships between words caused through repetition.

Procedure: Read the following text and underline the words which are repeated in the text.

Text: *Just as a man of superior knowledge or skill in the art of carpentry may compile a work in which his knowledge is made available to those who aspire to be good carpenters, so a man of superior wisdom in the art of politics may set down his knowledge in a book for the instruction of those whose business it is to found, govern, or preserve states. Thus great political works will be consulted for purposes of instruction by those who have to govern states.*

2.1.7 Finding/Classifying Synonyms, Antonyms, Superordinates, and Hyponyms Tasks

This type of exercise does not require complex preparation by the teacher. The teacher may simply ask students to find synonyms or antonyms for a given word, find hyponym for a super ordinate, or determine the super ordinate for a series of hyponyms. For classifying words, the teacher may give students a fairly large number of words – known or new words – and have them use various diagrams to classify and arrange the words either as synonyms, antonyms or superordinates/hyponyms. The teacher may or may not allow the students to use dictionaries in completing the exercise. Here are a few samples of identification and classification tasks. These tasks involve the following aims:

- To train the students to recognize synonyms and antonyms.
- To train the students to recognize words in a text.
- To train the students to recognize equivalence and the use of general words to cover more specific ones.
- These tasks also involve the following skills:
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices of synonymy and antonymy.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices: lexical sets and collocation.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text through the lexical cohesion devices of equivalence and hyponymy.
- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues.

2.1.7.1 A Finding/Classifying Synonyms, Antonyms, Superordinates, and Hyponyms Task

Specific aim: To train the students to recognize synonyms and antonyms.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items. Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices of synonymy and antonymy.

Why? Many texts make use of synonyms and antonyms to convey their message more clearly. It is important for the students to be aware of these lexical relations as they often help to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Text: Programming people

Programming people means getting others to act consistently as you want them to act. Stern parents or employers often are pretty good at this, at least while the subjects are under observation. Hypnotists can obtain excellent results in achieving desired behavior from suggestible subjects for short periods.

What interest us here are precise techniques for altering long-term behavior patterns in predictable ways. These new patterns may be desirable by the subject or by the programmer or by the organization employing him.

For achieving certain kinds of long-term programmed behavior the programmer need not be a scientifically trained technologist. Consider how the intense and unattractive Charles Manson horrified and fascinated millions of people a few years ago by his control methods. He had an ability to induce sustained zombie-like behavior in his followers, mostly girls. They committed random murders in the Los Angeles area. When a number of his 'slaves' faced trial they vigorously asserted that the murders were their own idea. They wanted to protect Charlie, who was always somewhere else when the butcheries occurred. In order to prove his theory that Manson had master-minded the killings the prosecutor, Vincent Bugliosi, had to spend months uncovering and analyzing the sources of Manson's control over the presumably free and footloose young people. His most important findings were these:

- *Manson was gifted at perceiving the psychological needs of others. He assured runaway girls needed a father that he would be their father. He assured plain-looking girls that they were beautiful.*
- *He was careful to destroy preexisting identities. All the members of his clan had to take on new names.*
- *He systematically destroyed inhibitions as part of his obedience training.*

- *He offered these insecure youngsters a bizarre religion, in which he was the Infinite Being who would lead them to a world of milk and honey.*
- *He was careful to identify and probe what each recruit was most afraid of, and to play on it.*
- *Finally, Manson apparently had some hypnotic powers.*

Bugliosi succeeded in convincing the jury that Manson was, indeed, responsible for the murders. (From Vance Pachard: The People Shapers, 1978)

a) In paragraph 3, find two nouns meaning more or less the same as *killings*:

b) In paragraph 2 and 3, find the equivalents of the following words:

changing:

take place:

declare:

c) In paragraph 3

i. find an adjective which means the opposite of *for short periods*:

....

ii. find a noun which means the opposite of *free and footloose young people*:

d) In paragraph 4, find the words which mean the opposite of.

hiding:

fail:

(Grellet, 1981:28)

2.1.8 Collocation Tasks

The main purpose of these tasks is to develop in the student the ability to find and sort the semantically related words into sets under the appropriate titles. Such an activity should make them conscious of how they can grow their vocabulary items by grouping the new words into sets according to their semantic domain.

