

# The Nature and Workings of Lexical Substitution in English Discourse

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## 0. Introduction

This paper explores the nature and workings of lexical substitution in English grammar and discourse. Lexical substitution is defined as ‘the use of a different lexical item to avoid repetition of the same item in a discourse.’ Examples are plentiful in English, which is presumably connected to one of the notable features of the language, i.e. repetition is to be avoided wherever possible. I argue for the threefold workings of lexical substitution: to avoid repetition and to serve the dual purpose of cohesion and semantic enrichment of the utterance. Not many previous approaches are found in this field, except for Sasaki (1950), Hasan (1968), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Chafe (1971, 1974).

Various cohesive devices, such as ‘reiteration’ and ‘grammatical cohesion’ are commonly found in many languages. In English, a closed class of grammaticalized items are used for anaphoric reference and grammatical cohesion: both the definite article and personal pronouns play major roles in all types of discourse, referring to antecedents or whatever has appeared in the preceding context. Japanese, however, has no such fully grammaticalized referential devices, and relies heavily on reiteration and zero form when it comes to referring to items in the prior discourse<sup>1</sup>. Japanese preference for zero form whenever the referent is retrievable from context leaves practically no room for lexical substitution. When an ostensive reference to previous items is necessary in Japanese, the same word will be repeated over and over again, exhibiting a marked contrast to English practices. The following discussion focuses on the characteristics and pragmatic functions of lexical substitution in English, with occasional reference to other related phenomena.

## 1. Anaphoric Devices in English

Anaphoric reference in English discourse can be made either by grammatical means or lexical means. Grammatical referential devices, such as *the, she, it, they, that, those* are omnipresent in English. The definite article, for example, denotes the identifiability of the noun phrase referent. A personal pronoun triggers a search in the discourse environment for an item with the same features as itself, regarding person, number and gender. A demonstrative pronoun likewise refers to a thing or idea in what went before.

In English, a lexical noun cannot be used to refer to a previously evoked item by itself. It must be accompanied by *the* to constitute a referential noun phrase. But, the referential role, relating a new lexical item to a discourse-old entity, is filled by the definite article<sup>2</sup>. The noun is simply a substitute for another noun. The use of nouns and other lexical items in this capacity is what we call ‘lexical substitution.’ Abundance of lexical substitution in spoken and written English reflects the language’s general reluctance to reiterate the same expression in a discourse. One of the key functions of lexical substitution is to avoid reiteration.

Though the definite article *the* is the main player in nominal substitutions, other definite determiners, such as *this, those, my*, work the same way. A noun phrase *this suggestion*, for example, can be used to refer to previously mentioned noun phrases like *a suggestion, a proposal, my idea*, etc. When *this suggestion* refers to *a suggestion*, it is a case of ‘lexical repetition’. When it refers to *a proposal* or *my idea*, it is a type of ‘lexical substitution’: a near-synonym is employed to replace the previous mentioned item with similar semantic contents.

## 2. Two Types of Function

In our daily lives it is not uncommon for a speaker to have several choices in referring to an item in the environment. Thus, if your friend has a Volkswagen, which she calls Rosie, you may use any of the following words in referring to it.

- (1) a. Rosie, Volkswagen, Beetle, compact, car, vehicle

What you eventually choose in a specific situation depends on linguistic as well as extra-linguistic contexts. Equally important are human factors such as the speaker's mental state and attitude, which are closely connected to his or her familiarity with the car, but do not automatically correspond with it. Even when the speaker's knowledge includes the type and the pet name of the car, it is quite possible for him or her to call it *a car*. For instance, when speaking to a stranger on the sidewalk in front of the friend's garage, he or she may as well utter the following.

- (1) b. Watch out! A *car* is coming.

It is also conceivable for a speaker to use all the words in (1a) one after another in a single stretch of discourse.

Let us begin our discussion on the functions of lexical substitution by looking at the following examples.

