

Analysis of Grammatical Cohesion in the Reading Texts of the “English for Nusantara” Ninth Grade Textbook

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of grammatical cohesive devices in the reading texts of the *English for Nusantara* textbook for ninth-grade. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, and analyzed 14 reading texts to identify four types of grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, based on Halliday and Hasan’s framework. The findings reveal that a total of 694 instances of grammatical cohesion were identified in the textbook. Reference emerged as the most dominant cohesive device with 552 occurrences, followed by conjunctions with 132 occurrences. Ellipsis appeared only 6 times, while substitution only 4 times. These findings show that the textbook relies heavily on explicit cohesive devices, particularly reference and conjunction, to maintain textual coherence. And it suggests that the *English for Nusantara* textbook effectively supports students’ reading comprehension by providing clear grammatical links between sentences, although the limited use of substitution and ellipsis indicates a restricted variety of cohesive devices.

Keywords: grammatical cohesion; reading texts; English textbook; ninth-grade

Received:
18-12-2025

Revised:
27-02-2026

Accepted:
11-04-2026

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in learning English. This is because reading helps students build a wide vocabulary, understand how sentences are structured, and improve their ability to think critically (Safei & Ekasari, 2023). According to Grabe & Stoller (2019) stated that reading involves three main processes: decoding the text, understanding the meaning of words, and making logical inferences. Therefore, to understand how reading texts convey meaning, it is important to look at how language functions in both spoken and written forms (Dewi & Irwandika, 2024). McCarthy (2000) defines discourse analysis as the study of language in use, including written texts, communication events, and conversations. Yule (1996) adds that good discourse structure depends on certain elements that help form a well-organized text, and the

connections between sentences create cohesion. Brown (2001) also emphasizes the role of textual cohesion in making reading easier to understand. Hence, cohesion is a key part of the reading process since it connects sentences together and makes the flow of meaning clear, allowing readers to understand the text correctly (Surjowati, 2025).

Cohesion can be broken down into two types, such as grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion (Rizki et al., 2022). In this study, the researchers focused only on grammatical cohesion. It includes references, substitutions, ellipses, and conjunctions (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). According to Ajam et al. (2023) stated that types of grammatical cohesion, such as: first, reference. Reference is a kind of semantic relation between noun or noun phrases to a certain item. A reference device is also called a pronoun or dummy word, which means that this pronoun needs its own referent in order to have meaning. Reference is divided into three, such as personal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference. Personal reference consists of personal pronouns, possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns. The examples of personal reference or personal pronoun are *I, me, you, we, us, he, him, she, her, they, and it*. And possessive adjectives: *my, their, your, her, his, and our*. And possessive pronouns are *mine, yours, his, hers, ours, and theirs*. Second, demonstrative reference. References are selective or non-selective deixis words. Demonstrative references show distance, such as the article *the*, and nominal demonstratives like *this, these, that, and those*. And adverbial demonstratives *here, there, now*. Third, comparative references, comparative references show adjective, verb and grammatical metrics through comparisons such as *more, different, better, same*.

Second is substitution. It is grammatical level, where a certain item is replaced with another grammatical item. According to Tafuli et al. (2023), who stated that substitution is different from reference, which refers to referent, while substitution refers to grammar structure. In substitution, there are three, such as nominal, verbal and clausal. The example of nominal is *one* or *ones*. Verbal example is *do* replacing the predicate or verb. And clauses where the whole previous statement is replaced with *so* and *not*. The third is ellipsis, which is “substitution by zero.” the context is textual. Cahya Maulana et al. (2025) explains that ellipsis is a grammatical unit which is omitted and can be understood based on the context in the text. Ellipsis is divided into three, such as nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, where a certain noun or verb is omitted, and the third clausal ellipsis, where a clause is omitted. Fourth is conjunction. Subandi et al. (2024) explained that conjunction shows certain relations between two clauses, two sentences or paragraphs, but actually it is not a structural device but more like a semantic or discourse marker in the text. And conjunction is divided into four, such as additive, adversative, causal and temporal.

