

Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif-2- University  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English Language and Literature

Teacher : Dr. Farida MECHRI  
Module : Study of Texts  
Level: First Year

## Lessons

### 1. What is a Text

The comprehensive inclusion of both oral and written forms of language under the same topic of 'text' seems reasonable although they do not always share the same characteristics. Brown and Yule (1983: 4-16) discuss the problematic issues of spoken and written texts, their similarities and differences in context, manner and form, and adopt "Text" as a technical term, to refer to the verbal record of a communicative act." (Brown and Yule, 1983: 6)

The expression 'verbal record' refers to transcripts –of oral language- which are supposed to transcribe the maximum features of speech into writing. Within the same scope of written representation of speech Crystal says:

'A piece of naturally occurring spoken, written or signed discourse identified for purposes of analysis. It is often a language unit which a definable communicative function, such as a conversation.' (Crystal, 1992: 72)

Crystal adds, here, that text has a 'communicative function, thus still considering text as discourse. Cook (1989: 158) considers that a text is 'stretch of language interpreted formally, without context. Nunan (1993: 6-7) is much more specific in the definition of the term 'text' as:

'Any record of a 'communicative event'. The event itself may involve oral language or written language (...), with an analysis of the structure properties of language, divorced from their communicative functions (...) identifying a regularities and patterns in language. A text or piece of discourse consists of more than one sentence and the sentences combine to form a meaningful whole. The notion that a text should form a 'meaningful whole \_that is, convey a complete message – is commonsensical. ' (Nunan, 1993b: 6-7)

Limiting the scope of 'text' to formal, structural, and syntactic properties of a 'communicative event', without going outside it, is drawing a clear cut distinction between text linguistics and discourse analysis.

## **2. Elements of Text**

Linguists assume that cohesion and coherence are the most two important elements of text.

### **2.1. Cohesion elements**

Cohesion is primarily concerned with the relationships that link the language elements together to make a text. Cohesive links of texts, stretches of language that are longer than a sentence, include regularities, patterns, formal structures and syntactic properties.

'A text has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text (...). The texture is provided by the cohesive "relation" (...). Cohesive relationships within a text are set up where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it can not be effectively decoded except by recourse to it' (Halliday and Hassan, 1970: 2-4)

'Texture', then, is the linking, binding, of text together so that interrelationships of meaning interpretation can be drawn from the text itself. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), 'anaphoric' and 'cataphoric' reference are explicit formal markers which relate what was said to what is to be said. They include additive, adversative, casual, and temporal conjunctions. 'Endophoric' and 'exophoric' relations refer to the interpretation of meaning inside the text and outside it. Brown and Yule (1983:192) name these forms co-reference relations. 'Substitution' and 'ellipsis' as well as 'lexical relation' play a major role in the establishing cohesive relationships in text.

Further meaning interpretation beyond sentence level is related to information structure. Identifiable structural, cohesive, linguistic devices are very important to distinguish coherent text from random sentences or utterances. In addition, kinds of texts can be distinguished according to the recurrent patterns. The position of information in a text indicates whether it is given or new. The organization of information in sentences and text indicates emphasis and focus on particular points by the speaker/writer and determine his/her purpose. The latter element is not sufficiently interpreted unless the hearer/writer brings in his/her contribution. At this level of interpreting meaning, we would be considering coherence

of text. As far as lexical items and relations are concerned, Sinclair (2004: 147-148) considers that ‘the word is not the best starting point for a description of meaning, because meaning arises from words in particular combinations’. On the other hand, Sinclair adds that:

‘(...) neither in the study of lexis of the language nor in the study of the grammar of the language are the syntagmatic relation of the language given meaning. This is to a great extent because there is no frame work within which they can be shown to have meaning, because meaning is largely held to reside either in the grammatical choice \_on the paradigmatic axis\_ or in the lexical choice of a word to deliver a meaning.’ (Sinclair, 2004: 169)

Hence, whatever the semantic meaning of a word of the conceptualized knowledge of a given syntactic structure, its meaning is determined either by the choice a speaker/writer makes to imply a purposive meaning or by the choice a hearer/reader makes to interpret meaning. These choices are not part of language/text but contextual factors of coherence and procedural processes of meaning negotiation between a producer and receiver of language.

Text cohesion can be signaled using reference, conjunctions, repetition, ellipses, and substitutions.

## **2.2. Coherence and Text**

Text is an important unit of any analysis. It involves the purpose and the message to be communicated. Text coherence can not be achieved only by linguistic links like conjunctions, ellipsis, reference, and substitutions. It can be achieved by text function, text structure, and text connection by more functional connectives. Coherence is related to unity. Ideas that are arranged in a clear and logical way are coherent. When a text is unified and coherent, the reader can easily understand the main points.

