Anaphoric Referencing: A Cohesive Device in Written and Spoken Discourse

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Abstract:

Communication is achieved through texts or stretches of language. Because modern linguists are interested in communication and language use, they look into these stretches of language to see the coherence features otherwise known as cohesive devices that made them 'hang together' to convey meaning. This study sought to find out what these devices are and paid attention to anaphoric references as a cohesive device. It looked into what differentiated anaphora from deictic expressions and the different language mechanisms for anaphoric referencing.

Introduction:

Analyzing language in use is more important to linguists. They are of the opinion that instead of looking at the formal properties of a language, the linguist should begin an investigation of what that language is used for. It was this notion that Widdowson (1978:7) had in mind when he said that:

> the aim of linguistic had been to describe the rules of English usages, that is the grammar. However, new studies shifted attention away from defining the formal features of language usage to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication.

This is a functional approach to language learning which led to discourse is a stretch of language that may be longer than one

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sentence. Halliday & Hasan (1985:10) define a text as "language that is functional". They describe as functional any language that is doing some job in some context as opposed to isolated words or sentences that might be written on the blackboard. It could be spoken or written or in any other medium of expression. A text must be meaningful. A text that is not cohesive is never meaningful. It is the duty of the language analyst to find out those features that make a text coherent (hang together) and those that make them incoherent. This is because we understand the meaning of a linguistic message solely on the basis of the words and structure of the sentences used to convey that message.

What are the Coherent features or Cohesive Devices?

Devices according to Halliday & Hasan (1985:75) have cohesive function "if and when they can be interpreted through their relation to some other (explicit) encoding device in the same passage". Such devices are called "grammatical cohesive devices". Any linguistic unit focused on has tow environments:

I. Extra linguistic Environment and
II. The Linguistic Environment.

The Extra Linguistic Environment

Hasan defines this as context relevant to the total text. It is called "exophoric reference." It is a situation where the interpretation of an implicit device lies outside the co-text and can be found through an examination of the context. This was explained with a child who was hammering on something while the mother was writing. The mother cautioned:

"Stop doing that here; I am trying to work"

None of these words can be interpreted except with reference to the immediate context of situation.

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The Linguistic Environment:

The linguistic environment is known as the context of a word under focus or the language accompanying the linguistic unit under focus. When the interpretative source of a text is co-textual, it is said to have "endophoric ties". Let us look at Hasan's example again:

"I had a little **nut tree**"

"Nothing will **it** bear"

The **nut tree** and **it** are co-referential. Halliday & Hasan (1985:82) summarized the grammatical cohesive devices and the types of cohesive ties they yield in a table as:

G R A M A T I C A L C O H E S I V E D E V I C E S	**COMPONENTIAL RELATIONS**		ORGANIC RELATION
	DEVICE RELATION	TYPICAL TIE	

	A. Reference
	  1. Pronominal
	  2. Demonstratives reference
	  3. Definite Article
	  4. Comparatives
		Co-reference	A. Conjunctives. E.g. 1. Causal tie 2.Concession tie

	B. Substitution& Ellipsis
	  1. Nominal
	  2. Verbal
	  3. Clausal
			B. Adjacency pairs E.g.
			1. Question (followed by
			   answer);
			2. Offer (followed by acceptance);
			3. Order (followed by compliance).

The scope of this study cannot cover all the grammatical cohesive devices. Only part of the reference can be taken.

The linguistic units of a text occur in succession. So, whatever implicit that is under focus may either follow or precede that linguistic unit by reference to which it is interpreted. Hasan calls this "linguistic referent". When it follows its linguistic referent, the label given to the cohesive tie is **Anaphoric** but when the implicit term precedes its linguistic referent, the cohesive tie is known as **Cataphoric** (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Quirk et al refer to this as "discourse references" (Quirk et al 1972:700). They define discourse references as "signals for marking the identity between what is being said and what has been said before". When it is pointing back, it is "anaphoric reference" but if it points forward, it is "cataphoric" reference. This study shall only concentrate on anaphoric references.

Anaphoric Relations:

It is a relation of situational identity known as "co-referentiality." Anaphoric relations according to Akmajian et al (2001: 48) "deals with the relation between pronouns or (noun phrase) and a set of antecedents." It is a relation between, for example, a pronoun and an antecedent noun phrase where the two are understood as being used to refer to the same thing. In discussing anaphora, we are discussing deixis, which concerns itself with the use of expressions within some utterances to refer to some portion of the discourse that contains that utterance. The difference between anaphora and deictic is that while deictic introduces a referent, anaphora refers to the same entity thereafter.

