Cohesion and coherence

Introduction

Cohesion and coherence are terms used in discourse analysis and text linguistics to describe the properties of written texts.

Cohesion is defined as "the use of explicit linguistic devices to signal relations between sentences and parts of texts." These cohesive devices are phases or words that help the reader associate previous statements with subsequent ones. Cohesion is the grammatical and/or lexical relationships between the different elements of a text.

A text may be cohesive without necessarily being coherent: Cohesion does not spawn coherence. Cohesion is determined by lexically and grammatically overt intersentential relationships, whereas coherence is based on semantic relationships.

Example:

- <u>My father</u> once bought a **Lincoln convertible**. <u>He</u> did it by saving every penny **he** could. **That car** would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, <u>he</u> sold **it** to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I"d rather have **the convertible.**

Cohesive ties (In reference): Father- he- he- he; "A" Lincoln convertible- that car- it- "the" convertible

-My father <u>once</u> **bought** a Lincoln convertible. He did it by **saving** every **penny** he could. That car would be **worth** a **fortune** <u>nowadays</u>. However, he **sold** it to help **pay** for my college education. <u>Sometimes</u> I think I"d rather have the convertible.

Cohesive ties (in semantics): [money]: bought- saving- penny- worth- fortunesold- pay [time]: once- nowadays- sometimes

-My father once **bought** a Lincoln convertible. He **did** it by saving every penny he **could**. That car **would** be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he **sold** it to help [ay for my college education. Sometimes I think I"d rather have the convertible.

Cohesive ties (in grammar): Tense: bought- did- could- would- sold

Cohesive devices for textual relation: however

Example: My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red. That color doesn"t suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter isn't as fast as a telephone call.

Many cohesive devices, but a text very hard to interpret. ϖ Here we don't see any coherence but there is a cohesion.

Cohesive (with many cohesive ties) Coherent (easy to interpret)

Coherence is the relationships which link the meanings of utterances in a discourse or of the sentences in a text.

Example:

- HER: That"s the telephone
- HIM: I"m in the bath
- HER: O.K.

There are certainly no cohesive ties within this fragment of discourse. Here we see coherence but no cohesion.

Cohesion and coherence

- Cohesion helps to create coherence.
- Cohesion does not entail coherence
- Coherence can be made with/out cohesive ties/ devises.

There are two main types of cohesion: *grammatical cohesion*, which is based on structural content— and *lexical cohesion*, which is based on lexical content and background knowledge.

GRAMMATICAL COHESION

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) there are four types of grammatical cohesive devices. Those are reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction.

REFERENCE

Reference creates cohesion by creating links between elements. Reference refers to system which introduces and track the identity of participant through text (Gerot and Wignell 1994: 170). As a general rule, therefore, reference items may be anaphoric and cataphoric

Anaphoric reference signifies a word or a phrase that refers to another word or phrase used earlier in the text .For example:

- A: Can I have an egg and bacon burger?
- B: Would you like cheese with that?
- A: yes, …and…..a large fries please.
- B: Would you like any drinks or a dessert with that?
- A: No, thanks.

or Stephen Downes denigrates restaurants and, in fact the very food which he is, sadly, in the position of judging. He has a happy knack of putting the reader completely off by his disgusting description.

Cataphoric reference describes the use of a word or phrase that refers to another word or phrase which is used later in the text. Cataphoric reference is less common in speech but can be used for dramatic effect in writing. It occurs when the reader is introduced to someone as an abstract, before later learning his or her name. For example: When I told him, Bill didn't really believe me.">

Ellipsis is another cohesive device which can be improving the readers understanding of a piece of writing. It happens when, after a more specific mention words are missed out when the phrase need to be repeated. Ellipsis can be divided into:

Nominal ellipsis

Example: My kids play an awful lot of sport

Both (my kids) are incredibly energetic.

In the example above the personal pronoun my kids is omitted.

Verbal ellipsis

A: have you been working?

B; yes I have (been working)

In the dialogue above the verb been working is omitted.

Clausal ellipsis

A; Paul's staying for dinner, isn't he?

B: is he? He didn't tell me (he was staying for dinner)

In the example above the clause he was staying for dinner is omitted.

SUBSTITUTION

Substitution is very similar to ellipsis in the effect; it has on the text, and occurs when instead of leaving a word or phrase out, as in ellipsis, it is substituted for another, more general word. The distinction between substitution and reference is that substitution is a relation in the wording rather than in meaning. It is a relation between linguistics items, such as words or phrases; whereas reference is a relation between meanings. Substitution can be divided into:

Nominal substitution

A: There are some new tennis balls. These ones have lost their bounce.

In the text above the noun tennis balls is substituted with ones

A: I'll have two poached eggs on toast, please B: I'll have the same

In the text above the poached eggs on toast is substituted by same

b. Verbal substitution

Example:
A: have the children gone to sleep? B: they must have done.

In the example above the verb gone to sleep is substituted by done.

Does she sing?-yes she does

In the text above the verb sing is substituted by does

c. Clausal substitution

A: Is it going to rain? B: I don't think so.

In the dialogue above, the clause going to rain is substituted by so.

CONJUNCTION

Conjunction creates cohesion by relating sentences and paragraph to each other by using words from the class of conjunction or numerals. Conjunctive relations typically involve contiguous elements up to the size of paragraphs-and possibly beyond, or their equivalent in spoken language, conjunction is a way of setting up the logical relations that characterize clause complexes in the absences of the structural relationship by which such complexes are defined. Conjunction can be divided into:

Temporal conjunction: after, while, when, meanwhile, before, then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last, at once

.For example: Mr. Hiram B. Otis bought Canterville Chase. Then his family came to England from America.

Causal conjunction: because, so, then, therefore, nevertheless, thus, hence, consequently, for this reason, it follows that.

For example: Rain started to fall, so the family went inside the house quickly.

Additive conjunction: and, and also, in addition, moreover, or, or else, further, further more, additionally, for instance, alternatively, by the way, in other words, in same way, similarly.

No one has put s ghost in museum. And you haven't seen this ghost either.

Adversative conjunction: but, however, in any case only, instead, yet, on the other hand, despite this, on the contrary, in fact, anyhow, though, nevertheless.

For example:"Yes, I will' sad Lord Canterville. 'But, please remember, I told you about the ghost before you bought the house".

LEXICAL COHESION

According to Paltridge (2000:134), lexical cohesion refers to relationship among lexical items in – a text and, in particular, among content words. The main kinds of lexical cohesion are repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation.

Repetition refers to words that are repeated in the text, as well as words that have changed to reflect tense or number such as feel and felt, feeling and feelings.

Synonymy refers to the relationship between words that are similar to meaning such as customers and patrons.

Antonymy refers to opposite meaning such as good and bad, happy and sad.

Hyponymy refers to classes of lexical items where the relationship is one of 'general - specific' or ' a type of', such as entree and main course.

Meronymy refers to lexical items which are in a whole-part relation, such as the relationship between main course, potatoes and broccoli; and fish, bones, and scales.

 Collocation describe associations between words that tend to co-occur, such as, combinations of adjectives and nouns, as in 'quality product', 'snide remarks' and ' discerning customers'. It also includes the relationship between verbs and nouns such as eat and food, and pairs of nouns such as friends and neighbours.