Cohesion

We know, for example, that texts must have a certain structure that depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence. Some of those factors are described in terms of cohesion, or the formal ties and connections that exist within texts. There are several cohesive ties in this text. 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 pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible. We can identify connections here in the use of words to maintain reference to the same people and things throughout. There are also connections created by terms that share a common element of meaning, such as "money" and "time." The verb tenses in the first four sentences are in the past, creating a connection between those events, in contrast to the present tense of the final sentence marking a change in time and focus. Analysis of these cohesive ties gives us some insight into how writers structure what they want to say. However, by itself, cohesion is not sufficient to enable us to make sense of what we read. It is quite easy to create a text that has a lot of cohesive ties, but is difficult to interpret.

The "connectedness" we experience in our interpretation of normal texts is not simply based on connections between words. There must be another factor that helps us distinguish connected texts that make sense from those that do not. This factor is usually described as "coherence" .

Coherence

The key to the concept of coherence ("everything fitting together well") is not something that exists in the words or structures of discourse, like cohesion, but something that exists in people. It is people who "make sense" of what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an interpretation that is in line with their experience of the way the world is. You may have tried quite hard to make the last example fit some situation that accommodated all the details (involving a red car, a woman and a letter) into a single coherent interpretation. In doing so, you would necessarily be involved in a process of bringing other information to the text. This process is not restricted to trying to understand "odd" texts. It seems to be involved in our interpretation of all discourse. For example, you pick up a newspaper and see this headline: Woman robs bank with sandwich. As you try to build a coherent interpretation, you probably focus on the sandwich part because there is something odd about this situation. Is she just carrying a sandwich, or is she eating the sandwich (taking occasional bites), or is she acting as if the sandwich is a weapon (concealed in a bag perhaps)? Deciding which interpretation is appropriate cannot be accomplished based on only the words in the headline. We need to bring information from our experience to create a plausible situation. If you decided on the "pretend gun in bag" situation, then your coherence-creating mind would appear to be in good working order. We also depend on coherence in coping with everyday conversation. We are continually taking part in conversational interactions where a great deal of what is meant or communicated cannot actually be found in what is said. In this brief interaction (from Widdowson, 1978), there are no cohesive ties connecting the three utterances,

so we must be using some other means to make sense of it. One way to understand what is going on is to consider the three parts of the interaction in terms of speech acts. These are listed on the right, providing a way of analyzing the interaction by identifying what makes it coherent for the participants.

H E R : That's the telephone. (She makes a request of him to perform action)

H I M : I'm in the bath. (He states reason why he cannot comply with request)

H E R : OK. (She accepts reason)

If this is a reasonable analysis of what took place in the brief interaction, then it is clear that language-users must have a lot of knowledge of how conversation works that is not simply knowledge of words and sentences, but must involve familiarity with a lot of other types of structures and their typical functions. Conversation analysis In simple terms, English conversation can be described as an activity in which, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking. Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns. (This is not true in all situations or societies.) If more than one participant tries to talk at the same time, one of them usually stops, as in the following example, where A stops until B has finished.

A : Didn't you [know whB : [But he must've been there by two A : Yes but you knew where he was going (A small square bracket [is conventionally used to indicate a place where simultaneous or overlapping speech occurs.) For the most part, participants wait

until one speaker indicates that he or she has finished, usually by signaling a completion point. Speakers can mark their turns as complete in a number of ways: by asking a question, for example, or by pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or sentence. Other participants can indicate that they want to take the speaking turn, also in a number of ways. They can start to make short sounds, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking, and often use body shifts or facial expressions to signal that they have something to say.

Turn-Taking

There are different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation in conversation, which may result in slightly different conventions of turn-taking. One strategy, which may be overused by "long-winded" speakers or those who are used to "holding the floor," is designed to avoid having normal completion points occur. We all use this strategy to some extent, usually in situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it. If the normal expectation is that completion points are marked by the end of a sentence and a pause, then one way to "keep the turn" is to avoid having those two markers occur together. That is, don't pause at the end of sentences; make your sentences run on by using connectors like and, and then, so, but; place your pauses at points where the message is clearly incomplete; and preferably "fill" the pause with a hesitation marker such as er, em, uh, ah. Pauses and Filled Pauses In the following example, note how the pauses (marked by …) are placed before and after verbs rather than at the end of sentences, making it difficult to get a clear sense of what this person is saying

