

CHAPTER 5

COHESION THROUGH LEXICAL ITEMS

In the previous chapter we studied the various methods of participant introduction, re-introduction and identification maintenance, and how they contribute to the cohesive effect of the text. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss lexical items as another source of textual cohesion.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:274), lexical cohesion is "the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary". Lexical items are textually cohesive because they form a linear connection between one mention of a referent and another mention of the same referent in the same text.

This chapter consists of four sections. Section 5.1 will discuss cohesion through the various reiterative devices observed in the Sgaw Karen data. These reiterative devices include repetition, synonym and near synonym, superordinate and general word. Section 5.2 will focus on the nominalisation of a verb as a source of lexical cohesion. Section 5.3 will describe the cohesive effect created by the selection of the small yet very important set of Nominal Classifiers. The final section will summarise our discussion in this chapter.

5.1 Reiteration

Reiteration refers to the use of repetition, a synonym, a near synonym, a superordinate or a general word to refer back to a lexical item (see also section 4.2.3). A general word and a superordinate appear to imply the use of a more general item. The principle difference between these two devices is that the former involves the most general word within a semantic domain whereas the latter concerns a word which is one step more general. For example, to refer back to 'this estate car', we can say "this **car**" which would

be superordinate reiteration. Or we can also say "this **thing**", which would be the most *general* word within the semantic domain of inanimate concrete object.

According to the Sgaw Karen data, the most common form of reiteration is repetition while synonym, near synonym or superordinate were only occasionally observed. A general word rarely occurs. Examples of the four common types of reiteration are given in Figure 17 below.

Lexical Items	Repetition	Synonym	Near Synonym	Superordinate
<i>dæ⁶</i> 'hut'	<i>dæ⁶</i> 'hut'			<i>h⁴</i> 'house'
<i>θe⁴ pya²</i> 'jungle'		<i>pya² la²</i> 'forest'		
<i>pu³ p^hæ⁵</i> 'set free'			<i>pla² kwi¹</i> 'let go away'	

Figure 17. Forms of Reiteration.

5.1.1 Repetition

Repetition refers to the use of exactly the same lexical item to refer back to the referent. This form of reiteration was observed to occur most frequently. Consider sentences 5, 6 and 7 in the following example.

(1) "The Story of Phue Mawtaw" (S 5-7)

ʔəwæ⁶ kə³ mə³ k^hr⁵ lə⁶ kəθə² kəpə³ ʔə⁴ bu⁵
 he go do field at mountain side stay near

dɔ⁵ θe⁴ pya² lɔ³
 with jungle SEP.

'He went to work in the **field** at the side of the mountain near the jungle.'

ʔəwæ⁶ p^hæ⁵ k^hr⁵ dɔ⁵ θu⁴ bɪ⁶ dɔ⁵ nwæ⁴ θe⁴ t²
 he slash field and grow rice and tapioca

təp^hə⁴ *lɔ³*
Plural SEP.

'He slashed the **field** and grew rice and tapioca.'

ʔə *k^hf⁵* *ʔo⁴* *ji¹* *dɔ⁵* *θəwɔ⁶* *ʔəxo⁶* *bə⁴* *læ³* *byɔ⁶*
his field stay far with village so must go build

wæ⁶ *dæ⁶* *s^hf⁵* *s^hf⁵* *p^ho⁶* *tə* *p^hlə⁴* *lə⁶* *ʔə* *k^hf⁵*
SC. hut small small little one N.Cl. at his field

ʔəxə³ *lɔ³*
beside SEP.

'Because his **field** was far from the village, he had to build a small hut beside the **field**.'

In sentence 5, the item *k^hf⁵* 'field' is first mentioned. Then in the next sentence (6), the narrator uses an exact repetition of the lexical item. Finally, sentence 7 contains two additional occurrences of *k^hf⁵* 'field'. This exact repetition occurs twice more in sentence 8 (not included in this example).

5.1.2 Synonym and Near Synonym

A synonym involves reiteration by the use of a different word with the same meaning while a near synonym involves reiteration by the use of a different word with a similar meaning. These two types of reiteration are less commonly used than is repetition. In the following example from 'The Story of Phue Mawtaw', *θe⁴pɣə²* 'jungle' (sentence 5), is referred to again in sentence 11 by the synonym *pɣə²lə²* 'forest'.

