LEXICAL COHESION IN THE SHORT STORY
THE STAR CHILD BY OSCAR WILDE

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Contents

Page

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the lexical cohesion in the short story *The Star Child* by Oscar Wilde. The objectives are to find out how many lexical items are related to each other and to classify them based on the Cohesive Theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976). The study shows that the lexical cohesive devices found are repetition, synonym, superordinate and general word. It is found that repetition is the most frequently used device and superordinate is the least.

1. Introduction

According to David Nunan (1993), lexical cohesion occurs when two words in a text are semantically related in some way, in other words, they are related in terms of their meaning. There are two major categories of lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation according to Halliday and Hasan (1976). Most linguists who have studied cohesion argues that lexical cohesion is the most difficult and interesting of all the cohesive categories because many lexical relationships are text-bound as well as context - bound. A group of words which is lexically related in one text or context may not be related in another.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the lexical cohesion, especially reiteration, in the short story "The Star Child" by Oscar Wilde.

The objectives are to explore lexical items that are related to each other, to classify them based on the Cohesive Theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976) and to find out the frequency and percentage of these devices.

This paper is divided into five chapters. The introduction which includes the aim and objectives of the research is in Chapter 1. The literature review including theoretical background, synopsis of the short story, a biography of the author is presented in Chapter 2. Research methodology is stated in Chapter 3. Then, findings and discussions are in Chapter 4 which is followed by conclusion in Chapter 5.

2. Literature Review

This chapter deals with theoretical background, synopsis of the short story *The Star Child* and biography of the author.

2.1. Theoretical Background

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion occurs when two or more words are related in terms of meaning and the two major categories of lexical cohesion are reiteration and collocation. Reiteration includes repetition, synonym or near synonym, superordinate and general word.

Repetition

Repetition is the use of the same word repeatedly.

E.g. What we lack in a <u>newspaper</u> is what we should get.

In a word, 'popular' <u>newspaper</u> may be the winning ticket. (David Nunan, 1993).

Synonym

Synonym is using the words that have the same or similar meaning in certain context.

E.g. You could try reversing the car up the <u>slope</u>. The <u>incline</u> isn't all that steep. (David Nunan, 1993).

Superordinate

Superordinate is the use of words, the meaning of which includes the meaning of another word or words.

E.g. <u>Pneumonis</u> has arrived with the cold and wet conditions.

The <u>illness</u> is striking everyone from infants to the elderly. (David Nunan, 1993).

General Word

General word is the use of words which are mostly vague in meaning, such as thing, person, people and so on.

E.g. A: Did you try the <u>steamed buns</u>?

B: Yes, I didn't like the <u>things</u> much. (David Nunan, 1993)

2.2 Synopsis of the Short Story

According to 'literature.wikia.com/wiki/The Star Child', *The Star Child* is a short fantasy story for children by the Irish author Oscar Wilde. The title character and protagonist of "The Star Child" is a handsome boy who for the first ten years of his life believes that he is truly the son of a star. As a result, he believes himself to be superior to everyone else and becomes vain, arrogant and cruel.

One winter night, two woodcutters see a shooting star fall to the ground. They go to the place in the forest where the star landed, expecting to find a pot of gold. Instead, they find a child wrapped in a gold cloak embroidered with stars and wearing an amber necklace. Although he is very poor and already has several children of his own, one of the woodcutters decides to take the child home with him. He has difficulty persuading his wife to take in the child but he tells her that the boy is a star child. The Woodcutter and his wife treat the star child as one of their own children for the next ten years.

The star child grows up to be a handsome boy but he is also very vain. As son of a star, he believes himself to be superior to everyone else in the village. He cannot bear people from the lowest levels of society and throws stones at beggars whenever he sees them. He also tortures and kills small animals. A gang of similarly-minded children gather around the star child and accept him as their leader.

