



FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI
Lingue e Comunicazione
Lingua Inglese 2

LESSON 5

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What is the difference between
coherence and
cohesion?

- People do not communicate in grammatical but in semantic units (Ulrich 2007)
- Grammatical unit: formal level of lg (organization of sentences into texts)
- Semantic unit: functional level of lg (how people put language to meaningful use)
- Sentence: complete from the grammatical point of view, incomplete on its own. It gets its meaning either from the situation (its context) or from the other linguistic elements surrounding it (its co-text)

Ex. “Please don’t **do that** while I’m trying to work”, she begged.

WHAT DO THE ELEMENTS **DO & THAT** REFER TO?

EXTRA-LINGUISTIC SITUATION

“True to his nature, James **started whistling to himself** as soon as she settled down to her work. “Please don’t do that while I’m trying to work”, she begged.”

- **Exophoric reference** (outside)
- **Endophoric reference** (inside) – anaphoric (backward) v cataphoric (forward)

“True to his nature, James **started whistling to himself** as soon as she settled down to her work. “Please don’t do that while I’m trying to work”, she begged.”

➤ **THIS TEXT FORMS A MEANINGFUL AND INTEGRATED SYSTEM.**

WHY?

- Pragmatically **coherent** (it reflects real-world experience)
- And it is **cohesive** (elements are interrelated grammatically and lexically)

Coherence & cohesion build textuality: the text does not contain random unconnected sentences but linked ones, connected discourse, an integrated whole, organization & linking of ideas.

Coherence and cohesion signal the relationships between ideas, and make obvious the meaning that the speaker or writer is trying to communicate.

Coherence & cohesion

- Coherence: Making sense, the feeling that a text makes sense and that it is not a jumble of sentences. It refers to the organization of meanings in relation to one another. The elements of a text correspond to the real-world order of events or sequences.
- Logical transition from one sentence to another, only in this way does the text achieve its general purpose

Coherence

- Organization of meanings in relation to one another
- The elements of the text correspond to the natural, real-world order of events or sequences (Ulrich 209)
- Logical transition: time ordered sequences (narrative texts), order according to cause-effect sequence or argumentative discussion, phenomenon-reason, phenomenon-example; problem-solution; instrument-achievement.

Coherence & cohesion

- Cohesion: Showing togetherness; Connections in the text: Texture (Bateman 2008)
- Such connections within a text – grammatical or lexical – hold the text together and give it meaning.
- Such connections are called **cohesive devices** and may span long passages of texts. By forming a network of references, cohesive devices make a text a unified whole.
- Cohesion is a guide to coherence, which is something created by readers in the act of reading a text.

DA and Written Discourse



Cohesion and Coherence

«Clare loves potatoes. She was born in Ireland».

- The two sentences are cohesive (Clare/she)....
- The pronoun provides a link with the proper noun Clare in the 1st sentence

HOWEVER, it is coherent only if the reader has a specific knowledge of Irish culture and history.

DA and Written Discourse



Cohesion and Coherence

The important difference between coherence and cohesion is that **coherence** relies on **semantics** of a given text as well as **cultural knowledge** and the **overall context** in which discourse is unfolding.

There is no explicit manifestation of textual coherence in a text itself. Coherence **is rather deduced** from a text.

Cohesion, in turn, starts with **concrete textual elements** which are then built upon to produce the effect of cohesion. Cohesion is often manifested through the use of such “devices” as pronouns (e.g. I, he, she, it) and deictic words (e.g. here, there, then).

DA and Written Discourse



Processing a text ...

The surface of a text is characterized by ‘markers’ of various kinds.

For example –ed suffix is a marker of pastness.

Cohesive markers/devices (pronouns, determiners, demonstratives, other items....) create links across sentence boundaries and chain together items that are related.

However, reading a text is more complex than that.

We have to interpret it and this depends as much on what both author and reader put/bring into it.

The reader makes **cognitive links** in the text and recognizes **textual patterns**.

DA and Written Discourse



These patterns are manifested in functional relationships between pieces of text (**textual segments**): phrases, clauses, sentences or groups of sentences.

Such relationships can be of various kinds:

Phenomenon-reason;

phenomenon-example;

cause-consequence;

Problem-solution;

instrument-achievement.

