

Pedagogic Strategies for Explaining Anaphora and its Antecedent

Kyi Thar Win¹ and Nan Win Yu Mg¹

Abstract

This research is mainly concerned with anaphora and its antecedent, a word or phrase which refers back to another word or phrase in text. Anaphora can help the students understand the text in the context thoroughly. Without comprehending them, it is not easy to grasp the messages conveyed in the text. Thus, this research focuses on anaphora and points out that it plays an important role to understand the specific texts. This paper attempts to highlight on how to develop reading skills through anaphora. And it may also provide the effective teaching strategies for explaining anaphora and its antecedent in reading passages. This research will be, to some extent, helpful to all students, especially for the undergraduate students from all specializations since they can apply these strategies to develop their reading skill.

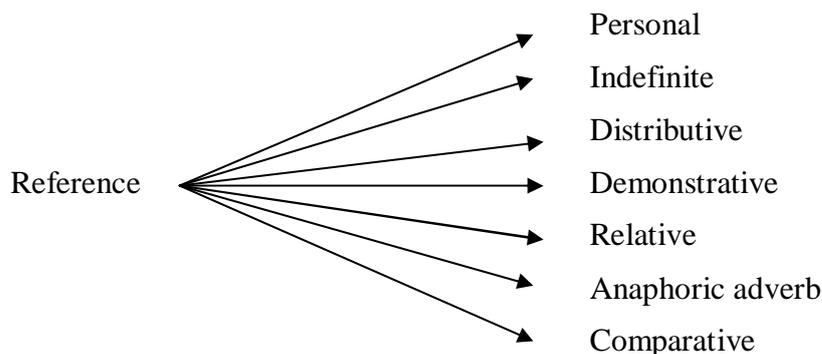
Introduction

In teaching-learning process, it is undeniable that reading enhances the students' intellect and ingenuity by means of understanding. To comprehend the text thoroughly, the study of anaphoric expression is an essential one for the students. The anaphoric expressions seem to be very minute to comprehend the reading passage in English. Moreover, the lack of such knowledge can hinder the students' comprehension due to their misinterpreting the messages of the given text. In order to fulfill the knowledge of anaphoric expressions, the feasible strategies for explaining the anaphoric expressions should be taken into account. Thus, these strategies can make the students improve their comprehension.

The purpose of this paper is to present the feasible approach to teach anaphora from the prescribed English text book for under-graduate students in Dagon University. The deductive and inductive strategies can advocate the betterment of reading skill of the learners developed by Burden and David (2003) the instructional approach. Moreover, this paper presents an example of teaching lesson on anaphora. So, the effective strategies and a lot of practices will be tools to help the students develop their reading skill.

Types of Anaphora

Anaphora is repetition of a word or phrase in successive clauses and its etymology comes from Greek. Both anaphora and cataphora together are called endophora. Anaphora, also called *backward* reference, is contrasted with cataphora, in which *forward* references are used. Jack C. Richards, *et. al.* (1992) mention that "anaphora" means a process where a word or phrase (anaphora) refers back to another word or phrase which was used earlier in a text or conversation.



¹Tutor, Department of English, Dagon University

Personal references	Subjective _ I, we, you, he, she, it, they Objective _ me, us, you, him, her, It, them Possessive _ my, our, your, his, her, its, their
Reflexive Pronouns	mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs
Demonstrative references	this, that, these, those
Comparative references	other, another
Indefinite Pronouns	few, either, none, one, no one, nobody, each, both, all, some ,any, several
Distributive Pronouns	one another, each other
Relative Pronouns	that, which, who, whom, whose, what, why, where
Anaphoric Adverbs	then, here, there

Research Methodology

In order to do this research, the following are used; materials, subject and method.

Materials

The materials used in this research are concerned with Eng 1001+1002. For the pre-test, the reading comprehension passage containing 15 words of anaphora; backward references, is selected from the lesson “Bamboo” from the textbook to cope with practical learning situation and students have to find out the antecedents within thirty minutes .After pre-test, the lesson plan is proposed (‘Hygienic food’) and the students are taught in the classroom in accordance with the lesson plan. Finally the post-test that is another reading passage “ Made in Myanmar ” given to them which is similar to the pre-test with the same time allocation and same number of items.

Subject

In this research, there are fifty students from first year specializing in Chemistry and Botany and they are taught English as a foundation course.

