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Topic Continuity in the Short Story "The Tortoise and the Hare": A Discourse Analysis

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A B S T R A C T

This study uses a discourse analysis approach to examine topic continuity in the well-known fable the Tortoise and the Hare. Based on Halliday and Hasan's cohesion theory and Givón's framework. The study investigates how linguistic devices like pronouns, repetition, and zero anaphora preserve narrative coherence. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the analysis shows that minimum interference and short referential distances are crucial for maintaining textual clarity. While definite and possessive pronouns aid in medium- and long-range topic tracking, zero anaphora and third-person pronouns are consistently employed to preserve local coherence. The results show that the fable's theme consistency is accomplished by the deliberate use of unified techniques that guarantee the traceability of characters and events rather than intricate frameworks. Notably, the text's emphasis on distinct protagonists is reflected in the lack of indefinite pronouns, which supports its didactic and moral goals. When paired with good reference management, the narrative's simplicity shows how cohesiveness can be efficiently achieved in brief textsThis study highlights how traditional tales model referential cohesiveness and use discourse strategies to support comprehension and learning. Additionally, the findings lay the groundwork for future comparative studies on topic continuity across languages and genres.

Introduction

Discourse is more than just a collection of sentences; it is a significant linguistic unit formed by coherence and cohesiveness, built using linguistic techniques that allow concepts to evolve and flow across time (Kehler, 2022). Topic continuity is one of the numerous aspects of discourse analysis that is essential to maintaining a text's coherence and coherence. According to Das & Egg, (2023), the manner that writers and speakers keep or change the focus of discourse topics throughout clauses, sentences, or interactional turns is known as topic continuity. It is an essential component of textual coherence that helps listeners or readers follow the ideas as they develop, particularly in narrative texts with dynamically changing characters and activities.

Florida & Hemingway (2007) stated that topic continuity guarantees that readers may follow the main characters, topics, and plot developments in narrative discoursesuch as that found in short stories or folklore without being confused or interrupted. Children's stories, such as the well-known fable "The Tortoise and the Hare," may appear straightforward, yet they use complex discourse structures to keep the plot moving and the themes consistent. Despite being short, this fable has a full story arc and uses referential and grammatical devices to maintain coherence. Few studies, particularly in the context of discourse analysis, have looked at how such linguistic continuity is achieved in short stories.

The issue is that narrative genres, especially folk tales and fables, are generally underrepresented in academic studies of topic continuity. Previous studies typically

concentrate on more formal or specialized literature, like political speeches. (Reyes, 2025), scientific writing(Sumadi, 2022), media discourse (Rohmah, 2016), or second-language acquisition contexts (Morris-Adams, 2013). Key processes of subject continuity, including syntactic consistency, lexical coherence, and coreference, have been identified by these investigations, frequently using the theoretical frameworks of Givón (1983). Coherence is a sequence of sentences or utterances in the text that seems to hang together (Hamdani et al., 2022). However, there is still a big gap in how these findings are applied to literary texts, especially traditional narratives that have a sophisticated functional organization underlying their basic surface structure.

Using Givón's approach to quantify reference distance and continuity levels, some studies have examined subject continuity in folk texts and online news items Sahdi (2016) and Siregar et al., (2019). These studies show how grammatical devices like pronouns, repetition, and transitional indicators are essential to topic tracking. The way these devices work in classic, moralistic stories like "The Tortoise and the Hare," which are essential for early literacy and cross-cultural transmission, hasn't been thoroughly studied, though. Furthermore, the discourse patterns in narrative writing intended for broad or young audiences are neglected in favor of explanatory or argumentative texts in the majority of contemporary works.

By applying discourse analysis to the topic continuity in "The Tortoise and the Hare," this study seeks to close this gap. The study aims to identify the language techniques that guarantee coherence in this short story by examining how topic elements in particular, the animal characters and their actions are introduced, maintained, or changed throughout the narrative. By applying Halliday and Hasan's cohesion theory and Givón's quantitative approach to topic continuity, this study advances our knowledge of how traditional stories maintain coherence despite their succinct and parable-like structure (Hamdi, 2023).

In addition to offering insight into the mechanics of narrative coherence, this research highlights the pedagogical and cognitive significance of topic continuity in widely used educational materials. This makes it noteworthy. The study encourages deeper linguistic analysis of classic and cross-cultural stories by concentrating on a well-known story, and it provides an approachable yet rigorous model for future research into narrative discourse (Erll & Sommer, 2019).

