

COHESION AND COHERENCE IN STD 10 ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE  
COMPOSITIONS OF BLACK PUPILS: AN ANALYSIS

BY

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*SOLI DEO GLORIA*

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**Synopsis**

Cohesion and coherence are two aspects of text that are very closely related. In this descriptive study an analysis is made of the cohesive devices used in the compositions of Standard Ten pupils according to the framework established by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and a holistic coherence rating is determined according to the Holistic Coherence Rating scale of Bamberg (1984). These two analyses are correlated in order to determine if there is a correlation between the cohesion and coherence of the compositions.

In conclusion, some suggestions are made relating to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in writing.

**Opsomming**

Kohesie en koherensie is twee aspekte van teks wat baie nou verbonde is. In hierdie beskrywende studie word 'n analise gemaak van die kohesie-vorme wat gebruik word in die opstelle van standerdtienleerlinge aan die hand van die indeling van Halliday en Hasan (1976) en 'n globale holistiese koherensiepunt word bepaal volgens Bamberg (1984) se Holistiese Koherensieskaal. Hierdie twee analises word vergelyk om te bepaal of daar 'n korrelasie tussen die kohesie en koherensie van die opstelle is.

Ter afsluiting word voorstelle gemaak vir die onderrig van  
kohesie en koherensie in skryfwerk.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Grave concern has been expressed in education circles about the high failure rate in English among black pupils. As experience has shown that their compositions are very poor and that teaching writing needs better understanding of the linguistic and rhetorical structures (Hubbard 1989b:16; Bamberg 1984:305) to solve the problems in compositions, this study aims to isolate two aspects of the problem of poor writing, namely, those of cohesion and coherence. The application of text-linguistic insights gained from this study can then be applied to the teaching of writing.

### **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Cohesion and coherence have been identified by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1988), Schiffrin (1987), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Hubbard (1989b) and Wessels (1993a) as major problems in L2 writing. Without cohesion and coherence, there can be no meaningful discourse. Savignon (1983:39) explains that cohesion and coherence have to do with discourse competence which is necessary for effective communication.

Widdowson (1978:52) points out that as a child naturally learns his mother tongue, he acquires the formal elements of language as well as an awareness of how these elements are used in the normal business of social interaction. This statement has direct bearing on second language teaching because the learning of language means acquiring the ability to handle discourse.

A lack of cohesion and coherence in pupils' writing and thinking causes problems in communication. Pupils' compositions often show a lack of logical connection and sequence, which are what make a text "make sense". De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:4) define this continuity of senses as the foundation of coherence. Should pupils not know how to plan a composition, an answer or a speech, they will not be able to communicate effectively, and, in a school situation, gain good marks. Pupils are taught all the discrete elements, spelling, grammar, and everything necessary to write but seldom how these elements are connected to form a text. As Cook (1989:127) rightly states, "Cohesion has often been neglected in language teaching, where sentences have been created, manipulated, and assessed in isolation." It would, therefore, seem that a concerted effort has to be made to make teachers aware of the need to teach this "connectedness". From personal observation, it would seem that the communicative approach is not yet quite

established in black schools, which could account for the problems pupils have with cohesion and coherence.

Teaching pupils to think logically and write with cohesion and coherence, equips them with a very valuable skill for life. Black pupils who are taught their subjects through the medium of English often cannot express their knowledge satisfactorily in subjects like science, biology, geography, etc. precisely because their writing lacks coherence and cohesion. To use ideas expressed by Hubbard (1989b:9&10), but applied to the field of this study, part of the rationale behind teaching writing at school level is that writing skills assimilated in the language class will be transferred into subject-specific writing. Although writing within a specific subject area usually takes place against a much richer conceptual network than is the case in general composition, it is the opinion of this researcher that academic success or failure is determined ultimately by the ability of the pupil to express his/her ideas lucidly in writing, which the students referred to in this study first learn in the English Second Language class.

This study focuses on the questions: What is the range, type and extent of cohesive devices used in pupils' compositions? How coherent is the writing? And, in conclusion: Can some recommendations for the teaching of

coherence and cohesion in writing be made?

Although a considerable amount of research has been done on composition writing, particularly on freshman composition writing in the United States (Stotsky 1983; Neuner 1987; Tierney & Mosenthal 1983) and some in South Africa, mostly based on student academic writing (Hubbard, 1989a; 1989b; Wessels, 1993a; 1993b) the field of Standard Ten pupils' compositions has not been approached.

### 1.3 THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are the following:

1. To analyse the different cohesive devices used in pupils' compositions in order to determine their range, type and scope, and to determine how correctly or incorrectly they are used.
2. To determine how coherent the compositions are.
3. To discuss ways in which cohesion and coherence can be taught.

#### 1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

##### 1.4.1 LITERATURE STUDY

A literature study was undertaken in order to study the field of cohesion and coherence; this included topics like discourse analysis, discourse markers, aspects of text structure, patterns in lexis, teaching writing and developing writing skills.

##### 1.4.2 ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITIONS

###### 1.4.2.1 COHESION

Each composition was analysed for its **cohesive devices**, noting correct use on the one hand and incorrect use and failure of use on the other hand. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) five categories of cohesive devices were used: Reference, Substitution, Conjunction, Ellipsis and Lexical cohesion. A complete discussion of these categories can be found in Chapter 2 of this study. An example of an actual analysis can be found in Chapter 4. The textual unit decided on was the orthographic sentence. Further discussion of the analysis follows in Chapter 4.

#### **1.4.2.2 COHERENCE**

The Holistic Coherence Rating of each composition was determined by having four raters allocate a coherence mark according to the Holistic Coherence Scale developed by Bamberg (1984) and adapted for the purposes of this study (see 4.7). These four marks were then converted to a percentage for the Holistic Coherence Rating of each composition.

#### **1.5 PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

The first step in this study is a survey of the field of cohesion and coherence, therefore, the concept of cohesion is discussed in Chapter 2, followed by a discussion of the concept of coherence in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with the method of research and the analyses of the study material, followed by the research findings and conclusions in Chapter 5. Some methods of teaching cohesion and coherence in writing in the secondary school are discussed in Chapter 6. In conclusion, the implications of the study and possibilities for further research are discussed in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 2 THE CONCEPT OF COHESION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Any speaker or hearer of a language intuitively recognizes whether what he is hearing or reading is a unified whole, or whether it lacks coherence. He will try to negotiate meaning if it lacks cohesion because he will not be able to understand the relations in the communication. This chapter defines and explores the concept of cohesion to the extent necessary for this study. Even though the concepts of cohesion and coherence are interrelated and the one is almost a prerequisite for the other, for organisational purposes, the following chapter, Chapter 3, will deal with coherence.

### 2.2 THE CONCEPT OF COHESION

The word "cohesion" simply means "sticking together"; applying this term to language would mean describing what it is in text or discourse that makes it a whole. There is cohesion within a sentence, as well as across sentences, therefore, cohesion is part of the system of a language; it creates texts.

The definitive work on cohesion is Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976). Writers on the subject of

discourse base their work on that of these two writers, add their own observations to it or attempt to refute some parts of it that they don't agree with.

Halliday and Hassan (1976:4) explain the concept of cohesion as being a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning and continuity that exist within the text, define it as text and is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary. It is the continuity provided by cohesion that enables the reader or listener to supply all the components of the picture which are not present in the text but are necessary to its interpretation (Halliday & Hasan 1976:299), for example:

*For he's a jolly good fellow  
And so say all of us!*

Widdowson (1978:26) explains that cohesion is recognized where we can establish a propositional relationship across sentences, without regard to what illocutionary acts are being performed, by reference to formal syntactic signals. Cohesion is thus the overt relationship, the links, between propositions expressed through sentences.

Cohesion is also a matter of the contextual appropriacy of linguistic forms - sentences and parts of sentences. Propositional links can be recognized because of the user's knowledge of certain facts of the English language (Widdow-

son 1978:27). Markels (1983:451), Yang (1983:235) and Schiffrin (1987:317) all agree that cohesion requires the meshing of both semantic and syntactic information. Only a definition that embraces both semantics and syntax can explain the macrostructure of a text.

### 2.2.1 COHESION IN TEXTS

A text is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976:293) as any piece of language that is operational, functioning as a unity in some context or situation. This unity has a texture that expresses the fact that it relates to the environment in which it is placed. Weideman (1984:72) adds that there must be linguistic cohesion, to express the continuity between one part of a text and another. The expression of the semantic unity of the text lies in the cohesion among the sentences of which it is composed. Conversely, the concept of cohesion accounts for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as text; furthermore, being a semantic unit, a text is realized in the form of related sentences with a single sentence as the limiting case (Halliday & Hasan 1976:293). Cohesion helps to create text; it is one aspect of the textual function.

It is, however, not the purpose of this study to go into the details of all the requirements for a text, as required by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1988). Furthermore, Carstens (1991:86) points out that from his exhaustive study of the literature there are more than 50 definitions of what a text can be. He takes 12 aspects into account for his definition of a text, one of which is coherence and suggests the following functional working definition: "A text is any passage of language that (a) forms a unified whole on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic grounds and (b) is also experienced as such by the relevant participants to the discourse." (See 3.4.) It is immediately apparent from this definition that cohesion is but a small part of the syntactic requirement of a text.

Widdowson (1978:25), Halliday and Hasan (1976:299), Trimble (1969:262), Fries (1986:20), Schiffrin (1987:13) and De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:71) all agree that cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another; it expresses at each stage in the discourse the points of contact with what has gone before. Unity in a sentence is therefore attained only when relevant details are logically stressed in main patterns, the lesser ideas being introduced by clause markers or phrase markers.

Schiffrin (1987:13) warns that cohesive devices do not

themselves create meaning; they are clues used by speakers and hearers to find the meanings which underlie surface utterances; neither do they supply all the inferences and understandings made available through text. While exophora gestures outward to the world, often outside the text altogether (Halliday & Hasan 1976:18 & 33; McCarthy 1991:39-41), cohesion is endophoric, pointing inward to other parts of a text (Brandt 1986:96; Halliday & Hasan 1976:303). Endophoric reference establishes a semantic tie between a referent and another part of a text by indicating the identity of the particular thing or class of things that is being referred to (see 2.2.3.1). Both situational and more remote textual information are necessary components and we often fail to realize just how much of our interpretation depends on this continuity with what has gone before.

The receptor of the text plays an important part in the realization of the meaning. Connor and Kaplan (1987:24) add the concept of a coherent universe discourse to the understanding of what a text is and therefore define a text as a string of language around which the receptor can build a coherent, noncontradictory universe of discourse. First the text must be understood; only then does it qualify as coherent.

Hasan (1968:10) explains that the situational features most

relevant to the language of a text can be summarized under three headings, which have been labelled 'field', 'mode', and 'tenor'. The 'field' is what the language is about, in the sense not only of the subject-matter but also, more widely, of what the speaker or writer is trying to achieve. The 'mode' is the channel taken by the language: whether it is spoken or written, incidental or prepared, and more generally its function, whether it is for example narrative, conversation, etc. The 'tenor' is the total set of social relations, permanent and temporary, among the participants.

In summary, it can be said that when cohesion is considered, linguistic means whereby a text is enabled to function as a single meaningful unit are investigated but that cohesion is also a more general notion; one that is above considerations of structure.

### **2.2.2 COHESION IN SPOKEN DISCOURSE**

Cohesion in spoken discourse is an important matter for the teacher of writing. Spoken discourse develops before written discourse in mother tongue and most second language language learning, with the result that pupils later write as they speak, a principle expounded by Hartnett (1986:143). If systems of relationships (or networks) characterize the mental processes that comprise thinking, it then follows

that thoughtful writing will express the systematic relationships which reflect the writer's thinking.

Cohesion is in operation where the interpretation of any item in the discourse requires making reference to some other item in the discourse. As stated in 2.1.1, this reference need not be overt; it may be implied, situational, or it may be left to the listener's interpretation. Fries (1986:24) says readers must create a semantic field. However, when it is completely ignored, the discourse falls flat because the cohesive relations themselves, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976:303), Schiffrin (1987:26, 62 & 63) and Yang (1989:236), are relations in meaning, and the continuity which they bring about is semantic continuity. Obviously, the role played by the participants in the spoken discourse towards the creation of coherence is greater than that in written discourse.

### **2.2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF COHESIVE DEVICES**

A brief classification of cohesive devices according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) is given, then follow those of De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), Markels's contribution (1983), Hartnett's functional classification (in Fries, 1986) and a discussion of the contribution cohesion makes to Hoey's (1991) concept of "bonding". The work of Halliday

and Hasan (1976) is discussed in detail as the research conducted for this study is based on it.

#### 2.2.3.1 HALLIDAY AND HASAN'S CLASSIFICATION

The classification of cohesion, as done by Halliday and Hasan (1976:303), is based on linguistic form: these are categories of cohesion that can be recognized in the lexicogrammatical system. In terms of the resources which are brought into play, they are all lexicogrammatical phenomena of one kind or another. Five different kinds of cohesion are identified by the writers: *reference*, *substitution*, *ellipsis*, *conjunction* and *lexical cohesion*.

#### Reference

There are items in a language that make reference to something else for their interpretation. Following Halliday and Hasan (1976:33), it can be stated that reference items can be **exophoric** (situational) or **endophoric** (textual). Endophoric items can be **anaphoric** (standing before the item, enabling items, once mentioned, to be maintained in the active discourse) or **cataphoric** (following the item and referring back to it). There are three types of reference: personal, demonstrative, and comparative.

' **Personal reference** is reference by means of function in the speech situation, through the category of *person*, it includes the three classes of **personal pronouns**, [*I, me, you, we, us, he, him, she, her, they, them, it, one*], **possessive determiners** (possessive adjectives) [*my, your, our, his, her, their, its, one's*], and **possessive pronouns** [*mine, yours, ours, his, hers, theirs, its*].

