

The Role of the Anaphoric Referential relations in Facilitating Reading

Mona Elamin Elnour Ali - Assistant Professor

Faculty of Education - Afif

Shagraa University - KSA

E. mail: mona.elamin@hotmail.com

Tel: 00966502552487

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of referential Relations on facilitating reading. The major aim of the study is to trace how awareness of referential relations could affect the Sudanese university learners' reading comprehension. The subjects of the study were 62 major English students from Neelain University, Faculty of Arts. They were randomly subdivided into "experimental" and "control" groups.

The experimental group subjects were taught for 10 hours in anaphoric relations, while the control group received nothing. Then they were given a test contains 20 multiple questions.

Results of the anaphora test were obtained and computed in tables, frequencies, percentage and normal distribution. The statistics indicated that the trained students did better in the test than the untrained ones.

Key Terms : Anaphoric reference , Cataphoric reference , Comprehension

Reading is a receptive skill, we can receive information through it. It is a process of looking at series of written symbols in order to elicit meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces), through our brain we can change them into words, sentences and paragraph that communicate a message to us. Some people can read silently others can read loudly. Reading is a very important skill, because it integrates the other skills , it increases the vocabulary so it helps in speaking, listening and writing. Moreover reading can be productive in the sense of receiving information and transmitting it, and the complex process of reading can lead to pronouncing the words we read.

One of the essential activities of study, is to be able of comprehending what you read and recalling the core ideas and concepts whenever you need them. Reading according to Wikipedia, is to be able to read text, process it, and understanding its meaning.

According to Nunan(1993,25) "Technically reading a discourse refers to the skill of looking into a text to understand it and extract the required information from it as efficiently as possible." There is a distinction drawn between the terms "text" and "discourse". The majority of linguists agreed that both terms need to be defined in terms of meaning and they can be used interchangeably. Discourse is defined by many linguists Nunan P.14 defines it as "a stretch of language consisting of several sentences which perceived as being related in some way- sentences can be related not in terms of the ideas they share but also in of the jobs they perform within the discourse- that in terms of their function". Crystal(1992s,22) points out that "Discourse is a continuous stretch of language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit such a sermon, argument or narrative". Cook(1989, 65) assumes that "discourse is a stretch of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive". The first definition of Nunan refers to sentences relatedness in terms of semantics and syntax. The second definition by Crystal relates discourse to the spoken language only, but the definition of Cook is comprehensive and involves any pieces of language which are overlapped and meaningful to achieve a certain purpose.

In order to interpret a text, a reader needs to follow in pulling together the meanings of words and grammar of sentences simultaneously with being aware of the context of the discourse, which plays a vital role in discourse interpretation. Context refers to the situation giving rise to the discourse and within which the discourse is embedded. The concern of this paper is "reference" in particular, the context of discourse seems very crucial. Nunan (ibid) describes two types of context, he said that there are two types of context, the first is the linguistic context- the language that surrounds the piece of discourse under analysis. The second is the non-linguistic or experiential context within which the discourse takes place which includes: the type communicative event (for example, joke, story, lecture, greeting, conversation); the topic; the purpose of event, the setting, including location, time of day, season of year and physical aspects of the situation (for example, size of the room, arrangement of furniture); the participants and the relation between them; and the background knowledge and assumption underlying the communicative event.

Reading plays a great role in learning and use of language, it is made up of several skills, some of these sub-skills have to do with aspects of language such as:

- a) Understanding relations within the sentences.
- b) Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical(semantic) cohesive devices.
- c) Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical (syntactic) devices.

- d) Interpreting a text by going outside it.
- e) Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- f) Identifying the main or important information in a piece of discourse.
- g) Processing and interpreting the basic reference skill.

Statement of the Problem:

This paper seeks the problem of active analytic reading process. It is based on discourse theory, which states that reading texts is a constant process of predicting and what the reader adds to the text is often more important than what he/she finds towards understanding it, but the case is not like that at Sudanese university. Sudanese readers are often passive readers. They understand the text through the clear available information. They are less trained in reading deeply in analytic process of understanding. In reading texts students should be aware of the relations that holds between texts components, i.e. they are expected to use reference, presupposition, implicature, and inference abilities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study aims to :

- 1) To identify the significance of interpreting referential relations in reading.
- 2) To test the learners' awareness of referential (anaphoric relations) in reading.
- 3) To give more insights into text analysis procedure for better comprehension.