until we hear the part after each pause. A: that's their favorite restaurant because they … enjoy French food and when they were … in France they couldn't believe it that … you know that they had … that they had had better meals back home In the next example, speaker X produces filled pauses (with em, er, you know) after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation. X : well that film really was … [wasn't what he was good at Y: [when diX : I mean his other … em his later films were much more … er really more in the romantic style and that was more what what he was … you know … em best at doing Y: so when did he make that one Adjacency Pairs That last example would seem to suggest that conversation is a problematic activity where speakers have to pay close attention to what is going on. That is not normally the case because a great deal of conversational interaction follows some fairly well established patterns. When someone says Hi or Hello, we usually respond with a similar greeting. This type of almost automatic sequence is called an adjacency pair, which consists of a first part and a second part, as found in greetings, question–answer (Q~A) sequences, thanking and leavetaking. First part Second part

Y O U : Good mornin'.

M E : Good mornin'.

Y O U : Where's Mary?

 M E : She's at work already.

Y O U : Thanks for your help yesterday.

M E : Oh, you're welcome.

Y O U : Okay, talk to you later.

M E : Bye.

These examples illustrate the basic pattern, but not all first parts are immediately followed by second parts. For example, one question may not receive its answer until after another question–answer sequence.

Insertion Sequences

In the following example, the sequence Q2~A2 comes between the first question (Q1) and its answer (A1). This is called an insertion sequence, that is, an adjacency pair that comes between the first and second parts of another pair. Y O U : Do you want some milk? (= Q1) M E : Is it soy milk? (= Q2) Y O U : Of course. (= A2) M E : Okay, thanks. (= A1) In some situations, a complex structure can emerge from the effect of insertion sequences. This is often the case in "service encounters," as in our next example. Notice how it is only in the middle of this interaction (Q3~A3) that we have an adjacency pair together, while insertion sequences delay the occurrence of second parts for each of the other first parts. B U D : Can I order pizza to go? (= Q1) D A N : What kind would you like? (= Q2) B U D : Do you have any special deals? (= Q3) D A N : Well, you can get two veggie supremes for the price of one. (= A3) B U D : Okay, I'd like that deal. (= A2) D A N : Sure thing. We'll have that ready for you in no time. (= A1) We are not normally aware of most of these aspects of conversational structure, but speakers sometimes draw attention to the need for a second part once a first part has been uttered. In the following interaction, originally analyzed by Sacks (1972: 341), a mother immediately notices the absence of a spoken return greeting by her daughter and draws attention to the social expectation involved.

W O M A N : Hi, Annie.

M O T H E R : Annie, don't you hear someone say hello to you?

W O M A N : Oh, that's okay, she smiled hello.

M O T H E R : You know you're supposed to greet someone, don't you?

A N N I E : [Hangs head] Hello.

The expectations we all have that certain patterns of turn-taking will occur in conversation are connected to a more general aspect of socially situated interaction, that it will be "co-operative." This observation is actually a principle of conversation.

The Co-operative Principle

An underlying assumption in most conversational exchanges is that the participants are co-operating with each other. This principle, plus four elements, or "maxims," were first described by the philosopher Paul Grice (1975: 45), and are often referred to as the "Gricean maxims," .The Co-operative Principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

The Quantity maxim: Make your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required.

The Quality maxim: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.

The Relation maxim: Be relevant. The Manner maxim: Be clear, brief and orderly.

In simple terms, we expect our conversational partners to make succinct, honest, relevant and clear contributions to the interaction and to signal to us in some way if these maxims are not being followed. It is certainly true that, on occasion, we can experience conversational exchanges in which the co-operative principle may not seem to be in operation.

However, this general description of the normal expectations we have in conversation helps to explain a number of regular features in our talk. For example, during their lunch break, one woman asks another how she likes the sandwich she is eating and receives the following answer. Oh, a sandwich is a sandwich. In logical terms, this reply appears to have no communicative value since it states something obvious and hence would appear to be a tautology. Repeating a phrase that adds nothing would hardly count as an appropriate answer to a question. However, if the woman is being co-operative and adhering to the Quantity maxim about being "as informative as is required," then the listener must assume that her friend is communicating something. Given the opportunity to evaluate the sandwich, her friend has responded without an explicit evaluation, thereby implying that she has no opinion, good or bad, to express. That is, her friend has communicated that the sandwich is not worth talking about.

