Written Discourse
Cohesion and Coherence

Starting point

• Text: the record of some speaker’s or writer’s discourse, uttered or written in some context and for some purpose.
• Context: No texts are constructed in isolation. Language is a social practice.

Spoken vs. written discourse

• Some features of spoken language
  ‘a friend of mine like he er suddenly turned up um er in the airport my best friend’
• Fillers: um, er
• Hesitations
• Repetition: double subject (a friend of mine, he)
• Lexical repetition: a friend of mine, my best friend

When is a text not a text?

• We can tell whether something is a text:
• Example:
  Text 1. Pick up a handful of soil in your garden. Ordinary, unexciting earth. Yet it is one of nature’s miracles and one of her most complex products. Your success as a gardener will largely depend on its condition, so take the first step in gardening. Get to know your soil.

How do we know that this is a text?

1. It makes sense:

• We can understand what the text is about.
• We can translate it.
• We can paraphrase it.
• We can explain the meaning to someone else.
2. It is somehow complete

- It is made up of sentences, not bits of sentences.
  
  *Can I have a...* (this is not a complete utterance - we know there is something missing at the end)
  
  *...were not very clear* (this is not a complete text we know there is something missing at the beginning)

- The sentences are somehow connected *(yet, and, so; soil, earth; garden, gardening)* – there is cohesion.

3. You can make a summary of it

- Our text was taken from the first page of a book about gardening. The first paragraph introduces the idea of the important role played by the soil, underlining how unremarkable it is in physical terms but how miraculous it is in terms of its properties, and encourages the reader to become familiar with this element.

  The text is, therefore, coherent.

Cohesion

- Cohesion is the set of grammatical and lexical connections between sentences which are linked together into a text.
- There are several of these elements in our text.

Cohesive features

Text 1. Pick up a handful of soil in your garden. Ordinary, unexciting earth. Yet it is one of nature’s miracles and one of her most complex products. Your success as a gardener will largely depend on its condition, so take the first step in gardening. Get to know your soil.

Lexical cohesion: garden, gardener, gardening; soil, earth, soil

Pronouns: your (3x)

Imperatives: pick up, take, get

Earth – it, one of nature’s miracles, one of her most complex products, its condition

Conjunctions – yet, so, and

Coherence?

Is Text 2 below coherent?

Text 2: Fertilisers put back what the rain and plants take away. Plastic pots are not just substitutes for clay ones. Pears are a little more temperamental than apples. Supporting and training are not quite the same thing.

Incoherent

- Although there are some cohesive features in the text, it is not coherent. It does not really say anything coherent that one could paraphrase. It seems to be talking about a lot of unconnected things even though it is on the topic of gardening.
- In fact it is taken from the first line of each chapter of the gardening manual.
Cohesive features

- Texts have texture as we have seen. The sentences in a text are linked together into a cohesive whole, the elements are in some way tied together, they are linked by a series of devices known as cohesive ties.
- Without cohesive ties, texts become a collection of isolated sentences; they are the devices a language uses to achieve unity and cohesiveness in texts, written or spoken.

Cohesion and coherence

- Cohesion and coherence are terms used in discourse analysis to describe the properties of written texts.
- Cohesion is a precondition for coherence.

Definitions

- Cohesion:
The grammatical and lexical relationships between different elements of a text which hold it together.

- Coherence:
The ways a text makes sense to readers and writer through the relevance and accessibility of its configuration of concepts, ideas and theories.

