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Fundamental Issues of English Information Structure at Discourse Level

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Abstract: This paper discusses fundamental issues of English information structure at discourse level. Issues related to information structure at discourse level are numerous and are viewed from various perspectives. The selection of the issues to be explored in this paper originates from what are considered as beneficial for L2 learners in the cognitive meta-linguistic approach to the teaching of reading and writing skills to L2 learners. The issues selected include: the basic attributes of information at discourse level, linking relations, the clause relational approach to text analysis, and information structure from genre analysis perspective. The three basic attributes of information structure are evidentiality, mutuality, and textuality. The issues discussed within the clause relational approach includes the concept of clause relations, clause relation cohesive devices, basic clause relations, clause relations and their signals as important factors of textual coherence, and basic textual patterns. Genre analysis encompasses various text types. In the scope of this paper, only information structure of academic texts is investigated. Two issues related to the information structure of academic texts from genre analysis perspective dealt with in this paper are the rhetorical structures and features of academic texts.

Keywords: Attributes of information, linking relations, clause relational approach, genre analysis, academic texts.

1. Introduction

English information structure is generally viewed at sentential level and discourse level. Studies in informational elements realized by sentential units are discussed in Tuan (2013) [1]. Researchers who go further into units larger than the sentence have criticized the traditional notions of information structure within intra-sentential or intra-utterance contexts as being based on a restricted and one-sided view of the communication process. They claim that such a framework does not allow the mutual and negotiative characteristic of bi-directional information sharing and exchanging to be fully explored. The relations between intra-sentential and inter-sentential discursive organization within a pragmatic context is suggested to fall within the scope of information structure at

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discourse level, the two most noticeable approaches being the clause relational approach and genre analysis approach to text analysis. Pertinent to the semantic and pragmatic relations among those units of information in discourse are the three attributes of information and linking relations that hold discourse elements together in a cognitively logical macro textual structure.

2. Three basic attributes of information at discourse level

Paprotté and Sinha (1987) [2] discussed certain pragmatic constraints on given and new information (see Tuan, 2013 [1] for further details) which they consider to be the three basic attributes of information at discourse level: evidentiality, mutuality and textuality in discourse. Their discussion is based on Grice (1975) [3]'s Cooperative Principle relating to the cooperative nature of the discourse enterprise to which speakers should adhere in order for the regulation of information exchange in discourse to be achieved. Hearers are also enjoined to take part in the information exchanging process on the assumption that the speaker adheres to these principles. The four maxims categorized under Grice's Cooperative Principle represent ideal communicative attitudes to be adopted by discourse participants regarding the selection and assignment of thematic/rhematic status to given and new information.

2.1. Evidentiality

According to Paprotté and Sinha (1987) [2], and Givon (1982) [4] one important attribute of information is its evidentiality, which in their view is the evidential status of information, ordered within a scale of epistemic certainty. Degrees of certainty will determine the newsworthiness or givenness of information items whereby items of lowest certainty will assume newsworthy status, and by contrast, items of highest certainty will be rated as given. As a natural consequence in discourse, items of highest certainty may not be subject to challenge or justification and wherefore are syntactically, morphologically, or prosodically unmarked for prominence, as well as for epistemic modality. On the contrary, items of lowest certainty will require some justification, albeit explicit or implicit and will be assigned with some kind of prominence.

2.2. Mutuality

Mutuality is the second attribute of information related to the givenness of information and to the selection of themes which requires that if given, the thematic informational element must be mutually taken as given by both sides of the discourse participation, otherwise repair should be made as a compensation (Clark, Schreuder, & Buttrick, 1983) [5]. In other words, the speaker will attempt to speak on what he believes to fall within the knowledge and belief of the listener, and the listener will attempt to understand what he believes to fall within the knowledge and belief of the speaker (Rommetveit, 1974) [6]. Quirk (1985) [7] considers it a courtesy to the receiver and a convenience for the speaker to provide the point of the message with enough context for this point to be both clearly identified and unambiguously understood, as well as being placed in a normal linguistic framework.

2.3. Textuality

Textuality is another attribute of information which ensures the cohesion and

coherence of the whole structure of text and encompasses evidentiality and mutuality. It is the interlocutors who guarantee textuality through their retrospective and prospective processes conforming to what has already been mentioned and to their shared goals of the discourse.

3. Linking relations

Ward and Birner (2001) [8] argue when an item of information is uttered in an utterance, it automatically falls within a *linking relation*, a comprehensive term that encompasses several other intercrossed sub-terms as *poset*, *anchor* and *trigger*, metaphorically used to describe the relationship between elements of the current sentence and the prior context by such authors as Reinhart (1981) [9], Fraurud (1990) [10], Garrod and Sanford (1994) [11], Hawkins (1978) [12], and Hawkins (1991) [13]. The relations are cognitive as they are recognized by discourse participants.

Poset (partially ordered set) relationship is one in which the discourse-old link in a given utterance is related to previously evoked information. Two elements co-occurring in a poset can be related to each other in one of three possible ways with respect to their relative rank of value: one can represent a lower or higher value than the other, or the two can be of equal rank, or "alternate values". Elements in a poset might be related to each other in such relations as part/whole, entity/attribute, type/subtype, set/subset and may be associated with events, activities, time, or place, or with a set of such items.

A poset relation can be contextually licensed if it involves a poset which the speaker believes the hearer can construct or retrieve from his or her knowledge store based on the information evoked in the current discourse. Acting as a connection point between the current utterance information and prior context is the link, which is a linguistic device representing information existing in a "contextually licensed poset relation" (Ward and Birner 2001:122) [8] with information evoked in or inferable from the prior context.

A poset relating the link and the prior context is referred to as the *anchoring set*, or *anchor*. The relation between the link and the anchor, which is always a posit relation, is termed the *linking relation*. The linguistic or situational device that licenses the inference to the anchor is called the *trigger*. It is entirely possible for the trigger, anchor, and link all to represent the same information.