Comparative Reconstruction

Using information from sets of cognates from different (but apparently related) languages, we can embark on a procedure called comparative reconstruction. <mark>The aim of this procedure is to reconstruct what must have been an earlier or even the possible "proto" form in the common ancestral language</mark>. In carrying out this procedure, we can make use *of two very general principles.* The majority principle is very straightforward. If, in a cognate set, three words begin with a [p] sound and one word begins with a [b] sound, then our best guess is that the majority have retained the original sound (i.e. [p]). The most natural development principle is based on the fact that certain types of sound change are very common, as shown in Table 17.1, whereas changes in the other direction are extremely unlikely.

Table 17.1 Direction of change Examples

1 Final vowels often disappear

vino → vin

2 Voiceless sounds become voiced, often between vowels muta → muda

3 Stops become fricatives ripa → riva

4 Consonants become voiceless at the end of words rizu → ris

Comparing Cognates

If we take some examples of cognates from three languages, as shown below, we can make a start on comparative reconstruction by deciding what was the most likely form of the initial sound in the original source of all three. Since the written forms can often be misleading, we check that the <mark>initial sounds</mark> of the words in languages A and B are all [k], while in language C, the initial sound in all the words is [ʃ].

A	B	C
cantare	cantar	chanter ("sing")
catena	cadena	chaîne ("chain")
caro	caro	cher ("dear")
cavallo	caballo	cheval ("horse")

Sound Reconstruction

Within the small set of languages just presented, the majority principle would be used to argue that the initial sound [k] in languages A and B is older than the [ʃ] sound in language C. Adding support to this analysis, the [k] sound is a stop consonant and the /ʃ/ sound is a fricative. According to one part

of the "most natural development principle" (in Table 17.1), change occurs in the direction of stops becoming fricatives, so the [k] sound is more likely to have been the original. We have started on the comparative reconstruction of the common origins of some words in Italian (A), Spanish (B) and French (C). In this case, we have a way of checking our reconstruction because the common origin for these three languages is known to be Latin. When we check the Latin cognates of the words listed, we find cantare, catena, carus and caballus, confirming that [k] was the initial sound.

Word Reconstruction

Looking at a non-Indo-European set of cognates, we can imagine receiving the following data from a linguist recently returned from an expedition to a remote region of the Amazon. The examples are a set of cognates from three related languages, but what would the proto-forms have looked like?

Languages 1   2   3

Protoforms

 mube   mupe   mup _____ ("stream")

 abadi   apati   apat _____ ("rock")

 agana   akana   akan _____ ("knife")

 enugu   enuku   enuk _____ ("diamond")

Using the majority principle, we can suggest that the older forms will most likely be based on language 2 or language 3. If this is correct, then the consonant changes must have been:

 [p] → [b],

[t] → [d] and

[k] → [g] in order to produce the later forms in language 1.

There is a pattern in these changes: voiceless sounds became voiced between vowels. So, languages 2 and 3 have older forms than language 1. Which of the two lists, 2 or 3, contains the older forms? Remembering one other "most natural development" type of sound change (i.e. final vowels often disappear), we can propose that the words in language 3 have consistently lost the final vowels still present in the words of language 2. Our best guess, then, is that the forms listed for language 2 are closest to what must have been the original proto-forms.

Discourse Analysis

The word discourse is usually defined as "language beyond the sentence" and so the analysis of discourse is typically concerned with the study of language in texts and conversation. In many of the preceding chapters, when we were concentrating on linguistic description, we were concerned with the accurate representation of the forms and structures. However, as language-users, we are capable of more than simply recognizing correct versus incorrect forms and structures. We can cope with fragments in newspaper headlines such as Trains collide, two die, and know that what happened in the first part was the cause of what happened in the second part. We can also make sense of notices like No shoes, no service, on shop windows in summer, understanding that a conditional relation exists between the two parts ("If you are wearing no shoes, you will receive no service").

We have the ability to create complex discourse interpretations of fragmentary linguistic messages. Interpreting discourse We can even cope with texts, written in English, which we couldn't produce ourselves and which appear to break a lot of the rules of the English language. Yet we can build an interpretation. The following example, provided by Eric Nelson, is from an essay by a student learning English and contains ungrammatical forms and misspellings, yet it can be understood.

My Town My natal was in a small town, very close to Riyadh capital of Saudi Arabia. The distant between my town and Riyadh 7 miles exactly. The name of this Almasani that means in English Factories. It takes this name from the peopl's carrer. In my childhood I remmeber the people live. It was very simple. Most the people was farmer.

