

Cohesion and Meanings

COHESION ET SIGNIFICATIONS

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Abstract

Text analysis is a way of describing language functions. A text is defined as any passage, spoken or written, that forms a whole. According to Halliday, every text has a texture, "A text derives this texture from the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to its environment." Cohesive elements are important linguistic features that pitch in the textual unity. The aim of this paper is to use linguistic tools that are useful in analyzing and understanding any written text. The principles of referencing, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion stated by Halliday and Hasan (1976) were applied on the selected short story to reveal the significance of the cohesive elements that are present in the text which provide semantic links among the words, phrases and sentences for the interpretation of meanings that exists within the text thus furnishing the texture of the text and transforming it into a piece of discourse. Understanding how cohesion functions within the text to create semantic links could be beneficial for students of English as a second or foreign language to help "decode" meaning.

Key words: Text; Texture; Cohesive elements; Semantic links; Meanings

Résumé

L'analyse du texte est une façon de décrire les fonctions du langage. Un texte est défini comme tout passage, parlé ou écrite, qui forme un tout. Selon Halliday, chaque texte a une texture, "Un texte tire cette texture du fait qu'il fonctionne comme une unité par rapport à son environnement." Éléments cohésifs sont importantes

caractéristiques linguistiques que la hauteur de l'unité textuelle. Le but de cet article est d'utiliser les outils linguistiques qui sont utiles pour analyser et comprendre un texte écrit. Les principes de référencement, la substitution, l'ellipse, la conjonction, et la cohésion lexicale a déclaré par Halliday et Hasan (1976) ont été appliquées sur l'histoire choisie courte pour révéler l'importance des éléments de cohésion qui sont présents dans le texte qui fournissent des liens sémantiques entre les mots, expressions et des phrases pour l'interprétation de la signification qui existe dans le texte fournissant ainsi la texture du texte et en le transformant en un morceau du discours. Comprendre les fonctions de cohésion au sein de la façon dont le texte pour créer des liens sémantiques pourrait être bénéfique pour les étudiants de l'anglais comme langue seconde ou étrangère pour aider à «décoder» sens.

Mots clés: Texte; Texture; Éléments cohésifs; Liens sémantiques; Significations

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INTRODUCTION

Cohesion is the relationship between structurally independent elements of a text. Example of such a relation is between a Proper noun and a Pronoun; Maria she. This type of semantic relation may be either within a sentence or out of the sentence within a discourse. The function of cohesion in a language is formation of text. Text refers to any spoken or written passage of unlimited length, which forms a unit. A collection of unrelated sentences can easily be differentiated from a text where the sentences are related to one another and providing

meaning. A text can be: Prose, Poetry, Dialogues of a Novel or story, Monologue, A proverb or A discourse. A text is a semantic unit; a unit of meaning. As it is not the structural but the semantic unit, it is something embedded and encoded in the structure which can be decoded by realizing the features constituting a text. Texture, Ties and Cohesion are the constituents of text as identified by Halliday and Hassan.

Texture is that feature of text which makes it a unified whole. According to 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics' by P.H. Mathews, "cohesion and coherence are sources which create texture". Crystal adds 'informativeness' to cohesion and coherence. For example:

Pick up two Victorian Novels from the shelf. Take them to the counter.

In the sentences above them is referring back to two Victorian Novels and is creating cohesion between the two sentences. Reference is a **Tie** here in the example. It is a simple example where only one tie (reference) is connecting the two sentences. If the above sentences are:

Pick up two Victorian Novels from the shelf. Take the Novels to the counter.

Now there are two ties in the above example; Reference and Repetition.

Cohesion according to 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics' by P.H. Mathews (1997), is a syntactic unit (sentence). According to 'A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics' by David Crystal (1997), cohesion is a grammatical unit (words). Halliday and Hassan (1976) have taken cohesion as a semantic concept. According to them, Cohesion is the type of relationship that exists within the text and can be referred to the "non-structural text-forming relations". Thus, Cohesion creates interdependency in text, as Halliday and Hasan (ibid.) states, "The continuity that is provided by cohesion consists, in the most general terms, in expressing at each stage in the discourse the points of contact with what has gone before... It is the continuity provided by cohesion that enables the reader or listener to supply all the missing pieces, all the components of the picture which are not present in the text but are necessary to its interpretation."