' **Demonstrative reference** is reference by means of location, on a scale of *proximity*; it is a form of verbal pointing. The **circumstantial (adverbial) demonstratives** *here, there, how* and *then* refer to the location of a process in space or time. The demonstrative: *this, these, that, those* occur extensively with anaphoric function. Halliday and Hasan (1976:70) also classify *the* as a demonstrative because it behaves similarly to the demonstratives.

' **Comparative reference** is indirect reference by means of *identity* or *similarity*. **General comparison** expresses likeness between things, also non-identity and non-similarity. **Particular comparison** expresses comparability between things in respect of a particular property. The property in question may be a matter of quantity or of quality, e.g. *higher, faster, more. so, such* and *as*, imply similarity.

## **Substitution**

Put simply, **substitution** and **ellipsis** can be thought of as processes within the text: substitution as the replacement of one item by another, and ellipsis as the omission of an item, that form of substitution in which the item is replaced by nothing.

The difference between substitution and reference is that substitution is a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning, a relation between linguistic items, such as words and phrases, whereas reference is a relation between meanings. In terms of the linguistic system, reference is a relation on the semantic level, whereas substitution is a relation on the lexicogrammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary.

There are different types of substitution that are defined grammatically rather than semantically. The criterion is the grammatical function of the substitute item. In English (Halliday & Hasan 1976:90) the substitute may function as a noun, as a verb, or as a clause. To these correspond the three types of substitution: **nominal**, **verbal**, and **clausal**. The following is a list of items that occur as substitutes:

Nominal: *one, ones, same*  
Verbal: *do*  
Clausal: *so, not*

## Ellipsis

Ellipsis occurs when something that is structurally necessary is left unsaid but that something is present in the selection of underlying options. Like substitution, ellipsis is a relation within the great majority of instances where the presupposed item is present in the preceding text. That is to say, ellipsis is normally an **anaphoric** relation; it is characteristic particularly of responses e.g.

**Nominal ellipsis:** *This is a fine hall you have here. I'm proud to be lecturing in it.*  
**Verbal ellipsis:** *This is a fine hall you have here. I've never lectured in a finer one.*  
**Clausal ellipsis:** *This is a fine hall you have here. I've never lectured in a finer.*

## Conjunction

Conjunction is based on the assumption that there are in the linguistic system forms of systematic relationships between sentences. These logical relations are embodied in linguistic structure, in the form of co-ordination, apposition, modification, etc. Analogous to these are certain non-structural, text-forming relations which are called conjunctive relations. Halliday and Hasan (1976:226) explain that conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out

into preceding (or following) texts, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. Conjunctive relations are encoded not in the form of grammatical structures but in the looser, more pliable form of linkages between components of a text. The following is a taxonomy of types of explicit markers of conjunctive relations.

**Additive:** *and, or, furthermore, similarly, in addition*

**Adversative:** *but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless*

**Causal:** *so, consequently, for this reason, it follows*

**Temporal:** *then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last*

The specific conjunctive relations are those of *and, yet, so, and then*; and each of these may occur in either an 'external' or an 'internal' context. Brown and Yule (1983:191) agree that conjunctions are simply semantic links between the elements that are constitutive of the text.

### **Lexical cohesion**

Lexical cohesion is 'phoric' cohesion that is established through the structure of the *lexis*, or vocabulary and hence (like substitution) at the lexicogrammatical level. Lexical cohesion embraces two distinct though related aspects which Halliday and Hasan (1976:318) refer to as reiteration and

collocation.

**Reiteration** is the repetition in the following manner:

<b>same word (repetition)</b>	<b>same referent</b>
<b>synonym (or near-synonym)</b>	<b>inclusive</b>
<b>superordinate</b>	<b>exclusive</b>
<b>general word</b>	<b>unrelated</b>

**Collocation:** The repetition of a lexical item is cohesive in its own right, whether or not there is identity of reference, or any referential relation at all between the two. The cohesion derives from the lexical organization of language and the **association of lexical items that regularly co-occur**, e.g. *Why does this little boy wriggle all the time? Girls don't wriggle.*

### **Perspectives**

Although most linguists agree with Halliday and Hasan, each contributes his own insight. Widdowson (1980:146) explains cohesion procedures as the way the language user traces propositional development in discourse by, for example, realizing the appropriate value of anaphoric elements, the way in which a sequence of units of information encapsulated

in linguistic units is provided with a conceptual unity. Hasan (1968), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Fries (1986) agree with Widdowson (1980:146) that the devices of thematization and grammatical cohesion can be described by rules of usage.

#### 2.2.3.2 DE BEAUGRANDE AND DRESSLER'S CLASSIFICATION

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:48) see cohesion as a function of syntax that imposes organizational patterns upon the surface text. Since grammatical dependencies often obtain among elements not directly adjacent to each other, syntax must provide closely-knit patterns of various size and complexity into which current materials can be fitted. The major units of syntax are patterns of well-marked dependencies: the phrase, the clause and the sentence. It is easy to use these units in a short span of time but for long-range stretches of text, there are devices for showing how already-used structures and patterns can be re-used, modified, or compacted. These devices contribute to stability and economy in respect of both materials and processing effort.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) divide the cohesive devices into the following categories:

**Recurrence** is the straightforward repetition of elements or patterns.

**Partial recurrence** is the shifting of already used elements to different classes (e.g. from noun to verb).

**Parallelism** is the repetition of a structure but filling it with new elements.

**Paraphrase** constitutes the repetition of content, but conveying it with different expressions.

**Proforms** are short placeholders of no independent content that are used to replace content-carrying elements. These proforms can be used **anaphorically** or **cataphorically**.

**Ellipsis** is identified as the repetition of a structure and its content but omitting some of the surface expressions.

**Junction** signals the relationships among events or situations, even across the boundaries of the sentence. Four major types are important: Conjunction, Disjunction, Contrajunction, Subordination.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:49) further explain that one can insert surface signals for the relationships among events or situations in a textual world, namely *Tense*, *Aspect*, and *Junction*. The ordering of expressions to show

the importance or newness of their content yields *Functional Sentence Perspective*. In spoken texts, prosody (i.e. *intonation, stress, tone of voice*, and other paralinguistic signals) can also signal importance or newness of content as shown by Davies (1989:255) and Gumperz (1982:328).

### 2.2.3.3 COHESION PARADIGMS IN PARAGRAPHS

De Beaugrande and Dressler's list of cohesion markers consists almost entirely of refined variations of the shared referent. Markels (1983:451) sees only parallelism as identifying something besides a semantic component. Markels considers cohesion to be the way in which independent choices in different points of a text correspond with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relations.

Markels (1983:453) criticises Halliday and Hasan for making cohesion dependent on the *sentence* when they insist that the sentence must link with what comes before. She argues that any sentence provides two distinct structural arrangements of semantic information: at one level it presents the information as a complete unit (satisfying Halliday & Hasan 1976); but at a second level - the level at which a sentence can lack cohesion - it presents that information as a structured array of internal elements. The unit that

includes both levels and is always cohesive - assuming semantic concord - is not the sentence but the **subject-verb-object sentence/clause**. This unit forms the cohesion paradigm in paragraphs.

The kernel SVO sentence/clause reflects current linguistic interpretations of syntax, and psychologists, according to Markels, have accumulated evidence to show that this kernel is the primary perceptual unit as well, since it is the smallest unit exhibiting semantic determinacy. It controls the function of ties, creates the relationships among internally cohesive parts, and provides the basis for an operational, reproducible definition of cohesion. Cohesion is thus attained when a dominant term, explicit or implicit, occupies concurrently the most important semantic position in the paragraph and also the most important syntactic position in each sentence of the paragraph. It is then obvious that cohesion requires the meshing of both semantic and syntactic information.

#### **2.2.3.4 HARTNETT'S FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION**

An interesting division of cohesive devices is that of Hartnett, as quoted by Fries (1986:19). Hartnett attempts

to relate form to interpretation when she distinguishes cohesive devices which serve to "focus and hold attention on a topic" from those cohesive devices which serve to "manipulate and develop [the topic] in the rhetorical modes of definition, comparison, etc." The first group of devices she calls **attention holding cohesive devices**. These would include the use of personal pronouns, demonstratives such as *this* and *that*, and the lexical ties involving repetitions of lexical items (particularly head nouns and verbs), synonyms, and collocationally associated items.

The second group are **manipulative devices**. Here, lexical cohesive devices which signal superordinate - subordinate classification would serve in definitions. Relations such as whole-part would be needed to express a description of a whole which is elaborated by a description of the parts. Inference is often indicated through the use of causal connectors (*therefore, thus*). Hartnett (in Fries, 1986) has thus devised **functions** for cohesive devices whereas Halliday and Hasan (1976) were only concerned with the linguistic resources available in English for marking relationships within a text (Blakemore 1988:232; Brown & Yule 1983).

### 2.3 A CRITIQUE OF THE THEORIES DISCUSSED

Although all writers agree about the existence of cohesive devices and more or less about their function, some writers argue that their importance is overrated. Schiffrin (1987:10 & 62) maintains that cohesion is not supposed to supply all the inferences and understandings made available through text; meaning conveyed by a text is meaning which is interpreted by speakers and hearers based on their inferences about the propositional connections underlying what is said. A complete analysis of the meaning of a text would specify both the propositional meanings displayed by cohesive ties, and the inferences and understandings derived through application of contextual and pragmatic principles.

Brown and Yule (1983:195) maintain that Halliday and Hasan fail to make the distinction between "meaning relations" which hold between items in a text and their explicit expression within a text. It is the underlying semantic relation which actually has the cohesive power.

Many linguists (Brown & Yule 1983; Weideman 1984; Carstens 1987; Schiffrin 1987; Blass 1990; Hubbard 1989b) express their criticism of Halliday and Hasan and De Beaugrande and

Dressler's insistence that cohesion is one of the prerequisites to define a text. There are many examples of texts which consist of only what seems to be unrelated information - consider an advertisement for a second-hand car or a horoscope, for instance. Here, as Schiffrin (1987:13) states, the discourse genre and also in other cases, the register, produce cohesion. One would expect no more from the advertisement or the horoscope and be able to identify them as such and understand what is said without having to look for cohesive devices.

Blass (1990:17) argues that cohesion is merely a surface symptom of some deeper relation which can exist independently of it, and that it is in terms of this deeper relation that the distinction between non-texts should be drawn, and the notion of discourse well-formedness. The obvious relation to consider here is that of coherence which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3. However, Blass (1990:19) also shows in the following example that coherence relations are sometimes not necessary for textuality.

A: *Is he an atheist?*  
B: *He is and he isn't.*

Semantically, B is contradictory and the text should be necessarily incoherent. However, in context it would often be interpreted as both coherent and true. It is thus clear that both cohesion and coherence contribute to textuality.

In her 1984 publication Hasan returns to the question of lexical cohesion that received such scant attention in *Cohesion in English* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). She now distinguishes between two major categories of cohesive relations: general and instantial. Wessels (1993a:33) summarises these categories as follows: The category of general relations contains lexical items related through repetition (e.g. *labour/labour(ing)*), synonymy, (e.g. *labour/work*), antonymy (e.g. *marriage/divorce*), hyponymy (e.g. *indigenous races/Xhosa*) and meronymy (e.g. *figure/body/legs*). The category of instantial relations contains words related through equivalence (e.g. *Our people's custom was to choose their children's marriage partners*), naming (e.g. *The payment for the bride was called lobola*), or semblance (e.g. *The girl was well-educated like a white girl*). General lexical cohesive devices express general semantic relations that are a feature of the language system as such. Instantial relations, on the other hand, are not part of the language system, but are text-bound. Their cohesive function is thus entirely dependent on the text in which they occur. Although Hasan (1984) discards the category of collocation, many relations previously dealt with in this category are now included under different headings in the new scheme. What is of interest in her new scheme is that she now regards some instances of lexical cohesion (i.e. general relations) as belonging to the system of the

language, whereas Halliday and Hasan (1976) view all types of lexical cohesion as being instantial. It will be noted (Chapter 4) that the frame of reference for this study is the original scheme of Halliday and Hasan (1976) which includes collocation.

Whereas Halliday and Hasan (1976) considered lexical cohesion merely as one of the categories of cohesion, and a very small one at that, devoting only about 14 pages to it; other scholars, among them Hoey (1991:9), consider it as the single most important form of cohesive tie, saying that it is the only type of cohesion that regularly forms multiple relationships. Hoey (1991:10) argues that the study of the greater part of cohesion is the study of patterns of lexis in text which form bonds that semantically relate the sentences. McCarthy (1991:87) calls these patterns fields of vocabulary.

The importance of lexical cohesion is indicated by many other researchers, for instance Hubbard (1989b), Witte and Faigley (1981), Brown and Yule (1983), Neuner (1987), Wessels (1993a&b), Zamel (1983). Witte and Faigley (1981:200) argue that parallelism often creates a cohesive tie, a category not included by Halliday and Hasan (1976) or later taken up by Hasan (1984). It will be pointed out that

one of the gravest problems in the compositions analysed in this study is the dearth of an adequate lexicon.

#### 2.4 CONCLUSION

An apt ending to this discussion of cohesion would be Gumperz's (1984:9) remark that the notion of cohesion can help one untangle the multiplicity of trends and sort out cognitive, developmental, and cultural factors, because it is explanatory of *COMMUNICATION* rather than of grammaticality or of paradigmatic forms of speaking or writing *per se*. When there is no cohesion there can be no meaningful communication and even the most uninformed reader or listener will realize that there is "something wrong" with the text or conversation, without knowing anything about cohesion as such. The following chapter will examine the concept of coherence and its relation to cohesion.

## CHAPTER 3 THE CONCEPT OF COHERENCE

### 3.1 Introduction

The topic of this chapter is the concept of coherence, its relation to discourse, the conventions of illocutionary acts and the matter of how coherence is effected. The relationship and the interdependence between cohesion and coherence are also examined.