This example may serve to illustrate a simple point about the way we react to language that contains ungrammatical forms. Rather than simply rejecting the text as ungrammatical, we try to make sense of it. That is, we attempt to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of what the writer intended to convey.

(Most people say they understand the "My Town" text quite easily.) It is this effort to interpret (or to be interpreted), and how we accomplish it, that are the key elements investigated in the study of discourse. To arrive at an interpretation, and to make our messages interpretable, we certainly rely on what we know about linguistic form and structure. But, as language-users, we have more knowledge than that.

Cohesion

We know, for example, that texts must have a certain structure that depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence. Some of those factors are described in terms of cohesion, or the formal ties and connections that exist within texts. There are several cohesive ties in this text.

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 pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.

We can identify connections here in the use of words to maintain reference to the same people and things throughout. There are also connections created by terms that share a common element of meaning, such as "money" and "time." The verb tenses in the first four sentences are in the past, creating a connection between those events, in contrast to the present tense of the final sentence marking a change in time and focus.

However, by itself, cohesion is not sufficient to enable us to make sense of what we read. It is quite easy to create a text that has a lot of cohesive ties, but is difficult to interpret. Note that the following text has these connections in Lincoln – the car, red – that color, her –she and letters – a letter.

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.

It becomes clear from this type of example that the "connectedness" we experience in our interpretation of normal texts is not simply based on connections between words. There must be another factor that helps us distinguish connected texts that make sense from those that do not. This factor is usually described as "coherence." Coherence The key to the concept of coherence ("everything fitting together well") is not something that exists in the words or structures of discourse, like cohesion, but something that exists in people. It is people who "make sense" of what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an interpretation that is in line with their experience of the way the world is. You may have tried quite hard to make the last example fit some situation that accommodated all the details (involving a red car, a woman and a letter) into a single coherent interpretation. In doing so, you would necessarily be involved in a process of bringing other information to the text. This process is not restricted to trying to understand "odd" texts. It seems to be involved in our interpretation of all discourse. For example, you pick up a newspaper and see this headline: Woman robs bank with sandwich.

As you try to build a coherent interpretation, you probably focus on the sandwich part because there is something odd about this situation. Is she just carrying a sandwich, or is she eating the sandwich (taking occasional bites), or is she acting as if the sandwich is a weapon (concealed in a bag perhaps)? Deciding which interpretation is appropriate cannot be accomplished based on only the words in the headline. We need to bring information from our experience to create a plausible situation. If you decided on the "pretend gun in bag" situation, then your coherence-creating mind would appear to be in good working order. We also depend on coherence in coping with everyday conversation. We are continually taking part in conversational interactions where a great deal of what is meant or communicated cannot actually be found in what is said. In this brief interaction (from Widdowson, 1978), there are no cohesive ties connecting the three utterances, so we must be using

some other means to make sense of it. One way to understand what is going on is to consider the three parts of the interaction in terms of speech acts .These are listed on the right, providing a way of analyzing the interaction by identifying what makes it coherent for the participants.

H E R : That's the telephone. (She makes a request of him to perform action)
H I M : I'm in the bath. (He states reason why he cannot comply with request)
H E R : OK. (She accepts reason)

If this is a reasonable analysis of what took place in the brief interaction, then it is clear that language-users must have a lot of knowledge of how conversation works that is not simply knowledge of words and sentences, but must involve familiarity with a lot of other types of structures and their typical functions.

 Conversation analysis In simple terms, English conversation can be described as an activity in which, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking. Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns. (This is not true in all situations or societies.) If more than one participant tries to talk at the same time, one of them usually stops, as in the following example, where A stops until B has finished.

 A : Didn't you [know whB : [But he must've been there by two A : Yes but you knew where he was going (A small square bracket [is conventionally used to indicate a place where simultaneous or overlapping speech occurs.) For the most part, participants wait until one speaker indicates that he or she has finished, usually by signaling a completion point. Speakers can mark their turns as complete in a number of ways: by asking a question, for example, or by pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or sentence. Other participants can indicate that they want to take the speaking turn, also in a number of ways. They can start to make short sounds, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking, and often use body shifts or facial expressions to signal that they have something to say. (For more on conversation, see Task C, on page 168.) Turn-Taking There are different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation

