Parataxis, Hypotaxis, Conjunctions and the Writing Style

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ABSTRACT

Syntax is defined as the way words combine with one another to form phrases, clauses and sentences. It is observed that every text type having a particular genre and style of its own depicts a distinguished arrangement of clauses. Language is a social semiotic system that acts as a resource to making meaning which resides in the systemic patterns of choice. If this be so, then every clausal arrangement joined by conjunctions giving rise to paratactic and hypotactic constructions foreground certain thoughts, thereby bringing stylistic variation in the text. Practical examples show that writers do exploit these clausal patterns to achieve their aim. Hence, in this paper an attempt is made to show through the analysis of some practical examples how parataxis and hypotaxis are used in real world and how conjunctions play their cohesive role in it. The paper also explains how necessary its knowledge is for students so that they, along with developing insight into this type of text designing, also develop a unique writing style.

Key words: Clause; Conjunction; Parataxis; Hypotaxis; Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL); Writing style.

Introduction

Every language comprises content words and functional words. Content words are those which have some meaning of their own like *pen, book, chair, wood, furniture* and *bag.* These lexical items of the language carry a semantic value. On the other hand, words performing grammatical functions in a language are called *functional categories* such as auxiliary verbs and prepositions. There is another group of grammatical words which are used mainly for joining one sentence or a part of a sentence to another. They are commonly called *joining words* or *conjunctions.* These words play a vital role in conveying the meaning of a phrase or a sentence though they are devoid of meaning content words have. In fact, without these functional words, language is a handicap. Hence, for clear and complete meaning transmission they are indispensible. Strategic manipulation and use of conjunctions is often adopted by writers to develop their unique style, to create an individual rhetoric profile. This paper will discuss how distinguished style can be created and thoughts foregrounded through expert handling of independent and dependent clauses linked by conjunctions.

Rhetoric Profile

Account holders in different social sites create their profiles by uploading their photos and personal information so that others can draw a character sketch of the individual. Similarly, for the purpose of creating language portraits, rhetoric profile enables one to project oneself before his readers or listeners. This rhetoric profile is being created using various sentence patterns and word choices. However, the selection of these to design the profile is greatly situation-dependent. While composing, one is always compelled by the needs for certain stylistic considerations – the need to show emphasis, the need for variation, the need to establish the view point and in some the need to use an elaborate texture and extraordinary style. This stylistic paragraph becomes possible only when special attention is paid to the style composition, which includes the type of sentences and their structural forms, their lengths and their repetition. Joining words has always been considered unfriendly to spontaneity: "Of all the parts of speech," they have been considered to be "most unfriendly to vivacity" (Campbell, 1963, 395). But it cannot be denied that the thinking process continues in the brain in a train rather than in isolation. To link those thoughts dependent on another, "to express well such methodical and rational thoughts, he must have words to show what connexion, restriction, distinction, opposition, emphasis, etc. he gives to each respective *part* of his discourse. To mistake in any of these, is to puzzle instead of informing his hearer: and therefore it is, that those words which are not truly by themselves the names of any ideas are of such constant and indispensable use in language, and do much contribute to men's well expressing themselves" (Locke, 1894, 98-99).

Sentences, Clauses and Conjunctions

A sentence is a group of words that makes a complete sense. These words are either combined into phrases with no verb in it or clauses with a subject and predicate. On the basis of the number of verbs and the dependence of the action, sentences are classified into simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. Simple sentences [also referred to as clause simplex in SFL (Eggins, 2004, 256)] are those with one independent clause, i.e. which has only one subject and predicate, while a compound sentence is one in which two or more sentences or independent clauses are joined by a conjunction. Thus, in a compound sentence each of the clauses possesses a subject and predicate of its own, thereby constituting a part of a larger sentence and are called co-ordinate clauses. A sentence where there is one principal or main clause and a dependent clause is called a complex sentence. When a sentence comprises two or more coordinate clauses and one or more subordinate clauses, it is categorized as a compound-complex sentence. Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Linguistics, notes that "The organizing concept of a systemic grammar is that of choice (that is, options in

