

Cohesive Writing Module: Introduction

Introduction

In this module, we will examine elements of academic writing that contribute to making a piece of writing cohesive. When you are writing assignments at university the way that you link your ideas logically through your text is by a combination of grammatical and vocabulary systems. Each unit of this module will investigate aspects of a system and explain how to develop skills in applying these to your own writing.




Who is this module for?

All students at university who need to improve their knowledge of clearer paragraph writing.

What does this module cover?

Unit 1	Paragraph Structure
Unit 2	Linking Themes within Paragraphs
Unit 3	Cohesion in Word Choice
Unit 4	Cohesion through Reference

Exercises

These are marked with the icon  and you should try to complete them before checking your work in the **Answer Key**, marked  .

Answer Key to all Exercises

This can be found at the end of the Unit.

Cohesive Writing Module

Unit 4: Cohesion through Reference

1.0 Introduction

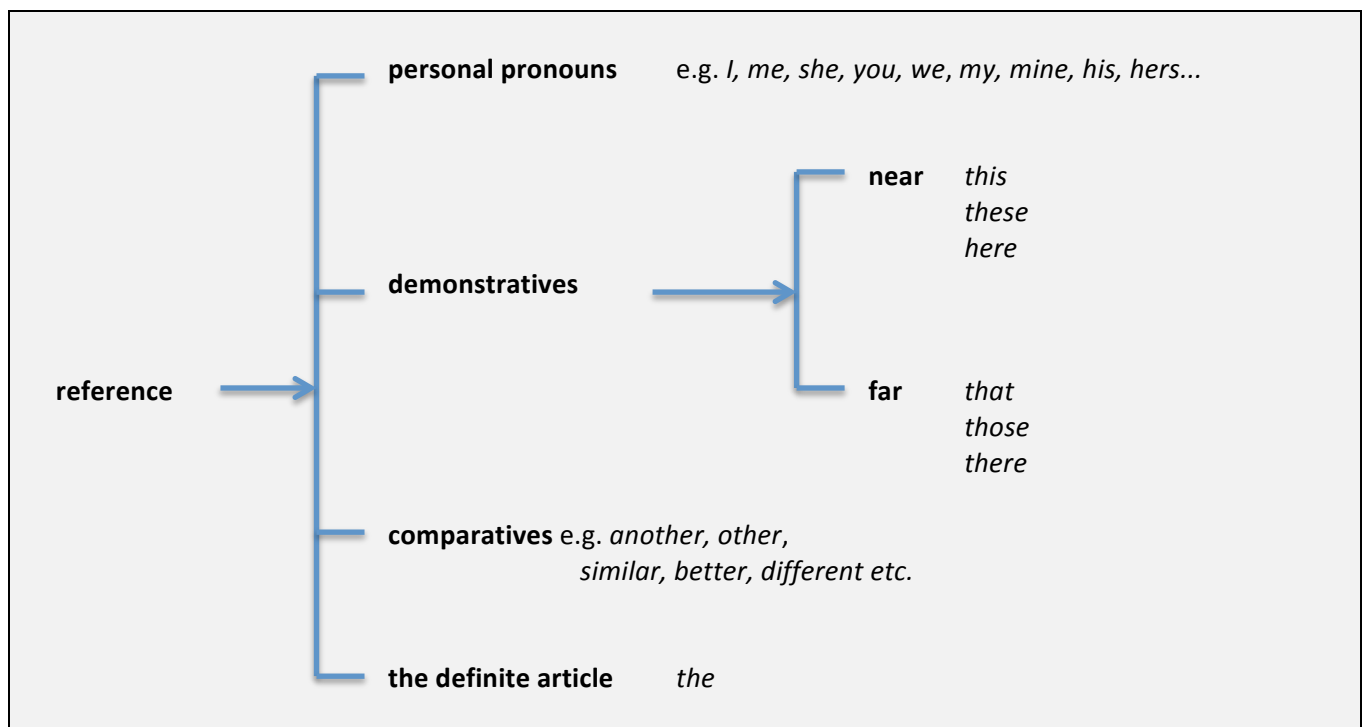
Reference is used to refer to things in your writing in order to create cohesion. The main types of reference in English, and examples of each type, are shown below.

Objectives of Unit 4

After you have completed this unit you should be able to:

- recognise the words that are used as reference in writing
- understand how the reference system makes connections in writing
- identify the types of problems that you may have with reference
- develop cohesiveness in your writing by using reference effectively

The reference system in English (from *Cohesion in English*, Halliday & Hasan 1976)



★ Exercise 1

What types of reference (personal, demonstrative, comparative, or definite article *the*) are the reference words underlined in the following texts?

