videos and listen music. In fact Britain is the country of the best musicians of the world.

3. (From a summary of a text on training astronauts; Italian learner.) The passage speaks about the astronaut's life. There are a lot of problems when one lives in space, and the most important is absence of gravity. It is necessary a long period of training to learn the basic operations which allow the life and the work within the Shuttle. They are trained in simple jobs like as cooking or daily routines and in different operations as emergency procedures, satellite repairs and so on.

(Author's data 1989)

6.5 Clause relations

In section 1.9 we looked at the clause-relational approach to written text, where it was stressed that the units of written discourse, rather than always being co-extensive with sentences (though they sometimes are), were best seen as functional segments (of anything from phrasal to paragraph length) which could be related to one another by a finite set of cognitive relations, such as cause–consequence, instrument–achievement, temporal sequence, and matching relations such as contrasting and equivalence. Individual segments of texts combined to form the logical structure of the whole and to form certain characteristic patterns (such as problem–solution). The sequencing of segments and how the relations between them are signalled were viewed as factors in textual coherence (see Winter 1977; Hoey 1983). In fact, the problems which could be subsumed under the notion of cohesion by conjunction in the last reader activity can also be viewed from a clause-relational standpoint, in that inappropriate use of conjunctions creates difficulties for the reader in relating segments of the text to one another coherently. But we also noted in Chapters 2 and 3 that the borderline between how conjunctions signal clause relations and how certain lexical items do the same is somewhat blurred, and that conjunctions such as *and*, *so* and *because* have their lexical equivalents in nouns, verbs and adjectives such as *additional*, *cause* (as noun or verb), *consequent(ce)*, *instrumental*, *reason*, and so on. Therefore, as well as activities that focus on conjunction and other local cohesive choices, activities aimed at the lexicon of clause-relational signals may also be useful. Segment-chain activities can be used for this purpose. An opening segment (which could be a sentence or more) and a closing segment of a text are given to a group of four or five students, and each individual is given the start of a segment containing a different lexical clause signal. Individuals complete their own

segment with as much text as they feel necessary, and then compare their segment with everyone else's in order to assemble the segments into a coherent text. This involves not only being satisfied with the individual segments but deciding on an appropriate sequence for the chain of clause relations that will lead logically to the given closing segment, and making any changes felt necessary to improve coherence. In the following example, groups of advanced German learners were given an opening sentence: 'Young people nowadays are exposed to a lot of violence on television, in films, and so on', and the conclusion: 'This would suggest that some sort of control or censorship may be necessary to solve the problem.' Individual segment-cards had starters such as:

The result is . . .
The reason is . . .
The fact is that . . .
This contrasts with . . .

Typical of the texts produced by the groups was:

(6.4) Young people nowadays are exposed to a lot of violence on television, in films, and so on. The result is that floods of blood suffocate the TV news and films all over Europe. This contrasts with countries where there is a strict control of TV and films. The reason is an uprooted, deculturalized young generation which has ceased to stick to the strigent values of their elders. The fact is that the situation has got worse and worse recently. This would suggest that some sort of control or censorship is necessary.

(Author's data 1989)

This particular group were unhappy with the relationship between the sentence beginning 'The reason is . . .' and the rest of the text, as they felt that since nothing had been said about young people's *behaviour*, it was pointless to give a reason for it, and a 'deculturalized generation' could hardly be cited as the *reason* for violence on television. The opinion was also voiced that the final text was a little unnatural with so many *front-placed* phrases such as 'the reason is . . .', once again raising new decisions on theme and rheme which had to be taken in relation to the text as a whole. The group finally decided to move the words 'the result is that' from sentence 2 to sentence 4 to replace 'the reason is', and then to reverse the order of sentences 3 and 4.

The aim of the activity was to reproduce some of the processes of choice that are involved in using the lexicon of clause-relational signals, once again as an alternative to only examining textual *products* containing such items. This does not mean that cohesive and clause-relational features cannot also be usefully tackled on readymade texts; alongside the process approach to writing, there is a healthy tradition of problem-solving

methods that include exercises in inserting missing linking and signal words in texts. These force the learner to make vocabulary choices that take more than the individual sentence into account (e.g. Coe, Rycroft and Ernest 1983).

Reader activity 4

Look at these pieces of learner data, in which there seem to be problems of how individual sentences relate to one another. Suggest ways in which, either by using conjunctions or lexical signals, the relationships can be made more clear.

1. My field of study concerns architecture. It's not a field of study, I think, it's a huge world going from science to knowledge of materials, to the history and composition of cultures, to knowledge of psychological needs and wishes of men and women in the world.
2. The problems of modern cities are derived from the Industrial Revolution, and also if the cities of my country were not interessed from this event it's true that there are relations between every cities.