4. Clause-relational approach to text analysis

The attributes of information and the linking relations discussed above are best revealed in the clause-relational approach to text analysis. In this approach, the clause is viewed as a device of co-relevance constructing and distributing information. Given and new information status, information distribution, information distribution signals, contextual constraints, posets, anchors, and triggers are all embedded in the relations held among the clauses which can be interlocked to create the logical structure of the whole text. This approach emphasizes the role of the reader in interpreting relations existing among clauses in a text, i.e. a text is seen as coherent if the reader can recognize the semantic links between its clauses. This cognitive process depends much on the knowledge shared between the writer and the reader. The approach was first mentioned in Winter (1971) [14] and has

received increasing attention from such other advocates as Hoey (1983) [15], Hoey (1991) [16], Hoey (1994) [17], Hoey (2001) [18], McCarthy (1991) [19], McCarthy & Carter (1994) [20], Crombie (1985a) [21], Crombie (1985b) [22], Ward and Birner (2001) [8], Jordan (1984) [23], and Jordan (1992) [24]. As McCarthy (1991:155) [19] defined it, in the clause-relational approach, units of written discourse are seen as functional segments which 'could be related to one another by a finite set of cognitive relations'. These segments (which these authors refer to as textual segments) might vary in their structural length, i.e. they could be phrases, clauses, sentences, groups of sentences or whole paragraphs. The relations held among the segments can be of cause and consequence or contrast, etc. When these segments are combined together, they form the logical structure of the whole text referred to as textual patterns, which can be situation-evaluation, hypothetical-real, or general-particular, etc. The interaction between the reader's comprehension and the writer's intentions depends on how the reader interprets the relations among the clauses and what pattern the whole text bears. McCarthy (1991) [19] pointed out that the act of interpretation on the part of the reader takes place at two levels, procedural and textual pattern recognizing. At the first level, the reader needs to activate his knowledge of the world to make the best sense of the segments of the text. At the second level, he has to ask himself questions guiding him to the recognition of the relationships held among textual segments to identify the macro-level structure of the text.

4.1. Clause relations

The central concept of the approach is the clause relation, which was first defined in Winter (1971) [14] as follows:

A clause relation is the cognitive process whereby we interpret the meaning of a sentence or group of sentences in the light of its adjoining sentence or group of sentences. (Winter, 1971) [14]

Hoey (1983) [15] claimed that this definition has the following important implications:

- A relation involves interpreted meaning. Any grammatical cohesion existing among clauses is only treated as a relation if it has gone through the act of interpretation of the discourse decoder, i.e. the reader or the listener. Consequently, the relation might vary according to how a reader/listener interprets it including its evidentiality.

- Joined together, clauses create some other meaning in addition to the meaning generated by individual clauses, by which a relation is born among clauses.

- The interpretation of a clause relation is possible only when the clauses are placed in a context.

There is some confusion of the term 'clause' and 'sentence' in Winter's (1971) [14] definition of clause relations. Hoey (1983) [15] suggested that the two terms should be taken as conflated. In his view, 'the clause relation is not so called because it relates only clauses. Rather it is so described because all systems for signaling relations are rooted in the grammar of the clause' (Hoey, 1983:18) [15]. In this sense, a relation between units smaller or larger than a clause can be viewed as a clause relation. That is to say, a clause relation can be a relation between phrases that make up a clause, or between paragraphs that are formed by more than one clause. This view of Hoey's is widely advocated as it is compatible with what McCarthy (1991) [19] termed 'units of written

discourse' and 'textual segments' above mentioned.

The distinction between clause and sentence was made clearer in later versions of the definition. In Winter (1994) [25], a clause relation is defined as follows:

A Clause Relation is the shared cognitive process whereby we interpret the meaning of a Clause or group of clauses in the light of their adjoining clauses or group of clauses. Where the clauses are independent, we speak of 'sentence relation'. (Winter, 1994:49) [25]

Winter (1994: 66-67) [25] claimed that the quintessential idea of the clause-relational approach to text analysis is the view of 'the clause as a device of co-relevance, once it communicates as a member of a clause relation in a text.' Thus the clause can be said to bear the nuclear status in the sentence and in the whole text where semantic relations as interpreted by the reader are borne among them through cohesive devices. The clause is viewed as 'the largest unit of meaning in the sentence, so that relations between sentences are really the synthesized sum of the relations between their constituent clauses' (Winter, 1994: 49) [25]. The relevance of the existence of each clause is constrained and determined by its neighboring clauses in terms of their semantics brought about by grammatical and lexical choices. In other words, the existence of one clause in the whole text is taken as meaningful if it brings about the coherence of the whole text in the light of its adjoining clauses.

4.2. Clause relation cohesive devices

The relations between one clause with other clauses in its sentence and adjoining sentences can be signaled by cohesive devices such as conjunctions, repetition structures (systematic repetition), and the replacement of the clause within the repetition structure. Conjunctions which include coordinators (and/or/but) and subordinators (because/although, etc.) can create surface links between clauses. A comprehensive list of conjunctions may be found in Quirk (1985) [7], Hasan (1985) [26], or Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) [27]. There are also lexical items acting as cohesive devices, e.g. 'the reason is…' might be used instead of the subordinator 'because'. A repetition structure may be words, phrases, or structures being repeated in adjoining clauses. Winter (1974) [28], Winter (1979) [29], and Winter (1994) [25] used the term repetition structure to encompass ellipsis, and substitution as used by Hasan (1985) [26], Cook (1989) [30] or Quirk (1985) [7]. Winter (1994) [25] gave the following examples to illustrate what he meant by repetition and replacement in clause relations.

a. 'What we have still not forgiven him for', she says, is that he [Mozart] *reasoned*.' 'Miss Brophy, whose spiritual home is the eighteen century enlightenment, also *reasons*.

b. The symbols *seem easy to the point of glibness*. *So does* the sckepticism that repeatedly informed them.

In the above examples, the italicized parts of the examples show repetition structure, and the remainders of the clauses are viewed as replacement change. In each example, the predications of the clauses are repeated, and are thus termed clause constants. In example a, the lexical item 'reason' is repeated. In example b, the repetition structure is realized by the substitution inversion structure 'so does'. The replacement takes place in the subjects bringing about change in the semantics of the clauses.