In the context of teaching English, textbooks and other learning materials are main tools that provide structured content for both teachers and students, including reading passages, exercises, and language practice. Not only that, textbooks have been described in ELT research as essential instructional resources that guide the presentation of language skills and support communicative objectives in classroom settings (Karim et al., 2020). One example of such a textbook is *English for Nusantara*

for ninth grade, which was developed under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and is widely used in Indonesian junior high schools. This book includes various reading texts aimed at improving students' reading comprehension and their understanding of grammatical structures.

Previous research has pointed out how important cohesive devices are for understanding reading material. For instance, Aini (2023) carried out a study that investigated how grammatical cohesion appears in narrative texts from EFL textbooks, with the goal of identifying and analyzing grammatical cohesion according to the education curriculum. The outcomes revealed that grammatical cohesion is often present in the majority of texts found in Indonesia's English Foreign Language materials. Furthermore, the results showed that reiteration is the most commonly seen type within the subcategories of grammatical cohesion. In a different study, Ananda et al. (2025) looked into grammatical cohesion in the "English Students Learning Activities" textbook made for eighth-grade learners. They took a descriptive qualitative approach to study 13 different texts, which included dialogues, recounts, and descriptions. Their results disclosed that even though the texts have a noticeable linguistic structure and are coherent, the extensive use of references along with a scarce use of other cohesive devices points to a lack of diversity in linguistic structures. Another study conducted by Nurwahidah et al. (2022), in the context of analyzing news item texts in a senior high school English textbook, investigated the types of grammatical cohesion devices found in "Symphony 3" textbook for twelfth-grade students. The findings revealed that the texts utilized references, conjunctions, and ellipses as grammatical cohesion tools. Among these, reference was the most prevalent, followed by conjunctions and ellipses. Therefore, substitution and ellipses appeared to be the least frequently used types of cohesive devices, suggesting that these two forms are rarely applied in written communication.

Although previous studies have analyzed grammatical cohesive devices in various EFL textbooks, few have specifically examined how these devices are used in the reading texts of the *English for Nusantara* textbook developed under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* especially the book for ninth-grade. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the textbook effectively supports students' reading comprehension through the use of grammatical cohesion. Based on the above considerations, this study aims to examine the use of grammatical cohesive devices in the reading texts of the *English for Nusantara* textbook for ninth grade. The study will focus specifically on references, substitutions, ellipsis, and conjunctions. The expected outcome of this research is to offer insights into the linguistic quality of the textbook and its effectiveness in supporting students' reading comprehension. It is also anticipated to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching materials, particularly within Indonesian junior high schools.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with the aim of providing a detailed description of grammatical cohesion in the textbook. Content analysis was used as a systematic technique to identify, code, and categorize the cohesion devices in the texts, ensuring valid and replicable findings (Krippendorff, 2013). The object of this study is the *English for Nusantara* textbook for ninth-grade (SMP/MTs) students, published in 2022 by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The textbook is officially used in junior high schools as part of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. It consists of 392 pages and five chapters and was written by Ika Lestari Damayanti, Yusnita Febrianti, Pipit Prihartanti Suharto, Iyen Nurlaelawati, Aji Jehan Fellani, and Hendra.

The data source of this study was the reading texts contained in the textbook. From the various types of texts available, the researcher used purposive sampling that selected three types of texts: descriptive texts, recount texts, and narrative texts, as these genres frequently appear in junior high school English learning materials and are suitable for grammatical cohesion analysis and contain sufficient examples of grammatical cohesion for detailed analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). In total, 14 texts were analyzed, consisting of three descriptive texts, five recount texts, and six narrative texts. The detailed table below.

TABLE 1. List of Text Analyzed

No.	Text	Text Type	Page Number
1.	Orang Utan	Descriptive	45
2.	Cendrawasih	Descriptive	64
3.	What an experience!	Recount	107
4.	Holiday Unforgettable	Recount	116
5.	My first snorkeling	Recount	124
6.	Proboscis Monkey	Descriptive	143
7.	My parents and I went to Bogor	Recount	146
8.	Time travel car (part 1)	Narrative	171
9.	Time travel car (part 2)	Narrative	172
10.	Time travel car (part 3)	Narrative	173
11.	Time travel car (end of story)	Narrative	180
12.	Timun mas growing up	Narrative	188
13.	Timun mas part 2	Narrative	196
14.	Galang was on the school bazaar	Recount	235

The data collection procedure involved several stages. First, the researcher carefully read each selected text to gain a general understanding of the content. Second,

grammatical cohesion devices found in the texts were identified and coded based on the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), which classifies grammatical cohesion into reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Third, the identified data were categorized according to their types and frequency of occurrence.

