TUTORIAL
8.6

Groupings: Cohesion and Boundaries

Learners will gain an understanding of how smaller language units, such as words, phrases, and sentences, group together to form larger units on the paragraph level and above. They will be able to recognize and describe *cohesion* and *boundaries* in both the *grammatical* and *semantic* realms.

Form and Meaning

In doing text analysis it is essential that we have a clear understanding of the distinction between the *form* of the message and the *meaning* of the message. Sometimes the "form" is called the *grammatical and lexical*[1] features or the *surface structure*. And the "meaning" is described as the *semantics*, or the *deep structure*. See chart below.

Form	Meaning
Grammatical (and Lexical) Features	Semantics
Surface Structure	Deep Structure

- The *form* includes the actual language units such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences.
- The *form* also includes the way the language units are structured together.

- The *meaning* includes the concepts and inferences conveyed by language units.
- The *meaning* also includes the significant (meaningful) relationships between the units.

As we discuss the contrast between *form* and *meaning* in today's tutorial, we will use the term "*grammatical features*" (for form), and "*semantics*" (for meaning) to describe these two elements of communication and the contrast between them.

In every language on earth, the essence of communication is wrapped up in the relationship between the *grammatical features* and the *semantics*. These

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[1] "Lexical" (or "lexicon") primarily refers to *words*, but it is a broader term that also includes units smaller than *words* such as prefixes and suffixes (morphemes).

two elements of communication function together on all levels of language - from the morpheme and word levels all the way up to the highest discourse levels. It will be important to keep these principles in mind as we consider *groupings* in today's lesson.

Groupings[2]

In language there are *groupings* on many levels. Words group together to form sentences, sentences group together to form paragraphs, and paragraphs group together to form larger discourse units.

Every morpheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph is a single unit both semantically and grammatically. (We'll discuss the difference in a few minutes.) On every level, with every kind of language unit (word, phrase, sentence, etc.) we must ask the question, "What causes this word or phrase or sentence to be considered a single unit?" That question may be fairly easy to answer on the lower levels, such as words, and phrases. But what about the higher levels such as paragraphs? When we indent to mark a new paragraph, we are indicating that this new paragraph is a single language unit.

- How do we know where we should indent?

- How do we know what constitutes a paragraph?

- And how do we know when one paragraph ends and another begins?

The answers to these questions are the focus of today's tutorial. The three key essentials of communication that will give us the answers are *groupings*, *cohesion* and *boundaries*.

Cohesion and Boundaries[3]

The two primary elements that signal paragraph *groupings* (and groupings above the paragraph level) are *cohesion* and *boundaries*. For now we will just focus on the paragraph level.

- ***Cohesion*** includes all the criteria that produce internal interconnectedness within each unit. Cohesion is the "glue" that joins smaller languages units together to form larger units.

- ***Boundaries*** are the criteria that indicate a shift from one unit to another unit. With paragraphs, for example, *boundaries* let us know where one paragraph ends and the next paragraph begins.

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[2] Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning Based Translation: a guide to cross-language equivalence*, revised edition, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), pp. 381-97; 425-40.
[3] Ibid.

When we identify a *paragraph* within a text, there should be some kind of internal *cohesion* acting like *glue* to unite the information within that paragraph as a single unit. Also the paragraph should be bordered by *boundaries*, indicating a transition to the next paragraph. Then, of course, the following paragraph would have its own internal cohesion.

– **Cohesion** exists in both the *semantic* and the *grammatical* structure.

– **Boundaries** also exist in both the *semantic* and the *grammatical* structure.

Four Key Elements of Communication

Today, we're going to consider these four elements of communication:
– Semantic Cohesion
– Grammatical Cohesion
– Semantic Boundaries
– Grammatical Boundaries

Semantic Cohesion[4]

Remember: *cohesion* is the "glue" that cements thoughts together within a paragraph. It unites smaller units into a larger unit. Cohesion causes words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to function together as a single paragraph. Two common forms of semantic cohesion are *Span* and *Sequencing*.

"Span" as a Cohesive Element[5]

One of the most common features providing cohesion within a semantic paragraph is "Span." There are various kinds of spans:

– Participant Span
– Setting Span
– Event Span
– Time Span
– Location Span
– Etc.

"Span" Defined and Illustrated

Span is the continued focus given to a particular participant, setting, event, time, location, etc. through a portion of text. For example, if a major *participant*

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[4] Ibid., pp. 426-30.
[5] Ibid., pp. 156, 401, 426-31, 439, 453, 456.

is named Peter, as long as Peter continues to be the primary participant in focus, there would be a *participant span* related to Peter. When the participant span associated with Peter is finished, there could be another participant span focusing on a different participant—John, for example.