(Author's data 1989)

6.6 Getting to grips with larger patterns

We have considered larger patterns of discourse organisation at various points in this book. The problem–solution pattern was illustrated in Chapter 1, and again in Chapter 3 in relation to vocabulary signals. Chapter 3 also looked at examples of claim–counterclaim (or hypothetical–real) patterns, and Chapters 2 and 5 referred to narrative patterns.

These are not the only patterns found in texts; another common one is the 'question–answer' pattern, which has some features in common with the problem–solution pattern, but whose primary motivation is the pursuit of a satisfactory answer to a question explicitly posed (usually) at the beginning of the text. For example: ⟶

(6.5)

London – too expensive?

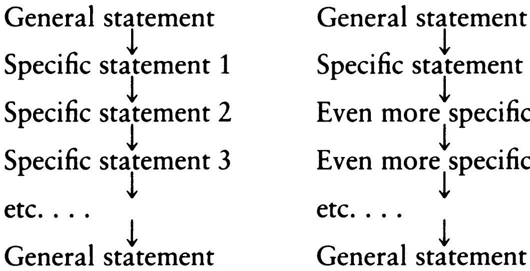
It's no surprise that London is the most expensive city to stay in, in Britain; we've all heard the horror stories. But just how expensive is it? According to international hotel consultants Horwath & Horwath's recent report, there are now five London hotels charging over £90 a night for a single room.

But even if your hotel choice is a little more modest, you'll still be forking out nearly twice as much for a night's stay in London as elsewhere in Britain. Average room rates last year worked out at around £19 in the provinces compared to £35 in London. ■

(from *Moneycare*, October 1985, p. 4)

In this text, a situation is established which contains an unanswered question. Answers are then offered, along with evidence or authoritative support for them. As with 'possible responses' in the problem–solution pattern, if the answer(s) offered do not answer the original question, then other answers are sought.

Other typical textual patterns include various permutations of the general–specific pattern, where macro-structures such as the following are found:



Examples of these patterns can be found in texts such as estate agents' sales literature in Britain, where a general description of the property for sale is followed by detailed descriptions of individual rooms/features, and then, finally a return to a general statement about the whole property again (for further discussion of different patterns, see Hoey 1983).

One point to note about patterns is that they are of no fixed size in terms of number of sentences or paragraphs contained in them. Another point is that any given text may contain more than one of the common patterns, either following one another or embedded within one another. Thus a problem–solution pattern may contain general–specific patterns within individual segments, or a claim–counterclaim pattern when proposed solutions are being evaluated, both of which features are present in this text:

(6.6)

Two-wheel solution

THOUSANDS of acres of our countryside are buried for ever under ribbons of concrete and tarmac every year.

Every few months a Government study or statement from an authoritative body claims that our motorway network is inadequate and must be extended.

Week by week the amount of car traffic on our roads grows, 13 per cent in the last year alone.

Each day as I walk to work, I see the ludicrous spectacle of hundreds of commuters sitting alone in four or five-seater cars and barely moving as fast as I can walk.

Our traffic crisis now presents us with the classic conservation dilemma – too many people making too much demand on inadequate resources.

There are four possible solutions: One, provide more resources, in this case build more roads and car parks; two, restrict the availability of motorised transport by artificially raising the price of vehicles and fuel: three, license only those with a good reason for needing motorised transport and prohibit unnecessary use; four reduce the average size of motor vehicles, especially those used for commuting purposes.

The ideal vehicle for transporting one person to and from his or her place of work has been in use for as long as the motor car. There is room on our existing roads for present and future needs but not if they are to be clogged up with half-empty cars when the motor cycle would serve the same purpose more than adequately.

Inevitably, objections will be raised to the promotion of the motor cycle as the saviour of our environment.

It is dangerous: It can be but three-fifths of all serious motor cycling accidents are caused by cars. So, by transferring some drivers from cars to motor cycles, the risk can immediately be reduced.

Department of Transport statistics have shown that a car driver is nine times more likely to take someone else with him in an accident than a motor cyclist, so riding a motor cycle is actually making a contribution to road safety.

Our climate is too cold and wet: Have we British really become so soft that we couldn't face a ride on a chilly morning? A good waterproof jacket costs a lot less than a new bypass.

But I must drive a BMW or Jaguar or I'll have no credibility with my clients, my boss, my shareholders: That is just a matter of fashion which most of the business community follow as slavishly as sheep.

If the right person were to set the lead and exchange his tin box traffic jammer for an environmentally responsible set of two wheels the rest of the business sheep would be falling over themselves to follow suit and some of our traffic problems would be solved at a stroke.

All that is needed is the willingness to sacrifice a little bit of comfort, take a little bit of a risk and dare to be a little different.

On the other hand, what is a few thousand acres of countryside each year and a ten-mile tailback?

