

Developing Sentence Cohesion Skills For Grade 5 Students in Vietnam in Vietnamese Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT: Sentence cohesion skills play an important role in developing primary students' ability to produce coherent and logical texts, particularly for Grade 5 students. However, teaching practice in Vietnam shows that many students still experience difficulties in identifying and applying sentence cohesion devices in writing. On this basis, the paper examines the current state of Grade 5 students' sentence cohesion skills as well as the teaching practices for fostering these skills in several primary schools in Vietnam. Based on the survey findings, the paper proposes a number of measures to develop sentence cohesion skills for students in Vietnamese language teaching.

KEYWORDS: Sentence cohesion; Grade 5 students; Vietnamese language teaching; Teaching methods; Primary schools in Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum, Vietnamese language teaching is not limited to equipping students with linguistic knowledge but aims to develop their ability to use Vietnamese effectively in specific communicative contexts. This orientation requires Vietnamese language teaching at the primary level to focus on the integrated development of the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Among these skills, writing plays a particularly important role, as it is the means through which students express their thinking, emotions, and acquired knowledge in a coherent and logical manner.

To write effectively, in addition to possessing a rich vocabulary and a sound understanding of grammatical rules, students need to develop sentence cohesion skills. These skills enable learners to establish close relationships among sentences within a paragraph, ensuring unity in content and form, thereby producing coherent, clear, and communicatively appropriate texts.

However, classroom practice shows that many Grade 5 students still experience difficulties in identifying and applying sentence cohesion devices in writing. Texts produced by students are often fragmented, lacking connections between sentences, or relying on cohesion devices in a mechanical way that does not reflect the intended semantic relationships. One of the main reasons for this situation is that instruction on sentence cohesion at the primary level has tended to emphasize the transmission of knowledge, while insufficient attention has been paid to organizing practical activities that foster application and use.

In response to the need to innovate Vietnamese language teaching and the realities of Grade 5 instruction, this paper proposes several measures to develop sentence cohesion skills for Grade 5 students in Vietnamese language teaching in Vietnam, thereby contributing to the improvement of teaching quality and meeting the objectives of the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

2. SOME MEASURES FOR DEVELOPING SENTENCE COHESION SKILLS FOR GRADE 5 STUDENTS IN VIETNAM IN VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1. Some Basic Concepts

2.1.1. The Concept of Cohesion

"Cohesion refers to the network of content-related relationships among the components of a text, which is realized through specific cohesive forms; at the same time, it denotes the relationship between the text and factors external to the text, manifested through particular indicators." [1]

2.1.2. Some Sentence Cohesion Devices Taught in the Grade 5 Vietnamese Language Curriculum in Vietnam

2.1.2.1. Repetition

"Repetition is a cohesion device realized through the recurrence in the subsequent utterance of elements that have already appeared in the preceding utterance" [5, p. 87]. *Example:*

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(1) *"Bamboo charges against tanks and artillery. Bamboo protects villages, protects the country, protects thatched roofs, protects ripened rice fields. Bamboo sacrifices itself to protect human beings."* (Thép Mới)

In example (1), repetition is manifested through the repeated use of the word *"bamboo,"* which creates a close linkage between the sentences and highlights the role and symbolic significance of bamboo.

2.1.2.2. Substitution

"Substitution is a cohesion device in which different words are used in subsequent sentences to replace an element in the preceding sentence while maintaining the same meaning" [1, p. 302].

Example:

(2) *"Clearly, our Trống Choai is no longer at the age of innocent childishness. He no longer needs to cling closely around his mother's legs."* (Hai Ho)

In this example, the word *"he"* in the second sentence is used to substitute for the phrase *"our Trống Choai"* in the first sentence, thereby avoiding unnecessary repetition, creating cohesion between the sentences, and making the passage more natural and coherent.

2.1.2.3. Conjunction

"Conjunction is a cohesion device that employs connective words to link sentences within a text" [1, p. 297].

