GRAMMAR AT THE COALFACE: DISCOURSE ELEMENTS IN TEXTS

Dr Lenore Ferguson, Education consultant

Discourse

In the previous two issues, we described the elements of a clause from two points of view: their structures, and the ways these structures function or work together in patterns to construct meaning. In this issue, we describe discourse elements that operate across whole texts. In the description of discourse elements, we refer to both structural and functional elements – a process that highlights the interconnectedness of these elements in constructing meaning in texts. In the final issue of *Words'Worth* for 2007 we will describe the artistic, metaphoric or figurative, and aesthetic patterns found in the written texts used in English classes.

First, we need to establish what we mean by 'discourse'. The term has, historically, described any stretch of text beyond a single clause. It is now defined more usefully for teachers following work undertaken by Foucault and James Gee, in particular. A discourse is described as a collection of related textual practices that occur in a particular personal or social situation. These interactions have identifiable purposes and they involve textual exchanges that form part of the social and personal engagements typical of the contexts in which we work and relax.

Thus we have discourses typical of interactions in the family, in the local community, in places of business, in places of industry, and in places of leisure. In fact, everywhere that people interact, there are typical interactions whose patterns we recognise. It is these patterns of discourse that describe, define and delimit what we see as 'normal' in their respective contexts. They create our self-concepts and our 'subjectivities' as we negotiate and take up patterns of discourse in the contexts in which we choose to engage. As we 'internalise' these patterns of interaction, along with their associated attitudes, values and beliefs, we come to accept as 'natural' the behaviours and subjectivities they represent.

Interestingly, we internalise multiple networks of discourses, many of which carry conflicting or oppositional values. Because these discourses have become 'natural' to us in their particular contexts (be they the sporting field, the supermarket, business enterprises, places of learning or worship, and the like), we tend to become 'blind' to any discrepancies in their underlying values and beliefs.

We can therefore think of discourse as the communicative component of a social practice linked to an institution, social group, or cultural community. In short, it is the set of textual practices that we engage in as we go about our daily lives – in private and in public situations. Through these discourses we are shaped by ways of being, ways of doing, ways of thinking, and ways of speaking / writing. In turn, through these discourses we shape ways of being, ways of doing, ways of thinking, and ways of speaking / writing. No community is static, and the attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours of a community and its members are constantly shaped and reshaped by the interactions involving the discourses of their members.

Some discourse practices have names we are familiar with, such as the discourses of teaching, of banking, of clubbing, of sailing, of farming, of sport … They comprise recognisable and named sub-activities called genres, e.g., banking genres include opening an account, depositing funds, withdrawing funds, transferring funds, and taking out a mortgage. Variations of these genres relate to the mode used, e.g., face-to-face, ATM, internet, Bpay.

The term, genre, simply means 'type', and it is used widely in many areas of the humanities – especially the creative arts (music, drama, theatre, literature, painting, television, film, etc), in architecture, and in cultural studies. In scientific and medical fields, genres tend to be more logical and driven by a need for replication. The texts that form part of them are

often called procedures and processes. Hence we hear doctors refer to medical procedures, and industrial chemists refer to production processes. These terms – genres, procedures and processes – are also used to describe our everyday activities involving human interaction. Whatever the term used to describe them, these recognisable activities are distinguished by their social purpose, their staged elements, and their sensitivity to social and cultural influences.

When examining discourses and their component genres in subject English, our focus is on texts – primarily literature, media and everyday texts. Our study of these texts includes analyses of their discourse elements and of the relationships between the texts and their contexts of use –those in which they arise and those in which they are consumed.

We come to understand happenings in the world, and we shape our ideologies through participation in discourses. Such participation includes engagement with, and study of, texts. Through explicit juxtaposition of discourses, we can compare and contrast the patterns, associations and generalisations they capture about values, attitudes and beliefs, and about the ways they are represented and presented in texts.

Discourse elements

Strictly speaking, discourse elements lie beyond grammar as they are concerned with textual patterns that extend past the selection and sequence of words in a clause or a sentence. They lie on the cusp between grammar and several fields such as semantics, text linguistics, discourse, and cultural studies. Their inclusion here enables us to show how discourse elements work in close association with grammatical patterns. In this way, we can show how grammatical choices across a whole text form connections that link all the sentences in a text and thus influence the meaning constructed.

Discourse elements in texts are of two kinds: primary and secondary. These elements keep us on track as we negotiate meaning in texts. Through our tri-processing abilities to juggle several sets of incoming information concurrently (see June issue of *Words'Worth*,

p. 51), they help us to integrate structural and functional elements as we interpret and construct texts.

Primary discourse elements contribute to:

1. coherence of a text
2. cohesion in a text

Secondary discourse elements comprise:

1. attitudinal codes
2. punctuation codes

All texts include primary and secondary discourse elements. By recognising them, and by being able to describe how they work, we can assist our students to better work with the subtleties of texts.

As with all other activities in life, we learn how these discourse elements work by identifying them in a variety of texts, by learning the terms used to describe them so we can talk about them, and by evaluating their influence on the clarity and nuances of meaning conveyed in a text.

