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**THE ROLE OF
METAPHOR IN
CONCEPTUAL
DEPENDENCY**

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1. INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL DEPENDENCY

During years coherence in texts has been understood as being woven through the different cohesive devices detected and classified within different types of cohesion. The origin of this classification can be found in the model proposed by Halliday & Hasan (1976). It included the following types of cohesion: conjunction, lexical, reference, ellipsis and substitution. This basic classification of the different types of cohesive devices has not varied through the years. In fact, we still find this basis in recent studies of discourse cohesion such as in Carter's et al. (1997), although with some important remarks, as we will see.

Lexical cohesion started to gain importance when it was discovered that this type of cohesion reflected the way texts worked beyond the propositional level. This implied an awareness of the semantic bearing that cohesive devices had in relation to their abstract connections out of the text. An example of this can be found in Haynes (1989). He made a further classification grouping the five types of cohesion within just two: lexical cohesion (including lexical cohesion itself) and grammatical cohesion devices (namely: substitution, conjunction, ellipsis and reference).

The relation that existed among the elements belonging to the lexical cohesive type can be reflected according to Carter et al. (1997) by means of: direct repetition, synonyms or near synonyms, superordination (Hyperonyms), antonymy, specific-general reference, ordered series and Whole-part relations. As opposed to the grammatical cohesion type, these relations within lexical cohesion provided a description of the boundaries that existed among different items belonging to the same conceptual field.

Lexical cohesion may be the most appropriate device to maintain and reinforce the "aboutness" of a text, since it reflects the different lexical relations among the events or elements that the text is dealing with.

Relational semantics (Chaffin & Herrman 1988) has contributed to the study of semantic relations, and hence they have become the basis for the explanation of lexical cohesion.

Ruiz de Mendoza (1996) proposed a further step in the conception of lexical cohesion by establishing a list of the semantic relations that could take place within a text. This implied the reinforcement of the assumption of the conceptual dependency of grammatical cohesive items. It was also considered that lexical cohesion was the groundwork for the rest of the grammatical cohesive devices to work on. This was a clear evidence that lexical cohesion does not only work at the propositional level. Moreover, when it comes to cohesion and coherence which is our purpose, we think that there are other factors beyond the propositional level organizing the discourse and giving it coherence.

However, lexical cohesion in texts has been understood to operate only at the propositional level, and it is very common to study cohesion analyzing the items that can fit into the traditional two main types of cohesion: lexical and grammatical (considering in the last one the classification mentioned before of: substitution, conjunction, ellipsis and reference).

Despite all the dependency of the conceptual ground mentioned before, each of the textual elements that can fit into this traditional classification of the cohesive devices is considered as having an independent role, and therefore they are not altogether useful tools to show clearly their conceptual structuring. This way of conceiving cohesion in texts overlooks the conceptual organisation of the information that is being transmitted since the items to focus on are only textual. However, this organisation may play a crucial role in the linking of the appropriate mental schemes activated by those items that carry this conceptual background.

Furthermore, it does not take into account the conceptual dependency to which cohesive elements (lexical or grammatical) are exposed, and therefore there is no place to think of the possibility that there may be a conceptual organizative tool governing the text and giving it coherence. Our purpose in this paper is to reflect that we have to take into account the main abstract basis from which the text emerges. By doing this we will also find the reasons for the selection of specific items from a wide range of possibilities.

2. THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN CONCEPTUAL DEPENDENCY

Metaphors have been considered just one of the many minor tools for cohesion, playing an isolated role in the structuring of the text, undermining this way the possibility of being something more than mere reference devices.

Conceptual dependency has also been demonstrated to be realized through metaphors, whose analysis has evolved from the study of its sheer nature to the organizing role in textual conceptual and rhetorical levels. Consequently, current theories of metaphor give it a more relevant role in discourse analysis, rather than an isolated feature without any discourse bearing as in the previous tradition (Cameron & Low 1999, Gibbs 1997).