According to Graham (2006)A key component of discourse analysis is topic continuity, which guarantees that a text is cohesive and that listeners or readers can easily follow the development of ideas. According to Siregar et al., (2019), topic continuity refers to the way a main topic is maintained throughout a sequence of clauses or sentences, forming a connected and unified discourse. The way a primary topic is upheld throughout a series of clauses or sentences to create a cohesive and linked discourse is known as topic continuity. This idea is essential for keeping the communication clear and focused in both narrative and expository texts. Topic continuity is frequently studied in discourse studies to learn how writers or speakers arrange information and handle references throughout lengthy passages of text. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), maintaining subject continuity depends heavily on cohesiveness, especially through lexical reiteration and references. The topic can be carried over from one phrase to the next without becoming confused or fragmented by using devices like pronouns, repetition, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunctions.

Furthermore, (Givón, 1983) introduces the concept of *topic persistence*, highlighting how the continuity of a topic depends on the degree of referential maintenance within a discourse. According to him, a topic appears more continuously the

more often it is addressed and the closer its occurrences are to one another. In narrative discourse, where characters and activities must be followed over time and across events, this idea is particularly pertinent. To stay on topic, speakers use discourse markers, inference, and common background knowledge. Similar to this, subject continuity in written texts particularly narratives is frequently determined by thematic development, paragraph structure, and the deliberate use of discourse cues like "then," "after that," and "meanwhile."

Furthermore, Yoder (2024) makes a distinction between topic changes and topic maintenance, contending that unambiguous signaling of the introduction of a new topic is just as important to efficient discourse management as simply keeping a topic going. If these transitions are not handled well, the text may become less coherent and more challenging to read. In general, topic continuity acts as a link between concepts, phrases, and paragraphs to form a cohesive whole. It is a crucial sign of textual coherence and is essential to successful communication in both written and spoken discourse. The preservation of topic continuity in narrative texts, such fables or short stories, improves understanding and engagement by enabling readers to follow the plot and character development (Prastyo & Pratomo, 2024).

The Model of Givón (1983), who created a quantitative model based on functionalist linguistic principles, offers one of the most significant and extensively used models for examining topic continuity in conversation. According to Givón (1983), speech is organized around the dynamic flow of topics, and three crucial parameters perseverance, potential interference, and referential distance can be used to methodically assess topic continuity. A strong framework for comprehending how discourse actors track and manage referents over time is offered by these elements. The number of sentences that separate a topic's most recent mention from its most recent mention is known as the referential distance, the first parameter. Because it shows that the issue is still cognitively salient to the conversation participants, a shorter distance denotes higher continuity. A referent is more likely to remain the conversation topic when it is brought up often and at close intervals.

The existence of competing referents or themes that could break the primary topic's continuity is the subject of the second parameter, potential interference. The continuity may suffer if there are a lot of additional or conflicting entities presented in between references to the primary subject. On the other hand, little distraction from other subjects keeps the conversation thread focused and cohesive (Brown & Yule, 1986). The duration that a given issue stays active and prominent in the debate is examined by the third parameter, persistence. A strong subject or focal point of the text is usually represented by a reference that appears repeatedly in sentences or even paragraphs. Strong topic continuity and a well-organized thematic development are indicated by high persistence.

A variety of grammatical and referential devices, including pronouns (e.g., "he," "it"), definite and indefinite noun phrases (e.g., "the hare," "a tortoise"), and demonstratives, operationalize these criteria, which are not just abstract ideas. Whether a topic is being maintained, reintroduced, or shifted can be inferred from the frequency, form, and placement of these referential phrases. For example, the introduction of indefinite noun phrases may indicate a topic change or the introduction of a new referent, whereas the usage of definite noun phrases frequently indicates topic continuity.

Givón (1983) model is a fundamental instrument in literary and linguistic discourse analysis because it has been extensively used in a variety of genres and languages. This paradigm enables researchers to monitor the ways in which the primary

characters and their activities are retained and referenced throughout narrative texts, including fables, short stories, and folklore. The coherence and narrative flow of the text can be illuminated by using this lens to objectively evaluate the continuity of protagonists, antagonists, and significant events. Furthermore, Givón's method's strength is its multidisciplinary applicability, which connects text analysis, functional grammar, and psycholinguistics. His approach acknowledges that topic continuity represents the mental accessibility and salience of referents in the minds of speakers and listeners, or authors and readers, and it not only takes into account formal linguistic aspects but also conforms to cognitive processing mechanisms.

