Chapter 2 What makes a text?

Think back over your day (assuming you're not reading this at breakfast). How many texts have you engaged with – either receptively or productively? And how many *kinds* of texts have you engaged with? Well, probably so many that it's impossible either to recall them or to list them, especially if you include spoken text. Just to give you an idea, here's how my day started:

- radio news (spoken, receptive)
- two pages of a novel (written, receptive)
- sporadic conversation with partner (spoken, interactive)
- reading and responding to e-mails (written, interactive)
- listening to programme details on radio (spoken, receptive)
- overhearing snatches of partner's phone conversation (spoken, receptive)
- making shopping list (written, productive)
- consulting reference books on discourse analysis (written, receptive)
- writing this paragraph (written, productive)

And that doesn't count the incidental, sometimes accidental, noticing of such domestic trivia as food package labels, the logo on the fridge, the initials on the hot and cold taps, the brand name on the computer keyboard I am using to write this with and so on.

In this chapter we will address these issues:
What distinguishes text from non-text?
What distinguishes one kind of text from another?

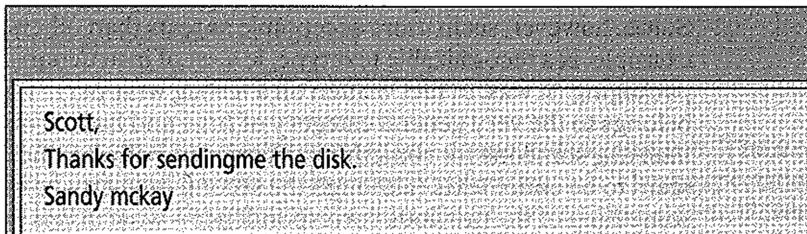
Discovery activity 2.1 *Texts or non-texts?*

Look at the following seven extracts. Which, in your opinion, qualify as texts? What are your criteria?

2.1

> **For the perfect cup**, use one tea bag per person and add freshly drawn boiling water. Leave standing for three to five minutes before stirring gently. Can be served with or without milk and sugar.

2.2


Scott,
Thanks for sendingme the disk.
Sandy mckay

2.3

1 The university has got a park.
2 It has got a modern tram system.
3 He has got a swimming pool.
4 I have got tickets for the theatre.
5 Rio has got some beautiful beaches.
6 She has got a good view from the window. [10]

2.4

Suzy Stressed gets up late and has a shower. She doesn't have breakfast. She goes to work by car. She gets to work at five to nine. She uses the lift. At eleven o'clock she has a cigarette and a black coffee. Suzy has lunch at half past one. She finishes work at six o'clock. Then she goes to an Italian class. She gets home late. After that she watches TV. She has dinner at eleven o'clock. She goes to bed very late. Suzy is very stressed. Do you live like Suzy?[11]

2.5

I like a pumpkin.
I like a celery.
Go toward the 21st century.

2.6

so go
go so
sl ow
go oh
low ow
oh[12]

2.7

YOU ARE NOW
ENTERING
THE HUMAN HEART

Commentary ■ ■ ■

The fact is that all seven of these 'language events' (I'm avoiding using the word *text* at the moment) actually *happened*. That is to say, they are all attested instances of language in use. In that sense, they have some claim to be considered as texts. Some, however, seem more acceptable as texts than others. The first, for example, is a recognizable text type, ie a set of instructions typical of food packaging (it was, in fact written on a teabag wrapper). The second clearly belongs to the very general category of *letter* and has the obvious purpose of *thanking* someone for something. Moreover, both 2.1 and 2.2, as short as they are, seem to be entire texts (although the second might make more sense if we knew something of the previous correspondence – what *disk* is being referred to, for example?). And both texts are organized in a logical way: at the very least, they both have a beginning, a middle and an end. They also use language in a way that is acceptably well-formed (although the second one contains a spacing error – *sendingme* – suggesting a fairly casual production process, in turn indicating an informal medium: it is in fact an e-mail). Which brings us to the last point: their appropriacy. Each was appropriate in the context in which it originally occurred.

To sum up, both 2.1 and 2.2

- are self-contained
- are well-formed
- hang together (ie they are *cohesive*)
- make sense (ie they are *coherent*)
- have a clear communicative purpose
- are recognizable text types
- were appropriate to their contexts of use.

On all of the above grounds, their status as texts seems unproblematic.

The other five 'texts', however, appear not to fulfil all of these conditions. Text 2.3 doesn't hang together: it's just six unconnected sentences; 2.4 is obviously written to display a feature of grammar, but it is neither identifiable as a genuine text type nor does it have any apparent communicative purpose; the fifth one makes no sense whatsoever and it's difficult to imagine a context in which it would make sense (see Chapter 5 for more on this); the sixth makes slight sense, but seems more playful than communicative and it's not clear that it is self-contained, even as poetry; and 2.7 is difficult to situate – where would such a text be appropriate? In short, texts 2.3 to 2.7 fail a number of 'text' tests. They are either

- not self-contained, or
- not well-formed, or
- not cohesive, or
- not coherent, or
- not communicative, or
- not typical, or
- not appropriate. ■

Over the next two chapters we will look at each of these qualities in turn (although not necessarily in the above order). In this chapter our concern is with cohesion.