### 3.2 Coherence as a quality of discourse

Coherence is a notion that is very difficult to define. Fries (1986:17) states, "a text is coherent when the language is being used to function within a given context." The implication is that coherence is a quality of the discourse itself which the reader simply has to recognize by reference to the rules at his disposal. The discourse, according to Widdowson (1980:135), is well-formed because the reader makes it so by working out the relationships between the parts; by realizing how the semantic links which exist between the lexical items mentioned are relevant to the interpretation of this particular discourse. Widdowson (1978:44) also discusses the concept of known conventions in illocutionary acts, maintaining that listeners recognize the discourse as representative of normal language use and

coherence is measured by the extent to which a particular instance of language corresponds to a shared knowledge of conventions as to how illocutionary acts are related to form larger units of discourse of different kinds. It is only when we see how items converge on a common frame of reference that we make sense of connections and achieve coherence in discourse (Widdowson, 1983:70). We can, for example, identify a piece of language as a description, technical report, legal brief or an explanation. Fries (1986:14) agrees that contextual configuration is the genesis of a text. (This identification is often necessary to enable one to understand a poem; one knows it is poetry, but the illocutionary act might be in the form of a prayer, for example, *Prayer for all my Countrymen* by Guy Butler.)

In summary, one can quote De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981:4-6) definition of coherence as "the ways in which the components of the *textual world*, i.e. the configuration of *concepts* and *relations* which underlie the surface text, are mutually accessible and relevant". They discuss relations such as Enablement, Reason, Purpose and Temporal Proximity. Hubbard (1989b:94) is of the opinion that De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) *coherence* is similar to what he (Hubbard) regards as *relational coherence* in his study.

### 3.3 Coherence operates in a context

Coherence is taken for granted because with it, a text is 'logical' and not noticed. However, when it is absent, it is immediately noticed. A text 'makes sense' when there is continuity of senses among the knowledge activated by the expressions of the text. A 'senseless' or 'non-sensical' text is one in which text receivers can discover no such continuity, usually because there is a serious mismatch between the configuration of concepts and relations expressed and the receivers' prior knowledge of the world. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:84) define this continuity of senses as the foundation of coherence, being the mutual access and relevance within a configuration of concepts and relations. (See 3.2.)

Halliday and Hasan (1976:23) define a text as a passage of discourse which is coherent in 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. Other writers (Brown & Yule 1983; Schiffrin 1987; Widdowson 1980; Fries 1986; De Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Neubauer 1983; Carstens 1991) insist on the context of situation as well.

### 3.4 Textual factors and the role of the reader

Fries (1986:18) points out that an analysis of a text for the cohesive ties which it contains will demonstrate one aspect of the coherence of that text, by giving an account of a portion of the texture of the text. Conversely, he argues, the analysis of the cohesive ties in a text does not account entirely for the texture of the text, much less the coherence of the text. Many writers point out this close relationship between cohesion and coherence (Schiffrin 1987; Yang 1989; Blakemore 1988; Fries 1986) but, conversely, also that coherence does not depend on the number of cohesive ties (Tierney & Mosenthal 1983:215; Neuner 1987:94; Yang 1989:247; Fries 1986:23); texts have to be treated as meaningful wholes to be understood. Hasan (1984) herself shows that it is the combination of ties that is important, not their occurrence in isolation. Speakers and listeners textualize their understanding of sentences as components of discourse, thereby providing them with a unifying cohesion and coherence. Cohesion is the overt structural link between sentences as formal items, whereas coherence is the link between the communicative acts that sentences are used to perform; cohesion is the propositional relation and coherence the illocutionary relation between parts of a discourse (Widdowson 1978:33, 1980:87). It follows clearly that whereas connexity and cohesion, as Haller (1984:84)

says, are inherent properties of texts, coherence is dependent on an interpreter. Coherence is based on what is said, what is meant, and what is done; it is not a mere feature of texts, but rather the outcome of cognitive processes among text users.

It is widely recognized (for example by De Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Carstens 1987; Weideman 1984; Hubbard 1990; Bamberg 1983) that no comprehensive answer to the question of how coherence is recognized can ignore contextual factors and the role of the reader in 'coherence making'. Brown and Yule (1983:66) explain that human beings do not require formal textual markers before they are prepared to interpret a text; they naturally assume coherence, and interpret the text in the light of that assumption. Carstens (1987:20, 1991:86; see 2.2.1) places the listener and language user in the process; he defines a text as "... 'n versameling (gesproke of geskrewe) taaluitings wat EENHEID behoort te vertoon op pragmatiese, sintaktiese en semantiese vlakke en wat ook as sodanig ervaar word deur die betrokke taalgebruikers..." and Hoey (1991:12) points out that because of its subjectivity, coherence could be judged differently by different readers.

### 3.5 The relationship between spoken and written discourse

It is beyond argument that the origin of written discourse lies in spoken discourse, after all, writing came after speaking. Widdowson (1978:52) explains that when a child learns a language, "... he learns at the same time how the language works; he learns meanings are to be inferred and certain common patterns of discourse development as well as basic conversational routines and narrative sequences". One concludes that coherence is acquired as a natural and necessary concomitant of language learning.

Much research (see Tannen 1982:265-280) has gone into illustrating the various differences between oral and written discourse, yet, it is agreed that cohesion and coherence must feature in both. Drieman (1984:269) explains that in written language, as compared to spoken language, shorter texts are found, longer words, fewer words of one syllable, more words of more than one syllable, more attributive qualities, a more varied vocabulary. This would seem completely logical, since writing is more formal and it is committing one's ideas to scrutiny and opening them to criticism, long after the ideas have been put onto paper. When speaking, meaning can immediately be clarified through discussion. However, it seems that the demarcation between

what is acceptable in writing and what usually happens in spoken discourse is becoming blurred. Lakoff (1984:274) has found that people are entering a new era of a new nonliteracy - a technological one - in which the oral is again being valued over the literate. He demonstrates this by showing that writing has come to reflect 'forms imitative of the oral mode.'

The foregoing discussion indicates that arguments pertaining to spoken discourse will, on the whole, pertain to written discourse as well. There are certain aspects of coherence in spoken discourse that are not so apparent in written discourse. One thinks for instance of the part **audience participation** plays in the creation of discourse, and **register**, which is typically associated with a situation type, i.e. the meaning potential of a typical social context. On the other hand, no one can argue that they play a role in writing as well. This researcher has found that when listening to a well-read audio book, the tone of voice, intonation, stress, even the accents the reader uses all contribute to the coherence of the book. Local coherence in speech (Schiffrin 1987:103), achieved by words like *well*, *so*, and *because*, are essential to realise coherence in the representation of dialogue in writing as well.

Coherence in spoken discourse is not within the scope of this study; what has been said has to suffice to indicate that there is a strong link between spoken and written discourse.

### **3.6 How is coherence effected?**

Although a theory of discourse organization cannot consist simply of a taxonomy of coherence relations, there are many devices that are used in order to attain coherence.

Gumperz (as cited in Schiffrin, 1987:21) suggests an integrated view of coherence. He maintains that communicative meaning is achieved through a process of situated interpretation in which hearers infer speakers' underlying strategies and intentions by interpreting the linguistic cues which contextualize their messages. Such cues are called contextualization cues: they are the verbal (prosodic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, rhetorical) and nonverbal (kinesic, proxemic) aspects of a communicative code which provide an interpretive framework for the referential content of a message. Production and reception of a message depend upon shared access to culturally defined repertoires of verbal and nonverbal devices which are both situated in, and reflective of, the

interactional frames within which they occur. Coherence then, would depend on a speaker's successful integration of different verbal and nonverbal devices to situate a message in an interpretative frame, and a hearer's corresponding synthetic ability to respond to such cues as a totality in order to interpret that message. When a hearer identifies a particular expression as an invitation rather than an order, he has realized that the context calls for an invitation (Widdowson 1980:146).

Coherence is a complex process, because, as Sgall (1983:135) points out, the questions of coherence of a text concern all the levels of the language system. Coherence is not only a matter of illocutionary connections in dissociation from propositional development, it is the basis of such social, but not linguistic rules that listeners interpret some conversational sequences as coherent and others as non-coherent (Brown & Yule 1983:226). Procedures of cohesion and coherence are not entirely distinct, any more than are the rules of usage and use.

### **3.7 Holistic rating scales for coherence**

On the holistic rating scales for creative writing devised and used by the Transvaal Education Department and the

Department of Education and Training, cohesion and coherence rate as a small separate consideration when determining the mark. What markers don't realize is that cohesion errors are regarded as language errors and coherence errors as style errors. Markers' typical reaction to errors in coherence is that the writing 'doesn't make sense' and they place the composition in a 'poor' content category. Without knowing the intricacies of cohesion and coherence, their intuition about text has guided them into allocating a justifiable mark. Because the problems of cohesion and coherence are taken care of as has just been explained, it seems that the categories of cohesion and coherence on the marking grid are never used, but these two notions are accounted for.

Long lists of properties of coherence are found in the work of Van de Velde (as cited in Heydrich 1989:180) and De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:94-96). Although these insights are very important, they are not applicable to the scope of this study in their entirety; the insights and definitions of Bamberg (1984) and her Holistic Coherence Scale will be used. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this scale and page 50 for the actual scale.)

### 3.8 Conclusion

After this discussion which might lead one to think coherence is a major problem, it is important to put it into perspective. Some of the latest works on text theories, according to Lundquist (1989:123), present coherence not as a typically textual problem, but as a general principle in the interpretation of all human activities, and therefore automatically applying it to the interpretation of texts. As a child acquires all the intricacies of his mother tongue, including knowledge of the appropriate social contexts, coherence becomes intuitive. A second language learner very easily transfers the notion of coherence to the language he is acquiring; he has to learn the cohesive devices, though, which contribute to coherence.

In the past two chapters the concepts of cohesion and coherence have been discussed in great detail. The aim of the current study is an analysis of cohesion and coherence in the Standard Ten compositions. In the following chapter the methods employed to analyse these concepts are discussed.

## CHAPTER 4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

### 4.1 Introduction

The basic purpose of this chapter is to describe how the <sup>1</sup>research project was <sup>2</sup>designed and how the data were <sup>3</sup>collected, <sup>4</sup>arranged and analysed. The figures and tables shown in Chapter 5 report on the various forms of cohesive devices studied and the rating of the coherence of the texts.

### 4.2 Population

The population was all the Standard Ten pupils (N=107) of a rural black school whose compositions were studied.

### 4.3 Sample

The sample comprised 20 pupils randomly selected from the population. The compositions these pupils wrote for an examination were analysed for this study.

### 4.4 Topic

The topic of the composition chosen to be analysed was the following:

Parents should have no say in the choice of their children's marriage partners. Give arguments for and against this view.

#### 4.5 Research design

This is a descriptive study of the compositions of 20 pupils. The results obtained <sup>Resultate kann nie verallgemeinert werden</sup> cannot be generalized, <sup>Kon conducting wees v. algemeen</sup> although they may give an indication of the general standard of writing by black pupils.

#### 4.6 Analysis of cohesion

##### 4.6.1 The orthographic sentence as textual unit

As in the work of Hoey (1991), Wessels (1993a; 1993b) and Halliday and Hasan (1976), the functional unit of discourse chosen for the study of cohesion was the orthographic sentence. The first procedure was counting the number of orthographic sentences in each composition. This was done in order to establish a basis for comparison among the compositions. The incidence/density of cohesive devices used in each sentence is expressed in terms of the number of devices used in each of the ten orthographic sentences, for example, from Table 2 (p. 55) it can be seen that

pronominal reference was used correctly 20,3 times per ten orthographic sentences.

Because of the great difficulty in determining the exact structure of many sentences in the writing, the orthographic sentence was considered to be the most appropriate unit to use. A sequence of words was counted as a sentence if there was any indication at all in the form of a period or a capital letter of it being a sentence. Often a period was followed by a small letter and a comma preceded a capital letter; many sentences were incomplete, often lacking verbs, but were started with capital letters and ended with periods. On the whole, though, the vast majority of sentences were complete.

One is aware of criticism of the orthographic sentence as a unit of analysis, for example by Hubbard (1989b:115) and Markels (1983); however, no ties holding across units, were considered, as Hubbard did when using f-units; cohesive ties were merely identified. Neither were repetition links indicated, as illustrated by Wessels (1993b:83), for the simple reason that not many occurred because of the paucity of the lexicon.

Not establishing various cohesive ties across sentences, or whatever type of unit researchers choose to identify, does

not signify a defect in this study. In a carefully devised study of cohesive ties and chains in good and poor freshman essays, Neuner (1987:97) found that a simple counting of ties does not appear to distinguish good from poor writing, neither does the distance of individual ties. He did, however, find that the chains in good essays were sustained over greater distances and involved greater proportions of the whole text. Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) came to the same conclusion. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 6.

#### 4.6.2 Analytic procedure

The analysis of cohesive devices was conducted according to the model proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) as discussed in Chapter 2. A count for each type of cohesive device was made for each composition, as well as of those devices which were incorrectly used. In deciding upon the analysis of each incidence of cohesion, it was important to remember the directive of Fagan et al. (1985:180) that in scoring papers for cohesion, scorers need to be attentive not only to the incidence of cohesive ties but also to their successful ordering.