Winter (1979: 101) [29] commented on the important function of systematic repetition and replacement in constructing new information in discourse as follows: 'This repetition provides a clause constant whereby the nature of new information is recognized and its importance to the context assessed. In such repetition, there are obligatory changes or additions to the repeated clause structure which give it new meaning as clause.' In more specific terms, in clause relations, new information is found in the changes made within the repetition structure where background information is given.

4.3. Basic clause relations

Hoey (1983) [15], Winter (1971) [14], and Winter (1994) [25] pointed out the two basic categories of clause relations: matching and logical sequence. In Winter (1994) [25] there is the addition of the third category '*multiple clause relation*', in which both matching and logical sequence relation are present.

4.3.1. The matching relation

Clauses in which attributes, people, actions, events, things, etc are compared or contrasted with one another concerning their similarities or differences can be said to hold the matching relation (Winter, 1994) [25]. The relation as introduced in Hoey (1983) [15], Hoey (2001) [18], and Winter (1994) [25] might be comparison, alternative, general-particular (preview-detail), similarity, exemplification, exception, apposition, contrast, or contradiction (denial and correction). In the following examples given by Winter (1994:51) [25], we can see a matching contrast, denial, or correction between two clauses.

1- No Russian wants to conquer the world. Some Americans *do*, on the best crusading ground.

2- The bee didn't get *tired* – it got *dead.*

3- *Little boys* don't play with dolls, *girls* play with dolls.

In example 1, a matching contrast is realized by the repetition structure 'do' repeating the old information 'wants to conquer the world'. 'Some American' is viewed as the replacement bearing the new information. Example 2 illustrates a correction made by the replacement of 'dead' for 'tired'. In example 3, 'girls'denies 'little boys'.

4.3.2. The logical sequence relation

The logical sequence relation is held among clauses where there exists a temporal, spatial, causal or deductive sequence. The relations, in Hoey's view can be actual or potential. Hoey (2001:30) [18] pointed out that logical sequence relation and the matching relation differ from each other in that the former involves 'putting propositions in some order of priority in time, space or logic', while the latter does not. The following are types of logical relation as listed in Winter (1994) [25], Hoey (1983) [15], and Hoey (2001) [18]: phenomenon-reason, phenomenon-example, cause-consequence, condition-consequence, instrument-achievement, means-purpose, premise-deduction, preview-detail, and temporal sequence. In the following example, an instrument-achievement relation between the clauses is revealed by the conjunction *thereby*:

Once on this page I announced 'I am no warped spinster waving the feminist flag', and *thereby* gravely offended some spinster readers. (Winter, 1994:53) [25]

The two basic categories of clause relations can be summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Basic categories of the clause-relational approach to written texts (adopted from McCarthy, 1991 [19]; Winter, 1977 [31]; Winter, 1978 [32]; and Hoey, 1983 [15])

Relational Type	Function	Example
Logical Sequencing	Unite the segments	Phenomenon-reason Phenomenon-example Cause-consequence Condition-consequence Instrument-achievement General-particular Generalization-example Preview-detail Temporal sequence
Matching	Compare and contrast the segments	Comparing Contrasting Equivalence Compatibility

4.3.3. Multiple clause relations

These can be found where both logical sequence and matching relations are present. In the following example, we can see the contradiction matching relation (denial and correction) as well as the logical sequence relation of condition-consequence as revealed by the correlative subordinators 'if'… 'then', and the repetition structure 'must be', which partially substitutes 'were not to blame'. The replacement 'the Americans' is the new information:

If the Russians were not to blame, then the Americans must be. (Winter, 1994: 54) [25]

Matching and logical sequence relations can embrace the local semantic relations forming a web of complex relationship throughout the whole text. And again, to some extent, it is the reader who interprets the relations; therefore the degree of clarification of the relationship might vary from reader to reader.

4.3.4. Clause relations and their signals as important factors in textual coherence

In the clause-relational approach, the sequencing and matching of textual segments and how the relations between them are signaled are considered important factors in textual coherence (Winter, 1977 [31]; Hoey, 1983 [15]; and McCarthy, 1991 [19]). In other words, a text is seen as coherent if there are evident signals showing that textual segments are matched or sequenced. The presence of cohesive devices can bring about the surface cohesion of the segments. However, how coherent the whole text is depends on the reader who has to interpret for himself the semantic links between textual segments. That is to say there is an interaction between the cohesion and coherence of a text. Hoey assumes that while cohesion 'is a property of the text', outside the reader's judgment, coherence is, on the other hand, reader-dependent. Hoey (1991: 11) [19] posited three questions involving the contribution of cohesion to the coherence of a text, the effect of cohesion on the perception of related sentences 'as complete propositions' and the contribution of cohesion to larger text organization.

The relationship between textual segments, clause relations, and the devices used to signal these relations are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

