A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO INTERNAL RELATIONS WITHIN A TEXT

Mădălina CERBAN*

Abstract: *The first part of this paper makes a short presentation of the most important approaches regarding internal and external relations within a text. This short presentation is important because of the important differences among these classifications which can lead to confusions. The second part enumerates the different characteristics of internal and external relations, emphasizing the fact that external relations display the sequence of actions, while internal relations are oriented to text-time, time in relation to what is being said not with what is being done. The third part briefly analyses the four main types of internal relations: additive, comparative, consequential and temporal.*

Keywords: *internal, external relations.*

Preliminary remarks

When analyzing internal relations within a text, one major problem is represented by the relationship between discourse structures and grammatical ones. Due to Halliday's theory regarding the lexicogrammar which is seen as a meaning making resource, this relationship has become an important issue. This is true especially with conjunctive relations since it is in this field that Halliday has elaborated his theory about grammatical description. His complex analysis divides interdependency into two types: paratactic and hypotactic, and the logico-semantic relations into: projection (locution and idea) and expansion (elaboration, extension and enhancement).

In this paper we are concerned of logico-semantic relations which are difficult to classify because of their diversified realizations. A large number of classifications have been proposed: Martin (1983), Halliday & Hasan (1976), Halliday (1985), Mann and Thompson (1986). Some of these classifications take into account all relations that can form correct grammatical structures from one language to another (Mann & Thompson); others focus on particular languages, analyzing the relations realized there (Halliday 7 Hasan, Martin and Halliday, Martin). Another problem that appears among these classifications has to do with what type of realizations is taken as point of departure for the analysis. For example, Halliday & Hasan focus on cohesive relations between clause complexes, Martin uses hypotactic conjunctions as basis for his classification, and Halliday develops a classification for hypotactic and paratactic relations within the clause complex.

Halliday & Hasan classify the conjunctive relations around two axes: four types of logico-semantic relations: additive, adversative, casual and temporal and the external/internal opposition. Halliday's table (1985) of expansion takes a different set of logico-semantic relations as one axis: elaboration, extension and enhancement and the diversification of the realization of these categories as the other. Martin recognizes four main types of logico-semantic relations: additive, comparative, temporal and consequential.

Although there are many differences among these theories, we have to remark that all three classifications have similarities that should be noted. They set up comparable additive, temporal and consequential categories for the possible meanings

*University of Craiova, madalina.cerban@yahoo.co.uk

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)

of ***and, then*** and ***so***. Halliday and Hasan focus on 'cohesive' relations between clause complexes and set up additive, adversative, causal and temporal logico-semantic relation with the items ***and, yet*** and ***so*** and ***then*** for all these four general conjunctive relations. On the other hand, Martin starts with hypotactic relations and divides the adversative category into concession (typically realized with the conjunction *although*) and contrast (typically realized with the conjunction *whereas*), concession is grouped with causal relations under consequence and contrast is grouped with similarity under comparison:

Martin (1983)		**Halliday & Hasan (1976)**
- additive: *besides*		additive: *and*
- comparison:	contrast: *whereas* similarity: *like*	adversative: *but*
- consequence:	concession: *although* cause: *because*	causal: *so*
- temporal: *after*		temporal: *then*

I. Internal and external relations

Internal relations (also called rhetorical relations) are the relations obtained in the organization of the text itself rather than in the organization of the world the text describes. The experiential relations are referred to as external, oriented to what happens outside the text, rather than within. Therefore, we can affirm that the opposition between internal and external relations is 'text' versus 'reality'.

The distinction between internal and external relations is probably clearest with temporal relations. External relations display the sequence of actions, while internal relations are oriented to text-time, time in relation to what is being said not with what is being done. Let us exemplify the four major categories of logico-semantic relations we are going to discuss in this paper, first in their external, then in their internal meaning:

e.g. **Additive**

external: *Mike came in*
and *asked for his brother.*

internal: *Mike was angry.*
Moreover*, he lost his wallet.*

Comparative

external: *Jane plays tennis*
like *Miriam does.*

internal: *Jane plays tennis very well;*
like *you should see her passing shot.*

Temporal

external: *Mike came in the office*
and then *looked for the book.*

internal: *Janet was not ready to go.*
First *she changed her dress;*
and ***second*** *she put on her make-up.*

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)

Consequential
external: *Mike was relieved*
because *he could anticipate the victory.*
internal: *Mike is relieved*
because *the victory was close.*

Note: We have to mention that the distinction between internal and external relations to a proper account of the semantics of logical relations does not play an important role in Halliday's classification of expansion because he analyses clause complex in relation to the rest of the grammar, rather than in relation to cohesion and text structure.

II. Internal relations

Starting from the fact that internal relations are basically "cohesive", functioning as connections between clause complexes, so "the point of departure will be "cohesive", rather than hypotactic conjunctions" (Martin, 992: 206), we chose to start our description of internal relations with additive and comparative one due to the fact that there are a much richer resource internally than externally. At the same time, we have to mention that most of external conjunctions can be used internally, and in order to make our presentation simpler, we will take into consideration only those conjunctions which are used internally all the time.

II.a. Internal comparative relations

Internal comparative relations are a resource for organizing meanings in terms of similarity and difference. The comparison is a textual one, i.e. it is not oriented to how meanings are alike or unlike with respect to field. In the following text Jones' opinion is presented in contrast with his interest in preserving his position. The text is organized to challenge the idea that initiatives coming from the employees are not appreciated in the company.

e.g. Internal similarity
Jones is hard-working;
he wants to preserve his position in the company.
On the other hand*, he wants to change the company's policy*
and his approach has made him very unpopular among his colleagues.

In the following example Jones' attitude is presented as an elaboration of his hard-working nature. The text is organized to suggest the point of view that company will not favour his ideas.