Primary discourse elements

Primary discourse elements are concerned with making the text work as a unit of meaning.

Coherence relies upon common sense world-knowledge not explicitly stated in a text as well as implicit socio-cultural understandings that are frequently assumed. These include the attitudes, values and beliefs that may be implied or accepted but largely unspoken in a community. Discourse elements contributing to coherence largely serve to draw upon and to build such socio-cultural understanding.

Cohesion relies upon knowledge of grammatical patterns. Discourse elements contributing to cohesion activate cognitive processes to make textual and cultural links. It is these links that constitute the processes of building textual understanding. These elements work together and draw upon structural and functional elements of texts to achieve their objectives.

When we first learn to speak and write, our learning is scaffolded in such a way that we come to understand explicitly how these links work. As we become fluent in our use of language, in whatever medium, we tend to use the links

automatically and our knowledge settles back to an implicit level. It is commonly recognised that new contexts bring explicit learning into play until familiarity induces automatic processing of texts in what become familiar situations.

The description that follows is intended to bring these understandings back to the foreground of our consciousness. Such knowledge markedly increases our ability to teach students how language and texts work, and also increases the level of control we have over our own reading and writing abilities.

Coherence

A text is coherent when it makes sense in a given cultural context, and it serves its social purpose. For example, a measure of the coherence of a buying-and-selling text is the success or otherwise of an exchange of goods and payment for such goods.

Several criteria assist us to make texts as coherent as possible. According to de Beaugrande[1], a text is coherent when it:

1. ***informs***. The focus here is represented knowledge, subject matter, or experience, i.e., 'what's going on' or 'who's doing what to whom under what circumstances'. The concepts provided from the relevant field are sufficiently wide and deep, and organised so that an adequate exchange of information or of goods/services can easily occur.

2. ***situates***. The focus here is on the flexibility of a genre – the ability we have to exploit this flexibility across a range of interactions that may involve experts or may involve novices who need some scaffolding to achieve the purpose of the genre. The physical, social and cultural circumstances of the interaction are acknowledged, and they influence the way an exchange takes place to ensure an effective communication.

3. ***accepts*** the requirements of its context. The focus here is vocabulary choice, and the structure of word groups and clauses – more complex between experts and less complex

for and by novices. Technical or everyday language is selected to ensure the purpose of a specialist or a casual exchange is met.

4. ***clarifies intention***. The focus here is on the language of interpersonal meaning. The values and goals of text creators and consumers involved in an exchange are clearly demonstrated in the approach of a speaker or writer; in the tone of a text; and in the choice of attitudinal and opinion words applied to subject matter or implied in the relationship established between those involved in an exchange.

5. ***demonstrates intertextuality***. The focus here is familiarity with typical patterns of genres, or textual meaning. The framing and pattern of the interaction is consistent with the purpose and the sequence (or schemata) of other interactions used in familiar, and similar, social and cultural contexts.

These are some of the factors we juggle when we participate in a textual exchange. The more sensitive we are in meeting these socio-cultural criteria, the more effective we are in meeting our social purposes – our goals.

Cohesion

A text that lacks cohesion is a non-text or 'non-sense'.

A text is cohesive when its surface patterns grammatically unite the elements of the subject matter into a meaningful, unified whole. That is, cohesion refers to the 'ties' that connect units of meaning in a text, giving it 'texture'. According to Halliday and Hasan[2], the grammatical patterns of cohesion comprise:

1. ***conjunction***. Clauses can be joined to form compound and complex sentences. They are joined by conjunctions selected to show the logical connections between them – addition (*and, or*), opposite (*but*), reason (*so, because, thus, therefore*), and time (*when, after, before*). For example, *The boy won the race because he trained hard.*

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1 de Beaugrande, Robert (1984: 38-40). *Text Production: Advances in Discourse Processes, vol xi.* Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey.

2 Halliday, MAK & Hasan, R (1976). *Cohesion in English.* Longman, London

Conjunctions do not form part of the representation of experience or subject matter in clauses; they provide the 'logical glue' that connects dependent clauses to their 'parent' clause. As a textual structure, conjunctions form part of the Theme in dependent clauses.

Addition and opposite conjunctions connect clauses of the same rank – either independent clauses that can stand alone, or dependent clauses that need to be linked to an independent clause to make sense. For example: *The chair was comfortable <u>and</u> the man was tired <u>and so</u> he fell asleep. The chair was comfortable <u>but</u> the man didn't fall asleep* (linked independent clauses). *The man fell asleep because the chair was comfortable <u>and</u> he was tired.* (linked dependent clauses of reason).

Reason and time conjunctions join dependent clauses to independent ones. For example: *The man fell asleep <u>because</u> the chair was comfortable. The man fell asleep <u>when</u> he became too comfortable.*

Some connective words provide the voice of the text's author, e.g., *furthermore, in addition.* These do not form part of cohesion in the same way that conjunctions do. They are discussed under secondary discourse elements below.

