

LEXICAL COHESION IN ARABIC READING TEXTS: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF A GRADE X MADRASAH 'ĀLIYAH TEXTBOOK

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Lexical cohesion constitutes one of the linguistic resources that contributes to the construction of discourse coherence through semantic relations among lexical units. From the perspective of text linguistics, lexical cohesion is understood as a linguistic mechanism that establishes topical continuity and semantic integration within a text. This study aims to map the distribution of lexical cohesion devices in Grade X Arabic reading texts used in Madrasah 'Āliyah based on the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The study employed a quantitative descriptive approach using content analysis techniques. The research data consisted of eight reading texts taken from the Grade X Arabic textbook published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The analysis was conducted through the stages of identification, classification, quantification, and description of five lexical cohesion devices: repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation. The findings reveal that lexical cohesion is predominantly realized through repetition, accounting for 75.7%, followed by collocation at 14.56% and hyponymy at 8.25%, whereas synonymy at 0.97% and antonymy at 0.48% occur less frequently. The predominance of repetition indicates that lexical cohesion in the analyzed texts relies mainly on direct lexical recurrence, which functions as an explicit mechanism for maintaining topical continuity and referential consistency throughout the discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely viewed as a grammatical system that governs lexical forms and sentence structures, but also as a complex system of meaning in which meaning is constructed through the relationships among elements within discourse as a whole (Utari et al., 2025). From the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter referred to as SFL), language is regarded as a form of semiotic system that generates meaning within social and cultural contexts, thereby suggesting that language analysis should not be limited to isolated words or sentence units alone, but must also take into account the cohesive functions of discourse as a whole (Masykar et al., 2023). Within SFL, discourse is understood as a unified semantic unit that is interpreted through the functional relationships among linguistic units within their contexts of use (Ayomi, 2021). Accordingly, understanding discourse requires a broader approach that views language as a system of meaning embedded within a relational network, rather than merely as a formal grammatical entity (Ayomi, 2021).

The coherence of a text is not solely determined by the grammatical acceptability of its sentence structures, but also by the presence of cohesion that establishes semantic relationships among textual elements (Itaristanti, 2016). Within the framework of SFL, cohesion is regarded as a linguistic resource that enables a sequence of sentences to function as a unified text (Kusmayanti et al., 2025). Halliday and Hasan classify cohesion into grammatical and lexical cohesion, with lexical cohesion serving to maintain topical continuity through semantic relations among lexical items (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Lexical cohesion comprises reiteration and collocation, where reiteration includes repetition and semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy, while collocation refers to associative relations among words within particular semantic environments (Martin, 2023). These lexical relations contribute to the informational continuity, prevent textual ambiguity, and construct thematic coherence, allowing a text to be interpreted as a unified and systematic whole within discourse (Suhendra & Patriani, 2021).

Reading texts in textbooks possess linguistic characteristics that distinguish them from literary and journalistic texts, particularly in their pedagogical orientation and the use of explicit lexical patterns to facilitate comprehension (Yuliani & Ali, 2025). Pedagogical discourse tends to present information systematically and employ controlled vocabulary, making semantic relations among lexical items important for maintaining informational continuity (Siregar & Purbani, 2024). Lexical cohesion devices, including repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation, contribute to the organization of meaning through interconnected semantic relations within discourse (Difadrana & Mulyana, 2026). The Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs represents an important form of pedagogical discourse used nationally in Arabic language instruction (Mohamad & Iman, 2023). Consequently, the reading texts contained in this textbook provide a relevant object for investigating patterns of lexical cohesion in Arabic pedagogical discourse (Rumadaul et al., 2026).

Given the central role of reading texts in shaping discourse patterns in Arabic language instruction, examining lexical cohesion becomes important for understanding how semantic continuity is constructed within pedagogical discourse. Based on these issues, this study focuses on mapping the distribution of repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation in the Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia based on the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). The selection of this object is

grounded in its position as a standardized form of formal discourse that is widely used, thereby representing the practice of Arabic language use within the Indonesian pedagogical discourse (Kolintama & Iman, 2022). From a linguistic perspective, the reading texts in the textbook provide systematic and structured data for identifying patterns of lexical relations that construct discourse texture (Zuaebun, 2025).