As previously explained (4.6.1), the incidence of cohesive devices was then expressed in terms of incidence per ten

orthographic sentences. The following cohesive devices were identified:

**REFERENCE: Pronominal, Demonstrative, Comparative**

**SUBSTITUTION: Nominal, Verbal**

**ELLIPSIS: Nominal, Verbal**

**CONJUNCTION: Additive, Causal, Temporal**

**LEXICAL: Repetition, Synonym, Collocation**

#### **4.6.3 Sample analysis of a composition**

In the following illustration of the analysis of part of a composition the cohesive devices are tabulated as was done in the analysis of all the compositions. The following abbreviations will be used:

**R=reference:**

Pro=pronominal  
Dem=demonstrative  
Com=comparative

**S=substitution:**

Nom=nominal  
Ver=verbal

**E=ellipsis:**

Nom=nominal  
Ver=verbal

**C=conjunctive:**

Add=additive  
Adv=adversative  
Cau=causal  
Temp=temporal

**L=lexical:**

Rep=repetition  
Syn=synonym  
Col=collocation

## Script

In the olden days it was a duty of the parent only to see to it that a child becomes successful life. A parent would bring up his child, educate him, and decide his future. Lets not foget that in those days there were no schools a child's knowlage was depended only to what is said by the parents. They even involve themselves in the love affairs of their children.

*I don't think parents should have a say in the choice of their children's marriage partners.*

Firstly civilisation is making itself to be felt by the people Civilisation makes children to grow deferently in the same community. Unlike in the olden days where a boy was supposed to

## Cohesive Devices

**the:** R-dem  
**olden days:** C-temp  
**it:** R-dem  
**a:**R-dem  
**the:** R-dem  
**it:** R-dem  
**that:** R-dem  
**a:**R-dem  
**parent-child:** L-col  
**a:**R-dem

**his:** R-pro  
**parent-child:** L-col  
**him:** R-pro  
**his:** R-pro  
**(us):** R-pro  
**that:**R-dem  
**those:** R-dem  
**those days:** C-temp  
**there:** R-dem  
**a:**R-dem  
**educate-schools-**  
**knowledge:**L-col  
**what:**R-dem

**the:**R-dem  
**they:**R-pro  
**themselves:**R-pro  
**the:** R-dem  
**their:**R-pro  
**parents-children:**L-col

*Topic of composition-*  
*not analysed*

**Firstly:**C-temp  
**itself:**R-pro  
**the:**R-dem

**civilization:**L-rep

**the:**R-dem  
**same:**R-com  
**unlike:**R-com  
**the:**R-dem  
**olden days:**C-temp  
**where:**R-dem  
**a:**R-dem

do that. Children brought up with  
different way of looking things  
will have different attitudes  
towards things. All in all  
a child should have a will to  
marry one he or she loves,  
without the parent's objections.  
In the olden days a woman would  
be a house wife and a man will  
go to work. Today there is  
freedom for every one to do what  
one wants to do, so a child must  
decide his future with partner  
so that they have some thing in  
common before getting married. I  
think if one is doing his or her  
will one won't blame a person for  
the setback if it comes. (sic.)

to do:S-ver  
that:R-dem  
boy-children:L-col  
things:R-dem  
different:L-rep  
things:L-rep  
All in all:C-add  
a:R-dem  
one:R-pro  
a:R-dem  
he:R-pro  
she:R-pro  
or:C-add  
marry-love:L-col  
child-parent:L-col  
the:R-dem  
a:R-dem  
the:R-dem  
olden days:C-temp  
woman-housewife:L-col  
a + a:R-dem  
woman-man:L-col  
Today:C-temp  
there:R-dem  
everyone:E-nom  
to do:S-ver  
a:R-dem  
what:R-dem  
one:R-pro  
to do:S-ver  
so:C-cau  
wife-man-child:L-col  
his:R-pro  
so that:C-cau  
they:R-pro  
thing:R-pro  
before:C-temp  
I:R-pro  
if:C-cau  
one:R=pro  
a:R-dem  
his:R-pro  
her:R-pro  
one:R-pro  
the:R-dem  
if:C-cau  
it:R-dem

The incidence of different cohesive devices used was added  
up and used as data for the different correlations and

incidence studied. The percentage cohesive devices used was obtained by dividing the number of occurrences by the number of sentences and multiplying by 100 to obtain a percentage.

Briefly, it can be stated that this analysis showed that pronominals were used the most, which could be expected because of the topic of the composition. Substitution and ellipsis were very rarely used and the range of conjunctives was very narrow. A great deficit was discovered as far as lexical cohesion is concerned. Repetition was relied on heavily and the collocation links were among a very narrow field of words. The conclusion has to be drawn that much teaching is needed to develop the pupils' skill in using cohesive devices. The results are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

#### **4.7 Analysis of coherence**

According to Bamberg (1984:305) a better understanding of the linguistic features and rhetorical structures that create coherence as well as greater insight into the problems students experience in trying to use them, is needed. The instrument used in this study to assess the coherence of the compositions is the Holistic Coherence Rating Scale devised by Bamberg (1984:309). She explains that the scale has the following features:

1. it assesses coherence holistically, rating the entire essay and not individual parts;
2. it assesses coherence in terms of a list of features that create both global and local coherence; and
3. it rates essays on a 4-point scale that conceptualizes coherence as a quality achieved with varying degrees of success rather than as a dichotomous variable.

In this study, the addition of ° marks for each scale became necessary because of the nature of the compositions. This was also done in the case of Hubbard's studies (1989a; 1989b; 1993). Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, the Bamberg scale was considered to be a five-point scale: 0-°, 1, 1°-2, 2°-3, 3°-4. (See the scale that follows below). Four raters' marks were added up to make a possible perfect count of 20, which was then multiplied by 5 to bring the Holistic Coherence Rating to a percentage.

The raters, who were all experienced evaluators of this level of compositions, were instructed, as in Hubbard (1989b:193), not to concern themselves about the amount of detail that the student supplied, nor with the accuracy of the content, as long as it made consistent sense. The compositions were also presented to the raters in random order.

## HOLISTIC COHERENCE SCALE

### FULLY COHERENT 3½ - 4

Writer clearly identifies the topic  
Writer does not shift topics or digress  
Writer orients the reader by creating a context or situation  
Writer organizes details according to a discernible plan that is sustained throughout the essay  
Writer skilfully uses cohesive ties such as lexical cohesion, conjunction, reference, etc. to link sentences and/or paragraphs together  
Writer often concludes with a statement that gives the reader a definite sense of closure  
Discourse flows smoothly - few or no grammatical and/or mechanical errors interrupt the reading process

### PARTIALLY COHERENT 2½ - 3

If writer does not explicitly identify the topic, s/he provides enough details so that readers can probably identify the specific subject  
Writer has one main topic but there may be minor digressions  
Writer provides some reader orientation, either by briefly suggesting the context or by directly announcing the topic  
Writer organizes details according to a plan, but may not sustain in throughout or may list details in parts of the essay  
Writer uses some cohesive ties such as lexical cohesion, conjunction, reference, etc. to link sentences and/or paragraphs together  
Writer does not usually conclude with a statement that creates a sense of closure  
Discourse generally flows smoothly although occasional grammatical and/or mechanical errors may interrupt the reading process

### INCOHERENT 1½ - 2

Some of the following prevent the reader from integrating the text into a coherent whole:  
Writer does not identify the topic and the reader would be unlikely to infer or guess the topic from the details provided  
Writer shifts topics or digresses frequently from the topic  
Writer assumes the reader shares his/her context and provides little or no orientation  
Writer has no organizational plan in most of the text and frequently relies on listing  
Writer uses few cohesive ties such as lexical cohesion, conjunction, reference, etc. to link sentences and/or paragraphs together  
Writer creates no sense of closure  
Discourse flow is irregular or rough because mechanical and/or grammatical errors frequently interrupt the reading process

### INCOMPREHENSIBLE 1

Many of the following prevent the reader from making sense of the text:  
Topic cannot be identified  
Writer moves from topic to topic by association or digresses frequently  
Writer assumes the reader shares his/her context and provides no orientation  
Writer has no organizational plan and either lists or follows an associative order  
Writer uses very few cohesive ties such as lexical cohesion, conjunction, reference, etc. and sentences do not seem connected or linked together  
Discourse flow is very rough or irregular because writer omits structure words, inflectional endings and/or making numerous grammatical and mechanical errors that continuously interrupt the reading process

### UNSCORABLE/MISCELLANEOUS 0 - ½

Essay consists of only one T-Unit  
Writer writes only to reject the task

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Although the corpus in this study is fairly small, all the compositions were analysed in great detail. The following chapter deals with the research findings and conclusions.

**CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 deals with the findings of the research. There is an analysis of each cohesive device used, namely, reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical, as well as the percentage correct/incorrect use of each type of cohesive device used.

The coherence of the compositions is determined according to the Holistic Coherence Rating and an overall coherence is indicated. The correlation between the coherence and cohesion is discussed briefly.

**5.2 Analysis of cohesion**

Table 1 (p. 53) shows the analysis of the cohesive devices used and the total incidence. The numbers 1-20 of the first horizontal line refer to the compositions studied. Reading horizontally, one sees that in composition number one pronominal reference was used 89 times correctly and 6 times incorrectly. Comparative reference was used correctly 2 times in composition number one and not used at all in

Table 1: Analysis of cohesive devices

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
CORRECT/ INCORRECT																					
REFERENCE:																					
Pronominal:	89.6	34.13	46.4	36.1	72.31	41.11	60.9	71.8	38.4	82.6	51.22	58.16	32.25	40.6	40.4	61.29	4.9	14.8	16.6	44.16	929.233
Demonstrative:	43.2	21.4	34.8	38.2	42.11	23.8	30.8	41.5	32.2	44.6	23.11	29.6	28.21	19.9	43.11	17.7	17.4	8.11	7.7	18.5	557.148
Comparative:	2	1	9	4	2.1	2		2		1	1	1	1	3.1	1					1	31.2
SUBSTITUTION:																					
Nominal & Verbal:	5	12.1	9.1	4	11	3	6	12	4	1	7.2	1	6.2	1.2	14.1	1.4		1.1	1.6	1	101.2
ELLIPSIS:																					
Nominal & Verbal:	5	0.1	2	1	0.2	1	2	0.1													11.4
CONJUNCTION:																					
Additive:	12	2	0.2	4	5.1	8	5.1	7	8	11	8	10	6.1	4	3	1	1.1	2	3	3.7	103.13
Adversative:	6.1	2	1		5	2	2	1	2		1	4.1	2.1	1	2.1		2			1	34.4
Causal:	4	6	9	8	19.1	10	9	11	9	23	9	10	1.2	6.2	3	15.1	2.1	3	5.2	7	169.9
Temporal:	8.1	3	4.1	3.3	17.3	4	7.1	5.1	2	3	4	4	1.2	1	8	1	1.2	1		2	79.14
LEXICAL:																					
Repetition:	5	8	5.1	15	19.3	13.1	8	16	19	14	4	14	3.3	10	6	5	4.2	4	7.4	3	182.14
Synonymy:	3	3.1	1	1		2	4		1	4.1		1.1	2	1		0.1					23.4
Collocation:	26	11	11	17	25	16	10	17	21	33	12	25	9	7	14	10	2	5	5	2	278
TOTAL:																					
Correct:	208	103	131	131	217	125	143	183	136	217	119	154	93	94	133	113	31	40	44	82	
Incorrect:	10	20	17	6	53	20	19	14	7	13	35	23	57	21	16	41	20	20	25	28	

compositions numbers 3, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19. Ellipsis was used correctly 5 times in composition 1 and once incorrectly in composition number 2.

The last two horizontal lines of the table indicate the total incidence of all the cohesive devices used in each composition. Whereas in composition 3 cohesive devices were used 131 times correctly and 17 times incorrectly, they were used correctly 31 times and 20 times incorrectly in composition number 17.

Column 21, reading vertically, indicates the total occurrence of each cohesive device used in all the compositions. In order to establish a basis for comparison (as discussed in 4.6.1 and 4.6.2), the total occurrence of each type of cohesive device used, as reflected in column 21, was divided by the total number of orthographic sentences of all the compositions. This figure is reflected in **Table 2** (p. 55).

**Table 2** (p. 55) indicates the incidence of correct and incorrect use of each different cohesive device per ten orthographic sentences. Reference cohesion was used correctly 33.2 times and incorrectly 8.34 times per ten orthographic sentences.