2. ***reference***. Some groups of words carry no meaning in their own right, but signal that the meaning must be retrieved elsewhere; that is, they refer readers (or listeners) to words or items that do carry meaning. These groups of words are:

- personal and possessive pronouns, e.g., *he, his, your, it, their, one's, whose*
- demonstratives, e.g., *this, that, those*
- comparatives, including adjectives and adverbs such as *same, other, such, worse, identically, more quickly*

Most of these reference items are found within the noun group in texts.

Reference is of two broad kinds:

(a) textual reference refers to information already presented in a text or to information yet to appear;

(b) situational reference refers to something in the context. Situational reference tends to appear most frequently in spoken texts.

For example:

- *<u>James</u> left early because <u>he</u> was tired.* (post textual reference)
- *Because <u>he</u> was tired, <u>James</u> left early.* (prior textual reference)
- *(pointing to an empty chair) <u>He</u> left early because <u>he</u> was tired. (*situational reference)

3. ***substitution***. A small group of words is used as a substitute for items already mentioned in a text – to avoid repetition. The substitute items serve the same grammatical role as the item they substitute for. These words are:

- *one, ones, same* (noun group) e.g., *Here is one <u>book</u>, and there is another <u>one</u>.*
- *do* (verb group) e.g., *He <u>enters marathons</u> more often than I <u>do</u>.*
- *so, not* (clause) e.g., *Do you think <u>that he will succeed?</u>. I expect <u>so</u>.*

4. ***ellipsis***. Sometimes items in a text are omitted to avoid repetition. To ensure that the information is retrievable, the same grammatical pattern is used to trigger the link. In some ways, ellipsis is like a 'zero' substitution. There are three major kinds of ellipsis, the omission of:

- part of a noun group. A determiner, numeral or adjective is upgraded to function as Head in a noun group, e.g., *James had three <u>sandwiches</u>. Susan had <u>two</u>.*
- part of a verb group. Part of a verb group is repeated, leaving omitted information to be retrieved, including finiteness, tense, voice, modality, polarity, event, e.g., *Are you waiting for Jodi? Yes, I <u>am</u>.*
- a clause. A verb group and the noun group functioning as its grammatical

subject are omitted, usually in responses to questions or in rejoinders, e.g., *When did you eat? This morning.*

5. ***lexical cohesion***. Lexical cohesion refers broadly to items of vocabulary representing concepts associated with the subject matter of a text. These items play a strong role in linking meaning across a text. The items come from open word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and therefore can be selected with discernment regarding their evaluation of the subject. They often carry strong attitudes about the subject matter and give character to a text.

    Because the precise meanings we attribute to words can vary from person to person, or from place to place, the degree of lexical cohesion in any text is quite difficult to measure. On the other hand, meaning gained from prior parts of the text heavily influences the meanings we continue to construct.

    Lexical cohesion is of two major kinds:

    - reiteration. The reiteration of meaning through vocabulary choice can take several forms:
      i.   repetition of the same word, e.g., *boy, boys, boy's*
      ii. use of a synonym or near-synonym, e.g., *boy, lad, ruffian, larrikin, toddler*
      iii. use of a superordinate word, e.g., *child*
      iv. use of *the* with a general noun, e.g., *the boy*

    - collocation. The choice of a word that is systematically related to a previous one, either in the general community or in a particular field of knowledge, e.g., *salt* and *pepper*, *bird* and *nest*, *black* and *white*, *eyes* and *ears*, *chart* and *sextant*, *doctor* and *stethoscope*,

In brief, cohesion is what makes a sequence of sentences into a text. Typical patterns of cohesive ties become part of a meaningful discourse to persons already initiated into a community that shares some knowledge and a common language.

Secondary discourse elements

Secondary discourse elements are explicit indications of an author's point of view, either in fact or 'in role'. They enable speakers and writers to stamp their authority on a text by expressing points of view and opinions, and to guide the reader to particular readings of a text.

These secondary discourse markers deliberately position readers to interpret a text in a certain way. They sit beyond the 'detached observer' scope of experiential meaning that represents 'what is going on' in a text; and so therefore lie outside a Transitivity analysis; that is, they lie beyond the meaning carried by the Participants, Processes and Circumstances in each clause.

Of the two types of secondary discourse elements, positioning codes permit a range of meanings expressing attitudes (emotions and feelings), values and opinions – meanings that may range from weak to strong.

The second type of discourse elements, punctuation codes, work with textual meaning and help to clarify how the author would like a text to be read.

Positioning codes

Key attitudinal codes include:

1. ***narrator interpolation***. Interpolations are used in some narratives where the author makes an effort to establish an overt link with the reader. Quaint intrusions such as *And now, dear reader* from yesteryear are replaced, especially in adolescent literature, with an apparent one-sided dialogue, e.g., *Now I know you wouldn't be silly enough to do this but …*

2. ***author comments***. These often appear at the introduction to a section or a paragraph, and can reinforce the tone developed throughout a text by opinion verbs, adverbs and adjectives. All have emotive elements. They could range from *Presumably …to As any first-year apprentice would know…* Newspaper columns are a rich source of these comments.