(from *Cambridge Weekly News*, 22 September, p. 11)

Here we begin with a general statement and then, in terms of time, a series of evermore specific ones, culminating in a general statement in paragraph 5 of the *problem* that is to form the central focus of the text. The next two paragraphs then put forward possible solutions. The author's preferred solution, the motorcycle, is then evaluated in the rest of the text in a series of claims and counterclaims with justifications for the counterarguments. Only the last sentence breaks the completeness of the patterns by raising a counterargument that the author chooses to leave open, but which brings us right back to the statement of the problem in the very first sentence of his text. So the text is highly patterned, and its author has embedded patterns within the overall structure of the text.

Reader activity 5

What patterns can you observe in the following extracts from the opening lines of two magazine articles (you have already analysed the second one for modals in section 3.8)? What text pattern would you predict is going to be the dominant one in each of the texts as a whole?

1. Men can mend stereos, drive cars and budget their pay packets efficiently; women are helpless when faced with anything mechanical and are extravagant spenders. Chaps, of course, are cool and rational, while women are swayed by their emotions and are slaves to the lunar cycle. Men are polygamous, women monogamous. Ridiculous stereotypes? Absolutely. So why do quite a lot of men and rather a large number of women still half believe them?

   (*Options*, October 1985: 201)

2. **Can citrus peel harm?**

   Did you know that lemon and orange peel is coated with wax and chemicals?

   The skin of almost all citrus fruit sold in the UK is treated with fungicides to stop it going mouldy. And the glossy surface is the result of bathing the fruit in wax.

   Could the fungicides used on citrus peel be harmful – particularly since there's some evidence from laboratory tests that, in sufficient quantities, they may produce cancers or mutations in animals?

   The Government doesn't feel there is any need to worry because the levels of fungicide permitted are very low. The levels are based on the recommendations of UK and international advisory bodies for the amount that can be consumed daily without any significant effect.

   (from *Which?*, January 1984, p. 4)

Finding patterns in texts is a matter of interpretation by the reader, making use of clues and signals provided by the author; it is not a question of finding one single *right* answer, and it will often be possible to analyse a given text in more than one way. But certain patterns do tend to occur frequently in particular settings: the problem–solution pattern is frequent in advertising texts (one way to sell a product is to convince people they have a problem they may not be aware of) and in texts reporting technological advances (which are often seen as solving problems or removing obstacles). Claim–counterclaim texts are frequent in political journalism, as well as in the letters-to-the-editor pages of newspapers and magazines (but see Ghadessy 1983, for a problem–solution orientation to such letters). General–specific patterns can be found in encyclopaedias and other reference texts.

6.7 Patterns and the learner

If we look at learners' attempts to create textual patterns of the kinds we have described above, we find that there are sometimes problems. Just as we noted that learners whose overall competence was poor often got trapped in the difficulties of local encoding at the expense of larger discourse management in spoken discourse, so too can we observe such difficulties affecting learners' written work. If we look again at a text from which we took an extract earlier, this time reproducing the whole text, we can see an attempt at a general–specific pattern which seems to just end in midstream, lacking the typical return to a general statement after the specific examples that is expected in a well-formed text. On the other hand, one could equally say that the text sets out to create a number of descriptive contrasts, but gets 'lost' in a digression about Britain's ascendancy in the world of music:

(6.7) (*general statement*) The British, Italian and American teenagers are like, (*specific: modification of general statement*) but I think that for the Italian teenagers using to play football more than British and American teenagers.

(*specific: parallel modification*) So as for the American teenagers using to play rugby more than Italian and British teenagers. (*new specific*) For use, British teenagers like to look videos and listen music. (*digression?*) In fact Britain is the country of the best musicians of the world. (*end of text*)

(Author's data 1989)

It is extremely doubtful whether the writer (a highly educated, mature person) would write such an unstructured text in his own native language. It is quite clear that the stresses of creating the text (and the frequent

crossings-out in the manuscript support this) at the level of local choice of grammar and vocabulary has proved too much, and all sense of overall planning has been abandoned.

At lower levels, clause- and sentence-chaining activities can take the strain off macro-level planning but still produce a learner-generated text for scrutiny in class. As with the clause-relational chaining activity, each learner creates a textual segment relevant to a given topic, but with the segment-starters containing signal words of the (in this case) problem–solution structure. For an all-Italian group of architects and environmental planners on an intensive English course, the topic sentence was: 'Nowadays, more and more people want to use the countryside for leisure purposes.' The starters were:

> *But the problem is . . .*
> *Planners have an important role to play: . . .*
> *One possible solution to the problem is . . .*

These were designed to generate the *problem*, a *response* from planners and a possible *solution*. Thus the next stage of the activity, marshalling the individual segments into a coherent text, is guided by top–down constraints of typical problem–solution sequences. The discussion on sequencing of segments and necessary changes to the text was carried on in the learners' L1 on this occasion. The author of extract (6.7) was a member of the group whose final text is reproduced here:

(6.8) Nowadays, more and more people want to use the countryside for leisure purposes. But the problem is that the urbanism take over and dominates it. Planners have an important role to play: they have to ensure the community the right distinction between spaces for working time and for leisure purposes, and moreover to locate this last activities in the best convenient situation for most of people. One possible solution to the problem is that people have to know the advantages to live far from traffic and noise, because a calm place where everybody can have a relationship with itself, it is necessary for our soul.