- (2) a. There's a *whale* on the beach.  
 b. Let's go and look at the *whale*.  
 c. Let's go look at it.  
 d. Let's go look at the *animal*. (Chafe 1971)

When someone utters (2a) and the others in the speech situation respond to it, they may choose to say either (2b), (2c) or (2d). The response by (2b) is a repetition of the same lexical item *whale*. The response by (2c) uses a pronoun *it*, which shares the same grammatical features with *whale*, i.e. [+Countable] [-Human] [-Plural]. The response by (2d) is an example of lexical substitution: a new lexical item *animal* is used to replace *whale*. In all the three responses, *the whale*, *it* and *the animal* make reference to *a whale* in (2a) in their respective ways.

The focus of the current study is on the semantic nature and discourse functions of lexical substitution exemplified by (2d). Though the definite determiner occurring with the new lexical item denotes the identifiability of its referent, it alone does not insure that the two words have the same reference. What makes the utterance (2a) and (2d) hang together as a coherent discourse is a semantic concept of 'implication': i.e. an implicational relation 'If x is a whale, then x is an animal' exists between the two lexical items. Here is another key function of lexical substitution, *viz.* to contribute to the coherence of the discourse through semantic implication.

### 3. Substitution and Reference

In the previous section, we made a cursory glance at the cohesive functions of lexical substitution. Before moving on to discuss the third function, let us look at other cohesive devices in English. As we have noted above, the principal cohesive devices are pronouns and the definite article, which are called 'grammatical reference items.'

The following discourse exemplify yet another cohesive device called 'grammatical substitution.'

- (3) a. Lend me a pen. --- You can borrow this *one*.  
 b. She sings. In fact they both *do*.  
 c. Has he left? --- I think *so*. (Hasan 1968: 83)

The italicized words in (3) are all called 'grammatical substitutes' by Hasan (1968): *one* replaces a noun *pen* in (3a), *do* takes the place of a verb *sing* in (3b) and the sentence *he has left* is replaced by *so* in (3c). 'Grammatical substitution' differs from 'lexical substitution' in that the substitute is a function word with no lexical contents: interpretation of function words, like *one*, *do* and *so*, relies solely on their antecedents.

The difference between 'grammatical substitution' and 'grammatical reference,' however, does not appear to be so clear-cut, but we point out four distinctive characteristics that separate the two grammatical devices. (i) Unlike grammatical substitutes, grammatical reference items have some semantic contents. For example, pronoun *it* embodies information to the effect that it refers to a singular neuter entity. (ii) A grammatical reference item may refer to an extra-linguistic entity, while a grammatical substitute may not. For example, pronoun *he* may be used to refer to a person in the speech situation. (iii) The antecedent of a grammatical reference item is limited to a noun phrase, but the antecedent of a grammatical substitute is either a noun, a verb or a sentence. (iv) In the case of nominal reference, the syntactic function of the antecedent and the reference item may differ, but the syntactic function of the grammatical substitute must remain the same as that of the antecedent. For ex-

ample, *she* (nominative pronoun in syntactic subject position) can be used to refer to *her* (objective pronoun in syntactic object position). But the grammatical substitute *one* may occupy only the same syntactic position as its antecedent.

Returning to the topic of this paper, ‘lexical substitution’ exhibits characteristics of both reference and repetition. It is considered referential, since ( i ) the substitute word has semantic contents, and ( ii ) the nominal substitute is accompanied by a definite article, which is a grammatical reference item. It is nevertheless regarded as substitution, for not only nouns but also verbs and adjectives, which do not refer, are substituted (cf. Section 14).

#### 4 . Grammatical Substitution and Lexical Substitution

As far as I can tell, Hasan (1968) is the first linguist who used the term ‘lexical substitution.’ The italicized words below are some of her examples.

