

**Tema 6.**

**LA COMUNICACIÓN ESCRITA. DITINTOS TIPOS DE TEXTOS ESCRITOS. ESTRUCTURA Y ELEMENTOS FORMALES. NORMAS QUE RIGEN EL TEXTO ESCRITO. RUTINAS Y FÓRMULAS.**

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**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION. TYPES OF WRITTEN TEXTS. STRUCTURE AND FORMAL ELEMENTS. RULES GOVERNING WRITTEN TEXTS. ROUTINES AND FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS.**

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## INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that the access to the written language is a powerful instrument for further learning and communication. Its two written linguistic skills are complementary since reading refers to the decoding and understanding of messages whereas writing involves the encoding and expression of messages in writing. They both fulfil a human social and communicative need and they are usually taught in an almost simultaneous way.

In the field of EFL, developing the learners' **communicative competence** includes the gradual acquisition of its discourse dimension. According to Canale and Swain (1980), the discourse sub-competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements and to how meaning is represented in relation to the entire discourse or text. It implies, therefore, the combination of grammatical forms and meanings to understand and produce different texts, and it includes the ability to cope with the cohesion and the coherence of a text according to its communicative function and context.

However, the way in which people handle written language, either receptively in reading, or productively in writing, is extremely complex and still needs further research to be fully understood. Many different disciplines have been attempting that goal, especially during the last three decades. At present, challenging insights for a better understanding on the form, meaning, skills and processes around the written text are being developed from a multidisciplinary perspective, which involves several different disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, literature, rhetoric, philosophy, philology, computational linguistics, or discourse analysis.

The first part of this topic will look at written texts as a means for interactive communication. Then, the needs and difficulties for a typology of written texts will be discussed, together with the characteristics of some of those traditionally called written genres. The following sections will analyze the structure, elements and rules of a written text. Formulaic expressions, routines and conventions will be the target of the last section of this paper.

## CHAPTER ONE: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

### 1. THE INTERACTIVE NATURE OF THE READING AND WRITING PROCESSES

**A text** can be defined as a complete and coherent unit of language in use, either oral or written. Halliday refers to text as follows: "A text is best thought of not as a grammatical unit at all, but as a unit of a different kind: a semantic unit. This unity that it has is a unity of meaning in context, a texture that expresses the fact that it relates as a whole to the

environment in which is placed” (Halliday & Hassan, 1989: 292)<sup>1</sup>. The nature of a text relies on being a **semantic unit** and it is, therefore, communicative; thus, reading or writing a text requires the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning. In addition, the written discourse can also be seen as a type of social practice which relates to the society and the culture it belongs to.

Reading involves an active process of constructing meaning among the different parts of a text, but also between the text and one’s own personal experience. As Lee and Van Patten put it, “the reader takes the text and gives it meaning”. On their part, writers want to express a message; they have an audience in mind, and attend to the specific context of their writing.

Therefore, a written text creates a relationship between the writer and the reader and the meaning of the text is conveyed through this interaction: not only the writer writes, but the reader also takes an active part in this interaction. This creates what is called the **interactive nature of the written text**. Reading means interpreting a text, constructing new meanings from the printed words; it is a cognitive task which requires of an active engagement on the reader’s part. The reader has to interpret the relationships between textual segments and to question the text as it unfolds. In addition, the writer will use linguistic and rhetorical devices to realize his/her purpose, to get the message across and keep the reader’s attention. Consequently, a written text operates on an interactional framework.

## 2. PURPOSES OF READING AND WRITING

Most scholars usually distinguish two broad **functions in writing**. On the one hand, it is the **intrapersonal function** by which the writer and the reader are the same person. For example, we may write the shopping list before going to the market, or we study by writing summaries on books. On the other hand, it is the **interpersonal function** by which we write to another person(s). The addressee may be absent but known, or, on the contrary, the audience may be unknown. Nonetheless, writing becomes a social instrument to express and transmit information. Within this interpersonal purpose in writing, three specific functions can be established:

- Communicative function: we transmit information, opinions, personal feelings, and etcetera; for example, we read and write postcards, letters, invitations or advertisements.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the terms discourse and text will be used interchangeably.

- Artistic function: people also use writing to create beauty, irony, humour, or entertainment through poems, jokes, or crosswords, for example.
- Certifying function: due to the permanent feature of the written language, texts have become the only accepted evidence of a fact or information in many cultures; for instance, laws, regulations, wills or contracts.

The purpose of the writing, the intended audience, and the topic together influence the choice of the text structure and, consequently its elements and devices.

Likewise, the way a text is read varies according to the purpose of the reading. We often read a novel or an article for pleasure or interest and we get a global knowledge from it: this is called **extensive reading**. On the other hand, there are times when the reader is interested in getting detailed information from the text. This kind of **intensive reading** is followed with instructions, letters or directions, for example. If the purpose of our reading is just to obtain the main idea of a text, we will use a **skimming** technique. Finally, **scanning** is the reading technique we use when the reading purpose is to find a particular piece of information from a text; it is what we do when we check timetables, or look at listings or job advertisements, for example.

### 3. COGNITIVE PROCESSES

At first sight, the cognitive processes involved in discourse –oral and written– must be really complex. The introduction to *The Handbook of Discourse Processes* (2003) reveals that “discourse processes involve comprehending, producing, reproducing, composing, recalling, summarizing and creating, accessing and using discourse representation”. Because it would exceed the purposes of this work to analyze them all, only a simplified overview will be addressed here.

Within cognitive and interactive models of reading, comprehension of a written text is “... constructed from knowledge sources interacting with each other on the input from the written page” (Lee & Van Patten, 2003: 227). This means that in order to understand a text, readers must be engaged in a process of relating the incoming information to the one already stored in memory. These connections will enter and become a part of their knowledge store.

The knowledge stored in memory relates to the schema theory. **Schema theory** describes the process by which readers combine their own background knowledge with the information in a text to comprehend that text. All readers carry different schemata (or background information) and these are also often culture-specific. Nonetheless, there must be

enough similarity, enough information common to everyone's schemata, to enable us to communicate. Schema theory is based on the belief that “every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well” (in Stott, 2001).

Thus, readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of combining the information in the text with the information they already bring to a text. Readers' mental stores, or 'schemata', are divided into two main types:

- 'Content schemata' or background knowledge of the world: This includes, as it was written above, experiences, beliefs, cultural conventions and information. Some of this information can be somehow organized in terms of scripts –mental representations of various human activities-, and frames– prototypical patterns or representation of concepts with their corresponding obligatory and optional features.
- 'Formal schemata' or background knowledge of rhetorical structure, which includes aspects related to the purpose and topic of the text. The identification and understanding of the context of the written discourse is essential to comprehend the message. Likewise, the reader also makes use of his/her knowledge of the language to understand a text: knowledge of the formal and functional system of the language.