Cohesion

Let's take a look at the 'text' 2.3 again:

1 The university has got a park.
2 It has got a modern tram system.
3 He has got a swimming pool.
4 I have got tickets for the theatre.
5 Rio has got some beautiful beaches.
6 She has got a good view from the window. [10]

Initially, it looks as if this is setting out to be a connected piece of text. The *it* of sentence 2 looks as if it refers to *the university* of sentence 1. These expectations are dashed, however, by the mention of a *tram system*: universities seldom, if ever, have their own tram systems, modern or otherwise. And by sentence 3 we are in no doubt that what we are reading is a series of isolated sentences, whose only common element is the grammar structure *have got*. The fact that the sentences are numbered is, of course, a dead give-away. In fact, they could be re-arranged in any order without disturbing the integrity of the exercise, in which, by the way, students of English have to convert the uncontracted forms of *has/have got* into contracted forms.

On the other hand, text 2.4, about Suzy Stressed, is clearly not a collection of isolated sentences. Our assumption that the pronoun *she* in the second sentence refers to the subject of the first sentence is not disappointed.

> Suzy Stressed gets up late and has a shower. She doesn't have breakfast. She goes to work by car. She gets to work at five to nine… etc.

In fact, every sentence seems 'tied' in this way to the subject *Suzy Stressed.* Moreover, there are no unexpected *tram systems* to throw us off balance: the word *breakfast*, for example, sits comfortably with *has a shower* in the first sentence and *goes to work* in the third sentence. They belong to the same *lexical set*, and, together with other expressions such as *gets home, has dinner, goes to bed*, and so on, form a kind of *lexical chain* of topically related lexical items. The repeated use of time expressions (*five to nine, eleven o'clock, half past one*, etc) forms another lexical chain. There is also some direct repetition of vocabulary, such as the word *work* in the third and fourth sentences, which also reappears later in the sentence *She finishes work at six o'clock.* Finally, connecting expressions like *then* and *after that* make explicit links across sentences. They serve to bind their respective sentences to the ones that preceded them. Note, also, that it simply wouldn't be possible to rearrange the sentences so that the text started with *Then she goes to an Italian class*, or *After that she watches TV*, for instance. Both *then* and *after that* make sense only by reference to previous text.

To sum up, the text is made cohesive (in the way that example 2.3 is not) by a combination of *lexical* and *grammatical* devices. The lexical connectors include repetition and the lexical chaining of words that share similar meaning. The grammatical connectors are pronouns (*she* and *that*) and linkers (*then*).

Discovery activity 2.2 ***Cohesive devices***

Here is another text, in this case, an advertisement. Can you find examples of lexical and grammatical cohesion in it? Are there any other devices that bind it together as a text?

2.8

Being under control is knowing the secret of cleaner, clearer, more beautiful skin.

(And it's not soap.)

Whatever else in your life may be spinning out of control, it doesn't have to be spots.
Rule number one, two and three: clean skin is the secret of clear skin.

•

With a name like Johnson's Clean & Clear,
it's no great secret whose cleansing lotion you should be using.

•

No other cleanser removes more of the dirt, oil and make-up that can lead to spots.
And what's even better it does this without drying.
It actually tingles on your skin to tell you it's working.

•

Not that it needs to. You can see for yourself.
A fresher, clearer complexion that even soap and water can't match.

•

Take it from us. Use Johnson's Clean & Clear as a one-step cleanser,
or an after cleansing astringent, and you'll never get in a lather over spots again.

Commentary ■ ■ ■

Examples of lexical repetition include *skin* (four times), *clear*, *clean*, *secret*, and *spots* (three times each), and *control* and *soap* (twice each). Note also the words belonging to the same word family, ie words that share a common root: *clear* and *clearer*; *clean*, *cleaner*, *cleansing*, and *cleanser*. The fact that these words are prominent is, of course, not accidental, since they carry the main thrust of the advertisement's message (*control* through *cleaner*, *clearer skin*) and many have positive connotations.

There are a number of words that are thematically related and which form chains running through the text (eg *skin*, *complexion*; *soap*, *cleansing lotion*, *cleanser*, *water*, *after-cleansing astringent*, *lather*) plus a number of synonyms (*fresher*, *cleaner*), as well as the antonyms *dirt* and *clean*, and *under control*, *out of control*. There is also a rudimentary list: *dirt*, *oil* and *make-up*.

Grammatical cohesion is realized by pronouns, which refer the reader back to their *referents* (ie concepts previously introduced into the text), as in *Being under control is knowing the secret of cleaner, clearer, more beautiful skin.* (*And it's not soap.*) Here, the pronoun *it* in the second sentence refers back to *the secret* in the first. *It* can also refer forward, and to a general idea, rather than to any specific word or clause, as in: *Take it from us. Use Johnson's Clean & Clear as a one-step cleanser [...], and you'll never get in a lather over spots again.*

Take it from us also demonstrates how some pronouns do not have referents *in* the text itself, but outside it. Thus, the referent of *us* is not retrievable from the text, either before or after, but refers to the sponsors of the text (ie Johnson). Likewise *your* and *you* in the sentence *It actually tingles on your skin to tell you it's working* refer to the reader. This is also a kind of cohesive device, since it binds the text to its larger context. The technical name for language that makes direct connection to the material world is *deixis* (adjective: *deictic*).