Literature Review :

According to Lyons (1977. 180) "old linguists (philosophers) prefer to use the term: deixis or indexical expression for reference. They thought that the most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context reflected is through the phenomenon of deixis. Historically the term deixis was borrowed from the Greek word for pointing, indicating, displaying, demonstrating or referring. A typical example of deixis is the use of demonstratives, personal pronouns, adverbs of time or place like 'now' and 'here' and variety of other grammatical features tied to the circumstances of utterance. Yule and Brown (1983,28) defined reference as "reference is the linguistic function whereby speakers (writers) indicate via the use of a linguistic expression, the entities they are talking 'writing' about". Yule in (1996.206) defined reference as" an act which speaker which speaker or writer uses language to enable listener or writer to identify something. Words that we use to identify things are not in direct relations to these things. 'Deixis' are expressions that cannot be interpreted at all unless there is physical cotext; the traditional categories of deixis are person, place, and time". The operational definition of reference incorporates the link between entities and their referring expressions in discourse, because entities are supposed to be the focal point of

readers, and understanding the relation between them and their referring expressions means efficient reading comprehension.

Anaphora

In recent times in the field of computational linguistics the term 'anaphora' appears to be prominent over 'reference'. Modern linguists prefer to use anaphora to speak about the phenomenon of referential expressions in natural language. So for the issue of the study the term 'anaphora' is used frequently, and the two terms are used interchangeably all through. Fillmore (1975,155) argues that it is not easy to draw a distinction between reference and anaphora. He points out that confusion is likely to happen in terms of distinction between discourse deixis and anaphora. Anaphora is said to work within sentences, across sentences and across turns between participants whereas deictic or other definite referring expressions are often used to introduce a referent, but anaphoric pronouns are used to refer to the same entity thereafter.

The direction of reference, especially textual is either referring backward and it is 'anaphoric' or forward and it is 'cataphoric'. So to interpret the direction of reference we should come across the term 'anaphora' as a linguistic phenomenon refers to the relationship between a 'referentially dependent expression', (the anaphoric expression, or anaphor) and a 'referentially independent expression' that serves as antecedent, and from which the anaphoric expression gets its reference. According to the location of the anaphoric expression to its antecedent; two directions can be drawn for reference either to be backward or forward reference. The reference is 'anaphora' (backward) when the referring expression follows the antecedent. Consider the following examples:

- i. John left because he was worried.
- ii. Bill loves only himself.

The reference is said to be 'cataphora' (forward) when the referring expression precedes the antecedent, the examples below illustrate cataphoric relations.

- i I can't believe it! We won.
- ii You must remember this; a thief is just a thief.

Types of reference:

1) Singular Definite Reference:

Lyons (ibid) described two types of singular definite reference: expressions that refer to individuals, and those that refer to classes of individual. The singular definite reference are (a) proper names (b) definite noun phrases and (c) personal pronouns.

2) Successful Reference:

The condition that the referent must satisfy the description has been interpreted by philosophers to imply that the description must be true of the referent.

3) Non-referring Definite Noun- phrase:

The main function of the definite noun phrase in English is to refer to a specific or classes of individual, but there is another function, it may occur as the complement of the verb ' to be' and it may have a predicative rather than a referential function.

4) Distributive and Collective General Reference:

The distinction between distributive and collective reference is illustrated by the following sentence:

*) Those books cost 5 pounds.

If those books mean " each of those books", it is being used distributively, if it means "that set od books" it is being used collectively.

5) Specific and Non- specific Indefinite Reference:

There is a terminological distinction for English between non-definite and indefinite noun phrase. Anon- definite noun-phrase is any noun-phrase which is not a definite noun-phrase; an indefinite noun-phrase is either an indefinite pronoun or a noun-phrase introduced by indefinite article (e.g. 'a man' and also phrases like 'such a man'). All indefinite nouns-phrases are non-definite.

6) Referential Opacity:

According to Quine (1960) constructions or contexts are opaque (as opposed to transparent) when they fail to preserve extensionality (i.e. truth-functionality) under the substitution of co- referential singular expression. The co-referential expressions in a question may be definite or non-definite.

