

A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE
OF LEXICAL COHESION
IN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER COMMENTARIES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study is a Systemic Functional Linguistic investigation of lexical cohesion based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion theory and Martin's (1981, 1985b & 1992) network of taxonomic relations. This study also incorporates a schematic structure framework on expositions suggested by Martin et al. 1983 and Martin (1985b). Two texts, 'A Pandora's box of ethical paradoxes' (Text 1) and 'A struggle to be free' (Text 2) from the genre of newspaper commentaries are analysed for lexical cohesion and cohesive force. The schematic structures of these texts are unravelled as well. The texts are expositions of the hortatory type. They are homogeneous in topic. They discuss the ethical and medical factors involved in the outcome of a surgery of a pair of deceased Iranian conjoined twins, Ladan and Laleh Bijani. The analyses of these texts are confined to an "intersentential" level along the paradigmatic axis. The findings from this study suggest that repetition is the most favoured semantic tie in both texts. The schematic structure analysis of Text 1 and Text 2, which are hortatory argumentative expositions, exhibits the thesis statement appearing in the Conclusion and in the paragraph of Argument 1 respectively. This phenomenon is contrary to Martin et al. 1983 finding that the thesis is usually evident in the Introduction. The interaction of lexical cohesion and schematic structure highlights the texts sharing four primary strings: *Twins*, *Medical professionals*, *Surgery* and *Life and death*,

which are consistent with the context of situation the texts carry. Lexical items that share a semantic bond are also analysed for their cohesive force. The cohesive force analysis reveals that ties, which are both mediated and remote, are favoured in both texts. This study may have some pedagogical implications, especially in the field of ESL teaching and learning. Learners in most ESL programmes are exposed to expositions at some point or another. Therefore, ESL instructors who are familiar with lexical cohesion in texts would be able to impart this knowledge to their learners. Armed with such knowledge, ESL learners would have a good grounding in developing their writing skills before taking ownership of the target language and applying it to the contexts of their own cultures.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah suatu siasatan Linguistik Systemik Fungsional berdasarkan teori ikatan Halliday dan Hasan (1976) dan taksonomi relasi yang dikelolakan oleh Martin (1981, 1985b & 1992). Kajian ini juga menggunakan rangka struktur skematik bagi karya-karya eksposisi yang dikemukakan oleh Martin et al. 1983 dan Martin (1985b). Dua teks iaitu 'A Pandora's box of ethical paradoxes' (Teks 1) dan 'Struggle to be free' (Teks 2), dari genera komentari suratkhobar, dianalisa bagi ikatan leksis dan kuasa ikatan leksis mereka. Rangka struktur skematik bagi teks-teks tersebut dipaparkan juga. Kedua-dua teks tersebut merupakan karya eksposisi dari jenis hortatori. Kedua-dua teks ini mempunyai topik yang homogen. Mereka membincangkan faktor-faktor etikal dan medikal yang terlibat dalam keputusan suatu pembedahan yang dilaksanakan ke atas sepasang kembar bercantum dari negara Iran, Ladan dan Laleh Bijani, yang malangnya berakhir dengan kematian gadis-gadis tersebut. Analisis ke atas teks-teks tersebut dihadkan ke peringkat "intersentential" yang sejajar dengan aksis paradigmatic. Penemuan yang diperolehi dari kajian ini menunjukkan ikatan repetasi adalah ikatan sematik yang paling digemari di dalam teks-teks tersebut. Analisa struktur skematik menonjolkan penyata tesis dijumpai di dalam perenggan penutup bagi Teks 1, manakala Teks 2 mengemukakan penyata tesisnya di dalam perenggan 'Argument 1'. Penemuan ini berbeza dengan penemuan Martin

et al. 1983 dimana mereka berpendapat bahawa penyata tesis biasanya dikemukakan di dalam perenggan permulaan bagi karya-karya eksposisi argumen. Disamping itu, interaksi di antara ikatan leksis dan struktur skematik menunjukkan kedua-dua teks berkongsi empat talian primari: *Twin*, *Medical Professionals*, *Surgery* dan *Life and death* yang konsisten dengan konteks situasi mereka. Item-item leksis yang mempunyai ikatan semantik dianalisa untuk kuasa ikatan leksis. Di dalam analisa ini, ikatan-ikatan yang dimediasi dan terasing paling digemari. Kajian ini dijangka mempunyai impak ke atas bidang pedagogi, terutamanya di dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran ESL. Pelajar-pelajar di dalam kebanyakan program-program ESL didedahkan kepada karya-karya eksposisi di sesuatu peringkat pengajian mereka. Justeru, instruktur-instruktur ESL yang berkebolehan dalam ikatan leksis akan berupaya menyampaikan pengetahuan ini kepada pelajar-pelajar mereka. Dengan itu, pelajar-pelajar ESL akan memiliki satu tapak permulaan yang baik bagi mengembangkan kemahiran menulis mereka, sebelum berkebolehan mengambil hak ke atas bahasa target dan mengaplikasinya ke atas konteks-konteks budaya mereka tersendiri.

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