## **3. Metadiscourse**

Metadiscourse markers refer explicitly to aspects of the organization of a text, or indicate a writer’s stance towards the text’s content or towards the reader (Hyland 2004a: 109). They are important markers in more academic text styles. Metadiscourse is a tool to signal the progression of the ideas of the text. It saves the link between the sentences of the text. It guides the reader through the main function and purpose of the author, and most importantly the coherence of the text. There are different kinds of metadiscourse makers.

These signals are the items that signal the progression (textual coherence of text). The following table will show some of them:

Textual Metadiscourse				Interpersonal Metadiscourse					
Logical Transitions	connectives/	Frame markers	Code glosses	Endophonic Markers	Evidentials	Hedges	Boosters/ Emphatics	Attitude Markers	Person Markers
In addition		First	For instance	See	Quote	Perhaps	In fact	Unfortunately	I
However		Second	For example	Noted	Established	Might	Definitely	I agree	We
Thus		Finally	Known as	Discussed below	Said	Almost	It is clear	Admittedly	Me
Moreover		To conclude	Such as	Discussed above	Points out	Apparently	True	Amazingly	My
And		To start with	Specifically	Discussed later	Argues	Doubt	Actually	Appropriately	Our
But		Firstly	e.g.	Section	Claim	Approximately	Always	Correctly	Mine...
Therefore		Secondly	ie.	Chapter	Believe	Maybe	Apparent	Cunously	
Thereby		Third	Defined as	Figure	Suggests	Believed	I believe	Disappointing	
So		Thirdly	This means	Table	Found that	Certain extent	Certainly	Disagree	
Similarly		Fourth	Namely	Page	Cite	Could	Clearly	Fortunately	
Equally		Fourthly	Such as	Discussed earlier	According to	Appear to be	Must	Hopefully	
Likewise		Fifty	Put another	Discussed before	Quote	Assume	Never	Important	
Furthermore		Fifthly	way	Fig	Show	Essentially	No doubt	Importantly	
In contrast		Next	Known as	Example...	Proves	Estimate	Beyond doubt	Understandably	
As a result		To begin	Defined as		Demonstrates	Frequently	Obvious	Interestingly	
Since		Last	Called		Studies	Generally	Obviously	Prefer	
Because		Lastly	That is		Research	Indicate	Of course	Pleased	
Consequently		Subsequently	That is to say		Literature	Largely	Prove	Must	
Accordingly		Two	In other words		Says	Likely	Sure	Ought	
On the other hand		Three	Which means		Point to	Mainly	Undoubtedly	Remarkable	
On the contrary		Four	In fact		Prove	Often	Well known	Surprisingly	
Besides		Five	Viz...		Shows	Possible	Should	Unfortunately	
Also...		Six...			Cites...	Relatively...	By far...	Unusually...	

Each of the previous elements or signals has a given role in guiding the reader to understand the message to be communicated. Transitions/logical connectives link the ideas of the text. They express semantic relation between main clauses. Frame markers signal the logical order of the article or selection. They explicitly refer to text stages. Code glosses signal the explanation and illustration provided and help readers grasp meanings of ideational material. Hedges withhold writer's full commitment to statements. They are really important to know the writer's doubts about the text topic. Boosters/emphatics can show the writer emphasis on the information and certainty in message. Attitude markers express writer's agreements and disagreements about the topic to providing enough argument about the topic. Endophoric markers refer to information in other parts of the text. Evidentials refer to source of information from other texts. Person markers indicate explicit reference to author(s).

#### **4. Text Functions**

Different texts have different functions: explanation, discussion, description, or an argumentation ... To understand the message to be communicated, we should focus on the main function(s) of any text, the link between the ideas of the text, the global organization of any text.

There are different functions of different types of texts. Each function has a given purpose. Consider the following functions:

a. Explanation:

- To explain the reasons
- To provide causes and effects of given concepts

Example: Academic article ...

b. Discussion:

- To give opinions
- To provide arguments

Example: Academic article, conference ...

c. Description:

- To describe cultural, individual, or natural event

Example: Abstract in an academic article...

d. Argumentation:

- To give facts and opinions for and against. The following connectives guide the reader to the argumentation of text:

Connecting similar ideas/opinion for	Connecting opposite ideas/arguments against
In this way, further, in addition, moreover, another way, by the same token, subsequently...	However, on the other hand, alternatively, despite this, in contrast, nevertheless, otherwise instead...

Example: Debate, political speech...

e. Narration:

- To tell a story
- To describe a sequence of events

Example: A story in a novel

f. Reviewing:

- To make comments and assessment

Example: Editorials in journals, book reviews

g. Instruction:

- To make a series of steps and directions to be carried out

Example: Manuals...