in conversation, which may result in slightly different conventions of turn-taking. One strategy, which may be overused by "long-winded" speakers or those who are used to "holding the floor," is designed to avoid having normal completion points occur. We all use this strategy to some extent, usually in situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it. If the normal expectation is that completion points are marked by the end of a sentence and a pause, then one way to "keep the turn" is to avoid having those two markers occur together. That is, don't pause at the end of sentences; make your sentences run on by using connectors like and, and then, so, but; place your pauses at points where the message is clearly incomplete; and preferably "fill" the pause with a hesitation marker such as er, em, uh, ah. Pauses and Filled Pauses In the following example, note how the pauses (marked by …) are placed before and after verbs rather than at the end of sentences, making it difficult to get a clear sense of what this person is saying until we hear the part after each pause. A: that's their favorite restaurant because they … enjoy French food and when they were … in France they couldn't believe it that … you know that they had … that they had had better meals back home In the next example, speaker X produces filled pauses (with em, er, you know) after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation. X : well that film really was … [wasn't what he was good at Y: [when diX : I mean his other … em his later films were much more … er really more in the romantic style and that was more what what he was … you know … em best at doing Y: so when did he make that one Adjacency Pairs That last example would seem to suggest that conversation is a problematic activity where speakers have to pay close attention to what is going on. That is not normally the case because a great deal of conversational interaction follows some fairly well established patterns. When someone says Hi or Hello, we usually respond with a similar greeting. This type of almost automatic sequence is called an adjacency pair, which consists of a first part and a second part, as found in greetings, question–answer (Q~A) sequences, thanking and leavetaking. First part Second part

Y O U : Good mornin'.

M E : Good mornin'.

Y O U : Where's Mary?

M E : She's at work already.

Y O U : Thanks for your help yesterday.

M E : Oh, you're welcome.

Y O U : Okay, talk to you later.

M E : Bye.

These examples illustrate the basic pattern, but not all first parts are immediately followed by second parts. For example, one question may not receive its answer until after another question–answer sequence.

Insertion Sequences

In the following example, the sequence Q2~A2 comes between the first question (Q1) and its answer (A1). This is called an insertion sequence, that is, an adjacency pair that comes between the first and second parts of another pair.

Y O U : Do you want some milk? (= Q1)

M E : Is it soy milk? (= Q2)

Y O U : Of course. (= A2)

M E : Okay, thanks. (= A1)

In some situations, a complex structure can emerge from the effect of insertion sequences. This is often the case in "service encounters," as in our next example. Notice how it is only in the middle of this interaction (Q3~A3) that we have an adjacency pair together, while insertion sequences delay the occurrence of second parts for each of the other first parts.

B U D : Can I order pizza to go? (= Q1) D A N : What kind would you like? (= Q2) B U D : Do you have any special deals? (= Q3) D A N : Well, you can get two veggie supremes for the price of one. (= A3) B U D : Okay, I'd like that deal. (= A2) D A N : Sure thing. We'll have that ready for you in no time. (= A1) We are not normally aware of most of these aspects of conversational

structure, but speakers sometimes draw attention to the need for a second part once a first part has been uttered. In the following interaction, originally analyzed by Sacks (1972: 341), a mother immediately notices the absence of a spoken return greeting by her daughter and draws attention to the social expectation involved.

W O M A N : Hi, Annie.

M O T H E R : Annie, don't you hear someone say hello to you?

W O M A N : Oh, that's okay, she smiled hello.

M O T H E R : You know you're supposed to greet someone, don't you?

A N N I E : [Hangs head] Hello. The expectations we all have that certain patterns of turn-taking will occur in conversation are connected to a more general aspect of socially situated interaction, that it will be "co-operative." This observation is actually a principle of conversation.

The History of English

The reconstruction of proto-forms is an attempt to determine what a language must have been like before any written records. However, even when we have written records from an older period of a language such as English, they may not bear any resemblance to the written form of the language found today. The version of the Lord's Prayer quoted at the beginning of this chapter provides a good illustration of this point. Even some of the letters seem quite alien. The older letters þ (called "thorn") and ð ("eth") were both replaced by "th" (as in ��u → thou, eorðan → earth), and æ ("ash") simply became "a" (as in to dæg → today). To see how one language has undergone substantial changes throughtime, we can take a brief look at the history of English, which is traditionally divided into four periods: Old English: before 1100 Middle English: 1100 to 1500 Early Modern English: 1500 to 1700 Modern English: after 1700