Method

The steps in this method are as follows:

1. The materials and subject for pre-test, lesson-plan and post-test are selected.
2. The pre-test is done. (see appendix 1)
3. The lecture is given to the students according to the lesson plan carried out by Paul R. Burden and David M. Byrd including before, while and after-reading activities.
4. The topic ‘Hygienic food’ is introduced and what kinds of the hygienic food they know are asked.
5. They are asked to fill the table on the white-board in before-reading session.
6. They are given only the first paragraph of the passage and asked to predict what will be the next in while-reading.
7. Then they are given the remaining paragraphs to check their predictions.

8. They are asked to collect the anaphora (backward references) from the given passage and find out their antecedents.
9. Anaphoric tables are given and explained. (see appendix 2)
10. They are given another passage substitution the wrong backward references and asked to correct them in after-reading activities.
11. The post-test is done. (see appendix 3)
12. The results of two tests are compared for discussion.
13. The pedagogical implication is also presented.

Analyzing the Data

Analyzing the result of pre-test

The followings are the analysis of the results collected from the pre-test with regards to the categories of anaphora and its antecedents.

1. Subjective pronouns: The students can answer them easily but sometimes they neglect capitalization because of slip of pen or their careless mistakes.

The mistake students made _ (It = bamboo)

Correct answer _ (It = Bamboo)

2. Possessive pronouns: The students notice that this pronoun is used as a possessive pronoun. But they usually emphasize to get the pronoun and neglect the possessive case. Moreover they do not know exactly about the grammar rules.

The mistake students made _ (their = the stems's, the stems)

Correct answer _ (their = the stems' (or) of the stems)

3. Relative pronouns: Students are accustomed to write down the answer which is close to relative pronoun. So they have to notice only the noun phrase.

The mistake students made _ (that = material)

Correct answer _ (that = the one suitable material)

4. Demonstrative pronouns: It is very difficult to choose the correct antecedent for demonstrative pronouns because students need to have complete understanding for this context.

The mistake students made _ (these regions = in most tropical countries (or)
from India to China and Japan)

Correct answer _ (these regions= the southeastern borders of Asia
from India to China and Japan).

Besides they cannot choose the right antecedent for *this* because they do not have complete understanding of the context and they do not know the comparison between the preceding and following ones. So they only over-generalize the answer. If they know the strategies beforehand, they can answer well. So they need to apply the critical thinking skill and analytical skill.

The mistake students made _ (this = cheap and plentiful (or) for economic

Kinds of foods	Favourite	Like	Dislike	Reason
Vegetables				
Fruits				
Fast foods				
Meat				
Fish				
Juices				
Snacks				

While-reading

In this session, students are given only the first paragraph of the reading passage and asked them to predict what will be next.

“We often eat to calm down or cheer up when we’re feeling stressed or depressed. Now new research suggests there’s a reason: Food changes our brain chemistry. These changes powerfully influence our moods. But can certain foods really make us feel better? Nutrition experts say yes. But what should we eat and what should we avoid? Here are the foods that work the best, as well as those that can make a bad day worse.”

Then they are distributed the remaining paragraphs and asked to read in silence themselves to check whether their predictions are correct or not. So they need to use the strategies such as prediction, scanning, guessing meaning of unknown words, etc.

To Outsmart Stress

What’s good? Recent research suggests that foods that are high in carbohydrates, such as Bread, rice, and pasta, can help you calm down. Researchers say that carbohydrates cause the brain to release a chemical called serotonin. Serotonin makes you feel better.

What’s bad? Many people drink coffee when they feel stress. The heat is soothing and the caffeine in coffee might help you think more clearly. But if you drink too much, you may become even more anxious and irritable.

To Soothe the Blues

What’s good? Introduce more lean meat, chicken, seafood and whole grains into your diet. These foods have a lot of selenium. Selenium is a mineral that helps people feel more relaxed and happy. You can also try eating a Brazil nut contains a lot of selenium.

What’s bad? When they’re feeling low, many people turn to comfort foods- or foods that make them feel happy or secure. These often include things like sweet deserts. A chocolate bar may make you feel better at first, but within an hour you may feel worse than you did before.”

Next, anaphoric tables are given and explained what anaphora and its antecedent mean. After the explanation of personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns are explained to them and how they are used are explained. Then, the students are asked to collect the pronouns in the passage and the students are asked which nouns are referred back by the pronouns. The pronouns are classified from the passages and they are asked to seek for their antecedents. Moreover indefinite pronouns,

distributive pronouns, anaphoric adverbs and comparative references are explained with some example sentences as well as they are taught to notice the main points and some exceptional cases.

