

TEXTUALITY OF NEWS HIGHLIGHTS IN *THE JAKARTA POST*: An Approach of How Lexical Cohesion is Learned by Students

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini mencoba mengungkapkan pemanfaatan teks-teks berbahasa Inggris guna membantu pembelajar Bahasa Inggris dalam memahami kohesi leksikal. Data diambil dari koran The Jakarta Post, khususnya kolom News Highlights. Kohesi leksikal selalu muncul dalam setiap teks. Mengenal kohesi leksikal, khususnya dalam teks berbahasa Inggris penting guna memahami teks secara utuh. Penting terutama untuk pembelajar bahasa Inggris karena bahasa ini seringkali memanfaatkan kohesi leksikal yang rekat dalam teks-teksnya. Media cetak berbahasa Inggris dapat dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber belajar memahami hubungan-hubungan leksikal seperti sinonim dan antonim.

A. Introduction

The printed media like newspapers provide a bulk of examples of how language is constructed. Therefore, the printed media is the rich source of data from which language use and language behavior are widely analyzed by language researchers. The discourse in media also has attracted enormous attention from linguists and media communicators. Attention to media discourse is important for several reasons. Kong listed at least three reasons: the first reason in the easy accessibility of media discourse, the second is

the use of media which influences and represents people use of and attitudes towards language in speech community, and the third is that many social and cultural stereotypes and meanings are projected and constructed through language.¹

Language in printed media such as newspapers is a matter of particular collected data. There are specific words, idioms, sentence structure, and styles of language use to be appreciated and discussed and set in context. Simpson pointed out that most study of language and media over the years has focused on the written genres, particularly newspapers.² It stressed that the increasing attention to the study of language in the written genres is largely because they are more readily available for analysis by virtue of being in written form compared with the ephemerality of spoken media discourse, which as to be recorded and then transcribed.

The studies on written media texts have attracted linguists in their efforts to find out how language is used and constructed. Using collections of empirical data makes it easy for the language analysts to study English language behaviors in newspapers. The focuses of analysis are various, for examples, syntactic patterns and lexicogrammatical usage, the language press advertisement, sport reporting in newspapers, link between language variation and context, social stratification of newspapers, and the construction of a model of social order in hard news reports. Specific analysis of

¹Kenneth Kong C.C., Media Discourse. In Jan Renkema (Ed.), *Discourse, of Course: An overview of research in discourse studies* (pp. 2009), h. 253-273.

²James Simpson, *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

lexical cohesion in newspapers has been concerned with, for examples, cohesive features on the surface text pattern of lexis in text, corpus-based lexical cohesion analysis and its application in English language teaching, lexical cohesion and rhetorical structure, lexical bundles and discourse signaling in academic lectures, , cohesive chains and speakers' choice of prominence, and the chains of cohesion occurring in the mailing-list language (Flowerdew and Mahlberg).³

The analysis of lexis in texts by focusing on examining its cohesion in the language of written media texts, particularly that in the national English newspaper *The Jakarta Post* is interesting and challenging. Understanding lexical cohesion will lead to the understanding of how textuality of texts is created. It may also give implication for English language teachers in terms of giving students meaningful practice in order that they can improve their ability in creating and decoding texts. As suggested by McCarthy that if lexical reiteration can be shown to be a significant feature of textuality, then there may be something for the language teacher to exploit. We shall not suggest that it be exploited simply because it is there, but only if, by doing so, we can give learners meaningful, controlled practice and the hope of improving their text-creating and decoding abilities, and providing them with more varied contexts for using and practising vocabulary⁴ (p.65).

McCarthy also pointed out that bringing a discourse dimension into language teaching does not by any means imply an abandonment of teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary will still be the

³ Flowerdew, John and Mahlberg, Michaela. 2009. *Lexical Cohesion and Corpus Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Johns Benjamins Publishing Company.

⁴ McCarthy, Michael. 2000. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*....p. 65.

largest single element in tackling a new language for the learner and it would be irresponsible to suggest that it will take care-of itself in some ideal world where language teaching and learning are discourse-driven.⁵ We can be sure that many English teachers in our schools teach English vocabulary without discourse-driven approach. In other words, vocabulary is only taught with the intention to enrich students' vocabulary stock. English teachers, therefore, need to go one step ahead in teaching English vocabulary by using extended texts like English newspapers and consider possible things that can be usefully exploited to give a discourse dimension to vocabulary teaching and vocabulary activities in the classroom. Examining co-text can be taken into consideration by English teachers in helping students expand their insight into English vocabulary. Learners should be directed to find out specific relationships between vocabulary choice by examining the actual text surrounding any given text. Rather than describing English vocabulary without knowing its patterns in actual texts, students need to be encouraged to understand discourse organization and vocabulary choice in written texts, particularly the text in the column of Newslights in the national English-written newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*. This article attempts to examine how different kinds of lexical cohesion can contribute to the creation of textuality of texts of News Highlights in the newspaper. It will consider the kind of lexical cohesion which links meaning or argument in the texts. This newspaper largely provides factual texts containing vocabulary choices using lexical cohesion devices that organize discourse of the texts. The results of this examination may benefit English teachers in

⁵ Ibid, p. 64

their effort to help learners understand English texts discourse through discourse-driven vocabulary activities.