There are **signals/clues** that tell us how we should interpret the functional relation between segments. They are the supporting evidence to the cognitive activity of deducing the relation.

Cohesion

- One element in the text is dependent on another for its interpretation -> a cohesive link- **a device** - is present between the presupposing & the presupposed items
- 3 types of grammatical links or cohesive devices: **Reference, substitution, ellipsis & conjunction**



1. REFERENCE

Personal pronouns (*he, she, it, they, etc.*), **definite article** (*the*), **deictics** (*this/that, these/those, here/there, etc.*), *same, different, other, else, such, etc.* -> **endophoric** (anaphoric, cataphoric), **exophoric**

Anaphoric reference: looks back in the text

Cataphoric reference: we have to read on to understand the relation between the items and the referents (engaging the reader's attention)

Exophoric reference: refers to the world outside the text (not truly cohesive, because it is not text-internal, but part of the reader's active role in creating coherence)

DA & GRAMMAR



1. ANAPHORIC REFERENCE

“Grandmother and I moved from via de’ Magazzini to via del Corso, in the autumn of ‘26. The two of **us** had been left “alone on the face of the earth”, as **she** used to say; and via de’ Magazzini, in the centre of the city, had, with the passing of the years, bestowed a new value on **its** buildings, and one by one the apartments had been sold. A business and his wife had bought the **one** in which we were living: **they** came from Turin and needed the house, for meanwhile they were living in a hotel. They were planning to renew the flooring, to put up a partition of the bathroom, between the entrance and the kitchen. They offered us a compensation money which grandmother refused. The eviction order was suspended for a month”.

2. EXOPHORIC REFERENCE (referred to knowledge of city, buildings, streets, eviction, ecc)



DA & GRAMMAR

1.a ANAPHORIC REFERENCE

Problems with 'it' and 'this' 'that'

Also in other languages we may have problems with some cohesive items ('sua' in Italian, her? Your?; 'lei' , you?, she?)

These items can be used when an entity has already been marked as the focus of attention, by using a deictic word: *a, the, my, this, that...*



1. ANAPHORIC REFERENCE

«Analyzing where **a** business stands in relation to **its** market and competition, enables **it** to identify potential opportunities for growth and potential threats. **It** is then possible to set strategic objectives and to predict the human financial resources needed to achieve **them**» (Intelligent Business, Intermediate, Longman: 23)

«Globalisation is forcing businesses to make cost savings by reducing operating costs. One way to do **this** is by outsourcing...» » (Intelligent Business, Intermediate, Longman: 58)

“Germany's Angela Merkel has restated her support for Jean-Claude Juncker to take over as president of the European Commission, at a mini-summit in Sweden. The chancellor said that while she was "happy" to say she wanted Mr Juncker for the top job, **it** was not "the main topic" of the two-day talks.” (BBC news, 10 June 2014)



1.b EXOPHORIC REFERENCE

Related to the immediate context. Reference to a world shared by both sender and receiver.

«Leave it on the table»

The Pope, the PM, the Queen.

Problems with L2 students:

«Do you like the classical music?» (music being heard)

«Do you like classical music?» (are you fond of that type of music?)

“**The** secure video conference room in **the** basement of **the West Wing** fell silent. Next to **me**, **Secretary Bob Gates** sat in **his** shirtsleeves with **his** arms folded and **his** eyes fixed intently on the screen. The image was fuzzy, but unmistakable. One of **the two Black Hawk helicopters** had clipped the top of **the stone wall surrounding the compound and crashed to the ground**. Our worst fears were coming true..”(The Times, 10 June 2014)

DA & GRAMMAR



1.c CATAPHORIC REFERENCE

Related to referents to come, to be mentioned later. Reader's attention hooked.

The untold message is: «Read on and find out more».

Although I phone her every week, my mother still complains that I don't keep in touch often enough.

«It has often been compared to New Orleans's Mardi Gras as an outdoor celebration. Certainly New York's Mulberry Street and surrounding block have been as crowded over the last few days as Royal and Bourbon Streets in the French Quarter are for the Mardi Gras. More than three million people are estimated to have celebrated the 61st annual Feast of the San Gennaro down in Greenwich Village since it began on Thursday».