2.1.8.1 A Collocation Task

Aim: To train the students to learn the new words through sorting them according to their meaning.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through semantically related words.

Procedure: All of the words below share the idea of causing something to happen. Group these verbs into the following sets: (Glendinning and Holmström, 1992:52)

reduce – aggravate – create – halve – set off – worsen – increase –
impair – dislodge – restrict – raise – double – cut – lower

<i>Cause + START</i>	<i>Cause + MORE</i>	<i>Cause + LESS</i>	<i>Cause + HARM</i>

2.1.9 Exploring Cohesion Tasks

The purpose of this activity is to emphasize continuity of links and to appreciate that such links might be referring to identical or similar persons, things or events.

Implementing Steps:

- Choosing a paragraph with clearly defined links, e.g. characters.
- Discussing the concepts students will meet in the passage before reading the text.
- Asking the students to read the passage and consider what changes will occur in the passage as a result of changing the main character from, for example, male to female.
- Inviting students to use a highlighter pen to mark the words talking about the main character.
- Renaming the character (to opposite sex) and asking students to consider changes they need to make as a result of the renaming.
- Variations: Other changes in a text that might be used to consider chains of reference in a text include changing: The time of day from morning to evening (vocabulary, tense);

breakfast to lunch (vocabulary, tense); past to present (tense); setting, e.g. city to country, Australia to Greece (vocabulary); characters, e.g. male to female (grammar – pronouns; vocabulary); age of the character (vocabulary); feelings of the character, e.g. from sad to happy (vocabulary); numbers of characters (grammar – verb agreement).

2.1.9.1 An Exploring Cohesion Task

Aim: To train the students to explore cohesion in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through cohesive devices.

Procedure: Read the following text and then find what changes will occur in the passage as a result of changing a *lady* into a *man*.

Text: *Indeed one of the most amnesic patients I have ever tested was a lady suffering from Korsakoff's syndrome, memory loss following chronic alcoholism. The test involved presenting her with lists of words; after each list she would comment with surprise on her inability to recall the words, saying: 'I pride myself on my memory!' She appeared to have forgotten just how bad her memory was.*

2.1.10 Cohesive Chains Tasks

The purpose of these tasks is to teach the students how the cohesive chains provide the main thread of a text by showing that some entity or circumstance, some relevant feature or argument persists from one moment to another in the semantic process as the meaning unfolds.

2.1.10.1 A Cohesive Chains Task

Aim: To train the students to consider the cohesive chains of a text to understand the text better.

Skills involved: Finding the cohesive chains in a text.

Procedure: There are two cohesive chains in the following passage. Read the passage carefully and then find the related words to each chain. Fill in the table. Some examples are shown.

<i>The first chain</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>
Fred Jarvis

<i>The second chain</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>	<i>Related words</i>
Two main accusations	<i>one</i>	.....	.....	.....

Text: *Fred Jarvis faced two main accusations when he applied to be general secretary of the National Union of Teachers. One was that he had never been a teacher. Running the NUT is a key job in British education so you might think that this was quite a handicap. Not so. Some of the union executives were much more upset by another question. Was Fred Jarvis too right wing?* (Fowler, 1976)

2.1.11 Spatial Chains Tasks

These tasks deal with the spatial chains which are generally composed of words of location and direction. It is typical of description of the location of places, objects, and people in space.

2.1.11.1 A Spatial Chains Task

Aim: To train the students to find relations between locations and directions in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding the role of cohesive markers in the spatial chain.

Procedure: Read the following passage and find the words related to the spatial chain of *the cathedral*.