There is evidence that our conceptual system is organized through metaphor. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999; Lakoff & Turner 1989; Lakoff 1987, 1990, 1993; Turner & Fauconnier 1995a,b; etc). Given that, it seems reasonable to think that texts and their discourse not only can be overwhelmed by metaphors of different types, but by a conceptual structuring metaphor organizing the whole discourse.

The different analysis found in this paper have been carried out following Lakoff's and his collaborators theory (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff, 1993) in which metaphor is seen as a systematic conceptual mapping from a source domain to a target domain.

Different metaphorical expressions embracing all types are derived from this conceptual metaphor. Their number and arrangement vary a lot from text to text. All these metaphorical expressions belong to the same source domain and therefore create lexical cohesion. The important point is that they create cohesion on an abstract basis, at the conceptual level (the source domain), and what is more, they trigger a mapping with a domain which does not appear in the text. They play their cohesive role by calling up the main conceptual metaphor governing the text each time that they appear.

If the proper inferencing mechanisms and mental schemes are activated successfully, then, the psychological process of mapping with the target domain will take place. This way the main function of metaphor will be accomplished, as well as cohesion.

3. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

For our analysis lexical cohesion plays an important part. The difference with regards to its previous field of action is that here it is based on the grounds of the metaphor that holds the text (there may be more than one). As we have said, this marks a shift from the previous common analysis of texts within the propositional level to their conceptual organization, giving metaphors a dominant role. The ones analysed here are a clear sample of the extent which metaphors can go to in terms of organizing a text. We have chosen three texts belonging to two different types of texts (politics

and medicine) to offer two different views of the relations that exist between the topic being dealt with and the metaphor used.

According to Lakoff and Johson (1999: 87) and the discourse coherence evidence, there are conventional metaphors for thinking about specialized subject matters. We take this assumption as having a relation to the metaphorical cohesive effect represented in this paper.

With the first example we show a type of metaphor which cannot be considered as being frequently used in political texts. In opposition, we find in the other two texts how the metaphor used is quite a conventionalised one when it comes to dealing with specific topics such as cancer.

TEXT ONE:

'Barak Works to Keep 2 Tracks Going, With the Syrians and the Palestinians

*Prime Minister Ehud Barak first declared his ambitious intentions to **juggle** the Palestinian and Syrian peace efforts simultaneously, he said **he could keep both balls in the air** and prevent them from touching, much less colliding. But that is increasingly turning into a **contortionist's trick**.*

*Israelis are noting that the **juggler cannot control the balls.**'*

New York Times 24-01-00

These pieces of text contain the main conceptual metaphor that provides the text with a coherent structure. We do not make a deep description of the type of metaphors implied and their underlying structure, since it is not necessary to describe how cohesion works on the grounds of metaphorical expressions.

The type of metaphor that is developed in this text is an example of the metaphors that sometimes are used consciously and carefully to deal with very specific circumstances surrounding a topic, presenting it with certain connotations. Therefore, the way in which the metaphorical items are arranged is crucial. These are presented in bold.

The main metaphor appears at the beginning and then it does not appear until the end of the text. It could be described like this: 'the management of peace efforts is juggling/circus show'. In the two first metaphorical expressions we conceive the image of the prime minister Ehud Barak as a juggler, playing with two balls. Thus, here we can describe the mapping between both domains considering as the source domain 'a juggler' and as the target domain the prime minister himself. Now, through the mapping we make the proper conceptualization of the qualities given to the prime minister by showing it as a juggler.

Cohesion would be reflected by the items 'contorsionist' and 'juggler' belonging to the source domain, creating, as it has been said, lexical cohesion at the conceptual level of the metaphor. When it comes to the possible connotation conveyed by the whole mental scheme of 'circus', it may convey what the author intended to transmit.

Finally, we find in the last line the last metaphorical expression. We can see how through the use of a simple metaphor a completely understandable conclusion can be achieved at. This is due to the

fact that we have been previously provided with the whole proper schemes. Thus the entire cohesive effect is achieved at the end with this last metaphor.