B. Lexical Cohesion

The term cohesion is used to refer to the property of connectedness that characterizes a text in contrast to a mere sequence of words. McCarthy defined lexical cohesion as exact repetition of words and the role played by certain basic semantic relations between words in creating *textuality*, that property of text which distinguishes it from a random sequence of unconnected sentences.⁶ Baker and Ellece describe lexical cohesion as a way of achieving cohesion by way of repeating the same word or phrase or using chains of related words that contribute towards the continuity of lexical meaning.⁷

Lexical cohesion is about meaning in text. It concerns the way in which lexical items relate to each other and to other cohesive devices so that textual continuity is created. Halliday and Hassan (1976) considered two distinct but related aspects of lexical cohesion; reiteration and collocation. Reiteration is “the repetition of a lexical item, or the occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference; that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent”, while collocation is the use of a word that is in some way associated with another word in the preceding text, because it is a direct repetition of it, or in some sense synonymous with it, or tends to occur in the same lexical environment.⁸ In line with Halliday and Hassan’s conception, It is to say that reiteration means either restating an item in a later part of the discourse by direct repetition

⁶ McCarthy, Michael. 2000. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*....p. 65.

⁷ Baker, Paul and Ellece, Sibonile. 2011. *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*.p. 69

⁸Halliday, M.A.K and Hassan, R. 1976. *Cohesion in English*.....p. 318-9).

or else reasserting its meaning by exploiting *lexical relations*, and lexical relations are the stable semantic relationships that exist between words. Both reiteration and collocation contribute to the texture of a text. These devices of lexical cohesion serve to hold the chunks of text together and that contribute to the creation of a text as unit of meaning. Mahlberg (2009) pointed out that cohesion can contribute to the readability of a text and have an impact on the comprehensibility and clarity of the argument.⁹ In other words, lexical cohesion devices, for examples repetition, synonym, hyponym, etc., tie the unity of a text having the understood meaning and clear argument.

C. Lexical Cohesion in Newspapers

Conboy noted that lexical mapping is a significant factor in creating an impression through language in the printed media as newspapers¹⁰ (p. 38). Compiling a list of words is not a simple thing in order to explore the impact of the lexical elements of a news medium. Conboy furthermore emphasized that lexical cohesion needs to be taken into account when establishing a news medium's priorities and news values because cohesion distinguishes audience-directed news from a random set of sentences. Lexical cohesion not only refers to the way that sentences or individual words fit together into one whole package but also to the ability of extended texts to fit into consistent worldview and longer narratives of social belonging and identification. Lexical cohesion explains how vocabulary forms

⁹Mahlberg, Michaela. 2009. Lexical cohesion: Corpus linguistic theory and its application in English language teaching. In John Flowerdew and Michaela Mahlberg (eds.). *Lexical Cohesion and Corpus Linguistics*...p.104.

¹⁰Conboy, Martin. 2007. *The Language of the News*...p.38.

part of a broader set of categories which are important in establishing news values (p. 39). A sense of lexical cohesion is built throughout the article by patterning of words chosen to depict an event, an accident, etc.

The texts in the column of News Highlights in *The Jakarta Post* provide much data of cohesion devices including both kinds of lexical cohesion. News highlights contain short news reported from various countries in the world. This news highlights a variety of events using “condensed’ language by making use of lexical cohesion devices.