It follows, therefore, that the **reading process** involves an initial identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all of which activate schemata and allow readers to interpret the text. Within a cognitive model of discourse processing, van Dijk signals the problems a reader copes when understanding a text. He limits to the *comprehension* side of communication, ignoring the production, because we still know little about the precise properties of production. However, it is assumed that many of the basic processes which play a role in comprehension also operate in production. When facing a text, first, there must be a comprehension of sequences in short-term memory. Then, the discourse is represented as episodic information in long-term memory. Finally, the text information needs to be retrieved and reproduced.

The reading activity involves a large number of cognitive processes together with motor skills and the use of strategies to cope with the written text. Among the different **strategies** used in the process of reading a piece of writing, some of them are pointed below:

- Memory strategies since we retain names and terms, for example, to be recalled when they appear later on in the text.

- Determining the main ideas and the specific details.
- Differentiating between relevant and non relevant information.
- Inferring from the text context and co-text.
- Predicting and hypothesizing about content, lexis, or meanings.
- Appreciating the writer's intentions.

Likewise, **writers engage into several cognitive processes and use strategies of different types to fulfil their purpose for writing.** Writers proceed on the assumption that the intended reader shares schemata and knowledge to establish a common ground in which the text is developed. Obviously, writers need of their linguistic knowledge referring to lexis, syntactic and morphological rules, or expressive resources, for example, in order to write accurately, and they will attend to the different factors which intervene in any communicative act (audience, participants, setting, purpose, and etcetera) to enhance appropriateness. Concerning the processes and strategies, the following have been reported:

- **Planning:** This refers to a graphic or mental outline of the text in order to select and identify objectives. It includes analyzing the receivers of the message to take decisions about the genre, style, tenor and content of the writing. It is also about generating and organizing ideas and recalling vocabulary and formulas. Mental elaboration, identification and selection are the main strategies used at this stage of the writing process.
- **Structuring and drafting:** It is the process of transforming the ideas to real linguistic forms by elaborating the sentences, selecting the lexis, and defining the text elements. It also includes connecting the different sentences, punctuating the text, ordering the different ideas or establishing the various links among the parts of the written discourse. It is also the stage of memory and organization strategies, using the dictionary, paraphrasing, or looking for synonyms, which are some of the strategies used to cope with the difficulties in writing.
- **Revising or editing:** The text is evaluated and compared to the original purpose, and corrected in those aspects that do not suit the writer's intentions.

Similarly to speech, the encoding and decoding of a written message involve cognitive processes which are formed by knowledge, skills and strategies of a complex nature which interact and work into a simultaneous process. EFL teachers should better look at writing as a process, rather than a product, in order to scaffold the activities and allow learners be aware of the processes and strategies used in creating a text.

## **CHAPTER TWO: TYPES OF WRITTEN TEXTS**

### **1. TYPOLOGIES OF TEXTS**

There are many kinds of texts one usually comes across: novels, short stories, tales or other literary texts and passages; plays; poems, limericks and nursery rhymes; letters, postcards, telegrams, and notes; newspapers and magazines; specialized articles, reports, reviews, business letters, summaries, accounts and pamphlets; handbooks, essays, textbooks and guidebooks; recipes; advertisements, travel brochures, and catalogues; puzzles, problems and rules for games; instructions, directions, graffiti, menus, price lists and tickets; comic strips, cartoons, legends, statistics, diagrams, telephone directories, and so on so forth.

In addition, some texts are mainly intended to be read “alone” like personal letters or novels; others are designed to be read aloud to others (the news bulletin on the radio, or a lecture to a group of students); and still others will be read by the own writer (memos and notes, for example). As we can see from the above mentioned examples, there are many types of written texts we can either read or write. It is for that reason that different disciplines, with different criteria and intentions and at different times, have engaged themselves in the study and classification of text into types. It is agreed that a discussion of genres is a discussion of classificatory activity.

According to Bhatia (2004), genre analysis at present has been the result of systemic development of discourse analysis. The author looks at genre analysis as a four space model:

- Language as text.
- Language as genre.
- Language as professional practice.
- Language as social practice.

Nowadays, most corpus-based studies rely on the notion of genre or the related concepts register, text type, domain, style, sublanguage, textual patterning, and so forth in an implicit or explicit way. There is much confusion surrounding these terms and their usage, as D. Lee remarks, and yet generic categorization has become of the greatest importance, especially for computational linguistics which attempts to analyze, describe and research on different types of texts in the field of linguistic corpuses, natural language processing and engineering.



Literature and rhetoric, for example, use the term “genre” and base their appreciations in formal criteria and context. Yet some linguistic trends are more interested in the internal structure of texts and texts as products of language; others take the communicative situation in which texts are produced as their starting point and base their analyses on the process of production.

Nonetheless, **the term *genre*** may be understood as a category assigned on the basis of external criteria like purpose or topic, rather than on linguistic, internal or form criteria. Genre is commonly regarded as a conventional and cultural recognised grouping of texts (Biber). Following D. Lee, it seems that the term “*genre* is used when we view the text as a member of a category: a culturally recognised artefact, a grouping of texts according to some conventionally recognised criteria, a grouping according to purposive goals, culturally defined. Genres are categories established by consensus within a culture... *Genres* include both literary and non-literary *text varieties*, for example, short stories, novels, sonnets, informational reports, proposals, and technical manual” (D. Lee, 2001).

Having discussed shortly about the confusion around the use of the terms text-types and genre, the objective of this paragraph will turn to some of the **cognitive aspects related to genres**. It may be agreed that the different genres are schema-like global structures –called superstructures by van Dijk, for example. These superstructures define the **global form** of the text. This global form is defined in terms of schematic categories, such as narrative structures of a story, or argumentation structures in a lecture. Thus, structures organise the text and have a global nature. Therefore, in order to know that a text is a story, for example, the reader will try to map the information into a superstructure schema of a narrative. It is worth signalling here again that these superstructures –genres– are culturally defined, and form a part of our knowledge of the world. Consequently, learners exposed to new or different genres in the foreign language would need, not only to identify the text genre or type, but also to appreciate the differences and similarities with those in their L1.

## 2. GENRE AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

Looking at the text as communication, it is revealed that the purpose of the writing, the intended audience, and the topic together influence the choice of genre. Thus, any genre is also a social process that has a purpose and a structure and the different genres are the product of a culture.

Texts are structured in different ways to achieve their purposes. The purpose of the writing influences the overall structure of texts. For example, if the goal of the writer is to explain how to cook a Christmas pudding, the writing will be structured into a kind of instructive text –expository genre. The writers’ choices about the way they organise the text and

develop the topic influence how the message is read by the reader, and consequently, the reader would predict and anticipate the different structures in the texts, depending on the writers' intentions.