**Table 2:** Incidence of correct and incorrect use of cohesive devices / 10 sentences.

	Correct	Incorrect
REFERENCE:	33.2	8.34
Pronominal:	20.3	5.1
Demonstrative:	12.2	3.2
Comparative:	0.7	.04
SUBSTITUTION:	2.2	0.4
Nominal & Verbal:	2.2	0.4
ELLIPSIS:	0.2	0.1
Nominal & Verbal:	0.2	0.1
CONJUNCTION:	8.4	0.9
Additive:	2.3	0.3
Adversative:	0.7	0.1
Causal:	3.7	0.2
Temporal:	1.7	0.3
LEXICAL:	10.6	0.4
Repetition:	4.0	0.3
Synonymy:	0.5	0.1
Collocation:	6.1	0.0

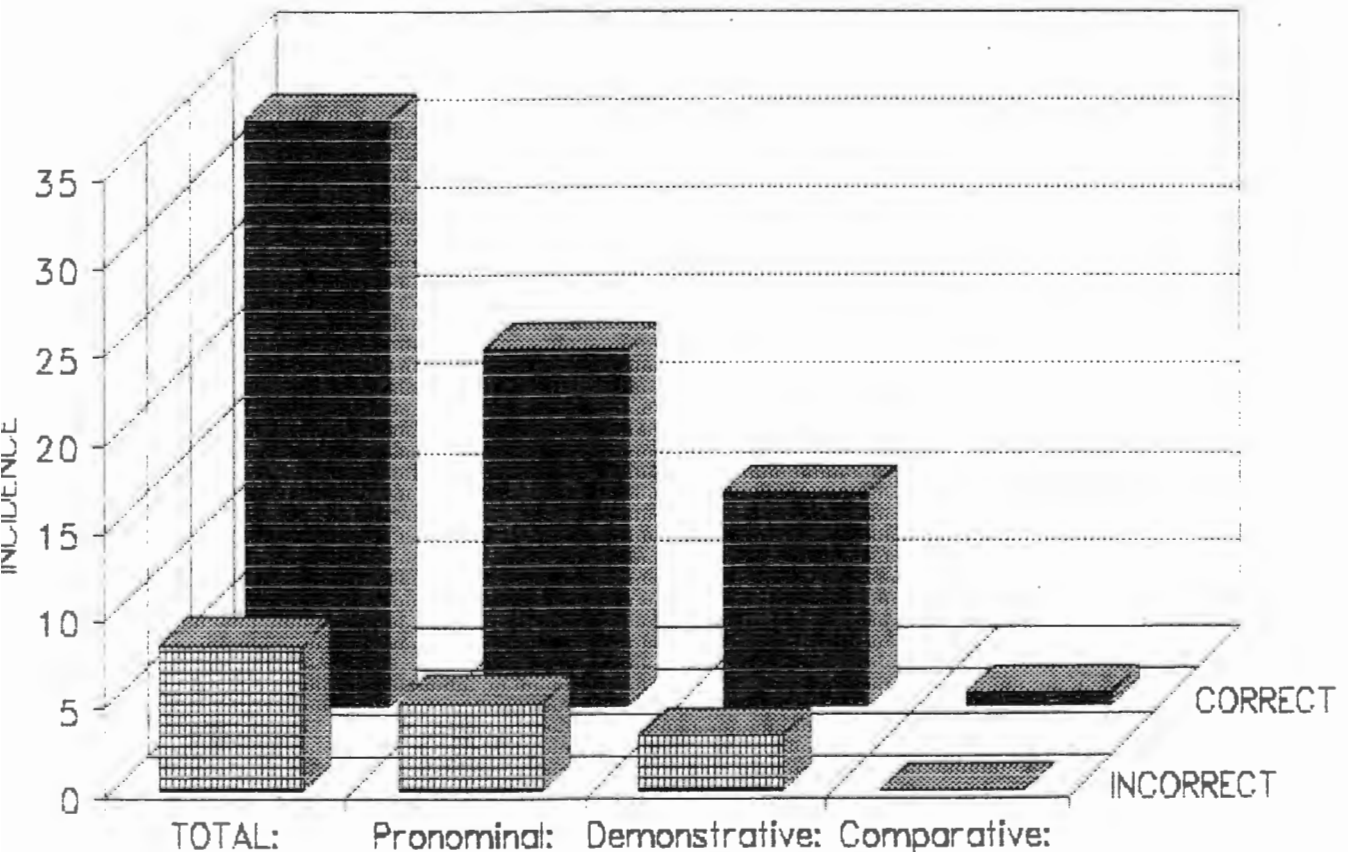
Although the data used for the calculation of the correlation between the cohesion and coherence are the same, the calculations differ. The procedures will be explained when coherence is discussed. A discussion of the specific cohesive devices follows.

5.2.1 Reference

Table 2 (p. 55) shows that the overall incidence of reference cohesion is 33.2 per 10 sentences with pronominal at 20.3 making the largest contribution and comparative at 0.7 the smallest. The figure for demonstrative cohesion is 12.2. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the three different types of reference cohesion, pronominal, demonstrative and comparative, as well as the incidence of their incorrect use.

Figure 1: Incidence of cohesive devices used / 10 sentences

REFERENCE



The topic of the composition called for a high incidence of pronominals because it dealt with people. Tierney and Mosenthal (1983:221) found that topic elicits an effect on the kinds of cohesive ties writers use.

Although some researchers, like Neuner (1987:92) and Witte and Faigley (1981:196), consider reference cohesion as the primary evidence of ability to sustain a selfsufficient text without the appeal to the non-textual environment, and a means for distinction between better writing and poor, this is not borne out by this study where some of the poorer compositions have a much higher incidence of them than the better ones. Hubbard (1993:66) also indicates this negative relationship between Holistic Coherence Rating and these features. A few examples of the writing will show that the use of more pronominals interfered with the text and made for very poor style:

*Your children and you yourself will never find peace because you will never feel satisfied. (sic.)*

*For instance, you will find that your child maybe is a woman is educated and he got a man who is uneducated that is a trouble that we meet in our world. (sic.)*

*Firstly of all my parents, they should start to criticise him or her. They can say his or her parents are bad so that you can't marry him or her. (sic.)*

There is a low incidence of demonstratives owing, one would conclude, to the nature of the topic. Virtually the only comparatives used were *such* and *as if*.

Reference items were only counted as incorrect if they were grammatically incorrect. The incidence of incorrect use for **pronominals** was 5.1 per 10 sentences, that is more than once in every two sentences. Switching of pronominals was the major problem encountered, for example in *One does not like his parents to-choose him a wife he doesn't like. (sic.)* as well as agreement between nouns and pronouns. This problem will again be discussed in Chapter 6 (6.2.1.2). There was only one incident of the incorrect use of a comparative.

One would conclude, with Neuner (1987:100), that poor compositions have a dominant chain that simply overwhelms the essay with the reiteration of its topic and pronouns for the topic.

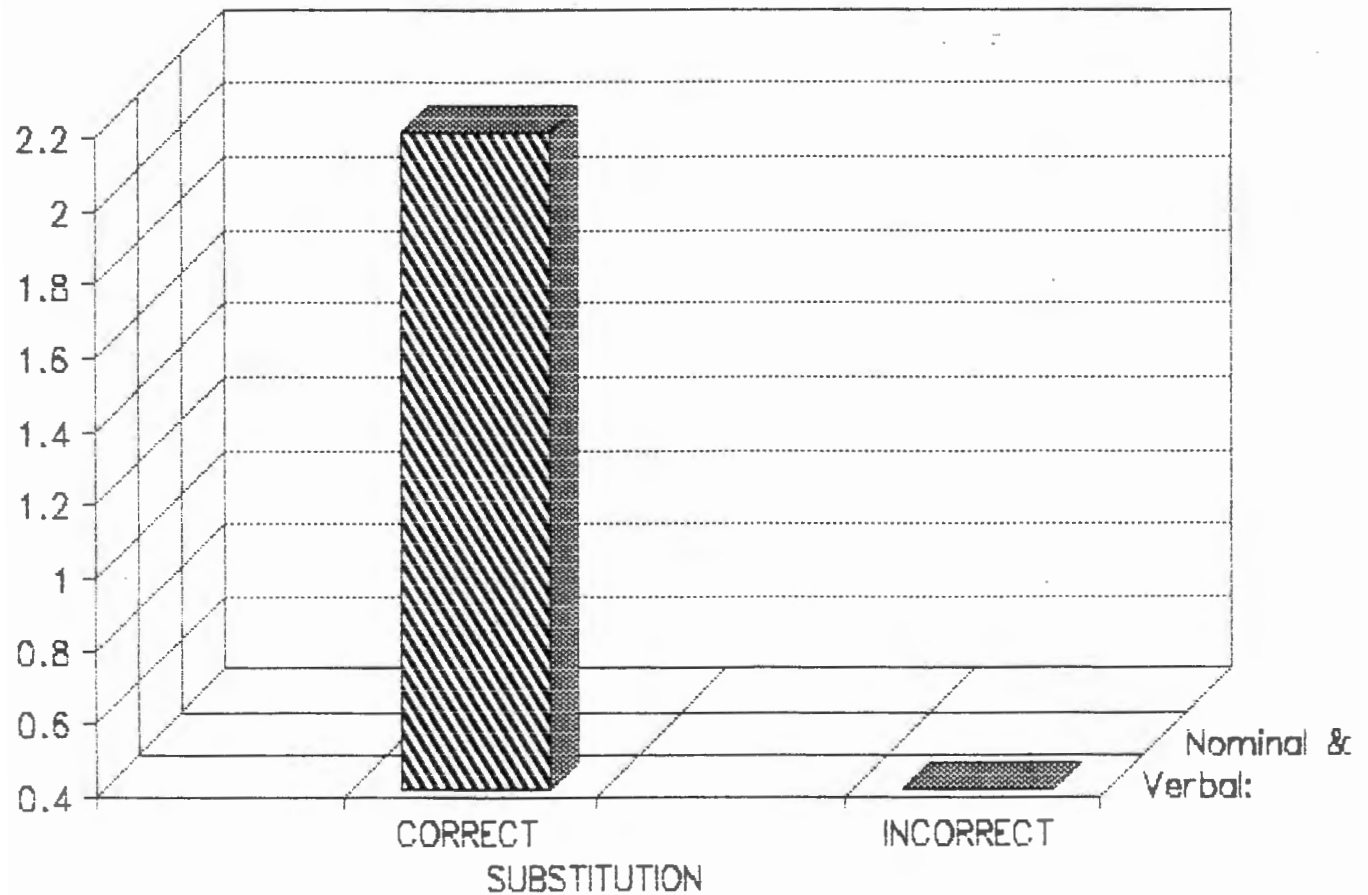
Hubbard (1993:66) suggests the higher incidence of direct reference in texts with lower Holistic Coherence Ratings could be symptomatic of insufficient topic development and elaboration resulting in less effective and less coherent writing. This seems to be the problem in the writing studied in this project as well.

### 5.2.2 Substitution

Table 2 (p. 55) shows that the total incidence of nominal and verbal substitution was 2,2 incidences per 10 sentences correct use and 0,4 incorrect use (see also Figure 2). The rate of use is a reflection of what other researchers also found. Tierney and Mošenthal (1983:217) left out substitution and ellipsis from their study simply because there were insignificant numbers of these cohesive types used in the essays they studied. Hubbard (1993:57) reports

Figure 2: Incidence of cohesive devices / 10 sentences:

#### NOMINAL AND VERBAL SUBSTITUTION



that he left them out because they are more characteristic of speaking than writing and few examples are found in compositions.

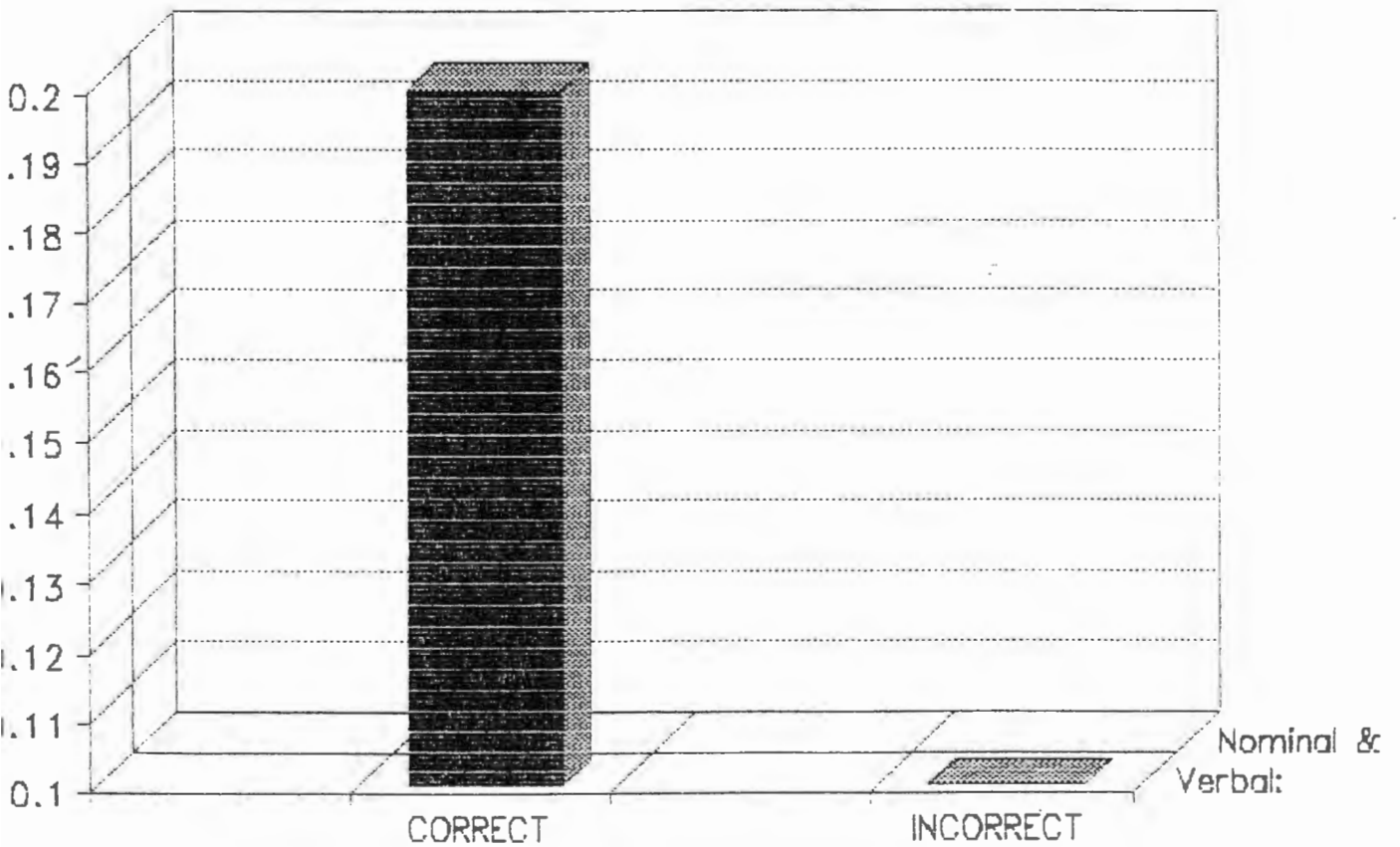
Almost the sole form of substitution used was *thing*, which reflects the very poor lexicon of the pupils. Neuner (1987:100) shows that *thing* collocates with virtually every word in the language and therefore bears little semantic import or explicitness.

### 5.2.3 Ellipsis

Table 2 (p. 55) and Figure 3 show that the incidence for ellipsis is even lower than for substitution, namely 0,2 and 0,1 of incorrect use. The same arguments hold for ellipsis as for substitution.