One day, the star child and his friends throw stones at an ugly beggar woman. The woodcutter, who is nearby, chastises the star child, saying that he cannot understand why the boy behaves that way, given that he treated the star child kindly ever since he found him in the forest. At these words, the beggar woman faints. When the beggar woman comes round in the woodcutter's house, she says that her child, who was wrapped in a gold cloak embroidered with stars and wearing an amber necklace, was stolen from her by robbers in the forest ten years ago. The star child is told that the woman is his mother but he wants nothing to do with her. When she asks for a kiss before she leaves, he says, "rather would I kiss the adder or the toad than thee". The star child goes to rejoin his friends but they shun him and call him ugly. He finds that he now has a face like a toad and skin like an adder. He realizes that he is being punished for his mistreatment of his mother. In the hope that he might regain his former appearance if his mother forgave him, he goes off in search of her. He has a long difficult journey to search of his mother and it takes almost three years to find her. During these years, he realizes how to treat other people kindly and as a result, he

finds his father and mother. He has become handsome again and has become the king of a country.

2.3 Biography of the Author

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Oscar Fingal O'flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October 1854-30 November 1900) was an Irish playwright, novelist, essayist, and poet. After writing in different forms throughout 1880s, he become one of London's most popular playwrights in the early 1890s. He is remembered for his epigrams, his novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray", his plays, as well as the circumstances of his imprisonment and early death. Wilde's parents were successful Anglo-Irish Dublin intellectuals. Their son became fluent in French and German early in life. At university, Wilde read Greats; he proved himself to be an outstanding classicist, first at Dublin, then at Oxford. He became known for his involvement in the rising philosophy of aestheticism, led by two of his tutors, Walter Pater and John Ruskin. After university, Wilde moved to London into fashionable cultural and social circles. As a spokesman for aestheticism, he tried his hand at various literary activities: he published a book of poems, lectured in the United States and Canada on the new "English Renaissance in Art", and then returned to London where he worked prolifically as a journalist. Known for his biting wit, flamboyant dress and glittering conversation, Wilde became one of the best-known personalities of his day. At the turn of the 1890s, he refined his ideas about the supremacy of art in a series of dialogues and essays, and incorporated themes of decadence, duplicity, and beauty into his only novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890). The opportunity to construct aesthetic details precisely, and combine them with larger social themes, drew Wilde to write drama. He wrote Salome (1891) in French in Paris but it was refused a licence for England due to the absolute prohibition of Biblical subjects on the English stage. Unperturbed, Wide produced four society comedies in the early 1890s, which made him one of the most successful playwrights of late Victorian London. At the height of his fame and success, while his masterpiece, The Importance of Being Earnest (1895), was still on stage in London. Wilde had the Marquess of Queensberry prosecuted for libel. The Marquess was the father of Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. The charge carried a penalty of up to two years in prison. The trial unearthed evidence that caused Wilde to drop his charges and led to his own arrest and trial for gross indecency with men. After two more trials he was convicted and imprisoned for two years' hard

labour. In 1897, in prison, he wrote De Profundis, which was published in 1905, a long letter which discusses his spiritual journey through his trials, forming a dark counterpoint to his earlier philosophy of pleasure. Upon his release he left immediately for France, never to return to Ireland or Britain. There he wrote his last work, The Ballad of Reading Gaol (1898), a long poem commemorating the harsh rhythms of prison life. He died destitute in Pairs at the age of 46.

3. Research Methodology

In this chapter, data collection, data analysis and the interpretation of the data are presented.

3.1. Data Collection and Data Analysis

In order to collect data, sentence number, original sentence and types of lexical cohesive devices are considered. Sample data analysis of lexical cohesion in the short story *The Star Child* is shown in the following table.

