Lingua Inglese 1

Lecture 7

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Coherence

- It concerns the ways in which he components of the textual world, i.e. the configuration of concepts and relations underlying the surface text are **mutually accessible and relevant**

- A text "makes sense" because there is **continuity of sense** among the knowledge activated by the expressions of the text. We define this continuity of senses as the foundation of coherence

- **Coherence** → connectedness at the level of sense/meaning (signatum)

- **Cohesion** → connectedness at the level of expression/form (signans)

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Coherence and Cohesion

- The following texts are coherent but not very cohesive
  - Arrived in LA at noon. Hotel ok. No appointment with Tilly so far. Prospective for success meagre. Love, Louis
  - Gone to pub with the girls. Dinner's in the fridge. Don't wait me up. Love, Sue

- The following one, instead is nether coherent nor cohesive. Therefore it **cannot be considered a text**
  - I bought a Ford. The car President Wilson drove was black. Black English is a widespread variety of English. Variety is not always an asset in the case of car production. Italy produces great quantities of fruit and vegetables.

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Coherence: Local and Global

- **Local coherence** (microstructure) deals with the relations between sentences or propositions in a linear sequence:
  a) We went to an expensive restaurant
  b) John ordered salmon with champagne
  c) *John ordered a Mercedes
- Interpretation based on world knowledge
- The meaningfulness of discourse also rests on what we assume to be the normalcy of the facts, episodes or situation described

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Some Typical Coherence Relations

- CAUSE/EFFECT
  - Sorry, I'm late. I took the wrong bus. Effect/cause (**ordo arficialis**)
  - It has rained a lot this winter. We won't have water shortages next summer. Cause/effect (**ordo naturalis**)
- REASON/CONSEQUENCE
  - You don't work hard enough, you won't go far in your career. Reason/consequence
- PLAN/PURPOSE
  - A: I went to Florence yesterday.
  - B: Shopping?
  - A: No, to visit grandpa Plan/action

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Some Typical Coherence Relations (2)

- TEMPORAL PROXIMITY/ORDERING
  - (A) When he arrived, (B) John was making some fresh coffee. A-B Contemporary events
  - (A) When he arrived, (B) John made some fresh coffee. A-B sequential events
  - (A) When he arrived, (B) John was in front of the fridge. A-B Contemporary events
  - (A) When he arrived, (B) John had gone and the fridge was empty. A-B sequential events
  - (A) When he arrived, (B) John was watching TV. (C) He went off right away. A-B Contemporary events, C?

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Principles of Iconic Coding

- **Semantic Principle of Linear Order**
  - ❑ The order of clauses in coherent discourse will tend to correspond to the temporal order of the occurrence of the event described
- **Pragmatic Principle of Linear Order**
  - ❑ More <u>important</u> or <u>urgent</u> information tends to be placed first in the string
  - ❑ Less <u>accessible</u> or <u>predictable</u> information tends to be placed first in the string

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Principles of Iconic Coding: Examples

- **Semantic Principle of Linear Order**
  - ❑ He opened the door, came in, sat and ate.
  - ❑ *He ate, sat, came in…
  - ◆ She shot him and he died. (frequent)
  - ◆ He died. She had shot him. (infrequent)
- **Pragmatic Principle of Linear Order**
  - ❑ NEUTRAL: John milked the goat.
  - ❑ CONTRAST: He milks the cow, but the goat he wouldn't milk.
  - ❑ FOCUS: It's the goat that John milked.
  - ❑ LEFT-DISLOCATION: The goat, I milked it.
  - ❑ WH-QUESTION: What did John milk?

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Principles of Iconic Coding (2)

- "The most remarkable thing about an entity as complex and multidimensional as grammar is how complexity is built up componentially, from a relatively small number of general, cognitively transparent iconic principles". (T. Givón 1995)

- **The Quantity Principle**

  a) A larger chunk of information will be given a larger chunk of code
  b) Less predictable information will be given more coding material
  c) More important information will be given more coding material

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Quantity Principle: Examples

a) act > act-ive > act-iv-ate > act-iv-at-ion

b) Once there was <u>a wizard</u>. <u>He</u> lived in Africa.

c) (**active**) John drank the beer in a hurry
(**passive**) The beer was drunk in a hurry
John drank in a hurry (**deletion of less topical elements**)

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Principles of Iconic Coding (3)

- **Proximity Principle**
  - "Entities that are closer together functionally, conceptually or cognitively will be placed together at the code level, i.e. temporally or spatially"

