TYPES OF RELATION BETWEEN SUBORDINATED CLAUSES IN WAKE FOR SUSAN BY COMAN MCCARTHY

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Abstract: The present paper proposes an analysis of the relations between clauses in complex sentences in the short story Wake for Susan by Cormac McCarthy's, emphasizing the role these relations between clauses have in the cohesion of text. As we know, the thematic structure of a text is realized by the cohesive component of grammar, component consists of reference, ellipsis and substitution as well as conjunction and lexical cohesion. The first part of this paper briefly analyses each type of these structures, pinpointing the difference between coherence and cohesion at the level of text. We also emphasize the idea that all these cohesive elements can be found together in any discourse with the exception of very short and abbreviated texts. The second part of the paper is concerned of the analysis of the coordinated and subordinated clauses in the above-mentioned text, pointing out their importance in the cohesion of text.

Keywords: coherence, cohesion, text, subordinated clauses

I. Theoretical background

Before discussing the types of relations within a text it would be useful to define cohesion and to point out the differences between cohesion and coherence. Generally these terms are interchangeable, but there is an important difference between them. Cohesion refers to linguistic devices by which the speaker can signal the experiential and interpersonal coherence of the text, and, as a result, it is a textual phenomenon. On the other hand, coherence is a mental phenomenon and it cannot be identified or quantified in the same way as cohesion. However, in most texts they are linked because a language which uses cohesive resources will create a coherent piece of writing. The difference between a text and a sum of unrelated sentences is that the former needs cohesion in order to be considered text. This is why one of the most common observations that are made about texts is that they lack coherence. A text must have coherence in order to form a unity, a whole that should represent more than the sum of its part. Coherence is a complex property which is accomplished with the help of many factors. One way to approach it is through the category of cohesion, as defined by Halliday and Hasan in *Cohesion in English* (1976). Cohesion is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of coherence. The different types of cohesive relations are the fundamental resources out of which coherence is built. But only the presence of the cohesive ties in a text is not enough for guaranteeing a coherent texture.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 5), "cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary". These are called grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion involves grammatical resources, namely grammatical items (conjunctions, reference items, substitute items), and grammatical structures (absence or substitution of elements of structure). An important role is played by the structural component which is sub-divide into two areas: the thematic structure and the information structure. The cohesive is subdivided into four areas:

- reference

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- substitution and ellipsis
- conjunction
- lexical cohesion

An important aspect that we should bear in mind is that all these cohesive elements operate simultaneously, working together with the thematic and information structure of the text, and this is how they are normally used by speakers and writers.

I.1 Reference

Reference can be cohesive when two or more expressions in the text refer to the same person, thing or idea.

A characteristic of cohesive reference is that, on the second mention of a person, thing or idea, the text avoids to use the names again, using instead pronouns, demonstratives (*this, these* etc) or a comparative. According to the rules of thematic progressive, the repetitions of nominals may also have a cohesive function, but there is a special characteristic that is produced by the use of the unnamed reference. When readers or listeners come across a pronoun or a determiner, they have to identify in their minds the reference ("linked nominal") in order to understand the spoken or written text. This has a very strong cohesive component.

The term *reference* which was used by Halliday and Hasan is an extension of the term as used in philosophy and some types of semantics. The term refers to entities which are outside of the discourse. For example, if we use "in the real world", we also mean terms such as "fiction" or "myth" which belong to imaginary world.

Strictly speaking, speakers or writers are the ones who *refer* to entities, using expressions for the purpose, but when we analyse a text we talk about words or expressions referring *to each other* and say that the reference occurs when *two or more expressions* refer to the same entity.

I.2.a Substitution

According to Bloor and Bloor (2004: 95) "Substitution is used where a speaker or a writer wishes to avoid the repetition of a lexical item and is able to draw on the grammatical resources of the language to replace the item". In English there is a set of words available for this purpose.

