Unit 3  COHESION IN WORD CHOICE

OBJECTIVES OF THIS UNIT
After you have completed this unit, we hope you will be able to:
• recognise the types of connections that occur between vocabulary items and how these contribute to the cohesion of a piece of writing
• identify problems in writing where the vocabulary choices interfere with the cohesion of the writing
• understand the need to select appropriate vocabulary for particular situations and to build up the cohesiveness of your own writing through appropriate word choices

INTRODUCTION TO THIS UNIT
In this unit we will look at how vocabulary choice helps us to develop a piece of writing. The word choices a writer makes help to develop the ideas of a text so that the relationships between ideas are clear to the reader and the text as a whole is cohesive i.e., all parts of the text relate together and work together.

As we have seen in Units 1 and 2 of this Cohesive Writing module, cohesion is an important feature of academic texts. This unit aims to help you understand how the vocabulary items in a piece of writing contribute to its overall cohesion.

1.  DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORDS

A. Repetition
The most obvious way of showing that an idea is related to one that has been mentioned earlier in the text is to simply repeat a word or a form of the word that was used before, for example:

'Stress is often called a disease of contemporary life. It seems that our modern world has not only created an advanced technological environment but also a stressful environment.'

One common problem that students have in their writing is to use too much repetition. Instead of developing the idea by using other related words, the same word or a form of the same word is used repeatedly throughout the writing. Not only is this boring to read, but it can be an indication of a limited understanding of the topic.

Exercise 1
Underline the examples in this paragraph of repetition of the word "stress". Notice that this word is used too much and so the writing becomes boring.

'Stress is a term adopted from engineering science by psychology and medicine.'
Simply defined, stress in engineering means force upon an area. As so many forces are working upon us in the modern age, and we find it extremely difficult to cope under so much stress, stress is called the "disease of civilization". Phillip Zimbard traces four interrelated levels at which we react to the stresses exerted upon us from our environment. The four are: the emotional level, the behavioural level, the physiological level, and the cognitive level. The emotional responses to stress are sadness, depression, anger, irritation and frustration. The behavioural responses to stress are poor concentration, forgetfulness, poor interpersonal relations, and lowered productivity. The physiological responses to stress consist of bodily tensions, which may lead to headaches, backaches, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, and even killer diseases. At the cognitive level one may respond to stress by losing self-esteem and self-confidence which leads to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. At worst, such a stressed person may even end up committing suicide.

(adapted from Lily de Silva, One Foot in the World, Wheel Publication, 1986)

B. Synonyms and antonyms
By choosing a vocabulary item with a similar meaning (synonym) to one mentioned before, a writer can show the relationship between ideas. Relationships can also be shown by using a word with the opposite meaning (antonym). By using synonyms and antonyms, it is possible to avoid using too much repetition of the same word.

Exercise 1
Read the text and underline examples of synonyms and antonyms, noting with an S or an A which type of relationship it is.

Stress is a term adopted from engineering science by psychology and medicine. Simply defined, stress in engineering means force upon an area. As so many forces are working upon us in the modern age, and we find it extremely difficult to cope under so much pressure, stress is called the "disease of civilization". Phillip Zimbard traces four interrelated levels at which we react to the pressure exerted upon us from our environment. The four are: the emotional level, the behavioural level, the physiological level, and the cognitive level. The emotional responses to stress are sadness, depression, anger, irritation and frustration. The behavioural responses to stress are poor concentration, forgetfulness, poor interpersonal relations, and lowered productivity. The physiological responses consist of bodily tensions, which may lead to headaches, backaches, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, and even killer diseases. At the cognitive level one may lose self-esteem and self-confidence which leads to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. At worst, such a person may even end up committing suicide.

(Lily de Silva, One Foot in the World, Wheel Publication, 1986)

C. General and specific words
Vocabulary items which are more general or specific examples of the item mentioned earlier in the text also create textual cohesion. For example 'fruit' is a general term which
includes the specific examples of 'apple, passion-fruit, lemon'. In the example for Exercise 1, 'fossilised energy' is a general term covering the more specific words 'coal, gas and oil'.

Energy is the most important resource of modern society: without power to work our machines and give us heat and light our society could not exist. Until half way through this century mankind was confident that the world's supply of fossilised energy would last forever. But now that proposition has been questioned and it seems that our supplies of coal, gas and oil are destined to run out. The production of nuclear energy leaves the producer with dangerous waste materials to dispose of. For these reasons mankind is investigating alternative sources of energy and, of these, solar energy, energy collected from the sun seems the most promising. This assignment will explain in detail how solar energy is collected for the generation of heat. It will examine the design and use of low temperature, medium temperature and high temperature collectors.

**Exercise 2**
Find the specific items relating to more general terms in the "energy" paragraph?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General term</th>
<th>Specific terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collectors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D. Collocation**
There is a tendency for particular vocabulary items to occur together often. This is called collocation. In scientific writing, for example, collocations occur between certain nouns and verbs. For example, data are collected and analysed but never observed. Other examples include: to conduct a survey (not to give a survey) to perform analyses (not to handle analyses) to obtain data (not to carry out data)

**Exercise 3**
Read the following sentence from a student's essay.

*Despite lack of efficiency, the registered medicine practitioners received advantages over their alternative competitors...*

Here the word received does not collocate well with advantages. The tutor marking the
paper has put a mark through it indicating that it is not a good choice. Can you think of a more appropriate word?

Despite lack of efficiency, the registered medicine practitioners received ____________ over their alternative competitors ...