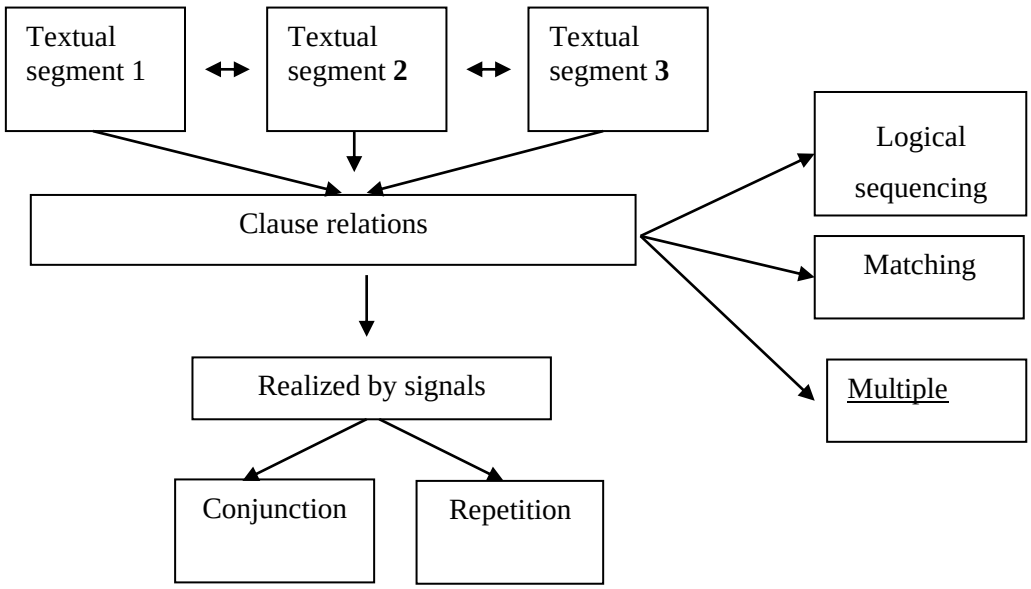

Figure 1. Textual segments, clause relations and their signals (adapted from Hoey, 1983 [15]; Hoey, 2001 [18]; Winter 1974 [28]; and Winter, 1994 [25]).

There is syntactic and lexical supporting evidence which can function as clues or signals to help the readers interpret these relations. The most apparent signals of clause relations are subordinators and coordinators. The signals can be lexical or grammatical. They can be explicit or implicit, so as the relationships between clauses. The relations can exist between two adjacent clauses or between clauses separated by others. They can form a web of complex relationship throughout the whole text.

The relationships between clauses are to some extent dependent on how readers interpret them. Therefore the degree of clarification of the relationship might vary from reader to reader. In other words, it is the reader's comprehensibility that affects the relationship between the clauses. Hoey (2001:31) [18] pointed out that patterns 'can be revealed by the use of paraphrase and questions'.

Winter (1974) [28] pointed out that there are three different ways to signal the same relationship, which he termed Vocabulary 1, Vocabulary 2, and Vocabulary 3. Vocabulary 1 is the general term that he used to indicate the subordinators, Vocabulary 2 the coordinators (which he called conjuncts), Vocabulary 3 the lexical signals. In different contexts these three ways can substitute each other to express the same relationship between the clauses. The problem resides with the speaker or writer's choice, and this might cause second language learners some difficulty or confusion. Often they cannot tell which way is better or best in a given context and they cannot tell the degree of formality of the way to be used.

Hoey (1983) [15] also differentiates two distinct types of lexical signals according to the time of their occurrence in relation to the event being talked about. They are 'anticipatory' if they take place before the event; and they are 'retrospective' if they occur after the event. Hoey, however, did not give any specific term for those lexical signals that occur during the

event. He also termed what is being referred to by the lexical signals 'lexical realization'.

Lexical signals play an extremely important role in indicating the relations between units of discourse at various levels from a single sentence and paragraph to larger passages and whole discourses. Winter (1977) [31] emphasizes the crucial role of "items of the meta-structure' which serve larger functions than those among clauses.

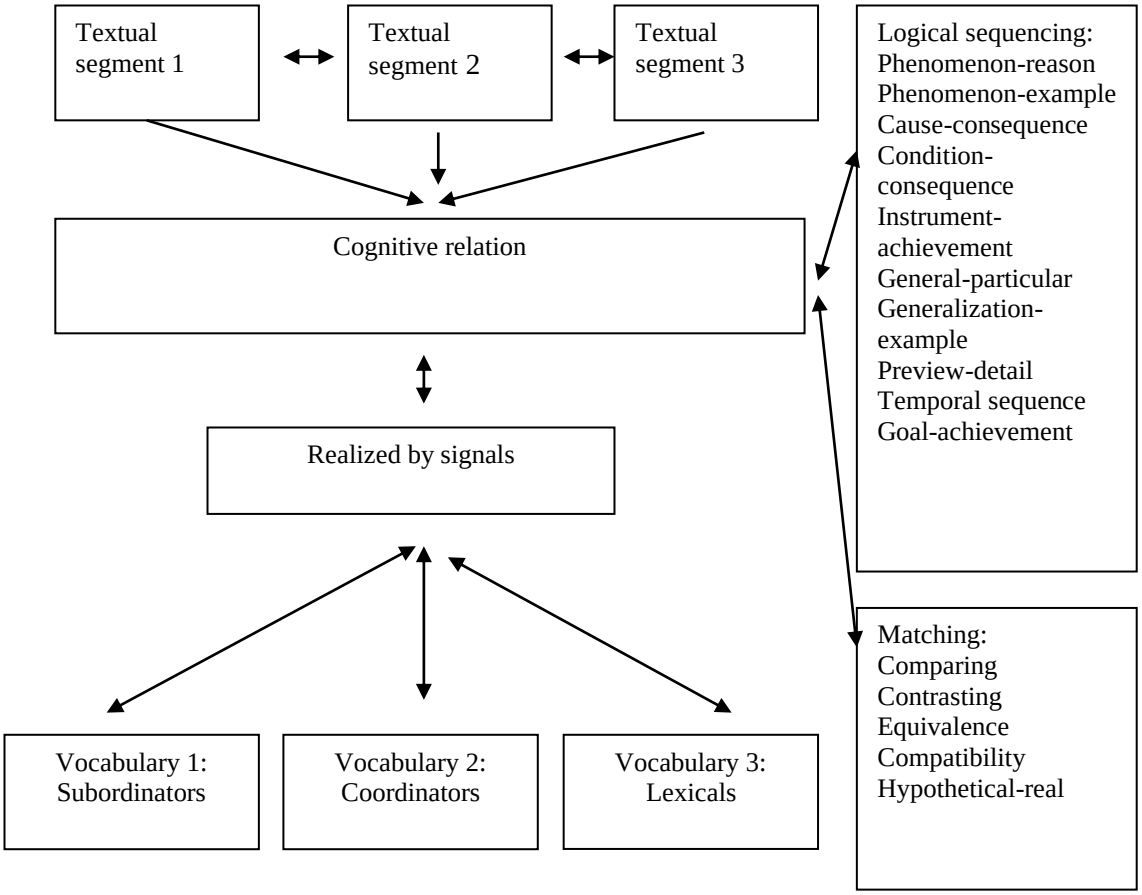

Figure 2. Cognitive relations and their signals (adapted from Hoey, 1983 [15]; Hoey, 2001 [18]; Winter, 1974 [28]; Winter, 1977 [31]; and Fairclough, 2003 [33]).