The writer will also choose those particular lexis and grammatical structures that best fulfil his/her communicative intention attending to the situation and specific writing context in which the text is to be used; mainly the intended reader. Thus, if the purpose determines the genre and organization of the text, the writer's choices relating to language patterns and vocabulary will show the style and register.

As we examined above, the existence of several different approaches to the study of text types hinders the possibility of a single classification of universal character. Nevertheless, as it is a most operative device in teaching, a limited classification of texts into several types can be provided, bearing in mind that the recognition of a text as belonging to a larger form of discourse is also a component of texture, "the property of being a text". The classification of texts we are going to provide is based on the writer's communicative intention or purpose.

## 2.1. ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS

The writer's **purpose** is to take a position on some issue and justify it; an argumentation is often aimed at conviction. In order to get this main goal, the writer will support the ideas in a logical sequence, and he/she will use all the necessary strategies to change or modify the reader's beliefs on a topic.

Argumentative texts generally deal with problems and controversial ideas. Reasons for or against some topic are put forward. The ultimate aim is always to win the reader round to the author's side. But the basis of any argumentative text form has to be provided by expository passages, by the explanation of facts, concepts, developments or processes.

There are several varieties or **types** of argumentative texts, mainly: those which plead a case, those which are aimed to sell goods and services, and those that put forward an argument. An example of the first type would be a letter to the local council about current issues like the lack of pre-school facilities in the area. The second type is clearly related to advertisement and marketing, whereas an example of the third type could be a newspaper article against the closing of nuclear power stations.

Most typical argumentations take the following **structure**:

- A statement of position at the beginning of the text. It may be the writer's point of view, or the opposite to argue by contrast.
- A logical sequence of points providing enough evidence, which is trustworthy, verifiable or by appealing to authority. Depending on the topic, authors sometimes use cause and effect arguments to support their ideas.
- A summing up or stating again the position at the end.

There are two basic types of reasoning processes followed in this type of texts: deduction and induction. Deduction begins with a general principle or premise and draws a specific conclusion from it. Induction supports a general conclusion by examining specific facts or cases.

If we look at the internal characteristics of the argumentative texts, that is, to their **language features**, it is found that most argumentations are written in the timeless simple present tense, and the passive voice is used to help structure the text. It is not uncommon to find rhetorical questions and some emotive language, which is intended to persuade and appeal to the reader's feelings. Verbs which express opinion and strong effective adjectives are also used, in addition to the deliberate repetition of words, phrases and concepts. Connectors such as *by contrast, however, yet, still, in any case, so*, and etcetera are linguistic signals of a contrastive text structure.

## 2.2. DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS

Description is used in all forms of writing to create a vivid impression of a person, place, object or event. Descriptive texts give the reader a mental image of an object, scene, person, or emotional situation that the writer wants to inform about. They do not usually play a dominant role in a text, but a secondary one. Some dictionary definitions, the setting in a story, clues in crosswords and etcetera are descriptive texts. Since a descriptive text has a photographic quality, it is usually the main instrument of scientists, so most descriptive texts appear in reference books and manuals.

Therefore, the main **purpose** of a description is to involve the readers enough so that they can actually visualize the things being described. A description is used by the writer to develop an aspect of the writing itself, for example to create a particular mood, atmosphere, or describe a place. The writer wants the reader to picture what he/she is describing. Descriptive texts engage the reader's attention, create characters, set a mood or an atmosphere and bring writing to life.

There are two main **types** of description: subjective and objective. The essential characteristic that distinguishes the **objective description** is a visual photographic quality. It is the main instrument of the objective observer, who uses concrete and specific words and does not indulge in subtle nuances. This kind of technical description tends to be neutral, exact and impersonal, and because of that, space is a premium –abbreviations and elliptical syntax is very common.

On the other hand, **subjective descriptions** reflect the author's reactions, and give expressions to the writer's feelings or moods. These impressionistic descriptions make wide use of figurative language and connotation of words. The author of a descriptive essay must carefully select details to support the dominant impression. The dominant impression guides the author's selection of detail and is made clear to the reader in the thesis sentence. In other words, the author has the license to omit details which are incongruent with the dominant impression unless the dominant impression is one which points out the discrepancies.

Regarding the **structure** of descriptive texts, successful descriptions quite often are introduced by means of a key word or title. Then, the writer will offer information in what is called the extension. The description will be structured in several paragraphs dealing with the object, person or place being described.

Some of the internal devices or **language features** appreciated in a descriptive text are the following:

- It relies on precisely chosen vocabulary with carefully chosen adjectives and adverbs.
- It is focused and concentrates only on the aspects that add something to the main purpose of the description.
- There is a precise use of adjectives, similes, metaphors to create images/pictures in the mind sensory description - what is heard, seen, smelt, felt, tasted.
- The focus on key details favours the use of powerful verbs and precise nouns. When the description relies on emotion to convey its point, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives convey more to the reader than nouns do.

### 2.3. EXPOSITORY TEXTS

The **purpose** of an expository text is to explain, clarify or inform something to the reader. These expositions explain objects and ideas in their interrelations. There are a wide **variety** of written texts which fall into the category of expository: definitions, horoscopes, weather forecasts, travel guides, instructions, essays, scientific treatises, textbooks, newspaper articles, lectures, and so forth. In fact, some scholars include the argumentative texts above as

a type of exposition. Here they are not classified as belonging to the same group because they appear to have a different communicative purpose: convincing for the argumentation, and explaining in the expository text. Thus, the aim of an expository text is to clarify and provide information, and, therefore, the writer uses resources to widen the reader's knowledge of a topic.

Despite the variety of expository texts, they share a number of characteristics in their basic global textual structure. The **structure** of an expository text is often divided into three parts:

- The introduction is commonly formed by a paragraph which presents the topic to be developed.
- Then is the development of the topic into several paragraphs. Each of these paragraphs functions as a semantic unit which, on the one hand, recovers information presented in the previous one –that is, works as theme–, and on the other hand, offers new information –and works as rheme.
- The third part is the conclusion, which may be a summary of the information, or a conclusion derived from the information provided.

The information provided by expository texts is selected accordingly to the point of view from which the subject is approached, and the knowledge the reader may have about the topic. This shared knowledge plays an important role in the thematic progression of the text –how the information will be provided in the text–, and in the supra-linguistic elements (central and secondary information items, or use of titles, subtitles, and typographical features, for example).

The most interesting **language features** found in expository texts are those related to connectors in order to sequence, add, or relate the information in the text. There are also found clear definitions of terms, and verbs for the identification and explanation of objects and ideas: *to refer to, be defined, to consist of, to contain*, and etcetera.

As it was mentioned above, **procedural texts** are a variety of expository texts. Their specific purpose is to explain the reader how to do or make something. They may tell how something works (instruction/operation manuals); how to do a particular activity (recipes, rules for games...); or they are texts which deal with human behaviour (how to succeed, what to do in case of earthquake...). Each type of procedural text has a format. For example, recipes usually have the information presented in at least two basic groups: ingredients and method. Scientific experiments usually include the purpose of the experiment, equipment, procedure, observations and conclusion.