  - "Functional operators will be placed closest, temporally, or spatially at the code level, to the conceptual unit to which they are most relevant"

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Proximity Principle: Examples

- You know the man <u>I'm talking about</u>
- The man, <u>whom I met a while back</u>, is a crook. (**same vs. separate intonational units**)
- She work-ed late
- *She –ed work late (**grammatical operators near the operands**)
- <u>Only John</u> met Mary
- John <u>only met</u> Mary
- John met <u>only Mary</u> (**placement of the focus marker –only near the word it focusses**)

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Global Coherence

- Global Coherence (**Macrostructure**) is concerned with the essential points of a text (i.e. the gist of discourse)
- Macrostructures are the product of inferential processes and can be viewed as large-scale statements of the content of texts
- Whereas the textbase represents the meaning of a text in all its detail, the macrostructure is concerned only with its essential points (but as a coherent whole)
- The typical summary of a text must be based on its macrostructure. The top level macrostructure of a book is its title

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Global Coherence (2)

- From a semantic perspective macrostructures are defined by rules, called **macrorules**:
  - **DELETION**: direct removal of material
  - **GENERALIZATION**: reformulating the content in a more general way
  - **CONSTRUCTION**: creating new material to subsume the presentation. Replace a proposition entailed by the joint set of propositions of a sequence

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Application of Macrorules

- **Deletion**
  - **Peter missed the train** [he didn't hear the alarm clock, as usual], **so he didn't go to the meeting**
- **Generalization**
  - The region has scarce natural resources, low industrial development, high unemployment.
    > The region is economically depressed
- **Construction**
  - Peter went into the place, chose a table in a corner, called the waiter and ordered fish and vegetables and a dessert
    > Peter went to a restaurant

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Intentionality and Acceptability

- **Intentionality** concerns the text producer's attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and coherent text instrumental in fulfilling the producer's intentions, i.e. to distribute knowledge or to attain a goal specified in a plan

- **Acceptability** concerns the text receiver's attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a a cohesive and coherent text having some use or relevance for the receiver, i.e. to acquire knowledge or provide co-operation in a plan

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Intentionality and Acceptability (2)

- **Contradictions**
  - ❑ When it rains, it really shines (Rover)
  - ❑ Less is more. Sisley
  - ❑ L'istante infinito (TagHeuer)
- **Paradoxes**
  - ❑ Back to the Future (Canados Group)
  - ❑ Tomorrow's make-up fr today's skin (Estée Lauder)
- **Gradation**
  - ❑ The whitest of all whites (Agfa)
  - ❑ The best gets better (Autocar)

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Intentionality and Acceptability (3)

- **Ambiguity**
  - ❑ Slow children at play
    - Reduce speed because children are playing
    - Unintelligent children are playing
  - ❑ More intelligent politicians are needed
    - We need politicians who are more intelligent
    - We need more politicians who are intelligent
  - ❑ Woman without her man is nothing
    - A woman without her man has no value
    - A man without his woman has no value
  - ❑ There was no smoking in the corridor
    - It was not possible to smoke
    - There was no smoke

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Informativity and Situationality

- Informativity concerns the extent to which the occurrences of the presented text are expected vs. unexpected, or known vs. unknown/certain. Cf. tautologies
  - A rose is a rose is a rose
  - Woman are woman
  - Boys will be boys

- Situationality concerns the factors which make a text relevant to a situation of occurrence. The term 'situationality' is a general designation for the factors which render a text relevant to a current or recoverable situation of occurrence
  - Stop
  - No u turn

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The Organization of Information

- Verbal messages are organized into **information units**, which are more or less crucial in terms of communicative importance (**informativity**)

- What are the **devices** by which we lead our hearer/reader to recognize unmistakably the piece of information that we see as the **highpoint** of our message, at the same time providing enough additional information to ensure that our message is complete?