D. Material

The material for this analysis consists of a selection of text language in the column of Newslights in the national English newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*. There contains three or four texts in each Newslights column. This column in the English-mediated newspaper appears every Sunday. The materials were selected purposively issued in the month of September 2013.¹¹

E. Patterns Of Lexical Cohesion In The Texts Of Newslights

The following three texts are taken from Newslights dated on 8 September 2013. In text (1.1), exact repetition is applied. *Five people, missing* and *a search* are the lexical elements that are repeated. The exact repetition also occurs in the word *died*. These elements appear respectively in this text showing the argument that is conveyed. It is to say that the textuality of this text is unified by the respective repetition of those three lexical elements appearing in paragraph 1, 2,

¹¹Newspaper *The Jakarta Post*. 8, 15, 22, 29 September 2013 and 6 October 2013. Jakarta: PT. Bina Media Tenggara

and 3 respectively. This text gives an example to the students how argument is arranged: there are people who died and missed in an accident, then a search must be done. Indeed, reiteration in a text such as this short one can give students insight of how lexical cohesion devices applied in a text. In other words, lexical reiteration is a useful feature of textuality. Exploiting it in a simple text may give students meaningful and controlled practice and provide them with more varied contexts for using and practicing the use of vocabulary

1. *5 Killed, 3 Missing In Nias Speedboat Accident*

INDONESIA: *Five people* have *died* and three others remain *missing* after a massive wave smashed into a speedboat carrying 12 people off Tello Island in South Nias regency. North Sumatra, on Friday afternoon. The four remaining passengers survived were rescued. As of Saturday, the National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas), with the assistance of local police forces and military personnel, are still conducting *a search for the two missing passengers*.

The five people who *died* in the incident, who were civil servants at the North Sumatra and South Nias administrations, have been identified as Syafi-run, 48; Saidin Purba, 51; Bahrin Lubis, 55; Edison Halawa, 40, and Arrnen Telaumbanua, 25.

The head of Basarnas' North Sumatra division, Joni Supriadi, *told* The Jakarta Post on Saturday that bad weather was hampering *the search for the missing passengers*. "We will continue to combat the weather, however, to find those *missing*," he said.

Repetition and reiteration in the form of synonym in (1.2) are found. In paragraph 1 the word *bomb* is repeated and *exploded* and *damaged* are synonymous in this context. Meanwhile, the phrase *the terror attack* in the second paragraph, *the incident* in the second

paragraph, and *the case* in the last paragraph are linked by hyponym. Or it is better to say as general superordinate (McCarthy, 2000).. *The case* is the general superordinate of *the terror attack* and *the incident*. Perhaps, in the textbooks students learn synonym and hyponym in single sentences without being supported by a particular context from which both devices are used. From my experience, almost all students have an understanding that synonym is the same or similar word. We can explain to the students, for example through the text in English newspapers, that *exploded* and *damaged* are different words but they are in the same meaning field in the context of bombing accident. As concerned with hyponym, students most likely do not understand the concept of hyponym or superordinate in English. The context in (1.2) may give students a guidance in understanding how one is hyponymous for other words in terms of meaning; how the meaning of a word become a superordinate meaning of other words: *the case* is the superordinate that includes *the terror attack*.

2. Bomb Explodes at Tabloid Office in Aceh

INDONESIA: A bomb exploded at the offices of local tabloid *Modus* in Banda Aceh on Saturday morning, but no injuries have been reported. *The bomb damaged* the entrance door into the weekly tabloid's premises.

The police have deployed a team of investigators to determine who was behind *the terror attack*. "At first, we and our neighbors thought the blast originated from a damaged power outlet," Dadang, a *Modus* journalist, said as quoted by *kompas.com* on Saturday.

Modus' editor-in-chief, Muhammad Saleh, said *the incident* occurred just a few days after he had received a threat. He added,

therefore, that he expected the police to be able to arrest the mastermind. "I received a threat on my eel! phone from an unknown person. It was related to some of our stories," he said.

He then mentioned several stories that the paper had published recently regarding the development of the Wali Nanggroe office and nan-performing loans belonging to a Bireun businessman.

Aceh Police spokesman Adj. Sr. Comr. Gustav Leo said the police would go all-out in investigating *the case*.

Lexical reiteration can be shown to be a significant feature of textuality (McCarthy, 2000: 65). To link the textuality, direct repetition and assertion of discourse meaning based on lexical relations are utilized. In text (1.3), there are two patterns of lexical cohesion that link the textuality of the text namely repetition and synonym. Repetition is shown by the lexical items *shelling* in paragraph one and two and *fighting* in paragraph two and four. Synonymous link exists between *killed* and *died* in paragraph two. Text (1.3) can provide an example for the students to understand the restatement of an item that functions as the devices of the text cohesiveness in real context within a text. Students can see the repeated appearance of the word *shelling* and may find its meaning through another text surrounding. Introducing context in a text to the students will help them better comprehend the meaning of the repeated lexical items. In text (1.3), again students find the significance of understanding reiteration using synonymous words such *killed* and *died* in the second paragraph.

3. *Syrian Regime Shelling Near Damascus Kills 16*

SYRIA: Heavy government *shelling* of rebel positions near the Syrian capital killed 16 people on Saturday, activists said, as US Secretary of State John Kerry lobbied European allies to back Washington's proposed military action against the ruling regime.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the mortar and artillery fire on the Moldokhiya agricultural area south of Damascus *killed* 14 rebels. A child and another civilian also *died* in the *shelling*, it added.