Figure 3: Incidence of cohesive devices / 10 sentences

#### ELLIPSIS



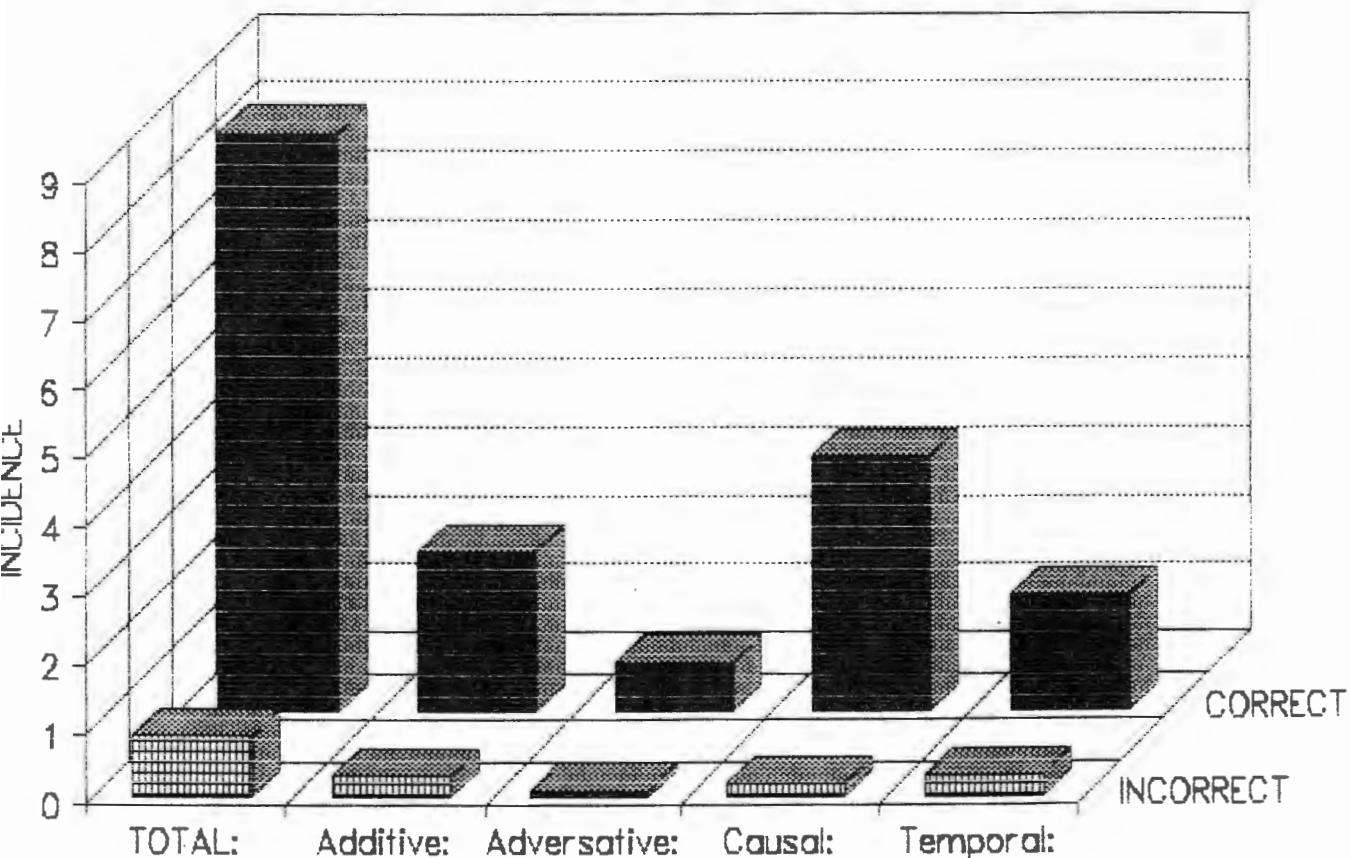
#### 5.2.4 Conjunction

Table 2 (p. 55) and Figure 4 (p. 63) indicate that conjunction was the third most employed cohesive device. The total incidence was 8,4 per ten orthographic sentences used correctly and 0,9 incidences of incorrect use per ten sentences. Because of the nature of the topic, one would have expected adversative and causal to show the highest incidence because pupils had to supply arguments for and against the issue. The figures show that causal cohesion was used 3,7 times and for the arguments against, adversative cohesion was only used 0,7 times, which shows that pupils did not successfully argue both sides of the statement. Although causal cohesion was used the most, the range was very narrow. The only causal cohesive device used was *because* and the only adversative was *but*. As will be referred to in Chapter 6, Brostoff (1981:285) also found the overuse of *because* and suggested this was because the cause-effect thought pattern is developmentally basic.

Pupils did not link and develop their arguments. Temporal conjunctions used mostly were *then, today, in olden days*. Hult (1986:166) found that a characteristic of poor writing was that conjunctions were missing or inappropriate. There was an incidence of 0,9 incorrect use of conjunction in the essays studied, which means about once every 10 sentences.

The range of conjunctions used was very narrow as well.

**Figure 4:** Incidence of cohesive devices / 10 sentences  
CONJUNCTION



### 5.2.5 Lexical cohesion

The use of this type of cohesion has in this study been identified as a grave problem in pupils' writing. Given the findings of various studies that this is the most important device to be used, the poor range and infrequent use of

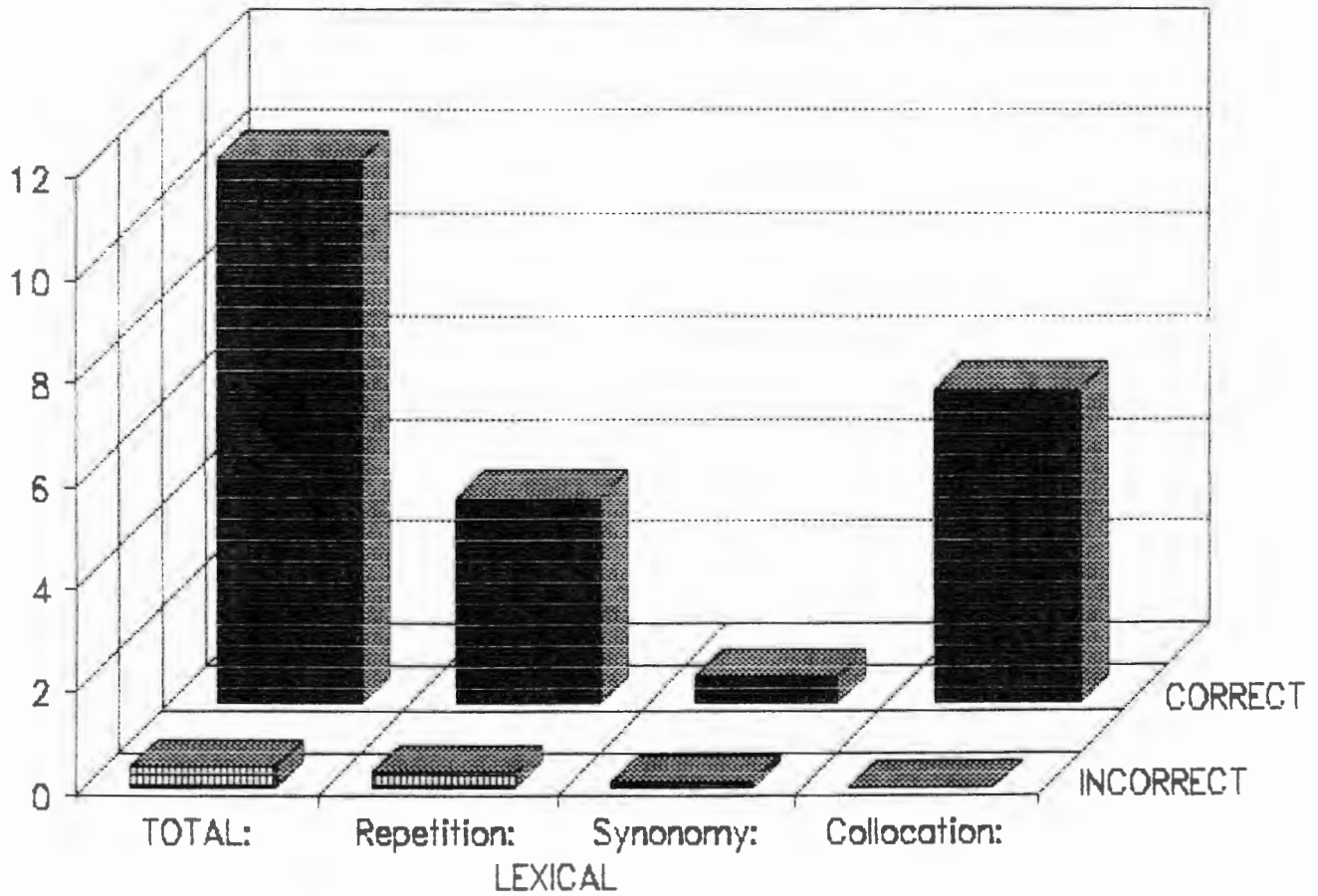
lexical cohesive devices are very serious problems. Hoey (1991), Wessels (1993a & b), Tierney and Mosenthal (1983), Hubbard (1993), McCarthy (1991) all consider lexical cohesion to be the predominant means of connecting sentences and creating coherence. Witte and Faigley (1981:196) found that in good writing two-thirds of the total ties were lexical ties, a far cry from what became apparent in this study.

**Table 2** (p. 55) and **Figure 5** (p. 65) indicate the incidence of lexical cohesion. Even though lexical cohesion had the second highest incidence, at 10,6 per 10 sentences, the fact is that the range of the links was extremely limited. Just as Witte and Faigley (1981:203) found in their study, these papers showed lexical repetition, totalling 4 incidences per ten sentences, of a very narrow field of words. There were 6,1 incidences of collocation per ten sentences. Once again the field was very narrow. The following words were used repeatedly (they were counted as an incident every time they were used):

*parents / children, marriage partner / marry / marriage, wife / husband, boy / girl, parents / mother / father / child.*

Figure 5: Incidence of cohesive devices / 10 sentences

LEXICAL



A count of 23 synonyms were used in the total of 457 sentences, which shows a great lack of functional lexicon, while 4 forms of synonyms were used incorrectly. The problem of a lack of lexicon has been proved by this study to be a serious one. In chapter 6 some suggestions are made to address this problem.

In conclusion to the study of cohesion, it can be stated that, to reiterate the observations made in Chapter 4 (4.6), the results indicate an overuse of pronominals, poor use of conjunctions and an extremely limited lexicon.

### 5.3 Analysis of Coherence

Table 3 indicates the percentages of the Holistic Coherence Rating, determined as explained in Chapter 4. The percentage of the Holistic Coherence Rating was calculated by adding up the four independent raters' marks, for a total out of twenty, and multiplying by 5.

Table 3: Coherence percentage

Composition	Coherence %	Composition	Coherence %
1	30	11	22,5
2	45	12	20
3	45	13	12,5
4	35	14	20
5	20	15	35
6	32,5	16	15
7	27,5	17	7,5
8	37,5	18	17,5
9	37,5	19	7,5
10	40	20	17,5
Average			26,25%

The average mark for coherence for the twenty compositions was 26,25%. This is an extremely low mark ranging from 7,5% to the highest mark of 45% achieved in compositions 2 and 3. Pupils' compositions were shown to lack coherence. These low marks indicate that there is much work to be done in the teaching of coherence in writing.

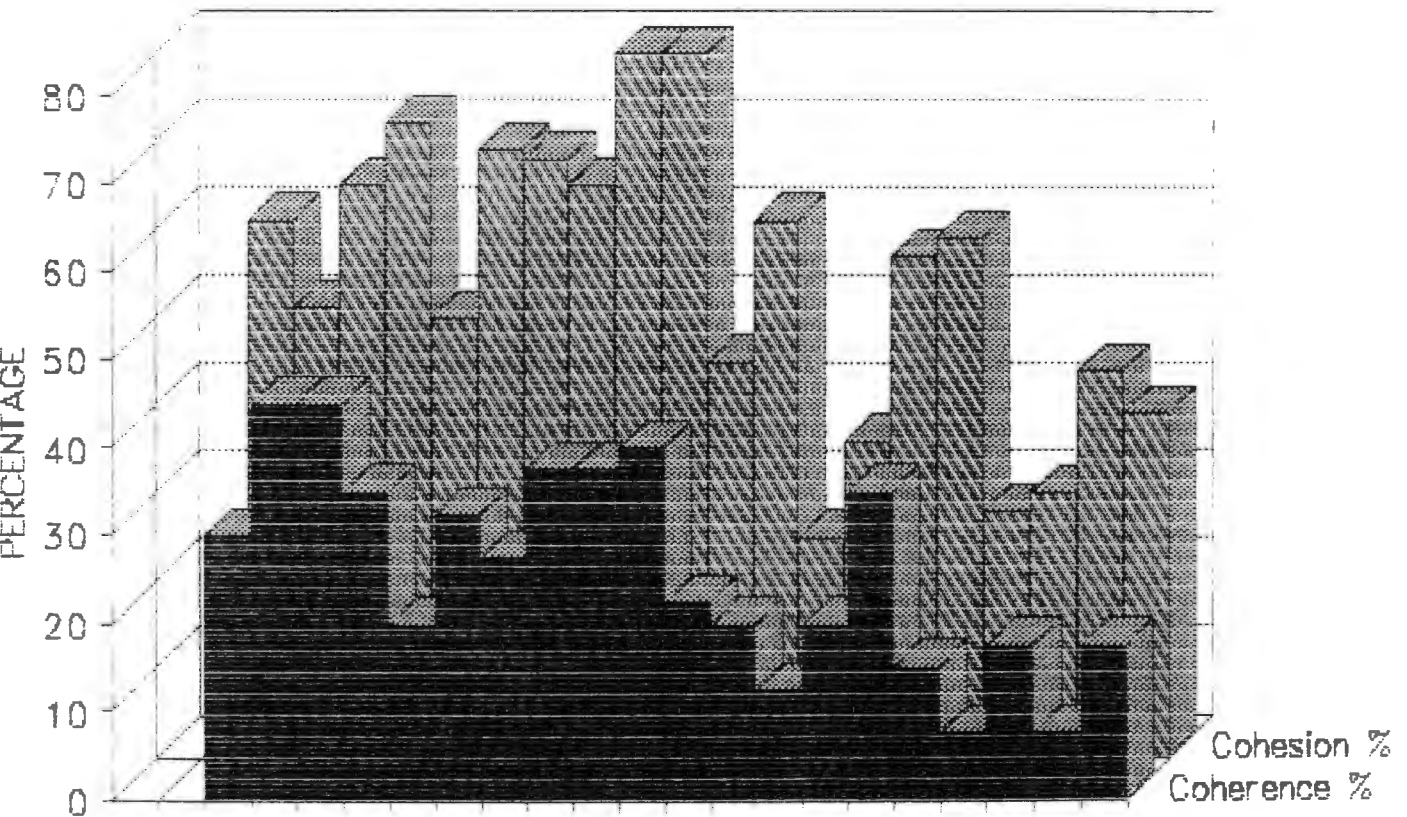
#### 5.4 Correlation between cohesion and coherence

The percentage cohesive devices used per ten orthographic sentences (see 4.6.3), and the Holistic Coherence Rating were correlated to determine if a high percentage for cohesion would correlate with a high coherence mark. According to the procedures followed in this study for this sample of compositions, the correlation between the cohesion and coherence was 0,73. **Figure 6** (p. 68), is a representation of the correlation of the two marks for each composition.