(2) 'The Story of Phue Mawtaw' (S 5, 11)

ʔəwæ⁶ *læ³* *mə³* *k^hf⁵* *lə⁶* *kəse²* *kəpə³* *ʔo⁴* *bu⁵*
he go do field at mountain side stay near

dɔ̃⁵ θe⁴pyə² lɔ̃³
with jungle SEP.

'He went to work in the field at the side of the mountain near the **jungle**.'

bə⁴shə⁴ tə³ɾɸ⁵ ɾo⁴ tə p^hɸ⁵ lə⁶ pyə²lɔ̃²
but monkey stay one group at forest

klə⁶ lɔ̃³
middle SEP.

'But there was a group of monkeys in the middle of the **forest**.'

The use of a near synonym is less common than the use of a synonym. In example 3 below, *pu³p^hlæ⁵* 'set free' in sentence 39 is a near synonym of the word *plə²kwi¹* 'let go away' in sentence 32.

(3) 'The Story of Khunawlei and Nawmuey' (S 32, 39)

kelɔ̃³ tæ⁶ ɾɔ̃³ lə⁶ ɾewæ⁶ me² lɪ⁶ lɔ̃³ ɾə
python tell him that he if pour down his

ko¹ ɾə θwɸ⁴ dɔ̃⁵ kə plə² kwi¹ ɾə mə⁶ lɔ̃³
throat its blood and will let away his wife SEP.

'The python told him that if he poured down the blood of his throat, it would set his wife free (**let his wife go away**).'

k^hɪ⁴nɔ̃²le⁶ θe⁴pə⁶ wæ⁶ lə⁶ ɾewæ⁶ me² tə lɪ⁶
Khunawlei know SC. that he if not pour

lɔ̃³ ɾə ko¹ ɾə θwɸ⁴ dɔ̃⁵ ɾə mə⁶ pu³p^hlæ⁵
down his throat its blood and his wife set free

tə θe⁶ lə³bə⁴
not can at all

'Khunawlei realised that unless he poured down the blood of his throat, his wife would never be **freed**.'

Another example of the use of a near synonym is from "The Story of Mueyaephae". In sentence 16, the word used to describe Mueyaephae is *do⁴ta²ye³* 'beautiful'. In the next sentence (17), 'beautiful' is replaced with the expression *kwa²...ye³* 'look good', a near synonym of 'beautiful' (example 4).

(4) "The Story of Mueyaephae" (S 16-17)

<i>ʔe⁶xo⁶</i>	<i>jo³do⁴</i>	<i>so³pa³</i>	<i>θe⁴na⁶</i>	<i>ne²</i>	<i>ʔo³</i>	<i>le⁶</i>	<i>ʔe</i>
so	Thai	king	know	for	her	that	she
<i>me²</i>	<i>pya³</i>	<i>do⁴ta²ye³</i>	<i>lo³</i>				
be	person	beautiful	SEP.				

'Therefore, the Thai king knew that she was, in fact, a **beautiful** woman.'

<i>le⁶ple³</i>	<i>so³lo⁴</i>	<i>so³pa³</i>	<i>te^ha⁴</i>	<i>ne⁴</i>				
formerly	(no meaning, play on word)	king	Plural	that				
<i>po¹ma⁴</i>	<i>le⁶</i>	<i>kwa²</i>	<i>wæ⁶</i>	<i>ye³</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ya³</i>	<i>ne⁴</i>	<i>hr⁵ne²</i>
woman	that	look	SC.	good	one	N.Cl.	that	get
<i>wæ⁶</i>	<i>d⁵</i>	<i>ʔe</i>	<i>ma⁶</i>	<i>lo³</i>				
SC.	as	his	wife	SEP.				

'Kings in former time often take **good-looking** women as their wives.'

5.1.3 Superordinate

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:278), a superordinate is "a name for a more general class". For example, the word "mammal" is a superordinate of the word "elephant". However, this form of reiteration is not found as frequently as repetition.

In example 5, sentence 1 states that Nyali and his grandmother live in a shabby, dilapidated hut (*dae⁶*). The "hut" is then referred to a second time in sentence 6 with the more general term *ha⁴* 'house'.