The information is presented in a logical sequence of actions which is broken up into small steps. These texts are usually written in the present tense, or in the imperative. The reader is often referred as collective (you, one). There is a great deal of sequence connectors; and detailed information on how, where and when.

## 2.4. NARRATIVE TEXTS

A narrative is a rehearsal of an event which might have been real or imaginary. It is the telling of a story, truth or fiction. Narratives are a type of “action discourse”, according to van Dijk., who also explains that the writer assumes that the reader does not know the events. In narrations, more than one action takes place, and the sequence of events is causally or rationally connected. As narration is intimately connected with time, the elements in this sort of texts cohere by means of temporal conjunctions. Some scholars consider narratives as a “mixed genre” in which sequences of report, speech, description, and comment can be analyzed; nonetheless, we will consider here narrative texts as a genre which attend to a specific communicative purpose, show a global format or structure, and answer to a culturally-shared schema.

The basic **purpose** of narratives is to entertain, to gain and hold a reader’s interest. However, narratives can also be written to teach or inform, to change attitudes or social opinions.

There are many **types** of narratives. They can be imaginary, factual or a combination of both. They may include fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, horror stories, adventure stories, fables, myths and legends, historical narratives, ballads, anecdotes, personal experience...

The prototypical schemata, or **structure**, for traditional narratives consist of three main parts:

- Orientation or introduction: the characters, setting and time of the story are established – it usually answers who? when? where?
- Complication or problem: The complication usually involves the main character(s), often mirroring the complications in real life. This complication comes from an action or event which is unexpected, surprising or dangerous for the character(s).
- Resolution: There needs to be a resolution of the complication. Resolution is formed by those actions to prevent the necessary unwanted consequences of the complicating

event, which may lead to failure or success. Sometimes there is a number of complications that have to be resolved. These add and sustain interest and suspense for the reader. Van Dijk adds a fourth element within this global structure called evaluation. It is about the narrator giving his/her attitude about the events, a “moral” in which the consequences or conclusions are drawn for present and future actions of the audience (readers).

Characters in narratives show defined personalities and identities, and, in addition, dialogues and descriptions form part of the narrative, which may change the story-time, create images in the reader’s minds and enhance the story.

Due to the complexity and variety of narratives, only some of the most relevant **language features** will be summarized in the following lines:

- Action verbs provide interest to the writing and so do specific nouns (an *oak* instead of a *tree*).
- Narratives are commonly written in the first person (I, we) or in the third person (omniscient narrator).
- The past tense is preferred, but the story may change to the present, or vice versa.
- There is a large amount of connectives with different functions: linking words to signal time (then, next day...), to move the setting (meanwhile...), and to surprise or create suspense (suddenly...).
- Since description plays a key role in narration, there is a careful use of adjectives and adverbs, in addition to the use of the senses.
- Narrators use a wide range of literary figures to attract the reader’s attention and express their messages: similes, metaphors, onomatopoeias, personifications, rhetorical questions, and so forth.
- Sentences are constructed with a variety of beginnings: participles, adverbial phrases, adjectives and etcetera.
- Effective narrations always show a personal voice, that is, the writer reaches and touches the reader somehow; a connection is made between them.

## CHAPTER THREE: STRUCTURE AND FORMAL ELEMENTS OF WRITTEN TEXTS

The most basic organizational principle of text is that it is **linear** and it unfolds in a linear way. This linearity gives texts a prospective/retrospective duality: besides looking forward, a reader also looks back to what has been given and to what he/she already knows about the text. In addition to this linearity, a text, either oral or written, is formed by the context, its rhetorical structure, and its cohesion, which together give form and meaning to a piece of writing. In the following lines these elements will be briefly analyzed.

### 1. CONTEXT

No text is created in a vacuum; on the contrary, any text is part of a context. The context involves participants, the communication setting and goal, the pragmatic ground rules, the subject matter knowledge, and most of other components that situate the text event. Following Bloor, at the time of analyzing the context of a text, three main elements can be considered: co-text, context of situation, and context of culture.

**Co-text** constitutes the micro-level. It refers to the surrounding text of a stretch of language, a few words or a whole paragraph. The meaning of a chunk of language is in part dependent on the words and paragraphs around it.

The **context of situation** is made up of all the phenomena which affect the discourse: topic, participants, and etcetera. In the case of a written text, the situation is more complex as the writer often writes for an imagined reader to whom s/he attributes certain knowledge and certain ignorance, but the text is processed only by real readers who may differ considerably from the imagined and may have more or less difficulty understanding the text.

The **context of culture** refers to the complex of various social phenomena involving historical and geographical settings, but also more general aspects like the reader's and writer's education or political orientation, for example. Writers automatically assume that their readers bring a great deal of prior knowledge with them to the text. If a writer over-estimates the background knowledge of the reader, there will be some degree of break-down in communication; if the writer under-estimates, the text will be tedious for the reader. Much of the credit for the emphasis on the role of context in language can be attributed to two significant figures in the history of linguistics: Firth and Malinowski.

Both the context of the situation and of culture leads us back to the concepts of knowledge of the world and schemata shown above in this paper. It follows, then,



that, for a text to fulfil its communicative goal, there must be established a **shared knowledge** between reader and writer on the linguistic, situational and cultural context.

## 2. TEXTURE

**Texture** is a term introduced by M. Halliday which refers to “the property of being a text” (Halliday & Hassan, 1989: 3). It is about the elements which tie together, structure and give meaning to texts. Texture mainly includes:

- Cohesion.
- The internal structure of the sentences –the organization of the sentence and its parts.
- The macrostructure of the text that establishes it as a text of a particular kind (genre and text-type)<sup>2</sup>.

All these elements, together with the context, impose meaning and structure to individual sentences that go beyond the meaning of sentences in isolation:

“What creates text is the **textual**, or text-forming, component of the linguistic system. Of which cohesion is one part. The textual component as a whole is the set of resources in a language, whose semantic function is that of expressing relationship to the environment” (Halliday & Hassan, 1989: 299).

The linearity of the written text and its cohesion appear to be the most basic organizational principle of a text. The notion of “**cohesion**” refers to the semantic relations within the elements of a text. In a wider view, cohesion embraces linguistic devices and the assumptions or inferences that both the writer and the reader make. These presuppositions and implications connected to world knowledge are one of the key ways in which coherence is achieved<sup>3</sup>. Halliday, who first introduced the concept of cohesion in his studies of functional grammar, defines it as follows:

“The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text”...“Cohesion occurs where the **interpretation** of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another” (Halliday & Hassan, 1989: 4).

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<sup>2</sup> The focus of this section will be drawn on cohesive devices since the macrostructure of texts has already been discussed, and the internal structure of the sentence is not the objective of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> At present, most scholars subsume the term coherence under the one cohesion.