3. *framing connectives*. These are found more generally in non-narrative texts that are organised by arbitrary concepts rather than by the flow of events as in a narrative text. They have an attitudinal function and focus the reader's attention, possibly re-orienting the reader to note a shift of focus, or generally suggesting that a reader considers the information from a particular perspective.

These frame-triggering connectives tend to be genre-specific so are learned through experience, instruction and reflection. The connectors may be single words or extended phrases or clauses. They can range from a simple *First …* to *And now to the final process* These are often used to assist speed reading.

Punctuation codes

Key punctuation codes include:

1. *punctuation marks*. Punctuation codes relate to structural and functional elements in a text, and also to an author's attitudinal intention.

To some extent, punctuation reproduces the effects of intonation, volume and pauses in speech:

- spaces are left between words
- commas separate phrases and non-finite clauses, e.g., *Yesterday, the player was banned from the competition. Dragging his feet, the weary gentleman trudged home.* Commas also separate items in a list, e.g., *The restaurant offered three choices: beef, chicken, and fish.*
- semi-colons indicate closure of a clause, e.g., *It rained; consequently, the tank filled with water.*
- colons indicate that another clause is to begin, e.g., *The street sign said: stop.* Colons can also signal the beginning of a list, e.g., *The restaurant offered three choices: beef, chicken, and fish.*
- full stops mark the end of a sentence where the clause is a statement or a command e.g., *Each night the lonely puppy whined.*

Give me the knife.

- question marks or exclamation marks indicate that a sentence is a question or an exclamation, e.g., *Are you ready yet? Yes, I am!*
- relation markers indicate how additional information relates to the central clause,
  - o a dash (–) signals apposition or a grammatical parallel, e.g., *The Prime Minister – Mr John Howard – addressed the nation*;
  - o brackets signal a digression, e.g., *The Prime Minister (who was suffering a sore throat) addressed the nation*;
  - o a hyphen links two or more words to create a compound word, e.g., *Mr Kevin Rudd, the would-be Prime Minister, addressed Parliament*; and
  - o an apostrophe (') indicates possession or the omission of one or more letters in 'contractions', e.g., *The Prime Minister's voice if failing. The Prime Minister can't be heard. We've cleaned the path.*

  See table 1 below.

2. *quotation marks*. Quotation marks or 'inverted commas' are used to indicate direct or 'quoted' speech. The conventions around their use appear in style guides such as Pam Peters' *Australian English Style Guide* published by Cambridge University. Here it is noted that the Australian Government recommends single quotation marks for signal quotes and ironic words.

Double quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes. Quotation marks or italics are used for the titles of chapters, books, songs, programs.

Location of punctuation marks in quotations

If a punctuation mark is part of a quotation (e.g. a question mark), it is placed before the final quotation mark. If, however, the punctuation relates to the sentence rather than to the quotation, it is placed after the final quotation mark.

If a quotation is only one sentence long, then the full stop mark is placed before the final quotation mark.

Table 1: the English punctuation system

Type	Feature represented		Symbol	
	General	Specific	Name	Form
boundary markers for grammatical units	word		space	(#)
	preposition phrase non-finite clause		comma	,
	finite clause	closing	semicolon	;
		opening	colon	:
	sentence			
status markers for: • speech function	information exchange	statement command offer	full stop	.
		question	question mark	?
	other functions	exclamation, call, greeting	exclamation mark	!
• projection	quotation marks	first order; or meaning	single quote	' '
		second order; or wording	double quote	" "
relation markers for: • any unit	apposition		dash	–
	digression		parenthesis	( )
• (compound) word	linkage		hyphen	-
• possessive, contraction	omission		apostrophe	'

Adapted from Halliday, MAK (1985). *Spoken and written language*. Burwood, Victoria: Deakin University (p. 35)

Possible learning activities

Learning activities associated with discourse elements must, by definition, engage students with whole texts. That engagement will include examining ways that:

- functional and structural elements serve the several roles of discourse elements, and
- discourse meaning organised by functional elements is realised through structural elements.

While these relationships are intertwined, observable patterns within texts enable us to make the relationships explicit. This enhances our ability to teach students about the inner workings of text, and also enhances the ability of our students to interpret and construct texts with sensitivity and flexibility.

The learning activities described below are designed as 'stand alones' or as suggestions that can be reshaped for incorporation into existing units, or into those under review or development. If they are used as stand alone activities, they provide additional opportunities to introduce students to short literary and media texts and to engage them in oral exchanges as they become more knowledgeable about the nature and place of grammar in shaping meaning in texts. Some might also be useful for the unexpected 'extra' lessons we acquire periodically.

1. To explore some coherent qualities of discourse

This activity could follow a presentation by a public figure or some person known to present well to groups of students. The presentation could be about a hobby or an activity of passionate interest to the presenter.

Prior to the talk, the presenter will have agreed to a negotiated series of questions that will form the basis of an evaluation of the qualities of the presentation.

