

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I discuss the topics that are related to pronoun reference. Since my paper concerns the effect of pronoun reference on writing, I have searched more the background in using pronoun reference through writing and reading. The following are what I consider beneficial and relevant to my topic—what pronoun reference is, how the pronoun reference is related to writing and reading, strategies to teach pronoun reference through reading, the connection between writing and reading skill and related research studies.

2.1 WHAT PRONOUN REFERENCE IS

Pronoun reference according to Greenberg “Effective writing” can be defined as the replacement of the noun previously stated. The noun that is repeated by the pronoun is called the antecedent which can then include places, proper noun, the name of person, etc. (Jolly, 2002; Halliday, M. A. K. & Hasan, R., 1976). With pronouns, the sentences in the text become connected and the writers can keep away from the repetition of the nouns.

For example:

I liked my high school computer teacher the most out of all of my teachers. She knew every student by name, and her grading policies were fair. I owe her a great deal.

(The pronouns “she” and “her” clearly refer to the computer teacher.)

It is pointed out by Wolf, Gibson, and Desmet, (2004), based on Centering Theory, that the antecedents of pronouns are likely to come up in the subject position.

For example:

Fiona complimented Craig, and she congratulated James.

(Notice that “she” refers to its antecedent that is “Fiona” which is in the subject position)

Also, it is said by Smyth’s study (as cited in Wolf, Gibson, & Desmet, 2004, p. 4) and Gorrell and Brown (1972) in “Parallel Preference” that when sentences with antecedents have the following features: both sentences agree in the thematic roles of

the verbs and the constituent structure of both sentences is the same; a parallel structure is taking place meaning, the subject pronoun is likely to refer to subject antecedents and the object pronoun is likely to refer to object antecedents. There are different kinds of pronoun such as indefinite pronoun, relative pronouns, etc. However, pronouns that I focus on in this paper are only the personal pronoun e.g. he, she, it, her, him, they, them, etc. To consider closely how to use pronoun reference, it is helpful to regard these following subtopics—agreement in gender, and agreement in number of person. (Brown, Nilson, Shaw & Weldon, 1984; Greenberg, 1988; Jolly, 2002; Neman, 1989)

Agreement in gender means pronoun reference and its antecedent should clearly represent the same gender whether it is male or female. Gender mostly affects the third person pronoun in which the gender of a personal pronoun in the third-person singular must relate to the gender of its antecedent. We, I, you and they don't give any details concerning gender. Here are some examples that reflect gender agreement.

1. *Nicky* whistled as *he* gathered the firewood.
2. *Janet* was pleased with *her* new job.
3. A *diamond* is precious because of *its* brilliance and hardness.

In sentence one, “he” is directly referred to “Nicky” that characterizes male while in sentence two, “her” is undoubtedly referred to “Janet” that characterizes female. Lastly, in sentence three, “its” is clearly referred to “diamond” which characterizes a thing.

Agreement in number of person refers to the relationship between the antecedent and the pronoun reference, whether they both are plural or singular, as it is obviously seen in this example,

Orville and Wilbur Wright are best known for *their* invention of the airplane; provided that the pronoun “their” agrees in number with the subject “Orville and Wilbur Wright”.

Obviously, to avoid problems that might occur with pronoun reference such as unclear pronouns, the writers need to understand the basic rules and knowledge in order to use pronoun reference more accurately. For the readers, vague pronoun

reference can affect their comprehension in reading as they have to analyze the gender or the number of the referents that are being referred to.

2.2 HOW PRONOUN REFERENCE IS RELATED TO WRITING AND READING

How pronoun reference is related to writing and reading can clearly be explained in the concept of cohesion and coherence (Brown & Yule, 2004; Dijk, 1981; Ellis, Hamilton, & Aho, 1983; Halliday & Hasan, 1976) Cohesion as defined by Halliday & Hasan (1976) is the relation between sentence occurred in the text by the use of cohesive devices such as the use of reference—personal pronoun, demonstrative, and so on, conjunction, etc. Cohesion certainly provides the semantic relation among sentences. The use of reference on which I focus in my study—pronoun reference—can take place mainly in two ways as follows; anaphoric or substitution (referring backwards), cataphoric (referring forward) as illustrated by the examples given by Brown and Yule (2004) below:

- 1) Look at the sun. *It's* going down quickly.
(*It* refers back to the sun.)
- 2) *It's* going down quickly, the sun.
(*It* refers forwards to *the sun*.)