Effective use of grammatical devices, which serve to foster cohesiveness and direct the reader or listener through the evolution of ideas, is crucial to maintaining topic continuity in discourse. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) identify several types of cohesive devices that contribute to topic continuity: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions. These processes represent deeper semantic and pragmatic linkages between concepts in addition to connecting sentences on the surface level.

Rabeea & Agha (2025) stated that the most often utilized of these in written and spoken materials is reference, especially pronominal reference. The identity of a referent is preserved throughout subsequent clauses and sentences by the use of pronouns like he, she, it, and they as well as definite noun phrases like the hare or the tortoise. This promotes textual coherence and cognitive processing by enabling discourse participants to follow the topic without needless repetition. Assuming the reader can deduce the referent from context, substitution and ellipsis help this process even more by substituting or leaving out repeated information.

Conjunctions like then, but, because, or meantime are essential for indicating temporal or logical links between statements, which helps the reader perceive the discourse's flow and organization. Siregar et al., (2019) expand on this by analyzing topic continuity in Indonesian texts, emphasizing the significant role of pronominal references, including third-person pronouns (*dia*, *mereka*), possessive pronouns (*-nya*), and even zero anaphora, where subjects are omitted but understood from the context. Because of its contextual dependence and pro-drop qualities, these traits are especially common in Indonesian. According to their findings, using these methods to consistently refer to the primary discourse actors promotes theme coherence throughout a passage of text.

Similar trends may be seen in English narrative texts, where the traceability of key characters and events is guaranteed by the frequent use of anaphoric references (Florida & Hemingway, 2007). For example, depending on emphasis and clarity, after introducing a character like "the hare," successive references may switch between the pronouns "he" and "him" and the full noun phrase "the hare." The reader's or listener's assumed acquaintance with the referent serves as the basis for this switch between explicit and reduced forms, a principle that aligns with Givón (1983) notion of accessibility hierarchy where more accessible topics are referred to with reduced or less explicit forms.

Furthermore, a text's thematic thread can be maintained by repeating important lexical words, either exactly or by using synonyms and related terms . For instance, even if the precise terminology varies, using phrases like "the race," "the competition," and "the challenge" repeatedly throughout a story helps to maintain the main event's continuity. These linguistic devices are not employed carelessly in narrative discourse, particularly in classic tales like The Tortoise and the Hare. Rather, they are used with care to preserve lucidity, direct interpretation, and enhance the artistic and expressive purposes of narrative. The narrator's intention and the conventions of the genre are frequently reflected in the harmony between repetition for emphasis and variance for stylistic

interest. All things considered, grammatical devices are the structural foundation of subject continuity, allowing speakers and writers to efficiently control reference, preserve coherence, and mold meaning. It is possible to get insight into the universal and language-specific techniques employed to generate cohesiveness in speech by comprehending how these devices work across languages and genres.

For short stories to be coherent overall, topic consistency is essential, especially for condensed narrative forms like fables. The development of events and the presence of key characters must be consistently maintained throughout these works' intricately structured narratives. Since there is limited opportunity for diversion in such brief narratives, theme continuity is not only crucial but also more obvious and observable. Because of this, short stories provide an excellent opportunity to study how language strategies are used to control thematic development and reference tracking in a condensed textual space.

Narrative coherence is largely a function of how well the discourse maintains continuity of reference, especially to key characters and plot elements. This is usually accomplished by reintroducing themes consistently using a variety of referential expressions, including pronouns and definite noun phrases. The clarity of these references is increased in short stories, particularly those that are intended for younger audiences or have their roots in oral traditions, like fables, to guarantee that readers or listeners can follow the plot without becoming confused.

This is aptly demonstrated by fables such as The Tortoise and the Hare. These texts, which have a linear plot and few characters, demonstrate how lexical consistency, repetitive structures, and little topic interference maintain topic continuity. The tortoise and the hare, the two major characters, are introduced early on and continue to be the main focus of the story. Simple yet powerful syntactic and structural strategies, including repeated noun phrases ("the hare," "the tortoise") and third-person pronouns ("he," "his"), are used to chronicle their actions, motivations, and outcomes. By focusing the conversation on the same topics, the use of direct or indirect speech further strengthens topic continuity.