Five types of relations are identified, which according to them create texture of a text: These relations are also known as cohesive devices (ties) and are:

- (i) Reference
- (ii) Substitution
- (iii) Ellipses
- (iv) Conjunction
- (v) Lexical Cohesion

Reference, substitution and ellipses and conjunctions express grammatical cohesion whereas lexical cohesion is non-grammatical and is created by reiteration of the same lexeme or other lexemes from the same semantic field. There are three general types of referencing: Homophoric

referencing, when reference is made through sharing of cultural context, Exophoric referencing, where referred information is retrieved from the situational context and Endophoric referencing, refers to a type of reference when information is within the text. Endophoric references are of three major types: Anaphoric, Cataphoric, and Esphoric. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976)

Anaphoric, When there is a reference which refers back to someone or something that has been mentioned or discussed previously. Use of pronouns instead of the repetition of nouns is an example of anaphoric references. Phrases like "as stated earlier", "the above mentioned", "the afore mentioned", "as already said" etc. are other common examples. Cataphoric reference is the reverse of anaphoric one: someone or something is mentioned in the text before it is introduced. For example: "Here she comes, a writer, a producer, a director and our host... it's none other than Humanyun". Esphoric refers to any reference within "the same nominal group or phrase which follows the presupposed item.

There are three main types of cohesive references from the functional point of view: Personal, demonstrative, and comparative. Personal reference keeps track of function through the speech situation using noun pronouns like "he, him, she, her" etc. and possessive determiners like "mine, yours, his, hers" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Demonstrative reference keeps track of information through location using references like "this, these, that, those, here, there, then, and the"(Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.51). Halliday refers demonstrative referencing as "verbal pointing" to indicate a scale of proximity to the presupposed references. Comparative reference keeps track of identity and similarity through indirect references "same, equal, similar, different, else, better, more", etc. and adverbs like "so, such, similarly, otherwise, so, more etc. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Substitution and ellipsis is used when "a speaker or writer wishes to avoid the repetition of a lexical item and is able to draw on one of the grammatical resources of the language to replace the item" (Bloor & Bloor, 1995). Substitution and ellipsis are functionally same as the linguistic link for cohesion; however ellipsis differs in that it is "substitution by zero". (Halliday & Hasan, 1976)

Substitution and ellipses can be further classified as nominal, verbal and casual. The nominal substitution can be referred as "one and ones" as they substitute nouns. In verbal substitution, we substitute verbs like "do" and is occasionally used in conjunction with "so" as in "do so." In clausal substitution, an entire clause is substituted and though it may seem to be similar to either nominal or verbal substitution, the difference is the presupposed anaphoric reference (ibid.).

Conjunction acts as a semantic cohesive tie. They are "Cohesive tie between clauses or sections of text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful pattern between

them.”(Bloor & Bloor, 1995). Halliday and Hasan (1976) asserts that “conjunction is a different type of semantic relation, one which is no longer any kind of search instruction, but a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before.” There are four kinds of conjunctions; additive, adversative, temporal and casual. Additive conjunctions coordinate by adding to the presupposed item and are indicated through “and, also, too, furthermore, additionally”, etc. (ibid.). On the other hand, Adversative conjunctions act to specify “contrary to expectation” (ibid.) and are signaled by “yet, though, only, but, in fact, rather”, etc. Causal conjunction expresses “result, reason and purpose” and is signaled by “so, then, for, because, for this reason, as a result, in this respect, etc.” The last conjunctive category is temporal and links by signaling sequence or time. Some sample temporal conjunctive signals are “then, next, after that, next day, until then, at the same time, at this point”, etc. (ibid.).

Lexical cohesion includes non-grammatical elements and refers to the “cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The two basic categories of lexical cohesion are reiteration and collocation.