Some questions to consider about a presentation

1. What range of things does the presenter enjoy in the hobby or activity?
2. Were photos, objects, demonstrations, etc. used to support what was said?
3. Were concepts related to experiences familiar to the audience?
4. Was the presentation loud enough and clear enough so that all could hear?
5. What specialised words were explained?
6. What makes the presenter enthusiastic about the hobby/activity?
7. How was the presentation similar to others you have seen?

(a) Select 3 or 4 students to prepare a talk on a hobby or special event they have enjoyed recently, telling them that their peers will review their talk using the same questions applied to the visitor's presentation.

(b) Organise students into 3 or 4 groups, and ask the selected students to make their presentations – one to each group.

(c) Following their presentations, ask each student presenter to privately review their talk, noting any improvements that could be made.

(d) Ask students to answer the questions, working in pairs at first, and then with their group. Variations in views should be noted, and possible reasons considered. These parts of a group discussion may require some scaffolding by the teacher to promote valuing of difference.

(e) Each group then proposes a checklist of suggestions for the student presenter to help make later talks more informative or more interesting. The suggestions are then discussed with the presenter who compares them with personally noted possible improvements.

(f) Ask 3 or 4 more students to prepare for the next session when the groups will be organised with a different mix. And so on.

2. To compare the nature of coherence in varying contexts

Select short news reports on the same incident from a local, a state and a national newspaper. Also record TV news reports on the incident from a commercial channel, and the ABC or SBS.

(a) i. Arrange for students to read and view the reports.

ii. Ask students to identify the discourses and fields of knowledge that inform the reports, explaining how they come to their conclusions.

iii. Ask students to complete Question 1 from the Activity 2 Table below, working in pairs. Support a class discussion on their responses when they have had time to record their notes.

(b) Discuss the prominence of the report in its context, inviting contributions from students. If necessary, prompt to consider:

- closeness to the front of the paper or TV news program
- size of heading or lead-in
- extent of the report in proportion to all news reports in the paper/program
- location of the report on the page/news segment
- inclusion of images as part of the report.

(c) i. Ask students to complete Question 2 in the Activity 2 Table below, again working in pairs. Then discuss possible reasons for any variations in the extent of technical language, and in the inclusion of explanations of technical language.

ii. Ask students to compare the tone of the reports:
   o neutral with factual information only
   o factual information presented with attitudinal slant
   o attitudinal slant in presentation with author/presenter comment as well

iii. Ask students to complete Question 3 in the Activity 2 Table below, working in pairs. Then discuss each item selected to secure a class agreement.

Select one of these words and work with students to place it on a cline of attitudinal words for the underlying concept – a dictionary or a thesaurus may be useful. For example, the noun, *miscreant*, has negative connotations. Write it on a whiteboard and invite students to nominate words with greater and lesser negative tone used to identify a person. Then negotiate their sequence on a sloping line or cline of negativity, discussing the 'message' implied in choosing each word. In doing so, discuss the contexts in which each word might be used.

iv. Ask students to work in pairs to prepare a positive cline of words that suggest an opposite tone to the ones negotiated and recorded on the white board. Return to a class grouping, comparing and discussing the choices. Again consider the contexts in which each word is likely to occur.

(d) Ask students to work in pairs to complete Questions 4, 5 and 6. Discuss responses, highlighting the difference between implied and explicit expressions of attitude.

(e) With the class, identify the stages of 'chunked information' in each report. Negotiate a word that best describes the purpose of each 'chunk' in relation to the whole report. Record on the white board. Then ask students to compare and contract the way the reports are structured. For example: What information comes first? Is the information presented in the same sequence? If there are variations, what is the effect of the difference?

(f) Ask students to consider, independently, which report they feel 'best' speaks to them. Then ask them to explain why the remainder were not selected, using some of the understandings and terminology about coherence gained from (a) to (e).

Activity 2: Table 1

Questions	Source of news report				
	Local newspaper	State newspaper	National newspaper	Commercial TV channel	ABC or SBSl
1a. What discourse or field knowledge does the report provide?					
1b. What discourses or field knowledge does the report presume?					
2. List any technical words used in the report.					
3. List all words that carry an attitudinal slant.					
4. What attitude does the reporter have: o about the incident? o to individuals referred to in the report?					
5. What comments does the reporter include to make his attitude explicit?					
6. What attitude does the reporter expect the audience to have? Why do you think this?					

3. **To examine the effects of conjunction, reference and substitution as cohesive ties**

(a) Take a short text such as *The weather prophet*[3], one of Banjo Paterson's ballads (see below). Read it with the class; then discuss the situation it represents, what it says about humour and about the knowledge of bushies; and enjoy it!