Old English

The primary sources for what developed as the English language were the Germanic languages spoken by tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes from northern Europe who moved into the British Isles in the fifth century. In one early account, these tribes were described as "God's wrath toward Britain." It is from the names of the first two that we have the term Anglo-Saxons to describe these people, and from the first tribe that we get the word for their language Englisc and their new home Engla-land. From this early version of Englisc, now called Old English, we have many of the most basic terms in the language: mann ("man"), wīf ("woman"), cild ("child"), hūs ("house"), mete ("food"), etan ("eat"), drincan ("drink") and feohtan ("fight"). These pagan invaders did not remain pagan for long. From the sixth to the eighth century, there was a period during which these Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity and a number of terms from Latin (the language of the religion) came into English at that time. The origins of the contemporary English words angel, bishop, candle, church, martyr, priest and school all date from this period. From the eighth century through the ninth and tenth centuries, another group of northern Europeans came first to plunder and then to settle in parts of thecoastal regions of Britain. They were the Vikings and it is from their language, Old Norse, that the original forms of give, law, leg, skin, sky, take and they were adopted, along with the weekdays Tiw's day and Thor's day. It is from their winter festival jól that we have Yule as a term for the Christmas season.

Middle English

The event that marks the end of the Old English period, and the beginning of the Middle English period, is the arrival of the Norman French in England, after their victory at Hastings under William the Conqueror in 1066. These Frenchspeaking invaders became the ruling class, so that the language of the nobility, government, law and civilized life in England for the next two hundred years was French. It is the source of words like army, court, defense, faith, prison and tax. Yet the language of the peasants remained English. The peasants worked on the land and reared sheep, cows and swine (words from Old English) while the upper classes talked about mutton, beef and pork (words of French origin). Hence the different terms in Modern English to refer to these creatures "on the hoof" as opposed to "on the plate." Throughout this period, French (or, more accurately, an English

version of French) was the prestige language and Chaucer tells us that one of his Canterbury pilgrims could speak it. She was cleped Madame Eglentyne Ful wel she song the service dyvyne, Entuned in her nose ful semely, And Frenche she spak ful faire and fetisly.This is an example of Middle English from the late fourteenth century. It had changed substantially from Old English, but other changes were yet to take place. Most significantly, the vowel sounds of Chaucer's time were very different from those we hear in similar words today. Chaucer lived in a "hoos," with his "weef," and "hay" might drink a bottle of "weena" with "heer" by the light of the "mona." In the two hundred years, from 1400 to 1600, that separated Chaucer and Shakespeare, the sounds of English underwent a substantial change known as the "Great Vowel Shift." The effects of this general raising of long vowel sounds (such as long [o] moving up to long [u], as in mōna → moon) made the pronunciation of Early Modern English, beginning around 1500, significantly different from earlier periods. The introduction of printing in 1476 brought about significant changes, but because the printers tended to standardize existing pronunciations in the spelling of words (e.g. knee, gnaw), later pronunciation changes are often not reflected in the way Modern English (after 1700) is written. Those changes reflecting influences from the outside (borrowed words from Norman French or Old Norse) are examples of external change. Other changes (especially sound changes) are the result of processes of internal change.

Sound Changes

In a number of changes from Middle to Modern English, some sounds disappeared from the pronunciation of certain words, in a process simply described as sound loss. The initial [h] of many Old English words was lost, as in hlud → loud and hlaford → lord. Some words lost sounds, but kept the spelling, resulting in the "silent letters" of contemporary written English. Word-initial velar stops [k] and [g] are no longer pronounced before nasals [n], but we still write the words knee and gnaw with the remnants of earlier pronunciations. Another example is a velar fricative [x] that was used in the pronunciation of the older form niht as [nɪxt] (closer to the modern German pronunciation of Nacht), but is absent in the contemporary form night, pronounced as [naɪt]. A remnant of this type of sound is still present in some dialects, as at the end of the Scottish word loch, but it is no longer a consonant in most dialects of Modern English.

Metathesis

The sound change known as metathesis involves a reversal in position of two sounds in a word. This type of reversal is illustrated in the changed versions of these words from their earlier forms. acsian → ask

frist → first

brinnan → beornan (burn)

bridd → bird

hros → horse

wæps → wasp

The cowboy who pronounces the expression pretty good as something close to purty good is producing a similar example of metathesis as a dialect variant within Modern English. In some American English dialects, the form aks, as in I aksed him already, can still be heard instead of ask. The reversal of position in metathesis can sometimes occur between nonadjoining sounds. The

Spanish word palabra is derived from the Latin parabola through the reversal in position of the [l] and [r] sounds. The pattern is exemplified in the following set. Latin Spanishmiraculum → milagro ("miracle") parabola → palabra ("word") periculum → peligro ("danger")

<mark>Epenthesis</mark> Another type of sound change, known as epenthesis, involves the addition of a sound to the middle of a word.