- ( 4 ) a . Accordingly...I took leave, and turned to the *ascent* of the peak. The *climb* is perfectly easy...  
 b . Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran  
     And leaping down the ridges lightly, plung’d  
     Among the bulrush beds, and clutch’d the *sword*  
     And lightly wheel’d and threw it. The great *brand*  
     Made lightning’s in the splendour of the moon. (Hasan 1968: 97)

(4a) is an example from a colloquial discourse and (4b) is from a verse.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) conducted a comprehensive study of cohesion in English. But their discussion of lexical cohesion centered around the distinction of grammatical and lexical devices, classification, and the cohesive role of each type in a discourse<sup>3</sup>. They did not show interest in the function of lexical substitution other than that of cohesion. Consider the following examples.

- ( 5 ) a . What should I do with *all this crockery*? --- Leave *the stuff* there; someone’ll come and put it away.  
 b . We all *kept quiet*. That seemed *the best move*.  
 c . Can you tell me where to stay in *Geneva*? I’ve never been to *the place*.  
 d . Henry seems convinced *there’s money in dairy farming*. I don’t know what gave him *that idea*.

The italicized expressions in (5) are examples with ‘general nouns’ used as substitutes. General nouns are lexical items used more or less like grammatical reference items. Halliday and Hasan’s list of English general nouns is given below.

- ( 6 ) a . people, person, man, woman, child, boy, girl  
 b . creature  
 c . thing, object  
 d . stuff  
 e . business, affair, matter  
 f . move  
 g . place  
 h . question, idea (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 274)

There are seven nouns of human reference (6a), followed by abstract nouns, three in (6e) and two in (6h), which, as we see below in Section 15, are also used to refer to a preceding sentence or a stretch of discourse. According to Halliday and Hasan, substitution by a general noun presents a borderline case between grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. This point will be questioned in the next section.

Let us compare the italicized words in following sentences.

- ( 7 ) There’s *a boy* climbing that tree.  
 a . *The boy*’s going to fall if he doesn’t take care.  
 b . *The lad*’s going to fall if he doesn’t take care.

- c. *The child's* going to fall if he doesn't take care.  
 d. *The idiot's* going to fall if he doesn't take care. (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 279–280)

What we see in (7a) is a repetition of the same lexical item, and in (7b) a substitution by a synonymous word, in (7c) a superordinate term and in (7c) an epithet. The following sentences show a similar set of examples.

- (8) There's a *boy* climbing *the old elm*.  
 a. *That elm* isn't very safe.  
 b. *That tree* isn't very safe.  
 c. *That old thing* isn't very safe. (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 280)

Here, the speaker of (8a) repeats the same lexical item, but the speakers of (8b) and (8c) uses a superordinate term and a general noun, respectively, to replace the original lexical item.

In (7b-d) and (8b-c), lexical substitution is chosen rather than grammatical reference (i.e. use of pronouns *he* and *it*). What is most relevant for our purposes is the status of the types represented by (7c), (8b) and (8c). If we follow Halliday and Hasan, (8c) must be treated differently from (7c) and (8c), since *child* and *thing* are general nouns, while *tree* is not. For reasons that will be given below in Section 8, my position is to treat all as lexical substitution whether the substitute term is a general noun or not.

The following (14) shows a list of devices used in English to avoid repetition of nouns/noun phrases in a discourse.

- (9) Substitute items used to replace N/NP in English discourse  
 1. pronoun (grammatical reference)  
 2. *one/ones, same, do, so, no* (grammatical substitution)  
 3. lexical items (lexical substitution)  
 a. general nouns  
 b. synonyms, near-synonyms  
 c. superordinate terms  
 d. epithets

## 5. Discourse Functions of Lexical Substitution

The list above in (9) indicates that there are four types of lexical substitution, classified in terms of the items used. They all share the following discourse functions.

- (10) a. Lexical substitution is a cohesive device just like grammatical reference and grammatical substitution.  
 b. Lexical substitution plays a role in indicating the speaker's state, attitude and judgment of the referent.

Our discussions thus far have centered around (10a). In the following four sections, we will present evidence for (10b), the third key function of lexical substitution, by examining the four kinds of lexical substitutes in (9.3).