Previous studies on lexical cohesion have been widely conducted across various types of discourse. For instance, Nendriyani analyzed lexical cohesion in YouTube advertisements and found that repetition was the most frequently employed cohesion device, functioning to emphasize messages and persuade consumers in promoting beverage products (Nendriyani & Atiqa Sabardilla, 2023). Meanwhile, Hadi, in a study examining reports on the Russia–Ukraine conflict published in Arabic and English online newspapers, sought to identify tendencies in the representation of the conflict and found that repetition likewise dominated the lexical cohesion devices used in both media outlets. Furthermore, the study concluded that the Arab media outlet Al Jazeera adopted a relatively neutral stance toward the conflict, whereas the English media outlet The Guardian appeared to show support for Ukraine, as reflected in narrative constructions that portrayed Russia and Putin in a predominantly negative manner (Hadi et al., 2024).

Within the domain of Arabic-language texts, studies on lexical cohesion have likewise been conducted across various objects of analysis. Hijjah's study, which examined lexical cohesion in Surah al-Qiyāmah, found that repetition was the most dominant type of lexical cohesion, followed by antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation, all of which functioned to reinforce the semantic unity of the verses within the surah (Hijjah et al., 2023). Meanwhile, 'Arabī investigated forms of lexical cohesion in the qasidah Ma'yūf Ṣāḥib al-Nakhlāh by Baḥrain 'Alī Syarqāwī and demonstrated that repetition was the most dominant lexical cohesion device, functioning to strengthen both the emotional intensity and the semantic coherence of the poetic discourse (عربي, 2023). In addition, study (Reflinaldi et al., 2023) on the Grade 12 Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah concluded that there was an imbalance in the distribution of lexical cohesion devices, with repetition dominating at 71.4%, significantly exceeding other forms of lexical cohesion, namely synonymy at 9.8%, antonymy at 3.2%, hyponymy at 8.1%, meronymy at 6.5%, and collocation at 1.0%.

Based on the mapping of previous studies, lexical cohesion has been examined in literary, journalistic, and religious discourse, whereas studies on Arabic pedagogical texts remain relatively limited. Grade X Arabic reading texts for Madrasah 'Āliyah are particularly significant because they represent the initial stage of upper secondary discourse development and serve as a bridge between MTs and MA levels. From a linguistic perspective, this transitional phase is important because the lexical structures presented in the texts shape patterns of semantic relations that serve as the basis for discourse development at subsequent levels (Reflinaldi et al., 2023). Therefore, this study contributes to lexical cohesion research by mapping the distribution of lexical cohesion devices in Grade X Arabic reading texts within the framework of SFL. This analysis is not directed toward pedagogical aspects, but rather toward mapping textual structures as the foundation for more complex discourse construction at higher levels.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach using content analysis techniques, an approach intended to objectively describe linguistic phenomena through numerical data without manipulating variables (Moleong, 2010). In mapping the distribution of lexical cohesion devices within reading texts, this approach was selected

because the study focuses on calculating the frequency of occurrence and percentage distribution of lexical cohesion devices in order to identify patterns and tendencies within discourse structures. The analysis was conducted based on Halliday and Hasan's classification of lexical cohesion, which includes repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation.

The data source of this study is the Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. The research data consist of reading texts contained within eight thematic units. Reading texts were selected as the primary data source because they provide continuous discourse and complete contextual frameworks, which are essential for analyzing the authentic distribution of lexical cohesion ties (Rijal et al., 2019). The unit of analysis comprises lexical units that form cohesive relations within the texts according to the predetermined theoretical categories. The list of topic titles is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The topic heading in the Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah

Code	Title	Page	Sentences	Words
D1	التَّعَارُفُ	5	4	117
D2	الْبَيِّنَاتُ الشَّخْصِيَّةُ	6	2	44
D3	بِطَاقَةُ شَخْصِيَّةٍ	7	8	115
D4	فِي الْبَيْتِ	21	3	173
D5	فِي السَّكَنِ	35	14	172
D6	إِلَى سُوقِ الْمَرْكَزِي	54	6	139
D7	الْهَوَايَةُ	65	7	134
D8	الْغِذَاءُ الصَّحِي	77	7	175
			Total	1.069

The textbook is an official edition used nationally and may be accessed through the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2sjnnw> (Ilyas, 2020). Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by thoroughly reading the selected reading texts and subsequently codifying all lexical units that demonstrated cohesive relations based on the categories of repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation according to Halliday and Hasan's theory. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using content analysis techniques, which involved the stages of identification, classification, quantification, and description. During the identification stage, all lexical relations indicating cohesion were recorded as research data. The data were then classified according to the categories of lexical cohesion devices by Halliday & Hasan (1976). The subsequent stage involved quantification, namely calculating the frequency of occurrence of each category and determining the percentage distribution in order to identify dominant patterns and tendencies. Finally, the results of the calculations were systematically described and their distributions interpreted to evaluate the tendencies and proportional use of cohesion devices within the texts.