Note, by the way, that the sponsoring authority (sometimes called the *author*) of the text is not necessarily the same individual as the *writer*. In this text, for example, the pronoun *us* does not refer to the actual writer, who was no doubt the anonymous employee of some advertising agency, but to the company itself.

Another form of grammatical cohesion is displayed in the sentence *And what's even better it does this without drying*, where *does this* stands for (or replaces) the proposition expressed in the previous sentence (ie: *removes more of the dirt, oil and make-up that can lead to spots*). The combination of *does* and *this* is unintelligible without reference to the previous sentence, hence it is a feature of the text's cohesion.

The use of *do/does* to substitute for a preceding verb phrase is called *substitution*. Words like *so* and *not* commonly substitute for whole clauses, as in:

> Will it rain? ~ I think so. (= I think it will rain)
> Will it rain? ~ I think not. (= I think it won't rain)

Substitution can operate at the level of individual words too. The pronouns *one* and *ones* commonly stand in for nouns or noun phrases, as in these two sentences from an advert for Beefeater gin (which also displays clause substitution using *so*):

2.9

> Is it important that a gin comes from London? The ones that don't, seem to think so.

The second sentence, unpacked, would read: *The gins that don't come from London seem to think that it is important that a gin does come from London.* This is a good example of how cohesion works to pack elements of previous text into the text that follows.

Another form of substitution is 'substitution-by-zero', as in this example from the cleansing lotion ad:

> It actually tingles on your skin to tell you it's working. Not that it needs to.

Needs to *what*? Needs to tingle on your skin, etc. Rather than repeat this, the writer simply leaves a blank, which the reader fills in. The technical name for 'substitution-by-zero' is *ellipsis*, ie the leaving out of elements that can be retrieved from elsewhere. In the gin ad, quoted above, *The ones that don't [...]* is an example of ellipsis, where *come from London*, retrievable from the previous sentence, fills the empty slot.

The term *cohesion* suggests the presence in a text of explicit linking words, such as *however, but, although,* and so on. There is only one explicit linking word in text 2.8: the use of *and* in the second sentence (*And it's not a soap*), and later on in the sentence beginning *And what's even better... And* is an instance of a conjunction. Other conjunctions are *but, so, or* and *because.* These typically have a sentence-internal function – that is, they connect clauses inside sentences. Connectors that link sentences are called *conjuncts.* (They are also commonly called *linkers.*) Common conjuncts are such sequencing expressions as *first, to begin with, lastly,* the reinforcing expressions *what's more, furthermore* and expressions used to make concessions, such as *however, in spite of that, on the other hand.* Note that the absence of conjuncts, apart from *and,* in the Johnson's ad suggests that perhaps the text is so cohesive already that it doesn't need them.

And what's even better displays yet another cohesive device: the use of comparatives to build on, and thus connect to, previous text. The phrase *what's even better* presupposes a previous mention (direct or indirect) of something good.

Another grammatical feature of the text that serves to give it internal consistency and hence acts as a kind of cohesive device is the use of *tense.* Apart from the *will* in the last sentence, all the main verbs are in the present and are unmarked for aspect (ie there are no continuous or perfect forms). Another way of connecting text, which is neither lexical nor strictly grammatical, might be best described as *rhetorical.* For example, in text 2.9, the presence of a question in the text (*Is it important that a gin comes from London?*) raises the expectation of finding an answer in the text that follows. When this expectation is met, we have a further, rhetorical, means by which sentences are connected and the text is made cohesive.

Another form of rhetorical cohesion is what is called *parallelism,* where sentences 'echo' one another. In this ad, for Seiko watches, parallelism is established in the repeated use of *It's not your...*:

> It's not your music.
> It's not your handshake.
> It's not your clothes.
> It's your watch that says most about who you are.

Apart from binding the text together, the parallelism serves to highlight the contrast between the first three lines of the text and the 'punchline', where the pattern is subverted. As we will see in Chapter 7, it is a device that is frequently used in literary texts. ■

To sum up, there are a number of ways that texts are made cohesive, and these cohesive devices (also called linking devices) are traditionally classified at the level of lexis, grammar and discourse (or rhetoric). These include:

- lexical cohesion:
  - direct repetition, word families, synonyms and antonyms
  - words from the same semantic field, lexical chains and lists
  - substitution with *one/ones*
- grammatical cohesion
  - reference: pronouns, articles (more on this below)
  - substitution of clause elements using *so, not, do/does/did*, etc
  - ellipsis of clause elements
  - conjuncts (also called linkers)
  - comparatives
  - tense
- rhetorical cohesion
  - question–answer
  - parallelism

Reference

We have noted the way that elements in a text refer to other elements (their *referents*) both inside and outside the text and how this cross-referencing serves to bind the text together, connecting sentences with other sentences and connecting the text to its context. Reference is such an important aspect of cohesion – and one that causes trouble to learners – that it's worth looking at it in more detail.