## 6. General Nouns

As we noted in the beginning of the paper, English tends to avoid repetition in discourse. General nouns make great contribution in this regard by providing powerful alternatives to pronouns. Comparing (6) with the following list of general nouns given by Hasan (1968), we notice that the two kinds of epithet, *viz.* pronominal epithet (e.g. *idiot, fool, devil*) and terms of endearment (e.g. *dear, darling*) have been removed from the 1976 version<sup>4</sup>.

- (11) thing, object, business, affair  
 animal, creature  
 person, people, man, woman, boy, girl, fellow, bloke  
 idiot, fool, devil  
 dear, darling

It is not my intention to pursue a complete list of general nouns but (6) is clearly an improvement from (11): the semantic contents of general nouns are supposedly thin and colorless, but epithets are full of character, useful for conveying attitudinal and emotional meanings. The two evidently do not belong to each other.

Though they usually receive little attention for themselves, general nouns are widely used in spoken discourse, playing a big role in discourse cohesion. What is most interesting from the viewpoint of pragmatics is their role in the other discourse function, i.e. conveying the speaker's attitude. Being low in semantic contents, general nouns themselves carry no emotional meaning but are freely combined with a variety of attitudinal adjectives. Let us look at the following examples.

- (12) a. I've been to see my great-aunt. *The poor old girl's* getting very forgetful these days.  
 b. Alice caught the baby with some difficulty...*The poor little thing* was snorting like a steam-engine when she caught it. (Hasan 1968: 96)  
 c. I just met John. *The lucky fellow* won the lottery.

In (12), attitudinal adjectives, *poor old*, *little*, *lucky*, serve to indicate how the speakers feel about the referents of *my great-aunt*, *the baby*, *John*, respectively.

General nouns accompanied by the definite article alone are regularly regarded as semantically void and are equivalents of pronouns. In actuality, the two are not mutually interchangeable. There are some grammatical environments, (5b) and (5c) for example, where pronouns simply cannot occur. Another relevant factor is that semantic contents of general nouns are not as low as those of pronouns. What I demonstrate is that the choice of a general noun itself may sometimes serve to convey speaker's judgment and mental attitude. Consider the following examples.

- (13) a. I've just read John's essay. *The whole thing* is very well thought out.  
 b. Bill seems very worried about something. I think you ought to have a talk with *the boy*. (Hasan 1968: 96)

Hasan treats cases like (12) as exceptional and maintains that the italicized expressions in (13) are cases of an item of higher generality having been selected as a substitute with no additional meanings. My position is different from her regarding this point. The italicized noun phrases in (13) do not present simple cases of substitution. The mere fact that general nouns, *thing* and *boy*, are employed (not pronouns like *it* or *him*, or repetitions like *the essay* or *Bill*) shows the speaker's attitude toward the referents of *John's essay* and *Bill*, respectively. I argue that selection of a lexical substitute, in general, has the effect of signaling the speaker's conscious or unconscious attitude toward the referents. (13a) has the implication that the speaker's attitude toward John's essay is casual and favorable., and (13b) implies that Bill is a boy from the speaker's point of view.

As to which grammatical or semantic item to use, the speaker has a choice in accordance to the semantic content of the antecedent and his or her own attitude and disposition. Another relevant factor is the semantic contents of the discourse as a whole. Consider the following sentence.

- (14) Didn't everyone make it clear they expected *the minister* to resign? --- They did. But it seems to have made no impression on *the man*. (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 274-275)

In (14) *the minister* is replaced by *the man*. The key point in this case is the fact that the antecedent is a title. The discourse contents make it clear that the speaker has a doubt about the minister's quality as the high-ranking public officer. The use of the pronoun *him* is excluded here, because to do so would lead to the acceptance of his position as the minister.

## 7. Synonyms and Near-Synonyms

To use a synonym or a near synonym as a substitute has the effect of shedding light on a different aspect of the NP referent. For example, *sword* and *brand* in (4b) and *boy* and *lad* in (7) each highlight a different feature of the same thing/person. Lexical substitution also adds a different color or a new perspective to the depicted scene. The quaint word *brand* in (4b) produces ancient atmosphere and the regional *lad* in (7) suggests pastoral scenery.