The analysis of data followed by Miles & Saldaña (2014) including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. It started with selecting the texts, followed by a thorough reading, then coding the grammatical cohesion elements based on the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan. The process concluded with categorizing and interpreting the findings. The goal was to provide a detailed description of how grammatical cohesion functions within the selected texts and to determine the most frequently used cohesion device in the textbook.

FINDINGS

Grammatical Cohesion in Textbook

Grammatical cohesion in 14 texts from the textbook was identified. This section presents the findings regarding the four main types of cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

TABLE 2. Grammatical Cohesive Devices in the textbook

No.	Cohesive Devices	Amount	Percentage
1.	References	552	81.18%
2.	Substitutions	4	0.59%
3.	Ellipsis	6	0.88%
4.	Conjunctions	132	19.41%
Total		694	100%

In total, 680 instances of grammatical cohesion were found across the 14 texts. References were the most frequent with 552 occurrences, followed by conjunctions with 132 occurrences, ellipsis with 6 occurrences, and substitutions with 4 occurrences. As shown in Table 2, references accounted for the majority of grammatical cohesive devices, while substitution and ellipsis appeared only rarely across the texts.

References

References are divided into three types, such as personal, demonstrative, and comparative. The distribution of these three types of references in the textbook can be seen in the table below:

TABLE 3. Type of References in the Textbook

Types of References	Total
Personal references	361
Demonstrative references	185
Comparative references	6
Total	552

As shown in Table 3, personal references were the most frequently used type of reference, followed by demonstrative references, while comparative references occurred only rarely.

Personal reference

Personal references were found 361 times in the texts and constituted the majority devices found in the text. Personal pronouns include *I, me, you, we, us, he, him, she, her, they,* and *it*, while possessive pronouns consist of *mine*, and possessive adjectives include *my, their, your, her, his,* and *our*. The following are examples of personal references:

Orangutans live with **their** small family groups. **They** usually live in the tree branches where **they** build **their** nests. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.45).
 This was **my** first experience going to Karimunjava. **It** was so fun. **I** was so excited days before the trip. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.107)

Demonstrative references

Demonstrative references were the second most frequent type of reference identified in the textbook texts. The demonstrative references appeared 185 times. There are demonstrative references in the text, among others: the article *the*, nominal demonstratives such as *these, this,* and *that*, as well as adverbial demonstratives such as *there, here,* and *now*. Here are the examples of demonstrative references:

Once we arrived **there**, we explored Maluk Beach. I learned how to surf **there**. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.116)
These birds are easily recognized by their bright blue, yellow, scarlet, and green feathers. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.64)

Comparative reference

Comparative references were identified 6 times in the texts and the least frequent type of reference found in the analyzed texts. These include comparative adjectives such as *longer, smaller, shorter,* and general comparisons indicating identity, such as *different* and *more*. The following are examples of comparative references:

The females have a **smaller** nose than the males. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.143)

A male orangutan can be **more** than 100 kilograms and can be quite tall. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.45)

Substitution

Substitutions are categorized into three forms, namely nominal, verbal, and clausal. However, only nominal substitution was found in the textbook. The distribution of this substitution type is shown in the table below.

TABLE 4. Type of Substitutions in the Textbook

Types of Substitutions	Total
Nominal substitution	4
Verbal substitution	0
Clausal substitution	0
Total	4

As shown in Table 4, only nominal substitution was found in the textbook, while verbal and clausal substitutions did not occur in the analyzed texts.

Nominal substitution

Only nominal substitutions were identified in the textbook, occurring 4 times, such as the use of one. The example is presented below.

There were two backpacks; **one** was big and the other was small. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.235)

In this example, the word one substitutes the noun backpack, which is understood from the previous clause.

Ellipsis

In the textbook, three types of ellipsis were examined: nominal, verbal, and clause ellipsis. However, only two of them appeared in the data, as shown in the table below.