Reference, as we have seen, is commonly achieved through the use of pronouns (*he, we, it; this* and *that, these* and *those*) and articles. We'll look at each of these in turn.

We have seen how pronouns refer back to previously mentioned referents. Here's another example, from a Ukrainian folk tale.

2.10

> One day a dog left his home and went out into the wide world to get a job. He worked long and hard and finally took his wages and bought a lovely new pair of boots...

The pronoun *he* and the possessive determiner *his* have back-reference to the *dog*. Back-reference is technically called *anaphoric* reference. The words *he* and *his* act like little index fingers, directing us back in the text to these first mentions. (In actual fact, the pronouns are directing our attention not at something back in the *text*, but at a concept that has been introduced into our evolving mental construction of the narrative as a result of our reading of the text. This mental construction is called a *schema*. Only occasionally, when we have 'lost the plot', do we have to physically search the text itself to find the source of a reference. But, normally, it is to the mental schema we refer, not to the text. More on schemas in Chapter 3.)

Less commonly, and for certain stylistic effects, the referring pronoun can anticipate the referent. This kind of reference is called *cataphoric*. The underlined words in the following text[13] point forward to their referent, rather than back:

2.11

> He's played junkies and city slickers, Jedi knights and US rangers. He's at home in Hollywood's boulevards and Glasgow's tenements. He spends his life in the arms of beautiful women and is happily married ... . It seems Ewan McGregor can do anything he wants.

The pronouns *it, this* and *that* can all refer back (ie anaphorically) to whole topics (rather than single nouns) that have been mentioned previously. For example, in the last sentence of the following extract from a book review[14], the pronoun *it* refers to the complete proposition expressed in the preceding sentence:

2.12

> '**HARD work**, no pay, eternal glory,' ran the internet ad for volunteers for a couple of weeks in a simulated Mars base at Devon Island in the high Arctic, or in the Utah desert. More than 400 applied. In Mars on Earth, Mars Society president and astronautical engineer Robert Zubrin relates the checkered history of the project, as well as his experiences as a crew member. Zubrin describes himself as mercurial, optimistic and romantic. It shows.

What shows? Not Zubrin, obviously. Here *it* refers to the whole idea of Zubrin being mercurial, optimistic and romantic.

As a rule, *it* is used to continue referring to the same topic, *this* draws attention to new or important topics and *that* has the effect of distancing the writer (or speaker) from the topic. For example:

2.13

> **SOUND**
> ... When the sound wave strikes our ears, it causes our eardrums to vibrate and nerves send signals to the brain. This is how we hear. If there were no air, there would be nothing to carry the sound. That is why there is no sound in space.[15]

The pronoun *this*, in referring to the whole process described in the sentence that precedes it, serves to bring into sharp focus the point the writer is making. On the other hand, the writer has chosen *that* rather than *this* in the last sentence, perhaps because she is referring to something that is rather peripheral to the main topic, which is SOUND. If the topic had been SPACE, she might have chosen *this* instead. Another difference between *this* and *that* is that the former can refer both back and forward in a text, whereas *that* only ever has back reference.

Pronouns can have referents *outside* the text, as well as inside it. That is to say, the index finger can point beyond the text: we saw this with the pronoun *us* in the Johnson ad: *Take it from us*. Reference outside the text is called *exophoric* reference. The referent may be in the form of visual information on the page, as in this caption to an illustration in a children's reference book[16]:

2.14

> This is a Roman valve that allowed water to be pumped uphill. Water would then come out of fountains such as the one shown here.

Or, as in the case of spoken language, the referent may be in the immediate physical environment. To continue the story of the dog in the Ukrainian folk tale (text 2.10):

> On his way home he met up with a rabbit, who said, 'Those are beautiful boots, indeed. May I try them on, please?'

Like pronouns, the definite article *the* can also make connections back, forward and outside the text. Again, to return to the story about the dog, note how each instance of *the* implies a previous mention of the noun that it determines:

> The dog was so proud of the boots that he agreed, and he sat down to take them off. The rabbit sat down next to the dog, pulled on the boots and admired himself.

The function of *the* is to signal knowledge that is *given*, ie knowledge that is shared between writer and reader (or between speaker and listener). It is as if to say: *you know which dog (or boots, or rabbit) I am talking about.* The reason we know, in this case, is because the dog and the boots and the rabbit have been introduced to us previously in the text, using the indefinite article *a* to flag new information: *A dog… a pair of boots… a rabbit.*

A dog… the dog is a clear example of the way new information becomes given information. Often, however, the noun is not repeated verbatim in this way (*dog – dog)*, but is expressed differently, eg by a synonym or a more general term, as in the following story opening[17], where the Beduin's son is referred to successively as *son, boy* and *child*, where *the town* is referred to as *the place*, and where the Beduin himself is later called *the father*:

