

Teaching the Recognition of Cohesive Ties in Reading a Foreign Language

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In recent years there has been a welcome re-orientation, in teaching reading, to greater emphasis being given to texture, i.e. the essential characteristics of text. Within this re-orientation, cohesion is gradually being given greater attention. This article outlines the system of cohesive relations in English, describes problematic instances in the recognition of cohesive ties, suggests appropriate teaching materials, and recommends associated classroom procedures. It is suggested that the materials and procedures described have relevance to teaching the recognition of textual cohesive ties in any foreign language.

COHESION AND TEXTURE

The concerns of applied linguistics swing pendulum-like between focus on larger and smaller elements. Thus, from a pre-occupation with segmental sounds just a decade ago, phonetics is now switching its attention to areas such as intonation discourse. Similarly, from the Rhetoric of the days of Aristotle, the pendulum swung to Chomsky's sentence-constrained transformational grammar, and now back to concern with texture, i.e. the properties that characterize text and that distinguish it from non-text.

Language-teaching, in drawing on the attentions of applied linguistics, has also in recent years concerned itself increasingly with the essential characteristics of text. Thus, in reading, we are today less occupied with the minutiae of words and word-parts, and more with texture. One important aspect of texture is cohesion.

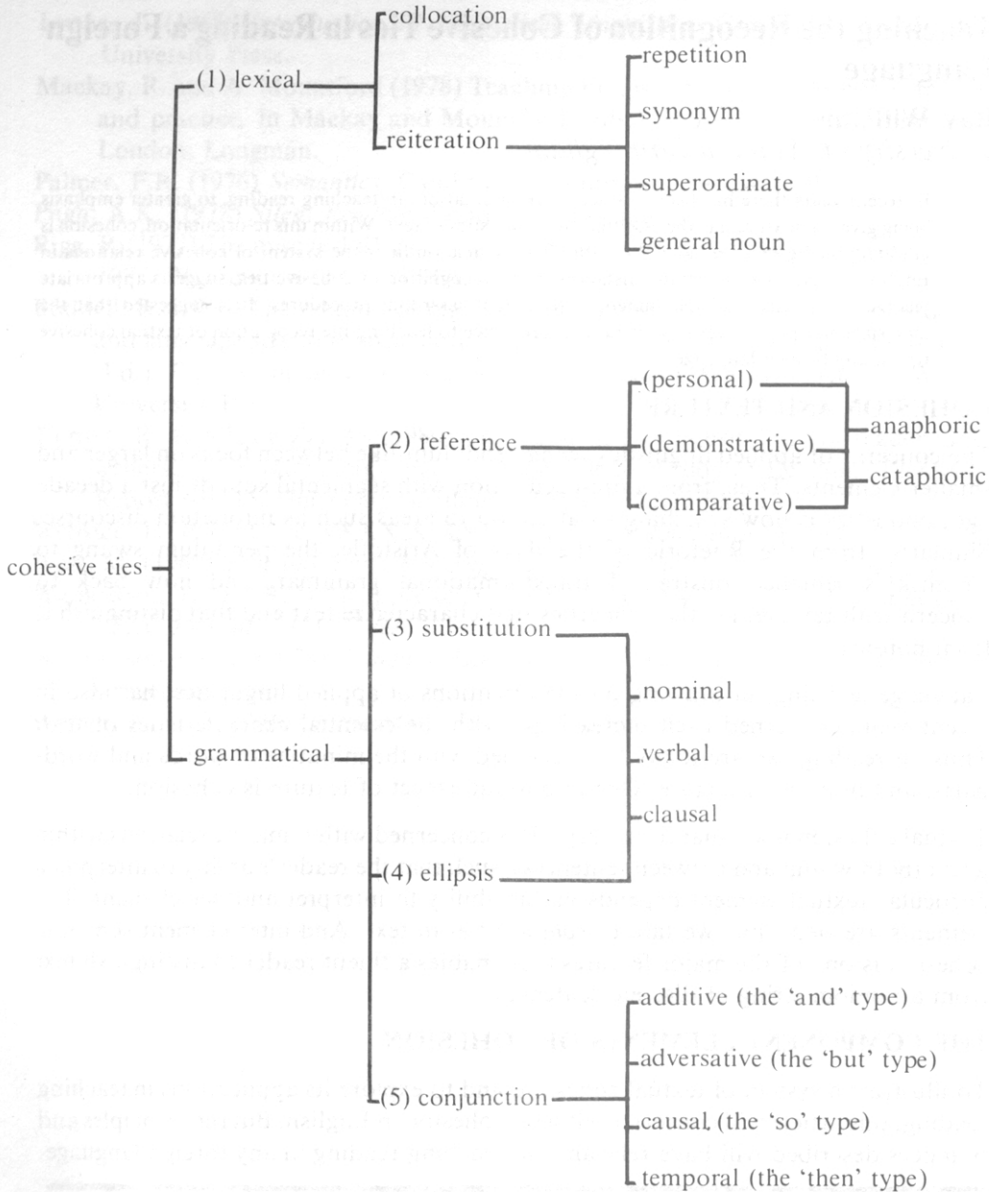
Textual cohesion is a semantic concept. It is concerned with semantic relations within a text (both within and between sentences), such that the reader's ability to interpret a particular textual element depends on his ability to interpret another element. The elements are tied: thus we talk of *cohesive ties* in text. And inter-element semantic cohesion is one of the major features that enables a fluent reader to distinguish text from a random string of discrete sentences.

THE COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF COHESION

To illustrate a system of textual cohesion, and to explore its applications in teaching reading, this article will concern itself with cohesion in English. But the principles and practices described will have relevance in teaching reading in any foreign language.

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A major advance in our understanding of how cohesion operates in English text is Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976). An outline of the system they describe is:



Most of the examples cited in Halliday and Hasan are of cohesion across sentence boundaries. But, as Halliday and Hasan themselves say, "Since cohesive relations are