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The effective use of DA & SPRE strategy to enhance reading and writing

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1. Introduction

Gee and Handford (2013:1) relate discourse analysis to everyday experience and to the natural use of language. It is therefore, can be what people produce to express themselves when they contribute or deliver a message. It mainly plays a vital role in applied linguistics; however, it has association with other disciplines such as sociology and psychology Trappes-Lomax (2004: 133). Nowadays, what makes discourse analysis essential is the need to analyze the wide use of modern term in academic language. The objective of this paper is to reduce the increasing number of students who focus on memorizing written or spoken information even if it is in their social context. Therefore, the samples used in this study are limited to understand students written texts in the situation of Oman. Moreover, students need to relate meanings of words in a text to some elements of discourse analysis. Grabe (1984:110) believes that relating sentences and clauses to each other's is one of the surface possible elements that discourse does so as the meaning can be interpretable properly. The paper also sheds lights on the impact of using SPRE pattern to enhance students' writing.

2. Material and Methods

Recently, studies show the interest of linguists in diagnosing the failure of meanings of some texts in different contexts. Most of these studies relate the problems to linguistic aspects whereas other studies refer to social and psychological factors. Gee and Handford (2013:5) believe that the importance of discourse analysis makes what is communicated meaningful. So they relate the meaning of spoken or written text to the social situations. This paper focuses on understanding natural students' written texts in terms of grammar and vocabulary in order to improve teaching materials.

Basturkmen (2002) counts the abuse or overuse of cohesive devices as common non-native learners' problems that lead to misunderstanding of written texts. Simply, Grabe (1984:110) notes

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the occurrence of discourse devices is responsible of making the interpretation of the written texts clearer because of some discourse elements. Halliday and Hasan (1976:22) categorize conjunctions into grammar and lexis cohesion. In this part, the focus is mainly on the lexical devices with some samples of the below four grammatical cohesions.

A. Grammatical cohesions

Reference

The interpretation of words with another word in a text is called reference. These words refer to people, place or compare ideas. For example, the personal references and other demonstratives and comparatives references function as cohesive ties as they are stated by (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:25). In the example, "Ahmed has a blue car. He drives fast"; the word (he) is an example of a personal reference that referring to (Ahmed). If the sentence "Ahmed drives to Muscat every weekend. He went (there) last night"; the word (there) is an example of a demonstrative reference to the word (Muscat). The last one is the comparative reference. It is in the sentence 'There were two birds in a tree. Another came and became three". In this example, the word (another) refers to the birds and it compares the two first birds to the least which shows a form of the same kind of birds (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:31).

Substitution

Substitution is a linguistic element that relates terms to structures whereas references relate them to meanings (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:88). In other words, a substitution replaces an item with another word in order to avoid repetition of similar items in a text. In the example, "I am using an old laptop. I have to buy a new one"; the word (one) is a substitution for the word (laptop) (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:88). Substitutions consist of three main categories. It is a nominal, verbal and clausal (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:112).

Ellipsis

Ellipsis and substitution are different in terms of structure because the ellipses are not substituted by other words (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:88). In the example; "Would you like another sandwich? Yes, another… please" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), the missing word (sandwich) is a nominal ellipsis. The other ellipses are verbal and clausal. For example, a verbal ellipsis in the sentence: "Salim ate a sandwich and Omar… some chips". The final example for clausal ellipsis is; "My dictionary was on the desk, maybe someone has borrowed. I wish I could find out who..."

Conjunction

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Conjunction deals with relationships of a particular presupposed meaning to another existing component in the discourse. It connects clauses with each other's by adding conjunction such as (and), or adverting conjunctions as in (yet) or giving a reason as in the example, "Rosh has an umbrella <u>because</u> the weather is hot". The last type of conjunctions is a temporal which tells us when something has happened (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

B. Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion clarifies words through repeating or emphasizing on items. It comprises of synonym and antonym besides superordinate and metonymy. In the example, "Mona has a sister. The <u>sister</u> is really friendly", the word <u>sister</u> is repeated for clarification. Unlike the grammatical items, lexical items are open, so they share in different fields. For example, "Hamed has some <u>friends</u>. His <u>friends</u> are <u>Ali, Fahad and Bader</u>"; in this sentence, the clause, (<u>his friends</u>) refers to (<u>Ali, Fahad and Bader</u>), which is a superordinate for the clause (<u>his friends</u>) as the state of Halliday and Hasan, (1976:278).

The importance of grammar and lexical cohesion does not only play a role in interpretation of sequenced ideas or matching the logical relations, but it also relates clauses and text patterns coherently (Winter, 1994). Among these relations, the problem-solution strategy is the most frequent as it is identified by Hoey (2001).

The problem-solution pattern addresses a problem to find a positive or negative result. The pattern has four main parts as in the structure (SPRE) which refers to **S**ituation, **P**roblem, **R**esponse and **E**valuation. The situation gives background information about the problem to which the response is either evaluated positively or negatively. In case, the result is negative, the pattern repeats until it is corrected reaching to a positive result.

Below is a practical example of Hoey's (2001:123) SPRE pattern with positive or negative results:

Positive: An English language teacher had students who were unable to read or write. He taught them how to analyze a text. Now, they can read and write stories.

Negative: An English language teacher had students who were unable to read or write. He taught them how to analyze a text. Unfortunately, that did not work and accordingly, he was dismissed.

Methodology

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An experimental study of a total of 50 students was conducted to test the validity of SPRE pattern and the impact of using discourse devices in writing. Two groups of students of the same level volunteered to participate in the study. They were 43 girls and 7 boys in the academic year 2018-2019. The instructor collected the data from the two groups.