Cohesion vs. coherence

Cohesion:
- formal linguistic features
  - e.g. repetition, reference
  - semantic relationships between sentences and within sentences
  - determined by lexically and grammatically overt intersentential relationships

Coherence:
- very general principle of interpretation of language in context
- fewer formal linguistic features
- relationships deal with text as a whole
- based on primarily semantic relationships

Cohesion

General categories of cohesive devices that signal coherence in texts:

- Reference
- Substitution
- Ellipsis
- Conjunction
- Lexical Cohesion

Grammatical Cohesion

1. Reference

- There are certain items in every language which have the property of reference, in the specific sense that they make reference to something else for their interpretation.
Reference

- For example:
  - *Three blind mice, three blind mice. See how they run! See how they run!*  
  - *There were two birds upon a tree. Another came, and there were three.*  
  - *Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain. He stepped in a puddle right up to his middle and never went there again.*

Reference

- All these items show that information is to be retrieved from elsewhere (in the same text in this case).
- What characterises this particular kind of cohesion, i.e. reference – is the continuity of what is being referred to, whereby the same thing enters the discourse a second time.

Reference

- In other words, in the example “See how they run!”, the pronominal reference they means not merely “three blind mice”, but more precisely “the same three blind mice that we have just been talking about”.

Expressed by:

- **pronouns and possessive adjectives** (I, me, she, you, we, my, mine)
- **demonstrative pronouns** (this, these, that, those)
- **comparative adjectives/pronouns** (another, other, such)
- **definite article** (the)
- **demonstrative adverbs** (here, there, now, then).....

Reference

- The identity of a presuming reference item may be retrievable from:
  - the surrounding text (endophoric reference),
  - or outside the text (exophoric reference).

1.1. Exophoric reference

- The identity of a presuming item can be retrieved from the general context of culture.
- *How hot the sun is today!*  
  (we all know which sun we are talking about, the specific sun of our solar system)

- or
1.1. Exophoric reference

2. The identity of a presuming item can be retrieved from the immediate context of situation.

- Put it down next to her, please.
  (if you are in the same place and in the same time, you are able to decode the it and her)

1.2. Endophoric reference

- the identity of a presuming item can be retrieved from elsewhere within the text itself. The identity of the participant is usually given at an earlier point in the text:

- A man rang on the door. He was wearing a black coat.
  (the identity of the man participant identified as HE has been revealed somewhere before in the text)

1.2. Endophoric reference

- Reference to elements which can be reconstructed from inside the text.
- It can be:
  a) cataphoric, pointing forwards, as in:
     This is how he said it. He shouted and...
  - The news came as a terrible shock to Mrs. Mallard. It seemed her husband Brently had been killed in a railroad disaster.
  b) anaphoric, pointing backwards, as in:
     - I met John in the station. He was completely drunk.
     - A man rang on the door. He was wearing a black coat.

Exercise 1

- What type of reference (exophoric or endophoric) do we have in the following examples?

1. The government are to blame for unemployment.
   - exophoric

2. This is how to get the best results. You let the berries dry in the sun, till all the moisture has gone out of them. Then you gather them up and chop them very fine.
   - Endophoric - cataphoric
3. You entered into a tiny little hallway and the kitchen was off that.
Endophoric - anaphoric

4. We could move that table.
Exophoric

5. I saw Sally yesterday. She was lying on the beach.
Endophoric - anaphoric

6. It was charming, that little bistro in Regent Square.
Endophoric - cataphoric

Exercise 2

• Decide whether the following cases of endophoric reference are anaphoric or cataphoric:
  1. If a man has talent and can't use it, he's failed.
     Anaphoric
  2. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother.
     Anaphoric
  3. Why do we envy him, the bankrupt man?
     Cataphoric
  4. A few weeks before he left, John gave us an old cigar box.
     Cataphoric
  5. Some careless driver backed into our car. Such people make me mad.
     Anaphoric
  6. This, I now realize, was a very bad idea – suggesting we do whatever Terry Crews wants for the day.
     Cataphoric

7. The object felt heavy in his hands. Inside it was a key.
Anaphoric

8. Too scared to buy before they sell, some homeowners aim for a trade.
Cataphoric

9. The book was there on the table. I'd never read Moby Dick and I didn't intend to do so now.
Cataphoric

10. Michael went to the bank. He was annoyed because it was closed.
Anaphoric

Exercise 3

• Find instances of reference and decide on the type:

  • Mr. Kaplan rose, inspiration in his eyes. His smile was so wide that his face seemed to be one ecstatic cavern. He cast majestic glances to both sides, as if reading the tribute in the faces of his fellow students.
  • his (eyes), his (smile), his (face), he, his (fellow students) – endophoric (anaphora)
I have a kind neighbor. He is Agus Mulyono. He works in a hospital. It is located not so far from his house. Mr. Agus has lived there for more than ten years with his family. They are Mrs. Siti and two sons named Boby and Agung.