In addition to the three vocabularies, there are also means of signaling and clarifying clause relations. The three means as mentioned by Hoey (1983) [15] are repetition, paraphrase and questions.

Concerning the position of cohesion in text organization, Hoey (1991: 11) [19] posited three questions involving the contribution of cohesion to coherence of a text, the effect of cohesion on the perception of related sentences 'as complete propositions' and the contribution of cohesion to larger text organization. Hoey assumes that while cohesion 'is a property of the text', laying objective outside the reader's judgment, coherence is, on the other hand, reader-dependent.

Fairclough (2003) [33], while studying the semantic relations between sentences and between clauses within sentences, distinguished two levels of semantic relations, one he roughly terms 'local' and the other 'global' semantic relations. The author classified such relations as mentioned by Hoey (1983) [15], and Hoey (2001) [18] as 'global' or 'higher-level' semantic relations over whole texts.

Following is the summary of 'local' semantic relations as shown by Fairclough (2003: 89) [33], based on similar accounts in Martin (1993) [34] and Halliday (1994) [35].

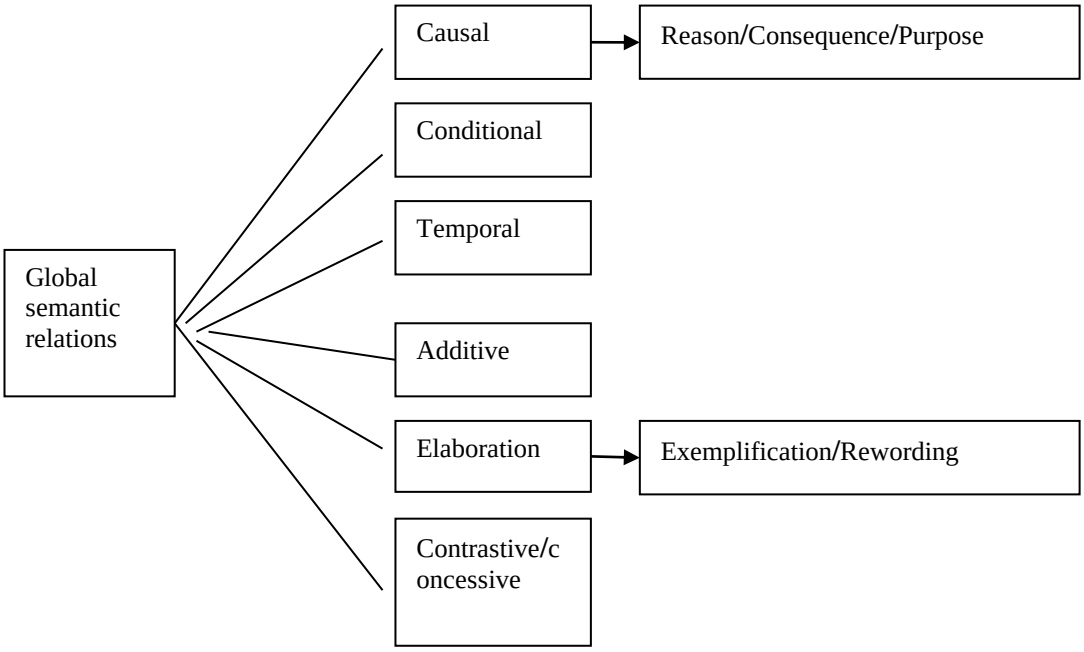

Figure 3. Local semantic relations, adapted from Fairclough (2003) [33], Martin (1993) [34] and Halliday (1994) [35].

Fairclough (2003) [33] suggested that there is a close relationship between semantic relation and genre. Fairclough also pointed out that semantic relations are realized by grammatical and lexical relations, which he termed 'textual markers' (p.92). Between clauses within sentences, he pointed out three grammatical relations: paratactic, hypotactic and embedded. These are however, just, substitutive terms for the more familiar subordination and co-ordination as used by Quirk (1972) [36], and Quirk (1985) [7] for example.

4.5. Basic textual patterns

When functional textual segments combine, they form the logical structure of the whole text called textual patterns (McCarthy, 1991 [19]; McCarthy and Carter, 1994 [20]) or text/discourse structure (Winter, 1994) [25]. There are common macro-structure organizational patterns of text, some of them are more popular, more typical, and more frequently occurring than others. There are 9 patterns mentioned in Winter (1977) [31], Winter (1978) [32]), Hoey (1983) [15], Hoey (2001) [18]), McCarthy (1991) [19], and

McCarthy & Carter (1994) [20]: problem-solution, hypothetical-real, general-particular, question-answer, goal-achievement, narrative, opportunity-taking, desire arousal-fulfillment, gap in knowledge filling. Some patterns are given different names by different authors, e.g., the problem-solution (Hoey, 1983) [15] is called 'situation-evaluation' in Winter (1994) [25].

McCarthy (1991) [19], Winter (1994) [25], and Coulthard (1994) [37] pointed out that a given text may contain more than one of the common patterns, either following one another or embedded in one another, e.g., the problem-solution pattern can be embedded in a hypothetical-real pattern.

Textual patterns and cognitive relations are not two separate concepts. They overlap each other and are intertwined with each other. Some of the terms used to refer to clause relations might be justifiably used to indicate a textual pattern. There may be more than one relation within one pattern, and there may be more than one pattern in a text. For example, the counterclaim (the real element in the pattern hypothetical-real) may consist of a preview and some details. The details may encompass a situation, a problem, a response, and an evaluation.

The patterns, according to Hoey (2001) [18] and McCarthy (1991) [19], share the following common characteristics:

- They are culture-specific and culturally ingrained, forming part of native speakers' knowledge.