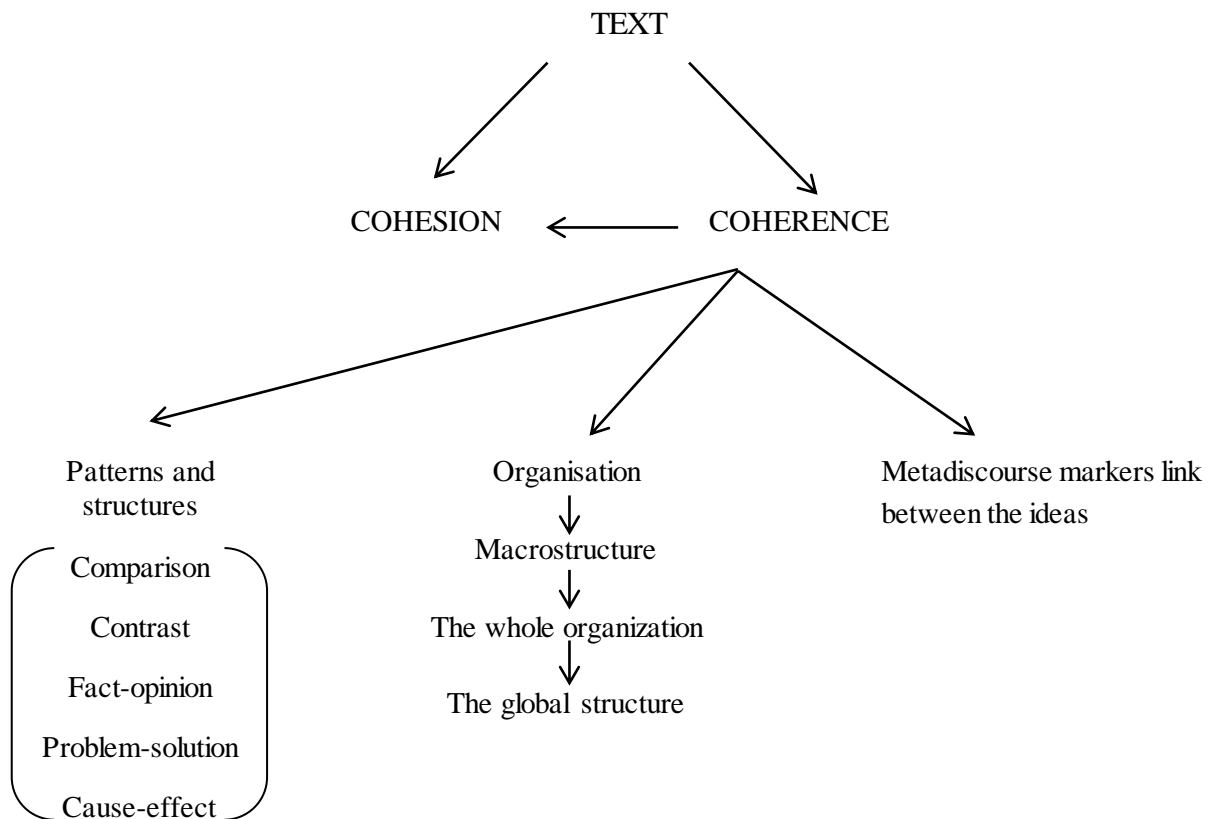
It is really important to know the different structures of a number of texts. Through these functions, we can understand the text and see how different structures can be formed.

## 5. The Global Organization of Text (Macrostructure)

Text coherence focuses on the whole organization of the information and the relation between ideas (the linguistic term is the rhetorical organization) which explain better the structure of any text. Also it depends on the element that signals the evolvement of the ideas (They are called in linguistics: MOVES). All these aspects help in the study of how text is structured in which it follows regular patterns. The whole organization of the text (macrostructure) is the essential property of any text. Its coherence is analyzed and



## Summary of the Main Aspects



(All these textual aspects help in understanding and analyzing text)

### Macrostructure:

- The author gives causes and consequences of the topic
- The author states agreements and disagreements about the topic (claims-counter-claims)
- States observation
- Introduces problem and gives solution
- States opinion about the topic
- Describes events in chronological order



## **Examples of Texts and Macrostructures**

- Argumentative text: arguments-conclusions
- Newspaper article: facts-causes, previous events, explanation, background
- Editorial: agreements-disagreements
- Academic article: abstract, introduction, problem, solution, conclusion

## **Making a Summary of Text:**

To make a summary, you should keep the structure and the main features of the text. Consider the following explanation:

- If the discourse is argumentative, you should summarize the arguments of the author with the main conclusion (relying on attitude markers and transitions/logical connectives)
- If the text is a newspaper article, you should mention the facts and the causes
- If the text is an editorial, you should mention briefly the agreements and the disagreements of the author and the conclusion