Table 1: **Sample analysis of Lexical cohesive devices in the short story** *The Star Child*

Sr No	Sent No	Original Sentences	Reiteration			
			Repetition	Synonym	Superordinate	General wood
1.	12.	Then a strange thing happened ------- and beautiful star feel out of the sky.	✓			
	13.	It seemed to **fall** behind some trees-------.				
2.	19.	The **woodcutters** opened the coat to take the pieces of gold from it.				✓
	22.	One of the **men** said, This is a sad ending to our hopes!				
3.	66.	He thought that he was better than **the village children.**				✓
		'They are ordinary **people',** he thought, ...				
4.	101.	The woodcutter **carried** into the house to his wife.		✓		
	102.	They **brought** food to her, but she did not eat or drink.				
5.	117.	'Where is my **mother**?' he asked.				✓

		I can only see this dirty old beggar **woman.**				
6.	156.	So he ran away into the **forest.**			✓	
	158	I can only see this dirty old beggar **woman.**				
7.	159.	The **animals and birds** remembered his sticks and stones, and they ran away from him.			✓	
8.	240.	A grey **cloth** covered his face and there were two holes in the **cloth** for his eyes.	✓			
9.	288.	'You helped me first', said the rabbit, and it **ran quickly** away.		✓		
	290.	He **hurried** back to the city.				
10.	312.	We are waiting for you — for our new **King**.	✓			
	313	'Take this crown and be out **King'.**				

3.2 Data Interpretation

Lexical cohesion of the short story *The Star Child* is analysed based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976). The frequency of the use of repetition is 68, 10 synonymy, 4 superordinate and 5 general word. Some examples with each type of lexical cohesion would be selected and interpreted below.

3.2.1 Repetition

In the short story *The Star Child* repetition was found 68 times. The identical lexical item was repeated in the same sentence or within two continuous sentences of the story.

e.g.1 The lexical item "snow" in sentence No.3 was repeated in sentence No. 5.

"There was thick **snow** on the ground and on the trees." (Sen.3)

"The **snow** was very deep, and the woodcutters went slowly". (Sen.5)

e.g.2 The lexical item "cloth" in sentence No.240 was repeated in the same sentence.

"A grey **cloth** covered his face and there were two holes in the **cloth** for his eyes." (Sen. 240.)

e.g.3 The lexical item "King" in sentence No.312 was repeated in sentence No. 313.

"We are waiting for you — for our new **King**". (Sen. 312)

"Take this crown and be our **King**". (Sen. 313)

3.2.2 Synonym

Synonym was found 10 items in the story and all synonyms do not exactly have the same meaning but are similar in some way.

e.g.1 The lexical item 'carried' in sentence No. 101 and 'brought' in No. 102 have similar meaning.

"The wood cutter **carried** her into the house to his wife." (Sen.101)

"They **brought** food to her, but she did not eat or drink". (Sen.102)

e.g.2 The lexical item 'forest' in sentence No. 221 and 'wood' in sentence 225 are smiliar in meaning.

"it was a beautiful **forest**, but the plants under the trees cut his skin." (Sen. 221)

"As the star child came to the end of the **wood**, he heard a cry." (Sen. 225)

e.g.3 The lexical item 'ran quickly' in sentence No.288 and 'hurried' in sentence No.290 have the same meaning.

"You helped me first, said the rabbit, and it **ran quickly** away." (Sen.288)

"He **hurried** back to the city." (Sen. 290)

3.2.3 Superordinate

Superordinate was found 4 items in the story. Superordinate is a term that denotes a general class under which a set of subcategories is subsumed according to www.dictionary.com.

e.g.1 The lexical item 'forest' in sentence No.1 is the superordinate of 'trees' in sentence No.3.

"Two woodcutters were going home through the **forest**". (Sen.1)

There was thick snow on the ground and on the **trees**". (Sen.3)

e.g.2 The lexical item "forest" in sentence No.156 is the superordinate of "grass" in sentence No.158.

"So he ran away into the **forest**". (Sen. 156)

"When the sun went down, he slept on the **grass**." (Sen. 158)

e.g.3 The lexical item "animals" in sentence No.159 is the superodinate of "birds" in the same sentence.

"The **animals** and **birds** remembered his sticks and stones, and they ran away from him." (Sen. 159)

3.2.4 General Word

In the short story, the Star Child, general word was found 5 times.

e.g.1 The lexical item 'men' in sentence No.22 is used as a general word for 'woodcutters' in sentence No. 19.