Additionally, paratactic structures which arrange phrases next to each other without a lot of subordination are frequently used in fables, which facilitate referent tracking, especially in didactic or oral settings. The main characters are re-established in each episode or sentence through the employment of certain narrative formulae like "and then he" or "but the tortoise," which ensures continuity and reinforces their salience. In literary words, topic continuity also reinforces the story's moral or theme. Fables are meant to impart a clear lesson, so it's important to keep the narrative thread concentrated to prevent narrative intricacy from overshadowing the intended moral. The text's didactic goal is strengthened by the many allusions to the main characters and their opposing qualities (such as haughtiness against tenacity).

Furthermore, Toolan (2001) preserving theme or situational consistency is just as important to topic continuity in short stories as character references. The continuous state of the race itself serves as a unifying theme in The Tortoise and the Hare, for example. To maintain thematic coherence, the geographical location, the competition's regulations, and the characters' perspectives on winning and losing are all revisited at different moments during the story. Therefore, because of their didactic goal, narrative economy, and structural simplicity, short stories and fables in particular offer a distinctive prism through which to examine topic continuity (Isninadia et al., 2023). Such texts are perfect for both theoretical investigation and applied discourse analysis because of their

minimalistic style, which emphasizes how coherence may be attained by linguistic economy.

The significance of topic continuity in discourse analysis has been established by the several genres and languages in which it has been studied. In order to preserve coherence and clarity in communication, scholars have studied the function of subject continuity in both spoken and written texts. Referential distance, potential interference, and persistence were the three main criteria that Siregar et al., (2019) examined in their important study on topic continuity in an explanatory Indonesian text. They discovered that while topic continuity was low in terms of possible interference, it was high in terms of referential distance and persistence. This indicates that there were sporadic changes or pauses in reference, even though the primary subject was kept constant throughout the text. In order to preserve the discourse's overall consistency and intelligibility, their study underlined the significance of minimizing frequent topic transitions.

Siregar et al., (2019) findings align with Allan et al., (1987) model of topic continuity, which stresses the importance of controlling reference and minimizing interruptions in the topic chain. However, their study also shown that, as a result of linguistic and cultural differences, different text types for example, expository writings in Indonesian can differ in how topic continuity is maintained. For instance, compared to more rigid languages like English, Indonesian's flexible sentence structure allows for more variance in the introduction and referencing of themes, which affects the continuity. Research in the field of narrative texts has frequently concentrated on the importance of reference consistency and repetition in preserving topic continuity. In their analysis of English literature, Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) noted the function of cohesive devices like demonstratives, definite noun phrases, and pronouns in maintaining the attention on the main characters and events in a story. With the help of these tools, the reader may follow the plot of the novel with ease and never lose sight of its primary components.

Additionally, cross-linguistic research has shed light on the function of topic continuity. Our knowledge of subject continuity in real-time communication has grown as a result of recent research on spoken discourse. When a topic becomes unclear, speakers in natural conversation employ techniques like repair and pauses to re-establish the topic and preserve coherence. To make sure the listener can follow the conversation easily in certain situations, speakers use simpler referential forms, like pronouns or repeated sentences.

In general, topic continuity research highlights how crucial it is to carefully control references, whether through grammatical or structural decisions, in order to maintain a discourse's coherence (Florida & Hemingway, 2007). While the methods for preserving subject continuity may differ among languages and text kinds, studies such as those conducted by Siregar et al., (2019) and others show that the ultimate objective is always the same: to guarantee that the audience can follow the topic's growth without becoming confused.

Research Method

The descriptive qualitative research methodology that this study uses is appropriate for examining textual data in its natural setting. Since the literary work "The Tortoise and the Hare" is the subject of the study, the emphasis is on interpreting and characterizing discourse phenomena in particular, topic continuity rather than quantifying them. An in-depth investigation of how discourse characteristics work together to preserve story coherence is made possible by qualitative research. This method offers the

adaptability required to uncover minute linguistic and pragmatic patterns in a narrative text by placing a strong emphasis on contextual meaning and interpretive analysis.

The complete text of the short fable "The Tortoise and the Hare" serves as the study's main source of data. Close reading and note-taking has been used to gather data, with an emphasis on textual elements such as words, phrases, sentences, and clauses that demonstrate or influence subject continuity. Relevant passages that show changes, maintenance, or reintroduction of the subject throughout the narrative progression will be taken out and annotated by the researcher.