(b) Then ask the students to identify cohesive ties and their roles in a text by engaging in some textual forensic analysis. For example students could:

-   examine the build-up of information through the additive conjunction, *and*, that links nouns in line 2, and clauses in line 3; then compare the effect of the adversative conjunction, *but*, in line 6 when the message reverses

-   write the 'story' behind the poem as a short prose narrative. Students could identify, in pairs, the conjunctions they have used (addition and opposite conjunctions linking 'equal' grammatical units; reason and time conjunctions linking 'unequal' grammatical units), and then explain how they help to define relationships between items of information

-   consider the economy of words achieved by using pronoun references to 'the squatter' in lines 5 and 6 (in bold)

-   discuss the defining use of <u>the</u> *man* and <u>the</u> *squatter*, when *the* is usually the article used after a 'noun' has already been introduced. Suggest that this use of *the* implies 'the ubiquitous bushman' and the 'ubiquitous squatter' that we already know about, thus serving as a situational reference.

-   write, in pairs, the meanings captured in *with <u>things</u> the way they are* in line 1; i.e., what does *things* substitute for? What meaning is retrieved from within

the poem (where and how?), and what understandings do readers bring to the interpretation?

'Ow can it rain, the old man said, with things the way they are?
You've got to learn off ant <u>and</u> bee, <u>and</u> jackass <u>and</u> galah;
<u>And</u> no man never saw it rain, for fifty years at least,
Not when the blessed parakeets are flyin' to the east!

The weeks went by, **the squatter** wrote to tell **his** bank the news.

It's still as dry as dust, **he** *said,* *I'm feeding all the ewes;*
The overdraft would sink a ship, <u>but</u> make your mind at rest,
It's all right now, the parakeets are flyin' to the west.

4. **To compare the use of lexical cohesion in texts**

(a) Take two texts such as *The weather prophet*, one of Banjo Paterson's poems (see above) and the blurb from the back cover of *The Penguin Banjo Paterson Collected Verse* (see below). They are of similar length – approximately 100 words.

The poet A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson, best known for his rousing folk classics 'The man from Snowy River' and 'Waltzing Matilda', is widely acknowledged as Australia's greatest and most popular balladist. His poems, written with great gusto and humour, celebrate all the romance and rough and tumble of old Australia.

In this collection, leading Paterson scholar Clement
Semmler presents more than 100 of Paterson's poems
that reflect the remarkable richness and range of his
writings. Generously illustrated with period drawings,
this first Penguin edition of Paterson's verse pays tribute
to one of Australia's favourite sons –
'the Banjo of the bush'.

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3 *The Penguin Banjo Paterson Collected Verse,* ed. by Clement Semmler1993. Penguin Books Australia, page 214

(b) Employ a teacher talk-aloud approach with a text written on a whiteboard. Use a different coloured pen to circle the words associated with each concept, . Alternatively, write them in a list or 'string' as in Activity 4 Table 1 below, for Paterson's poem, above:

(c) Talk about the pattern and how it works in the text. For example: the pattern of lexical cohesion in this poem is typical: one string that is longer than the others, indicating the central (semantic) theme of the poem. In this case the central theme is 'nature' as it carries information related to the weather. The other strings centre on the weather, actions of 'nature', the characters, the aspects of society affected by the weather, duration of time, and direction, respectively. This reflects the meaning captured by the functional elements in a text: what, what action, who, what, when, where. Taking the average rule of thumb (50% of words in a text are open class words and therefore likely to form part of lexical strings), it is noted that 14% of open class words are found in the central string. Other open class words such as *feeding, ewes, mind, all right* each build the 'picture' by extension; the strings themselves are linked by association as is common in narratives.

(d) Repeat the process of analysis using the 'blurb' from the back of the anthology. See Activity 4 Table 2 below.

Activity 4 Table 1

rain	*things*	*flyin'*	*old man*	*his bank*	*fifty years*	*to the east*
rain	*ant*	*flyin'*	*no man*	*the overdraft*	*weeks*	*to the west*
as dry as dust	*bee*		*the squatter*			
	jackass					
	galah					
	parakeets					
	parakeets					

Activity 4 Table 2

poet	*folk classics*	*Australia's*	*Paterson scholar*	*collection*
A.B. Banjo Paterson	*The man from Snowy River*	*old Australia*	*Clement Semmler*	*Penguin edition*
Balladist	*Waltzing Matilda*	*Australia's*		
favourite sons	*poems*			
the Banjo of the Bush	*100 of Paterson's poems*			
	his writings			
	Paterson's verse			

(e) While the central string, as with the poem above, carries about 14% of the open class words, the pattern is different. The strings centre on who, what, where, another who, another what. The relationships between all of these strings is very tight: the first three strings focus on the poet and his works; the final two strings focus on the collector and location of the poet's works. It is instructive to examine the grammatical Theme in this text, in relation to the lexical cohesion illustrated above. The grammatical Themes, in order, are:

The poet

His poems
In this collection
Generously illustrated with period drawings, this first Penguin edition of Paterson's verse

In this descriptive advertising 'blurb', the text foregrounds the key selling points through grammatical Theme, and reinforces them through closely linked lexical strings. There are no digressions and the strings could be said to sit in hierarchical relationships as is common in scientific texts and in many non-narrative reports.