Exercise 4
In the following paragraph (which we looked at briefly at the beginning of this unit), there are some problems of collocation with the choice of vocabulary. The use of the word "aseptic" is appropriate for academic writing, but the words "clean" and "dirty" do not collocate, as they are too informal. Likewise the words "rinsing off any equipment" are not academic enough and so they do not collocate well in this paragraph. Try to find other words to substitute for these words in this paragraph:

Medical aseptic technique is based on an act of distinguishing the concepts between clean and dirty. In the case of housekeeping, the nurse is responsible for making sure that the patient's room and equipment are clean. Other responsibilities involve rinsing blood, drainage, and body wastes off any equipment the nurse has used. Also recording the circumstances of the spill during a treatment or test is important.

2. WORD RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE TEXT
A. A mixture of relationships
In any one piece of writing, all these different relationships can, and normally do, occur between the vocabulary items chosen.

Exercise 5
Identify the connections in the first part of the 'energy' text between each of the words listed in the left-hand column. Put a tick in the appropriate column to show how the words are each related to the first one "energy".

Energy is the most important resource of modern society: without power to work our machines and give us heat and light our society could not exist. Until half way through this century mankind was confident that the world's supply of fossilised energy would last forever. But now that proposition has been questioned and it seems that our supplies of coal, gas and oil are destined to run out.
### Words related to "energy"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Relationship between each word and &quot;energy&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fossilised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Taxonomies

We can look in more detail at relationships between general vocabulary items and specific vocabulary items. These relationships can form **taxonomies** of vocabulary items where one item is a **kind** of another, for example a rose(specific) is a kind of flower (general), or where one item is a **part** of another, for example a leaf is a part of a plant.

These relationships are shown in the following diagram:

```
 颁奖礼/ 种类                
  赞礼/ 超级系               
      (rice/food)       
  植物/ 超级系               
    （a rose is a flower is a plant）
  种类/ 种类            
      (rice/potatoes)

Taxonomic vocabulary relations
```
To illustrate how a taxonomy works, we can develop the above examples. **A rose is one kind of flower.** Geranium, carnation, cornflower, tulip and daisy are others. Hence:

```
_ Rose
_ Geranium
_ Carnation
_ Tulip
_ Daisy
```

Each flower has the following parts: stem, roots, leaves, stamen, pistils. Hence:

```
_ Stem
_ Roots
_ Leaves
_ Stamen
_ Pistils
```
Exercise 6
Read the following piece of writing. It is the introduction to a scientific published paper. As you are reading, notice the way that the vocabulary chosen is building up a "taxonomy" about rice-growing areas. Fill in the table below to show how the words fit into this taxonomy.

Rice (Oryza sativa) is traditionally grown in tropical regions of the world, but the availability of irrigation has led to the establishment of rice growing areas in temperate regions, such as Spain, Italy and California.

The rice industry in Australia began in the 1920s in irrigation areas along the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers, and these areas currently produce more than 95% of the total Australian crop of about 500,000 t/year, with the remainder being produced in Queensland in the Burdekin Valley and the Atherton Tablelands areas (about 15,000t/y) and the Ord River area of Western Australia (less than 2,000t/y). While about 90% of the Australian crop is exported, the 10% consumed locally constitutes the bulk of rice available in Australia (M. Goldring, Rice-growers Co-operative Mills, Ltd., pers. commun.)

Rice is available in Australia in three forms; as white or polished rice that has had the bran layer removed by abrasive milling, as brown or unpolished rice that has the bran layer retained and as parboiled rice that has been partially cooked with the bran layer on the grain and after drying, the bran layer removed by milling.

This paper reports on a laboratory investigation of the nutrient composition of seven brands of Australian commercially-produced rice, including white, parboiled and brown rice, available in retail outlets and the changes in the levels of some B-vitamins and minerals during cooking. (Willis R. Palipane, K. Greenfield, H. 1985 Composition of Australian foods 13 rice)
Taxonomy of rice-growing areas

_tropical regions

RICE GROWING AREAS

_Spain

................. regions_  ...................

.....................  .....................

_Australia_  ................
Independent Learning Resources

Cohesive Writing

key
Unit 3: Cohesion in Word Choice

Repetition

Exercise 1:

environment - environment

Synonyms and Antonyms

Exercise 2:

Synonyms: Energy - power
            solar - sun
Antonyms: last forever - run out

General and Specific Words

Exercise 3:

- solar energy ➔ low
- energy ➔ fossilised energy collectors ➔ medium
- nuclear energy ➔ high

Collocation
Exercise 4:  

had  
enjoyed

Exercise 5:  

i. distinguishing the concepts between clean and dirty should be *distinguishing between sterilised and contaminated*  

ii. rinsing...off any equipment. Avoid colloquial language such as the phrasal verb "rinsing off" rather rinsing from

Creating 'vocabulary strings'

Exercise 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOCABULARY ITEM</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>REPETITION</th>
<th>SYNONYM ANTONYM</th>
<th>GENERAL SPECIFIC</th>
<th>COLLOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resource</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fossilised energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

{Ed: power tick needs a kick}
### Exercise 7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tropical Rice Growing Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temperate - irrigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrumbidgee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atherton Tablelands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A. - Ord River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 8:

a) The paragraph begins by introducing a range of factors that can trigger change in the health system. Then one of these, "new disease" is suggested as an initiator of change. The writer summarizes in the last line.

Integrating evidence with your text

Exercise 9:

a) Approaches to the control of illness in Australia appear to be scientifically oriented. Technology plays a significant role in this approach which may include the use of sophisticated medical equipment to conduct tests, and the interpretation of physical symptoms in order to diagnose a client's illness. Depending on the results of these procedures drugs may be prescribed or other medical routines recommended. This approach contrasts with other societies where more holistic approaches to health are used. As Davis and George suggest "it is a materialistic approach, rather than a spiritual or mental one". (Davis & George J., 1988:23)