2.15

> A Beduin once had business in the cattle market of a town. He took his young son with him, but in the confusion of the place he lost track of his boy and the child was stolen.
>
> The father hired a crier to shout through the streets that a reward of one thousand piasters was offered for the return of the child. Although the man who held the boy heard the crier, greed had opened his belly and he hoped to earn an even larger sum. So he waited and said nothing.
>
> On the following day the crier was sent through the streets again…

The above text also demonstrates how a noun can be made definite, not by what has already been said about it, but by what is about to be said about it. That is, *the* refers forward in the text, rather than back. The answers to the questions *Which cattle market?* and *Which confusion?* are not located back in the text, but immediately after the noun: *the cattle market of a town; the confusion of the place*. Likewise: *the return of the child*. Other ways of qualifying a noun so as to make it definite include the use of relative clauses, as in *the man who held the boy*. Nouns can also be made definite through the addition, for example, of adjectives, especially adjectives that imply uniqueness, as in *the following day.*

Neither forward nor back reference seems to account for the use of the definite article in *the streets,* however: *The father hired a crier to shout through the streets…* Which streets? There is no answer to the question that is explicit in the text. In this case, of course, the reader infers which streets are being identified by reference to the previous mention of *a town:* towns have streets (and post offices and bus stations and town halls and mayors, and so on). Once the town 'schema' is activated, therefore, it would be unnecessary, even pedantic, to specify which streets by writing, for instance, *the streets of the town*.

Here is a more contemporary example[18], where, once the basic schema has been triggered, the answers to the question *Which?* can easily be inferred. First of all, here is the first line:

2.16

> In the evening Hamim took me to his movie theater…

How many things and events does the above sentence evoke? Now read on:

> We entered by a side door and stood near the screen, watching the show. It was a steamy Los Angeles mystery dubbed into Arabic. I forget the title and plot … Hamim told me he had seen the movie before; but I noticed now that he intended to see it again. I wanted to leave, but … we stayed to the end.

In this text, none of the nouns identified with *the* have been mentioned previously. How do we know, then, which screen, which show, which title, etc, is being referred to? The identity of each is, of course, easily recoverable by reference to the mental schema of the movie theatre. If you substituted just some of these items with others from a different schema, you can easily see how the word *the* no longer fits, since it no longer 'points' to a shared schema:

> In the evening Hamim took me to his movie theatre. We entered by a side door and stood near the aquarium, watching the antelopes…

Definiteness is a quality that is not only inferred from clues in the text, but also conferred by recourse to common knowledge of the world *outside* the text. The underlined references in the opening of the following (Armenian) folk tale[19] are all recoverable from our knowledge of the world. (You should by now be able to explain the other instances of *the.*)

2.17

> There was once a rich man who had a very beautiful wife and a beautiful daughter known as Nourie Hadig (tiny piece of pomegranate). Every month when the moon appeared in the sky, the wife asked, 'New moon, am I the most beautiful, or are you?' And every month the moon replied. 'You are the most beautiful'…

The answers to the questions *Which moon?* and *Which sky?* are not to be found in the text at all, neither explicitly mentioned nor implicitly inferred. The referents are outside the text altogether (ie they are exophoric), in the shared general knowledge of reader and writer, where there is only one moon and only one sky. When there is only one of something, we always know which one is being referred to!

Shared world information can consist of things in the immediate context, like *the cat* or *the corkscrew*, or things in the local context, like *the post office*, *the pub*, or things in the national or global or universal context, like *the Queen* or *the United Nations* or *the sun*.

Exophoric reference means that a lot can be left unsaid when speaking or writing. When, for example, my neighbour buzzes and asks, 'Can I borrow the electric drill?' I understand that she means the electric drill that is part of our shared world, the one she has borrowed a number of times before. Likewise, the referent of *the* in a note pinned up in the office ('Can you switch off the lights when you leave?') is in the shared world of reader and writer. It is this 'insider' knowledge which makes it difficult, often, to understand other people's mail (if you are the kind of person who reads other people's mail!). Take this e-mail I sent to my sister:

2.18

Dear Trish,
I picked up the box this morning – thanks so much for the goodies – can't wait to try them. What do you do with the figs I wonder? And the apron will be perfect for Sant Pol barbies. How's the new granddaughter? I e-mailed Lib both to share congratulations and to check if she had got the Amazon voucher – she hadn't. I suspect she may have trashed it, thinking it was spam. Oh well.

The prevalence of the definite article in this text reflects both the close relationship between writer and reader and the fact that the writer is not so much relaying news as responding to, or commenting on, events that are already familiar.

Nominalization

Pronouns and articles are used to refer backwards, forwards or outwards, to specific referents. But we can also make references in a less focused, more general way, using certain nouns, a process called *nominalization*. To return to text 2.11, for example, in the sentence *Robert Zubrin relates the checkered history of the project*, the word *project* has no previous mention in the text, but refers back in a general way to the events described in the first sentence of the text. Nouns that are typically used to 'nominalize' actions and events include *situation*, *process* and *way*. Ideas, too, can be referred to, using words like *idea*, *theory* and *viewpoint*. And, very commonly, words like *explanation*, *criticism*, *proposal*, *suggestion*, etc, are used to refer to what has been said or written. For example, in this extract[20] two writers have just mentioned how they first heard about the 'recovered memory' controversy and how it prompted them to collaborate on a thriller:

2.19

Since we had come across the idea together we decided to write it together. Much of that process seems vague now, but I remember the day before we started writing…

Here, both *the idea* and *that process* refer back in a general way to previously mentioned thoughts and events.