Reiteration relates to the repetition of a lexical item, either directly or through the use of a synonym, or related word. Halliday and Hasan explain reiteration as “one lexical item referring back to another, to which it is related by having a common referent. A reiterated item may be a repetition, a synonym, a super ordinate, or a general word.” (1976) On other hand, collocation refers to lexical items that are likely to be found together within the same text. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). There will be the stronger cohesive effect if lexical items are closer to each other.

Cohesive devices in the text knit the semantic pattern of text which in turn shapes the overall meaning carried by the text. In Halliday’s view, “A language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be expressed.” What gives meanings to text is texture which provides a basis for unity and semantic interdependence of the grammatical and non-grammatical elements of text. The study attempts to analyze a selected text to show the role cohesive devices play to develop semantic links in the text which then gives it meaning. Understanding the functions of cohesion in the text to create semantic links could be helpful for the learners of English as a second language to “decode” meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is analytic in nature. Using a short story by Paulo Coelho, “The Story of the Pencil” the textual aspect of meaning extracted through cohesion was analyzed. The analysis was based on the principles

of referencing, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion put forth by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Bloor and Bloor (1995) to reveal the importance of the cohesive devices in the text to give it meanings. Clauses of the story were numbered in order to refer them during analysis. Then each cohesive device was dealt as a separate category of analysis. References were identified and placed under relevant category one by one.

Analysis of the Text

1. Referencing

Nunan (1993) defines references as those cohesive devices in a text that can only be interpreted with reference either to some part of the text or the outside world. In a text, referencing shows the author’s strategy of introducing the participants and keeping track of them throughout the text (Eggs, 1994).

Anaphoric refers to any reference that “points backwards” to previously mentioned information in text. In the story, “you” in line 3 is anaphoric reference as it refers to the boy. On other hand, Cataphoric refers to any reference that “points forward” to information that will be presented later in the text. In order to create interest and to raise curiosity in the mind of readers, cataphoric references are used. For example, in line 18 “there is a hand,” we find reference to the God. This cataphoric reference of ‘hand’ also stands for the love, intimacy, support, strength and relationship. Esphoric refers to any reference within “the same nominal group or phrase which follows the presupposed item”. In the story in line 25 “they” refers to the “pains and sorrows” in line 24. Here the reference is esphoric as it is within the same nominal group or phrase.

In the selected text there are forty-six incidences of personal referencing. Of the personal references, there are fourteen incidences of personal pronoun ‘you’. The rigorous use of the personal pronoun “you” in the story addresses not only to the boy who is explicitly the major addressee of the discourse but also refers to general mankind. In the text, there are eight incidences of pronoun “it”. On five occasions “it” is used for pencil: however in line 23, the pencil is referred as “he”. The use of pronoun “he” instead of “it” changes the state of the pencil from inanimate to animate; thus personifying the pencil for life.

There are also incidences of possessive pronouns in the text. In line 5 “her letter” refers back to grandmother mentioned in line 1 and thus reference is anaphoric. The use of “his” in line 1 and 5 and “her” in line 5 and 6 refers back to boy and grandmother respectively. The use of possessive pronouns “his” and “her” shows the intimate, close and warm relation between the two characters, the grandmother and the grandson. Moreover, the use of “we” in line 3 shows the strength of their relationship.

In the text, there are twenty one incidences of demonstrative references. In the text, there are ten incidences of the determiner “the”. Out of ten, five times

it is used for the pencil. The recurrent use of “the” adds specification to the metaphysical implication of the word pencil. i.e. it stands for the life which is further reinforced by the personal pronoun “he” in line 23, this personifying pencil for life.

Moreover, ‘that’ has been used seven times in the text which also helps keeping track of information. For example, in line 19 “we call that hand...” refers back to “a hand guiding” in line 18. In line 22 “that” refer back to the act of erasing in line 21-22. Similarly, in line 36 “that” refers back to the fact stated in line 35 i.e. “everything we do in life will leave a mark”.

There are only four incidences of the comparative referencing in the story. The role of comparative references acts to show similarity or likeness, which itself is a referential property. With regard to the use of comparative referencing, on the thematic level the pencil has been compared to the human beings. For instance, in line 30 “what really matter” show a comparison between the external and internal qualities of the pencil and indirectly that of the human beings. In line 23 “he’s much sharper” compares the state of pencil before and after the use of sharpener; as the pencil is much sharper latter. Symbolically, it refers to the condition of man after bearing “pains and sorrows” as it makes man a better person.

