



## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF USING COHESION IN DISCOURSE

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### Abstract

This paper looks back at the definitions of cohesion and coherence, the relationship between the two, and relevant theories. Though cohesion and coherence research has made great achievement, for various reasons, there is little consensus to the nature of coherence and coherence research approaches. Accordingly, the main theoretical framework of the present study is established on the foundation of Halliday and Hasan's cohesive devices, Halliday's two metafunctional notions in Systemic Functional Grammar—thematic structure and information structure, van Dijk's propositional macrostructure and Hasan's generic structure.

**Keywords:** Cohesion; Coherence; Device; Framework

### Introduction

For several years, the analysis of cohesion in texts has been a key topic in the study of discourse. Cohesion refers to the relations of meaning that exist within a text. It is part of the system of language which has the potentials for meaning enhancement in texts. The most salient phenomenon of discourse is the fact that sentences or utterances are linked together. For this “connectedness”, this “texture”, two concepts are used: cohesion, referring to the connections which have their manifestation in the discourse itself, and coherence, referring to the connections which can be made by the reader or listener based on knowledge outside the discourse. In a sentence like “Mary got pregnant and she married” the fact she refers to Mary is an example of cohesion, and the interpretation that her pregnancy was the reason for her to marry is an example of coherence. (Rankema, 2004).

We shall be looking at what discourse analysis can tell us about contextualized uses of structures and grammatical its orientations to cover significant areas at present under-represented in grammar teaching. We begin by looking at grammatical cohesion, the surface marking of semantic links between clause and sentences in written discourse, between utterances and turns in speech. (McCarthy: 1991)

The concept of cohesion cannot be separated from the concept of ‘text’. A text, can be spoken or written that does form a unified whole. What differs text and non-text lies





on the 'texture', and this texture is constructed by the cohesive relations between its linguistic features. Further, Beaugrand and Dressler<sup>1</sup> (1981) define a text as a communicative occurrence, which meets seven standard of textuality:

- 'Cohesion' referring to the surface text, i.e. grammatical dependencies in the surface text.
- 'Coherence' referring to the textual world, i.e. the configuration of concepts and relations which underlie the surface text.
- 'Intentionality' referring to the text writer's attitude.
- 'Acceptability' referring to the text reader's attitude to the text.
- 'Informativity' referring to the extent to which the message of the text is (un) expected, (un)known, etc.
- 'Situationality' referring to the factors that make a text relevant to a situation.
- 'Intertextuality' referring to the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of previously encountered texts.

Cohesion is in the level of semantic, which refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text (Ruqaiya and Hasan<sup>2</sup>, 1976). Cohesion occurs when the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. "Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish." (in a cookbook)

It is understood that "them" in the second clause refers to the previous noun "apples". This is called Anaphoric, and it gives cohesion between the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole; the two sentences together constitute a text. (Halliday & Hasan<sup>3</sup>, 1976)

To see the difference between cohesive and not-cohesive text, see example below.

(1) To reach the movie theater you will need to turn right on the next intersection and then go straight for about 5 minutes. You will see **it** on your right-hand side.

(2) A cat catches a mouse. The car broke down. I go swimming (1) and (2) are constituted by two or more sentences. However, (1) is cohesive one each other, while (2) is not. Like all the components of the semantic system, cohesion is realized through grammar and vocabulary (Tanskanen<sup>4</sup>, 2006). Cohesion can therefore be divided into grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, while lexical cohesion is divided into reiteration (repetition, synonymy etc.) and collocation (co-occurrence of lexical items).



### 1.1 Using Grammatical Cohesive Devices in Written Discourse

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 04) note that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. They find five sources of cohesion that can be found in English: cohesion through reference, cohesion through substitution, cohesion through ellipsis, cohesion through conjunction, and cohesion through lexical items. Of these various types of cohesive relations, the first four are grammatical, while the other is lexical. Each of these cohesion sources will be discussed briefly in the following section.

#### 1.1.1. Reference

The first source of cohesion discussed in English by Halliday and Hasan(1976) is cohesion through reference. They state,Reference is the specific nature of the information that is signaled for retrieval... and the cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, wherebythe same thing enters into the discourse a second time (1976:31).Reference concerns the relation between a discourse element and apreceding or following element. Reference deals with a semantic relationshipwhereas substitution and ellipsis deal with the relationship between grammaticalunits: words, sentence parts and clauses. In the case of reference, the meaning of adummy word can be determined by what is imparted before or after theoccurrence of the dummy word. In general, the dummy word is a pronoun.Rankema (2004:104).

(1) I see John is here. **He** hasn't change a bit.

(2) **She** certainly has changed. No, behind John. I mean Karin .

But reference can also be achieved by other means, for instance, by the useof a definite article or an adverb, as in the following examples:

(3) A man crossed the street. Nobody saw what happened. Suddenly **the** man was lying there and calling for help.

(4) We grew up in the 1960s. We were idealistic **then**.

