FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Lingue e Comunicazione

Lingue e culture per la mediazione linguistica

Lingua Inglese 2

LESSON 6

Prof.ssa Olga Denti

a.a. 2026-2027



What is the difference between coherence and cohesion?

Coherence & cohesion

- Coherence: Making sense, the feeling that a text makes sense and that it is not a jumble of sentences.
- Cohesion: Showing togetherness; Connections in the text: Texture (Bateman 2008)
- Cohesion is only part of coherence in reading and writing.
- Cohesion is a guide to coherence, which is something created by readers in the act of reading a text.

- People do not communicate in grammatical but in semantic units (Ulrich 207)
- Grammatical unit: formal level of lg (organization)
- Semantic unit: functional level of lg (use)
- Sentence: complete from the grammatical point of view, incomplete on its own (context + co-text)
- Coherence & cohesion build textuality: the text does not contain random unconnected sentences but linked ones, connected discourse, an integrated whole, organization & linking of ideas

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

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.

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.

Here are some extracts from real texts. Decide what kind of relation exists between segments separated by a slash (/) in each case, and note any supporting evidence such as syntactic parallelism.

1. The BBC has put off a new corporate advertising campaign due to be aired this month, extolling the virtues and values of both television and radio. / A BBC spokesman delicately suggests that this may not be the most appropriate time to be telling the audience how wonderful the Beeb is.

   (*The Observer*, 16 November 1986: 42)

2. In Britain, the power of the unions added an extra dread, / which made British politics a special case; / on the Continent, Margaret Thatcher was regarded as something of a laboratory experiment, rather like a canary put down a mine-shaft to see if it will sing.

   (*The Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 December 1979: 14)

1- Second sentence is reason for the 1° (PHENOMENON-REASON)

2- CAUSE–CONSEQUENCE (first two segments, subordination as supporting evidence). First 2 segments taken together as one single segment are in contrast with the rest. Note the signal provided by the syntactic parallelism…

Cohesion

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

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

(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)

➢ Pragmatically coherent + cohesive (interrelated grammatically and lexically)

DA & GRAMMAR

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

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

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

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*…

DA & GRAMMAR

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 outsorcing…» » (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)

DA & GRAMMAR

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».

«It has often been compared to New Orlean'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 61° 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)
- Informal texts: this/these tend to be associated w speaker's approval & that/those w disapproval
- This/these & that/those as determiners (≠ w Italian) – *the* for *this* & *that*
- *The* w anaphoric function v *the* w cataphoric function (news stories & novels – to catch the reader's interest & attention)

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 (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

- “Co-reference is a semantic relation that sets up a bond of cross-reference between two items that refer to the *same* thing” (Ulrich 235)
- Ellipsis can be nominal, verbal, clausal – nominal -> the headword is omitted; verbal ell. -> repetition v elision of entire verbal group + contrastive function w change of auxiliary
- Clausal substitution: so & not

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.

- Logical relationship between sentences + textual sequencing
- Explicit c.: consequently, rather, for instance, in short, in fact, however, moreover, …)
- Implicit c.: to be inferred
- Function: discourse easy to be followed
- Signposts to drive the reader's understanding

Type	Sub-types	Examples
Elaboration	apposition	In other words
	clarification	or rather
Extension	addition (adversative)	and/but
	variation	alternatively
Enhancement	spatio-temporal	there/previously
	causal-conditional	consequently/in that case

(Halliday 1935: 306)

https://view.genially.com/640231f29060c100181520a7/interactive-content-conjunctions-infographic

CONJUNCTIONS

WOW

Adverbs
Prepositional phrases

Conjunctions express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.

Types of conjunctive expressions

1 Additive

and, and also
nor, either
or, or else
additionally
alternatively
incidentally, by the way
likewise, similarly
on the other hand,
that is, in other words
for example, thus



2 Causal

so, thus, hence,therefore
consequently, because of this
for this reason, on account of this
as a result, in consequence
for this purpose, with this in mind



3 Temporal

Then, next, afterwards, after that
at the same time, simultaneously
earlier,previously
at once, thereupon, on which
soon, presently, later,
next time, on another occasion
next day,
meanwhile, all this time
next moment
finally, at last, in the end,
secondly, to begin with
finally, to conclude with



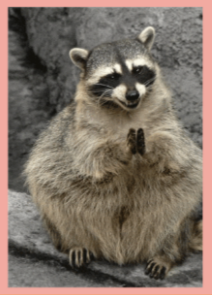
4 Adversative

Yet, though, only
but
however
on the other hand
in fact, actually
instead
any/either way
anyhow, at any rate



5 Continuatives

Now
Of course
Well
Anyway
Surely
Afterall



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

Lexical cohesion

"the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of related vocabulary or 'content words' across sentence boundaries" (Ulrich 250)

- *It occurs w grammatical cohesion*

Two types of lexical ties:

- Reiteration: the repetition of vocabulary, the use of semantically-related lexical items at various points in the text
- Collocation: the lexical items that have a tendency to co-occur in similar contexts