The pairing of *ascent* and *climb*, which are of different etymological origins, in (4a), presents a typical example of alternation of a more abstract Latinate vocabulary and a more concrete Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. The abundance of this type of synonymous pairs is a special feature of the English language, providing its speakers with extensive sources of lexical substi-

tutes.

## 8. Superordinate Terms

There are many instances of superordinate terms used as lexical substitutes. Examples in (2d), (7c), (8b), (12a) and (12c) are of this type. The following list shows hyponym and superordinate term pair we have looked at above.

(15)	hyponym		superordinate term	
	i. whale	<	animal	(2d)
	ii. boy	<	child	(7c)
	iii. elm	<	tree	(8b)
	iv. great-aunt	<	girl	(12a)
	(v. John	<	fellow	(12c) <sup>5</sup>

The reason why superordinate terms are frequently employed as substitutes is simply because of the maxim of ‘the greater serves for the lesser’: the extension of a hyponym is included in the extension of its superordinate term. Once the identity of a referent is established in a discourse, no inconvenience will be caused if it is later substituted by a less specific term.

One thing to be noted here is that hierarchical relationships are found between some of the general nouns of human reference in (6a), too. For example, (7c) is an example of a superordinate term (*child*) used to replace a hyponym (*boy*). From a broader perspective, ‘lexical substitution by general noun’ is a subset of ‘substitution by superordinate term’, only difference being the level of generality.

## 9. Epithet

Substitution by epithets is a case where the speaker’s attitude toward the referent and/or the situation is ostensibly shown. For example, in (7d) above, the epithet *idiot* is applied to the boy who is trying to climb the tree. The choice of such a term itself reflects the speaker’s disapproval of the boy’s action. Sometimes an adjective of subjective evaluation accompanies the epithet, as in the following example.

(16) Henry’s thinking of throwing up his job. Do go and talk to *the wretched fool*.

The combination of two attitudinal items, an adjective and an epithet, replacing a proper noun in the preceding sentence in (16), presents the speaker’s negative assessment of Henry (and his conduct) openly foregrounded. But he is not making an assertion to the effect that ‘Henry is a wretched fool.’ By recourse to lexical substitution, the speaker succeeds in presenting one’s opinion or idea as a presupposition, as if it is an established fact. Lexical substitution can be an effective communicative tool.

## 10. Expressing the State of the Speaker

If we go back once more to (2), it may look as if there is no detestable speaker intention in choosing (2d) rather than (2b) or (2c). The lexical substitute *animal* does not contain any subjective judgment in itself. However as we have noted above, the selection of substitute item itself reflects the state of the speaker. The speaker of (2d) shows more than a passive response to the news brought about by (2a). He may as well be demonstrating his knowledge of biology that ‘a whale is not a fish but an animal.’ This is an example of a word of little semantic contents serving to reflect what is going on in the speaker’s mind.

The plurality of language function was first pointed out by Russell (1940: 195ff.) in his philosophical framework. Russell identified three purposes that language serves: (i) to indicate facts, (ii) to express the state of the speaker, (iii) to alter the state of the hearer. These three purposes are not always present: some utterances involve only one or two. In view of what we have seen above, we can say, for example, that (2a) involves (i) and probably (iii) but not (ii); (2b) involve (iii) and sometimes (ii), but not (i); (2c) involves (iii), but not (i) nor (ii); (2d) involves (ii) and (iii), but not (i).

Regarding Russell’s second purpose, languages do contain many affect-loaded vocabularies, which ostensibly indicate the status of the speaker: some are favorable (e.g. terms of endearment), others are pejorative (e.g. pronominal epithets). Their use, however, constitutes only a part of what Russell means by (ii). A choice of seemingly neutral vocabulary as a lexical

substitute may well serve to express the state of the speaker.