Classroom applications

It should be fairly obvious that the way reference works can only be properly understood when both referring expression and referent are locatable in the context. The meaning of a word like *the*, for example, is not easily contained in sentence-length examples. The same can be said for *it, this, that* and other referring devices. This suggests that, at the very least, learners need to meet and use these items in contexts beyond the level of the sentence, ie in extended segments of text.

Discovery activity 2.3 *Referents*

One way of raising awareness as to how articles and pronouns work to achieve cohesion in a text is to ask students to identify the referents (ie the things referred to) of each instance of reference in a text. And, in the case of the definite article, to say why the referent is being presented as definite. The referent can be either in the text, or inferable from the text, or in the world outside the text. If it is *in* the text, it could be back in the text (anaphoric reference) or forward in the text (cataphoric reference). If it is outside the text (exophoric reference), it could be in the immediate physical context, or in the general knowledge of the world that the speakers share. Try doing it with this joke[21]:

2.20

> An American, a Frenchman and an Australian were sitting in a bar overlooking Sydney Harbour. 'Do you know why America is the[1] wealthiest country in the[2] world?' asked the[3] American. 'It[4]'s because we[5] build big and we build fast. We put up the[6] Empire State Building in six weeks.'
>
> 'Six weeks, mon dieu, so long!' snapped the[7] Frenchman. 'Ze[8] Eiffel Tower we put up in one month exactement. And you[9],' he continued, turning to the[10] Australian, 'what has Australia done to match that[11]?'
>
> 'Ah, nuthin', mate. Not that I know of.'
>
> The American pointed to the[12] Harbour Bridge. 'What about that[13]?' he[14] asked.
>
> The[15] Australian looked over his[16] shoulder. 'Dunno, mate. [It[17]] Wasn't there yesterday.'

Commentary ■ ■ ■

Here is a suggested answer to the task:

1 The referent (country) is made definite by a superlative adjective, which implies that there is only one such country with this quality and hence the question *Which country?* has only one possible answer, which, in this case, occurs back in the text (*America*).
2 exophoric: in the knowledge that the speakers share: that there is only one world.
3 anaphoric: refers to 'an American' in line 1
4 anaphoric: refers to the whole clause 'why America is the wealthiest country in the world'
5 exophoric: refers to the speaker (and his compatriots)

6 exophoric: only one Empire State Building in the world. It is a characteristic of proper nouns that, by virtue of their uniqueness, they are always definite. This doesn't mean, of course, that all proper nouns take the definite article. Think of your own name, for example.
7 like 3
8 like 6
9 exophoric: refers to the person being addressed
10 like 3
11 anaphoric: refers to the Frenchman's previous claim, ie that the Eiffel Tower was put up in one month
12 like 6
13 exophoric: refers to the actual bridge.
14 anaphoric: 'the American'
15 anaphoric
16 anaphoric
17 exophoric: the actual bridge ■

A slightly easier text for students is the Ukrainian folk tale[22], which you now have in its entirety. It is rich in cross-references:

2.10 (complete)

Why Dogs Chase Rabbits

One day a dog left his home and went out into the wide world to get a job. He worked long and hard and finally took his wages and bought a lovely new pair of boots.

On his way home he met up with a rabbit, who said, 'Those are beautiful boots, indeed. May I try them on, please?'

The dog was so proud of the boots that he agreed and he sat down to take them off. The rabbit sat down next to the dog, pulled on the boots and admired himself. Suddenly he jumped up and ran away.

And that is why dogs still chase rabbits. They are trying to get their boots back.

A logical follow-up to reading the text and identifying the references would be to ask learners to restore the referring words to a 'mutilated' version of the text:

One day (1) ______ dog left (2) ______ home and went out into (3) ______ wide world to get (4) ______ job. (5) ______ worked long and hard and finally took (6) ______ wages and bought (7) ______ lovely new pair of boots.

On (8) ______ way home (9) ______ met up with (10) ______ rabbit who said, '(11) ______ are beautiful boots, indeed. May I try (12) ______ on, please?' etc.

Note that for some of these gaps there may be more than one possible option, eg (1) *a* or *the*, (8) *his* or *the*, according to the intentions of the writer, and therefore learners should be asked to justify their choices, explaining what differences in meaning (if any) are implied.

Conjuncts

We have devoted quite a lot of space to the subject of reference – but what about conjuncts (commonly known as linkers)? Their very name suggests that they play a crucial role in holding a text together. In fact, as we saw in text 2.8, they are not

as prevalent as you might think: that particular text was held together more by lexical and referential cohesion than by any explicit linkers – apart from two instances of *and*. Of course, the amount of explicit signposting will depend to a large extent on the type of text we are dealing with. Here, for example, is an extract from a book on applied linguistics[23], with the explicit linkers underlined:

2.21

> As was pointed out earlier, Standard English is generally defined by its lexis and its grammar. In fact, when you come to look for it, standard lexis is very elusive; so elusive that one wonders if it can be said to exist at all. And on reflection it is hard to see how it could exist. To begin with, the notion of standard implies stability, a relatively fixed point of reference. So if I invent a word, for example, it is not, by definition, standard. But people are inventing words all the time to express new ideas and attitudes, to adjust to their changing world.