- In spoken language, **intonation** and other **prosodic features** are essential in the processing and receiving of information, but **lexical choices** and **grammatical organization** play an important role as well

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The Organization of Information (2)

- Let us consider the following examples:
    1. Will the new law help old people?
    2. I'll visit them occasionally
    3. The honeymoon couple returned to Edimburgh in bright sunshine today

- In the following variants, the truth value is unchanged, but the presentation is very different
    a. In our view, will the new law give old people the help they need?
    b. I don't think I can do more than pay them an occasional visit
    c. It was bright sunny weather that welcomed the honeymoon couple back to Edimburgh today

- It is not just a matter of length, but in each sentence an **introduction** has been provided which puts the utterance in a communicative context (a;b), or which **highlights** an aspect of the utterance which is more **communicatively effective**. The ending has also given an appropriate **climax** (a;b;c)

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Given and New Information

- When we construct a message some elements express, or refer back to information that is familiar from the preceding discourse, i.e. **given**, while others present **new** information
- There is a preferred distribution of the information in the clause, corresponding to a gradual rise in the information load
    - Inside the house, Mr Summers found a box full of ancient jewels locked in the closet
- The clause is grounded on the preceding info, where *the house* and *Mr Summers* have already been mentioned, and on the other hand it carries the communication forward by telling us about what Mr Summers *found*

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Theme and Focus

- **Given information** tells us **what the sentence is about**: it provides the sentence **Theme**. **New information** provides the **focal point of the text**, to which people are expected to pay special attention.
- English generally follows the **Principle of End-Focus**:
  - The given information (Theme) appears at the beginning of a sentence and the new information (Focus) comes at the end.

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Theme and Focus (2)

- What is John doing?
- John is   going to the theatre
  THEME   **FOCUS**

- Where is John going?
- John is going to   the theatre
  THEME   **FOCUS**

- Who is going to the theatre?
- **John**   is going to the theatre → *marked order*
  FOCUS   **THEME**

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An Example of Thematic Connection

- Anna Elise, she jumped with <u>surprise</u>;
  The <u>surprise</u> was so quick, it played her a <u>trick</u>;
  The <u>trick</u> was so rare, she jumped in <u>a chair</u>;
  The <u>chair</u> was so frail, she jumped in <u>a pail</u>;
  The <u>pail</u> was so wet, she jumped in <u>a net</u>;
  The <u>net</u> was so small, she jumped on <u>the ball</u>;
  The <u>ball</u> was so round, she jumped on <u>the ground;</u>
  And ever since then she's been turning around

  - Utterances in this passage are **linked thematically**, in that the focal element introduced in the first part is either pronominalised or mentioned with a determinative article and becomes the theme of the second sentence and so on

  - From the thematic part to the focal part, we can identify a **crescendo in communicative dynamism** also reflected in the rhythmic prosodic pattern

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An Example of Rhematic Connection

- Caroline arrived on Tuesday and Roger finished his thesis on Friday

  - In this cases the parts of the sentence are connected through the focal elements (*rheme*=another name for focus), in this case *on Tuesday* and *on Friday*

  - The Cohesion of the passage is also based on **parallelism** (same structure, but different meaning)

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Varying the Information Structure

- One way of ensuring that this flow of information is preserved is through the use of noncanonical constructions, i.e. syntactic structures in which the canonical order of elements (in English SVO) is rearranged
- Since different constructions impose certain constraints on the familiarity of their parts, a speaker's choice of a given construction can assist the hearer in constructing a coherent discourse model

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Varying the Information Structure (2)

- There are several ways in which **special attention can be drawn to the Theme of a sentence**:
  - by moving part of the sentence to the front (**Fronting**)
  - by inverting the positions of subject and verb (**Inversion**)
  - by using the impersonal *It* (**Cleft sentences**)
  - by moving the clauses outside of their normal position (**Extraposition**)
  - by using the existential *There* (**Existential sentences**)

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Fronting

- Fronting occurs when we move to the beginning of a sentence an item which does not usually belong there. This item then becomes the theme, but it carries extra prominence:
  - **GEORGE** I said my name was.
  - **INTO THE SEA** they dived.
  - **A WELSHMAN** I was born, and A WELSHMAN I shall die
  - An utter **FOOL**, she made me feel

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Fronting (2)

- If we place an Expression in an Abnormal Position, the effect is to make the expression more prominent. If the verb or any objects, complements, adverbials come before the subject (i.e. are Fronted), they acquire greater prominence:
  - Attitudes will not change overnight, but **CHANGE** they will.
  - **MARIJUANA** they used occasionally, but **COCAINE** they never touched.
  - **SOME THINGS** you forget. **OTHER THINGS** you never do
  - **WHAT SHE HAD WANTED**, she was to have.

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(O)SV in Space

- **<u>Sick</u> I've become. [SP]**
- **<u>Strong</u> with the Force you are. [SP]**
- **<u>Your father</u> he is. [SP]**
- **When <u>nine hundred years</u> you reach, [O]**
- **<u>Look as good</u> you will not. [SP]**

- The rarity of **(O)SV Constructions** explains the impact of this strange speech style, used by the Jedi Master, Yoda, in the film *Return of the Jedi* (1983).