5. To link adjectives to referent noun groups

(a) Take a short text such as Aesop's fable, *The goose with the golden eggs* (see below).

(b) Share the text with students, discussing it and its relevance to today's world.

(c) Then suggest to them that the writer has used references to avoid repeating parts of the text, and ask them to identify them. Students are likely to identify pronoun references quite easily (e.g., *he, his*), but may overlook the adjectives. Demonstrative adjectives operating as references are bolded, while comparative adjectives operating as references are underlined. If necessary, point them out to students.

(d) Ask students to amend the text by removing the adjectives and including the retrieved information they refer to.

(e) Ask students to prepare an explanation that favours the use of adjectives as references or the use of the retrieved information to make the text easier to follow and understand. Discuss the responses.

*One day a farmer went to the nest of his goose and found in it an egg that was all yellow and glittering. When he lifted it up, he found that it was as heavy as lead. He was going to throw it away at first because he thought a trick had been played upon him, but he took it home on second thoughts. He soon found to his delight that **this** was an egg of pure gold. Every morning the <u>same</u> thing occurred, and he collected <u>more</u> and <u>more</u>. He soon became rich by selling **these** eggs at the market. As he grew rich he grew greedy. Thinking to get all the gold the goose could give at once, he killed it and opened it only to find – nothing.*

Moral: Greed oft o'erreaches itself

6. To employ ellipsis of nouns and verbs to avoid repetition

(a) Take a short text such as Christina Rossetti's *Remember* (see below). Read it and talk about its message and the circumstances that may have triggered it.

(b) Ask students to focus on lines 1 to 4. Ask them to work in pairs to retrieve the text that has been 'left out'. The 4 lines would then read:
Remember me when I am gone away,
<u>When I am </u>*Gone far away into the silent land;*
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I <u>can</u> half turn to go yet (<u>on</u>) turning stay.

(c) Discuss the effects on meaning, on metre, and on ease of reading/speaking with the changes:
  - In line 2, repeated: conjunction, *when*; personal pronoun, *I,* as Participant and Subject; finite verb, *am,* with retrievable tense and voice.
  - In line 4, added *can,* as finite verb to balance *can* in line 3; optional added *on,* as preposition to preposition phrase, <u>*on turning*</u>.

(d) Use the term, *ellipsis*, and illustrate its use in discussing the omission of words that are needed to complete the construction of meaning in a written text. Introduce the companion terms, *elide* (verb) and *elision* (noun) that refer to the omission of a vowel or a syllable in pronunciation.

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

7. To sleuth motivations for collocation

(a) Invite students to play a party game. Tell them to call out the first word that occurs to them in response to a word you call out. Choose everyday words that have well-known collocations, such as: salt (and pepper), knife (and fork), boy (and girl), night (and day). Point out that they

have engaged in collocation completion, and ask them to explain what collocation might be. Ensure they understand that collocation refers to 'a short sequence of expectedness'. Invite students to suggest other examples. Explain that their quick and accurate matching of collocated words is the result of much practice and repeated instances of their occurring together. It is an aid to comprehension when some words and phrases can be processed more quickly. Why? Because the brain has more operating power to spend on less obvious interpretations.

(b) Provide small groups of students with newspapers and magazines, and ask them to:
    i. find examples of collocation in headlines to items and to articles, and in cartoons
    ii. find examples of 'interrupted collocation' where a variation of a collocation draws attention
    iii. work out the value of the collocation – familiarity? humour? links to other texts or events?
    iv. find examples of 'near collocations' that bring different discourses together
    v. report their finding to the whole class when asked.

If necessary, provide some examples, e.g.,

- *Brain surgeon suspected as mastermind* as lead headline regarding the Glasgow car bomb plots (*The Courier Mail*, 4 July 2007, page 5)

- *Grave concerns for scholarship winner* regarding the scholarship winner's studies of cemeteries (*The Courier-Mail*, 4 July, page 11)

- *Antarctic exploits frozen in time* regarding the story of 101 year old Alf Howard's travels in Antarctica (*The Courier-Mail*, 4 July, page 24-25)

- *Head over heels over shoes* regarding three women owning more than 300 pairs of shoes each (*The Courier-Mail*, 5 July, page 28 for article on pages 37–38)

- Bill Leaks's cartoon in *The Australian*, 5 July 2007: two burkha clad women are taking coffee, each looking at a photo. The younger woman is weeping; the older is saying, *Ahh, I am so proud of my young son – he wants to be a doctor when he blows up.*

(c) Ask students to identify and describe humorous incidents from TV programs they have seen. Develop a board summary of the causes of the humour, e.g., slapstick where a physical happening or event is not what was expected, interactive where somebody does something that is out of character and unexpected, verbal where something unexpected is said. Point out that this humour is the result of a deliberate breaking of collocation. Then ask them to recall and note jokes and riddles that rely upon the deliberate breaking of verbal collocation. Have some joke and riddle books available to get some students started. Share these after a time. Especially if there are newly arrived migrants in the class, stress the cultural basis of humour. What seems amusing to one group may not seem so to another. This may stimulate a useful and informative discussion.

