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## COHESION IN LITERARY NARRATIVES

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Cohesion, one of the main standards of textuality advanced by Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang U. Dressler, is treated in the present article as a constitutive principle of textual organization. The study aims at identifying the role of cohesive categories, i.e. reference, substitution, ellipsis, junction, and lexical cohesion to the thematic organization and logical structuring of literary narratives. Analyzing the actual manifestation of lexical and grammatical cohesion elements in specific narrative contexts, the article seeks to identify the cohesive devices that enhance or preclude the logical, coherent concatenation of a given literary text with a view to evaluating their impact on the general understanding and interpretation of the narrative.

**Keywords:** *textuality, cohesion, lexical cohesion, reference, substitution, ellipsis, thematic organization.*

### ROLUL COEZIUNII ÎN NARAȚIUNEA LITERARĂ

Coeziunea, unul dintre standardele de bază ale textulității înaintate de către Robert de Beaugrande și Wolfgang U. Dressler, este abordată în prezentul articol drept principiu de bază al organizării textuale. Studiul dat are drept scop identificarea rolului categoriilor coezive, *id est* al referinței, substituției, elipsei, joncțiunii și al coeziunii lexicale, la organizarea tematică și la structurarea logică a textului narativ. Analizând punctual manifestarea elementelor coezive gramaticale și lexicale în anumite contexte narative, în articol se urmărește identificarea mijloacelor coezive specifice care contribuie la sau prejudiciază organizarea logică, coerentă a textului literar narativ cu scopul de a identifica impactul acestor mijloace asupra comprehensiunii și interpretării textului.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *textualitate, coeziune, coeziune lexicală, referință, substituție, elipsă, organizare tematică.*

### Introduction

Cohesion is one of the key-concepts in text linguistics whose object of study, as formulated by Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang U. Dressler, includes the defining properties of texts – what constitutes their textuality or texture [1]. In this framework, texts are considered from two standpoints: 1) *the text-as-a-product* approach, which focuses on text cohesion, coherence, topical organization, and communicative functions; 2) *the text-as-a-process* perspective, which studies how texts are created and understood, i.e. the text production, reception, and interpretation [2, p.18]. Texts are seen as language units having a particular communicative function, characterized by definable linguistic features and such principles as cohesion, coherence, informativeness, etc. A stretch of language is identified as a text, to a large extent, due to the connections within and among its sentences, which are of several kinds:

- Connections created through the arrangement of information within each clause and the way this relates to the arrangement of information in preceding and following clauses and sentences; these contribute mainly to topic development and maintenance through *thematic* and *information structures*.
- Surface connections which establish interrelationships between persons and events; these allow us to trace participants in a text and interpret the way in which different parts of the text relate to each other (*cohesion*).
- Underlying semantic connections which allow us to ‘make sense’ of a text as a unit of meaning (*coherence*) [3, p.123].

Cohesion is the principle of textual organization that concerns the ways in which the components of the surface text, i.e. lexemes, clauses, sentences and paragraphs, are mutually connected within a sequence [4, p. 4]. This standard of textuality is systematized by means of five distinct categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, junction, and lexical cohesion (synonymy, antonymy, and collocation). Each of these categories is represented in the text by particular features – repetitions, omissions, occurrences of certain word classes (articles, pronouns, demonstratives, adverbs, and adjectives), and lexical constructions which have the function of signaling that the interpretation of one textual element is dependent on another element in the text.

### Analysis of the role of cohesive devices in the logical organization of the text and their impact on text understanding and interpretation

In what follows, the contextual analysis of specific cohesive elements is conducted in order to identify the impact they have on the enhancement or preclusion of the logical organization of a given literary piece with a view to evaluating their contribution to the general understanding and interpretation of the narrative.

**Referencing elements** are those items which make reference to some other language elements in a given context for their interpretation. There are two general types of reference: *endophoric*, which refers to information that can be retrieved from within the text, and *exophoric*, which refers to information from the immediate context of situation. In English, referencing items are pronouns, demonstratives, the definite article and comparatives. The opening excerpt of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy contains different types of endophoric reference:

ONE EVENING of late summer, before the present century had reached its thirtieth year, a young man and woman, the latter carrying a child, were approaching the large village of Weydon-Priors, in Upper Wessex, on foot. They were plainly but not ill clad, though the thick hoar of dust which had accumulated on their shoes and garments from an obviously long journey lent a disadvantageous shabbiness to their appearance just now [5, p.1].