The **cohesive devices** that the language system offers have been classified into three main types: semantic, lexical and grammatical. Cohesive grammatical resources involve closed systems –pronouns or demonstratives, for example–, and are related to form. The lexical devices involve an open-ended choice on the writer’s part, such as the selection of a synonym, and they are related to reference in Halliday’s terms. There is a third type of cohesive devices of a semantic relation and which is in the border-line of the grammar and the lexical ones: conjunctions.

a) **Grammatical cohesion:** Reference, substitution and ellipsis are cohesive devices which establish relationships related to form.

– **Ellipsis** is the omission of words, groups, and clauses with three classifications: nominal, verbal, and clausal. “*The kid stood up, (he) smiled, and (he) left the room*”.

– **Substitution** refers to the replacement of one item by another: “*She liked the blue house, but her husband preferred the white one*”. Similarly to ellipsis, the criterion to name the different types of substitution relates to the grammatical function: nominal, verbal, and clausal.

– **Reference** relates to those items which can not be interpreted semantically in their own right but by referring to an element already mentioned in the text (endophoric), or by reference to the context of situation (exophoric). In English there are three types of reference: personal, demonstrative, and comparative.

Personal reference includes personal pronouns and possessives, which relate to the grammatical category of “person”. Words like *me, she, our* or *you* establish a personal reference.

Demonstrative reference is achieved by means of location, and proximity. Demonstratives (*these...*), some adverbs (*now, here, there, then...*), and the definite article (*the*) form part of this type of reference: “I knew those were not my best words, but I couldn’t say anything else then”.

Comparative reference relates by means of identity or similarity with adjectives or adverbs: *similarly, more... than*, and etcetera.

b) **Conjunctions** represent semantic links between the elements that form the text; they allow the parts of a text to be connected to one another in meaning. This type of semantic cohesion is achieved by the use of different grammatical categories which include conjunctions themselves (*and, so, or*), some adverbs (*accordingly*), the so-called linkers (*moreover*), and prepositional phrases (*on the contrary, instead of that, because of that*). According to Halliday, conjunctive elements are cohesive but virtue of their specific meanings and they presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse, they can not stand alone, isolated.

Conjunctive cohesion is subdivided into four main categories:

- Additive: there is the addition or further information: *and, and...not, or, besides that, likewise, for instance...*
- Adversative: a new piece of information conflicts or contrasts with what has been said previously, or negates it in some way: *though, but, nevertheless, in fact, rather, at least, in any case...*
- Causal: conjunction shows relation of cause, consequence, result and purpose between the sentences: *because, consequently, for this reason, in consequence, for this purpose...*
- Temporal: sequencing in time is shown: *next, after that, at the same time, at once, later, next day, some minutes later, meanwhile, until then, finally, eventually, at first... in the end, in short...*

c) **Lexical cohesion** is achieved by the selection of vocabulary, by choosing an item based on the previous choices and establishes relations related to reference. Lexical cohesion, therefore, includes repetitions, synonyms, use of a superordinate, and collocations, for example.

In short, these rhetorical devices allow a text to be organized and coherently developed so that the writing fulfils the author's communicative purpose; and they establish three types of relationships among the discourse elements: grammatical, semantic, and lexical. Any of these resources realize the "textual meta-function", which is especially concerned with the flow of information in a text by analyzing clauses as messages. The understanding and use of cohesive devices is vital for the development of the EFL learners' communicative competence -in oral and written language.

### 3. GRAPHOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Due to the intrinsic features of the written language, graphology resources are of the greatest importance. These include orthography, punctuation, paragraphing, and text layout or format (headings, footnotes, indexes, use of bold letters, and etcetera). They perform the functions that voice quality, intonation, or pauses realize in oral speech.

It may be interesting to notice that **spelling** also forms part of the graphic resources of the language. For example, it is by the writer's deliberate misspelling that the reader may learn about the social status or geographical origin of a character in a novel. Likewise, abnormal spelling is widely used in the world of marketing to catch the reader's attention, or to avoid confusion between a common phrase and a brand name.

The Encyclopedia of the English Language signals the critical role that **punctuation** plays in writing:

- Grammatical: Its main purpose is to enable stretches of written language to be read coherently, by displaying their grammatical structure by the use of sentence-ending periods, clause-dividing commas, and paragraphs. Among the punctuation marks which separate grammatical structures are periods, semi-colons, colons, commas, round brackets, dashes, inverted commas, hyphens, or spaces.
- Prosody: Punctuation gives readers clues about prosody elements through features as question marks, exclamation marks, and brackets, for example. They represent the intonation and emphasis of the spoken discourse.
- Semantics: Punctuation is also used to highlight semantic units or contrasts present in the text but which are not directly related to the grammatical structure, for example by using colons or semi-colons. In addition, question and exclamation marks also answer to a semantic intention. On the other hand, scare quotes are sometimes used to convey a different meaning to the actual word: "... *and that was his birthday "dinner": an overripe apple*". And also have a semantic function the use of capital letters to draw attention to a very important word, for example. There are also some symbols which express a meaning in their own right such as: @, &, \$.

**Other graphic resources** like titles, headings or indexes, for example, are mainly used to help writer and reader visualize the organization of the flow of information. On the other hand, a footnote is usually aimed to clarify and/or extend the writer's message; and it may cover a presupposed lack of reader's background knowledge in the case of translator's notes.

It goes without saying, therefore, that these graphic devices play a **communicative role**, and their choice responds to the sense of a text. EFL learners need to understand and use these devices in order to interpret and produce written texts in a correct and appropriate way.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RULES GOVERNING WRITTEN TEXTS**

As it can be inferred from this paper up to here, the rules that govern written texts are directly affected by their purpose (genre) and their situation. The genre determines the structure of the text, whereas the style and register determine the language patterns and vocabulary used within the text. Once again, the terms register and *style* have been used in different ways by scholars and they have become confusing. Following D. Lee, **style** would refer to the individual's use of the language, whereas **register** would characterize the appropriateness of a text to the specific communicative situation (formal/ informal), or specific topic (religious, scientific, legal...).

Being texts acts of communication through the written language, all the communication elements will be interconnected and affected by each other: the writing situation, the purpose of the writing, the likely audience (one way/ interactive/ remote), the writer's own goals, the topic, the writer's knowledge of the issue... Each and all these elements will determine the form and meaning of a text. If we had to evaluate the characteristics of a written text, the following items would have to be analyzed according to the writing context:

- Correction.
- Cohesion and coherence.
- Appropriateness.
- Style.
- Presentation and layout.

In short, the properties of a written discourse will be determined by:

- The context of use: culture, historical period, social situation, intended reader, and etcetera.

- The grammatical structure: register, syntax, semantic connections, coherence relations, themes, and so forth.
- Other discourse structures like the superstructures (genre), and stylistic resources.
- The interactional properties.
- The presentation structures.