(The Guardian, 15 September 1987, quoted by McCarthy M. 1991: 42)

- Deictic reference: this/these (here & now, cataphoric ref.) v that/those (there & then, anaphoric ref.) (≠ w Italian)

“This is an announcement: will Mr Smith please go to the information desk”

“And that was the 9.00 o’clock news”

- Informal texts: this/these tend to be associated w speaker’s approval & that/those w disapproval:

“Why on earth is this sensible girl going out with that horrible man?”

- **THE USE OF THE IN ENGLISH:**

the w anaphoric function v *the* w cataphoric function

Type of reference

Type of noun	Specific	Generic
Count singular	the	a/an
Count plural	the	zero
Uncount	the	zero

Generic reference coincides with unshared new information presented for the first time. It is mainly associated with cataphora, forward-looking reference.

“Money is the root of all evil”.

Specific reference refers to information shared by both addresser and addressee and generally coincides with anaphoric or exophoric reference.

*“My first thought was that I was finally witnessing the building of a Scottish castle, complete with ghosts. **The ghosts** existed, but they had not yet been roused from sleep”.*

DA & GRAMMAR – Cohesive devices (reference)

1

LOOMINGS

CALL me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off – then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

DA & GRAMMAR – Cohesive devices

2. ELLIPSIS/SUBSTITUTION

Substitution & ellipsis are highly dependent on context as the substituted and omitted elements are recoverable from other elements in the discourse (Ulrich 233)

Ellipsis: Omission of elements. Speaker/writer choice made on a pragmatic assessment of the situation.

«The children will carry the small boxes, the adult the large **ones**»
(anaphoric);

«If you **could**, I'd like you to be back here at 5.30»

(cataphoric, but usually in front-placed subordinate clauses);

Verbal ellipsis, more complex:

A: Will anyone be waiting? B: Bill **will**, I think (auxiliary echoing ellipsis)

A: **Has** she remarried? B: No, but she **will** one day, I'm sure (auxiliary contrasting)

Substitution & Ellipsis

Ellipsis can be nominal, verbal, clausal

Nominal: the headword is omitted:

John liked the white plates, I preferred the pink

Verbal: repetition of a verbal element (elision of entire verbal group in Italian)

Will Rose be going? I believe she will

+ contrastive function w change of auxiliary

Has he moved? No, but he will soon

DA & GRAMMAR – Cohesive devices

2. ELLIPSIS/SUBSTITUTION

Similarly to ellipsis, Substitution is used at nominal, verbal & clausal level: **One** refers to an indefinite antecedent, **it** to a definite antecedent

Whole stretches of clauses may be omitted:

«Matteo Renzi said he would add 80 euros to some salaries as soon as he could, and he has»

- **One(s)**. I offered him an ice cream. He said he didn't want **one**.
- **Do**: Why don't you find another boyfriend? I might **do** that.
- **So/not**: Do you need a lift? If **so**, wait for me, if **not**, I'll see you there.
- **Same**: He chose the beef, I chose the **same** (I **did** the **same**)

DA & GRAMMAR – Cohesive devices

3. CONJUNCTION

A conjunction presupposes a textual sequence, and signals a relationship between segments of the discourse.

The role of conjunctions is to create a logically articulated discourse that can be easily followed by the reader.

- Logical relationship between sentences + textual sequencing
- Explicit c.: consequently, rather, for instance, in short, in fact, however, moreover, ...)
- Implicit c.: to be inferred.

Discourse genres with informative function (scientific, legal) explicit linking devices are used.

In expressive texts conjunctions are generally a stylistic feature...

Type

Elaboration

Extension

Enhancement

Sub-types

apposition

clarification

addition (adversative) and/but

variation

spatio-temporal

causal-conditional

Examples

In other words

or rather

alternatively

there/previously

consequently/in that
case

(Halliday 1935: 306)

- Overt linkage – constraints; implicit linkage – interpretation of vagueness
- *that is* or *rather*: an appositive or clarificative function
- Tenor of discourse: anyway, anyhow, what is more, all the same (informal); therefore, furthermore, nevertheless, nonetheless (formal), besides & however (relatively neutral)