Example:

(3) *"Every work of art is constructed from materials borrowed from reality. However, the artist does not merely record what already exists but also seeks to express something new."* (Nguyễn Đình Thi)

In example (3), the use of the connective *"however"* clearly expresses the contrast between the two ideas in the passage, thereby emphasizing the author's viewpoint on the creative role of the artist and making the line of reasoning more explicit and cohesive.

2.2. The Current Situation of Teaching Sentence Cohesion Skills for Grade 5 Students in Some Primary Schools in Vietnam

To investigate the current situation of teaching sentence cohesion skills to Grade 5 students in some primary schools in Vietnam, we conducted a survey involving 15 teachers and 145 Grade 5 students at two primary schools in Thái Nguyên Province, namely Nguyễn Viết Xuân Primary School and Thống Nhất Primary School.

2.2.1. Objectives and Content of the Survey

- To examine the level of sentence cohesion skills among Grade 5 students in some primary schools in Vietnam;
- To investigate the current practices of teaching sentence cohesion skills to Grade 5 students in the Vietnamese language subject in some primary schools in Vietnam.

2.2.2. Survey Methods

The study mainly employed the survey method, including task-based worksheets administered to students and questionnaires (ankets) distributed to teachers.

2.2.3. Survey Results

2.2.3.1. The Current State of Sentence Cohesion Skills of Grade 5 Students in Some Primary Schools in Vietnam

Table 1. The Current State of Sentence Cohesion Skills of Grade 5 Students in Some Primary Schools in Vietnam

Trường	Class	Total number of worksheets	No errors	1 error	2 error	3 error
Nguyen Viet Xuan Primary School	4A1	36	7	18	7	4
	4A2	38	6	17	9	6
Thong Nhat Primary School	4A2	35	7	16	7	5
	4A4	36	6	15	9	6
Total		145	26	66	32	21

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it can be seen that the sentence cohesion skills of Grade 5 students in Vietnam remain limited. Specifically, the number of worksheets with no sentence cohesion errors ranges from only 6 to 7 out of a total of 35–38 worksheets in each class, accounting for a relatively low proportion of the class size. Meanwhile, worksheets containing one cohesion error account for a very high proportion, with 15 to 18 cases in each class. Worksheets with two cohesion errors number approximately 7 to 9 cases. Notably, there is still a group of students whose worksheets contain three sentence cohesion errors within a single piece of writing, with figures ranging from 4 to 6 cases per class. This situation indicates that sentence cohesion skills among Grade 5 students in Vietnam have not yet been firmly developed, thereby highlighting the need to strengthen instructional measures aimed at fostering sentence cohesion skills in primary-level Vietnamese language teaching.

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2.2.3.2. The Current Situation of Teaching Sentence Cohesion Skills for Grade 5 Students in the Vietnamese Language Subject in Some Primary Schools in Vietnam

To gain a clearer understanding of the approaches currently employed by teachers in fostering sentence cohesion skills for Grade 5 students, we further investigated the extent to which teachers apply various teaching methods and techniques in classroom practice. The results are presented below:

Table 2. Teaching Methods Commonly Used by Teachers to Develop Sentence Cohesion Skills for Grade 5 Students

<i>Method</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Group discussion	15	100
Lecture-based teaching	10	66.7
Linguistic analysis	13	86.7
Other methods	2	13.3

The survey results indicate that teachers mainly employ familiar teaching methods to foster sentence cohesion skills among Grade 5 students. For example, group discussion is used by 100% of the surveyed teachers. This traditional method enables students to exchange ideas, share viewpoints, and identify sentence cohesion devices during the learning process. In addition, linguistic analysis is also applied at a relatively high rate, with 86.7% of teachers reporting the use of this method. Lecture-based teaching is still employed by 66.7% of teachers, suggesting that direct knowledge transmission continues to occupy a certain place in the teaching of this content. Notably, other teaching methods are used by only 13.3% of teachers, indicating that the diversification of teaching methods and techniques for developing students' sentence cohesion skills remains limited.