2. Substitution and Ellipsis

Explicit examples of substitution could not be marked but the biggest example noticed was that of the theme where the success of human life was explained by assigning it the characteristics which are associated with an object of minor importance in the lives of human beings. Comparison of the qualities of a low level inanimate object with that of an animate entity of highest grade actually is drawn through ellipsis in general.

3. Conjunction

In the story, there were various notions of conjunctions and they function extremely well to create cohesion in text. In the story “and” is used three times. In line 19 “and He always guides us ...” links back to the lines 18-19 that “...there is a great hand guiding your steps” and “We call that hand God...” Furthermore, in the text “but” is used four times and acts to signal opposite to expectation. In the line 17-18 “but/ you must not forget that there is a great hand guiding...” refers back to the line 17 that “you are capable of great things.” Likewise, in line 23 “but afterwards, he’s much sharper” refers back to the line 22-23 in which there is reference to the use of sharpener “That makes the pencil suffer a little...”

In the text casual conjunctions are used to show cause and effect relationship between sentences. The conjunction “so” is used two times, where as “because” is used once only. In line 31-32 “So /always pay attention to what is happening inside you” links back to lines 30-31 in which the graphite inside of the pencil has been given

importance as compared to the wooden exterior of the pencil. In the line 35 “So try to be/ conscious” links back to the lines 34-35 as “...everything you do in life will leave a mark.”

In the text, temporal conjunctions are used to link the text by signaling sequence. In the line 23 “afterwards” and in line no 33 “finally” are used to signal the sequence in the narration of the qualities of the pencil.

Lexical Cohesion

Cohesion using the similar or near-similar terms is seen throughout the text. There is repetition of word “writing” in line 3, 5, 7, 21 in the story. Similarly, the word “pencil” has been repeated eight times in the text as the whole story revolves around the qualities of pencil which if man follows, will make him a person at peace with the world. In the text, there is also repetition of the word “quality” five times as the world is related to the main theme of story.

In the appendix 3 a word list is used to generalize the pattern of lexical cohesion in the story. Five categories have been identified. For instance, the writing activity is the major category which identifies the things that are involved in the writing process. The vocabulary related to the writing activity is used in the story like, “hand”, “sharpener”, “eraser”, “pencil”, “mark” and “rub.” This categorization however is purely subjective. Another lexical categorization sets up the role of the God towards His mankind. The words used under this category are “guides”, “will”, “guiding”, “helps” and “capable of great things”.

In the story, the lexical collocations are missing; however certain grammatical phrases collocate in the grammatical sense. Phrasal verbs such as “grow up” in line 10, “now and then” in line 21 and “rub out” in line 27 bond together to help bind the text and thus can be considered as cohesive devices.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows cohesion in text plays a major role in interpretation of the meanings the words are carrying. It also shows that more the number of cohesive ties, much improved is the readers’ comprehension. Cohesion analysis has revealed the principles that develop semantic links within text. Cohesion in texts weaves the texture that knits the ideas and experiences which creates meaning within the language. Texture is one of the three meta-functions for creating meaning within language. Implications for cohesion analysis in the second language classroom, and for reading comprehension in particular, seems relevant. In Pakistan, most of the learners have the knowledge of the theoretical structure (i.e. grammar) of the English language, but they are deficient in the functional usage of this knowledge with semantic patterning. Using principles of cohesion as a basis of

teaching with a focus on lexicogrammar, learners might gain an understanding of the identification and application for meaning in English.

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APPENDIX 1 THE STORY OF THE PENCIL

‘Third quality: the pencil always allows us to use an eraser to rub any mistakes. This means that correcting something will did is not necessarily a bad thing; it helps to keep us on the road of justice.

‘Fourth quality: what really matters in a pencil is not its wooden exterior, but the graphite inside. So always pay attention to what is happening inside you.