According to **Figure 6** (p. 68) the percentage for the cohesive devices is higher in each instance than the coherence mark. For composition number 1 the mark for cohesion is 61% and for coherence 30%; for composition number 9 the marks are 80% and 37,5% respectively. This high percentage of use for cohesive devices and corresponding low percentage for coherence illustrate

Bamberg's (1984:308) statement that cohesive ties do not constitute coherence. Roen (1984:36) showed in his experiment that too many cohesive devices confuse the reader and cohesive conjunctions do little to enhance coherence (see 5.2.1). Fries (1986:23) also argues that more ties don't make the writing more coherent.

**Figure 6:** Incidence of cohesive devices / 10 sentences and coherence mark



1-20

The high correlation between cohesion and coherence can, in the opinion of this researcher, be attributed to the nature of the texts studied. The average coherence mark was 26,2%

(Table 3, p. 66). The language use, the composing skills and the analytic abilities of these pupils are virtually undeveloped. At this low level of writing, the two aspects, namely cohesion and coherence, should correlate because they would affect each other.

Although the correlation between coherence and cohesion is so close, it must be remembered that the range and use of the cohesive devices is also very poor. It has been shown, in the discussion of pronominals (5.2.1) that often the use of these devices interfered severely with style and writing quality as well.

### 5.5 Conclusion

The results of this study have, in summary, shown that, although cohesive devices are used in abundance, they are sometimes used incorrectly and in many instances unnecessarily.

The severely limited scope of the pupils' lexicon was revealed, as well as a very narrow range of cohesive devices being used. The correlation of the cohesion with the extremely low coherence mark can only be attributed to the untutored standard of the pupils' work.

Results of this study have identified various areas where the teaching of specific skills will improve pupils' writing. The following chapter will suggest some teaching strategies to improve the use of cohesive devices and the coherence of writing.

## CHAPTER 6 TEACHING COHESION AND COHERENCE IN WRITING

### 6.1 Introduction

This study of cohesion and coherence in writing was obviously not an end in itself; it was merely a procedure to identify these two problems in pupils' creative writing and suggest ways in which they could be remedied, as set out in the aims mentioned in Chapter 1. Huckin (1980:210) agrees with Widdowson (1978:16) that the most important task of the teacher is to teach the pupils how to recognize and create coherence, i.e. how to interpret discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to explore some ways in which the two aspects, cohesion and coherence, can be taught in the writing class.

### 6.2 Strategies for teaching cohesion

In the words of Widdowson (1978:55) the importance of the work on grammatical cohesion is that it is a description of the devices which are used to link sentences together to form a text and as such provides the language teacher with an inventory of points he must incorporate into exercises to develop a knowledge of this aspect of language use. In terms of this study, the grammar of cohesion to be taught is the different types of cohesive devices as discussed in

Chapter 3, based on the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976). A word of caution has to be sounded here. All researchers concede the importance of cohesive ties but warn that cohesive ties do not predict rankings on general coherence nor an enhanced writing quality (Neuner 1987; Morgan & Sellner 1980; Roen 1984; Fries 1986). Neuner (1987:97) found that the length of cohesive chains does discriminate good from poor essays in his study because connectedness is at the core of meaning and complex meaning is never resolved in a single word or phrase but through longer semantic structures that cross or intertwine with others. This is also reiterated by Yang (1989:235), Zamel (1983:22) and Markels (1983:458).

The final remark in this section has to be that cohesive devices have to be taught in context and incidentally, as suggested by writers like Cook (1989:128) and McCarthy (1991:77). Cook (1989:133) finds nothing inherently bad in isolation, provided it remains in subordinate relationship to more holistic activities.

In the following section of this chapter the teaching of each different device will be discussed. This section should be read with the results of the analyses of this study in mind and the maxim that teaching must have context, should be remembered. The following categories of cohesive

devices will be discussed: Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction, Lexical cohesion.

### 6.2.1 Reference

The high density of pronominals used in the sample analysed in this study, and the highest incidence of incorrect use, as revealed in the analysis in 5.23.1, shows that there is a great necessity for the teaching of reference cohesion. Hubbard (1993:66) found that there is a negative relationship between Holistic Coherence Rating and the density of these features; this is also borne out by this study.

#### 6.2.1.1 Sentence combining exercises

A simple sentence combining exercise from Glendinning and Mantell (1983:9) will illustrate how a context can be created. A little imagination will open up the further possibilities of such an exercise, for example, using it as a model for any piece of writing describing a person's achievements, but mostly as a method for teaching the use of reference cohesion.

#### *SHAKESPEARE*

- a. *Shakespeare was a writer.*
- b. *He was born in Stratford in 1564.*
- c. *Stratford is a small town.*
- d. *It is in the west of England.*

- e. *Shakespeare wrote many plays.*
- f. *They are still performed today.*
- g. *He spent much of his life in London.*
- h. *He worked in a theatre in London as an actor and a writer.*

This exercise illustrates that a combination of ties creates cohesive harmony which, in turn, creates coherence. The point is also illustrated that, as Widdowson says (1980:146), "procedures of cohesion and coherence are not entirely distinct, any more than are rules of usage and use."

#### **6.2.1.2 Teaching pronominals**

Pupils in this study had great difficulty in sticking to the pronoun *one* after having introduced it. Obviously, they have to be taught this aspect. They also became very involved with pronouns as a result of not deciding on gender, making strings of sentences using *him/her* all the time (cf. 5.2.1). In this study it has been found that the high incidence of pronominal reference interferes with text and writing quality. Pupils have to be taught that switching pronouns is like switching the names of people in a story.

An exercise like the following one by Cunningsworth (1989:55) is an example of how pronominals can be taught:

*John's* sister gave *her* programme to *her* neighbours.

*He gave her his.*

This researcher has found that role play with pictures providing clues is interesting to the pupils and they can identify with the characters and not confuse the pronouns.

#### **6.2.1.3 Using literature texts, magazines, newspapers**

Passages from literature and any magazine or newspaper can be used for the purpose of teaching cohesive devices and also for illustrating how coherence is attained (see 6.3). McCarthy (1991:41) makes use of newspaper reports to teach exophoric reference, which Halliday and Hasan (1976) called demonstrative reference.

Comparative reference needs to be given specific attention as it is very seldom used by pupils (refer to 5.2.1) and, as Hubbard (1993:66) found, there is a positive relationship between the density of their use and coherence. The topic of the composition studied in this research (see 4.4) demanded the use of comparative devices, as pupils had to argue both sides of the topic. In the few instances where they attempted to do this, they set the two sides next to each other and never made a connection. Pupils must be able to use comparatives such as: *same, equal, such, similar, other, different, else, otherwise, more, fewer, so-, as-, equally, less.* (Adapted from Halliday & Hasan 1976:76.)

Although Neuner (1987:93), argues that, as writers mature, they use less reference and conjunctive cohesion and rely more on lexis, it is important that pupils at the level of writing researched in this study should know how to use these cohesive devices correctly. Substitution tables suggesting the different comparatives are extremely effective.

### 6.2.2 Substitution and ellipsis

To state briefly what is explained in full in Chapter 2, 2.2.3.1, substitution is the replacement of one item by another, whereas ellipsis is seen to be the omission of an item. The devices used in the compositions studied were *thing*, *it* and *someone*. As substitution and ellipsis are so rarely found in writing, they have to be studied incidentally whenever they are come across and their workings explained. It is interesting to note the example of ellipsis used in the previous sentence, namely, the omission of *have to be* before *explained*.

In this study a few examples of substitution and ellipsis were found, almost exclusively the repetition of *thing* and *it* which, as stated in 5.2.2, collocate with virtually every word in the language and therefore bear little semantic import or explicitness (Neuner 1987:100).

Pupils have to be taught to be explicit and precise in their writing.

McCarthy (1991:45) maintains that most learners practise and drill the items commonly used for substitution in English, for example:

**One:** *I offered him a seat. He said he didn't want one.*

**Do:** *Did Mary take that letter? She might have done.*

**So/not:** *Do you need a lift? If so, wait for me; if not, I'll see you there.*

**Same:** *She chose the roast duck; I chose the same.*

McCarthy adds that many common, everyday substitutions tend to be learnt idiomatically.

### 6.2.3 Conjunction

As seen from the analysis in 5.2.1 and 5.2.4, reference and conjunction are the devices most frequently employed and also most frequently used incorrectly. Hubbard (1989a:16) reports that errors in these categories are likely to be the most troublesome to the reader, affecting textual coherence most adversely, and he advises that the eradication of such errors should be a priority in any pedagogical programme directed at better cohesion in student writing. Other writers (Witte & Faigley 1981; Brostoff 1981; Roen 1984;

Fries 1986; Brown & Yule 1983) agree that all types of conjunctions are associated with good writing. Hubbard (1993:67) reiterates that conjunctive cohesion is the only type of cohesion that regularly links the meanings of textual units as wholes - this is possibly one reason for its importance to coherence. He cites other studies that find a more positive relationship between conjunctive cohesion and coherence than between reference cohesion and coherence. This claim can be countered to some extent by stating that the topic of the discussion will determine whether more reference or conjunctive devices are used. In the topic of this study, because it dealt with people, more pronominals were used (see 5.2.1). Wessels (1993a:79) also argues that a common topic contributes to coherence.

The overuse of *because* as a conjunction in this study is symptomatic of the paucity of the teaching in this field. As Brostoff (1981:285) indicates, the cause-effect thought pattern is developmentally basic. As far as adversative conjunction is concerned, there was just as great a lack of range because pupils used *but* exclusively. There is thus a great need for teaching in the field of conjunctions.

Sentence combining exercises, which have been discussed in this chapter (6.2.1), are invaluable here. A further exercise is the following one of Cunningsworth (1989:61),

which eventually forms a paragraph:

*Pupils should not use the conjunctions to join the sentences together to make longer sentences, nor use one with the first sentence.*

#### *The Difficulty of Curing Inflation*

1. *Too much money in circulation causes inflation and this has bad social effects .*
2. *Inflation should be reduced if possible in the reduction of the money supply.*
3. *Industrial production will then fall and unemployment will rise.*
4. *Social and political problems will then follow and pressures will build up to increase the money supply.*
5. *The politicians of the 1990's face a difficult problem.*

*so            therefore            as a result            however*

It is vitally important that these devices be taught incidentally, as already stated (6.2). The literature material is also most appropriate for teaching conjunctions as the meaning relations which hold between items in a text and the explicit expression of those "meaning relations" (Brown & Yule 1983:195) within a text can be illustrated to the pupils.

#### **6.2.4 Lexical cohesion**

The pupils whose work was analysed in this study experience the greatest difficulty in this field. If the lexicon is poor, Stotsky (1983:445) warns that there can be no "web of meaning". A greater maturity of word choice also characterises good writing (Neuner 1987:101) and determines

the richness and density of the texture of a text (Stotsky 1983:443). Lexical collocation is seen by Wessels (1993a), Witte and Faigley (1981), Hoey (1991) and Zamel (1983) as the subcategory of cohesion that best indicates overall writing ability and Hoey (1991:10) maintains that lexical cohesion is the only form of cohesion that regularly forms multiple relationships. This much must suffice to show how important lexical cohesion is. Unfortunately, this is the most difficult matter to teach.

The teaching of lexis is beyond the scope of this study; a brief discussion will have to suffice. The common denominator between lexis and good writing is reading. Stotsky (1983:440) makes very appropriate suggestions regarding the development of lexicon:

1. Encourage broad reading and frequent discussion of essays.
2. Arrange discussions of an author's use of words, supplemented occasionally by traditional kinds of exercises on categories of word relationships.
3. Develop a sequence of writing activities that stimulates the use of this vocabulary for expressing logical operations in a variety of verbal contexts.

Instructional programmes in reading could foster the development of lexicon by deliberate repetition of new or difficult words in context. It will follow from this that each lesson will in the first place have to deal with some lexicon. In the case of the pupils under discussion in this study, because they have to study all subjects through medium of a "foreign" language, because English is a foreign language to the vast majority of them, the lexicon of each lesson has to be taught conscientiously.