Text: *The cathedral in charters is representative of the French cathedrals. The main entrance to the charters cathedral faces west. This western side is not quite symmetrical. There is a square tower on both sides, yet the tower on the south corner is shorter and has less decoration than the tower on the north corner. The cone-shaped steeple of the south tower rests on an octagonal section, which, in turn, rests on the square tower below. There are three front doors with semicircular sections above each one. In these sections there are elaborate sculptures which tell about the life of Christ. Above the entrance, three arches surround stained-glass windows. In the center of the western side is a large, round stained-*

glass window. It is one of the most ancient windows of this type.
(Sonka, 1981)

The Spatial Chain											
The cathedral	Faces west	not quite symmetrical	on both sides	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

2.1.12 Word Relations Tasks

The interest here is in the words and phrases that are most important to a text's argument. These words are treated like the points on a map that the student must link together in order to recreate the text.

2.1.12.1 A Word Relations Task

Aim: To train the students to read for gist and find out the relationships between words.

Skills involved: Understanding the relationships between words in a text.

Procedure: Read the text carefully; find the words which are important according to their meaning. Then write them in a paper in a random fashion; now draw a line between two words whose sense appears related in some way, continue until the paper resembles a route map joining all the words to each other. Discuss the relationship between the words with your partner.

Text: *Trucks rank high in meeting the transportation needs of most manufacturers. They are the most frequently used form of transportation, for two reasons. (1) they offer door-to-door delivery from the manufacturer to the customer without intermediate unloading, and (2) they operate on public highways that do not require an expensive terminal or right-of-way as airlines and railroads do. The main drawback of trucks is that they cannot carry all types of cargo. Federal regulations limit weight loads and truck dimensions, so trucks cannot cost-effectively haul heavy, bulky commodities like steel or coal.*

2.1.13 Text Symbols and Abbreviations Tasks

There are some symbols being used in the texts. These symbols are commonly used to show how important points are linked. Such as

i.e. means rephrasing, e.g. means for example and & means addition.

2.1.13.1 A Text Symbols and Abbreviation Task

Aim: To train the students to know the meaning and functions of symbols and abbreviations in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding the relationships between words through the recognition of the symbols and abbreviations.

Procedure: Look at the text, and then fill in the following chart about the symbols and abbreviations.

Idea	Linking words	Symbols

Text: *For many years, all over the world, pieces of shore and shallow sea have been 'reserved' for special purposes e.g. harbors, shellfish farms, underwater cables, etc.*

2.1.14 Sentence Value Tasks

The value of a sentence arises from its relationships with the other sentences in the text, and from the context. These tasks deal with specific functions. They could involve classifications, a sequence of actions, steps in a process, straightforward cause and effect, and so on.

2.1.14.1 A Sentence Value Task

Aim: To train the students to see that the value of a sentence depends on how it relates to other sentences. Some can be labeled such as cause, reason, example, etc.

Skills involved: Understanding the different values of sentences.

Procedure: Match the sentences with their functions.

Sentences	Functions
1. A thermometer is an instrument that measures temperature.	Classifying
2. There are two types of acid: organic and inorganic.	Defining
3. The north of Iran is mountainous and well watered.	Describing

2.2 Macro-information Reading Tasks

The category of macro-information is broken into Analysis and Interpretation. In questions which fall into the first of these categories, analyze, the reader must examine and relate information which is explicitly present in different sections of the text. In questions classified in the second group, interpretation; the reader must go beyond the explicit information found in the text. The reader must elaborate, infer or predict. In order to do this, the reader must rely on content schemata.

2.2.1 Analysis

There are some possible tasks within the category of analysis. The reader is asked to place a list of sentences in the correct order to form a coherent paragraph. To do this the reader must recognize the different indicators of text, cohesion and identify propositional relations among sentences at various levels. To evaluate if the reader is able to transcode information from a text to a graph or diagram, the reader is asked to recognize the most appropriate graphic representation of the information presented verbally in the reading. The reader is also required to select the best verbal interpretation of information which appears in a text or diagram. In some tasks the reader is asked to make predictions through the continuity realizes by cohesion in a text.