- They begin with some initiation which logically or sequentially provokes some reaction. The initiation can be a situation, a problem, a hypothesis, a claim, a generalized statement, or a question. The reaction can be an evaluation, a solution, an affirmation/denial, a response, an example, or an answer.

- They end with a conclusion characterized by a positive or negative evaluation and/or result.

- There are grammatical and lexical devices signaling the patterns.

Out of the 9 patterns, the three most common and most frequently used patterns are problem-solution, hypothetical-real, and general-particular. Question-answer and goal-achievement to some extent are a reflection of the problem-solution pattern with some distinctive differences. Other less frequently used patterns are narrative, opportunity-taking, desire arousal-fulfillment, gap in knowledge filling as presented in Hoey (2001) [18] and McCarthy & Carter (1994) [20].

4.5.1. Problem-solution (situation-evaluation)

The expanded version of this pattern might include the following elements: situation-problem-responses (possible solutions)-evaluation of responses (positive or negative). McCarthy and Carter (1994: 55) [20] claimed that in this pattern, the key element is a 'positive evaluation of at least one of the possible solutions offered'. 'A text which ends with no positive solution offered leaves the reader with a feeling of unease'. Coulthard (1994) [37] pointed out that the pattern can be complicated in several ways, e.g. when the evaluation of the solution is negative, which is itself a problem, there is an alternative suggested solution followed by evaluation.

4.5.2. Hypothetical-real (Claim-counterclaim/response)

This pattern consists of two elements: the hypothetical, which reports what has been said or written, and the real, which states the writer's

affirmation or denial of the hypothetical. The hypothetical reports somebody else's statement, the truth-value of which is unknown or controversial. The real states whether the hypothetical is true or not true. Winter (1994) [25] commented that unlike the problem-solution pattern in which the problem can be implicit, in the hypothetical-real pattern, the hypothesis must be explicitly signaled as hypothetical.

4.5.3. General-particular

In this pattern, a generalization is followed by specific statements. The patterns can be in the form of a generalization followed by examples or a preview followed by details. In the particular element (examples or details), there can be an embedded matching relation, i.e. the examples or details may contain two clauses or more holding a matching relation. Hoey (1983) [15] pointed out that definition is one of the most typical examples of the detail in the preview-detail relation. There can be at least three types of detail: composition, structure, and function.

4.5.4. Question-answer

This pattern is similar to the problem-solution pattern. The difference is that there is an explicitly posed question followed by a satisfactory answer. The main elements are question, answer and positive/negative evaluation. The evaluation is obligatory when the answer is ascribed to someone rather than the author. When the answer is made by the author, the evaluation can be optional. Question-answer differs from the other patterns in that there is no intermediate stage between question and answer and there is no logical sequence relationship between question and answer (Hoey, 2001) [18].

4.5.5. Goal-achievement

Hoey (2001) [18] commented that this pattern is similar to the problem-solution pattern in almost every respect. Mapped onto the problem-solution pattern, the goal in the pattern is like the problem, and the achievement the solution. The major difference is that the goal element in the pattern is defined as 'an intended change in situation', i.e. instead of suggesting a possible solution to the problem, in this pattern, the writer tends to make it explicit that something must be done for the goal to be achieved. The expanded version of the pattern is: situation-goal-method of achievement-evaluation/result. As may happen in other patterns, we can see another pattern, e.g. problem-solution embedded in this pattern.

4.5.6. Opportunity-taking pattern

The opportunity-taking pattern often begins with an implicit offer followed by the taking of that opportunity by a participant, or how the opportunity may be taken. The offer may take the form of a question or a set of questions.

4.5.7. Desire arousal-fulfillment pattern

The pattern often begins with a positive evaluation (whereas in problem-solution pattern, the evaluation tends to be negative). This positive evaluation is then followed by a desire to fulfill the evaluation in a particular way.

4.5.8. Gap in Knowledge-filling pattern

The pattern often begins with a situation in which there is a gap of knowledge, followed by what a participant does to fill the gap and the result.

4.5.9. Narrative pattern

McCarthy (1991) [19] summarized Labov (1972) [38]'s descriptions of a narrative as follows. A narrative often contains the

following five elements: abstract (short statements of the topic of the narrative), orientation (time, place, and characters), complicating event (main events taking place), resolution (how the events are resolved), and coda (a bridge between the narrative world and the moment of narrating). Not every narrative contains all the five elements. However, orientation, complicating event, and resolution must be included to make a narrative. Elements of other patterns like situation and evaluation are often embedded in the elements of a narrative.

5. Information structure from genre analysis perspective

5.1. Genre analysis

Bhatia (2002) [39] suggests that the development and design of any language teaching and learning activity should take linguistic analysis and description, of which genre study is an important part, as a kind of prerequisite. Many researchers, e.g. Bhatia (1993) [40], Bhatia (2000) [41]; Bhatia (2002) [39]) and Dudley-Evans (1993) [42]; Dudley-Evans (1995) [43]; Dudley-Evans (2002) [44] reiterate the role of genre study in written text, especially in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study of information structure, which axiomatically involves discourse organization and development necessarily entails the inclusion of genre study. Swales (1981) [45] and Swales (1990) [46] gave a very detailed discussion of the use of the term genre in various disciplines with particular focus on approach to the teaching of academic writing to non-native post-graduate students or young academics learning to write in their subjects.

The view of genre adopted in ESP is much influenced by the definitions given by Miller (1984) [47] and Martin (1993) [34]. Though referred to in various terms such as *typification of rhetorical action* (Miller, 1984) [47], and Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) [48], *regularities of staged, goal oriented social processes*, Martin (1993) [34]; or *consistency of communicative purposes*, (Swales, 1990) [46] and (Bhatia, 1993) [40], genre analysis in academic context can be briefly described as "the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings" (Bhatia, 2002) [39].