In general, reference is subcategorized into two groups: **exophora**, orexophoric reference (situational reference which is not cohesive/ reference whichlies outside the text in the context of situation) and **endophora**, or endophoricreference (textual reference/ reference which refers to preceding text).See the differences between **endophora** and **exophora** in sentences below;

(5) I saw Sally yesterday. She was lying on the beach.

“She” is an endophoric reference since it refers to something already mentioned in the text, i.e. “Sally”. By contrast, see sentence (6)

(6) She was lying on the beach.





If it appeared by itself, contains an **exophoric** reference; “she” refers to something that is not present in surrounding text, so there is not enough information given within the text to independently determine to whom “she” refers to. It can refer to someone the speaker assumes his/her audience has prior knowledge of, or can refer to a person he/she is showing to his/her listeners. Without further information, in other words, there is no way of knowing the exact meaning of an exophoric term. Endophora is divided into anaphora (reference to preceding text) and cataphora (reference to following text). A special type of referential cohesion results from the use of pronouns;

(7) John said that **he** was not going to school.

(8) When **he** came in John tripped over the blocks.

Back-referential pronouns, such as the pronouns in (7), are called anaphora. The term is derived from a Greek word which means “to lift up” or “to bring back”. Forward referential pronouns, such as the one in (8), are called cataphora: cata- is the opposite of ana-. In the examples mentioned here. “he” can also refer to another person. Then it is called an exophor or a deictic element. Anaphoric relations are not only found when personal pronouns are used. See the proverb in the following example.

(9) If John is not going to school, Then I won't **do** it either.

The research into anaphora is focused on the following question: How are anaphora interpreted and which factors play a role in the interpretation process? Compare the following discourse fragments.

(10) Mary said nothing to Sally. She would not understand the first thing about it.

(11) Mary told Sally everything. She could not keep her mouth shut.

In (10) “she” can only refer to “sally”.

In (11) both references are grammatically possible. While in (12). “she” can only refer to “Sally”.

(12) Mary told Sally everything. She could not keep her mouth shut and Mary really told her off for doing it.

An interesting phenomenon can be observed in the following sentences.

(13) Julius left. He was sick.

(14) He was sick. Julius left.

(15) He was sick. That's why Julius left.

In (13) “he” can refer to Julius. In (14) it is much more plausible that “he” refers to someone other than Julius while, in (15) “he” can be interpreted as referring forward to “Julius”. These differences can be explained by assuming an interpretation principle suggested by Peter Bosch; 1983 in Rankema (2004).

(16) Principle of natural sequential aboutness



Unless there is a reason to assume the contrary, each following sentence is assumed to say something about object introduced in previous sentences. On the basis of this principle", according to Bosch; 1983 in Rankema(2004), the "he" in (14) cannot be interpreted as Julius. The fact of Julius leaving says nothing about the preceding sentence: "He was sick." In (15), on the otherhand, the word "that" indicates that something is going to be said which is linked to the preceding sentence. This indication is reinforced by the reader's knowledge that one consequence of "being sick" is found in the words which follow, that is, that sickness can be a reason for leaving. It is for this reason that the sentence about Julius can be linked to the preceding sentence. This interpretation is, therefore, very much dependent on the reader's general knowledge. This can also be seen in the following example, in which the relation is the same as in (15).

(17) He screamed. That is why Julius left.

As someone's screaming is not usually a reason for that same person's leaving, it can be assumed on the basis of the interpretation principle that this second sentence does not say anything about the person in the first sentence. Thus, the "he" in (17) cannot be interpreted as referring to "Julius". Experimental research has determined which factor plays a role in the interpretation on anaphora. In an experiment conducted by Susan Ehrlich; 1980 in Rankema (2004), subjects were given sentences of the following type.

(18) Steve blamed Frank because he spilled the coffee.

(19) Jane blamed Bill because he spilled the coffee.

The time it took for the subjects to determine which name was the antecedent for the anaphor "he" was measured. Most of the subjects determined that "he" in sentence (18) referred to Frank. This decision did not require grammatical knowledge but general knowledge. Spilling coffee is dummy and inconvenient and is, therefore, a reason for blame. If Steve is blaming Frank, then it is most likely the latter who spilled the coffee. The use of general knowledge is a pragmatic factor. In (19) this knowledge is not necessary for the interpretation of "he". Knowledge of grammar makes it clear that "he", being a male-gender pronoun, can only refer to Bill. If pragmatic factors always play a role in the interpretation of anaphora, then the subjects would have spent equal amounts of time in determining the antecedent for both sentences (18) and (19). If, however, readers first apply their grammatical knowledge and only then their general knowledge, if necessary, then the interpretation of (18) will take less time than that of (19). After all, in the case of (19) grammatical knowledge is sufficient. The experiment did indeed prove that the interpretation of (19) took less time than that of



(18). This led to the conclusion that pragmatic factors only play a role when grammatical clues are lacking.

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