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Discourse Markers and Cohesion

Grammar does not stop at the sentence boundary. Cohesion is the grammar of *texts*: the devices that bind sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into arguments.

21.1 The cohesion toolkit

Reference pronouns and determiners pointing backward (anaphora) or forward (cataphora): *The committee published **its** findings. **These** caused an uproar.* Cataphora: *Before **she** became famous, **Adele** sang in pubs.*

Substitution and ellipsis (Chapter 20): *one, do so, so/not*, and omission.

Conjunction linking words — the discourse markers below.

Lexical cohesion repetition, synonyms, and general nouns: *a Boeing 747 . . . the aircraft . . . the plane*; and summarizing nouns: *this **approach**, that **claim**, such **measures***.

21.2 Discourse markers by function

Function	Markers
Adding	*moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, what is more, not to mention*
Contrasting	*however, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the other hand, in contrast, by contrast, whereas, while, yet, even so, still*
Conceding	*admittedly, granted, of course, to be sure, it is true that*
Cause and result	*therefore, consequently, as a result, thus, hence, accordingly, for this reason*
Exemplifying	*for example, for instance, in particular, notably, such as, a case in point*
Reformulating	*in other words, that is (to say), namely, to put it another way*
Sequencing	*first(ly), second(ly), then, next, subsequently, finally, lastly*
Summarizing	*in short, in sum, to conclude, overall, on balance, all in all*
Digressing, returning	*incidentally, by the way; anyway, in any case, at any rate*

21.2.1 Grammar of the linkers

The most common cohesion errors are grammatical, not lexical — using a conjunction as an adverb or vice versa:

Type	Behaviour
Coordinators (*and, but, or, so, yet, for*)	join two clauses inside one sentence: *It was late,* ***but*** *we carried on.*
Subordinators (*although, because, whereas, while, since, unless*)	attach a dependent clause: ***Although*** *it was late, we carried on.* No comma splice possible.
Conjunctive adverbs (*however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless*)	connect *sentences*; need a full stop or semicolon before them: *It was late****; however,*** *we carried on.*

Common Error

- Comma splice with *however*: ✗ *It was late, however we carried on.* → ✓ *It was late; however, we carried on.* / ✓ *It was late, but we carried on.*
- Doubling connectors: ✗ *Although it was late, but we carried on.* → pick one: ✓ *Although it was late, we carried on.*
- ✗ *Despite of the rain…* → ✓ *Despite the rain / In spite of the rain / Despite the fact that it rained.*
- *on the other hand* needs a genuine contrast of alternatives, not just any second point — for mere addition use *in addition*.

21.3 Concession and contrast in depth

Fine distinctions among the contrast words:

- *although/though* + clause: plain concession. *though* can also end a sentence informally: *Nice flat. Small, though.*
- *even though* = emphatic factual concession; *even if* = hypothetical: *Even though it rained, we went* (it did rain) vs. *Even if it rains, we'll go* (maybe it will).
- *whereas/while*: balanced contrast of two facts: *Exports rose,* ***whereas*** *imports fell.*
- *despite / in spite of* + noun or gerund: *Despite losing, they celebrated.*
- *however* + adjective/adverb + clause: ***However hard*** *she tried, the door stayed shut.* Same with *no matter how/what/where*: *No matter what happens, stay calm.*
- *Adjective + as/though + subject + verb* (formal concession): ***Tired as she was****, she finished the shift.* ***Strange though it may seem****, the figures are correct.*

21.4 Paragraph cohesion in practice

A cohesive paragraph typically: (1) opens with a topic sentence whose subject names the paragraph's theme; (2) begins later sentences with *given* information (backward links) and ends them with *new* information; (3) uses *this/these + summary noun* to carry complex ideas forward.

Compare the disjointed and cohesive versions:

> *Disjointed:* The council closed the library. Reading levels in the district had been falling for a decade. A petition with 12,000 signatures was ignored. Budget pressures were cited.

Cohesive: The council closed the library, citing budget pressures. **The decision** ignored a petition with 12,000 signatures — and **it** came just as reading levels in the district, already falling for a decade, needed support most.

Style & Register

Do not sprinkle markers mechanically; the strongest cohesion is often *structural* (given-before-new, parallel patterns, summary nouns). A paragraph that needs *moreover* in every sentence usually needs reorganizing instead.

Exercises

Exercise 21.1 Choose the linker

Choose the correct option.

1. (Despite / Although) the delay, we arrived in time.
2. Sales fell sharply; (therefore / whereas), the factory cut production.
3. (Even if / Even though) you dislike opera, you'd enjoy this production — it's spectacular.
4. He is strict; (on the other hand / in addition), he is fair.
5. (However / No matter) you look at it, the plan is risky. (adjust if needed)

Exercise 21.2 Repair the cohesion

Fix the punctuation or structure of each item.

1. The results were promising, however the sample was tiny.
2. Although the price was high, but the quality was poor.
3. Despite of his injury, he played the full match.
4. The theory is elegant. The theory has little evidence. The theory remains popular. (combine cohesively)

Exercise 21.3 Concession patterns

Rewrite using the pattern in brackets.

1. She was very experienced, but she failed the simulation. (Experienced as. . .)
2. It doesn't matter how much it costs; we need it. (However. . .)
3. He apologized, but the damage was done. (Admittedly. . . — two sentences)