After-reading

In the last step, a passage from English question of the first semester supplementary exam, December 2009 and for all specializations, substituting the wrong anaphora is given to them and they are asked to correct this anaphora for the purpose of knowing how important anaphora in the passage is to understand the meanings. So they have to read and correct the following passages with wrong anaphora in **bold**.

“Carbohydrates, **what** are sugars, are an essential part of a healthy diet. **It** provides the main source of energy for the body, and they also function to flavor and sweeten foods. Carbohydrates range from simple sugars like glucose to complex sugars such as amylose and amylopectin. Nutritionists estimate that carbohydrates should make up about one-fourth to one-fifth of a person’s diet. **They** translate to about 75-100 grams of carbohydrates per day.

A diet **who** is deficient in carbohydrates can have an adverse effect on a person’s health. When the body lacks a sufficient amount of carbohydrate; **they** must then use **their** proteins supplies for energy, a process called gluconeogenesis. **They**, however, results in a lack of necessary protein and further health difficulties may occur. A lack of carbohydrates can also lead to ketosis, a build-up of ketones in the body **what** causes fatigue, lethargy and bad breath.”

Finally, in order to give information to students on their progress. Their answers are evaluated and they are responded to the teacher’s feedback. This helps the students enhance their reading and writing skills.

Analyzing the Results of Post-test

The followings are the analysis of the results collected from post-test with regards to the categories of anaphor and its antecedent.

1. Subjective pronouns: In this reading passage, “it, she and He” are not problematic ones and they can be easily guessed. But some students cannot distinguish between animate and inanimate ones. In this sentence, *they* is written in passive voice and refers to the inanimate objects “the lacquer, canisters, bowls and trays”. Even though they can write these objects, they do not give the full answer.
2. Possessive pronoun: All of the students can get the correct answer for it as *his* is easier for them. (his = a worker’s)
3. Relative pronouns: They know the referent place in the given context. Although they see the meaning *where*, they do not use the preposition which shows what is happening in this place. (where = at the Mahamyatmuni Pagoda)
They have to use synthesis, analytical and critical thinking skills to get the correct answer for *which*. They must have prior knowledge and observation in their real-life situation. If so, they may understand the context in the sentence. (which = the cylindrical frame of bamboo and horse hair)
Most of the students omit ‘all’ to answer *that*. It may be their careless mistake or they cannot absorb what the teacher has taught in the classroom. (that = all the colour)

4. Demonstrative pronouns – Although students know the real situation in the passage, they cannot give the correct answer for *This incident* because they may think the answer cannot be too long. Moreover it is, to some extent, difficult for them as they need to substitute the nouns for the pronouns “*she* and *one*”. (This incident = The incident in which the lady professor did not find the statue and had to be satisfied with a photograph instead)
There is no difficult word in these two sentences, yet they cannot catch which refers to *this*. They are not able to guess the associative meaning of *secret*. The word “*secret*” is usually associated with the one which is covered and hidden. In this perspective, they cannot choose the correct association. (this = how Myanmar lacquer ware is made)
5. Comparative references: Most of the students get the correct answers but some students omit “s” for *other* because of slip of pen. (other = other designs, Another = Another surprise)
6. Indefinite pronouns – They get the correct antecedents for “few and one”. When they give the answer for *each* they use “each Myanmar brooms”. It may be their carelessness between singular and plural nouns. (each = each Myanmar broom)