The group also reported heavy *fighting* between rebels and troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad around the Christian village of Maaloula.

The fighting comes as President Barack Obama's administration presses ahead with efforts to win congressional backing and international support for military strikes against Syria over an alleged chemical attack in August outside Damascus. — AP.

Lexical cohesion devices using repetition that builds the textuality of text is consistently also found in text (1.4) taken from Newslights on 29 September 2013. The word *operation* is respectively repeated in paragraph 1, 2, and 4. Although other items are added to the word, it refers to the same entity in the text. Through this example, students can be encouraged to find out the "entity" of the operation based on the context given. Indirectly, students may find it difficult to know what the *operation* refers to, but a guidance can be given to them by paying attention to co-text that precedes and follows the word.

4. Chinese police rescue 92 abducted children

CHINA; Chinese police rescued 92 abducted children and detained 301 suspects in *the latest operation* to crack down on the country's chronic problem of child trafficking, the Ministry of Public Security said.

Police forces from 11 provinces were involved in *the operation* to break up a massive network that stole, bought and sold children in Henan province in central China and other provinces, the ministry said late on Friday.

It said the group targeted children in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces in China's southwest and transported them to other provinces for sale,

Child abduction is a major problem in China, where such *police operations* have become regular occurrences as authorities crack down on child trafficking. Strict family planning laws, a traditional preference for boys, ignorance of the law, poverty and illicit profits drive a thriving market in babies and children.

China also plans to introduce laws to punish buyers of children and parents selling their own children. — *AP*

One word can carry semantic apposition (e.g. to indicate inclusion of semantic group of words). Newspaper text often show the pattern as in (1.5) from *Newslights* dated on 15 September 2013. . The word *fighting* that is repeated two time in the text semantically carries meaning to the group of words such as *killed* in the second paragraph and *wounded, displaced, razed, and flames* in the third paragraph. Exemplified repetition is also found in the text as shown in the second paragraph where *the port city of Zamboanga* is simply repeated by *the city*. Through this text, students can be given an understanding that one word can represent and cover the meaning of a group of words synonymously. In this context, the word *city* is actually synonymous with *the port city of Zamboanga*.

5. *New Philippines Fighting Derails Cease-Fire*

THE PHILIPPINES: *Fighting* intensified on Saturday in the southern Philippines between government troops and rogue Muslim

separatists, shattering a cease-fire almost immediately as it was to go into effect and leaving many residents running low on supplies.

The army said 53 people, including 43 guerrillas, had been *killed in the fighting*, now in its sixth day in *the port city of Zamboanga*. Both President Benigno Aquino and his vice-president flew into *the city* to monitor operations.

Dozens have been *wounded* and more than 62,000 *displaced*, with hundreds of homes *razed* and a hospital still in *flames*. Rebels have fired on government positions and seized civilians to use as human shields, - *Reuters*

Lexical cohesion by synonym is also found in text (1.6) taken from Newslights dated on by 29 September 2013 below, that is the word *agreement* and *deal* in paragraph 2. In this context, *agreement* and *deal* co-refer to the same entity. Teaching synonym using context like this help students understand the cohesiveness of a text easily.

6. Tunisia's Ruling Islamists Step Down

TUNISIA: Tunisia's governing Islamist party has agreed to step down following negotiations with opposition parties that begin next week.

A spokesman for the main labor union said months of talks with the Islamist-led government had finally reached *an agreement* on Saturday. Bouali Mbarki of the UGTT union said *the deal* calls for three weeks of negotiations to appoint an interim, non-partisan government.

Tunisia has endured more than two years of turmoil, worsened by the assassination of a leading position figure in July.

As recently as a week ago, the union, which represents 500,000 workers, said talks on a way out of the country's political impasse had failed.

Tunisia's protesters, inspired by the self-immolation of a fruit seller, overthrew their decades-old authoritarian government in January 2011. Those protests spread through the Arab world, including to Egypt, Syria and neighboring Libya. Before the 2011 fall of Tunisia's longtime dictator, the country had been known as one of the most secular countries in the Arab world. — *AP*

F. Concluding Remark

This writing has simply discussed how lexical cohesion in English can be understood and learned. English written media can be used as sources to support students' understanding on lexical cohesion. The printed media such as a newspaper provides many examples of the use of lexical cohesion. Students can be introduced to the cohesiveness of a text through particular columns rather than that as provided by traditional grammar textbooks that is difficult for students to understand.

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