2.2.2 Inferring Tasks

The main purpose of these tasks is to develop in the student the ability to analyze their own process of inference. Such an analysis should make them conscious of how they can deal with an unfamiliar word and make them ready to use the different techniques of inference more quickly and efficiently. The following

types of relation between the word and the context may help the students. (Grellet, 1981:38):

- Equivalence: a synonym is mentioned in the text.
- Contrast: the word means the contrary of another word or expression given in the text.
- Cause: the meaning of the word can be guessed because it is the cause of something described in the text.
- Consequence: the word describes or appears in the description of the consequence of something. If the cause is known, it may be possible to guess what the consequence is.
- Purpose: the word applies to an object whose purpose is described in the text.
- Explanation/illustration: the meaning of the word is explained or an example is given.
- Generalization/specification: the word is just one specific instance of a more general thing or idea mentioned in the text, or, on the contrary, after a number of specific examples have been given, a generalization is made.

2.2.2.1 An Inferring Task

Grellet (1981:35) offers the following example:

Specific aim: To train the students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to help them to analyze their process of inference.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.

Procedure: Read the following text and complete the blanks with the words which seem most appropriate to you.

Text: *It is the policy of keeping Africans1....., and separate from Europeans. They are to be kept separate by not being ...2..... To live as citizens with rights in ...3..... towns. They4..... go to European towns to ...5....., but they may not have their families6.....; they must live in 'Bantustans', the7... areas. They are8... to9... with Europeans by sitting in*

...10..... *cafes, waiting-rooms, compartments of trains, seats in parks.*

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | a) superior | b) inferior | c) equal |
| 2 | a) obliged | b) encouraged | c) allowed |
| 3 | a) British | b) African | c) European |
| 4 | a) cannot | b) may | c) should |
| 5 | a) work | b) live | c) drink |
| 6 | a) working | b) there | c) at home |
| 7 | a) European | b) native | c) white |
| 8 | a) sometimes | b) often | c) not |
| 9 | a) play | b) mix | c) talk |
| 10 | a) the same | b) other | c) the black |

2.2.3 Prediction Tasks

These tasks provide the basis for making predictions and building expectations. The continuity expressed by cohesion constitutes the context that provides the basis for making predictions and building expectations in reading.

2.2.3.1 A Prediction Task

Aim: To train the students to make predictions through the continuity realized by cohesion in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding the role of cohesion in the interpretation of text by making predictions through the context provided by cohesion.

Procedure: Read the first incomplete sentence of the following passage and make prediction as to how it will continue. Choose *a* or *b*.

The passage will deal with the salaries

- a) of men
- b) of women

Text: *If we compare the salaries of men and women engineers in the United States, we find that men earn more at the top of the profession whereas ... (Moore et al. 1979)*

2.2. 4 Paragraph Formation Tasks

These tasks provide the basis for making paragraphs by placing a list of sentences in the correct order.

2.2.4.1 A Paragraph Formation Task

Aim: To train the students to know the role of continuity realized by cohesion in formation of a paragraph in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding the role of cohesion in the formation of paragraphs in a text.

Procedure: Choose the correct order of the following sentences.

Text: (I) *Over the past decade, there has been a great change in China's economic policies.* (II) *In this paper I will first discuss the significance of these zones.* (III) *These zones are called 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZ's) and feature various incentives designed to encourage foreign investment.* (IV) *Then I will describe some of the aims and characteristics of the SEZ's and attempt to across the significance of the SEZ's in the development of the wider Chinese economy.* (V) *Like other developing countries which are attempting to become more export-orientated, China has started to set up free trade zones.*

- a) II, IV, III, I, V
- b) IV, II, I, V, III
- c) IV, I, V, II, III
- d) III, V, IV, I, II
- e) III, I, IV, II, V

2.2.5 Interpretation

This category includes tasks in which the reader is required to identify the topic of the reading through a chain of related words.