Levinson (1983:85) defines anaphora as being concerned with "the use of (usually) a pronoun to refer to the same referent as some prior term, as in:

Harry's a sweetheart; **he**'s so considerate.

Harry and he, he noted, are "co-referential". He went further to explain that:

> where a pronoun refers to a linguistic expression (or a chunk of discourse) itself, it is discourse-deictic; where a pronoun refers to the same entity as a prior linguistic expression refer to, it is anaphoric (86).

Brown & Yule (1983:215):

> anaphora covers any expression which the speaker uses in referring on the basis of which the hearer will be able to pick out the intended referent given certain contextual and co-textual conditions.

Their definitions suggest that other things or structures can realize anaphoric reference apart from pronouns. For quite sometime, the term anaphora seemed to have been used to refer to only pronouns as the only thing that refers back in the English Language. This is because pronouns are the paradigm examples of expressions used by most speakers to refer to given entities. But because pronouns lack 'content', linguists have argued whether they could pass the test of any theory of reference. For instance, to what does the expression **it** refers when in isolation? The fact that there is no reasonable answer to this question has led many linguists to suggest that a pronominal such as **it** is not actually a referring expression but can only be used "co-referentially", that is, within a text which also includes a full nominal expression. It is this relationship between the nominal and pronominal that is described as **antecedent-anaphor relation**.

The phenomenon of anaphoric relations can be realized through different mechanism but we shall start with the pronoun.

Mechanisms for Anaphoric Relation:
1. The Use of the Reflexive Pronouns:

This is the -self attached to the possessive pronouns used attributively to show that the two phrases refer to an individual. That is, the subject and object are linked to the same entity. Reflexive pronouns are pronouns that end in -self or -selves to show when a direct or sometimes the indirect object of a verb refers back to the subject.

	Possessive pronouns Singular/Plural	**Reflexive Pronouns Singular/Plural**	**Anaphoric Sentence Examples**
First Person	My Our	Myself/Ourselves	**I** blame **myself** for her mistakes. **We** cheered **ourselves** for winning the debate.
Second Person	Your Your	Yourself/Yourselves	**You** should be ashamed of **yourself**. Why should **you** bother **yourselves** coming?
Third Person	his her Their its	himself herself Themselves itself	**He** bought **himself** a car. **She** saw **herself** in the mirror. **They** cooked the food **themselves**.

2. The Use of Self:

Self when attached to other word categories such as nouns and adjectives also show anaphoric relation. They are added not to any kind of noun or adjective but often to those derivable from some transitive verbs. Akmajian et al (2001:48) refer to them as morphological anaphora. They include:

Verb	Noun/ Adjective	Morphological Anaphora
admire	admirer (Noun)	Self-admirer (one who admires oneself).
deny	denial (Noun)	Self-denial (denying oneself something).
right	righteous(Adjective)	Self-righteous (one who claims to be righteous)
amuse	amusement(Noun)	Self-amusement (one who amuses himself or herself.
deceive	deceived (adjective) deceit (Noun)	Self-deceived Self-deceit ⌐ one who ⌐deceives himself
employ	employed (Adjective) employable (Adjective)	Self-employed one who works in his own Self-employable company
Close	Closing (Noun/ Adjective	Self-closing (a door that closes itself)
destroy	destruction (Noun) destructive (Adjective)	Self-destruction one who destroys him- Self-destructive ⌐self or herself.
inhibit	inhibitory (Adjective)	Self-inhibitory (something that prevents itself from working).

3. Syntactic Anaphora:

Syntactic structures also realize anaphora phenomenon. These structures include:

3.1 The Pronoun and its Antecedent:

It is always important and natural that we match the grammatical human pronoun with human antecedent and non-

human antecedent with non-human pronoun. This is referred to as agreement the pronoun and its antecedent. Anaphoric relations obey this relation:

I promised **I** would be there.

I must stand by **my** client.

John left after **he** was settled.

Mary will jump if **she** is fit.

Alice wants to know if **her** proposal was accepted

The company will change its policy.

Sonia and Linda said they would marry when **they** are of age.

Some of these pronoun-antecedent relations are ambiguous:

The lady believes **she** is wise.

Peter thinks **he** has been cheated.

'She' can refer to the lady (anaphoric reference) or to someone else. The same goes to 'he' which could be Peter himself or someone else who was cheated. To this effect, Akmajian et al (2001:250) noted that more than one anaphoric device could be used in a sentence and thereby effecting its linking. For instance:

John said that **he** was tired.

John said that **he** was tired (**that man over there**).

They said that we could block the later possibility by adding **"as for himself".**

John said that, as for himself, **he** was tired.