There is a main difference between reference and substitution. In the case of reference, the cohesion exists between two or more words which refer to the same concept. With substitution we do not have co-referentiality, but rather a substitute for a word or group of words. For example,

Reference: Do you want to wear **this dress**? I bought **it** yesterday.
Substitution: Do you like **this dress**? Or do you want another **one**?

In the case of reference, *this dress* and *it* refer to the same object. In the case of substitution, *one* do not refer to the same object as *this dress*, denoting to another dress. However, the receiver of the message can interpret *one* only in relation to *this dress*. This is the reason why this construction forms a cohesive tie.

According to Hallidayan model of cohesion, there are three types of substitution in English: nominal, verbal and clausal substitution and each type has its own set of substitute words: *one, ones* and *same* for nominal substitution, *to do* for verbal substitution and words *so* and *not* that can replace entire clauses or parts of clauses for clausal substitution.

e.g. I bought a **gold ring** for my wife and **a silver one** for my daughter. (nominal)

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He washed the car, did he?
Yes, he did. (verbal)
I would like to spend my holiday abroad.
If I were you I would do *so*. (clausal)

I.2.b Ellipsis

In the same cohesive class as substitution we have ellipsis, namely the omission of a word, groups of words or clauses. Being a kind of substitution, we can divide ellipsis into the same categories as substitution: nominal, verbal and phrasal.

e.g. *Do you want a coffee?* (nominal)
Yes, I want.
e.g. *I'll help you if you want me to.* (verbal)
You can't [E].
e.g. *Do you think he is right?* (clausal)
No.

I.2.c Conjunction

Conjunction describes the cohesive ties between clauses and sections of the same text in order to demonstrate the logical relationship between them. "It is also possible to perceive this process as the linking of ideas, events or other phenomena" (Bloor and Bloor, 2004: 97). This linking is realized by *conjunctive Adjuncts* (the other types of adjuncts, namely circumstantial and modal ones do not function as cohesive ties although they have a lot of semantic characteristics). Conjunctive Adjuncts have two functions: to fulfill conjunction and to indicate the relationship between the two elements.

I.2.d Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion is expressed by a set of lexicogrammatical systems that use specific resources in order to pass across the boundaries of the clause - that is "the domain of the highest-ranking grammatical unit" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 532). At the level of reference lexical cohesion is represented by synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy (Cruse, 1986, Halliday and Hasan, 1989), and at the level of wording by repetitions (reiterations) and collocations.

The linguistic study of the contribution made by inter-sentence groups of related words to text understanding was first carried out by Halliday and Hasan (1976) who set up in their work *Cohesion in English* the concept of 'lexical cohesion'. They set up lexis as a distinct level within lexicogrammar, concerned with open as opposed to closed system items, making the point that word and lexical item were not necessarily co-extensive units; i.e. *round the twist* patterns lexically as a single lexical item agnate to *crazy*, insane, but it is composed of three words. Later (1986) they included the concept of 'cohesive harmony'. Cohesive harmony adds lexico-grammatical structure to word-groups by dividing them into two types: (i) identify-to-reference word-groups which combine reference and lexical cohesion, and (ii) similarity word-groups which use only classical relations.

Cruse (1986) linked these groups together in a tight unit with intra-sentence relations, and discussed the concept of 'pattern of lexical affinities' where intra-sentence relations were called 'syntagmatic affinities' which can create a more-general concept of lexical affinities called 'paradigmatic relations'.

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Lexical semantic relations create lexical cohesion, cohesive harmony and the concept of patterns of lexical affinity. Their analysis made by Halliday and Hasan in 1976 is vague and general. They took in consideration only the relation between two or more words. The more recent works of Halliday and Hasan (1989) use only classical relations since the rest are "too intersubjective". They have analyzed lexical semantic relations out of the context of the text, but have assumed that lexical semantic relations are relevant within it.

II. Types of clauses in *Wake for Susan* by Comac McCarthy

Wake for Susan was published in 1959, being about a boy who invents a tale based on an old gravestone, understanding the shortness of life with empathy. The boy imagines life with Susan for two reasons: one, he wants to escape from his boring life, and the other he pictures Susan as an idealized love. This story is also about the boy's loneliness. The phrase "She would see him again tomorrow night" suggests that he will think about her the next day and perhaps the day after that. When he weeps for "lost Susan, for all the lost Susans, for all the people", he's not weeping for the actual people who died. Rather, he's weeping for the relationships he will never have with these dead people, whose lives and personalities he has made up.