Note that even in this text, where every sentence is explicitly linked to a previous one, the linkers are all relatively non-academic, apart from the phrase *as was pointed out earlier.* In fact, three of the most common linkers are each represented in this text: *and, but* and *so.* So common are these that there are grounds for arguing that, for the purposes of speaking and writing, most learners need learn only these three (plus a few sequencing linkers), reserving the more obscure or formal linkers, such as *nevertheless* and *furthermore,* for recognition purposes only. It stands to reason that these are best presented to learners in their contexts, ie in connected text. A standard activity type is a combination of identification and categorization.

Discovery activity 2.4 *Conjuncts*

Identify the sentence conjuncts in these short texts and classify them. (Note that, for the purposes of this discussion, we are interested only in ways that sentences are linked one with another, as opposed to internally. Sentence-internal linkers, eg *such as* in text 2.22, can be ignored for the time being.)

2.22

> Cold-blooded creatures, such as reptiles, cannot control their body temperature like we can. This is why they prefer life on land, where it is easier for them to warm up. But there are some reptiles that have adapted to ocean life.[24]

2.23

> Ancient Egyptians were skilled at making mummies. The body's insides were removed, except for the heart. Next, the body was left to dry for 40 days. Then it was washed and filled with linen to keep its shape. Finally, the body was oiled and wrapped in linen bandages.[25]

2.24

> A spider has eight legs. So it is not an insect. It is a type of animal called an arachnid.[26]

2.25

> Plant-eaters must spend much of their time eating in order to get enough nourishment (goodness from food). A zebra, for example, spends at least half its day munching grass. The good side to being a plant-eater, though, is that the animal does not have to chase and fight for its food as hunters do.[27]

2.26

> Roman baths were more than a place to get clean. They were also places to relax, meet friends and get fit.[28]

Commentary ■ ■ ■

Conjuncts can express a number of different categories of logical relation between parts of a text. The main categories (with examples from the above texts in bold) are:

- **additive** – that is, relations of addition, exemplification, similarity, emphasis: ***also***, *too, as well, moreover, what's more, in addition,* ***for example***, *likewise, similarly*
- **adversative** – that is, relations of contrast or alternatives: ***but***, ***though***, *however, on the other hand, in fact, alternatively*
- **causal** – that is, relations of cause and result: ***this is why***, **so**, *therefore, as a result*
- **temporal** – that is, relations of sequence in time: ***next***, ***then***, ***finally***, *in the meantime, ever since.*

Notice that some conjuncts are single words (usually adverbs), such as *nevertheless, eventually,* while some are preposition phrases (*as a result, in addition*), and there are others that consist of entire clauses, such as *what's more, this is because....*

The above categories, too, are very broad categories and it would be misleading to think that the items within a category are interchangeable. For a start, there are different syntactic constraints on where each conjunct can be placed in a sentence. Compare, for example:

a) The film was slow. But I enjoyed it.
b) The film was slow. I enjoyed it, though.

and

a) Jackie's a vegetarian. Karl is a vegetarian, too.
b) Jackie's a vegetarian. Karl is also a vegetarian.

There are also stylistic differences, some conjuncts being very formal, even pompous (*notwithstanding, whereupon*) and others being relatively informal and characteristic of spoken language (*still, what's more*).

All of these factors create problems for learners, resulting in under-use and over-use (as we shall see below) and misuse, as in these examples (the misused linkers are underlined):

1 *To tell you the truth, I come from a small family. There are four of us in our family: My mother, my father, my sister and I. I dare say, we also have got a cat. Its name is Mozart.*

2 *Hiccupping can be very irritating if we are together with other people or if we hiccup for a very long time. However, some people can hiccup for hours or even days.*

3 *Then we were on the road again, but only for half an our. The tyre punctured. I opened the boot and realized we didn't have an extra tyre and the tool to changes it. At least we pull up in front of the hotel at midnight.*

4 *My surprise was when I arrived at home, there was a police car in front of my door. Firstly I thought that something wrong had happened. However, when I came in my home, I could see all my family sat in my sitting room with a policeman and a man.*

5 *I'm quite used not only to speaking English with customers but also dealing with people that have English as a second language. For that reason, I'd like to practising my English even during my leisure time.*

Probably what the writers meant were, respectively:
1 *I might add...*
2 *In fact...*
3 *At last* (or *Eventually...)*
4 *At first* and (possibly) *Indeed...* (since it is unlikely the sight of a policeman allayed his initial fears!)
5 The choice of *that* rather than *this* has the effect of distancing the reason from the consequence; in fact, *This is why...* might work even better to join the two sentences. ■

Classroom applications

The tendency, especially at beginner and elementary levels, to teach the language through isolated sentences means that many learners are uncertain as to how to weld such sentences into connected text. Here, for example, is a text written by an elementary student in response to the task *Write a paragraph each about your free time, recent activities and future plans:*

2.27

I spend my free time doing my homework.
I spend my free time going to a walk with my friends.
I spend my free time listening music.
Last weekend I stayed at home with my family.
Last holiday I went to Tarragona and I went to the beach.
Last weekend I went to the disco with my friends.
The next few months I'm going to stay at home all the day, studing.
I'm going to a picnic in a week.
I'm going to have a long holydays the next few months.