From this situation, it can be observed that although teachers have initially shown concern for organizing more active learning activities for students, the development of sentence cohesion skills still relies largely on a limited number of traditional methods. More diverse teaching methods and techniques aligned with a competency-based approach have not yet been effectively exploited. This reality highlights the need for greater innovation and flexibility in selecting and combining teaching methods in order to enhance the effectiveness of developing sentence cohesion skills for Grade 5 students in Vietnamese language teaching.

2.3. Proposed Measures for Developing Sentence Cohesion Skills for Grade 5 Students in Vietnam in Vietnamese Language Teaching

2.3.1. Using Active Teaching Methods and Techniques

2.3.1.1. Using the "Placemat" Technique to Help Students Acquire Knowledge of Sentence Cohesion

The *Placemat* technique is employed to help students acquire knowledge of sentence cohesion through active and collaborative learning activities. The teacher divides students into small groups and assigns tasks that require them to identify or analyze sentence cohesion devices in a given passage. Through this technique, students directly observe linguistic phenomena, exchange ideas, and draw conclusions about the characteristics of different sentence cohesion devices, thereby gaining a proactive and lasting understanding of the nature and functions of sentence cohesion.

Illustrative example:

Organizing instruction for the lesson *Sentence Cohesion through Repetition* [3, p. 45].

SENTENCE COHESION THROUGH REPETITION

Read the passage below and answer the questions.

⁽¹⁾Next door to my house, there was a burrow belonging to Choat the Cricket. ⁽²⁾*Choat the Cricket* was the name I gave him in a mocking and condescending way. ⁽³⁾That Choat was probably about the same age as I was. ⁽⁴⁾However, because Choat was weak by nature, I looked down on him, and he was very afraid of me as well.

(To Hoai)

- Which word is repeated in the sentences of the passage above?
- What is the effect of repeating that word?

(1) Preparation

The teacher divides the class into small groups (four students per group) and provides each group with an A3 sheet designed according to the *Placemat* technique, consisting of four corner sections and one central section. The task content is displayed on the board or distributed as worksheets to the students. Each group's task is to identify the word(s) repeated in the sentences of the given passage.

(2) Procedure

Each student works individually in his or her assigned section, reads the passage, and records the word(s) he or she considers to be repeated across the sentences. After completing their individual responses, group members engage in discussion, compare their findings, exchange ideas, and reach a consensus. The agreed-upon answer is then written in the central section of the placemat.

(3) Presentation and Sharing

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Representatives of the groups present their results to the class, clearly indicating the repeated word(s) in the passage and their positions of occurrence. The teacher organizes peer feedback and additional comments from other groups, then confirms the correct answer and summarizes the characteristics of sentence cohesion through repetition.

The *Placemat* technique plays an important role in teaching sentence cohesion to Grade 5 students, as it enables learners to actively participate in the process of knowledge construction rather than passively receiving information. By combining individual work with group discussion, students are trained to identify and analyze sentence cohesion devices while also developing their abilities in verbal expression and reasoning. Moreover, this technique enhances collaboration, confidence, and learning motivation, helping students acquire knowledge of sentence cohesion in a sustainable manner and apply it effectively in speaking and writing activities.

2.3.1.2. Using Learning Games to Practice Sentence Cohesion Knowledge for Grade 5 Students

The use of learning games in practicing sentence cohesion knowledge helps Grade 5 students become more engaged with textual grammar content, which is often perceived as dry and abstract. Through games such as identifying repeated words, selecting appropriate connective words, or linking isolated sentences into coherent paragraphs, students are trained to recognize and apply sentence cohesion devices in a relaxed and natural manner. This method enhances students' active participation while supporting the consolidation of knowledge and the effective development of sentence cohesion skills in Vietnamese language teaching.

Illustrative example:

Organizing instruction for the lesson *Sentence Cohesion through Connective Words* [3, p. 54].

Find appropriate connective words to replace the flower icons in order to create cohesion between the sentences.