(5) "The Story of Nyali" (S 1-6; p. 148)

(1) In former time, a Nyali fish lived with his old grandmother in a dilapidated hut (*dæ⁶*). (2) His grandmother fed him with food from the field. (3) As for Nyali, he lived in the water jar. (4) His grandmother gave him rice two or three times a day. (5) Sometimes, his grandmother went to the field with him being kept in her backbasket. (6) While her grandmother was not at home (*house h⁴*), the house was always swept tidy and clean, and things like rice and water were always cooked too.

5.2 Nominalisation of a Verb

In Sgaw Karen, lexical cohesion can also be achieved through the nominalisation of a verb (cf. Jones 1961:25). According to the stories studied, a nominalised verb occurs more frequently than a verbalised noun. When a verb is changed to a noun, the nominaliser *ta²* 'thing', is placed in front of it.¹ This is illustrated in example 6 below.

(6) "The Story of the Brave Orphan" (S 15-16)

<i>ʔə</i>	<i>na³</i>	<i>lə⁶</i>	<i>sɔ³pə³</i>	<i>kə</i>	<i>hæ⁶</i>	<i>ke³</i>	<i>s^hu⁶</i>
it	night	that	king	will	come	back	to
<i>ʔət^hʔəkɔ²</i>	<i>ne⁴</i>	<i>p^ho⁴xæ⁶</i>	<i>p^ho⁶</i>	<i>m^hmɔ²</i>	<i>ta²</i>	<i>ɬ³</i>	
his country	that	orphan	little	dream	thing	SEP.	

'During the night before the king's return to his region, the little orphan had a dream (dreamed something).'

<i>lə⁶</i>	<i>ta²</i>	<i>m^hmɔ²</i>	<i>ʔəp^hu⁶</i>	<i>t^hA</i>	<i>wæ⁶</i>	<i>m^hAxə⁶</i>
at	Nom.	dream	inside	see	SC.	fairy

<i>tə</i>	<i>ɣə³</i>	<i>ɬ³</i>
one	N.Cl.	SEP.

'In his **dream**, he saw a fairy.'

¹The word *ta²* has a wide variety of functions, one of which is as a nominaliser.

In the above example, the verb occurs in sentence 15 when the orphan "dreams something". Here *ta*² follows the verb and stands for the object of the clause. In the next sentence, *ta*² precedes the verb *mɪ⁶mɔ⁴* 'to dream' and the verb becomes the noun 'dream'.

5.3 Nominal Classifiers

Nominal classifiers are an important feature in Sgaw Karen as well as in most Southeast Asian languages. Sgaw Karen has a large set of nominal classifiers. Jones (1961) reports that he found more than seventy nominal classifiers in the Moulmein dialect of Sgaw Karen. This dialect is similar to the dialect used in this thesis. Jones says that the list "is probably not complete" (Jones 1961:19).

Each Sgaw Karen nominal classifier generally agrees with the physical appearance of the noun it classifies, except for a noun signifying collectivity.² When a classifier is used to refer back to a nominal item, it links one mention of a referent to the next mention of the same referent. If, for instance, somebody is talking about a tiger, a catfish and a bird, and at a certain point in the discourse he mentions *ta*³ *ta bo*⁶ *ʔi*³ (animal-one-Nominal Classifier-this) 'this animal', it superficially looks like he is using a general noun, which could confuse the audience. However, he is referring to the catfish, not to either of the other two creatures² because the classifier *bo*⁶ is used with a long, thin and cylindrical object. To say something like *ta*³ *ta be*⁴ *ʔi*³, also meaning "this animal" (animal-one-Nominal Classifier-this), he is undoubtedly talking about the bird since the classifier *be*⁴ refers to a wide, flat object and a bird's wings are wide and flat.

²Although the data used in this study shows no example of a nominal classifier used in a similar context as the one presented here, it is important to note that cohesion in Sgaw Karen is also achieved by the use of nominal classifiers. The example presented here is from a conversation between the author and Mr Paul John, one of the language associates. Nominal classifiers do occur in the stories examined but are not functioning as cohesive devices.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have considered three major lexically cohesive devices observed in the Sgaw Karen folk narratives. They contribute to textual cohesion in that they signal redundancy by linking one mention of a referent to another mention of the same referent. In section 5.1, we discussed the four reiterative mechanisms: repetition, synonym, near synonym and superordinate. The most frequently used mechanism is repetition. Section 5.2 discussed lexical cohesion obtained through the nominalisation of a verb. Finally, in section 5.3, we focused our attention on nominal classifiers, which play a very important part in maintaining lexical cohesion in Sgaw Karen.