'meaning making potential'" (2003, 434) and states that language is a social semiotic system, which semantically performs mainly three meta-functions such as ideational, interpersonal and textual. For him grammar is more like systems rather than sets of rules, on the basis that every grammatical structure involves a choice from a describable set of options. Eggins writes, "Wherever there is choice there is meaning" (2004, 256). Hence to realize why a speaker sometimes chooses a clause simplex over a clause complex or a specific "*type*" of clause complex, we need to examine the functional effect of these on the language in the situation concerned. However, what provides the resources for marking the logico-semantic relationships that obtain between text spans of varying extent, ranging from clauses within clause complexes to long spans of a paragraph or more is but the conjunctions. Thus Halliday and Mattiessen say, "the resource of clause complexes is used to guide the local development of text.... and the clause complex is the most extensive domain of relational organization, whereas the cohesive system of CONJUNCTION has evolved as a complementary resource for creating and interpreting text" (2004, 538) and provides a list of cohesive conjunctions, also functioning in text enhancement, classifying it into four categories – additive, adversative, casual and temporal as shown below (*manner* and *matter* too contribute to this and hence Halliday, though not here, includes them in the chart below). Additive conjunctions mainly introduce additional or new information, while adversative ones bring out the contrast. A temporal conjunction indicates the time sequencing and causal connectives state about the reason that underlie a certain outcome or event. However, besides fostering cohesiveness, linkers in a text also enable it to elaborate through apposition and clarification, and extend the text through addition and variation.
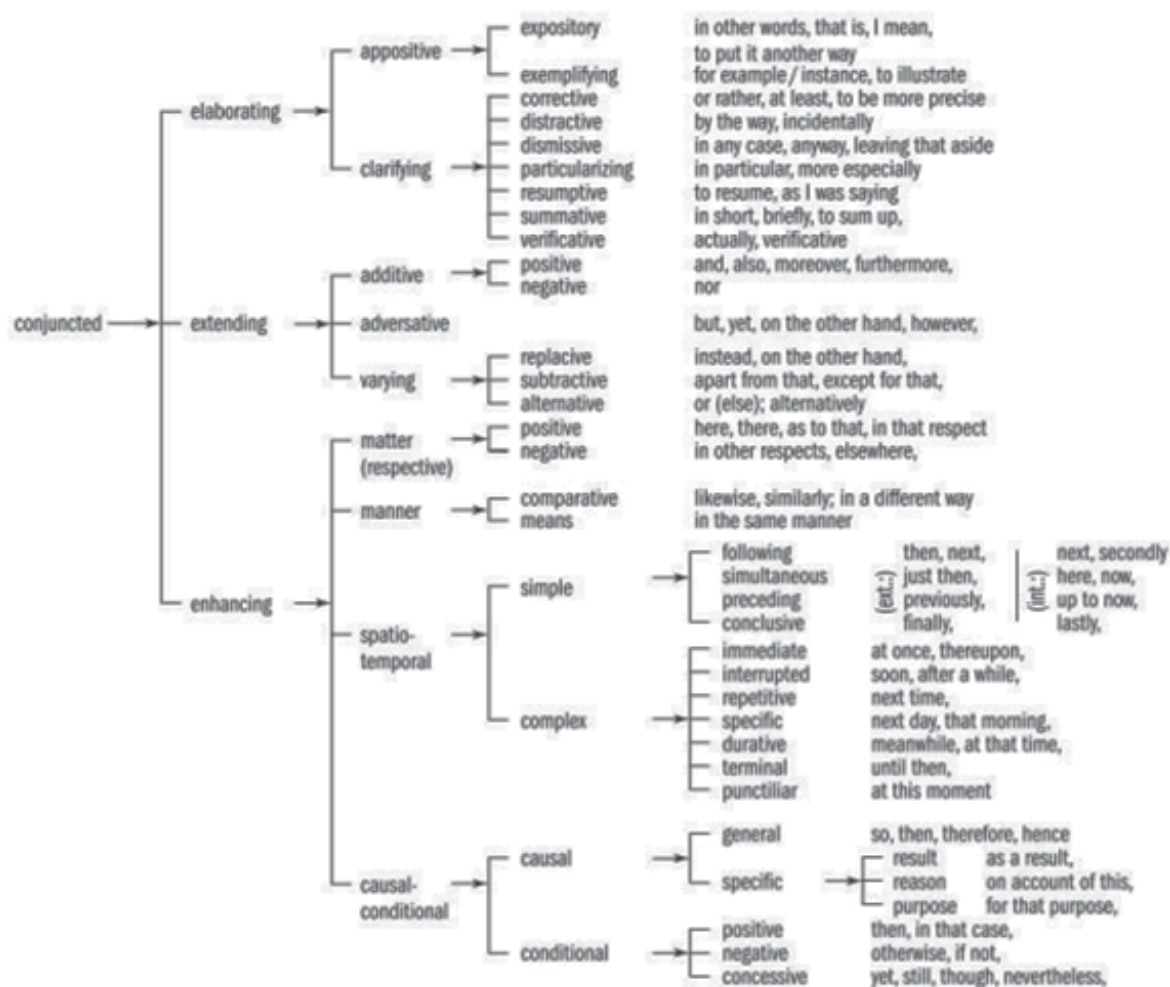
Figure 1: The System of Conjunctions (Halliday and Mattiessen, 2004, p 541)