æmtig → empty

 spinel → spindle

timr → timber

The addition of a [p] sound after the nasal [m], as in empty, can also be heard in some speakers' pronunciation of something as "sumpthing." Anyone who pronounces the word film as if it were "filum," or arithmetic as "arithametic," is producing examples of epenthesis in Modern English.

<mark>Prothesis</mark>

 One other type of sound change worth noting, though not found in English, involves the addition of a sound to the beginning of a word and is called prothesis. It is a common feature in the evolution of some forms from Latin to Spanish. schola → escuela ("school") scribere → escribir ("to write") spiritus → espíritu ("spirit") sperare → esperar ("to hope") Spanish speakers who are starting to learn English as a second language will sometimes put a prothetic vowel at the beginning of some English words, with the result that words like strange and story may sound like "estrange" and "estory."

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Tobecume þin rice.

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 And forgyf us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum.

And ne gelæd þu us in costnunge, ac alys us of yfele.

The Lord's Prayer (c. 1000) This barely recognizable version of the Lord's Prayer from about a thousand years ago provides a rather clear indication that the language of the "Englisc" has gone through substantial changes to become the English we use today. Investigating the features of older languages, and the ways in which they developed into modern languages, involves us in the study of language history and change, also known as PHILOLOGY. In the nineteenth century, philology dominated the study of language and one result was the creation of "f a m i l y   t r e e s " to show how languages were related. Before all of that could happen, however, there had to be the discovery that a variety of languages spoken in different parts of the world were actually members of   the   same   family.

Family Trees

 In 1786, a British government official in India called *Sir William Jones* made this observation about Sanskrit, the ancient language of Indian law (Lehman, 1967: 10): The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity ,both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident. Sir William went on to suggest, in a way that was quite revolutionary for its time, that languages from very different geographical areas must have some common ancestor. It was clear, however, that this common ancestor could not be described from any existing records, but had to be hypothesized on the basis of similar features existing in records of languages that were believed to be descendants.

During the nineteenth century, a term came into use to describe that common ancestor. It incorporated the notion that this was the original form (Proto) of a language that was the source of modern languages in the Indian sub-continent (Indo) and in Europe (European). With Proto-Indo-European established as a long ago "great-great-grandmother," scholars set out to identify the branches of the Indo-European family tree, tracing the lineage of many modern languages.

Indo-European Indo-European is the language family with the largest population and distribution in the world, but it is not the only one. There are about thirty such language families containing a large number of different individual languages. According to one reputable source (Ethnologue, 2015), there are actually 7,102 known languages in the world. Many of these languages are in danger of extinction while a few are expanding. In terms of number of speakers, Chinese has the most native speakers (over 1 billion), while Spanish (over 400 million) and English (over 330 million) are more widely used in different parts of the world.

Looking at the Indo-European family tree, we might be puzzled initially by the idea that all these diverse languages are related. After all, two modern languages such as Italian and Hindi would seem to have nothing in common. One way to get a clearer picture of how they are related is through looking at records of an older generation, like Latin and Sanskrit, from which the modern languages evolved. For example, if we use familiar letters to write out the words for father and brother in Sanskrit, Latin and Ancient Greek, some common features become apparent. Sanskrit Latin Ancient Greek pitar pater pate-r ("father") bhrātar frater phrāter ("brother") While these forms have clear similarities, it is extremely unlikely that exactly the same words will be found throughout the languages. However, the fact that close similarities occur (especially in the pronunciations of the words) is good evidence for proposing a family connection.

Cognates

The process we have just used to establish a possible family connection between different languages involved looking at what are called "cognates." Within groups of related languages, we can often find close similarities in particular sets of words. A cognate of a word in one language (e.g. English) is a word in another language (e.g. German) that has a similar form and is (or was) used with a similar meaning. The English words mother, father and friend are cognates of the German words Mutter, Vater and Freund. On the basis of these cognates, we can see that Modern English and Modern German must have a common ancestor in the Germanic branch of Indo-European. We can look at similar sets in the Italic branch of Indo-European and find cognates in Spanish (madre, padre, amigo) and Italian (madre, padre, amico).