The most important feature of genre theory is the emphasis on conventions. Genres are essentially conventions on language use in conventionalized communicative settings. These conventions are socio-culturally constructed based on a specific set of communicative goals set up by specialized disciplinary and social groups, and thus establish relatively stable structural forms and constrain the use of lexico-grammatical resources (Bhatia, 2002) [39]. The second important aspect of genre theory is that although genres are typically associated with recurring rhetorical contexts, and are identified on the basis of a shared set of communicative purposes with constraints on allowable contributions in the use of lexico-grammatical and discoursal forms, they are not static. As Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) [48] pointed out, "genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures". It is the expert members of the specialist community who create new forms in order to respond to novel rhetorical contexts or to convey "private intentions" within the socially recognized communicative purposes that make genres as flexible and changeable as they are. Though these two features of genre

theory, emphasis on conventions and propensity for innovation appear to be contradictory in character, they are quite in complementary relationship. Genres, in Berkenkotter & Huckin(1995) [48]'s words are "sites of contention between stability and change". Another aspect of genre theory is its versatility due to the versatility of communicative purpose, and of a more general view of language use combined with its very specific realization (Swales, 1990 [46]; and Bhatia, 1993 [40]).

One other important feature of genre that makes it extremely difficult for both language teachers and learners is that they cut across disciplinary boundaries. Bhatia (2002) [39] pointed out that there is a noticeable and significant overlap in the case of genres such as research article introductions (Swales, 1981) [45]; (Swales 1990) [46], abstracts (Bhatia, 1993) [40], and textbooks (Myers, 1992) [49]. There are also subtle variations across a range of disciplines as discussed in Hyland (2000) [50]. These variations reveal themselves significantly when different speech communities exploit lexico-grammatical resources and rhetorical strategies to express their own discipline-specific concepts, knowledge and its structure in disciplinary specific ways.

Genre analysis, categorized by Bhatia (1993) [40] as *discourse analysis as explanation*, "goes beyond such a description to rationalize conventional aspects of genre construction and interpretation" (p. 2). It is concerned with answering the question: "Why are specific discourse-genres written and used by the specialist communities the way they are?" (p. 11). It aims to explain "why a particular type of conventional codification of meaning is considered appropriate to a particular institutionalized socio-cultural setting" (p. 5). Yet, genres are not simply texts to be analyzed for their grammatical and discoursal features. Rather, genres is "a social activity of a typical and recognizable kind in a community, which is realized in language" (Mauranen, 1993) [51]. That is, genres go beyond text to take social purposes into account, including ways members of discourse communities are guided by shared rhetorical purposes when they speak and write. They are "typified responses to events that recur over time and space" (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995) [48].

5.2. Information structure of academic texts from genre analysis perspective

It is the availability and portability of written text (Myers, 1992) [49] that have made it the main focus of genre analysis. Genre analysis in language teaching and learning is an area of discourse studies in which attempts have been made into bringing about deeper descriptions of language use in professional and academic discourse, especially in the teaching of ESP. Bhatia (2002: 21) [39] viewed genre analysis as the outcome of a quest for 'thicker descriptions of language use' and of a shift of focus of language analysis and description from 'surface structure to deep structure of discourse, from discourse to genre.' Three major approaches to genre analysis are mentioned and discussed in Paltridge (2001) [52], Johns (2002) [53], Grabe (2002) [54], and Hyland (2004) [55]: the Australian work in the tradition of Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the New Rhetoric (NR) studies in North American composition contexts, and the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Grabe (2002:250) [54], summarized the concept of genre conceptualized from the SFL, the New

Rhetoric or the ESP perspective as 'a central concept determining how discourse is organized and used for various purposes – how it both constitutes and is constituted by recurring social situations that lead to recognizable and shared conventions and expectations.'

Given that the central concept of genre is the socio-cultural conventions that determine how a discourse is organized to reach a communicative purpose, information structure in the sense of ways in which information is distributed in discourse can be seen as the underlying operations of genre conventions realized in a text or a type of texts. These conventions operate at various levels including the information structure level, and constrain the choice of rhetorical structures as well as the choice of lexico-grammatical resources of a language to construct a text. The conventions evolve from various factors of the social settings in which a text occurs and regulate the way in which the information of a text is organized. These factors are inherently part of the socio-cultural context in which the text is constructed including the communicative purpose of the text, and the shared expectations between the writer and the audience. When many texts share the same features they form a kind of genre. Each kind of genre has a set of conventions that regulate how information can be constructed in that genre. These conventions are dynamic and new conventions might evolve as required by the changeability of socio-cultural contexts. There are overlapping conventions across different types of genres and there are variations in a particular genre in various disciplines.

5.2.1. Rhetorical structures of academic texts

What can be inferred from the discussions above is that different genres require different information structures although there are variations of conventions in each genre and there is some overlapping across genres of various disciplines. The genre selected to be discussed in this paper is academic texts. This selection originates from what are considered as beneficial for L2 learners in the cognitive meta-linguistic approach to the teaching of reading and writing skills in which fundamental features of English information structure at sentential and discourse level are chosen to be explicitly given to L2 learners as an initial step into their reading and writing skill development.

Rhetorical structures of academic texts can be described from several perspectives. Hyland (1990) [56], and Hyland (2004) [55] viewed rhetorical structures as encompassing stages and within each stage there are a number of moves. For example, in an argumentative essay, there are three stages: thesis, argument, and conclusion. Each stage is composed of several moves, some of which are optional. For example in the thesis stage, the following moves can be included: gambit (controversial or dramatic statement), information (background material), proposition (writer's position and delimit of the topic), evaluation (brief support of proposition), and markers (introduction and/or identification of a list). Some other researchers views rhetorical structures as consisting of spans of texts bearing such linking relations as claim and evidence, and cause and result (O'Brien, 1995) [57]. Young (1994: 165) [58] saw discourse structures as being composed of phases which he described as 'strands of discourse that recur discontinuously throughout a particular language event and, taken together structure that event. These strands recur and are interspersed with others resulting in an interweaving of threads as the

discourse progresses.' Hoey (1983) [15], Hoey (2001) [18], Coulthard (1994) [37], and Winter (1994) [25] talked of rhetorical structures in terms of such textual patterns as problem-solution, general-particular, hypothetical-real, question-answer, and goal-achievement. In each of the above-mentioned rhetorical structure, there are discourse elements such as situation, problem, response (solution), and evaluation in the problem-solution pattern. These rhetorical structures are discussed in more details in the next section within the clause-relational approach to text analysis.