With *location span*, there could be one episode which takes place inside the house, followed by another episode that takes place outside.

With *setting span*, there may be one setting followed by a second setting—like two scenes in a play.

Spans can function at various levels—not only the paragraph level. For example, a participant span focusing on Peter could be on a higher level and include more than just a single paragraph.

Sequencing: Logical and Chronological[6]

Span is the most common kind of semantic cohesion, but it is not the only kind. Another feature that provides semantic cohesion within a paragraph is *Sequencing*. With *sequencing*, the thoughts within a semantic paragraph are clearly tied together by virtue of the fact that they must occur in a specific order—either logically or chronologically.

Logical Sequencing[7]

Sometimes a sequence of events has a "domino" effect, like a cascading series of chemical reactions. Logical sequencing often involves a cause-and-effect relationship between clauses or sentences within a paragraph.

- Event "A" caused event "B"
- Event "B" caused event "C"
- Event "C" caused event "D"
- ...and so on

This kind of *logical sequencing* "glues" these events together as a single semantic unit.

Chronological Sequencing

It is often necessary in narrative accounts for the stated series of events to occur in a particular sequence in order to make sense. Here is an example:

John woke up.
Immediately he got out of bed.
Then he went to the lake.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 30, 210, 305-10, 312, 348, 353-57, 400, 404, 429.
[7] Ibid., p. 439.

> And he caught a fish.

As with *logical sequencing*, the *chronological sequencing* in this example "glues" these events together as a single cohesive, semantic unit.

Grammatical Cohesion[8]

Every *semantic paragraph* has some kind of *semantic cohesion*, which "glues" the thoughts together within that paragraph. For every type of *semantic cohesion*, there will be grammatical features that correspond to the semantic cohesion. These grammatical features are called *grammatical cohesion*.

The semantic cohesion within any given paragraph is universal; it is the same in every language. But the grammatical features marking cohesion within the paragraph may be very different from one language to another. For example, if a paragraph has a *participant span* focusing on "Peter," then "Peter" will be the focus no matter what language that paragraph is translated into.

- The actual participant span (a semantic feature) would be the same in every language: "Peter" is in focus.
- But the way it is handled on the surface (grammatical features) could be vastly different in each language: the way each language lets the hearer know that "Peter" is still in focus.

This is the same principle that we see at work on every level. On the word level, for example, English the word "dog" is basically equivalent to the word "perro" in Spanish. The meaning (semantics) for both words is the same: a canine animal. The form, however, is very different: "dog," "perro."

In the same way when we analyze paragraph structure, the *semantic cohesion* within a paragraph (i.e., the *meaning*), will be the same in every language. But the *grammatical cohesion* (i.e., the *form*), will likely be different.

Grammatical Features which Encode "Spans"[9]

Participant Spans are often marked grammatically by the use of pronouns, generic substitution words, prefixes and suffixes on verbs, etc. For example, in a participant span focused on "Peter," he would initially be mentioned by name, and after that, mostly by pronouns as long as he remains in focus. Pronouns like "he," "him," and "his" referring to Peter could indicate that the narrator assumes Peter is still at the forefront of the hearers' thinking. These pronouns help maintain cohesiveness throughout the participant span.

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[8] Ibid., pp. 430-40.
[9] Ibid., pp. 433-34.

Time Spans may be marked on the surface by special time words, verb affixes, or the lack of a new time indication as long as it is still the same time span.

Location spans are often indicated by location words (here & there) or simply by not mentioning anything about the location again until there is a change. When there is a specific, explicit reference to a change in time and/or location, that is often an indication of the beginning of a new paragraph.

Grammatical Cohesion for Logical and Chronological Sequencing[10]

Discourses connected through logical sequencing tend to use connectors such as "and," "but," "therefore," "then," etc. to tie thoughts together within a paragraph. In a series of logically connected clauses which uses a lot of connectors, the lack of a connector at the beginning of a sentence or clause may be especially significant. It could signal a break in the cohesion, indicating that there is a boundary (new paragraph).

Recapitulation as Grammatical Cohesion[11]

A common form of grammatical cohesion in narrative paragraphs recapitulation. We looked at some examples of recapitulation in the previous tutorial when we were talking about thematic and non-thematic material. In recapitulation, some part of the information from the preceding unit is repeated at the beginning of the new unit. Here is an example of recapitulation (The recapitulation is in bold italics):

> We went and arrived at the village.
> ***Having arrived at the village***,
> > we went to the men's house and sat down.
> ***While we were sitting at the men's house***,
> > they brought us some food to eat.