8. **To establish a repertoire of framing connectives**

Narratives and articles are structured differently. Narratives carry a sequence within the unfolding narrative; articles deal with concepts or issues. Thus articles require sign posts to help the reader to follow a line of thinking, the stages in an argument, or a number of points related to an issue. Grammatical Themes at the beginning of articles, sections and paragraphs provide locations for these signposts.

(a) Share with the students a relatively short article, column or editorial. Briefly discuss the issues represented. Then ask students to identify parts of the text that helped them to read the text more easily or more quickly. Tell them that grammatical Themes play a strong role in guiding readers through a text. Underline the key themes that provide

direction to the reader, then take the Themes on their own to show how they work. Take, for example, Glenn Milne's column[4] about Brendan Nelson's referral to Australia being in Iraq because of needing to secure Australia's 'oil' or 'energy supply'. Under the title, *Oil gaffe puts PM in an awkward half-Nelson*, the major grammatical Themes in this column are:

i. *The Government's Keystone Kops*

ii. *performance*

iii. *Defence Minister Brendan Nelson's performance*

iv. *Not only the Coalition, but also the country*

v. *Nelson's stumble*

vi. *And in the case of Iraq*

vii. *The confusion*

viii. *If you*

ix. *Emphasising the instability to our north, and Howard's neglect of the pacific, it*

x. *In the Opposition's analysis*

xi. *But on getting it Nelson*

xii. *Labor*

xiii. *Trouble*

xiv. *Dangerously for nelson*

xv. Or then

These framing Themes provide a running brief of the content. They are what fast readers use when they 'speed read'.

(b) Some writers provide even stronger framing to their columns, articles, essays, etc. They do so by including explicit information that sits beyond the clause structure of sentences. Illustrate this by taking an article such as David Peetz' *Two-faced into the bargain*[5].

This article starts by establishing a context and a reason for what he has to say. About half way through the text, Peetz makes his main points. He emphasises this by introducing the paragraphs with, in turn:

First, Second, Finally. He concludes by introducing external information from a poll, asking a key question about the findings, and answering the question he posed.

These text organisers direct the reader and make it easier to follow his argument and make connections across several bits of information. Invite students to discuss the use of these guides to them as they read.

Provide students with a collection of newspaper columns, editorials, and articles. Ask them to work in pairs to locate texts that use explicit organisers, and to make a note of them. Invite students to share their findings with the class, and then ask students to see if they can identify any pattern in the ways the organisers are used to guide readers.

To extend this activity further, especially for visual learners, perhaps the students could generate visual representations of these patterns for comparison and contrast. A sharing of these efforts is likely to be both entertaining and informative – certainly very worthwhile. A collated summary of visual patterns could be copied for students or a chart made for the class wall.

9. To play with punctuation codes for 'effect'

(a) Invite students to play 'punctuation jigsaws'. Provide them with copies of short texts reproduced with any punctuation marks removed. The missing punctuation marks are presented in a line, below the text. Ask them to work in pairs to find the most likely places for the missing punctuation. When they have finished, ask them to explain why they chose to place each mark where they did. Encourage students to refer to grammatical elements and to intonation patterns. Include some short poems so that line breaks become important, and metre provides some clues.

Try to locate texts that have complex and compound sentences so that punctuation marks separating grammatical units of

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4 Milne, Glenn, *Oil gaffe puts PM in an awkward half-Nelson*, **Sunday Extra** in **The Sunday Mail**, 8 July 2007, page 54.

5 Peetz, David, *Two-faced into the bargain*. **The Courier Mail**, 3 July 2007, page 18.

clauses and phrases (, ; : .) are used and need to be scrutinised in some detail.

(b) Find some jokes, book and film titles, and riddles that rely upon punctuation to make the intended sense. Play with omitting, replacing or swapping punctuation marks – and talking about the effects produced.

Then challenge students to sleuth some more examples over a given period of time – perhaps a week. This will give them time to go to the library, search the net, talk to friends, and engage their family. Devote some class time to the presentation of their 'finds'.

(c) Bring some examples of incorrectly used punctuation marks. Handwritten advertising boards (or printed ones, too) in shops are often a reliable source. Ask students to explain why they are not correct, or not conventional. Set them the task of sleuthing their own examples for sharing in class.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF ETAQ

Special anniversary events in 2017

A **PRE-CONFERENCE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION** on Friday 18 August from 5:30 to 7:30 pm where Nick Earls will be the guest speaker; and where we will honour the Botsman Award winners. A **50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER** on the Saturday night when life members, past presidents and past patrons will be recognised.

As usual we will be organising the following events

- GRAMMAR HALF DAY WORKSHOP – Saturday 10 June (booked out)

- ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE – Saturday 19 August,
  Keynote presenters: Larissa McLean-Davies, University of Melbourne, and Markus Zusak

- SPRING LITERARY BRUNCH – Saturday 21 October (tbc)

Further information and online registration will be available as events are finalised
at www.etaq.org.au