TABLE 5. Type of Ellipsis in the Textbook

Types of Ellipsis	Total
Nominal ellipsis	1
Verbal ellipsis	0
Clause ellipsis	5
Total	6

As shown in Table 5, clause ellipsis occurred more frequently than nominal ellipsis, while verbal ellipsis was not found in the texts.

Nominal ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis appeared only once in the texts and nominal ellipsis was the least frequent type of ellipsis found in the data, for example:

Two main compartments, two front pockets and two side pockets. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.235)

In that example above, the omitted noun (e.g., bags or items) is understood from the surrounding context, allowing the sentence to remain meaningful even without repeating the noun.

Clause ellipsis

Clause ellipsis appeared 5 times in those texts, for example:

We packed before we left the islands. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.107)

The sentence is grammatically complete, but it contains an ellipsis because the clause after before could be longer (e.g., before we left the islands, we packed our things). The omitted part is understood without being written.

Conjunction

In the textbook, four types of conjunctions were identified, namely additive, adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions. The distribution of these types can be seen in the table above, showing a total of 132 conjunctions found across the texts.

TABLE 6. Types of Conjunction in the Textbook

Types of Conjunction	Total
Additive conjunction	66
Adversative conjunction	15
Causal Conjunction	11
Temporal conjunction	40
Total	132

As shown in Table 6, additive conjunctions were the most frequently used type, followed by temporal conjunctions, while causal and adversative conjunctions occurred less frequently.

Additive conjunction

Additive conjunctions constituted the largest proportion of conjunctions found in the texts. A total of 66 instances of additive conjunctions were identified, primarily represented by the coordinating conjunction and, along with other transitional forms. Examples of additive conjunctions are presented below:

She gathered her courage **and** went outside. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.171)

I **also** spent time swimming with sharks. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.107)

Adversative conjunction

Adversative conjunctions were less frequent than additive and temporal conjunctions. The adversative appeared 15 times, by the coordinator conjunction such as *but* and other conjunction that found are *however*, *although*, and *in contrast*. For examples of adversative conjunction:

However, he would sell them for 80,000 rupiahs. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.235)

Causal Conjunction

Causal conjunctions occurred less frequently than additive and temporal conjunctions. A causal conjunction in these texts appeared 11 times, consisting *with because, why, so*. For example of causal conjunction:

Because Monita was causing a ruckus, she was put in the security office. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.177)

Temporal conjunction

Temporal conjunctions were the second most frequent type of conjunction identified in the texts. Temporal conjunction in these text appeared 40 times, consist with *while, when, before, when, then, after, until*. For examples of temporal conjunction:

A couple of years later, the couple realized that they only had a few days

until Timun Mas turned seventeen. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.189)

When Prof. Mahmud saw the car, he was excited. (Damayanti et al., 2022, p.180)

DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the grammatical cohesion in the school textbook *English for Nusantara* for ninth-grade students. The findings indicate the presence of grammatical cohesion in the 14 texts in the book. References to appear as the most dominant and frequent cohesive device, followed by conjunctions as the second most frequent, followed by ellipsis as the third, and substitutions as the least frequent. This finding, particularly regarding the most frequent references, is consistent with previous research by Aini (2023), Ananda et al. (2025), and Nurwahidah et al. (2022), all of which found that references appear more frequently than other grammatical cohesive devices, especially in English textbooks in Indonesia.

According to Halliday and Hasan, references themselves serve as references which use pronouns or demonstratives, and refer to something already mentioned or about to be mentioned. And this is evident in student reading, especially in junior high school. It is hoped that using these references will aid in explanation and support students in tracking meaning throughout the text. Furthermore, students will learn which pronouns or referents are appropriate within the text. They will also gain a better understanding of how references are used, and they will be able to name words other than people, places, and so on using these references.

Next, the second most common grammatical cohesion is conjunctions. According to Halliday and Hasan, conjunctions act as discourse markers or connecting words, functioning to connect sentences or ideas. Furthermore, as Yule (1996) points out, the logical relationship between each sentence creates a coherent discourse, thus assisting readers. This is evident in the extensive use of conjunctions in each reading text in this book, making it easier to understand, especially for junior high school students. The use of additive and temporal conjunctions often helps convey ideas

clearly in each sentence, and students understand how sentences are presented and organized.