Text 1

1. Poverty is generally defined as deprivation of material needs.
2. However, the term 'poverty' can also apply to deprivation in other circumstances, such as emotional deprivation in young children.
3. While it has long been recognised that children living without family support are more at risk, increasingly research is indicating the impact of emotional deprivation.
4. This is particularly so in regards to the development of a child's self-esteem, in their ability to form relationships and in their learning capabilities.
5. Anecdotal evidence has for some period of time recognised the lack of self worth among orphans who have spent their early years in institutional environments.
6. But comparative, longitudinal case studies of these children reaching adulthood have confirmed that their ability to form lasting emotional relationships is less successful than children from a nuclear family.
7. These same studies also took into account comparative learning difficulties encountered by both groups and found that those without family support and consistent emotional input had the greater difficulties.
8. Although a child may be materially well-off, if they are denied on-going emotional support from an early age then the long term prognosis is of emotional impoverishment.

Text 2

1. In addition, methane contributes to the formation of ozone in the troposphere, which is another greenhouse gas.
2. Along with other hydrocarbons and CO, methane can be proto oxidised in the presence of oxides of nitrogens to form ozone.

Text 3

1. Plants acquire their energy in a different way, although many details of the process are surprisingly similar.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

1.1 Reference words and their referents

Not only do we need to know **what kind** of reference is involved, but we also need to know their **referents**, i.e. **what the reference refers to** and **where the original referent can be found** in the text. For instance:

Neutral reference the:

Poverty is generally defined as deprivation of material needs.

However, **the term 'poverty'** can also apply to deprivation in other circumstances, such as emotional deprivation in young children.

Comparative reference other:

Poverty is generally defined as **deprivation of material needs.**

However, the term 'poverty' can also apply to deprivation in **other circumstances,** such as emotional deprivation in young children.

The reference words in the following text (Text 4) are in bold and what they refer to has been indicated with an arrow.

Text 4


FINANCIAL INFORMATION is a vital component of modern civilisation. MUCH EFFORT is devoted both to producing **it** and to using **it**. Not all **these** endeavours are fully effective. Sometimes needed information is not available. Irrelevant or misleading data may be produced and even acted upon. To master the problems of handling financial information efficiently it is desirable to understand SOME BASIC IDEAS and to be able to relate **them** to the acquisition and the use of financial information. Some of **these** concepts, such as **those** of 'GOAL-SEEKING ORGANISATIONS', 'SYSTEMS', 'MANAGEMENT', 'ECONOMIC RESOURCE ALLOCATION' AND 'INFORMATION' are discussed in **this** chapter. On **this** foundation **later** chapters explore the processes of producing FINANCIAL INFORMATION and the ways in which **it** may best be put to use. (Source: *Financial information systems and models*, (A.S. Carrington and G. Howitt, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1980).

Things to think about

- *It* [as in *it is desirable* in line 4] is not underlined because it is not a reference word. It does not refer to anything inside or outside the text.
- *This* foundation in line 7 refers to the whole of the previous sentence.
- Notice that reference may point **backwards** or **forwards** in the text, e.g.


Backwards:

FINANCIAL INFORMATION is a vital component of modern civilisation. MUCH EFFORT is devoted both to producing


it and to using it.

Forwards

Some of these concepts, such as those of


{`GOAL-SEEKING ORGANISATIONS', `SYSTEMS', `MANAGEMENT', `ECONOMIC RESOURCE ALLOCATION' and `INFORMATION'} are discussed in this chapter.

★ Exercise 2

Use arrows to show what the bolded reference words in Text 5 refer to.

Financial information may be described most simply as the representation of some real phenomena in terms of money. For example a residential property, an automobile or a tape-recorder may be described in terms of **their** size, type, age, technical features and so forth. For some purposes, such as arranging insurance cover or negotiating a loan, an even more important aspect than **these** might be the value of the property or machine in dollar terms. The question of how to best assign such a value will be considered in subsequent chapters. The point to recognise is that monetary value can be an important attribute of goods or property. **It** may also be a useful way of describing various activities, for example the size of sales made by a supermarket in a week or the productive output of a factory over a year.