Halliday (1994, 338) illustrates that conjunctions work in two planes corresponding to the ideational meta-function and interpersonal meta-function, external and internal respectively. Conjunctions working in external (ideational) plane present a relationship between processes (i.e., verbs) as a sequence of events that follow one another in time. For example, *first* [he entered], *next* [she entered], *finally* [the others entered]. And the conjunctions operating in internal (interpersonal) plane configure a relationship between propositions or proposals like *first* [they say this], *next* [they say that], *finally* [they say the other]. The semantic links at this level are the links between the debate phases not between phenomena of experience. How these conjunctions act as cohesive devices and capture the logical relation including the metaphorical mode of expression in a clause simplex as well as clause complex will be examined in certain selected texts of different genres.

Type of Genre – Conjunction Selection – Clausal Impact

It is needless to say that people use language to express their thoughts and ideas and exchange the same with others through interaction. And they being a part of a society whatever they think or comment get reflected in their language. Thus language is basically a socio-cultural construct which is used by different members of different societies or sub societies like academic disciplines in different ways to meet their various needs. Hence we have so many registers, so many genres and so many different styles realizing those genres through individualistic pattern. Undoubtedly, "structure is an essential part of the description; but it is interpreted as the outward form taken by systemic choices, not as the defining characteristic of language. A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice." (Halliday, Mattiessen, 2004, 23). When two clauses are combined whether both would be given equal status or one would be subordinated to the other depends entirely on the language user's choice and interpretation. Moreover, the user in the process of joining or binding clauses together chooses some meaning relation which to a great deal is influenced by the experiential function. Thus we see that the linking words or conjunctions in patterning the clause structure play a very vital role in foregrounding the thought conveying the underlying message. In fact, the paratactic constructions showing the same interdependency (equal status) and hypotactic constructions with unequal interdependency of clauses (unequal status) are often found to be employed by the writers and speakers to produce the desired stylistic effect. Today thus it becomes the need of the hour to impart some lessons to the students on stylistic usage of the conjunctions through namely parataxis and hypotaxis and to achieve this aim two texts belonging to different fields have been chosen. The selected fields include marketing (i.e. advertisement) and literature (literary writing) and they with the analysis appear below.

1) Field-Marketing; Text Type-Advertisement; Genre-Narrative; Style-Subjective.

I love my get-togethers - guests always go back with fond memories. I also love dining with my family in the garden – it delights me to see everyone so happy. These moments are special – and they are connected by music.

(Product-Music system, BOSE, March 2014, *India Today Woman, Supplement to India Today,* 17 March, 2014)

Analysis:

The above text belonging to the field of marketing is an advertisement on the renowned music system producing company BOSE. It depicts a narrative style with total six clauses arranged into three sentences as shown in a tabular form-

Sl. No.	Clause	Sentence Number
1	*I love my get-togethers*	1
2	*-guests always go back with fond memories.*	(cont.) 1
3	*I also love dining with my family in the garden*	2
4	*– it delights me to see everyone so happy.*	(cont.) 2
5	*These moments are special*	3
6	*– and they are connected by music.*	(cont.) 3

Table 1:

Here we find that the independent clauses 2, 4 and 6 are continuations of clause 1, 3 and 5 respectively. This tells us that these continuing clauses stand in a paratactic relationship with their preceding clauses thereby resulting into three compound sentences. Another notable thing here in the text is that each coordinate clause has been introduced by a typical punctuation *dash.* Now the two questions that these choices raise are:

1. Why does the advertising agency despite having options for other sentence types resort only to the compound sentence?

2. Why, although according to the general norm a coordinate clause is to be introduced by *and,* does a *dash* occur in that place?

Each of the following clauses in sentence 1 and 2 could have had been introduced by the subordinate conjunctions like *wherein* and *as* respectively and written as-

Sentence 1- *I love my get-togethers **wherein** guests always go back with fond memories.*

Sentence 2- *I also love dining with my family in the garden **as** it delights me to see everyone so happy.*

It is only in sentence 3 i.e. the last one, that *and* joins the coordinate clauses. But there also *dash* occurs in parallel to the other two sentences. However, this recurrence instead of creating monotony adds to the emphasis produced by the additive conjunction *and* thereby linking the new thought with the rest of the clauses.