The underlined markers in the quoted example have the function of reference. For the text to be logical, readers assume that *its* in *its thirtieth year* is the year of the century introduced earlier in the sentence; the *latter* stands for the woman in *a young man and woman*; *they* refer to the same couple, likewise *their shoes and garments* and *their appearance* are the young man and woman's. The referents for *its*, *they*, *their*, can be tracked by looking back in the text; i.e. by means of *anaphoric reference*. This type of reference "points backwards" to previously mentioned information in the text.

*Cataphoric reference* "points forward" to information presented later in the text, when the information needed for the interpretation is to be found in the part of the text that follows, as in *When he was twenty-three years old, Paul sent in a landscape to the winter exhibition at Nottingham Castle* [6, p.252]. Cataphora can be used to generate uncertainty and therefore to intensify readers' interest in the text. It is a classic device for engaging the reader's attention and is usually characteristic of modern narratives that begin *in medias res*, or with an *etic opening*, i.e. narratives that lack a proper incipit that would provide a preliminary orientation in the text. In such texts, persons and objects from the fictional world are usually treated as given, known and therefore in no need of being introduced, with referents being withheld for quite long stretches of text:

He came back into the kitchen. The man was still on the floor, lying where he had hit him, and his face was bloody. He was moaning. The woman had backed against the wall and was staring with terrified eyes at Willi, his friend, and when he came in she gave a gasp and broke into loud sobbing. Willi was sitting at the table, his revolver in his hand, with a half empty glass of wine beside him. Hans went up to the table, filled his glass and emptied it at a gulp [7, p.174].

The beginning of the short story "The Unconquered" by W.S. Maugham contains elements that are typical of an *etic opening*. There is no antecedent for the personal pronoun *he*. Its identity is disclosed towards the end of the quoted paragraph *Hans went up to the table [...]*. We have to piece the connections together, slowly, and work out who Hans and Willi are, what has happened to the man and woman. The objects and setting are referred to by the definite article, also referred to in narratology as *familiarizing article*: *the kitchen, the man, the floor, the wall, the table*. Thus, unknown information to the reader is presented in the guise of given information. No exposition is provided to introduce the reader to the protagonists' situation, and, consequently the items in question, though specific, are unidentifiable in the text. Readers are compelled to use more than just the text to establish referents; the narrator expects them to share a world with him irrespective of the text, with a house and a typical kitchen in it, furnished in a certain way, where a fighting scene is taking place.

References to assumed, shared worlds outside of the text are *exophoric references*. Because they are not text-internal, i.e. they do not bind elements together into a text, they are not truly cohesive, but they are text forming agents contributing to textuality. Referents "outward" from texts are often culture-bound and outside the experience of the readers (e.g. geographical locations, historic events, symbols, etc.). In this case they will need to consult some source of encyclopedic information in order to identify the referent.

**Substitution**, the replacement of one item by another, and **ellipsis**, the omission of an item, represent two forms of another type of cohesive relation. Writers resort to substitution and ellipsis when they wish to avoid the repetition of a lexical item being able to draw on one of the grammatical resources of the language to replace the pronoun *it*. In English there are three types of substitution which reflect its grammatical function: nominal (*one, ones, same*), verbal (*do*), and clausal (*so, not*).

The substitute *one/ones* always functions as the head of a nominal group and can substitute only for an item which is itself the head of a nominal group. For example, in "... *he took the bread out of the oven, arranging the burnt loaves at the bottom of the panchion, the good ones at the top*" [8, p.209] the noun *loaves* is the head of the nominal group *the burnt loaves* and *ones* is the head of the nominal group *the good ones*. The noun that is presupposed is always a countable noun; there is no substitute form for mass/uncountable nouns: *These biscuits are stale. – Get some fresh ones. This bread's stale. – Get some fresh.* [9, p.92]. In the second example the only possible form of substitution is substitution by ellipsis.

In **clausal substitution**, actualized by means of the words *so* and *not*, the presupposed element is an entire clause:

'Well,' he began apologetically, 'she didn't ask me; but one morning –and it WAS cold – I found her on the station shivering, not able to keep still; so I asked her if she was well wrapped up. She said: 'I think so' [10, p. 131].

'Are you a bachelor, *mon colonel*? If so I strongly recommend you to go to Geneva [11, p.847].

In the first quoted example *so* is a report substitute that presupposes the whole of the clause *I think I am well wrapped up*, whereas in the second, *so* is a condition substitute replacing the conditional clause *if you are a bachelor*.

**Ellipsis** is the omission of elements normally required by the grammar which the issuer assumes are retrievable from the context and therefore need not be mentioned [12, p.43]. An elliptical item is one which, as it were, leaves specific structural slots to be filled from elsewhere.

Mrs. Morel rose.

'You will let me help you wash up,' said Clara.