Essentially the text is nothing more than a list of sentences, or, rather, three sets of lists. The only apparent connecting device is the repetition of the sentence frames (eg *I spend my free time -ing).* This (inadvertent) use of parallelism is perhaps more suitable to a song than a written composition! What would help would be the

inclusion of some basic conjuncts, especially those that express *addition*, such as *and* and *also*. Asking learners to identify and categorize the conjuncts in a simple text or texts (as you did with texts 2.22–2.26) is one way of drawing attention to them.

One way of forcing the use of linking devices might be to ask the student who wrote text 2.27 to redraft it using fewer words and fewer sentences. Another problem with cohesion is a tendency of learners to overuse certain sentence-internal linkers, such as *and* and *because*. In the following text the learner incorporates *because* into practically every sentence.

2.28

> *In my free time I like to pass when my family. We go to swimming pool because we like to swimming too much. A lot of times I go to video club and I get a film because we like very much the films too. I can not go to the cinema frecuently because I have two children. The last film that all the family saw was Atlantis because other film they do not will like.*

Showing learners that, in order to express causality, there are alternatives to *because*, such as *so*, might help here. Also, substituting some sentence-internal links with links across sentences, using formulae such as *this is because...* and *this is why...* would also help vary the rather repetitive sentence structure. One way of doing this might be to reformulate the text and ask the learner to note any differences. For example:

> I like to spend my free time with my family. We love going swimming so we often go to the pool. And, because we also like films, I go to the video club a lot. I have two children so I don't go to the cinema very often. The last film that we watched together was Atlantis. This is because there was no other film that they wanted to watch.

A follow-up stage, where learners re-cast sentences using the newly presented linkers, might look like this:

> **Re-write each of the following sentences at least twice, choosing from these patterns:**
> I often go to Chinese restaurants because I like Chinese food.
> → *I like Chinese food so I often go to Chinese restaurants.*
> → *Because I like Chinese food I often go to Chinese restaurants.*
> → *I often go to Chinese restaurants. This is because I like Chinese food.*
> → *I like Chinese food. This is why I often go to Chinese restaurants.*
>
> 1. My flatmate doesn't go out much because he is shy.
> 2. The seas are rising because the Arctic ice is melting.
> 3. etc.

Of course, it is important that learners get beyond this rather mechanical stage and start writing short texts of their own creation. One way of doing this might be to set a task such as:

> Describe some changes that have happened in your town/neighbourhood in the last few years and explain why these changes occurred.

The causal element of the task rubric (*explain why...*) should require the use of at least some of the causal linkers practised previously.

An overemphasis on teaching conjuncts, however, at the expense of a focus on other ways of making texts cohesive, can result in the kind of stilted, over-connected type of text that is parodied by Ann Raimes in her article 'Anguish as a Foreign Language'[29]:

> Louie rushed and got ready for work, but, when he went out the door, he saw the snowstorm was very heavy. Therefore, he decided not to go to work. Then, he sat down to enjoy his newspaper. However, he realized his boss might get angry because he did not go to the office. Finally, he made another decision, that he must go to work. So, he went out the door and walked to the bus stop.

Raimes comments: 'Many of us, at one time or another, have praised a student for such a piece of writing. No grammatical mistakes. I have seen such flat paragraphs as this applauded as excellent and I, too, have assessed similar papers with a check mark and the comment "very good".' Raimes attributes this attitude to a pre-occupation with 'bottom-up' processes, as opposed to 'top-down' ones. Bottom-up processes focus on getting the details right at the expense of the whole: 'We have, I fear, trapped our students within the sentence. They worry about accuracy; they stop after each sentence and go back and check it for inflections, word order, spelling and punctuation, breathe a sigh of relief and go on to attack the looming giant of the next sentence.'

As an antidote to this bottom-up view, one idea might be to ask learners to *remove* conjuncts from a text, leaving only those that are absolutely necessary and making any other adjustments (eg in the ordering of the sentences) that might be required.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered how a text can be distinguished from a random collection of sentences and what implications this might have for learners in interpreting texts and in producing their own. We looked principally at the question of cohesion – what is it that binds the parts of a text together? The main teaching implications of this discussion of cohesion can be summarized as:

- expose learners to texts rather than to isolated sentences only
- draw attention to, and categorize, the features that bind texts together
- encourage learners to reproduce these features, where appropriate, in their own texts
- provide feedback not only on sentence-level features of learners' texts, but on the overall cohesiveness as well.

In the next chapter we will address the question of coherence: what is it that makes a text make sense?