

Formal links and contextual links are two ways that language is made **coherent**, meaning it's easy to follow and understand. While both create connections, they do it in different ways. Formal links use explicit linguistic features, while contextual links rely on shared knowledge and the situation.

Formal Links

Formal links, also called **cohesive devices**, are grammatical and lexical ties that connect sentences. They are explicit and "formal" because the connection is built directly into the language of the text itself. You can spot these links by analyzing the words on the page or the sounds in the conversation.

- **Reference:** A word that refers to another word or idea in the text. This is the most common type. For example, in the sentence "My friend bought a new car. **She** loves it," the pronoun "**she**" formally links back to "my friend."
 - **Conjunctions:** Words that show a logical relationship between sentences. For example, "**Therefore,**" "**because,**" or "**and.**" "It was raining outside, **so** we stayed in."
 - **Substitution:** Replacing a phrase with a single word to avoid repetition. For example, "Did you finish the work?" "**I did.**" (The word "did" substitutes for "finished the work.")
 - **Ellipsis:** Leaving out words that can be understood from the context. For example, "John bought a cake, and Mary [bought] one too."
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Contextual Links

Contextual links, on the other hand, are connections that are not explicitly stated in the language but are understood through our knowledge of the world, the situation, and the people involved. They rely on shared assumptions and the non-linguistic aspects of communication.

- **Shared Knowledge:** The people communicating have background knowledge that allows them to understand a statement without a formal link. For example, in the conversation "Did you enjoy the concert?" "**The singer was amazing,**" the second statement is a coherent response because we assume the singer is a part of the concert.
- **Physical Context:** The meaning of the language is tied to what is happening or present in the physical environment. For example, if two people are looking at a painting and one says, "**The colors are beautiful,**" the meaning is clear because the physical context (the painting) makes it obvious what "the colors" refers to.
- **Implied Actions:** A statement can function as a request or command based on the situation, not on the words themselves. For instance, "It's cold in here" is a statement of fact, but when said in a room with an open window, it's understood as a polite request to close the window.

The Relationship

Formal links and contextual links work together to create a **coherent discourse**. While formal links provide explicit connections, contextual links fill in the gaps and allow for more efficient and natural communication by relying on shared understanding. A text that uses only formal links might sound stiff and repetitive, while one that relies too heavily on contextual links might be confusing to someone who lacks the necessary background knowledge