'Eh, there are so few, it will only take a minute,' said the other [13, p.323].

Emma was rather plain, rather old, and condescending. But to condescend to him made her happy, and he did not mind [13, p.110].

The selected excerpts present different forms of nominal ellipsis specific for the English language. In the first, the presupposed element *dishes*, although not explicitly supplied, of the elliptical nominal group *so few* is retrievable from the previous sentence *You will let me help you wash up*. The same procedure is valid for the second underlined nominal ellipsis *the other*, implying the *other woman*, i.e. *Mrs. Morel*. Therefore, in literary narratives, the saturation of elliptical structures with the necessary elements implies more than the analysis of the previously occurring nominal groups, it relies on the consideration of wider fictional context. Still, another form of nominal ellipsis is displayed in the last excerpt *did not mind* refers to the first part of the same sentence, the presupposed elements being *he did not mind her condescending to him*. Hence the double status of ellipsis: using texts with no ellipses is time and energy consuming, nevertheless extreme, very heavy ellipsis cancels out this advantage by soliciting intensive search and problem solving.

Cohesion is also supported by *tense* and *aspect*. The tense system marks the chronological distinctions among *past, present, and future times* of the relations of retrospection, simultaneity, and prospection of the narrated actions or events. Aspect qualifies the actions as continuous, finished or unfinished, repeated or singulative. Some of these distinctions arise mainly from the perspective of the narrator at that moment (e.g. past, present, and future are relative to the situation of utterance), and others from the organization of text-world situations or events among themselves [14]. In literary narratives, for instance, tense and aspect are aligned with either the perspective of the narrator or character acting in the story:

When October came in, she thought only of Christmas. Two years ago, at Christmas, she had met him. Last Christmas she had married him. This Christmas she would bear him a child [15, p.13].

The use of tenses and deictics in the above example mark the perspective of the character referred to by the pronoun *she* (Mrs. Morel). The combination of the temporal deictics *two years ago*, *last Christmas*, typical of direct discourse, with the past perfect tense *she had met him*, *she had married him* defy the grammar conventions suggesting that the perspective is that of the character in the story, otherwise the past perfect tense would normally be used with *two years before* and *the previous Christmas*. The actions *she had met him*, *she had married him*, *she would bear him a child* are interpreted as retrospective or prospective from the woman's viewpoint. Thus, cohesion is also viewed as a means of providing temporal, spatial, and logical orientation for the reader.

**Junction** is another device for expressing the relationships among events or situations. At the surface level, junction markers relate sentences, clauses and paragraphs to each other, thus amounting to text coherence by means of such relations as cause-consequence, contrast, evidence, concession, result, etc. signaled by the corresponding junctive devices:

He had been completely idle at Oxford; although his father had given him a very large allowance, he had got monstrously into debt; and now he had been sent down [16, p.325].

"I rather wanted to be a painter when I was a boy, but my father made me go into business because he said there was no money in art..." [17].

It was not till he was twenty years old that the family could ever afford to go away for a holiday. Mrs. Morel had never been away for a holiday, except to see her sister, since she had been married. Now at last Paul had saved enough money, and they were all going [18, p.174].

The first quoted excerpt presents two coherence relations: the first clause offers the *cause* for the character's dismissal from university announced in the last clause of the sentence (*and now he had been sent down*); then follows a relation of *concession*, i.e. the third clause (*he had got monstrously into debt*) denies the expectation raised by the second clause (*his father had given him a very large allowance*). In the second sample a negative relation is signaled by the contrastive connective *but*. The second clause (*but my father made me go into business*) is the *consequence* of the last part of the sentence (*because he said there was no money in art*). The last extract displays the relation of *enablement*: Paul's action of saving enough money made it possible for his family to go away for a holiday.

**Lexical cohesion** refers to the role played by the selection of vocabulary in organizing relations within a text. It is classified into: recurrence/reiteration, partial recurrence, parallelism, and paraphrase. *Recurrence* means either restating an item in a later part of the discourse by direct repetition or reasserting its meaning by exploiting *lexical relations*: the use of synonymy or near synonymy, hyponymy or hyperonymy: "*I will draft you a Bill,*" said the King, [...] "*enacting that women shall vote at all future elections. Shall vote, you observe; or, to put it plainer, must* [19].

*Partial recurrence* is the shifting of already used elements to different classes (e.g. from noun to verb). Partial recurrence can also be helpful in disclosing the meaning of titles. W.Dressler notes a story by Erich Fried where the title of "*Turtle-Turning*" and the expression *turtle-turner* are introduced without explanation until a later passage:

[12] Everywhere he finds a helpless turtle fallen on its back, he turns it over [20].