The researcher serves as the main tool in qualitative research, interacting directly with the text by manually identifying, classifying, and interpreting discourse units. Discourse analysis serves as the foundation for the analytical process, which focuses on topic continuity mechanisms. This covers the study of referential cohesion (such as pronouns and deixis), lexical cohesion (such as the repetition of important terms), and transitional devices (such as conjunctions) that support or alter the theme flow.

There are multiple methodical steps in the research process. In order to determine the story's structural and thematic components, the researcher first chooses a text and reads it several times until they are well acquainted with it. Second, while closely examining how the topic develops throughout the narrative, the text is divided into relevant discourse units, such as phrases, clauses, or paragraphs. Givón's concept of topic continuity, which comprises three crucial parameters reference distance, potential disruption, and topic persistence is used in this phase of the study. Third, the way these criteria appear in the narrative is examined by analyzing each discourse unit. Topic persistence looks at the topic's consistent presence and prominence across succeeding units; potential disruption assesses the possibility of topic confusion brought on by conflicting or overlapping referents; and reference distance measures the textual distance between repeated references to the same topic or entity. Supporting linguistic and pragmatic elements including lexical coherence, referential expressions, and deixis (person, place, time) are also taken into account in this study. The fourth step involves interpreting the results to see how these mechanisms support the narrative coherence and thematic framework of the story. The study concludes with a descriptive report that combines textual examples and analytical insights to show how the short narrative "The Tortoise and the Hare" constructs and preserves subject continuity as measured by these criteria.

Result and Discussion

"The Tortoise and the Hare":

In a meadow long ago, a hare and a tortoise, who were once the best of friends, were talking about their abilities. "I am the fastest animal in the whole world," said the hare without the slightest hint of doubt in his voice. He bragged and boasted and crowed about his speed until the tortoise, who was the slowest creature in the meadow, became so upset by all the talk of how fast the hare was that he responded, "I may not be fast like you, but I am slow, wise and strong, which is why I will win the race."Ha!" exclaimed the hare. "What good is strength and wisdom when you cannot run fast enough to escape a hungry fox?" The tortoise, who was now fed up with the fox's boasting, stretched out his long neck and challenged the hare to a race, which, of course, made the hare laugh. "Well, what a joker," chuckled the hare. "A race between us? Oh what fun! I will be sure to win." The meadow animals met and mapped out the course. The race began, and the hare, being such a swift runner, was soon far ahead of his faithful, hard-working friend. After a couple of hours, the hare realised he had plenty of time to beat his plodding competitor. "Oh, I'm

so far ahead!" thought the hare. "I can rest for a while in the field, meadow and enjoy the sunshine with my friends." And so he did. After the hare finished up his rest and returned, he looked back down the track. The tortoise was nowhere to be seen. So he decided that he would take a little snooze under the shade of the oak tree. "I have plenty of time to defeat the tortoise," he thought. And he cuddled up against the tree and dozed off contentedly. All the while, the tortoise continued to plod on, albeit, at ever so slowly. He never stopped, never looked back, never gave up on the goal, but instead took one tiny step after another. At last, the hare woke from his slumber. "Time to get going," he said. Then he stopped, glanced around, and gasped. Far down in readiness for his final, sprint, he bounded off towards the finish line. And there, to his great horror, he met the sturdy tortoise, who was patiently awaiting his arrival.

In this study, several abbreviations are used to represent different components of the data. **RD** stands for *Referent Density*, which indicates the number of references made to a particular character or object in the text. **KG** refers to *Knowledge Group*, representing the thematic category or type of knowledge conveyed. **KT** denotes *Key Terms*, highlighting important words that carry significant meaning in the context. Other abbreviations, such as **PI** (*Participant Identity*) and **TC** (*Turn Count*), are used to identify the speaker and the number of speaking turns, respectively. Providing these notes before the narrative helps readers to understand the meaning of each abbreviation and interpret the data more easily.

1. In a meadow long ago a hare [RD: 20, K: 2, KT: 6] and a tortoise [RD: 20, KG:2, KT: 1] were talking about their abilities
2. Who (Hare) [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 5] (Tortoise) [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 0] were once the best of friends
3. "I [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 4] am the fastest animal in the whole world," said the hare [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 4]
4. without the slightest hint of doubt in his voice [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 3]
5. He [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 2] bragged about his speed [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 2]
6. and ∅ [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 1] boasted about his speed [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 1]
7. and ∅ [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 0] crowed about his speed ∅ [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 0]
8. until the tortoise [RD:6, KG: 2, KT: 1] became so upset
9. who [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 0] was the slowest creature in the meadow
10. by all the talk of how fast the hare [RD:3, KG: 2, KT: 0] was
11. that he [RD:2, KG: 2, KT: 3] responded
12. "I [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 2] may not be fast like you
13. but I [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 1] am slow, wise, and strong
14. which is why I [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 0] will win the race."