7) Generic Reference:

Generic referring expressions whether distributive or collective can occur freely in sentences that express time- bound proposition of various kinds.

Analysis :

The student in the two groups, the control and the experimental group, were given a multiple choice test of twenty sentences, the students have to choose the correct answer

The scores of the students on the anaphora test were analyzed to identify the major problems of reference encountered in reading. They were examined from the point of view of discourse coherence and continuity, i.e. for cataphoric, anaphoric implicit and explicit anaphora as well as for reading comprehension ability.

The data were analyzed to see whether the awareness of referential relations affects reading comprehension, then a comparison was made between students' performance in anaphora test.

Results:

The research paper in general is an experimental study of the effectiveness of referential relationship awareness. A language test was used to collect the data. Then the means of the results were used in analyzing the data. The sample of the study were taken from Neelain University. English Department Level three. The subjects were 62 students were randomly chosen. Then they were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received training on different aspects of referential relations, while the control group did not. The two groups were tested on referential relation, and statistical results were discussed in terms of means differences.

The data was first analyzed descriptively and then frequency tables, the percentage of group performance, tables of means and standard deviations were obtained.

Scores of the two groups in the anaphora test were tailed as below:

Table (1) Frequencies of the scores of the control group

Scores	Frequency	Percent
0-20	9	29.0
21-30	12	38.7
31-40	9	29.0
41-50	0	-----
51-60	1	3.2
total	31	100.0

Table (2) Frequencies of the scores of the experimental group

Scores	Frequency	Percent
0-20	2	6.5
21-30	8	25.8
31-40	14	45.2
41-5	3	9.7
51-60	4	12.9
Total	31	100.0

As reflected in tables (1) and (2) descriptive statistics reveals that in the lower ranges, scores namely (0-20) and (21-30) the frequencies of the control group are greater than the experimental group. In other words, the achievement of the control group statistically is better than the

experimental group. Ideally it is a shallow achievement since it reflects an out performance on weak ranges (values). On the other hand , the results displayed in the tables reveal that the higher scores range(31-40, 41-50, 51-60) were better obtained by the experimental group subjects.

To further investigate whether the experimental group performed better than the control group, the range 31-40 is roughly considered as the central tendency of the test. The achievement of the experimental group is higher than the control group in this range.

To further investigate whether the experimental group subjects benefited from their private treatment in anaphora, descriptive statistics were performed via percentage table (3).

Table(3) Percentage of the scores of the two groups

Group	0-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Exp.	6%	26%	45%	10%	13%
Con.	29%	39%	29%	0.0%	3%

As reflected in table (3) descriptive statistics reveals that the percentage representation of the two groups are different. In all the last three ranges of scores (higher scores) the experimental group out performed the control group. On the other hand, the difference between the mean and the standard deviations are revealed in table (4)

Table (4) : Paired sample statistics

The group	MEAN	No.	Standard Deviation	Standard error mean
Control group	26.2903	31	8.41108	1.51067
Experimental group	36.0645	31	10.72671	1.92657

The results displayed in table (4) revealed that the mean of the experimental group (36.06) is greater than the mean of the control group (26.29). The difference between the two groups is statistically significant. The means of the errors in both groups are very close to each other, indicating that there is a problem in understanding referential relations encountered by all students.

Conclusion:

The results of the study, lead to the conclusion that some problems go back to our university reading courses and absence of anaphora resolution training, and some to students' low knowledge of discourse anaphora.

The problem in our universities courses of reading, is that teachers believe exactly opposite to Mitkov (2001 , p.5) " our studies provide compelling evidence that fully automatic anaphora resolution is more difficult than previous work has suggested).

Recommendation:

- 1- In a study done by Amy Sharpio, et al (2007. P 175) it is recommended that referential coherence affects comprehension in a way that is similar to other manipulation of text coherence. So anaphora resolution is considered as one of the skills of discourse comprehension.
- 2- Critical approach in reading courses should be developed by teachers. As stated by Cohen (2005 p.5) " we need to view that anaphora resolution facts are thought of as defaults, which may be overridden".
- 3- Reading should be taken as a good tool for learning. So in reading learners should be able to encounter texts as a process of entity sequences
- 4- More courses are needed to offer the students the chance to be trained and experiment the different features of reference in EFL reading.
- 5- Low motivated students should be encouraged to read more literature books ,magazines and stories.

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