- a. In the North, when Tết arrives, peach blossoms bloom brightly. 🌸 In the South, when Tết comes, apricot blossoms show off their colors.
- b. When visiting Huế, tourists enjoy admiring the scenery along the Perfume River. 🌸 They also look forward to enjoying Huế cuisine.
- c. Many people like Vong Village green rice flakes for many reasons. First, the green rice flakes here are very delicious. 🌸 They also evoke associations with Hanoi's autumn.
- d. When traveling in the Mekong Delta region, tourists can have interesting experiences through many attractive activities such as rowing sampans, crossing monkey bridges, and visiting floating markets. 🌸 Tourists can also freely pick fruits when visiting orchard areas.

(1) Preparation

The teacher prepares the task content and designs a learning game with an appropriate name, such as "*The Cohesion Flower*." The class is divided into small groups or organized in the form of group-based competition. The teacher prepares word cards containing connective words such as *but, meanwhile, therefore, in addition, thus, secondly, not only that, etc.*, and displays the exercise on the board.

(2) Procedure

The teacher explains the rules of the game: within a given time limit, groups observe each sentence and select an appropriate connective word to replace the flower icon corresponding to each idea. When time is up, students raise their word cards. The group that raises the correct card both quickly and accurately is declared the winner.

(3) Sharing

After the game ends, the teacher organizes peer feedback and additional comments from the groups, then confirms the correct answers and summarizes the role of connective words in creating cohesion between sentences. The group with the highest number of correct responses is commended in order to encourage students' learning motivation.

The use of learning games in teaching sentence cohesion enables Grade 5 students to develop language skills through competitive and experiential activities. During gameplay, students must quickly identify semantic relationships between sentences and select appropriate cohesive devices, thereby enhancing their linguistic thinking ability. This method helps create a positive learning environment, reduces pressure when learning Vietnamese language content, and supports students in consolidating and flexibly applying sentence cohesion knowledge in practice and drills.

2.3.2. Integrating the Development of Sentence Cohesion Skills into Reading and Writing Instruction in Grade 5 Vietnamese Language Teaching

This measure aims to develop students' sentence cohesion skills through reading comprehension and text production activities, in accordance with the integrated orientation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

2.3.2.1. Integrating the Development of Sentence Cohesion Skills into Reading Instruction

In primary Vietnamese language teaching, reading instruction is not only intended to help students understand the content of texts but also serves as a favorable context for developing language skills. Therefore, integrating the development of sentence cohesion

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skills into reading instruction is both necessary and consistent with the competency-based orientation toward developing students' Vietnamese language use.

In teaching reading, particularly reading comprehension, teachers can integrate the development of sentence cohesion skills in the following ways.

Illustrative examples:

In the Grade 5 Vietnamese textbook, immediately following the lesson *Sentence Cohesion through Repetition* [3, p. 45] is the reading text *Young Tea Buds on the Old Tea Tree*. When guiding students to comprehend Paragraph 1 of this text, the teacher may ask questions such as: "In Paragraph 1, which word(s) are repeated in each sentence?" and "What is the effect of repeating that word?" Through such brief questions, the teacher helps students consolidate their previously learned knowledge of sentence cohesion through repetition.

Similarly, after students have learned the lesson *Sentence Cohesion through Connective Words* [3, p. 54], when teaching the reading text *Dance on the Brocade Background*, the teacher may ask: "Does Paragraph 1 of this text use any connective words to link sentences? Can you identify which word is used?"

From these examples, it can be affirmed that integrating the development of sentence cohesion skills into reading comprehension instruction is an appropriate and effective approach in Grade 5 Vietnamese language teaching. Through a system of guiding questions based on specific textual materials in the textbook, teachers not only support students in achieving deeper comprehension of the text but also create opportunities for them to consolidate and naturally apply their knowledge of sentence cohesion devices. This instructional approach helps students develop the habit of paying attention to sentence connections while reading and provides a solid foundation for applying sentence cohesion skills in writing activities, thereby meeting the objectives of developing Vietnamese language competence as set out in the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

2.3.2.2. Integrating the Development of Sentence Cohesion Skills into Writing Instruction

Alongside reading instruction, writing instruction plays a particularly important role in the formation and development of Vietnamese language skills for primary students. Therefore, integrating the development of sentence cohesion skills into writing instruction not only helps students produce coherent and logical texts but also contributes to improving the effectiveness of Vietnamese language teaching in line with a competency-based approach. The implementation can be described as follows.