Once we have analyzed, though briefly, the main resources of the written language, the structure, rules and elements that constitute a text, and the different classification of the written discourse, this chapter will mainly focus on the characteristics of the written language.

## 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Characterising the written language means to attend to mode –channel, medium, code, or means for some scholars. Oral and written modes most often function as independent methods of communication.

The characteristics of the oral and the written language are mainly determined by the obvious distinction in **physical form**: oral speech uses the “phonic substance” whereas writing uses the “graphic substance”.

According to Chafe (1985), writing is a slow, deliberate, editable process, whereas speaking is done on the fly. This leads to the integrated quality of the written language, as opposed to the fragmentary quality of the spoken discourse. In addition, writing is a lonely activity but speaking typically takes place in an environment of social interaction; this causes written language to have a detached quality - **integration versus involvement**.

Written language is **secondary** to spoken language historically. It is not only that it appeared later in the time, but also that literacy is not universal. In fact, not all the languages have a written representation; secondly, not all the speakers of a language may have access to the written code as they may be illiterate; and, thirdly, using correctly all the different registers and genres of the written language implies an extremely complete education, which is restricted to a few persons (for example, legal documents or novels). In addition, most humans spend more time speaking than writing. Moreover, the written language was founded on the resources of the spoken system, although it has developed certain expanded possibilities.

In comparison to the oral language, writing is produced very **slowly** due to two reasons. First, there is not choice because of the mechanical constraints of the writing itself. Secondly, writing is not constrained by temporal limits or informational capacity; we may want to

be slower because we can have time to deliberate organization and selection of the linguistic resources.

Writing is **static, permanent and space-bound**. The commonest writing situation is that of a writer distant from the reader, who is often unknown. Therefore, writers must anticipate, on the one hand, the effects of time-lag between production and reception of the message; and on the other, the problems posed by the interpretation of the writing by different readers and settings. As Byrne points out, "Although we may try to anticipate reactions and build them into the text, we have to sustain the whole process of communication on our own to try to stay in contact with our reader **through words alone**" (Byrne, 1979: 2). Since written language can be permanent, then it is more conservative to change rapidly. This can be shown in vocabulary and syntax. For example, data analysis shows that spoken language prefers words like *stuff*, *scary*, or *to show*, whereas written language chooses *material*, *frightening* and *display*, respectively.

Since the process of writing is not usually constrained by time, it promotes the development of **careful** organization and compact expression, with complex sentence structure. In addition, the writer can re-read and check the piece of writing to ensure the linguistic options and the message itself. Therefore, errors and inadequacies can be eliminated because writing generally hides its process of creation and shows us the polished **product**. In addition, writers have more time to find the right word and they seldom need to hedge their choices (so circling expressions such as *a sort*, or *kind of* are not so common in the written language). This turns into **precision**.

The lack of visual contact with the reader means that there is not immediate feedback: **graphological and linguistic resources** will, somehow, fulfil the functions of the paralinguistic elements. All this is revealed in written texts being **explicit** with avoidance of deictic expressions, for example, which are likely to be ambiguous.

As Chafe writes, it is interesting to notice that a reader can scan a larger chunk of language than a listener at the same time - eleven words per written idea-unit, and about seven for spoken. The consequence is that written language tends to be significantly longer and more complex; it has **longer idea-units** and places them in various relations of dependence.

As it was mentioned above, some constructions are characteristic of the written language. Many of those are **devices** to expand the size and complexity of idea-units, among which the following may be considered:

- Syntax is usually well structured, with complete sentences and a wide range and amount of subordination.
- The use of: nominalizations, complement clauses, restrictive relative clauses, adverbial and participle clauses, or indirect questions, are devices to enlarge and elaborate complex idea-units.
- An extensive set of markers are used to connect and mark the relationships between clauses (that, when, while, besides, and so forth); written language also shows a wide use of rhetorical organisers for large stretches of discourse (firstly, in conclusion, more important than, and etcetera).
- In written language there appear heavily premodified noun phrases; and the packaging of information related to a particular referent can be very concentrated: “A man who turned into a human torch ten days ago after snoozing in his locked car while smoking his pipe has died in hospital” (Evening News (Edinburgh), 22 April 1982; in Brown & Yule, 1983: 16)<sup>4</sup>.
- The use of passive structures which allow non-attribution of agency occurs in the written language to a significant extent compared to the spoken language.

An indirect characteristic of the written language is its suitability to the recording of facts - the doctor noting down a patient's symptoms, for example-, and to tasks of memory and learning. D. Crystal (2003) also mentions that written records are easier to keep and scan; tables demonstrate relationships between things; and text can be read at speed which suit a person's ability to learn.

Finally, we will comment about the **visual** nature of the written language. There are written text varieties which have to be assimilated visually and cannot be read aloud efficiently but interpreted differently into the spoken language such as timetables, graphs, or complex formulae. In addition, writing owns some unique features like pages, lines, capitalization, or spatial organization, for example.

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<sup>4</sup> Not underlined in the original work.



## CHAPTER FIVE: ROUTINES AND FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS

As it was explained in other chapters of this exposition and in the topic 7 about oral communication, language users organize what they have to communicate in typical patterns. These patterns correspond more or less to typical kinds of message, and so deal with recurring cognitive problems. They have been called “**routines**” (for example by Widdowson, 1983): “conventional ways of presenting information”; and include stories, descriptions, or instructions, and are present both in the oral and the written language. Because they are **conventional**, routines are **predictable** and help ensure clarity.

Information routines may be identified as expository or evaluative. **Expository routines** involve factual information hinging on questions of sequencing or identity of the subjects. They would correspond to narrations, descriptions, and procedural texts. On their part, the **evaluative routines** are based on expository routines. They involve the drawing of conclusions, usually requiring the expression of reasoning, in addition to explanations, predictions, justification, preferences and decisions. They could be found in argumentative texts, for example. The recognition of information routines is key to the understanding and production of texts.

At the same time, these information routines are closely related to the three commonest patterns of: problem –solution; claim –counterclaim; and, general– specific. They form the structure of the different genres and text varieties, as it was discussed in chapter II of this topic.

The first pattern, **problem – solution** is identified as expository and it is predictable in stories, anecdotes, or operation manuals, for example; but also in academic writing with the variation of *problem – process – solution*. Similarly, the scientific discourse follows the specific *structure introduction – problem – solution – conclusion*, according to van Dijk. The problem-solution pattern consists of four basic elements: situation, problem, response or solution, and evaluation of the response or solution. The structure is clearly signalled by the orthographic unit of the paragraph, among other devices.

The pattern **claim – counterclaim** is one of a series of claims and contrasting counterclaims, mainly of an evaluative type, which may follow a complain sheet, a political answer in the Parliament, or a letter to the Editor, for example.

