

TEXTUAL PROPERTIES

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a critical assessment of standards of textuality and their application to randomly chosen sentences from magazines, newspapers and ELT books. I would like to discuss the limits of standards of textuality while analyzing a text from the point of view of structural complexity and content. The special emphasis will be on the functions of cohesive ties which help readers to get the hidden meaning of a text.

Key words: text, cohesion, coherence, acceptability, informativity, intertextuality
situationality

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı bir metni oluşturan standartları eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla incelemektir. Yazıda kullanılan örnekler Beykent Üniversitesi Hazırlık Biriminde okutulan İngilizce kitaplarından rastgele seçilmiştir. Bu makalede metin çözümleme açısından metnin standartlarının sınırlarını yapısal açıdan irdelemektir.

I. INTRODUCTION:

"Literature is not an object but an experience, and readers are not **consumers** but active performers who bring texts to life in their minds"

(Thomson, 1987, p.112)"

Iser puts much emphasis on the relationship between text and text readers. We can define text simply as a piece of spoken or written language. A text may also be considered from the point of view of its structure or its functions. 'A full understanding of a text is often impossible without reference to the context in which it occurs' (Jack Richards, **Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics**).

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Prior to the 1960s the sentence was considered the largest linguistic unit; however, since the 1960s some linguists have turned their interest away from the sentence as the largest linguistic unit. The common and underlying assumption of text linguistics is that the basic theoretical unit of communications is the **discourse** or the **text** (a piece of spoken or written language). We do not normally communicate by using single sentences in isolation but rather by using a coherent sequence of sentences in a particular context. The term **context** should be understood as the broader social situation in which a linguistic item is used.

Some linguists have attempted to synthesise beyond-the-sentence linguistics with a wide range of interdisciplinary research on the production and utilisation of texts in human interaction and proposed seven standards of textuality as the legitimate basis of the actualisation and utilisation of texts (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981)

I would like to try to clarify the terms text and context first.

TEXT: In the simplest way we can define text as language that is functional. By functional, we simply mean language that is doing some job in some context, as opposed to isolated words or sentences that I might put on the blackboard.

Meaning has to be coded in something in order to be communicated; but as a thing itself, a text is essentially a semantic unit.

Any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of a situation, we shall call a text. A text is essentially a semantic unit. Thus we cannot simply treat a theory of text as an extension of grammatical theory, and set up formal systems for deciding what a text is.

Because of its nature as a semantic entity a text, more than other linguistic units have to be considered from two perspectives simultaneously, both as a product and as a process.

Text is a **product** in the sense that it is an output, something that can be recorded and studied, having a certain construction that can be represented in systematic terms.

It is a process in the sense of being a contiguous process of semantic choice, a movement through the network of meaning potential, with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set.

You need to look beyond the words and structures so as to interpret the text as a process in a way that relates it to the language as a whole.

The process and product of social meaning in a particular context of a particular situation.

The intimate relationship between text and context, whereby one can only be interpreted by reference to the other.

Meaning is realised in language (in the form of text), which is then shaped or patterned in response to the context of the situation in which it is used. To study language then is to concentrate upon exploring how it is systematically patterned towards important social ends.

The relationship between text and context is a dialectical one: the text creates context as much as the context creates the text. Meaning arises from the interaction between the text and context. This means that part of the environment for a particular text is a set of previous texts, texts that are taken for granted as shared among those taking part.

Of the seven standards of textuality the first two are text-based; the other five standards of textuality are discourse-based. Since we are discussing the characteristics of text I would like to emphasise the first two i.e. text-based standards and I will also try to elaborate on cohesion in particular.

II. THE SEVEN STANDARDS OF TEXTUALITY

1. Cohesion: Cohesion concerns the way in which components of the surface texts are mutually connected within a sequence. It rests upon grammatical

dependencies. Cohesive elements represented in a text are pro-forms, tense, aspect, junction, ellipsis, recurrence, lexical substitution.

The set of linguistic resources that every language has (as part of textual metafunction) for linking one part of a text to another are **reference**,, **substitution**, and **lexical cohesion**. These are the semantic relations that enable one part of the text to function as the context for another.

All learning is a process of contextualisation: a building up of expectancies about what will happen next. These include non-verbal expectancies.

Most texts are connected links on the sentence base in terms of grammatical features such as pronominalisation, ellipsis and various kinds of. The resources available for grammatical cohesion can be listed finitely and compared across languages for translatability and distribution in real texts.

The cohesive items are clues or signals as to how text should be read, they are not absolutes The pronoun **it** only gives us the information that a non-human entity is being referred to.