15. “Ha!” exclaimed the hare [RD:5, KG: 2, KT: 0]
16. “What good is strength and wisdom when you [RD:2, KG: 2, KT:5] cannot run fast enough
17. To Ø [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 4] escape a hungry fox?”
18. The tortoise [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 3] stretched out his long neck
19. who [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 2] was now fed up with the fox’s boasting
20. and Ø [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 1] challenged the hare [RD:5, KG: 2, KT: 2] to a race
21. which Ø [RD:1, KG: 1, KT: 0] made the hare [RD:1, KG: 2, KT: 1] laugh
22. “Well, what a joker,” chuckled the hare [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 0]
23. “A race between us [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 1]?” “Oh what fun!”
24. “I [RD: 2, KG: 2, KT: 0] will be sure to win.”
25. The meadow animals [RD: 20, KG: 2, KT: 1] met
26. And Ø [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 0] mapped out the course
27. The race [RD: 20, KG: 2, KT: 0] began
28. and the hare [RD: 4, KG: 2, KT:9] was soon far ahead of his friend [RD: 4, KG: 2, KT:9]
29. Ø [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 8] being such a swift runner
30. After a couple of hours the hare [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT:7] realised he [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT:7] had plenty of time
31. to beat his [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 6] plodding competitor
32. “Oh, I’m [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 5] so far ahead!” thought the hare [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 5]
33. “I [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 4] can rest for a while in the field, meadow [RD: 9, KG: 2, KT: 0]
34. and Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 3] enjoy the sunshine with my [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 3] friends.”
35. And so he did [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 2]
36. After the hare [RD: 1, KG:1, KT: 1] finished up his [RD: 1, KG:1, KT: 1] rest and returned
37. he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 0] looked back down the track
38. The tortoise [RD: 17, KG: 2, KT: 10] was nowhere to be seen

39. So he [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 9] decided
40. he [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 8] would take a little snooze under the shade of the oak tree
41. “I [RD: 1 KG: 1, KT: 7] have plenty of time to defeat the tortoise,” he [RD: 1 KG: 1, KT: 7] thought
42. And he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 6] cuddled up against the tree
43. and Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 5] dozed off contentedly
44. All the while, the tortoise he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 4] continued to plod on
45. albeit ever so slowly he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 3] never stopped
46. never Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 2] looked back
47. never Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 1] gave up on the goal
48. but instead Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 0] took one tiny step after another
49. At last, the hare [RD: 12, KG: 2, KT: 9] woke from his slumber
50. “Time to get going,” he [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 8] said
51. Then he [RD: 1, KG: 2, KT: 7] stopped
52. Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 6] glanced around
53. And Ø [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 5] gasped
54. Far down in readiness for his [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 4] final sprint
55. he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 3] bounded off towards the finish line
56. And there he [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 2] met the sturdy tortoise [RD: 8, KG: 2, KT: 2]
57. Who [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 1] was patiently awaiting [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 1] his arrival
58. to his [RD: 1, KG: 1, KT: 0] great horror

Table 1. Zero Anaphora and Their Referential Reconstructions

No	Clause Number	Zero Anaphora	Referential Reconstructions	RD	PI	TC
1	6	Ø	(Hare)	1	1	1
2	7	Ø	(Hare)	1	1	0
3	17	Ø	(You/tortoise)	1	2	4
4	20	Ø	(Tortoise)	1	1	1
5	21	Ø	(Challenge by tortoise)	1	1	0
6	26	Ø	(Meadow animals)	1	2	0
7	29	Ø	(Hare)	1	2	8

8	34	Ø	(Hare)	1	1	0
9	43	Ø (he)	(Hare)	1	1	5
10	46	Ø	(Tortoise)	1	1	2
11	47	Ø	(Tortoise)	1	1	1
12	48	Ø	(Tortoise)	1	1	0
13	52	Ø	(Hare)	1	1	6
14	53	Ø	(Hare)	1	1	5

Total:

- **RD = 14**
- **PI = 17**
- **TC = 33**

Mean (Average):

RD: $\frac{14}{14} = 1.00$

PI: $\frac{17}{14} = 1.21$

TC: $\frac{33}{14} = 2.36$

This table illustrates how the text "The Tortoise and the Hare" uses zero anaphora, or zero pronouns. Because the referents are always introduced very recently just one clause away the Referential Distance (RD) has a mean of 1.00, suggesting good topic continuity. With a mean of 1.21, the Persistence Index (PI) is regarded as low, indicating that most referents are only involved in the discourse for a brief period of time. With a mean of 2.36, the Topic Continuity (TC) indicates modest topic transitions. While some zero pronouns transition more quickly, others relate to entities that persist as topics.