(Author's data 1989)

The author of text (6.7) composed the sentence beginning 'but the problem is . . .', which reflects his lexico-grammatical weaknesses compared with the others in the group, but in terms of the final text, which was used for remedial vocabulary and grammar work, his contribution was as useful as the rest.

Reader activity 6 🗝

An advanced group of German learners of English produced the following sentences based on the topic card (seen by all members of the group) and segment-starters given (in italics). What, in your opinion, would be the best order for the sentences to make a satisfactory text? How many possible acceptable orders are there? What changes would you like to make to the wording of individual sentences?

Topic: 1. *Football hooliganism is a common phenomenon in a lot of European countries.*
2. *One possible solution* to reduce the worst effects might be, first of all, to stop violent fans from entering the stadium.
3. *The reason* for the fans aggressive behaviour is their social background.
4. *The problem* is how to interfere without cancelling all football matches and without frustrating the real non-violent fans.
5. *The situation* can be described as follows: thousands of people are injured every weekend and a lot of damage is done to the stadiums.

(Author's data 1989)

Another interesting aspect of learners' success or otherwise in macro-level communication in their writing is how they use the kind of discourse-signalling vocabulary discussed in sections 3.5–6. What is sometimes observable in learner data is that, although the overall patterning is present, misuse of signalling words can disorient the reader somewhat. This extract is from a summary of a text on the problems of training astronauts to live in space:

(6.9) As soon as a man of our century realizes we're going to reach the complete control of communicating and travelling in space, he has to consider the huge number of difficulties that overcome with the developing of space travels.

Science and technique may develop to hinder a lot of problems, like for example loss of oxygen, intense cold, severe radiation bursts and so on.

(Author's data 1989)

The first infelicity in discourse-signalling vocabulary occurs with 'difficulties that overcome', but here it is not entirely clear whether the problem is lexical; it may be (interference from a cognate form in Italian which hides a false friend) or it could be syntactic, insomuch as many languages use a 'that' construction where English would have an infinitive ('difficulties *to*

overcome'), but the vocabulary-choice tends to be dominated by the quite plausible syntax here, and most readers presented with the text suffer disorientation. The second error, 'to *hinder* a lot of problems' is more obviously lexical, and underlines the point made in Chapter 3 about the importance of grouping words together along discourse–functional lines, and suggests a role for the teaching of collocating pairs in the case of such words. A similar collocational problem seems to have occurred in the football hooliganism text in Reader activity 6: one does not normally *interfere* to solve a problem (interference usually suggests making things worse); in English, one *intervenes* to solve problems. Such local errors disorient the reader in the sense that he/she is continuously making predictions about the text as a whole and its likely sequencing and patterning.

6.8 Culture and rhetoric

Our data examples so far show one thing: European learners of English in general are perfectly capable of transferring discourse patterns such as problem–solution patterns from their L1 to an L2 (as witnessed in the chaining activities). Where problems arise, they seem to be relatable to lack of linguistic competence at the lexico-grammatical level and the natural difficulties of coping with global planning when one is under great stress encoding at the sentence level. But what of the writing of learners from cultures quite different from Western ones? Are there established norms of writing in other literate cultures that are different and might therefore be expected to interfere with the macro-level decision-making of the learner writing in English?

The area of cross-cultural rhetoric studies has spawned a vast literature of its own, and a somewhat confusing one. On the one hand, linguists claim to have evidence of textual patterns in other languages not found in English writing; on the other hand, there is disagreement over whether these patterns are transferred and cause interference when the learner writes in English. A paper by Kaplan (1966), in which he posited a typology for textual progression with different types associated with different cultures, was very influential, but has since been undermined by other studies. Kaplan suggested that English text was characteristically linear and hierarchical, while Semitic (Hebrew and Arabic) text was characterised by parallelism; Oriental text had 'indirection' as a characteristic, and Russian and Romance texts had a preference for digressions. Some evidence seems to support differences in textual structure, such as the acceptability in Japanese texts of what seems to the English eye to be the abrupt insertion of irrelevant matter (see Hinds 1983), or certain features of word order and use of conjunctions that are redolent of Indian languages being carried over into writing in Indian English (Kachru 1987). Similarly, differences in