Cohesion is only a guide to coherence and coherence is something created by the reader in the act of reading the text.

Cohesion is only part of coherence in reading and writing, and indeed in spoken language too, for the same process operates here.

Cohesive tie: The term itself implies a relation. If you think of a text as a continuous space in which individual messages follow each other, then the items that function as the two ends of the tie- the A and B are spatially separated from each other. There is a link between these two ends. The nature of this link is semantic: the two terms of any tie are tied together through some meaning relation. Such semantic relations form the basis for cohesion between the messages of a text.

The relation of **co-referentiality** is typically realised by the devices of reference, such as the pronominals **he, she, it** etc. or by the use of definite article **the, this, that**.

Co-classification is normally realised either by substitution or by ellipsis.

Little nut tree it = **co-referentiality**

Plays the cello does = **co-classification**

For example, one study looked different..... did)(pp.107)

Your pen yours = **co-classification**

Cohesion is established when an implicit device is interpreted by reference to some item of text.

Cohesive device: co- extension e.g. Silver.....golden

The sense relations: Synonym, antonym, and hyponym, repetition, metonym, cohesive chains- the relation will contribute to cohesion in either use.

Synonym: The experiential meaning of the two lexical items is identical: this does not mean that there is a total overlap of meanings- simply the meaning is the same.

Antonym: Oppositeness of experiential meaning.

Repetition: It creates a relation simply because a largely similar experiential meaning is encoded in each repeated occurrence of the lexical unit.

Metonymy: The term refers to a part-whole relation as in the case of **tree**, **limb** and **root**.

Cohesive chain: Identity chain: girl/she

Similarity chain: went/walk

If the grammatical cohesives are high and interpretable it means that the text is highly self-sufficient; to understand the speaker's meanings, one needs simply to know the English language.

If grammatical devices are not high, on the contrary, low the text is not interpretable and rather ambiguous.

2. Coherence: This concerns the ways in which the components of the textual world are connected with meanings. The configurations of concepts and relations which underlie the surface text are mutually accessible and relevant. Relations are links between concepts which appear together in a textual world.

They are represented in the text as rhetorical acts, such as defining, classifying, exemplifying, etc.

Coherence is ultimately based on the assumption that when speakers speak they say things that cohere with each other.

Coherence is a semantic property of discourses, based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences.

Every text is also a context for itself. A text is characterised by coherence; it hangs together.

Coherence is the feeling that a text hangs together, that it makes sense, and is not just a jumble of sentences.

3. Intentionality: This concerns the text producer's attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and a coherent text instrumental in fulfilling the producer's intentions. The manipulation of cohesion and coherence features produces a text which can fulfil the writer's intentions.

The elements signifying intentionality in a text are natural time order, relevance, brevity, clarity.

4. Acceptability: This concerns the text receiver's attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and a coherent text having some use which is relevant for the receiver e.g. to acquire knowledge or provide cooperation in a plan. In other words, awareness of the reader's expectation that the text will possess certain features and will be of use and relevance. Possible realisation as syllabus items could be conventional textual features (e.g. instruments in recipes); aspects of text grammar (e.g. use of passives, articles, etc.).

5. Informativity: The extent to which the elements in the text are expected/unexpected or known/unknown/uncertain. Possible realisations as syllabus items are marked/unmarked sequences; given/new information; topic/comment; maintaining/breaking text conventions.

6. Situationality: The ways in which a text is relevant to the situation in which it occurs. It concerns the factors which make a text relevant to a situation of occurrences. Possible realisations of syllabus items are topic selection and development; situational constraints (e.g. formal letters, etc); exam questions.

7. Intertextuality: This concerns the factors which make the utilisation of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts. The factors which make the accessibility of one text for a reader dependent upon knowledge of, or access to, other texts. Possible realisations are use of source material; quotes; in-text references to other texts, bibliographies.

In this paper I would like to emphasise two main textual standards **cohesion** and **coherence**. These two standards seem to be more important than the other standards in many ways. They hold more than one speech-act together in the same text in order to make it a real text. For the sake of clarity I would like to show their textual properties in texts randomly taken from different ELT books, newspapers, magazines.

Cohesion: Procedures whereby the elements are organised into a sequence such that their mutual relevance and linear connectivity is maintained.

Cohesion in the text can be achieved in a number of ways.

1. By the use of a definite NP linking the future of 'definiteness' to an earlier mention of that particular item in the text

e.g.

*One way is to put very, very small words, called **microprint**, in hidden places on the bill.*

***These words are***

Open-water swimmers do not swim in pools but in lakes, seas and oceans.

They swim.....

Lynne was born in 1957 in the state of New Hampshire. She started.....