"The **woodcutters** opened the coat to take the pieces of gold from it". (Sen. 19)

"One of the **men** said, This is a sad ending to our hopes!" (Sen.22)

e.g.2 The lexical item "people" in sentence No.67 is used as a general word for 'the village children in sentence No. 66.

"He thought that he was better than **the village children**." (Sen. 66)

"They are ordinary **people**, he thought, but I am the child of a star." (Sen. 67)

e.g.3   The lexical item "woman" in sentence No. 118 is used as a general word for "mother" in sentence No.117.

"Where is my **mother**?" he asked. (Sen.117)

"I can only see this dirty old beggar **woman**". (Sen.118)

4. Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the short story, *The Star Child* according to Halliday and Hasan (1876), the following table displays the frequency and percentage of the lexical cohesive devices.

Table 2:   Frequency and percentage of lexical cohesive devices found in the short story *The Star Child*.

Sr.No	Lexical cohesive Devices	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Repetition	68	78 %
2.	Synonym	10	11 %
3.	Superordinate	4	5 %
4.	General Word	5	6 %
	Total	87	100 %

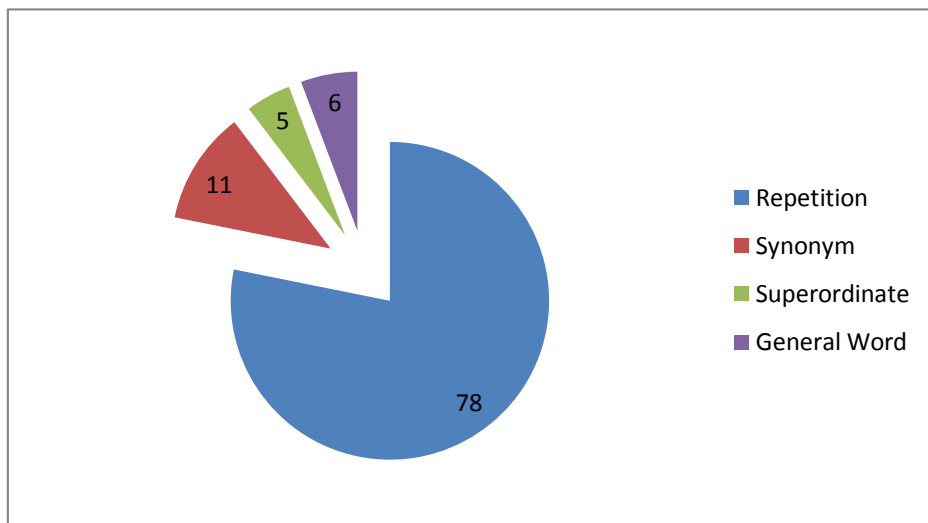These results are shown in the following pie chart.

Figure (1) The Percentage of lexical cohesive devices in the Short Story *The Star Child*

In the short story *The Star Child* all the four types of lexical cohesion are found. Repetition is the most frequently used device and it is found 68 times. The second most frequent device is synonym and it is used 10 times. General word is the third most frequent device and it is found 5 times. Superordinate is used 4 times and it has the lowest frequency in the short story.

5. Conclusion

This research is the analysis of lexical cohesion of the short story *The Star Child* by Oscar Wilde, based on the cohesive theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), there are two categories of lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation. This research deals with reiteration which includes four types of lexical cohesive devices: repetition, synonym, superordinate and general word. The most frequent device is repetition and the least is superordinate. As the short story *The Star Child* is a fantasy story which is meant for the young children, the author uses simple and easy words. The purpose of the short story is to give a moral lesson to the young children and the author uses repetition many times to help the readers interpret and understand the texts in a simple way. Although the author uses all four types of lexical cohesion, the frequency of other three types is far less than the frequency of repetition. By using the lexical items repeatedly, the author draws the attention of the young readers and the readers can grasp the given message without much difficulty. Therefore, using appropriate lexical cohesion in one text is very important and it is one of the most effective ways to understand it and grasp the message of the author.

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