Chapter 2
Cohesion, coherence and Unity

Cohesion and coherence

One of the most salient phenomena of discourse is the fact that sentences/utterances are **linked together** (cf. *textum*, texture). There are two types of connections that tie discourse together:

Consider the following example:
"Susan got pregnant and she married."
Whom does the pronoun *she* refer to? It probably refers to Susan. This is an endophoric connection, which contributes to **cohesion**.
In order to make sense to us, discourse must be **both cohesive and coherent**. Take a look at the following example:
"A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. Cats have four legs. My leg hurts. *Hurts* is a verb."
This sequence is highly **cohesive**, as each sentence is connected to the previous one at the level of discourse.
However, it is not **coherent**, because no plausible connections can be made outside the discourse.

Cohesion and coherence

When faced with any stretch of discourse, we expect it to be sufficiently cohesive and coherent. If some connections are missing, we will make an effort to establish them on our own.
Activity: Try to reconstitute the original sequence.
1. However, nobody had seen one for months.
2. He thought he saw a shape in the bushes.
3. Mark had told him about the foxes.
4. John looked out of the window.
5. Could it be a fox?

The original sequence is:

John looked out of the window. He (⇒ John) thought he saw (⇒ looking out) a shape in the bushes. Could it (⇒the shape) be a fox? Mark had told him (⇒ John) about the foxes (⇒ fox). However (⇒ the fox hypothesis), nobody had seen one (⇒ foxes) for months. In order to reconstitute the original sequence, you have relied on the existing cohesive ties (⇒ xxx), but you have also drawn upon your knowledge of the world.

Cohesion: grammatical & lexical

Let us now focus on **cohesion**, that is, the connections that have their manifestation *in the discourse*. There are two types of cohesion:

1. Grammatical cohesion

Substitution

Ellipsis

Reference

Conjunction

2. Lexical cohesion

Grammatical cohesion: substitution

Substitution is the replacement of one or more words (typically a noun, a verb, or an entire clause) by a 'dummy' word, like in the examples below:

a) "This pen doesn't work. Give me another *one*."

b) "You asked me to call them but I haven't *done it* yet."

c) "Are they still arguing in there?" - "No, it just seems *so*."

The main function of substitution is to make texts more economic and concise by avoiding tedious repetition.

Activity: introduce substitutions where needed.

1. "Are you going to tell them the truth?" - "No, I don't think I am going to tell them the truth." ⇒ "... don't think *so*."

2. "Did you watch the entire movie?" - "No, I was too tired to watch the entire movie." ⇒ "... to *do that/so*."

3. "What menu do you prefer?" - "I think I'll try out the vegetarian menu." ⇒ "... the vegetarian *one*."

Grammatical cohesion: reference

Reference concerns the grammatical relations between a discourse element and a preceding or following element.
- Reference is usually achieved by the use of pronouns:
1. "Mary is Clive's sister. *She* is a bit older than *him*."
2. "John said that *he* was going to school."

- Reference may also be achieved by other means, e.g. definite articles:
1. Once upon a time there was a wolf who lived in the woods. *The* wolf was…"
 2. "I saw a guy running away. *The* guy was tall and thin."
3. "*This* is great, that the teacher gave her a good mark!"

Grammatical cohesion: conjunction

Conjunction concerns the relationships between clauses or between sentences. This is usually achieved by the use of connectives. The most frequent types of conjunction are:
1. **Addition**: "*Besides* being handsome, he is *also* clever."
2. **Temporality**: "I called her *before* we met."
3. **Causality**: "He didn't come *because* he's sick."
4. **Condition**: "I will do that *if* you are nice to me."
5. **Contrast**: "We agree on the principle
but disagree on the method."

Activity: which types of conjunction are used in these examples?
1. "You can't get a job unless you've got experience."
2. "I think, therefore I am."
3. "He managed to eat a big lunch despite having eaten an enormous breakfast."
4. "Since the law has been adopted, the crime rate has decreased significantly."
5. "Since the weather is so nice, I went out for a walk."

Grammatical cohesion: conjunction

Conjunction is **hypotactic** when it joins a main clause with a subordinate clause (via subordinating connectives), and **paratactic** when it joins two clauses at the same level (via coordinating connectives).
a) "*Although* she fulfilled the requirements, her application was rejected." (hypotaxis: subordinating connective)
b) "He left school, *and* he is looking for a job." (parataxis: coordinating connective)

Lexical cohesion

While grammatical cohesion is based on connections between elements of grammar, **lexical cohesion** refers to links between
content words (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) which are used in subsequent stretches of discourse.
a) "I love *cats*. In fact, I love all sorts of *pets*."
b) "Cats can *hurt* you. Once I was *scratched* very badly." Two types of lexical cohesion can be distinguished: **reiteration and collocation**

Lexical cohesion: reiteration

Reiteration is divided into five types:
1. **Repetition**: "*Cats* are nice. Everybody likes *cats*."
2. **Synonymy**: "Are you going to *class*?" - "Yes, the *lesson*'s just started."
3. **Hyponymy/hyperonymy**: "I love *cats*. In fact, I love all sorts of *pets*."
4. **Meronymy**: "The *car* is okay, but the *brakes* don't work."
5. **Antonymy**: "*Old* movies are boring, the *new* ones are much better."
Lexical cohesion: reiteration
Activity: identify which types of reiteration are used in the following examples.
1. "Look, I've got an iPhone!" - "So now I am the only one without a smartphone?" ⇒ hyphonymy/hyperonymy
2. "He's very quick at maths, but unfortunately he's slow at all the rest." ⇒ antonymy

3. "I don't defend traditional values, but I think family is the basis of our society." ⇒ meronymy

4. "We need a new couch." - "I saw a nice sofa at the store yesterday." ⇒ synonymy

Lexical cohesion: collocation

Collocation deals with the relationship between words on the basis of the fact that these often occur in the same surroundings:

a) "Many kids are in trouble with the *law* because they have no respect for the *authority*."

b) "My mom gave me a *wool* sweater although she knows very well that I prefer *cotton*."

Collocation is based on the notion of **semantic field**, which refers to a set of words that are related in meaning.

Cohesion in discourse

Activity: identify all instances of grammatical and lexical cohesion in the following speech. "We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade, and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too." (JFK, 1962

Unity

What is unity in writing?

A unified paragraph is the one which tells about only one main idea.

When paragraph is unified, it focuses exclusively on one main idea.

Ex. Taking aspirin has many advantages. TS.

(Do not write about disadvantages).

(Do not write about other kinds of medicine advantages).

Taking aspirin has many advantages TS. It can benefit heart health. S.

Also, it can relieve pain, decrease fever and reduce inflammation. S.

Aspirin can prevent blood dots from forming. Aspirin is good for health. CS.

If you are writing an entire essay about this subject i.e. The Advantages of Taking Aspirin,
try to write one advantage in each paragraph.

Coherence
What is coherence?
When a paragraph is coherent, information flows logically, and readers can easily follow your ideas.
- What are the main criteria that are used to create a coherent paragraph?
All the above mentioned cohesive devices are used to link the paragraph sentences together