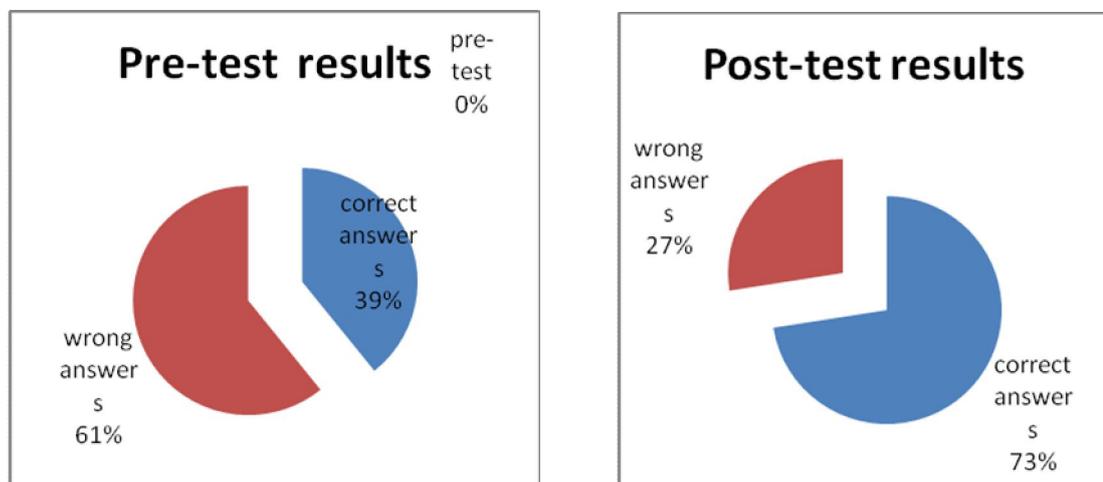


Figure 1. Comparison between results of pre-test and post-test

Pedagogical Implication

Today's teaching-learning situation, teachers need to take the roles of manager, model, monitor, counselor, informant, facilitator, social worker and friend. In order to cope with the current situation, teachers must train students to give not only moral ethics but also conceptual skills. When students are given tests, they have to find answers to the questions. If the questions in test are unseen, they have to try to get the answers by themselves. That is why they are trained to develop problem-solving skill.

In addition to this, students enhance their synthesis and analytical skills to find out answers for given anaphora. They have to use their critical thinking and creative skills while reading the passage because sometimes anaphora is ambiguous and not easily noticed. Therefore, teachers can give students conceptual skills while teaching reading to them.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this research is to highlight the vital role of anaphora in reading comprehension and pedagogic strategies for teaching reading by matching the great utility of authentic materials and effective activities. Actually, not only the comprehension of anaphora but also the background knowledge is important to get message or full understanding. For

anaphoric comprehension, students can get the correct antecedent by means of doing a lot of exercises. If not so, they will make many mistakes again and again. By doing so, students could overcome some difficulties in their reading. Usually, students make mistakes due to the lack of knowledge on functions of verbs, cohesion, punctuation marks and contextual meanings. To overcome these difficulties, the students need to be trained with effective strategies and methods. Moreover, many activities should be included to get active learning for the students. Only using mechanical ways of explaining is not sufficient. That's why, they have to try create own thoughts and ideas based on their background knowledge. Besides, the numbers of students, the size of classroom, periods of teaching and authentic materials are also crucial in student- centered approach.

Acknowledgements

Our special thanks go to Dr Hla Htay, Rector of Dagon University and Dr Aye Aye Tun, Pro-Rector of Dagon University who encourage everyone to do the research at every department of Dagon University. We would like to give our profound gratitude to Daw Swe Swe Pwint, Professor and Head of the English Department of Dagon University for her strong encouragement and emotional support. Especially, our great gratitude goes to Dr Thi Thi Tun, Professor of English Department of Dagon University for her training and useful guidelines to get a fruitful research. We would like to acknowledge our very special indebtedness to Daw Hnin Hnin Aung, Associate Professor of English Department of Dagon University for her overseeing every aspect of the editing, writing, supporting and completion of this research. Then, we would like to appreciate all of our colleagues from the bottom of our heart for their help and attention to this research.

References

- Burden, P. R. & David, M. (2003). "Methods for Effective Teaching", 3rd Ed., Pearson Education Inc., USA
- Cicourel, A.V. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from www.annualreviews.org
- Honby, A.S. (2010). "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English", 8th Ed., Oxford University Press, New York
- Lee, I. (2002). "Helping Students Develop Coherence in Writing", *Journal of English Teaching Forum*, **40**(3), 34-35
- Nunan, D. (1993). "Introducing Discourse Analysis", Clays Ltd., England
- Richard, N. Retrieved November 7, 2011, from <http://www.Grammar.about.com/bio/RichardNorouist-22176.html>.
- Richards, J.C., Platt, J. and Platt, H. (1992). "Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics", 2nd Ed., Harlow, Longman
- Wikipedia Anaphora. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

Appendix-1

English Department Pre-test

Name: _____

Specialization _____

Roll No. _____

Time allowed: (30 minutes)

Read the passage and find out the answers what the underlined words in the passage refer to?

Bamboo is a member of the Bambusoideae, a subfamily of the grasses, and is recognizable by its woodiness and the clear branching of its stem. The boundary between bamboo and other is not sharp.