RESULT

Based on the analysis of eight reading texts contained in the Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah 'Āliyah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, a total of 206 lexical cohesion devices were identified across the

data range D1–D8. All identified data were classified into five categories; repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation in accordance with the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan. The frequency and percentage distribution of each lexical cohesion device are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Results Data

Lexical	D1		D2		D3		D4		D5		D6		D7		D8		Total	%
Cohesion	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Repetition	17	79.5	10	66.6	19	76	26	70.3	20	80	24	80	22	75.8	18	81.9	156	75.7
Synonymy	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.97
Antonymy	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.48
Hyponymy	2	8.3	2	13.3	3	12	1	2.7	2	8	3	10	4	13.8	1	4.5	17	8.25
Collocation	5	20.8	3	20	2	8	8	22	3	12	3	10	3	10.3	3	13.7	30	14.56
Total	24	100	15	100	25	100	37	100	25	100	30	100	29	100	22	100	206	100

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that lexical cohesion devices in the Grade X reading texts are significantly dominated by repetition, accounting for 75.7% of the total occurrences. This dominance is substantially higher than that of the other devices, with collocation ranking second at 14.56% and hyponymy at 8.25%. Meanwhile, synonymy and antonymy appear with very limited frequency, each accounting for less than one percent. This distribution demonstrates with repetition functioning as the dominant lexical cohesion device for establishing discourse continuity. Quantitatively, this pattern suggests that the discourse texture of the Grade X reading texts is constructed more through repetitive strategies than through variations in other semantic relations.

Repetition

Based on the calculation results, repetition emerged as the most dominant category, with 156 occurrences or 75.7% of the total 206 lexical cohesion devices identified. This figure indicates that nearly three-quarters of the cohesive structure in the Grade X reading texts is constructed through the repetition of identical lexical items. In general, repetition appears in the form of the direct recurrence of words or phrases that function as the main topic within a text. This pattern is commonly reflected in the repetition of nouns referring to the central theme of the reading passage, thereby maintaining informational continuity explicitly. For example, in D5 and D7 using the same word redundancy appear:

[D5]

في السكن

للمدرسة سكن للطلاب وسكن للطالبات يتضمن السكن المرافق..... ويتضمن السكن كذلك المكتبة..... كل حجرة يسكنها ثلاثة طلاب..... عن حياة الطلاب في السكن والطلاب يعيشون في السكن بنظام يصلون في مسجد السكن جماعة..... وفقا للنظام المعمول به في السكن..... والمشرفون يسكنون في بيوت بجوار السكن

[D7]

سليمان له هوايات كثيرة...

.....يقرأ سليمان في أوقات الفراغ...

.....يشترى سليمان كتابًا جديدًا...

.....يلعب سليمان كرة القدم...

.....يرسم سليمان المناظر...

.....سيزور سليمان أصدقاءه...

The lexical *al-sakan* (السكن) in D5 is repeated 12 times, both in full and partial repetition forms, in order to maintain the focus of discussion on the introduction to the dormitory environment. Similarly, in D7, the lexical *Sulaimān* (سليمان) is repeated 7 times in the form of complete repetition without morphological variation, consistently maintaining the narrative focus on the main character.

Collocation

Collocation devices were identified in 30 occurrences, accounting for 14.56% of the total 206 lexical cohesion devices. This figure places collocation as the second most frequent category after repetition, although the difference in frequency remains considerably significant. In general, collocational patterns in the Grade X reading texts tend to appear in the form of administrative and classificatory lexical pairings, particularly in the introduction of personal identities and educational institutions. The collocations identified do not involve the repetition of identical forms; rather, they consist of the cohesive association between two lexical items that conventionally co-occur within a particular semantic field. For instance, in D2, the following commonly used lexical pairings appear:

[D2]

البيانات الشخصية لطالب..... تعرف أن مدرسته مدرسة حكومية.....

.....تعرف أن مدرستها مدرسة أهلية.....

The lexical pair *al-bayānāt al-shakhṣīyah* (البيانات الشخصية) constitutes a fixed collocation commonly used in administrative contexts to refer to personal identity information. Meanwhile, *madrasah ḥukūmīyah* (مدرسة حكومية) and *madrasah ahlīyah* (مدرسة أهلية) represent attributive collocations that construct institutional classifications through the relationship between nouns and relational adjectives. In the latter two examples, the adjectival elements do not merely serve a descriptive function, but also construct socially recognized categories conventionally established within the educational system.

