CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the purpose of this study. The research questions formulated are presented as well. Following this, the significance of the study is illustrated. Subsequently, the rationale for taking up this study is given. Next, limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are provided. The outline of this research report appears as the finale to this chapter.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The first purpose of this study is to show how semantic relationships are formed between two lexical items in two texts from the genre of newspaper commentaries. The researcher attempts to find out what kinds of cohesive ties are favoured in those texts. These semantic relations will be analysed using the lexical relations network developed by Martin (1981, 1985b & 1992). The second purpose is to unfold the schematic structure organised in such texts. In this analysis, the theoretical framework suggested by Martin et al. 1983 and Martin (1985b) is employed to observe the stages that occur in the texts as they unfold. The third purpose is to encode the interaction between lexical cohesion and schematic structure to show the frequency of occurrence of the lexical strings in various stages in the texts. This will perhaps shed some light on the progression of topic unity throughout the texts. The final purpose of this study is to look at the cohesive force that cohesive lexical items possess. A cohesive force analysis is concerned with whether lexical items exert a strong or weak force on the texts. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion model is employed here in the cohesive force analysis.

1.2 Research questions

This study has four purposes to accomplish. The previous section has provided us with the purpose of this study. This leads us to the research questions that the researcher is interested in seeking answers

for. The research questions formulated for the purpose of analysis in this study are:

1. What is the most favoured type of cohesive tie in the two texts chosen?

2. What are the schematic structures of the two texts?

3. What kinds of patterns can be derived from the interaction of lexical cohesion and schematic structure?

4. Finally, what is the nature of cohesive force projected between lexical items in the two texts mentioned?

1.3 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the analysis on semantic relations that lexical items form in expository texts will lead to a better understanding of how these relations are formed and how they function in creating a text that is coherent. This knowledge can be conveyed to ESL learners through writing exercises focusing on semantic relations such as repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, co-hyponymy, meronymy and co-meronymy. ESL instructors could focus in their writing lessons on the importance of the correct use of words that are semantically related.

Secondly, an understanding of schematic organization in expositions will enable ESL students to produce better expository essays. Furthermore, ESL lessons that incorporate the schematic structure of various expositions will expose ESL learners to how expositions are typically produced. Furthermore, an understanding of lexical cohesion and schematic structure in expository essays should be taken into account when producing ESL books and teaching materials. Hence, ESL students will have a good foundation in writing expository essays before applying it to the contexts of their own cultures.

1.4 Rationale of the study

A number of postgraduate studies have been conducted in University of Malaya using a Systemic Functional framework. One of the earliest works was by Wong, Eric T.K. (1994) with his Ph.D thesis entitled 'A Systemic Phonological Study of Penampang Kadazan'. Two years later in 1996, two more studies were conducted within the Systemic Functional framework. One was a Ph.D thesis by Hashim entitled 'Syntactic Choices and Text Organization in Medical Research Articles'. Another study in the same year was a Masters thesis by Sriniwass entitled 'Lexical Cohesion in Chemistry Texts: An Exploration into Systemic-Semantic Relations', which dealt with lexical cohesion and the development of system networks in chemistry texts. Sriniwass' work paved the way to more studies within the cohesion theory and system networks in authentic texts. Following Sriniwass' path on the explication of the cohesion theory, Viswanathan

4

(1997) conducted a study on reference items in agricultural articles. This thesis of hers is entitled 'Reference Items in Agricultural Articles'. Viswanathan (2000) also carried out a Ph.D study entitled 'Conjunctive Relations in Agricultural and General Editorials'. This was followed by Palaniandy's (2001) study entitled 'Explorations into Cohesive Conjunctions in Political Speeches'. She analysed the use of conjunctives in political speeches. In the same year, Wong, W.T. (2001) produced a thesis entitled 'An Analysis of Nominal Groups in Inspirational Writings: Systemic Functional Approach'.

Emulating the works of the above researchers, this study aspires to contribute to the development of Systemic Functional Linguistic studies, specifically in the area of lexical cohesion. Although Sriniwass conducted a study on lexical cohesion in 1996, the present study differs from her study as it attempts to investigate expository texts from the genre of English newspaper commentaries. In addition, this study also delves into the exploration of schematic structures and cohesive force of the texts. It is hoped that the present study will be able to accomplish what it has set out to do and enrich the existing knowledge on Systemic Functional theory-based studies in University of Malaya.

1.5 Limitations of the study and further research

This study has been limited to "intersentential" analysis of lexical items. "Intersentential" analysis involves an investigation of lexical items *across* sentences in a particular text. Nevertheless, further research could look at

the analysis of lexical items on an "intrasentential" level or *within* sentences in a text. This level of analysis examines the structural relations within a sentence. It is comprised of cohesive ties, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. These cohesive ties can also be found on an "intersentential" level although the frequency of their occurrences may be lower here.

Further research can also be carried out on other genres apart from English newspaper commentaries such as academic journal writing, research papers, lecture monologues and so on. The genres need not be limited to expositions only but could also explore narrations such as folk stories.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the purpose and research questions of this study. Then, the significance and rationale for undertaking the study was given. Finally, limitations of the study were stated and suggestions for further research were illustrated as well. The following chapter, which is Chapter 2, presents the related literature to the framework adopted in this study. Chapter 3 illustrates the research methodology of this study. The findings and discussion are revealed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 acts as the conclusion of the present study.