Finally, the pattern **general – specific** is one in which a generalization is followed by more specific statements, and perhaps might end with a broader generalization. It combines the expository and evaluative routine types. It could be a report of an experiment, or the interpretation of a survey, for instance.

Nevertheless, it seems important to remind that information routines, expository and evaluative, are likely to be combined in the majority of texts. On the other hand, studies have shown that to demonstrate textual patterns, and to signal vocabulary and cohesive devices related to each pattern –mainly connectives and rhetorical organisers– improve EFL writings, and make students become better readers. In addition, this helps learners be aware and develop their learning to learn key competence.

However, there are other general conventions we find in written texts which should also be addressed in the teaching of a foreign language. One of them is the use of **formulaic expressions**. These are idiomatic expressions or phrases likely to be found in the different text varieties; they constitute Halliday’s “routinized discourse”, and they promote fluency and appropriateness:

	Starters	Endings
– For tales, anecdotes, recounts, and stories	– “Once upon a time...” – “One day...”	– “... and they lived happily ever after” – “... and that was it”.
– In informal letters, postcards, invitations and so forth	– “Dear ...”	– “Best wishes”; “Love”; “please, answer back”; ...
– In formal and commercial correspondence	– “To whom it may concern,” – Dear Sir/Madam” – “Dear Mr X/ Miss Y,” – “I am writing to apply/ enquire...”	– “(Yours) sincerely” – “(Yours) faithfully”...

**Writing conventions** are also essential features of effective writing. Conventions make writing easier to read by putting it in a form that the reader expects and is comfortable with. Generally speaking, it could be said that writing conventions include three broad aspects: mechanics, sentence formation, and usage. **Mechanics** includes conventions about spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphs; these orthographic devices inherent to the written language are, obviously, of the greatest importance.

At secondary education, students should have control of conventions such as spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing in their L1, and they should start applying specific conventions to the English language too. For example, teachers of English can show conventions and formulaic expressions for friendly letters and business letters, capitalizing lines in songs and poetry, headings and subheadings in informational reports, conventions for quotations, and etcetera... This includes also language-specific conventions related to the **presentation of texts and formats** like informal/formal letters: the date, the sender’s and receiver’s name and address; capitalization of months, and so forth.

**Conventions about usage** include word order, verb tense, pronoun reference and subject-verb agreement. In secondary school, pupils can start to extend their knowledge to use a more varied language which better adjusts to the writing situation by using different registers –mainly formal and informal– in several text types (invitations, letters, or complaints, for example); and also by appreciating the differences and appropriateness of oral and written language.

**Sentence formation** refers to the structure of sentences, the way that phrases and clauses are used to form simple and complex sentences. By secondary school, students are ready to experiment with using varied sentence lengths to achieve specific effects on an audience. They are also ready to use (and punctuate) dependent and independent clauses by combining simple sentences into more complex ones. Teachers can use parallel writing and reading to make students produce more emphatic texts.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that new conventions have arisen with the arrival and development of on-line discourse. Some scholars name “**electronic discourse**” to this new way of interacting in writing, which includes electronic mail and also on-line courses.

Electronic discourse has its own peculiarities. On the one hand, it includes features of the oral language like markers of personal involvement, repetitions, or direct address. On the other hand, it shows characteristics of the written language, such as the absence of fillers. In addition, although the writer can plan and organize the written message, most often this on-line discourse shows unconventional punctuation, misspelling and lack of revision. We could be dealing with a type of “written talk”.

On-line interaction in academic settings is also changing the perspective of both teachers and students. Instructors have had to assess the content of the students’ essays and reports and also their rhetorical devices (vocabulary precision for example). The spread of on-line courses will mean for educators to consider how to answer to unconventional language use and structuring of ideas in electronic discourse for academic purposes.

On the other hand, electronic discourse has also its **own graphic features**. Besides paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization or italics, chatters and e-mail writers have created their own graphic resources and conventions. For example, the use of emoticons to signal humour, irony or intimacy has been extended; or, it has been agreed that words and sentences into capital letters show anger, whereas underlying means emphasis.

As for readers themselves, it is also important for students at secondary education to learn about new text varieties and formats in the digital media, for which we may lack of a consistent schemata. The Web is a new, large and heterogeneous community where the

interaction among the members, and the possibility offered by technology, might modify existing genres and text varieties, or create new ones, which better satisfy the communication needs of Web users. This is the case of web-pages, for instance, which present and develop the information in a different way to traditional printed texts of their type.

In fact, most genres being borrowed from the paper world have undergone adjustments when moving on to the Web (for instance, online newspapers and online manuals which use hypertext). Also, there is a family of text types which have been created specifically for the Web, such as home pages, splash screens, weblogs, or FAQs. Home pages, for example, may be personal, academic or organizational; in a personal webpage the reader expects to find a description of personal life, hobbies and possible features written in the first person.

At the same time innovative genres, unrelated to previous ones, might also be created, in order to meet the needs and requirements specific to the new medium. The development of the FL students' communicative competence would have to attend to these new challenges in written comprehension and expression as well as it has been dealing with the most traditional printed texts.

## **SUMMARY**

In this theme we have seen some of the features that characterize human communication in writing by attending to linguistic, formal and cognitive aspects related to it.

Looking at reading and writing as part of the communicative competence of the student, we have defined the text as a semantic unit and described the interactive nature of the writing-reading process. Then, we have also established the main purposes of reading and writing and their main strategies. **Chapter One** finished with a description of the main cognitive processes involved in reading and writing within the Schema Theory.

- A written text creates a relationship between the writer and the reader and the meaning of the text is conveyed through this interaction: not only the writer writes, but the reader also takes an active part in this interaction.
- The purpose of the writing, the intended audience, and the topic together influence the choice of the text structure and, consequently its elements and devices. Likewise, the way a text is read varies according to the purpose of the reading.
- Discourse processes involve comprehending, producing, reproducing, composing, recalling, summarizing and creating, accessing and using discourse representation.

- Readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of combining the information in the text with the information they already bring to a text. The reading activity involves a large number of cognitive processes together with motor skills and the use of strategies to cope with the written text.
- Likewise, writers engage into several cognitive processes and use strategies of different types to fulfil their purpose for writing. Writers proceed on the assumption that the intended reader shares schemata and knowledge to establish a common ground in which the text is developed.
- Similarly to speech, the encoding and decoding of a written message involve cognitive processes which are formed by knowledge, skills and strategies of a complex nature which interact and work into a simultaneous process.

**Chapter Two** has developed a discussion on the notion of genre and the genre as a matter of study for different disciplines. We have shown the present relevance of corpus analysis and computational linguistics in the study of genres. But the focus of the chapter has been drawn by defining a genre as a schema-like global structure which defines the global form of a text, which is culturally dependant, and a part of the communication process. Then, we have analysed how text genres answer to the reader's expectations and which factors affect the choice of genre: audience, purpose of writing and topic. Finally, we have proposed a classification of texts according to the communicative purpose into argumentative, descriptive, expository and narrative texts. For each of them it has been described its purpose; the types or varieties which may show; the most common structure or elements; and its most relevant language features.