## 11. Generality of Substitute Expression

There have been two different views on the semantic generality of lexical substitute. One is that it only needs to be similar in meaning to the antecedent. The other is that substitution must occur only in one direction, *viz.* ‘from more specific to more general.’ The first view is based on examples like (4) and the second view is based on the widespread occurrence of general nouns as substitutes.

We may also speculate that, in the case of biological terminology, the ones that are used most often as lexical substitute are ‘names of species,’ which are familiar and not too specialized. However, neither *animal* nor *tree*, which we have seen above, is a name of a species. (They both denote categories larger than species.) Moreover, it is theoretically possible to use a term of still larger category, such as *sea beast* or *creature*, for example, as a substitute for *whale*. It is, therefore, difficult to define the level of generality of lexical substitute in any systematic way.

There are various kinds of expressions capable of referring to a thing or a person in our environment, as we have noted in connection with (1). According to Sasaki (1950), a pioneer work in this field, lexical substitutions takes place in the order of ‘from more specific to more general.’ Thus, in the case of (1), a speaker may refer to the car in question using one word in the list after another, from left to right, but not in any other order. Let us look at the following discourse.

- (17) *The Queen Elizabeth* is on her maiden voyage. *The merchant-ship* is nearly 100 miles from the English shore. When *the vessel* finally arrives... (Sasaki 1950: 8)

The italicized expressions in (17) all refer to one and the same ship and their order of appearance is from the more specific to the more general. But Sasaki’s ‘from more specific to more general’ constraint is not invincible, for it is unable to explain cases like (4), for instance. Lexical substitution is not free from restrictions, and both the constraint on the semantic generality and the constraint on the order of occurrence appear to be in partial operation.

## 12. Conditions for Lexical Substitution

Based on the findings in the preceding sections, we set up the following four general conditions for lexical substitute.

- (18) a. The semantic generality level of a lexical substitute must be the same or lower than that of its antecedent.  
 b. Proper nouns and technical terms<sup>6</sup> are not used as lexical substitutes.  
 c. No defining element other than the ones carried over from the antecedents is accepted.  
 d. Only non-defining modifiers (e.g. attitudinal adjectives) are accepted.

It is possible to combine (18a) and (18b) into one constraint, and (18c) and (18d) are certainly related to each other. In fact, (18b) is regarded as a corollary of (18a), and (18c) and (18d) in combination constitute a necessary condition for a substitute to guarantee its coreferentiality with its antecedent.

## 13. Form and Function of Substitute Expressions

The choice of a substitute term from among the possible candidates depends on linguistic as well as extra-linguistic contexts, the speaker’s judgment, attitude and purpose of utterance. From the viewpoints of form and function, we can discern the following three major types of lexical substitution.

- (19) a. Simple-straightforward type  
 i. general noun or name of species  
 ii. no modifier  
 iii. complicated antecedent (highly specific, structurally complex, or semantically heavy)  
 b. Expressive type  
 i. synonym or near-synonym (including compounds, archaic expressions, dialects, and words of different etymology)  
 ii. no modifier

- iii. same level of complexity as antecedent
- iv. expressivity is increased through show of knowledge, addition of different or wider angle, etc.
- c. Subjective type
  - i. word of the same or higher level of generality as the antecedent (including epithets and general nouns)
  - ii. frequently accompany non-defining modifiers (attitudinal or evaluative adjectives)
  - iii. semantic contents and pragmatic effects are added

The three-fold division in (19) is only a rough sketch. Each type may be subdivided into two or more subtypes. There may also be some borderline cases. Those in (5), for example, are ‘simple-straightforward’ type, (4a), (7b), (7c), (8a) and (8b) are ‘expressive type’ and (7d), (8c), (12) and (15) are ‘subjective type’. Examples (13b) and (14) are borderline cases between ‘simple-straightforward typ’ and ‘subjective type’.

The following (20) appears to be a violation of constraint (18a)

- (20) Once upon a time, when your Granny’s granny was your age, *a little yellow bird* lived in a cage...*the canary* sang...