The procedure was as follows:

In group (1) the students were asked to complete activities (1) and (2) without any explanation. The instructor did not explain how to do activity (3) either which was about reading.

Group (2) students were taught the discourse markers as well as the SPRE pattern to comprehend reading texts and use them in writing. Group (2) students answered the same activities.

The two groups were asked to do activity (4) which was about writing a paragraph using discourse markers and implementing SPRE pattern.

3. Results and Discussion

Since the two groups of students completed the four activities, the collected data measured quantitatively. Below are the results of reading and writing activities among the two groups.

Both groups of students answered reading activity (1) correctly because they are familiar with the given type of tasks from school. The task was to fill in gaps using a given list of words.

Table (1): Results of reading activity (2 and 3)- (the two groups)

SPRE	Group 1	Group 2
Situation	X	√
Problem	√	√
Response 1	√	√
Evaluation	X	√
Response 2	X	√
Evaluation 2	X	√

Table (1) shows SPRE pattern elicited via (wh) questions and a table. As the results show, group (1) students realized only the problem and the first response whereas group (2) students identified the entirely required information.

Table (2): Results of writing activity (4)- (the two groups)

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Cohesive	Group 1	Group 2	Total
Reference	6 (23.1%)	19 (50%)	25 (39.1%)
Substitution	4 (15.4 %)	4 (10.5%)	8(12.5%)
Ellipsis	0	2 (5.3%)	2 (3.1%)
Conjunction	16 (61.5%)	13 (34.2%)	29 (45.3%)
Total	26 (100%)	38 (100%)	64 (100%)

Table (2) results show the significant improvement of group (2) students who studied discourse analysis. The other group had almost similar results for substitution whereas it is needed reinforcement for ellipsis. From group (2) students, only 5% were able to implement ellipsis and about 13% of them managed to apply conjunctions confidently. The results show great number of conjunctions used by group (1) students. However, it was not a healthy indicator because the students overused conjunctions. Overall, discourse makers have challenged the students of this level.

In teaching a language, it is difficult to apply discourse analysis in everything described as concluded by McCarthy (1991.147). However, creating some relevant materials can help students understand reading texts as well as produce organized writing paragraphs. In addition, Interactive approach in writing can enable readers to comprehend texts as claimed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) who give importance to reading-writing relationship. Another area that is not mentioned in details in this paper is the cultural meaning that can be presented through videos to familiarize the students with the context of the text. So, combining written discourse analysis with writing techniques such as SPRE can enable teachers and students to achieve learning outcomes.

In applying SPRE pattern, the teacher introduces a situational problem and encourages students to brainstorm ideas of possible solutions. At that stage, the teacher focuses on cohesive devices, elicits the necessary information and vocabulary about the case in order to prepare the students for the writing activity. In the discussion stage, the teacher can estimate the students' evaluation whether it is positive or negative. He/ she can also keep creating other problems related to the first one and then asks the students to find explanations or solutions for their claims. The teacher can also relate the problem to other contexts if they experience any from the everyday speech or they can compare going for further details.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to test the validity of Hoey's idea about interactive writing using cohesive devices and SPRE pattern. A number of 50 students' contributed to the study and the collected data analyzed and the results confirmed by the researcher's pedagogical implementation of

discourse devices and (SPRE) pattern. Using written discourse analysis and SPRE pattern are helpful to English language learners in enhancing reading and writing. They improve learners' understanding for a text and they also organized their writings. The participants were able to analyze reading texts and they were confident in the production stage. They wrote accurate and controlled paragraphs. So the teacher's role is to implement discourse devices and SPRE pattern in his/ her teaching materials to enhance reading and writing.

The study is limited to GFP level one students at the university; however, it is applicable to faculty students who rely on memorizing information. Further research is needed to test the pattern SPRE in other field.

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Appendix

Activity (1)

Read the text and complete with one of the words. **There is ONE extra word.**

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- visit – machine- him - one –his- change _ he - it - vehicle

Salim bought an old car. It took _____ to a garage many times. In the last _____, he was informed that he had to _____ the engine. He got it difficult to pay for the _____, so he took a loan from a bank. A month later, his _____ was able to work. He surprised when his car stopped again. Accordingly, he took it … for the second time. This time, when the mechanic informed Salim that the engine had to be replaced again, he was unconscious. Luckily, _____ kept the bill in which he had a grantee for a year, so he was given another _____ instead. This time, the mechanic was carefully repaired _____ in order not to be accused of fixing it incorrectly. Finally, the car was perfect and Salim drove it back home glad.

Activity {2}

Read the text again and answer the questions below.

Salim bought an old car. It took him to a garage many times. In the last visit, he was informed that he had to change the engine. He got it difficult to pay for the machine, so he took a loan from a bank. A month later, his vehicle was able to work. He surprised when his car stopped again. Accordingly, he took it … for the second time. This time, when the mechanic informed Salim that the engine had to be replaced again, he was unconscious. Luckily, he kept the bill in which he had a grantee for a year, so he was given another one instead. This time, the mechanic was carefully repaired it in order not to be accused of fixing it incorrectly. Finally, the car was perfect and Salim drove it back home glad.

1. Why did Salim take his car to the garage? _____
2. What was the problem with the car? _____
3. Was he able to pay the mechanic to repair his car? Why? _____
4. What did he do? _____
5. How did he get another engine for his car? _____
6. How did the mechanic maintain the car for the second time? _____
7. What does the word (one) in line 6 refers to? _____

Activity (3)

Complete the table from information from the text.

Situation (What happened)	

Problem	
First Respond	
Evaluation	
Second respond	
Evaluation	

Activity (4)

In your group, describe a problem you had at a school and explain how did you overtake it? Write (100-120 words).

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