2.2.6 Topic Finding Tasks

The purpose of these tasks is to learn the students how to identify the topic of the reading through a chain of related words.

2.2.6.1 A Topic Finding Task

Aim: To train the students to find the topic of a text through the continuity realized by cohesion.

Skills involved: Understanding the role of cohesion in guessing the topic of a text.

Procedure: Read the following passage carefully and then find the topic of the text through the chain of related words.

Text: *We all tend to complain about our memories. Despite the elegance of the human memory system, it is not infallible, and we have to learn to live with its fallibility. It seems to be socially much more acceptable to complain of a poor memory, and it is somehow much more acceptable to blame a social lapse on 'a terrible memory', than to attribute it to stupidity or insensitivity. But how much do we know about our own memories. Obviously we need to remember our memory lapses in order to know just how bad our memories are. Indeed one of the most amnesic patients I have ever tested was a lady suffering from Korsakoff's syndrome, memory loss following chronic alcoholism. The test involved presenting her with lists of words; after each list she would comment with surprise on her inability to recall the words, saying: 'I pride myself on my memory!' She appeared to have forgotten just how bad her memory was.'*

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this taxonomy has been to categorize the reading tasks on the basis of cohesion and suggest activities for the treatment of strategies to tackle texts through cohesive devices. The task taxonomy of this study includes two general categories: Micro-information questions (bottom-up processing), and Macro-information questions (top-down processing). This study has offered thirteen different kinds of micro-information tasks and six different kinds of macro-information ones.

References

- Briton, B. K. (1994). Understanding expository text. In M.A. Gernsbacher (Ed.), *Handbook of Psycholinguistics* (pp. 641-674). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Briton, B. K., & Gülgöz, S. (1991). Using Kintsch's computational model to improve instructional text: Effects of repairing inference calls on recall and cognitive structures. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 320-345.
- Chapman, L. J. (1983). *Reading Development and Cohesion*. UK: Heinmann Educational Books.
- Chung, J. S. (2000). Signals and Reading Comprehension Theory and Practice. *System* 28 (2), 247-259.
- Cooper, M. (1984). Linguistic Competence of Practical and Unpractical non-native Readers in English. In Anderson, C. and A. M. Urquhart, (Eds.) *Reading in a Foreign Language* (pp.122-125). Longman Group Limited.
- Degand, L. & Sanders, T. (2002). The impact of relational markers on expository text comprehension in L1 and L2, *Reading and Writing* 15 (7-8), 739-758.
- Fowler, W.S. (1976). *Proficiency English II: Reading comprehension*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Graesser, A.C., Millis, K.K., & Zwaan, R.A. (1997). Discourse comprehension. *Annual Review of Psychology* 48: 163-189.
- Glendinning, E.H. & Holmström, A.S. (1992). *Study Reading: A Course in Reading Skills for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grellet, F. (1981). *Developing Reading Skills*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. & Hassan. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Marshall, N. & Glock, M.D. (1978). Comprehension of connected discourse: A study into the relationships between the structure of text and information recalled. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 14, 10-56.

- Moore, J. (1979). *Reading and Thinking in English: Discovering discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murray, J.D. (1995) Logical connectives and causal coherence. In R.F. Lorch, Jr. & E.J. O'Brien (Eds). *Sources of Coherence in Reading*, 107-125. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Sanders, T.J.M. & Noordman. (2000). The role of coherence relations and their linguistic markers in text processing. *Discourse Processes* 29:37-60.
- Sonka, A.L. (1981). *Skillful Reading: A Text and Workbook for Students of English as a Second Language*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Stoodt, B. D. (1972). The relationship between understanding grammatical conjunctions and reading comprehension. *Elementary English*, 49, 502-504.
- William, R. (1983). Teaching the recognition of cohesive ties in reading a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language* 1 (1), 35-52.