3.2 Quantified Antecedent:

Indefinite Pronouns will also have their antecedents referring back to them. This is a **quantified antecedent.**

Everyone should submit **his** expense report.

Every man has got **himself** some pride.

Nobody could help **himself** always.

The plural indefinite pronoun is also referred back to with a plural pronoun:

> **Many** people love **themselves.**
> **Several** banks in Nigeria made **their** annual goals in 2005.
> **Both** workers had what **they** wanted.
> **A few** have missed **their** target.

3.3 Possessive pronouns also exemplify anaphoric relationship:

Those used objectively will refer back to those used attributively:

> This is my book. It is mine.
> It is our house. It is ours.
> This is her pen. It is hers.

"Mine" refers back to "my book"; "ours" to "our house" and "hers to "her pen"

3.4 The reciprocal pronouns (each other and one another) are anaphoric references that refer back to the plural noun phrase functioning as subject of the sentence. Each other refers back to two people while one another to more than two people:

> **The two friends** never visit **each other's** house.
> **The couple** loves **each other**.
> **The team of eleven players** embraced **one another** after the match.
> **The politicians** quarreled with **one another** over who becomes the governor.

3.5 Wh - antecedent:

> It is you who are to blame.
> It is I who am at fault.
> It is she who is willing to compromise.
> The man who came here is my brother.

The person whom I love doesn't care.
I need an accountant whom I can trust.

There are some other words that are anaphoric references in the English language:

4. Former and Latter:

These are anaphoric references that single out one of two previous phrases:

Mary and Jane are friends. The former had first class and the latter second class.

While **former** refers to Mary, **latter** refers to Jane. Former and latter appear mainly in the written language and in formal contexts.

5. Ordinals (First, Second...) and Cardinal "One":

Ordinals can point back to more than two previous noun phrases or to units larger than noun phrase. The cardinal "one" also refers back to a singular noun phrase:

As we have stated our suggestions for improving the economy of Nigeria, you will agree with me that the first suggestion is of utmost importance and requires urgent attention.

Other such phrases are:

the former reason
the last proof
the third reason
the fifth suggestion

The cardinal "one" refers back to a singular noun phrase:

Mr. Smith is the **one** to fear.
He is the **one** to go.

6. So and That:

These two have anaphoric reference when they are intensifiers pre-modifying an adjective:

Those infected with HIV are **many**. I did not expect them to be **that** number.

Nigeria has over **120 million people**. I never knew we are **so/that** populous.

I took analgesic for my waist pains a moment ago. I'm not feeling so / that sick again.

7. Most and Each:

Most singles out part of the noun phrase it refers to. It shows majority of the noun phrase referred to:

Ann has **many friends**. **Most** of them are married.

There are **many cars** on the road**. Most** are front wheel drive.

There are **many tourists** in Nigeria**. Most** don't visit this part of the country.

Each also singles out in its anaphoric reference. We use each when we think of things separately, one by one:

We bought ten buckets. Each costs 300 Birr.

There are several books on the shelf. Each of them is a different colour.

Ten people won the competition. Each will go home with a prize.

8. Super-ordinate Term:

Another way of linking words in a text and creating coherence is to refer back to a word by using what is called super-ordinate term. It is a general or more inclusive term. The specific terms are called hyponyms.

Liberia has been under war situation. Recently **the country** elected a female president.

She went to the **Rockview** and was delighted the way the **hotel** is kept.

"Country and hotel" are the super-ordinate terms for Liberia and Rockview respectively.

9. Use of identical, same, selfsame, very etc.

Anaphoric reference can be in the co-reference of two noun phrases by the use of **identical, same, selfsame, very etc.**

He was good to **some students**. The **same** students betrayed him.

I have published **a book**. The **same** book you refused to co-author.

I saw **the woman**, **the very one** that joined the army.

I saw **the twins**. They are **identical**.

10. Such, like that and **like those** are used anaphorically for the identity of type.

She lives in a **rickety house**. **Such houses** should be demolished.

Beans is proteinous, such food should be recommended for children.

He betrayed his friend; I wouldn't have **a friend like that**.

11. Anaphoric Determiner:

The noun with the determiner 'the' can also have a backward reference to the antecedent which is another noun:

Mary found **a book** and **the book** belongs to Anita.

I saw **the teacher**; **the man** is friendly.

12. Some Idioms and Epithets:

Some idioms and epithets refer back to a noun phrase:

I lost **my** way.

He bit the finger that fed him. **Ingrate**

He stepped on my toes**, the creep**

Conclusion:

Finally, words of the language should not be learnt in isolation. The pronoun and other structures have been seen performing anaphoric functions in the language, all to the overall goal of making the language coherent for communication to take place.

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