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Inversion

- Inversion involves the subject and the verb appearing in the reverse of their normal order:
  - **Here'<u>s the POSTMAN</u>.**
  - **Down <u>came the RAIN</u>.**

  <u>NB</u>: The verb is in its simple form!
  - ***Down <u>was coming the RAIN</u>.**
- There are two types of inversion:
  - **Subject-verb inversion** or **full inversion,** where the subject is preceded by the entire verb phrase
  - **Subject-operator inversion** or **partial inversion**, where the subject is preceded by the operator rather than by the main verb or a full verb phrase

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Subject-Verb Inversion

- The clause opens with an adverbial (esp. of place), providing the background or setting for a situation
- The verb is intransitive or copular. It often expresses existence or emergence on the scene
- The clause ends with a long and heavy subject introducing new information
- In short, this structure conforms to the requirements of the information principle of **end-weight**
  - **On one long wall** hung a row of Van Gogh
  - **Here** comes the first question
  - **Now** comes the business of sorting out the returned forms

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Subject-Operator Inversion

- It may occur with transitive or intransitive verbs
- The opening elements triggering subject-operator inversion are much more restricted
  - Negative or restrictive coordinator adverbials
    - A: I haven't got a copy of club rules.
    - B: **Nor** have I.
    - **Never before in our history** have so many strong influences united to produce so large a disaster.
  - Order or negative scope
    - **No doubt** he will find out.
    - **Only then** did he feel better.

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Cleft Sentences

- Cleft sentences occur when we split the sentence into two clauses, giving each its own verb. The first clause consists of the pronoun *It* and a form of the verb *be*. The second clause begins with a relative pronoun such as *that* or *who*:
  - ❑ John kicked the ball into the goal.
  - ❑ <u>It</u> was JOHN <u>who</u> kicked the ball into the goal.
  - ❑ <u>It</u> was THE BALL <u>that</u> John kicked into the goal.

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Cleft Sentences (2)

- **Cleft sentences** provide greater prominence to One Part of the Sentence by placing it after a semantically empty subject (*it*) and a semantically empty verb (*be*):
  - ❑ A human error caused the explosion.
  - ❑ It was **A HUMAN ERROR** that caused the explosion (*it*-cleft).
  - ❑ **A HUMAN ERROR** was what caused the explosion (reversed *wh*-cleft).
  - ❑ What caused the explosion was **A HUMAN ERROR** (non-reversed *wh*-cleft also called *pseudo-cleft*).

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Extraposition

- Where the subject or object element is a clause, it is possible to change the sentence around, so that the clause comes later. The element is then replaced by the pronoun *it*, which 'anticipates' the following clause:
  - What you say doesn't matter.
  - <u>It</u> doesn't matter <u>what you say</u>.
  - I find working here a bore.
  - I find <u>it</u> a bore, <u>working here</u>.
  - It's no use <u>telling them that</u>
  - It wouldn't be any good <u>trying to catch the bus</u>

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Existential Sentences

- We can also use a construction, in which the First Words Have No Meaning. They seem to act as a theme, because they appear at the beginning of the sentence, but it is an empty theme.
- The main means of achieving this effect is to use *there* followed by the verb *be*:
  - Many animals are in danger these days.
  - <u>There are</u> many animals in danger these days.

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Existential Sentences(2)

Note:
- □ There are some apples on the table.
- □ *There's some apples on the table.

- Other verbs can be used instead of *be*:

  - □ There exist several variations of this proposal.
  - □ Soon after, there occurred a fresh development.
  - □ There used to be a house at the end of Clarendon Road.
  - □ There is supposed to be a plot between them to get hold of the wealth.
- ***There*-structures** give greater prominence to the Subject: e.g.
  - □ **There were some students who refused to show their ID card.**

An Example

- **LEATHER LOOK**
- **POLITICALLY correct it is not. Sexy, shiny and raunchy, on the other hand, it most certainly is. Leather has long been the stuff of S&M fantasy, biker jackets and practical outer-wear but now it is emerging as a versatile tool for designers too. Antonio Berardi apparently looked to Evel Knievel for inspiration when creating his leather dresses, suits, jackets and gloves; Versace, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren tailored soft kid into elegant dresses, slimline coats, sharp jackets and pencil skirts in an array of bright colours. But it was Ann Demeulemeester who proved that, for the sexiest modern edge, leather still has to be black.**

(Newspaper Supplement, August 1997)

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