Recapitulation can take several different forms:
- A word-for-word repetition of what was said
- A partial repetition of what was said:
  - Repeating only the last part
  - Repeating only the most important or central part
- A summary of what was said (not in the same words)
- A single word or short phrase which refers back to what was just said:

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[10] Ibid., pp. 435-37.
[11] Ibid., p. 485.

- o   "*...with that, they left*"
- o   "*...having done that, they came*"

Recapitulation "glues" together the thoughts within a paragraph as a single, cohesive grammatical unit. In a portion of text that uses a lot of recapitulation, it is often the absence of a recapitulation clause that deserves special attention. The lack of recapitulation in this kind of context may signal a boundary (new paragraph).

Example of Recapitulation as Cohesive "Glue"

In the Lamogai language of Papua New Guinea, recapitulation is often used to tie statements together within paragraphs in narrative discourse. Here is an example. The recapitulation is in boldfaced print:
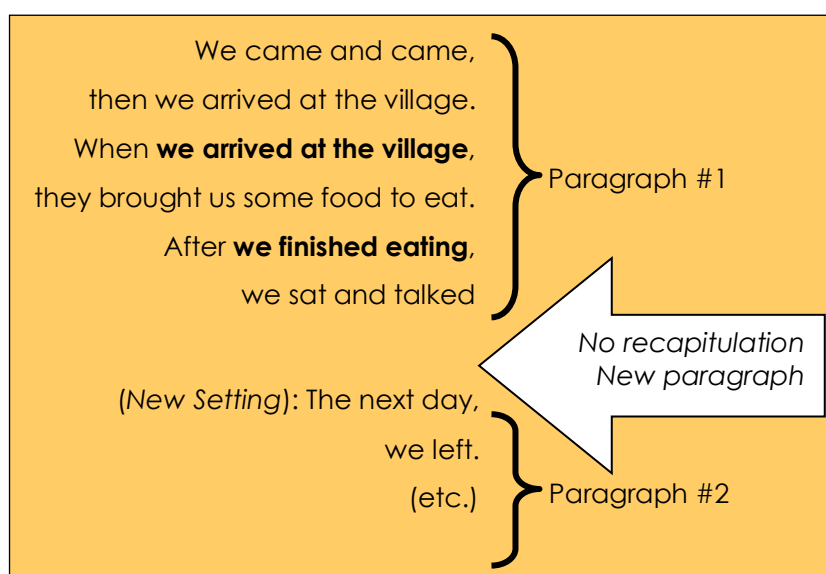
Cohesion and Boundaries Marked by Recapitulation

The recapitulation in this sequence creates grammatical cohesion, gluing the thoughts together within each semantic paragraph. The absence of recapitulation at the end of the first paragraph marks a semantic boundary. It is the start of a new semantic paragraph.

Each of the paragraphs in this example is a single semantic unit. Why? Because they each deal with distinct settings: the first paragraph takes place one day, and the second paragraph takes place the next day. These paragraphs are like separate scenes in a drama.

Along with being single semantic units, each of these paragraphs is also a single grammatical unit. Why? Because the clauses within each paragraph are tied together by the grammatical feature known as recapitulation.

Proper Alignment

When we speak or translate into any language, it is essential that our *semantic* units and *grammatical* units line up correctly. If the semantic paragraphs are not marked with the appropriate grammatical signals, our speech and translated materials could be confusing or unnatural—or possibly even unintelligible.

If, for example, I told a narrative story in Lamogai, and failed to include recapitulation in the appropriate places, or if I inserted it where it did not belong, my hearers could be confused—not knowing for sure when there was a semantic change of focus or setting.

The grammatical element of recapitulation helps the hearers pinpoint the semantic boundaries between the paragraphs. If the grammatical signals are wrong, the semantic units will be difficult to recognize.

Sending Conflicting Signals

Sometimes my wife I have been in the middle of a conversation and all of a sudden, in her mind, she changed to a different subject, but she forgot to let me know. So I assumed she was still talking about the same subject she had been talking about a moment earlier. In her mind, she imagined a semantic boundary. But she failed to include the appropriate grammatical signals to mark a grammatical boundary. This is what happens when our *grammatical boundaries* and *semantic boundaries* do not line up.

We have probably all experienced this kind of situation. If this happens when we are speaking our own language, how much more likely is it to happen when we speak another language not our own? The potential for misunderstanding is compounded by the fact that other languages have their own ways of marking grammatical cohesion and boundaries.