Table 2. Definite Pronoun

No	Clause Number	Topic	RD	PI	TC
1	1	Hare	20	2	6
2	1	Tortoise	20	2	1
3	3	Hare	1	2	4
4	8	Tortoise	6	2	1
5	15	Hare	5	2	0
5	18	Tortoise	1	2	3
6	20	Hare	5	2	2
7	21	Hare	1	2	1
8	22	Hare	1	2	0
9	25	Meadow Animals	20	2	1
10	27	The race	20	2	0
11	28	The Hare	4	2	9
12	30	The Hare	1	2	7
13	32	The Hare	1	1	5
14	33	Meadow	9	2	0
15	36	The Hare	1	1	1
16	38	The Tortoise	17	2	10
18	49	The Hare	12	2	9
19	56	The Tortoise	8	2	3

Total:
RD = 172
PI = 35
TC = 73
Mean (Average):
RD: $\frac{172}{19}$ =9.05
PI: $\frac{35}{19}$ =1.84
TC: $\frac{73}{19}$ =3.84

The story's usage of definite pronouns, like "he" and "his," is shown in this table. With an average referential distance (RD) of roughly 9.05, pronouns frequently return to subjects that were introduced a number of clauses earlier. Because there are other active referents present, there is a comparatively moderate likelihood of topic confusion, as indicated by the potential interference (PI) average of 1.84. Definite pronouns are frequently employed to identify topics that remain relevant over numerous clauses, as seen by the topic continuity (TC) average of 3.84.

Table 3. Indefinite Pronoun

No	Clause Number	Topic	RD	PI	TC
	None				

According to the above analysis, the text contained no instances of indefinite pronouns.

Table 4. Third Person Pronoun

No	Clause Number	Third Person Pronoun	Referential Reconstruction	RD	PI	TC
1	5	he	(Hare)	1	1	2
2	11	he	(Tortoise)	2	2	3
3	30	he	(Hare)	1	2	7
4	35	he	(Hare)	1	1	2
5	37	he	(Hare)	1	1	0
6	39	he	(Tortoise)	1	2	9
7	40	he	(Tortoise)	1	2	8
8	41	he	(Tortoise)	1	1	7
9	42	he	(Tortoise)	1	1	6
10	45	he	(Tortoise)	1	1	3
11	50	he	(Hare)	1	2	8
12	51	he	(Hare)	1	2	7
13	55	he	(Hare)	1	1	3
14	56	he	(Hare)	1	1	2

Total:

RD = 15

PI = 20

TC = 67

Mean (Average):

RD: $\frac{15}{14}$ =1.07

PI: $\frac{20}{14}$ =1.43
TC: $\frac{67}{14}$ =4.79

The third-person pronouns like "he," which are primarily used to refer to the Hare and the Tortoise in the narrative, are listed in this table. The pronouns typically refer to antecedents that are very close in the discourse, enabling clear referential cohesiveness, according to the mean referential distance (RD), which is roughly 1.07. With an average potential interference (PI) of 1.43, there is a moderately low chance of confusion with other subjects. Third-person pronouns frequently relate to themes that remain active for numerous sentences, maintaining narrative flow and coherence, as seen by the topic continuity (TC) mean of 4.79.

Table 5. Possessive Pronoun

No	Clause Number	Possessive Pronoun	Referential Reconstruction	RD	PI	TC
1	4	his	(Hare's voice)	1	1	3
2	5	his	(Hare's speed)	1	1	2
3	6	his	(Hare's Speed)	1	1	1
4	7	his	(Hare's Speed)	1	1	0
5	28	his	(Hare's friend)	4	2	9
6	31	his	(Hare's plodding competitor)	1	1	6
7	34	my	(Hare)	1	1	3
8	36	his	(Hare rest)	1	1	1
9	57	his	(Hare arrival)	1	1	1
10	58	his	(Hare great horror)	1	1	0