TEXT TWO:

The following text belong to a science magazine. The metaphor is introduced explicitly in the heading. This procedure is useful to activate the proper inference mechanisms and cognitive domains in a quicker and more effective way.

It presents a metaphor that is frequently used, and therefore somehow conventionalized, to deal with diseases issues: 'An illness is an enemy'.

This text is a long one and deals with several issues, so we cannot say that the first metaphor that appears contributes to the whole cohesion of a text, but to the explanation of a process that is somehow conventionalized.

'Molecular Attack on Malignancy Herceptin offers new hope for the victims of breast cancer.'

*It's not a cure, but Herceptin should at least give a **fighting chance** to some of the estimated 180,000 woman who [...]*

*'Herceptin, manufactured by San Francisco-based Genentech Inc., is the first of a new class of anticancer medications that **attack** disease genetically, **targeting** the underlying biological cause of the cancer. It takes its design from the **disease-fighting proteins** that naturally exist in the human immune system, but with a special twist that **directs** the protein specifically **against** cancer cells. Unlike most other cancer treatments, Herceptin **focuses its attack** solely on cancer cells and leaves normal ones **undamaged**. Therefore it doesn't have the usual **side effects** of chemotherapy.'*

*'The molecule acts as a **trigger** that promotes cell growth needed to maintain the body. But in 25 to 30 percent of women with metastatic breast cancer, additional copies of the HER2 gene are expressed by the **malignant** cells, with **disastrous results**.'*

*'As a result, cancerous cells can **spread aggressively--and lethally--** from the breast to other organs throughout the body. Herceptin halts that process by binding to the HER2 receptors, **blocking the sites** and thereby preventing the cells from dividing. [...]*

The following pieces of text belong to the same text. The metaphor that creates here cohesiveness is highly conventionalized: an illness is seen as an entity that progresses in time and space.

Considering the type of metaphor described previously, we could say that this one is related to it: the progression of the disease in the battlefield, and the attempts of the drug to stop it. This obviously would reinforce cohesion too from a wider perspective.

*'[...] tumors in patients who took the drug along with chemotherapy **progressed more slowly** on average than tumors of those who underwent chemotherapy alone. In another, women treated with Herceptin alone showed **delay in tumor progression** compared with the control group. On average, Herceptin combined with chemotherapy **delayed the progression of the disease** by about three months. In some patients, **the drug delayed cancer's progression** for years.'*

*‘É despite constant **medical progress**, the mortality rate from breast cancer has changed little in the past two decades. Perhaps Herceptin and its ilk will finally improve the odds.’*

Discovery, Posted 10/28/98

TEXT THREE:

In this last text we find another example of this conceptual metaphor applied to another news dealing with cancer. And similarly we can observe how the different metaphorical expressions trigger the mapping from the source to the target domain.

‘The War on Cancer Heats Up

*Recent reports indicate that two experimental anti-cancer **strategies** are showing promise. One way **to fight cancer** is to **starve it**. Tumors normally generate their own blood vessels to **bring oxygen and nourishment to the cancer cells**. Several groups are working on “anti-angiogenesis” drugs--compounds that prevent the formation of new blood vessels, **chocking off the cancer**. A group led by Judah Folkman of Children’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School is studying two such drugs, called endostatin and angiostatin, that eliminate tumors in laboratory mice. Despite a feverish article in the May 3 edition of *The New York Times*, however, these drugs are not yet a cure for cancer. They probably will not even begin clinical trials in humans until 1999.*

*Other researchers are **targeting** the genetic roots of cancer. [...]* ‘

Corey S. Powell
Posted 5/20/98

4. CONCLUSION

Metaphor is a basic and primary mechanism of thought. The way abstract schemes are displayed in texts through metaphors constitute an important contribution to textual coherence.

We have seen in the three examples chosen how cohesion is reflected by means of the different metaphorical expressions that belong to the source domain.

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