Hyponymy

Based on the calculation results, hyponymy devices were identified in 17 occurrences, accounting for 8.25% of the total 206 lexical cohesion devices. This figure indicates that hyponymic relations are employed less frequently than repetition and collocation, yet they still contribute to the construction of semantic networks within the texts. For example, following in section D6 below:

[D6]

.....اتجه الصديقان أولا الى قسم المأكولات والمشروبات المعلبات فاخذ امين فيه عصير البرتقال واخذ اديب علبة

من عصير العنب. ثم اتجها الى قسم الفواكه فاخذ امين كيلو من التمر، واخذ اديب كيلو من التفاح. ثم اتجه الصديقان الى قسم الملابس الجاهزة وجاءت البائعة فاحضرت لهما بعض القمصان والفائلات من اخر طراز ومن كل صنف.....

The lexical *al-mashrūbāt al-mu‘allabah* (المشروبات المعلبات) functions as a hypernym for *‘aṣīr al-burtuqāl* (عصير البرتقال) and *‘aṣīr al-‘inab* (عصير العنب). Similarly, *al-fawākih* (الفواكه) serves as a hypernym for *al-tamr* (التمر) and *al-tuffāh* (التفاح), while *al-malābis al-jāhizah* (الملابس الجاهزة) encompasses *al-qumṣān* (القمصان) and *al-faīlilāt* (الفائلات). These relations establish cohesion through semantic development from general to specific categories. The resulting relations demonstrate the connection between superordinate elements (hypernyms) and subordinate elements (hyponyms), enabling the texts not only to maintain topical continuity but also to gradually elaborate semantic details.

Synonymy and Antonymy

Based on the calculation results, synonymy devices were identified in only 2 occurrences (0.97%), while antonymy devices appeared in just 1 occurrence (0.48%) out of the total 206 lexical cohesion devices. These extremely low percentages indicate that relations of semantic equivalence and semantic opposition are scarcely utilized in the cohesive structure of the Grade X reading texts. Within the category of synonymy, the relation of semantic equivalence can be observed in D4 below:

[D4]

.....ونغتسل في الحمام،.....
استحم في الحمام.....

Both verbs refer to the activity of bathing. Although they differ in morphological form and derivational pattern, the two expressions possess comparable lexical meanings, even if they are not entirely identical in their nuances of usage. Morphologically and semantically, *naghtasil* (نغتسل) derives from the root *ghasala* (غسل), which carries the basic meaning of “to clean” or “to wash,” whereas *istaḥamma* (استحم) derives from the root *ḥamma* (حم), which is associated with the use of water for bathing. This difference in root forms indicates that the synonymy involved is not absolute synonymy, but rather contextual synonymy. Such a relation establishes cohesion without repeating identical lexical forms and, theoretically, may enrich the semantic variation of the text. Meanwhile, within the category of antonymy, one relation of semantic opposition was identified, namely in D3 and D4:

[D3]

.....بيتي قريب من المدرسة، لذا اذهب اليها كل يوم ماشيا على الاقدام.....
بيتها بعيد قليلا عن المدرسة.....

[D4]

.....هذا هو الطابق العلوي، وهذا هو الطابق السفلي. في الطابق العلوي.....وفي الطابق السفلي.....

The pair *qarīb* (قريب) and *baʿīd* (بعيد) constructs a semantic opposition related to spatial distance. This relation establishes cohesion through contrastive meaning while remaining within the same referential field. Meanwhile, the pair *al-ʿulwī* (العلوي) and *al-sufī* (السفلي) represents a semantic opposition based on vertical spatial orientation. This relation is binary and mutually exclusive in nature, thereby creating cohesion through semantic contrast and enabling the text to develop variation in its semantic structure based on oppositional meaning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that lexical cohesion in the Grade X Madrasah ʿĀliyah Arabic reading texts is constructed predominantly through repetition representing 75.7% of the total lexical cohesive devices identified. Within the framework of SFL, lexical cohesion serves as a critical semantic resource that organizes textual continuity and creates a unified discourse texture (Mulović, 2023). The absolute dominance of repetition indicates that the continuity of pedagogical discourse in the analyzed textbook is maintained through explicit lexical recurrence rather than complex semantic variations (Oliveira et al., 2024). This structural pattern demonstrates that the textbook prioritizes referential clarity and topical maintenance to ensure the text remains accessible as a unified semantic whole.

