

Context and Culture in EFL Learners' and Native Speakers' Discourses

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Abstract : Cohesive devices, the linguistic tools that are usually employed to hold the different parts of the text together, have been the focus of a significant number of discourse analysis studies. These linguistic tools have grabbed the attention of researchers since the inception of the first and most comprehensive model of cohesion in 1976. However, it was noticed that some cohesive devices (e.g., endophoric reference, conjunctions, ellipsis, substitution, and lexical ties) - being thought of as more popular than others (e.g., exophoric reference) - were over-researched. The present paper explores the usage of two cohesive devices that have been evidently almost absent from discourse analysis studies. These cohesive devices are exophoric and homophoric references, the linguistic items that can be interpreted in terms of the physical and cultural contexts of discourse. The significance of the current paper, therefore, stems from the fact that it attempts to fill a gap in the research conducted so far on cohesive devices. This study provides an explanation of the concepts of the cohesive devices that have been employed in a plethora of research on cohesion and elucidates the relevant context-related concepts. The paper also identifies the gap in cohesive devices research. Exophora and homophora, the least visited cohesive devices in previous studies, were qualitatively and quantitatively explored in six opinion articles, four produced by eight postgraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in a university in the United Arab Emirates and two by professional NS writers in the Independent and the Guardian. The six pieces were about the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP) leader's call to ban the burqa in the UK and were analysed vis-a-vis the employment and function of homophora and exophora. The study found that both EFL students and native speakers employed exophora and homophora considerably in their writing to serve a variety of functions, including building assumptions, supporting main ideas, and involving the readers among others.

Keywords : cohesive devices, context, culture, exophoric reference, homophoric reference

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