For many years, East German people devised creative ways to sneak out of East Germany. Some people dug tunnels; others tried crashing through checkpoints with cars, trucks, or busses; still others flew out in small airplanes or balloons.

When the CSI team arrived at the crime scene, these words were scribbled on the bathroom mirror: I’ll be back.

Exercise 4
List the words which belong to the reference chain which start with the word ‘LA Galaxy football team’.
1. LA Galaxy football team from New York has just checked into the Royal Bintang Hotel. This group is here on a world tour. Malaysia is their third stop-over after Singapore and Indonesia. Hong Kong plays host after this and they are expected to play against the national team.

List the words which belong to the reference chain which start with the word ‘The Beatles’.
2. The Beatles were probably the most famous British pop group in the 20th century. They first caught the public’s attention in the 60s. It was unusual then for groups based outside London to achieve recognition. Their songs are still popular today. Songs such as ‘A hard day’s night’ and ‘Let it be’ are theirs. These songs have sold millions and until today no group has come close to their level of success.

2. Substitution
It is a grammatical relation where one grammatical item substitutes another (lexical) one. The substituted item can only be interpreted by reference to the original longer item.

There are three kinds of substitution nominal, verbal and clausal.
Nominal substitution

**Nominal substitution** is when **one** or **ones** in pronominal use substitute a singular or a plural countable noun, and the substitution of the whole noun phrase by **the same**.

- This Coke is flat. Get me a fresh **one**.
- This bulb is broken. Give me a new **one**.
- These magazines are old. Let’s look at some newer **ones**.
- Give me a pint of Guinness and a packet of crisps. – I’ll have the **same**.

**Verbal substitution**

- Carried out by means of the various forms of **do** functioning as pro-verbs substituting for some lexical verb mentioned previously.

  - I didn’t manage to do my homework but Martin **did**.
  - Does anyone live in Grosseto? - I **do**.

**Clausal substitution**

- **Replaces a whole clause**: It is carried out by means of **so** (to replace an affirmative clause) and **not** (to replace a negative one):

- Is there a strike on Saturday? - They say **so**.
- Are you going to Grosseto? If **so**, we could travel together. If **not**, I’ll take the bus.

**Exercise 1**

Use clausal substitution to complete the sentences:

1. Many British graduates are taking jobs overseas and the reason they are .......... is because graduate unemployment is currently high in the UK.

   Doing so

2. The prince is then told to kill and bring home a dragon, but in order to .........., he has to cross the Forbidden Mountain.

   Do so

3. Many people have refused to vote in elections for years. They may have .......... because they believe that their vote can change nothing.

   Done so

4. Good writers frequently rephrase and summarise the main ideas in their texts. They .......... in order to remind the reader about what is important.

   Do so

5. The company changed their product packaging last year and by .........., they have attracted many new customers.

   Doing so

6. There has been a lot of speculation about why the team played so badly – the manager claims that they .......... because they were tired.

   Did so

**Exercise 2**

Identify substitution:

1. I’ll have a latte, and please be sure to use skim milk. - I’ll have the **same**.

   The same

2. Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up, and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better.

   One
3. It’s tonight, right? – I don’t think so.

So

4. All generalisations are false, including this one. (Mark Twaine)

One

5. I might come round. If not, I’ll call you.

not

6. There’s a towel in the top drawer, if you need one.

One

3. Ellipsis

• Ellipsis is similar to substitution but the item concerned is replaced by nothing. There is an obvious structural gap which can only be revealed by a previous sentence.