These two elements of reference are considered important for readers' interpretation. (Brown & Yule, 2004; Nuttal, 1986)

According to Donald, Hamilton and Aho (1983), coherence, which is one of the important elements utilized in discourse, is a tool that makes the string of words, clauses and the sentences reasonable in other words, the elements of the sequence are tied together in order to have a consistent text. Proposed by Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) in the book "Discourse and context in language teaching A guide for language teacher" is the idea that constructing the coherent text is the responsibility of the writer, to provide coherence to the readers. Consequently, teachers should give students the opportunity to develop this kind of strategy. Four ways to achieve coherence given by Oshima and Hogue (1999) are repeating key nouns, using pronouns to refer back to key nouns, using transition signals or connectors and arranging the sentences in logical order.

Pronoun reference relating to the concept of cohesion and coherence has affected both reading and writing. In reading, as stated also by Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) the readers need the knowledge of grammatical features as a tool to indicate the reference appearing in the text, such as pronoun, article or demonstratives. Since the pronoun reference has an abundance of possible antecedents, it is sometimes difficult to indicate the correct referent. The readers hence come across this kind of problem all the time, especially for ESL/EFL readers as they may have to reread the sentence again and again to insure their comprehension. To improve EFL and ESL students' reading skill, Celce-Murcia has suggested that the learners should have an opportunity to practice identifying correct antecedents of pronoun reference and using the pronoun in more accurate ways.

In writing, Fox (1987), has investigated the use of third-person singular references in written English text, spoken text and so forth. Fox said that successful text from the audience point of view should show anticipation of the reader's comprehension of the texts, or at least develop reader's understanding throughout the text because unquestionably, readers can't get access into the writer's head in order to figure out what the text is all about. The reader should not have to guess who he or she is referring to. Moreover, using an appropriate pronoun to refer back to the key word is one of the tactics that makes the writing look smooth and allow readers to track the text more easily. (Greenberg, 1988)

It is clear therefore that pronoun reference is an important factor in both writing and reading, especially in cohesion and coherence theory. The writers must master the use of pronoun reference to construct cohesive text while readers need the knowledge of pronoun reference to interpret the written text.

2.3 STRATEGIES TO TEACHING PRONOUN REFERENCE THROUGH READING

To see the effect of pronoun reference on writing, I have chosen the strategies recommended by Nuttall (1996) who indicates the first step in teaching students to identify the correct referent of a pronoun. Below are the strategies given by Nuttall.

The first strategy is to provide students a text containing various pronouns with boxes around the target items with numbers or colors. To achieve the task,

students then find other items with the same referent as the ones in the boxes by giving the same number or coloring it.

The second strategy is to give students the text with some pronouns omitted. There'll be a list of omitted pronouns supplied in random order. Students have to put the items into the correct places.

Third strategy is to give students a text from a book or article they are familiar with. Some of the pronouns are underlined and numbered. Students will be given another sheet of paper which they use to identify the noun or the appropriate pronoun by writing them according to the number indicated in the text.

The fourth strategy is to give students a text with one or two nouns underlined. The underlined noun should refer to many pronouns. To create the web, the teacher can have students draw lines from the underlined noun to all of the pronouns referring back to that noun. Students can practice more using different kinds of text which can be done with the whole class first, then individually.

2.4 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN READING AND WRITING SKILL

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of researchers who have conducted research involving the connection between reading and writing skill, such as Crowhurst (1991), Webster and Ammon (1994), Stotsky (as cited in Kroll, 1997, p. 89-90), etc. They all mention that reading and writing are related to each other and can somewhat transfer skills either from reading to writing or from writing to reading.

Kroll (1997) has described the relationship between reading and writing skill based on a variety of studies where there exists the link between these two skills in second language; anyhow, it still depends on many factors of the learners such as language literacy and the way that the reading-writing interaction in the second language is affected by L1 reading and writing skills. She then discusses three different hypotheses of how reading and writing are related in L1. First, the directional hypothesis, which believes that the connection of reading-writing is directional, meaning learning reading can influence writing but learning writing cannot support reading. In the study of Stotsky (as cited in Kroll, 1997, p. 89-90), the results showed that using extra reading to improve writing was more effective than providing grammar exercises or additional writing practice. A second hypothesis

believes the relationship of reading-writing is nondirectional, meaning it can transfer in either direction. The key concept of this hypothesis is that the process of reading and writing is dynamic and interactive, noting that both skills are cognitive processes in which learning one would support the other. The last hypothesis claims that the reading-writing relationship is bidirectional, meaning reading-writing can be both interactive and interdependent. Therefore, reading-writing in this hypothesis's point of view means reading and writing skill can be changed or developed over time depending on students' level, the nature of the instruction and so forth.