My uncle Martin is my mother's elder brother. He....

2. By the use of recurrent pronouns and personal markers,

e.g.

Then, in 1975 she....

In 1977 she swam

During these swims, she had to keep

He is my favourite among my mother's family.

He is a very interesting man. He lives quite near us with my aunt Angela and my cousins.

3. By the sustained use of tense signals,

e.g.

is, thinks (present tense marker)

was, made, broke, decided (past tense markers)

is, lives (present tense marker)

4. By expressing in various ways the three types of deixis (a term for a word or phrase which directly relates an utterance to a time, place, or persons)

e.g.

time : at present, every weekend, while, this time the next year, 30 minutes late

place : quite near us, so close to the boat

person : my uncle, Anne, Bob, Lynee, Africa's Cape of Good Hope

5. By repeating a structure , but filling it with new elements (parallelism)

e.g.

She broke records

Lynee decided she wanted to use her talent to do something

She wanted to encourage people.....

Lynee decided to swim the 2.7....

Lynee wanted the challenge of swimming

But even more, Lynee wanted to bring the two countries...

Lynee continues to make..

He is about 45 and grey-haired.

He is still quite good-looking.

He is tall and well-built.

6. By the repetition of elements of patterns,

e.g.

He was wearing three shirts, a jacket, two pairs of socks, a pair of shorts and two pairs of jeans.

He was carrying one small backpack, which was very full

He is extremely tidy.

He gets angry.

7. By shifting used elements to different classes,

e.g.

from noun to verb, from adjective to adverb

highly, clearly, soundly, repeatedly, formerly

8. By the use of pro-forms (i.e. replacing content-carrying elements with short place holders),

e.g.

***He** found Tony near the Air France counter.*

*He will have sign with your name on **it**.*

They cannot arrest me for that

*At present **he** is in the USA.*

***He** is visiting the firm's customers **there**.*

9. By paraphrasing what has been said previously.

e.g.

*These chemicals are a great help to farmers. Therefore, farmers can grow more produce on the same amount of land. **This means that shoppers can find more produce in the stores.***

10. By referring to the same entity in a textual world with different surface expressions (co-reference).

e.g.

His body ached and he felt constantly tired.

It was difficult for him to even move around.

11. By repeating a structure or content with certain omissions/ ellipses.

e. g.

At present, he is in the USA (he is visiting the firm's customers there).

12. By conjoining sentences via conventional conjunctions. However, conjunctive relations between sentences can take various forms.

e.g.

The Hermansons, however, have maintained that prosecutors...

a. **additive**

*He lives quite near us with my aunt Angela **and** my cousins Anne and Bob. **So** I often go to his house.*

b. **adversative**

*He is about 45 and grey-haired **but** he is still quite good-looking.*

c. **causal**

*My aunt and cousins never touch them **because** he loses his temper.*

d. **temporal**

When uncle Martin is at home

III. COHERENCE: The procedures whereby elements are organised into a contour of concepts and relations so that their mutual relevance and conceptual connectivity is maintained. The relationship which links the meanings of utterances in a discourse, or the sentences in a text. These links may be based on the speakers' shared knowledge. There is no grammatical or lexical link between question and reply. But the exchange has coherence because both A and B know that B's sister lives in the opposite direction to A's home. Generally a paragraph has coherence if it is a series of sentences which relate to it.

A. Could you give me a lift home?

B. Sorry, I am visiting my sister.

Coherence itself is the product of two factors-paragraph unity and sentence cohesion. To achieve paragraph unity, a writer should make sure that the paragraph must have a single generalization that serves the focus of attention, that is, a topic sentence and control the content of every other sentence in the paragraph.

In order to achieve cohesion, the link of one sentence to the next, we can consider such techniques:

Repetition:

A. I never liked the school

B. I liked the teachers in the sixth form

In this example, in sentence B a word from sentence A is repeated.

Synonymy: If direct repetition is too obvious a synonymy of the word can be repeated.

A. I liked my lessons.

B. I enjoyed my lessons.

Antonymy: Antonymy can also create sentence cohesion because in language antonyms share a lot of elements of meaning.

Collocation: A commonly paired or highly probable word to connect one sentence to another

Parallelism: Repeating a sentence structure.

Transitions: Conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs can be used to link sentences with particular logical relationships such as: *that is, tat is to say, in other words, but, yet, however, nevertheless, still, though,, although, whereas, in contrast, too, also, furthermore, moreover, in addition, besides, in the same way, therefore, so, consequently, as a result, hence, it follows that, because, since, for, in fact, in deed, admittedly true, I grant, naturally, for instance, after all, even, in fact, etc.*

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