Repeating a structure but filling it with new elements is termed **parallelism**:

[13] Heaven knows what pains the author has been at, what bitter experiences he has endured and what heartache suffered, to give some chance reader a few hours' relaxation or to while away the tedium of a journey [21].

In addition to anaphoric reference, the textuality of the quoted excerpt is enhanced by direct repetition, synonymy, and parallelism. The clauses *what pains the author has been at*, *what bitter experiences he has endured* and *what heartache suffered* co-refer to the same activity – the act of creation, the process of writing a book. In the process of text comprehension, decoding the co-referring relationships is an important act of the reader similar to the process that occurs with pronouns.

**Collocation**, as a sub-class of lexical cohesion, in Halliday and Hasan's model, covers any instance which involves a pair of lexical items or long lexical chains that are associated with each other or among them through recognizable lexico-semantic relations of: synonymy and near-synonymy (*climb ... ascent, beam ... rafter, disease ... illness*); superordination (*elm ... tree, boy ... child, skip ... play*); opposition of various kinds (*boy ... girl, order ... obey, crowded ... deserted*); part to whole (*car ... brake, box ... lid*), etc. [22, p.286-288]. The cohesive effect of such lexical pairs or chains depends on their tendency to share the same lexical environment, to occur in collocation with one another. The paragraph from the novel *Death of a Hero* by Richard Aldington represents a rich reserve of such collocational cohesion:

...Travel means the consciousness of adventure and exploration, the sense of covering the miles, the ability to seize indefatigably upon every new or familiar source of delight. Hence the horror of *tourism*, which is a conventionalizing, a codification, of adventure and exploration – which is absurd. Adventure is allowing the unexpected to happen to you. Exploration is experiencing what you have not experienced before. How can there be any adventure, any exploration, if you let somebody else – above all a travel bureau – arrange everything beforehand? It isn't seeing new and beautiful things which matters, it's seeing them to yourself. And if you want the sensation of covering the miles, go on foot. Three hundred miles on foot in three weeks will give you infinitely more sense of travel, show you infinitely more surprising and beautiful experiences, than thirty thousand miles of mechanical transport [23, p.84].

Lexical connectedness in the above paragraph is achieved by the reiteration of items such as *travel*, which constitutes the topic of the paragraph, and its near synonyms *adventure, exploration, covering the miles*. Chains of collocation cohesion that establish and maintain the subject of the extract are: *travel ... adventure ... exploration ... unexpected ... new ... tourism ... travel ... bureau ... miles ... on foot ... mechanical transport*. They are characterized by synonymy (*unexpected ... new ... surprising, experience ... sensation*), oppositeness of meaning (*beauty ... horror, new ... familiar*), superordinate relation between *tourism* and its hyponyms: *travel, adventure, exploration, travel bureau, go on foot*, etc.

Cohesive devices that run throughout a text usually differ in their density. In some instances, there might be numerous clusters of cohesive ties, giving a very close texture which serves to reinforce the unity of the text. Conversely, there might be isolated sentences or other structural units which do not cohere with those around them, even though they form part of a connected passage. This is usually the case of transitions of some kind, for instance the transition from narration to description or from a main line of the narrative to a flashback in a passage of prose fiction. Generally, a greater degree of cohesion is found within a paragraph than between paragraphs. In some literary narratives, however, as an idiosyncratic style of certain authors, the rhythm is contrapuntal: the writer extends a dense cluster of cohesive ties, across the paragraph boundary and leaves the texture within the paragraph relatively loose. Given to the fact that continuity is the basic feature of textuality, readers would normally interpret text-world events and situations, presented by these passages, as related. Noticeable gaps could be filled by making inferences about how the text-world is evolving without explicit statements being provided.

### Conclusions

Having considered the standard of cohesion, it can be stated that its actualization in literary narratives is based on various grammatical, discursive and logico-semantic relations at the micro-level of the text as well as on the readers' knowledge of the world, their skills to draw inferences, fill in the ellipsis and focus on contextually relevant information. Although this standard of textuality is regarded as an objective property of the text, making sense of cohesive links in a literary narrative requires the reader's involvement, too. Hence, it can be stated that cohesion is pragmatically determined. The contextual analysis conducted in the present article has proved that the cohesive relations that enhance the logical organization of a narrative text are anaphoric reference, junction and lexical cohesion; whilst the cohesive categories and elements that preclude the logical connectedness of a text are cataphoric and exophoric reference, referentless pronouns, familiarizing articles usually occurring in *medias res* incipits. Thus, the reader's ability to piece the information together, identify the missing links and interpret the details in wider contexts of the text are essential in defying the challenges to cohesion.

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