Language History and Change ◈

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Pragmatic Markers

Speakers have other ways of indicating how their utterances are to be interpreted. They can include short forms such as you know, well, I mean, I don't know, which are optional and loosely attached to the utterance. These are pragmatic markers and they can be used to mark a speaker's attitude to the listener or to what is being said. Speakers can use you know to indicate that knowledge is being treated as shared, and I mean to self-correct or to mark an attempt to clarify something. They had been reading something by Charles Wright, you know, the famous poet and well, I mean, he's famous in America at least, but em they didn't really understand it. After making a statement about the poet, the speaker uses well to mark a shift from conveying information to commenting on it, with I mean introducing a clarification. A more recent change of function has turned I don't know into a pragmatic marker. This phrase has evolved from a way of indicating lack of knowledge (What's a lychee? ~ I don't know) to become a marker of hesitation or uncertainty when a speaker is about to say something potentially in disagreement with another speaker. L E E : I'm not very fond of Edinburgh it's so drab and it's always cold there. J E N : Oh, I don't know, I really enjoyed going to the Festival there last year. By appearing hesitant about disagreeing, the speaker can signal a desire not to challenge the other speaker. It seems to be a new way of being polite in interaction.

Politeness

We can think of politeness in general terms as having to do with ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people. In the study of linguistic politeness, the most relevant concept is "face." Your face, in pragmatics, is your public self-image. This is the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. Politeness can be defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person's face. If you say something that represents a threat to another person's self-image, that is called a face-threatening act. For example, if you use a direct command to get someone to do something (Give me that paper!), you are behaving as if you have more social power than the other person. If you

don't actually have that social power (e.g. you are not a military officer or prison warden), then you are performing a face-threatening act. An indirect request, in the form associated with a question (Could you pass me that paper?), removes the assumption of social power. You are only asking if it is possible. This makes your request less threatening to the other person's face. Whenever you say something that lessens the possible threat to another's face, it can be described as a face-saving act.

Negative and Positive Face

We have both a negative face and a positive face. (Note that "negative" doesn't mean "bad" here, it is simply the opposite of "positive.") Negative face is the need to be independent and free from imposition. Positive face is the need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of the group. So, a face-saving act that emphasizes a person's negative face will show concern about imposition (I'm sorry to bother you …; I know you're busy, but …). A face-saving act that emphasizes a person's positive face will show solidarity and draw attention to a common goal (The same thing happened to me …; Let's do this together …). Ideas about the appropriate language to mark politeness differ substantially from one culture to the next. If you have grown up in a culture that has directness as a valued way of showing solidarity, and you use direct commands (Give me that chair!) to people whose culture is more oriented to indirectness and avoiding direct imposition, then you will be considered impolite. You, in turn, may think of the others as vague and unsure of whether they really want something or are just asking questions about it (Are you using this chair?). In either case, it is the pragmatics that is misunderstood and, unfortunately, more will often be communicated than is said. The distinction between direct and indirect ways of communicating can be analyzed as different types of linguistic action, or speech acts. Speech Acts We use the term speech act to describe an action that involves language such as "requesting," "commanding," "questioning" or "informing." To take a more specific example, if you say, I'll be there at six, you are not just uttering a sentence, you seem to be performing the speech act of "promising." We can define a speech act as the action performed by a speaker with an utterance.

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts When an interrogative structure such as *Did you … ?*, *Is she … ?* or *Can you … ?* is used with the function of a question, it is described as a direct speech act. When you seriously want to know the answer to *Is she wearing a wig?*, that utterance is a direct speech act. If we really don't know something and we ask for the information (e.g. about ability), we normally use a direct speech act, as in *Can you ride a bicycle?*. Compare that utterance with *Can you pass the salt?*. In this second example, we are not really asking a question about someone's ability. We are using an interrogative structure to make a request. This is an example of an indirect speech act. Whenever one of the structures in Table 10.2 is used to perform a function other than the one listed beside it on the same line, the result is an indirect speech act. For example, you can also use a declarative structure (*You left the door open*) to make a request (to the person, who just came in from the chilly outside, to close it). That is another indirect speech act. Indirect speech acts offer fairly good evidence in support of the pragmatic principle, stated earlier, that communication depends on not only recognizing the structure and meaning of words in an utterance, but also recognizing what speakers mean by their utterances in a particular context.