A text is coherent if it makes sense, namely if it fits the receiver's expectations, previous knowledge and cultural knowledge. Cohesive devices can be divided into two categories: clauses coherence and logical coherence. In this paper we are interested in logical cohesion which is used to keep track of the participants from one clause to another, to link larger units of meaning into a single coherent text.

If we analyse the types of clauses the author uses, we can notice that most of the clauses are simple structures that describe especially the setting of the story. Many of the clauses are clause simplexes of the type:

e.g. *In October the first frost glazed this remote valley.*
For Susan it was the best time of the year.
The crisp mornings got one out of bed almost by force.

From the total number of clauses complexes, the largest proportion of complexes is represented by the ones made up of only two clauses as in the following examples:

e.g. *Leaves tired and dropped sighing the branches.*
He picked up his rifle and started for home.
The starts promised they would be back tomorrow night.

The clauses complexes are less present in the story, and their number is quite low, and clause complexes containing four or more clauses are very rare.

e.g. *Susan would stand at the door // until he was out of sight, breathing very quietly //and*
α β_1
imagining him still there with his arms around her.
β_2
If their luster paled,// it was //because a part of beauty was no longer there to receive them.
β_1 α β_2

Logical cohesion is usually achieved by linking adverbials. They are similar to conjunctions, but the difference between them is that, while conjunctions link the meanings of clauses together, the linking adverbials link meanings together across larger units of text, such as

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from one sentence to another or from one paragraph to another. Analysing this short story, we concluded that the conjunctions *and* and *but* are by far the most used ones. They keep the story going, keeping it simple, without useless details.

e.g. *She laughed or smiled, but he felt an empty flatness in their repetition.*
The year was 1834, and a very fine year it was.

We must notice that these conjunctions are used at the beginning of the sentences, emphasizing the content that follows after them. McCarthy is known for his little use of punctuation. He prefers simple declarative sentences, and he uses capital letters, periods, an occasional comma, colons for setting off a list, but very rarely semicolons. This short story is no exception. This might be a reason why he places these conjunctions in front positions.

e.g. *And so they fell in love.*
And he told her the things he dreamed of.
But let the government increase its contribution to the 'Public Assistance' program […]

Throughout the story clauses that are related mostly by hypotactic relationships, parataxis being less present. However, the most present types of clauses are the coordinated ones, and we can notice that the predominance of such types of relations helps the story remain quite simple. The style of this story is not characterized by different structures and high variation. As a result of this lack of variation, linking adverbs are less used than conjunctions. They are not frequent in the text. Nevertheless, the inference linking adverbs are the most numerous ones:

e.g. *Now they returned to the earth to decay and so provide life and sustenance for their unformed successors.*

Conclusions

Drawing upon the data analysed, the main features of the short-story *Wake for Susan* by Comac McCarthy in terms of relationships between clauses is that the most numerous clauses are simple, consisting of one or two clauses. They are more numerous than clause complexes made up of three or four clauses. Shorter clause complexes have more exemplifications maintain an alert rhythms of the main character's thoughts.

In terms of the tactic relationships established between clauses within clause complexes, the author seems to favor hypotaxis, since hypotactic relations outnumber consistently paratactic relations. Paratactic relations are signaled most often by the system of conjunctions, ***and*** and ***but*** being the most frequently used.

Regarding hypotactic relations, they are usually placed before the dominant clauses due to the fact that the author wants to emphasize the circumstances in which the action is carried out. Although most of the clauses in this hypotactic relation are finite, there are numerous non-finite clauses, gerundial and infinitive clauses being most often employed. Due to the fact that most of the sentences are simple sentences, the cohesion of the text is generated especially with the help of conjunctions and lexical cohesion, the linking adverbials being less used.

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