Total:
RD = 13

PI = 11

TC = 26

Mean (Average):

RD : $\frac{13}{10}$ =1.00
PI : $\frac{11}{10}$ =1.10
TC : $\frac{26}{10}$ =2.60

The usage of possessive pronouns like "his" and "my," which mostly pertain to the hare in the narrative, is demonstrated in this table. Possessive pronouns often refer to antecedents that were introduced just before, preserving high referential accessibility, according to the mean referential distance (RD) of 1.30. These possessive forms hardly ever create ambiguity with other entities, as seen by the low average potential interference (PI) of 1.10. Possessive allusions are employed to maintain attention on the hare's activities and characteristics throughout the story, as indicated by the topic continuity (TC) average of 2.60, which indicates a moderate level of topical persistence.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that topic continuity in the short story *The Tortoise and the Hare* is primarily maintained through the strategic use of linguistic devices such as pronouns, repetition, and zero anaphora. These results are well aligned

with Halliday and Hasan's (1976) seminal theory of textual cohesion, which posits that cohesive ties including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion are fundamental mechanisms through which coherence in discourse is achieved. In particular, our study highlights the central role of referential cohesion, whereby definite and possessive pronouns, as well as zero anaphora, minimize referential distance and thus maintain clear and continuous tracking of characters and events throughout the narrative.

Our analysis also resonates with Givón's (1983) framework relating to referential continuity and reference distance, which suggests that shorter referential distances contribute to stronger topical cohesion and easier processing for readers. The frequent use of third person pronouns and zero anaphora in the narrative exemplifies this principle by keeping the protagonists the hare and the tortoise centrally accessible and traceable within the discourse, thus facilitating topical continuity at both local and global levels.

Furthermore, this research supports Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) elaboration on discourse semantics, emphasizing that maintaining subject or topic continuity involves cohesive devices to uphold informational flow without confusion or fragmentation. The absence of indefinite pronouns in the text, as found in this study, reflects an intentional strategy to highlight and differentiate the main protagonists, thereby aligning with Chafe's (1994) theories on reference management, which argue that such restrictions on referential expressions optimize narrative clarity and focus.

Moreover, the findings corroborate insights from Kehler (2002), who stresses that coherence arises from semantic and pragmatic connections enabling narrative comprehension. In the context of *The Tortoise and the Hare*, these connections are manifested through linguistic markers that guide readers smoothly through the moralistic storyline, enhancing comprehension and retention especially in young audiences.

Lastly, this study expands on Florida and Hemingway's (2007) assertion that topic continuity is essential in narrative texts to ensure readers can follow character development and plot progression without disruption. Our results underscore the effectiveness of simple yet unified discourse strategies in traditional children's stories, underscoring their pedagogical value in fostering early literacy and cross-cultural knowledge transmission.

Overall, the current study not only substantiates established linguistic theories of cohesion and topic continuity but also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how traditional fables utilize discourse strategies to maintain clarity and instructional intent. These findings lay the groundwork for future comparative research on discourse patterns across genres and languages.

Conclusion

In order to investigate the processes of topic continuity in the well-known fable The Tortoise and the Hare, this study looked at the distribution and purpose of referring expressions, such as possessive pronouns, zero anaphora, definite pronouns, and third-person pronouns. This study sought to determine how various pronoun kinds support cohesiveness and track discourse participants throughout the story by applying Givón's (1983) discourse-pragmatic framework. According to the results, referring expressions with varying referential distances, potential interferences, and subject persistence are used consistently and strategically to maintain topic continuity throughout the narrative. The most locally coherent device was zero anaphora, which showed little ambiguity and instant referent accessibility. On the other hand, because of the small and consistent group of conversation participants, definite pronouns showed longer referential distances while still remaining coherent. Referential clarity is further reinforced by the lack of indefinite

pronouns, which points to a narrative style centered on distinct and recurrent topics. In the meantime, possessive and third-person pronouns were essential for maintaining medium- to long-range topic continuity, especially for enhancing narrative flow and character focus. With short RD values, low PI scores, and moderate TC levels for the majority of pronoun types, the discourse structure of the story exhibits a high degree of referential cohesiveness overall. These findings highlight the value of accessibility and referential economy in storytelling, especially in fables where character-driven development, narrative clarity, and simplicity are crucial. The results further support the idea that subject continuity is a discourse-level technique that reflects the writer's communicative aim, genre conventions, and audience expectations rather than just being a syntactic phenomena.

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