This prominent reliance on repetition possesses distinctive characteristics that align with the specific nature of pedagogical discourse. In pedagogical discourse, the recurring use of identical lexical items functions not merely as a linguistic or stylistic device, but as an intentional instructional strategy (Northbrook et al., 2022). This pattern supports the argument that pedagogical texts frequently employ explicit lexical structures to facilitate vocabulary recognition and reduce learners' cognitive burden (Darong et al., 2022). Consequently, other lexical cohesion devices appear minimally because introducing extensive semantic variations, such as synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms or collocations at an introductory level can trigger semantic ambiguity and hinder immediate comprehension (Pérez-Serrano et al., 2022).

When compared broadly with previous textbook evaluations, this structural tendency reflects a wider instructional convention within the Indonesian Islamic educational system. Previous research on Grade XII Arabic textbooks also demonstrated a massive reliance on repetitive lexical ties, indicating a standardized cohesive pattern in pedagogical materials published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Reflinaldi et al., 2023). This uniformity suggests that national textbook developers systematically utilize lexical explicitness over structural diversification to maintain readability across different secondary school levels (Faizin et al., 2023). Therefore, the high frequency of repetition can be interpreted as a deliberate pedagogical norm aimed at reinforcing language acquisition in formal Indonesian classrooms (محمد, 2023).

Furthermore, this pedagogical pattern presents a stark contrast to the distribution of cohesive devices found in other discourse genres. While literary texts also employ repetition to secure thematic focus, they typically integrate a more balanced proportion of diverse semantic relations, such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and collocation, to enrich rhetorical aesthetics (Hijjah et al., 2023). A similar tendency can be observed in religious and media discourse, lexical variation is highly utilized to build emotional intensity or neutral narrative framing (Nendriyani & Atiqa Sabardilla, 2023;

Hadi et al., 2024; 2023, عربي). In contrast, the pedagogical texts analyzed in this study heavily minimize semantic diversification, confirming that structural predictability is highly favored over stylistic variation when the primary goal is language instruction.

From the perspective of Arabic linguistics, the findings are particularly important because Arabic possesses extensive cohesive resources capable of constructing discourse continuity beyond direct repetition (Khalaf, 2026). Referential cohesion in Arabic may be achieved through pronouns (ḍamīr), relative pronouns (ism mawṣūl), derivational variation, and semantically related lexical substitutions (Alwan et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these resources appeared less frequently in the analyzed texts. This finding suggests that the textbook relies more on lexical explicitness than structural variation in order to maintain accessibility for beginner-level learners. In this regard, the study extends previous lexical cohesion research by demonstrating that the distribution of cohesive devices in pedagogical discourse is influenced not only by textual organization but also by instructional orientation and learner considerations.

This study has significant implications for mapping the distributional patterns of lexical cohesion at the critical transitional level between lower and upper secondary Islamic schooling. Practically, these findings contribute a clear empirical baseline for future textbook developers and syllabus designers regarding how semantic networks should be structured to match learners' reading comprehension capacities. By demonstrating that cohesive proportions are strongly governed by instructional orientation rather than purely textual organization, this study expands the application of SFL within pedagogical text analysis. Ultimately, these insights provide actionable guidance for optimizing discourse complexity, vocabulary presentation, and language learning outcomes in Arabic pedagogical discourse.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of eight reading texts contained in the Grade X Arabic textbook for Madrasah Aliyah, a total of 206 lexical cohesion devices were identified across five categories according to Halliday and Hasan's classification. The findings reveal a substantial dominance of repetition (75.7%), followed by collocation (14.56%) and hyponymy (8.25%), whereas synonymy (0.97%) and antonymy (0.48%) occurred only minimally. These results indicate that repetition functions as the primary lexical cohesion strategy in the analyzed texts, reflecting the pedagogical orientation of the textbook toward maintaining referential clarity and supporting vocabulary acquisition. Although repetition effectively facilitates comprehension, a more balanced use of lexical cohesion devices may contribute to richer semantic relations and a more dynamic discourse texture. Future studies may expand the scope of analysis to other educational levels and integrate grammatical cohesion analysis to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of discourse texture within the framework of SFL.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author conceived and designed the study, collected the data, performed the analysis, interpreted the findings, and wrote the manuscript draft. The second author contributed to the analysis validation and provided critical revisions to the manuscript. The third author contributed to the research design, supervised the analysis process, and reviewed the theoretical framework of the study. The fourth and fifth authors contributed to proofreading, language refinement, and final manuscript review. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript before submission.

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