‘Finally, the pencil’s fifth quality: it always leaves a mark. Just the same way, you should know that everything you do in life will leave a mark, so try to be conscious of that in your every action’.

APPENDIX 2

Personal References

Line no.	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
1	His	1	Boy
2	He	1	Boy
3	You	1	Grandmother
3	We've	1	Boy and Grandmother
4	It	3	Story
4	Me	1	Boy
5	His	1	Boy
6	Her(letter)	1	Grandmother
7	Her	1	Grandmother
7	You	1	Boy
7	I	1	Grandmother
8	I'm	1	Grandmother
8	I(Hope)	1	Grandmother
8	You	1	Boy
9	You	1	Boy
10	It	8	Pencil
12	It's	8	Pencil
12	I've	1	Boy
13	You	1	Boy
13	You	1	Boy
13	It	8	Pencil
14	You	1	Boy
14	Them	14	Qualities
15	You	1	Boy
17	You	1	Boy
18	You	1	Boy
18	Your	1	Boy
19	We	1	Boy and Grandmother
19	HE	19	God
19	US	1	Boy and Grandmother
20	HIS (will)	19	God
21	I	1	Grandmother
23	He's	22	Pencil
23	You	1	Boy
25	You	1	Boy

To be continued

Continued

Line no.	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
26	US	1	Boy and Grandmother
28	We	1	Boy and Grandmother
28	It	27-28	Act of correcting
29	US	1	Boy and Grandmother
31	Its	8	Pencil
32	You	1	Boy and Grandmother
33	It	8	Pencil
34	You	1	Boy
35	You	1	Boy
36	Your	1	Boy
28	It	27	Act of erasing

Demonstrative References

Line no	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
8	The pencil	8	Pencil / man
9	This	8	Pencil/ man
8	The words	1	Letter
10	The boy	1	Boy/ mankind
13	That	12-13	Fact...what you see depends on how you see
14	Them	14	Qualities
15	The world	15-16	Real world
18	That	18-19	Fact...there is a hand
18	There	18	Hand guiding our way
19	That hand	18	Guiding hand
21	Now and Then	22	Sharpening the pencil
22	That	22	Act of sharpening the pencil
25	They	24	Pains and sorrows
26	The pencil	8	Pencil/ man
27	This	26-27	Use of eraser
28	That	?	?
29	The road	29	Path of life
33	The pencil	8	Pencil/ man
34	The same way	33-34	The way pencil leaves a mark
34	That	33-34	Fact...everything we do leave a mark
36	That	33-35	Fact...everything we do leave a mark

Comparative References

Line no	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
12	Like any other pencil	8	Pencil (of the story)
23	Much sharper	23	As compared to earlier/later
30	What really matters	30-31	Wooden exterior/graphite inside
34	Same way	33-34	Human being compared to pencil.

Ellipsis and Substitution

Line no	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
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Conjunctions

Line no	Reference	Line Reference no.	Referenced Item
5	And	5-6	..stopped writing.../..said to her grandson
7	But	7-8	Words/ pencil
17	But	17-18	capable of great things/...there is a great hand
19	And	19-20	...call that hand.../...guides us
22	And	21-22	Stop writing/ use a sharpener
23	But	22-23	suffer a little/...afterwards he 's much sharper
23	So	23-24	Pencil sharper after /man better after suffering too
24	Because	24	Bearing pains makes better person
12	But	11-12	very special.../.just like any pencil
31	But	30-31	... exterior/.. inside.
31	So	31-32	Inside matter more than exterior/ attention to inside
35	So	35-36	Everything leaves marks/conscious of your action
33	Finally	33	Quality of pencil

APPENDIX 3

Lexical Cohesion Summary

Writing tools

Hand/sharpner/ eraser/ pencil/mark/rub

Writing genres

Letter/story

Human traits

Steps/ pain and sorrows/ mistakes/ correcting/ forgot/ learn/ attention/ conscious/ action

God

Guides/ will/ guiding/ helps/ capable of great things

Pencil

Graphite/ wooden exterior

Writing

Write/ writing/ writing/ writing

Watch

Watching/ looked/ look/ seen