5.2.2. Features of English academic texts

Features of academic texts can be described at lexico-grammar level and discourse level. Following are some features of English academic texts at discourse level in terms of their information structure:

- The tendency to be writer-responsible

Hinds (1987: 143) [59] claimed that in English 'the person primarily responsible for effective communication is the speaker.' This tendency among English native speakers is by contrast different from that of many Asian writers who are believed to be reader-responsible, i.e. those Asian writers tend to assume that it is the readers who are responsible for understanding the writers' underlying discourse information structure.

- Writer's awareness of the audience's expectations and prior knowledge

Accoding to Swales & Feak (1994) [60], audience's expectations and prior knowledge affect the content and the organization of the writing to a large extent. Therefore, writers of a specific speech community, notably of native English speaking communities always bear in mind the expectations of their targeted audiences in the process of constructing information in their writing.

- Tendency to directness in expressing ideas among native English writers and the explicitness in revealing the logical development of ideas

Although 'indirectness strategies and markers have been identified' in English written discourse (Hinkel, 1997: 361) [61], Kaplan (1987: 10) [62] claimed that in English directness and specificity are 'highly valued', and this tendency is highly conventionalized in academic writing. This expectation is justifiable in that vagueness and ambiguity can be avoided (Swales, 1990 [46]; Swales and Feak, 1994 [60]). This directness involves among many other aspects the explicitness in revealing the thematic development and organization of texts (Connor, 1996 [63]; Clyne, 1997 [64]). Connor (1996: 167) [63] said that English writers 'move from generalizations to specific examples and expect explicit links between main topics and subtopics'. Clyne (1994: 171) [65] remarked: 'the English essays end with an identifiable concluding section encompassing a restatement and predictions of future implications'. Note however, that vagueness and explicitness can be culturally and dialectically dependent. What is conceptualized as vague and indirect in one culture can be perceived as explicit and direct in another (Gee, 1990; [66] Hinkel, 1997 [61]). The tendency to directness and explicitness encompasses also the provision of specific exemplifications while supporting the main ideas. Leki (1991) [67] and Leki (1992) [68] pointed out that facts, statistics, and illustration in arguments are normally expected by English speaking readers.

6. Summary

In this paper, we have discussed the fundamental issues of English information

structure at discourse level: the basic attributes of information, linking relations, the clause relational approach to text analysis, and information structure from genre analysis perspective. In the clause relational approach to text analysis, a text is seen as coherent if the reader can recognize the semantic links between its clauses. The five related issues discussed included the definition of clause relations, clause relation cohesive devices, basic clause relations, clause relations and their signals as important factors of textual coherence, and basic textual patterns. A clause relation is the cognitive process whereby the reader interprets the meaning of a sentence or group of sentences in the light of its adjoining sentence or group of sentences. Clause relation cohesive devices can be conjunctions, repetition structures (systematic repetition), and the replacement of the clause within the repetition structure. Clause relations and their signals are important factors in textual coherence. Textual patterns are the logical structure of one whole text. There are five popular patterns: problem-solution, hypothetical-real, general-particular, question-answer, and goal-achievement. Information structure from genre analysis perspective can be seen as the underlying operations of genre conventions realized in a text or a type of texts. These conventions operate at various levels including the information structure level, and constrain the choice of rhetorical structures as well as the choice of lexico-grammatical resources of a language to construct a text. There are conventionalized rhetorical features of academic texts that non-native writers who use English for academic purposes should conform to for optimal comprehension between interlocutors of this speech community to be achieved.

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Những vấn đề căn bản của cấu trúc thông tin tiếng Anh ở cấp độ ngôn bản

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Tóm tắt: Bài báo này đề cập đến các vấn đề căn bản của cấu trúc thông tin tiếng Anh ở cấp độ diễn ngôn. Các vấn đề liên quan đến cấu trúc thông tin tiếng Anh ở cấp độ diễn ngôn rất đa dạng, phong phú và được xem xét từ nhiều góc độ khác nhau. Việc lựa chọn vấn đề và góc độ thảo luận trong bài báo bắt nguồn từ mục đích của tác giả trong việc tìm ra những điểm căn bản nhất có thể đưa vào đường hướng nhận thức siêu ngôn ngữ trong việc dạy kỹ năng đọc-viết cho học viên học tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ thứ hai. Các vấn đề được lựa chọn bao gồm: các thuộc tính của thông tin ở cấp độ ngôn bản, quan hệ liên kết, cấu trúc thông tin theo đường hướng quan hệ mệnh đề trong phân tích văn

bản, và cấu trúc thông tin nhìn từ góc độ phân tích thể loại văn bản. Ba thuộc tính của thông tin được bàn đến là: tính xác chứng, tính tương hỗ và tính văn bản. Các vấn đề liên quan đến đường hướng quan hệ mệnh đề bao gồm: khái niệm quan hệ mệnh đề, các phương tiện liên kết trong đường hướng quan hệ mệnh đề, các quan hệ mệnh đề cơ bản, các dấu hiệu quan trọng thể hiện tính mạnh lạc của văn bản trong quan hệ mệnh đề, và các kiểu mẫu văn bản căn bản. Đường hướng phân tích thể loại văn bản bao trùm việc phân tích nhiều thể loại văn bản khác nhau. Thể loại được lựa chọn để phân tích trong bài báo này là thể loại văn bản học thuật. Hai vấn đề liên quan đến cấu trúc thông tin của văn bản học thuật được đề cập là cấu trúc và đặc điểm của văn bản học thuật.

Từ khóa: Thuộc tính của thông tin, quan hệ liên kết, đường hướng quan hệ mệnh đề, phân tích thể loại văn bản, văn bản học thuật.