If we compare *bird* and *canary*, the former is higher in generality scale than the latter. When we think in terms of noun phrase, however, *a little yellow bird* is on a par with *canary* in generality scale. As for complexity, the antecedent is structurally more complex than the substitute. Hence, (20) is regarded as an example of ‘simple-straightforward type’ of lexical substitution. What we attest here is a sort of ‘zooming in effect’: viz. what was introduced as an obscure *a little yellow bird* in the beginning of the story is later identified as a specific kind of bird named *canary*.

#### 14. Lexical Substitution of Verbs and Adjectives

Lexical substitution occurs not only with nouns but also with other grammatical categories. In the following examples, a verb is replaced by another verb (or verbal cluster).

- (21) a. So now *run* home, peeking at your sweet image in the pitcher as you *go*. (Hawthorne, *Twice-told Tales*)  
 b. In the seventeenth century, Leibniz *advanced* the idea of... d’Alembert *put forward* the idea of...  
 c. Then at another moment everyone laughs but one person doesn’t get the joke — and feels *bereft*, suddenly *cast out of* the magic circle.

The following (22) is an example of an adjective replaced by another adjective and (23) is an example of a verb is replaced by an adjectival predicate, a complex verbal and a noun phrase one after another.

- (22) ... the man performing the *generous* gesture is likely to... if his *polite* gesture...  
 (23) I *thank* the talented and insightful students... I *am extremely grateful for*... To A and B, I *express my gratitude and appreciation*. *My thanks go*, also, *to*...

#### 15. Lexical Reference

The italicized expressions in the following sentences resemble lexical substitution.

- (24) a. A few *become angry at the mere suggestion that women and men are different*. And *this reaction* can come from either from women or men.  
 b. My analysis emphasized *that the husband and wife in this example had different but equally valid styles*. *This point* was lost in a heavily edited version of my article that appeared...

In (24a), a noun phrase *this reaction* in the second sentence is used to refer to a verb phrase in the first sentence. In (24b), a noun phrase *this point* is used to refer to an embedded sentence in the first sentence. These uses of definite noun phrase of propositional content are not cases of ‘lexical substitution’ but ‘lexical reference,’ a discourse device extensively found in English as well as in other languages. A combination of a definite determiner and an abstract noun of propositional content is utilized for a compact and efficient reference to a preceding concept or proposition.

There are two factors working together in (24), i.e. grammatical reference items (e.g. *the, this, that*, etc.), which we have looked at in Section 3, and abstract nouns of propositional content (e.g. *idea, point, explanation, proposition, reaction, proposal, question*, etc.). Lexical reference thus contributes to coherence as well as effective and well-organized unfolding or advancement of the discourse.

## 16. Summary

One of the special features of English discourse is the widespread occurrence of lexical substitutions in abundance. In this paper, we have examined the phenomena and identified their three basic functions. Lexical substitution serves to avoid repetition, to hold the discourse together and to express the state of the speaker. Besides making the discourse less monotonous but coherent by way of semantic implication, the employment of different lexical items in reference to an entity/idea enables the speaker to enrich his or her discourse with multiple viewpoints, expressivity, subtle feelings and subjective judgment without ostensibly doing so. Lexical substitution is one of the devices for a speaker of English to express his or her attitude nonchalantly in all genres of speech and writing.

## Notes

- 1 There are several forms of demonstrative origin, such as *kore, sore, are*, which are semi-grammaticalized as anaphoric items, but their usage is not relevant to the topic of this paper.
- 2 The lack of definite marker is a reason why lexical substitution does not exist in Japanese.
- 3 Halliday and Hasan use the term 'text' following the European tradition, instead of 'discourse'.
- 4 Two other words, *animal* and *fellow*, had also been removed, probably because they are not so meaningless as others on the list
- 5 *John* being a proper noun, this pair is not to be treated as a hyponym-superordinate pair in the strict sense of the term. Be that as it may be, *John* is in the extension of *fellow*, and the proposition 'John is a fellow' is true.
- 6 By 'technical terms' I mean specialist vocabularies and jargons.

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