- The term *genre* may be understood as a category assigned on the basis of external criteria like purpose or topic, rather than on linguistic, internal or form criteria. Genre is commonly regarded as a conventional and cultural recognised grouping of texts.
- Any genre is also a social process that has a purpose and a structure and the different genres are the product of a culture.
- Attending to the communicative purposes, texts can be classified into argumentative (to take a position on an issue and justify it); descriptive (to involve readers so that they can visualize what is being described); expository (to explain, inform, or clarify something to the reader); and narrative (to entertain, to gain and hold a reader's interest).

**Chapters Three and Four** dealt with the formal structure, elements and rules of a written text. First, we have seen how context and texture define a text. Then, we have categorized the text cohesive devices into grammatical, conjunctive and lexical analyzing them briefly. Finally, we have analyzed the semantic, grammatical, conventional and prosodic roles of the graphological resources.

- Any text is part of a context. The context involves participants, the communication setting and goal, the pragmatic ground rules, the subject matter knowledge, and most of other components that situate the text event: background knowledge (context of culture), context of situation, co-text.
- Texture is about the elements which tie together, structure and give meaning to texts: cohesion; internal structure of the sentence; and macrostructure of the text.
- Cohesion: relationships of meaning within a text: grammatical cohesion (substitution, reference, ellipsis) creates relations to form; lexical cohesion (repetition) forms reference relations; conjunctions create semantic relations.
- The rhetorical devices allow a text to be organized and coherently developed so that the writing fulfils the author’s communicative purpose; and they establish three types of relationships among the discourse elements: grammatical, semantic, and lexical. Any of these resources realize the “textual meta-function”, which is especially concerned with the flow of information in a text by analyzing clauses as messages. The understanding and use of cohesive devices is vital for the development of the EFL learners’ communicative competence –in oral and written language.
- Graphology resources are of the greatest importance. These include orthography, punctuation, paragraphing, and text layout or format (headings, footnotes, indexes, use of bold letters, and etcetera). These graphic devices play a communicative role, and their choice responds to the sense of a text. EFL learners need to understand and use these devices in order to interpret and produce written texts in a correct and appropriate way.

In **Chapter Four** the terms register and style have been the focus of analysis in the first part together with the properties of a written discourse. Then, there has been a description of the main characteristics of the written language. We have concluded that a coherent discourse needs of the application of distinct types of knowledge such as communicative goals, text-type, schemas, discourse structure relations, and theme development patterns. This knowledge is

encoded as separate resources and integrated into a flexible planning process that draws from appropriate devices whatever knowledge is needed to produce a text.

- Style would refer to the individual's use of the language, whereas register would characterize the appropriateness of a text to the specific communicative situation (formal/ informal), or specific topic (religious, scientific, legal...).
- To evaluate the characteristics of a written text, the following items will have to be analyzed according to the writing context: correction; cohesion and coherence; appropriateness; style; presentation and layout.
- Characteristics of the written language:
  - Writing is a slow, deliberate, editable process.
  - Written language is secondary to spoken language historically.
  - In comparison to the oral language, writing is produced very slowly.
  - Writing is static, permanent and space-bound.
  - Since the process of writing is not usually constrained by time, it promotes the development of careful organization and compact expression, with complex sentence structure.
  - Errors and inadequacies can be eliminated because writing generally hides its process of creation and shows us the polished product.
  - Writing looks for precision and explicitness.
  - The lack of visual contact with the reader means that there is not immediate feedback: graphological and linguistic resources will, somehow, fulfil the functions of the paralinguistic elements.
  - Written language tends to be significantly longer and more complex; it has longer idea-units and places them in various relations of dependence.
  - An indirect characteristic of the written language is its suitability to the recording of facts, and to tasks of memory and learning.
  - The visual nature of the written language favours the existence of written text varieties which have to be assimilated visually and cannot be read aloud efficiently (timetables, graphs...).
  - Writing owns some unique features like pages, lines, capitalization, or spatial organization, for example.

Finally, **Chapter Five** has defined and related the concepts of routines, formulaic expressions, and conventions in the written language offering some examples and didactic considerations. This chapter has ended with a special comment on the new text types that the digital technology is bringing to our lives, and the challenges they pose as language users and teachers.

- Routines are “conventional ways of presenting information”; they are present both in the oral and the written language. Because they are conventional, routines are predictable and help ensure clarity.
- Information routines may be identified as expository or evaluative. Expository routines involve factual information hinging on questions of sequencing or identity of the subjects. They would correspond to narrations, descriptions, and procedural texts. On their part, the evaluative routines are based on expository routines. They involve the drawing of conclusions, usually requiring the expression of reasoning, in addition to explanations, predictions, justification, preferences and decisions. The recognition of information routines is a key to the understanding and production of texts.
- At the same time, these information routines are closely related to the three commonest patterns of: problem – solution; claim -counterclaim; and, general – specific. They form the structure of the different genres and text varieties.
- Formulaic expressions are idiomatic expressions or phrases likely to be found in the different text varieties; they constitute Halliday’s “routinized discourse”, and they promote fluency and appropriateness: letter starters and endings, for example.
- Writing conventions are also essential features of effective writing. Conventions make writing easier to read by putting it in a form that the reader expects and is comfortable with. Writing conventions include three broad aspects: mechanics, sentence formation, and usage.
- Mechanics includes conventions about spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphs, and also those related to presentation of texts.
- Conventions about usage include word order, verb tense, pronoun reference and subject-verb agreement.
- Sentence formation refers to the structure of sentences, the way that phrases and clauses are used to form simple and complex sentences.
- New conventions have arisen with the arrival and development of on-line discourse. Electronic discourse has its own peculiarities; on the one hand, it includes features of the oral language; on the other hand, it shows characteristics of the written language. In addition, it has developed its own “text-types” (home pages, weblogs, and etcetera).



- Electronic discourse has also developed its own graphic features and conventions regarding the use of capitals, for example.
- The development of the FL students' communicative competence would have to attend to these new technological challenges in written comprehension and expression as well as it has been dealing with the most traditional printed texts.

This theme has attempted to hint the complexity of the reading/writing process by highlighting its interactive and communicative nature. Interaction through the medium of written language includes a great deal variety which should be motivating and purposeful for the EFL learner. By designing communicative activities which involve the application of reading and writing skills and strategies, EFL teachers will be developing their students' competence in the English language. In addition to texts printed in paper, learners would also need to cope with the development of written texts in the digital medium. In fact, medium and text-types are closely related and both are determined by the function they perform; as the European Commission signals "With the increasing sophistication of computer software, interactive man-machine communication is coming to play an ever more important part in the public, occupational, educational and even personal domain" (p. 82).

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