Stotsky (1983:442) suggests that a second method for helping pupils understand unfamiliar vocabulary is the use of contextual aids such as restatement, synonym, or definition. During conscientious teaching of comprehension, all the word-attack skills should also be taught, together with inference, deduction, association and co-occurrence. Eventually, one has to come back to reading as the font of not only developing the lexicon, but as Stotsky (1983:443) points out, it is also prior reading experience that develops the reader's capacity to respond adequately to the words that contribute to collocational cohesion. As pupils mature, they will use less reference and conjunction and more lexical cohesion, as researchers have found (Wessels 1993b; Neuner 1987; Fahnestock 1983; Hubbard 1989b).

Another very important method involving lexicon is to make

the pupils aware of the significance of repetition nets, a concept discussed by Hoey (1991:100). The way these nets function in text can be taught through passages that pupils have to analyse by for instance, finding all the words related to each other. When they link these words with lines, they will graphically see the patterns of relation. Wessels (1993b:83) illustrates these links as well.

The repetition nets just mentioned are formed by lexical phenomena such as synonyms, collocation and repetition. Pupils must realise they are there to be used. McCarthy (1991:68) once again uses a newspaper report to show pupils that synonyms and hyponyms are used in authentic texts and are part of everyday use. He also suggests simple cue and response drills for pairwork which will train the learner in immediately associating synonyms and antonyms. Whenever these words come up in texts, examples of lexical relations that are valid in that particular text only, and whose interpretations may not correspond to dictionary definitions, have to be explained to pupils (McCarthy 1991:73). Jokes often depend on this type of meaning.

McCarthy (1991:67) supports the notion that has been repeatedly stated in this study, namely, that the teaching of cohesive devices must happen in context.

Pupils must be shown the value of vocabulary in organising texts. McCarthy (1991:76, quoting Winter) gives lists of discourse organising words like: *achieve, addition, contrast, deny, follow, general, happen, lead to, means, reason, result, same, similar, situation, time, way, etc.* and words (quoting Francis) that refer back to chunks of text: *abstraction, evaluation, illusion, scenario, analysis, evidence, belief, doubt, fabrication, etc.* Once again, McCarthy (1991:77) suggests that examples of these words can be found in the press.

The following ways in which to develop a vocabulary are suggested by Tony Randall (1992:29), who is on The American Heritage Dictionary Usage panel, and loves words almost as much as acting. Briefly, they are:

1. Try to guess the meaning of the word from the context.
2. Look it up.
3. Dig the meaning out by the roots.
4. Study the powerful prefixes.
5. Put your new words to work at once.

Once again, the teacher can concentrate on certain aspects, but much of these ways can be taught incidentally. The teacher's interest in words is a great catalyst in the classroom.

Research has shown (Abdullah 1993:10) that individuals tend to recall words according to the semantic fields in which they are conceptually mapped. Abdullah (1993:11) supports Krashen's Narrow Reading as a most appropriate activity because as learners read around the same topic, a schema of related concepts, and hence words, is built up and reinforced. One of the exercises he suggests is the following: Tell the pupils:

*You are going to read a passage on housing styles and climatic conditions. Before reading it, decide which of the following words you would expect to find in the passage. Compare your list with your partner's, giving reasons for your choice.*

<i>materials</i>	<i>hostile climate</i>	<i>heat</i>	<i>dwelling</i>	<i>cold</i>
<i>interior</i>	<i>breezes</i>	<i>kill</i>	<i>comfort</i>	<i>war</i>
<i>pollutes</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>warm</i>	<i>exterior</i>	<i>humid</i>
<i>shelter</i>	<i>positioning</i>	<i>igloo</i>	<i>shape</i>	<i>cool</i>

Abdullah finds that this activity, besides its value as a pre-reading activity in activating background knowledge and arousing curiosity, also provides opportunity for purposeful discussion of the words. Vocabulary learning here is seen as a means to an end. The students need to define their understanding of the words before they can decide whether or not to rule out the possible occurrence of those words in the passage.

In concluding this section on teaching cohesion, it has to be repeated that the value of being aware of all the devices

and how they operate lies not in merely knowing about them, but to the professional teacher, in using this knowledge to improve the pupils' performance in writing tasks.

### 6.3 Strategies for teaching coherence

Coherence is essential if writing is to communicate its intended meaning to a reader (Bamberg 1984:305), therefore, teaching students to write coherently is an important aspect of writing instruction. The problem of coherence is related to the teaching of writing at the level of the whole discourse rather than at the word or the sentence level. Bamberg's (1984:305) opinion is shared by many writers (for example, Crowhurst 1983; Willis 1975; Brostoff 1981; Lundquist 1985; Connor & Johns 1982 (in Lautamatti); Connor & Kaplan 1987 and Fahnestock 1983) in this field. Fagan et al. (1985:181) explain that when both the incidence and ordering of cohesive ties pattern the entire piece of writing, the writer has created what is called coherence.

Brostoff (1981:279) 'defines incoherence as writing in which separate, unrelated ideas appear to be juxtaposed; they are next to, but not connected to, each other. The connectors needed to make a text coherent are thought patterns such as classification, analogy and comparison. Thinking consists of making relationships; and these mental processes which

||NB

the writer performs appear in discourse, at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and essay, as patterns which the reader perceives. There are three separate operations writers must perform to build a coherent discourse:

- (1) writers must make and sustain logical relationships,
- (2) they must form a well-structured sequence or hierarchy of relationships and
- (3) they must reveal the relationships adequately to the reader.

Firstly, in order to develop the ability to maintain logical relationships, pupils need to do exercises in which they have to classify, analyse and compare. They have to think logically and realize that logical and syntactical features work together. A sentence taken from one of the compositions, which does not make a logical link between statement and reason, will illustrate this point:

*"When I marry, I will marry the one I love because marriage is very expensive."* (sic)

Secondly, pupils need to be taught that paragraphs are hierarchic systems composed of inclusive, controlling thought patterns and subsidiary patterns; main ideas and supporting detail because key words/phrases in the lead

sentence signal commitments on the part of the writer which must be fulfilled in the sentences that follow (Shakir 1991:408; Hubbard 1989b:105; Willis 1975:331; Trimble 1969:176).

Thirdly, in order to teach pupils how to provide cues to reveal relationships, one has to show them how these work in written passages. Pupils must be shown that the first part of a sentence usually deals with known information and the second with new information (Widdowson 1983:69). Also, as with an analysis of cohesive devices, pupils need to trace the related words and referents in the paragraph in order to see how the links are made. This was also discussed in 6.2.4. Literature texts are especially effective for this exercise as well as for improving comprehension. A study of examination papers will reveal that comprehension questions often demand what a referent refers to in the text.

Moloi (1987:28) suggests the following strategies that will be easy to utilise in a classroom, to teach pupils to write a unified paragraph:

- (a) Given a topic sentence for a paragraph, pupils should choose from a list of details those relevant to the topic.
- (b) Given a paragraph, pupils should identify any idea that does not support the main idea stated in the topic

sentence.

- (c) Given a topic sentence for a paragraph, pupils should compose their own supporting sentences.
- (d) Given a paragraph, in which one of the elements (the topic sentence, developing sentences, linking words, concluding sentence) is missing or incorrect, the pupils should identify missing or incorrect elements.
- (e) Given a faulty paragraph, pupils should correct it.
- (f) Given a topic within their understanding and/or interest, pupils should write a unified paragraph.

It will be seen that many of these activities can be devised by using paragraphs from newspapers as they are or by manipulating them in order to do number b, for example. Huckin (1980:219) insists on using genuinely communicative exercises, just as McCarthy (1991) does in all his examples, which will force pupils to negotiate meaning, as any language user is forced to do all the time, and supply their own context which will make the correspondence or communication coherent.

Much comment has been made about the use of sentence combining exercises (for example Willis 1975; Shakir 1991; Witte & Faigley 1981; Freedman et al. 1983; Crowhurst 1983), which writers agree is a very effective method as long as it is done in context (see also 6.2.1). Witte and Faigley

(1981:201) warn that numerous exercises teach clause and sentence structure in isolation, ignoring the textual, and the situational considerations for using the structure.

There are the proponents who advocate the use of sentence combining techniques to lengthen the mean t-unit length. Freedman et al. (1983:172) use sentences in embedding exercises which eventually achieve the same results.

Crowhurst (1983:63 & 64) suggests that sentence combining exercises increase syntactic fluency and improve writing quality. She cites research which shows that sentence combining does not lead to changes or growth in the students' basic linguistic ability, but raises to conscious control innate linguistic resources and increased syntactic fluency. The sentence combining exercises suggested in 6.2.1.1 will advance the ability to write coherently as well as the purposes they are put to in that section.

Crowhurst (1983:65) suggests that sentence imitation also increases syntactic fluency. This method does not, according to her, have the negative effect of having some students create very long and error-laden t-units.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the work of McCarthy (1991:87) and Fahnestock (1983:415) express the opinion that helping students understand coherence in terms of the lexical ties and semantic relations possible between clauses and sentences gives some structure to an area of composition instruction that has been somewhat haphazard before. Fahnestock (1983:415) concludes that it makes the process of creating a coherent paragraph less mysterious.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion**

### **7.1 Review**

It has become quite clear that (a) the teaching of all the cohesive devices is an important part of the teaching of grammar, and following upon this, that (b) the teaching and development of lexicon is the most important contribution a teacher can make, not only to the improvement of the pupils' English marks but also to their success in all their other subjects and in coping with a demanding life in a developing country. It has also been shown that, although coherence is an elusive quality to define (2.2), it can be taught.

This study set out to achieve three aims, as discussed in 1.3. Briefly, they were to analyse the cohesive devices used by the pupils in their compositions, both for correct and incorrect use and their range, type and scope; to establish how coherent the compositions are and to suggest ways in which the cohesion and coherence can be improved.

The results of the study, dealt with in Chapter 5, succeeded in identifying problem areas like the use of pronominals and conjunctives, and especially the great lack of a lexicon the pupils revealed. The coherence was also found to be very poor.

The results of the analyses showed a close correlation between cohesion and coherence as defined and measured in this study. This correlation was interpreted as correct, reflecting the poor overall ability of the pupils in composition writing.

It was beyond the scope of this study to go into great detail as far as teaching methodology was concerned but it is hoped that the methods suggested here will stimulate readers to devise and apply their own exercises in order to solve their pupils' problems.

A criticism that might be levelled at this study is that it focused on the frequency of individual cohesive ties. Despite this, many meaningful insights to writing at this level have been gained, as shown in 5.2.5. Neuner (1987:94), borne out by Hoey (1991) and Wessels (1993a; 1993b), suggests that longer strands or chains of related cohesive items that crisscross the entire text should be studied. This is a valid argument, depending on the type of writing studied. As was shown in 5.2.5, such a study would have had little import here because of the lack of new ideas generated and the great dirth in lexicon which resulted in the mere repetition of a very few related words.

Referring to the aims of the study, it is quite clear that this was a descriptive study, focusing solely on identifying and analysing the cohesive devices used and determining how coherent the compositions are as judged according to Bamberg's Holistic Coherence Rating Scale (1984:317). This study did not set out to trace any cohesive chains or networks.

## **7.2 Implications of this study for teaching**

In discussing the results of the analyses in Chapter 5 and in the suggestions for the teaching of cohesion and coherence in Chapter 6, the implications of this study have become apparent. A concerted effort has to be made at all levels for the improvement of writing, not only compositions but also functional writing in the traditional sense of writing tasks such as business letters, notices, minutes, reports, etc.

Neuner (1987), Witte and Faigley (1981), Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) and others have found in research, that cohesion is an important property of writing, but no evidence to suggest that large or small numbers of ties in themselves affect writing quality. However, everyone will agree that the correct use of cohesive devices is important.

Although this study found that these devices were very seldom used **incorrectly** as such, it did find that the simple ones were over-laboured and that the range and scope of the pupils' use were extremely narrow. Especially lexical cohesion and the development of lexis have to be given priority.

This study reveals a very high correlation between the use of cohesive devices and coherence but it was pointed out in 5.4 that the level of coherence was extremely low. This study reveals, as is also reported by Hartnett (1986:143), that poor writers repeat concepts and words redundantly, without adding new information; and they do not use a variety of lexical collocations to extend and refine meaning as do better writers.

The greatest contribution this study has made is that it has focused attention on the importance of the two aspects studied and provided some concrete ways of addressing some of the problems encountered in pupils' writing at the level studied. It has also become apparent that one cannot remedy the problem in Standard Ten but that teaching these aspects is an ongoing process that has to be worked at at every level in school.

The conclusion Shakir (1991:407) comes to is very apt in

this study as well: *What student writers seem to need, more than mastery of sentence structure and the mechanics of writing is an awareness-building process; a process through which they can become familiarized with what renders a text coherent and, consequently, complete and communicatively acceptable.* By focusing the attention of the teachers on these factors, this study will, hopefully, do that.

### **7.3 Implications for further research**

It has become apparent that pupils, apart from the specific skills needed to write compositions, lack the ability to construct meaning. Christie (1986:239) has found that failure to master the skills, capacities, and knowledge of schooling goes hand in hand with an inability to handle the language structures necessary to make such mastery possible. Once teachers are clear about the nature of these structures, they will be in a position to guide students' learning effectively. Further study has to be undertaken to determine how meanings are constructed. This study focused on cohesion and coherence which are forms needed to convey this meaning clearly.

A second field that is very important is the study of the development of an ability to perceive and articulate abstract concepts with reference to particular instances, to

perceive relationships among ideas and to reach beyond the worlds of their immediate experience; a field that Witte and Faigley (1981:199) have identified as a problem area. They found in their study that better writers seem to have invention skills that allow them to elaborate and extend the concepts they introduce. This is also a field identified by Wessels (1993a:112) which is of the utmost importance to the pupils whose work was studied in this research paper.

In conclusion it can be said that this mini-dissertation was a first step in the study of the problems pupils at school level have in expressing their ideas lucidly. One might even have to go as far back as the transition from oral to written literacy, which should start very early in the pupils' school career, in order to establish a clearer picture of the problem and find solutions.

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