Every time there is a semantic shift to a different participant, time, location, event, etc., we need to mark it appropriately with the right kind of grammatical boundary markers.

More about Boundaries

- **Semantic Boundaries.** Semantically, a new narrative paragraph often starts with the introduction of a new incident, place, time, participant, or group of participants—just as cohesion within a paragraph often focuses on the *same* incident, place, time, participant, or group of participants.
- **Grammatical Boundaries.** Grammatically, there may be a connector or some other device used to signal the beginning of a new paragraph. However, there may not be an identifiable grammatical signal for every semantic boundary.

English: "Now…"
One grammatical signal commonly used in English to mark semantic boundaries is the word "now." Consider the way "now" is used in the following verses to introduce a new paragraph (or larger discourse unit):

Genesis 6:11
Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.

Genesis 11:1
Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

Genesis 12:10
Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while…

Genesis 27:5
Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau.

In reading these verses, it is clear that the word "now" is not functioning in its usual role as a present-tense time word. In these examples, the word "now" is functioning on the discourse level, marking a boundary—the beginning of a new paragraph or larger unit.

If you study the surrounding contexts, you will find that each of these new grammatical paragraphs correspond to a semantic shift of some kind. The grammatical marker "now" is informing the reader that this is the beginning of a new semantic paragraph or larger semantic unit.

Discourse markers are easy to miss because they often function on more than one level. They tend to hide. If you were studying the discourse structure of one of these Genesis passages, you might be tempted to say, "*There don't appear to be any discourse boundary markers here.*" It would be easy to skip over a simple word like "now" because you already know what it means on the word level and it doesn't occur to you that the same word could carry a different function on higher levels.

ACTIVITIES
Groupings: Cohesion and Boundaries

1. Determine the Paragraph Breaks for Mark 1 and 2

   - Don't just open a Bible to find the indentations

   - Be prepared to defend your decisions regarding where to break the paragraphs, giving specific examples of cohesion within the paragraphs and boundaries between them.

2. Mark Cohesion and Boundaries in Mark 1 and 2 – Use Translation **Activity Sheet 8.6**

   - What cohesive elements can you identify that are acting as "glue" to bond these language forms together as a single unit (semantically and grammatically)?

   - Can you identify anything at the beginning and/or end of each paragraph that may be signaling a semantic or grammatical boundary?

Further Explanation about the Activities

In a real translation project, you won't necessarily do all the work "in writing" as you are doing for these activities. You will learn to do much of it "in your head"—intuitively recognizing language features such as embedded discourses, groupings, cohesion and boundaries. However for this tutorial, we want you to work through these processes on paper, "showing your work," so to speak—as you would in a mathematics problem— since this will help you gain a more complete understanding of each step of the process.

Translation is mostly learned "on the job." The purpose of these Bible translation tutorials with their associated activities is *exposure*, not *mastery*. When it comes time to start translating, you should review these principles by attending translation workshops.

This tutorial focuses largely on the paragraph level and above. On these higher levels of discourse, there is much ambiguity and room for interpretation. This is borne out in the fact that the various English versions of the Bible do not all "indent" for a new paragraph at the same places. With this in mind, please note that there will not always be one, exactly correct answer for each part of this activity.

The goal of this lesson is that you understand the principles of cohesion (semantic and grammatical) and boundaries (semantic

and grammatical)—not that you get every answer precisely correct, because that will probably not be possible.

Mark 1				
	COHESION		BOUNDARIES	
	Semantic	Grammatical	Semantic	Grammatical
V. 4	Participant span (John) Location span **++** (Jordan River)	and, and… him, him… he and, and…		**
V. 9	Participant span (Jesus) Chronological Sequencing	Passive*: "was baptized" he, him… and	New participant (Jesus) New Time	Explicit mention of Time: "In those days"
V. 12	Participant Span (Jesus) Location Span (desert)	and, and… him, he…	New Location (into the desert)	Explicit mention of Time: "Immediately"

++ The "LOCATION" span may encompass several paragraphs on a higher discourse level.

* The "PASSIVE" voice is often used to maintain focus. (In this case Jesus is made the subject of the sentence even though he is not the one doing the action.) Other languages may have other devices that do the same thing. If you focus on *form*, you may literally reflect the Passive, but fail to reflect Semantic Focus. Some languages do not have a passive construction and those that do, may use it differently or less frequently.

** The semantic boundaries will definitely be there, but there may not always be an identifiable grammatical signal for each semantic boundary.