Internal difference
Jones is hard-working;
he wants to preserve his position in the company.
That is*, he wants the company's policy to change*
and his approach has made him very unpopular among his colleagues.

The internal conjunctions in these two texts code different attitudes to what company will do; at the same time Jones' attitude remain the same.

In order to make the relations of internal similarity more explicit Hoey distinguishes two types of conjunctions: one type used to reformulate the text and another type for comparison. According to Hoey (1983, *On the surface of discourse*),

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)

the two types of relations have different functions: reformulation – a discourse function used to clarify what is meant in the text (the underlying meaning), and comparison is used to signal that something remains unchanged in the text.. The conjunctions that are most commonly used in reformulations are: *that is, in other words, in general, briefly, in particular, in fact, actually, at least, indeed* and the conjunctions that are most commonly used in comparisons are: *likewise, similarity, in the same way, equally, correspondingly, again*.

II.b. Internal additive relations

Like internal comparatives, internal additives are a richer resource internally than externally due to the fact that we consider that the continuatives *now, well, anyway* (according to Halliday and Hasan, 1976) should be considered internal additive relations while *of course* and *after all* will be analysed as internal consequential.

According to Martin (1993) internal additives can be divided into two groups:

1. emphasize an exchange, i.e. *oh, well*
2. build an exchange ("turn building", Martin, 1993: 218), i.e. *now, anyway, as well, or*

1. a. *Oh* explicitly acknowledges the new information, i.e. the information the listener/ speaker considers to be new:

e.g. A: *I have brought you my latest book.*
B: ***Oh,*** *let me see it.*

b. *Well* introduces a response to information. It appears where there is some doubt about the given information, either because it has the form of a question:

e.g. A: *Does she like oranges?*
B: ***Well****, oranges, lemons, pineapples, yes.*

or of a statement:

e.g. A: *I would like we spend our holiday in Spain.*
B: ***Well****, let me think about it.*

2. Build an exchange. The conjunctions used in building an exchange have the function of organizing the discourse on a global level. They can be classified according to the contribution they have to the development of the discourse into: staging (a change of topic) and developing.

- staging: *by the way, anyway, anyhow:*

e.g. A: *Is the president coming tonight?*
B: *I'm not sure. He is extremely busy.*
A: ***Anyway****, I'll see him tomorrow.*

- developing: *in addition, as well, moreover, furthermore, alternatively*

e.g. A: *We could go to a movie.*
B: ***As well****, we could go to theatre.*
A: *This new model has a bigger speed.* ***Furthermore****, it is less expensive.*

Note: Conjunctions such as *in addition, as well* are used to extend a text, while conjunctions such as *furthermore, moreover* build it up to something (cumulative conjunctions).

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)

II.c. Internal consequential relations

Consequential relations can be divided into causal and concessive. As far as causal consequential relations are concerned, resources for internal relations are very limited, most of the conjunctions being used for both internal and external relations. The most used ones are: *consequently, hence, in conclusion*. *After all* is used only internally, introducing a reason in the exchange, expressing a mild apology.

e.g. *It may be argued that politicians could not possibly write perfect laws, given the fact that they are thought to be corrupted.* ***After all****, every one should be aware of this.*

On the other hand, concessive consequential relations are realized by a number of different conjunctions: *nevertheless, nonetheless, still*. They function as counterparts of the above-mentioned causal consequential conjunctions. Apart from these, there is a number of other concessive conjunctions which are oriented to objections (Martin, 1992): *of course, needless to say, in any case, anyhow, anyway.*

e.g. A: *Dinner's ready.*
B: ***But*** *I'm not hungry.*

The function of objection is better seen if we interpret the example above: Although you called me for dinner, I'm not hungry.

The objections have different degrees of probability: possible objections (*admittedly*), probable objections (*of course*), certain objections (*needless to say*).

e.g. *A lot of teachers would argue that there are no perfect teaching methods.*
Admittedly*, everybody agrees with this theory.*
Of course, *there are teachers who don't agree with this statement, but there are exceptions.*

III. Internal temporal relations

They are very similar to consequential relations. Simultaneity between text and time is realized with the help of *at the same time.*

e.g. *One important aspect of this political battle is the politicians' charisma.* ***At the same time****, one should bear in mind that their ideas and intentions count even more.*

The conjunction *still* is used to signal the fact that the information expressed before remains relevant.

e.g. A: *I think nobody is guilty for the accident.*
B: *But* ***still*** *you imply someone could have prevented it.*

There are also some internal conjunctions that enumerate a list of arguments or end it: *first, second, next, finally*.

Conclusions

In this paper we have made a short presentation of internal relations, pointing out the situations in which the conjunctions which mostly establish internal relations are used, leaving out the external conjunctions. As a result, this analysis is only partial and needs to be developed, integrating internal relations with other types of conjunctions.

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)

References

Butler, C.S., *Systemic Linguistics: theory and applications*, London: Batsford, 1985
Halliday, M.A.K., *Introduction to Functional Linguistics*. London: Arnold, 1985.
Halliday & Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, London: Longman, 1976.
Halliday, M.A.K. Martin, J.R., *Readings in Systemic Linguistics*, London: Batsford, 1981
Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C., *Introduction to Functional Linguistics*. London: Arnold, 2004.
Hoey, M., *On the surface of discourse*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1993.
Martin, J.R., *English Text: System and Structure*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1983.
Mann, W.C. & and Thompson, S.A., "Relational propositions in Discourse" in *Discourse Processes*, 9(1), 1986.
Winter, E.O., "A Clause Relational Approach to English Texts: a study of some predictive lexical items in written discourse" in *Instructional Science* 6 (1), p. 1-92, 1977.

BDD-A6032 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:58:05 UTC)