After the lessons *Sentence Cohesion through Repetition*, *Sentence Cohesion through Connective Words*, and *Sentence Cohesion through Substitution*, the Grade 5 Vietnamese textbook continues to organize writing activities in various forms, including: *Writing a paragraph expressing feelings or emotions about an event*; *Writing a paragraph expressing agreement with an event or phenomenon*; *Writing a descriptive essay about a landscape*; *Writing a descriptive essay about a person*; and *Writing a paragraph expressing opposition to an event or phenomenon*. These writing tasks create opportunities for students to flexibly apply and combine the sentence cohesion devices they have learned in the process of text production.

For instance, when teaching students to write descriptive texts (describing a landscape or a person), teachers can guide students to use sentence cohesion through repetition to maintain the descriptive focus throughout the paragraph (by repeating words referring to the central scene or character), while also employing substitution devices such as pronouns or synonymous expressions to avoid mechanical repetition. In addition, students may be encouraged to use connective words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* to link sentences according to the order of observation, thereby ensuring a clear and logical descriptive sequence.

For the task of writing a paragraph expressing feelings or emotions about an event, teachers can instruct students to combine repetition and substitution to sustain the emotional focus on the event being discussed, while also using connective words that signal emotional progression or the sequence of thoughts, such as *at first*, *then*, *gradually*, and *therefore*, in order to create natural links between sentences and convey emotions smoothly.

In writing tasks that require students to express agreement or opposition toward an event or phenomenon, teachers can guide students to use connective devices to express logical relationships between sentences, such as cause–effect, addition, or contrast, through connective words like *therefore*, *thus*, *moreover*, *however*, and *but*. At the same time, students should continue to use repetition and substitution to ensure that the topic under discussion is consistently maintained throughout the paragraph.

In summary, the writing tasks in the Grade 5 Vietnamese textbook are closely connected with Vietnamese language knowledge—in this paper, specifically knowledge of sentence cohesion through repetition, connective words, and substitution—and provide opportunities for students to apply these cohesion devices flexibly during text production in accordance with communicative purposes and content. Guiding students to use these sentence cohesion devices across different writing tasks plays an important role in developing their ability to produce coherent and logical paragraphs and essays, thereby meeting the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

3. CONCLUSION

Sentence cohesion skills play an important role in developing primary students' ability to produce coherent and logical texts, particularly for Grade 5 students, who are at the transitional stage to lower secondary education. Through an examination of the current state of Grade 5 students' sentence cohesion skills and the teaching practices used to develop these skills in several primary

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schools, this study has revealed that sentence cohesion skills among Grade 5 students in Vietnam remain limited and have not yet been firmly established. At the same time, instruction in sentence cohesion still relies largely on traditional teaching methods and has not fully exploited active teaching methods and techniques aligned with a competency-based approach.

On this basis, the paper has proposed several measures to develop sentence cohesion skills for Grade 5 students in Vietnamese language teaching, including the use of active teaching methods and techniques as well as the integration of sentence cohesion skill development into reading and writing instruction. The proposed measures closely align with the Grade 5 Vietnamese curriculum and textbooks, creating opportunities for students to flexibly apply knowledge of sentence cohesion through repetition, connective words, and substitution in learning activities.

The research findings indicate that organizing instruction through an integrated approach and emphasizing skill development through practice not only helps students understand the nature and functions of sentence cohesion devices but also contributes to improving the quality of coherent and logical paragraph and essay writing. The measures proposed in this paper can be flexibly applied in primary Vietnamese language teaching practice, thereby contributing to the effective implementation of the goal of developing students' Vietnamese language competence in accordance with Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum.

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