Bamboos grow close together, like blades of grass in a field; and like all other grasses, bamboo has joints all the way up its length, with a partition at each joint. Most bamboos are thornless. Bamboos range in size from dwarfs a few inches high to giants reaching 120 feet in height and 8 inches in diameter. The stems reach their full height unbranched, but afterwards, especially in their upper parts, throw out horizontal branches, forming dense thickets. Although the bamboo grows very rapidly, reaching its full height within a year, it takes two or three years to ripen and harden.

Great forests of bamboo are found in most tropical countries, particularly on the southeastern borders of Asia from India to China and Japan. In the heavily populated parts of these regions, bamboo is the one suitable material that is cheap and plentiful enough to supply the needs for economic housing. Besides this, it supplies the raw material for hundreds of objects in daily use. It is used, for example, to make a bridge, ladders, fences, fishing rods, mats, to soles of shoes. With the partitions between the joints removed, its hollow tubes are used as water pipes. Papers of many different kinds are made from bamboo pulp.

Marco Polo, the famous traveler of the Middle Ages, said he saw people in the east split bamboo canes 30 feet long and then twist the thin pieces together to make ropes as long as 600 feet. In recent years bamboo has been used in Europe and America to make cheap furniture. In fact, bamboo is so versatile that it can be put to almost any use. In addition, young bamboo shoots are delicious to eat, either cooked in various ways, or preserved in sugar, rice or salt. Some kinds of bamboo also have a fleshy fruit as big as an orange, which can be baked and eaten.

Appendix 2

Anaphoric Tables

Personal Pronouns		Possessive Pronouns		Reflexive Pronouns
Subjective	Objective	Adjective	Noun	
I	me	my	mine	myself
you	you	your	yours	Yourself / yourselves
we	us	our	ours	ourselves
he	him	his	his	himself
she	her	her	hers	herself
it	it	its	its	itself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves

Indefinite Pronouns	few, either, none, one, no one, no body, each, both, all, some, any, several
Distributive Pronouns	one another, each other
Demonstrative Pronouns	this, that, these, those, such
Relative Pronouns	that, which, who, whom, whose, what, where, when, why
Anaphoric Adverbs	then, here, there
Comparative References	other, another

Appendix 3

English Department Post-test

Name: _____

Specialization _____

Roll No. _____

Time allowed: (30 minutes)

Read the passage and find out the answers what the underlined words in the passage refer to?

One summer, a group organized by the Union of Myanmar Hotel and Tourist Corporation was visiting Mandalay. Naturally it went to the Mahamyatmuni Pagoda, where the guide pointed out the statue of the Vasundhara natthamee, the Mother of the Earth. One tourist, a lady professor of History from one of the State Universities in the United States, was especially attracted by the statue. Before the group left Yangoon, she searched for a similar statue at the Bogyoke Market, the Shwedagon Pagoda, and various sculpture shops. But she did not find one, and had to be satisfied with a photograph instead.

This incident illustrates the interest people from the West often take in Burmese handicrafts. Since the days of Marco Polo, westerners have valued the works of art made in the East. As well as wood and ivory carvings, many other traditional Myanmar crafts are admired: alabaster statues, silver bowls and bangles, jewellery, bronze opium weights, cane furniture and mats, hand-woven fabrics Shan bags, paintings of dancers and rural scenes, reproductions of frescoes, glazed earthenware.

But most unusual is our Myanmar lacquer ware. All tourists admire the lacquer, canisters, bowls and trays; few find out how they are made. But this is no secret. A craftsman first weaves a cylindrical frame of bamboo and horsehair, over which many coats of sap from the thitsi are applied. After each coat has dried, a worker puts the cylinder on a lathe. Turning the lathe with a stick in his right hand, he smoothes the surface of the cylinder with pumice. An artist then scratches a pattern on the surface and covers it with pigmented lacquer. He next polishes the cylinder to remove all the colour except that caught in the scratched pattern. The process is repeated with more colours until the design is complete. Some designs tell a love story; others include figures from astrology, such as the mythical hinthu bird. Abroad, Myanmar handicrafts can cause surprises. One Myanmar official reported on a reception he had attended while he was in the United States. The reception was in an ultra-modern steel and glass building; but guest most admired the silk curtains. They had been woven in Amarapura. Another, visiting a friend's house in Italy, found two Myanmar brooms that cost only a few kyats each, hanging on the living-room wall.