Ellipsis is the third most common type of ellipsis. Ellipsis is the omission of an element considered clear from the preceding context. This study only found nominal and clausal ellipsis, with clausal ellipsis occurring more frequently than nominal ellipsis. This difference may be related to the types of texts included in the textbooks studied, which consisted of narratives, recounts, and descriptive texts. These types of texts often rely on complete sentence structures to maintain clarity, resulting in fewer instances of ellipsis.

Furthermore, the study found a very low frequency of substitutions. Substitutions only appeared four times, all of which were nominal substitutions. Substitution refers to the replacement of an element with another, more common element, to avoid repetition. And based on Tafuli et al. (2023), substitution operates at the grammatical level and replaces a linguistic element rather than referring to it. The minimal use of substitutions in this textbook may indicate that the authors deliberately avoided more complex grammatical structures that could confuse learners.

Moreover, the study found limited or minimal occurrences of substitution and ellipsis. And it same to the previous researches, Aini (2023) and Ananda et al. (2025) reported that substitution and ellipsis are the least frequently used cohesive devices in Indonesian English textbooks. This occurs because many textbook authors tend to prioritize explicit grammatical ties over implicit ones. From a pedagogical perspective, this approach may be intentional, as explicit cohesion reduces ambiguity and helps English Foreign Learners (EFL) process text more easily, especially at the junior high school level.

This study reflects the characteristics of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes accessibility, student-centered learning, and communicative competence. The preference for references and conjunctions over substitutions and ellipsis may reflect an effort to ensure that the reading text remains straightforward and easy to understand. This distinguishes the *English for Nusantara* textbook from materials analyzed in previous studies, which may not have been developed under the same curriculum framework.

The findings of this study offer several important implications for English language teaching, particularly in the context of teaching reading at the junior high school level. For example, because of the large number of references, this can be used by teachers to take advantage of this feature by explicitly teaching students how to identify and interpret reference words, such as pronouns and demonstratives, to enhance reading comprehension. This supports students' ability to decode texts, understand word meanings, and make logical inferences, as proposed by Grabe and Stoller (2019). Second, the frequent use of conjunctions indicates that the texts clearly signal logical and temporal relationships between ideas. This can be used by teachers if texts to help students recognize how conjunctions function as discourse markers and how they contribute to text coherence. This supports Brown's (2001) assertion that textual cohesion plays a crucial role in making reading easier to understand. And

finally, the limited use of substitution and ellipsis also has pedagogical implications. This means that while explicit cohesion is beneficial for comprehension, excessive reliance on reference and conjunction may limit students' exposure to more varied grammatical structures. Perhaps teachers may need to supplement the textbook with additional materials that introduce substitution and ellipsis more frequently, enabling students to become familiar with both explicit and implicit cohesive ties. This study confirms that grammatical cohesion is key features of the reading texts in the *English for Nusantara* textbook. The findings are largely consistent with previous studies, particularly regarding the dominance of reference and the limited use of substitution and ellipsis.

CONCLUSION

This research intends to explore how grammatical cohesion devices are used in reading materials from an *English for Nusantara* textbook designed for ninth graders. From the analysis conducted, four categories of grammatical cohesion were recognized: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. The results show that reference is the most frequently used cohesion tool, with conjunction coming next, whereas ellipsis and substitution are observed quite infrequently.

The findings of this study have several implications for English language teaching and materials development. For textbook developers, these findings suggest that while explicit cohesive devices are effective for comprehension, a more balanced use of grammatical cohesion may better prepare students for more complex texts at higher levels. Incorporating a wider range of cohesive devices may help students develop a deeper understanding of discourse structure and improve their overall reading skills.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focused only on grammatical cohesion and did not examine lexical cohesion, which also plays a crucial role in text coherence. Second, the data were limited to 14 reading texts from a single textbook, which may not fully represent the use of grammatical cohesion in English textbooks or other grade levels. Third, this study did not measure students' actual reading comprehension performance; therefore, the findings are limited to textual analysis and not learning outcomes. And future research is recommended to analyze both grammatical and lexical cohesion, compare different textbooks or grade levels, and investigate the relationship between cohesive devices and students' reading comprehension more directly.

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