Kroll (1997) highlights at the end of her article the connection in L2 reading and writing; that the important factor which facilitates transfer is teaching. Teachers can help their students by providing some extra reading to enhance writing skill. What's more, according to Krashen (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2003, p. 39), reading is considered to be a source of comprehensible input where the people can achieve high levels of proficiency in the second language if they are extensively exposed to comprehensible input.

Pardo (2006) studied the role of context in learning to teach writing with beginning urban teachers. His findings based on many teachers' interviews were that two teachers out of three prefer integrating reading and writing in their teaching. Some of the teachers find the pedagogy in combining the processes of reading and writing together quite successful, Tracey & Morrow (as cited in Pardo, 2006, p. 378)

In brief, although the connection of reading and writing skills are not evidently proved, the result of many studies has revealed the benefit of teaching writing with a mixture of reading instruction.

2.5 RELATED RESEARCH STUDY

A number of studies have been made to investigate the function of pronoun reference and the relationship of reading and writing skill. Here are some studies that I have gone through in order to gather more information relevant to my topic.

Kral (2004) conducted an experiment with her students in the real classroom setting to find way to improve reading test scores through pronoun reference drill. The findings indicated the remarkable progress her students made after receiving the instruction. She taught her students how to correctly identify the pronoun reference

using different kinds of text and strategies, including the ones recommended by Nuttall (1996). The pretest and the posttest scores were significantly different implying the impact pronoun reference had on students' comprehension in the text.

Macedo (2001) examined the errors produced by a Japanese high school student in processing text. She was assigned to write an e-mail letter which was then analyzed to find out the areas of the errors she had made. With some recommendations based on the error analysis, it was suggested she rewrite the letter. The result displayed a variety of errors in her first letter, including cohesion and text pattern. Her rewrite letter showed better cohesive and sequential text. This study implied that in order to improve students' writing, it is good to take students' errors into consideration and provide students with useful strategies such as how to write in clear text patterns, how to make their writing become more coherent, etc. Moreover, students do need to understand their errors and come up with a better text.

Freeman (1986) investigated pronoun reference based on miscued data that young students from grade two and six made while they were reading aloud. The data was analyzed to find the strategies that the students use to assign pronoun reference. The findings pointed out that young readers could control cohesion in their reading using certain text features such as preceding noun phrases, preceding pronouns, and so on, and some strategies using different kinds of cue such as syntactic cues (the cues that most pronouns take place), pragmatic cues (the background knowledge that the readers have gained from reading or else), etc. The study indicated the importance of pronoun reference in making the text more coherent.

Wolf, Gibson, and Desmet (2004) carried out the self-paced reading experiments with forty participants. They were required to read twenty set of sentences in four conditions and answer the questions according to the sentences they read via computer. Each set of sentences contained the coherence relation (resemblance, cause-effect) and parallel reference (parallel, nonparallel). The sentences shown on the screen were broken into a group of words with dash marking. The time the participants used in reading was recorded and analyzed to test the prediction of the three main theories— Centering Theory, Parallel Preference, Causal-inference-based and Coherence-based theory. All of these mentioned that the time in reading affects the coherent structure of the sentence; for example, some structures

should be read faster than the other. This study aimed mainly at finding out the relation among clauses focusing on discourse coherence and pronoun resolution.

MacMillan (2007) has explored the TOEFL exam to analyze the role of lexical cohesion in the assessment of EFL reading proficiency. The results indicated various kinds of lexical cohesion including reference such as lexical repetition, lexical links, connecting question stems, etc in the passages and questions. As a result, this study implied that it is terribly beneficial for the students to know more about lexical cohesion if they want to succeed in a TOEFL test.

Crowhurst (1991) investigated the interrelationships between reading and writing persuasive discourse to pinpoint whether giving students instruction can improve their writing in the mode of persuasive discourse and reading can support writing or writing can support reading within the theme of persuasion. Students in two classes from grade six were separated into 4 groups by sex and ability. The first two groups were taught persuasive discourse—one with writing and one with reading. The other two were taught only to read novels and write book reports—one with a persuasion model and one without persuasion model. Pretests and posttests were done to see the difference among the four groups. The findings revealed significantly high scores on the first two groups while the other two groups got lower scores.