• It can be nominal, verbal and clausal.

Nominal ellipsis

• Nominal ellipsis involves the omission of a head noun or noun phrase.

- Ten students passed and another ten Ø failed.
- Which jeans are you going to wear? These Ø are the nicest.

*another and these are endophoric references

Verbal ellipsis

• Verbal ellipsis involves the omission of a lexical verb form a verb phrase and possibly an auxiliary or two, only recoverable from reference to a previous sentence.

- Is it going to rain today? It may Ø, it may not Ø.
- Have you been drinking? – Yes, I have Ø.

Clausal ellipsis

• Clausal ellipsis is concerned with the omission of large parts of clauses, whole phrases and more.

- Who has taken my car keys?
  - Peter Ø.
- Where did you leave those library books?
  - Ø On the floor in the bedroom.

Exercise 1

Identify the ellipsis and say whether it is nominal, verbal or clausal.

Many OAPs still have a hard time making ends meet but some are sitting on a small fortune. During the last property boom they saw the value of their homes soar. (208)

Particles containing the b quark (bottom particles) are the heaviest found so far, some weighing in at around ten times the mass of the proton. (219)
I say that the critic new to the trade ‘lowers his standards’ when faced with a weekly fare of rubbish, and so he does; that is, he excuses the badness of the plays and marks them higher than he knows he should. Which is only reasonable.

This form tells me that you want to vote by post, or get someone else to vote on your behalf, at elections for an indefinite period. It is for people who have a right to vote but who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person because of the nature of their job (or their spouse’s). Fill the form in carefully using block letters except for your signature.

### Exercise 2

Now have a look at the sentences below and see if you can change them using ellipsis.

1. He said he would retire at the age of 55 and he has retired at the age of 55.
2. Do you know if it will snow tomorrow? I think it will snow.
3. Michiko bought 10 eggs and Hiro bought another 10 eggs.

### 4. Conjunction

- Refers to specific grammatical devices, conjunctions, which link sentences to each other:

  - **Additive conjunctions** add on information
  - **Adversative conjunctions** draw a contrast
  - **Causal conjunctions** make a causal link
  - **Temporal conjunctions** make a time link between two sentences

### Conjunctions

- **Additive**: and, in addition
- **Adversative**: but, yet, however
- **Causal**: so, therefore, consequently
- **Temporal**: then, after that, subsequently

### Exercise 1

Sort these conjunctions: additive, contrastive, causal, or temporal?

Finally, anyway, in addition, or, furthermore, in other words, yet, however, on the contrary, so, then, for this reason, as a result, up to now, but, after all, and, though, consequently, now, it follows that, then

### Key

- additive, contrastive, causal, temporal
- Finally, anyway, in addition, or, furthermore, in other words, yet, however, on the contrary, so, then, for this reason, as a result, up to now, but, after all, and, though, consequently, now, it follows that, then
5. Lexical cohesion

• Lecture no. 4

Exercise 1

Identify grammatical cohesion in the text:

Martin’s grandmother had an English accent.
‘I’m a Londoner, of course,’ she said. ‘Always a Londoner, that’s me.’
She’d left London years and years ago, after the end of World War Two.
‘I was about your age,’ she said to Snow.
‘Hopped on a boat. Never seen one before. All by myself. Couldn’t get out of there quick enough.’

Key

Martin’s grandmother had an English accent. ‘I’m a Londoner, of course,’ she said. ‘Always a Londoner, that’s me.’ She’d left London years and years ago, after the end of World War Two. ‘I was about your age,’ she said to Snow. ‘Hopped on a boat. Never seen one before. All by myself. Couldn’t get out of there quick enough.’

Reference: M’s grandmother = I, she, me, she, I, she (endophoric – anaphora);
Snow=your – endophoric –cataphora;
Londoner = that (end. – anaphora);
London=there (end.-an.);
Substitution: one
Ellipsis: Ø
Conjunctions: and, after