Actually though written in the form of a narration the poem being an advertisement of a product makes the persuasive appeal through this striking use of the unexpected *dash.* This punctuation as a mark of deviation not only helps the text to draw the attention of the readers but also produces a delayed effect increasing the time duration between the clauses. And this in turn implicitly instills a reflective mood in the text. The simple declarative sentences subtly becomes a part of the readers own life experience and they (readers) get transcended to that place and environment of the advertising personality while sharing his thoughts and feelings. And it is this mental change at which the advertisement aims- to make him feel as the lines narrate and believe in BOSE to be the best and buy it.

2) Field-Literature; Text Type-Poetry (Anti slavery); Genre-Allegory.

He did not feel the driver's whip,

Nor the burning heat of the day;

For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,

And his lifeless body lay

A worn-out fetter, that the soul

Had broken and thrown away! (http://www.bartleby.com/356/31.html)

Analysis:

Here in this excerpt taken from *The slave's dream* by H. W. Longfellow we find the following clausal arrangement-

Sl. No.	Clause	Sentence Number
1	He did not feel the driver's…. day	1
2	For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep	(cont.) 1
3	And his lifeless body lay/A….fetter	(cont.) 1
4	that the soul had broken	(cont.) 1
5	that the soul had thrown away	(cont.) 1

Table 2:

The table shows that in this concluding stanza the clauses are so arranged that they form a compound complex whole with the first independent clause (clause 1), carrying a subordinate clause (clause 2), being coordinated with the second independent clause (i.e. clause 3) which again is joined with two subordinate (relative) clauses (clause 4 and clause 5) internally joined by *and*. However, the reason behind adopting such a complicated construction which involves both parataxis as well as hypotaxis is the subject matter of the poem the *dream* itself through which salvation is realized. Here the metaphor of salvation from the fetters of earthly life has been voiced through an implicit comparison with *Death,* personified and invested with the quality of rendering the slave freedom from all tortures; 'illuminated' *Land of Sleep* has been compared with the peaceful, blissful, fearless life after death and "his life-less body" has been implicitly compared with the "worn-out fetters" discarded by the departed soul. Had any other clause structure been chosen the allegorical note of the poem which is not merely a cry for political freedom but the freedom of soul soaring high and higher would have remained shrouded. That the poem is about a much dignified theme than slave torture and other earthly fetters, that it is a poem with a profound spiritual teaching that ultimately no shackle can keep the soul bound - it is ever free and ever blissful, would have remained unrealized.

Conclusion

Conjunctions, coordinating as well as subordinating, joining one clause with another to form clause complexes, thus provide key to the writer's mind and psychology. They function to provide textual transitions within narration and dialogues as well as they serve to facilitate

meaningful progressions from narration to dialogues and the vice versa. Moreover, as shows the analysis above, according to the aim of the writer clausal arrangement in the text changes, which not only creates stylistic differences in the text but also shows a shift in the theme under focus. So by examining the patterns of the independent and subordinate clauses the reader or the student immediately realizes the main motif of the speaker, understands that he is making one clause dominant over another just to emphasize on the main clause, or that the sentence initiates with the subordinate clause only to foreground that particular Theme. And in this way students gradually learn to identify the internal design of the text and read in between lines developing into a writer who can anticipate the needs of the audience. In fact, the success of a text not only depends on the writer but a great deal also on its readers. A good writing style does not only include the writer's ability to write spontaneous grammatically correct Standard English but also how far he can analyze the need and feel the pulse of his audience-otherwise he would never be able to touch their heart as we see in the first sample text on advertisement. Without organizing meanings effectively into clauses, clause complexes, paragraphs and texts, and without making the beginning and the end of all units of language organizational focal points, this is hard to be achieved. Hence it is very important to know how to order them using the cohesive conjunctions within texts mainly for the students who struggle with basic clause

structure and write texts made of clauses which do not have an effective progression of topical Themes. This besides improving the quality of business English dramatically, if proper attention being given to the thematic progression of information in texts, will also bring out an overall development in the writer's writing style engendering an insight into the subject making him adept in it. Hence Eggins writes,

"Understanding how the natural logic of English works to form clause complexes can thus help us understand the basic process of complexing: how language offers us the creative potential to 'blow out' or develop on the meaning in any grammatical unit."

(2004, 256)

Note: *The ideational meta-function shows the ways in which the clause represents the experiences an author or speaker expresses. The interpersonal meta-function determines how a clause is represented as an exchange between the speaker and the listener i.e. "his* (speaker's) *attitudes, and judgments, his encoding of the role relationships in the situation, and his motive in saying anything at all" (Halliday, 1976, 26-27) and hence helps not only to justify a particular grammatical choice made by the speaker but also to determine the mood (declarative, interrogative or imperative) of the clause. Textual meta-function tells how the clause is expressed as a message, how language is used to "provide for making links with itself and with the features of the situation in which it is used" (Halliday, 1970, 143).*

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