The need for financial information arises from the basic human problem of making effective use of limited resources. Mankind, collectively and individually, has many goals, often intangible ones such as happiness, freedom, social acceptance or personal fulfilment. Pursuit of **these** aims can only take place within the limits set by the availability of such requirements as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical services, entertainment and so forth. All **those** goods, services, property and equipment, which in a modern community have a price in money terms, are known as 'economic resources'. **They** are not the sole or even the most important concern of individual

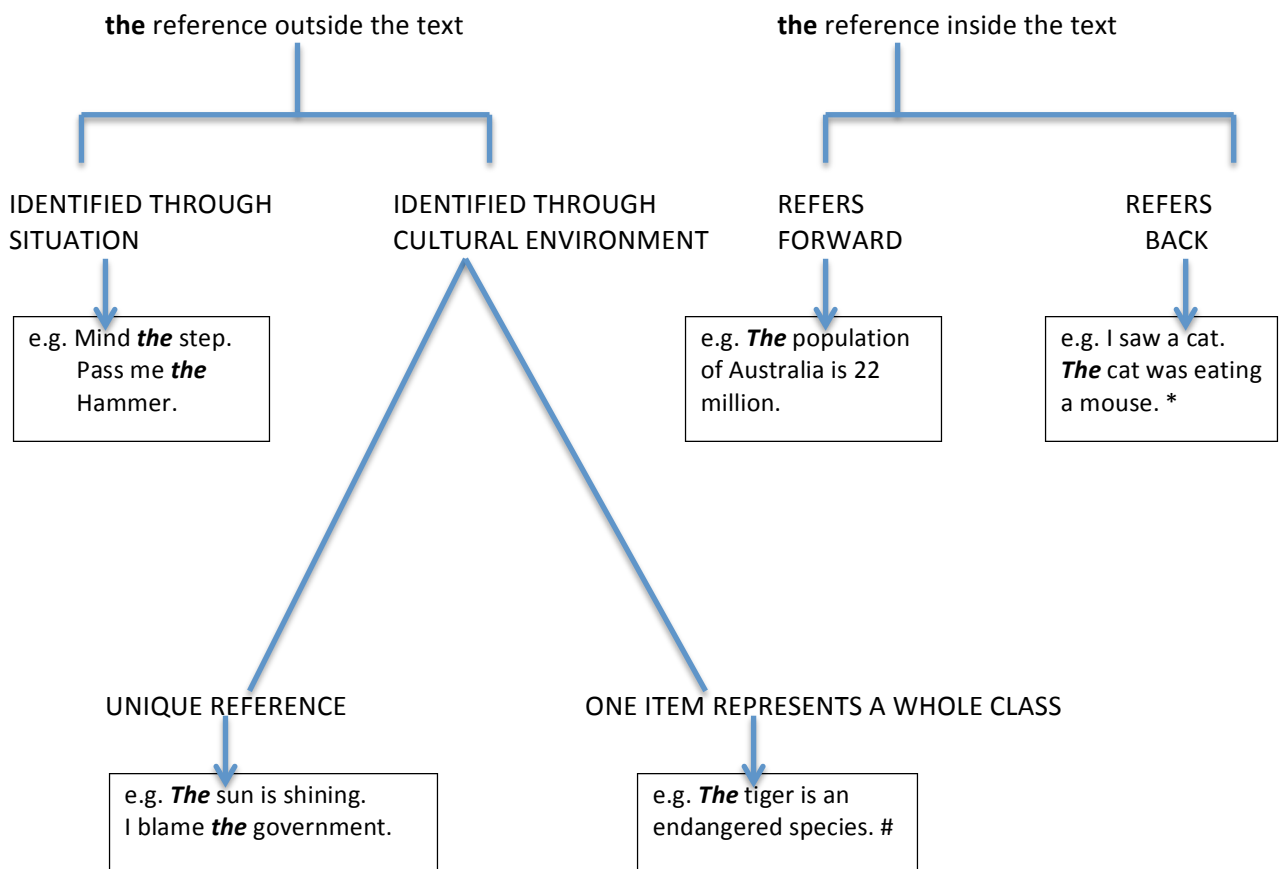
men and women, but acquisition and appropriate use of economic resources is an essential basis for most personal goal attainment. Since there are competing ways in which a person can use **his** limited funds and **other** resources, a key problem arises. **This** is the decision on how to spread **them** over different purposes to gain the greatest benefit or satisfaction. In the jargon of economics, **this** is the problem of 'resource allocation'.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

1.2 Use of the definite article *the*

The definite article *the* is not as important in linking ideas in a text as the three other kinds of reference just described (i.e. personal, demonstrative and comparative). Nonetheless, many students have problems in using *the*, so it is worthwhile considering when and why *the* is used.

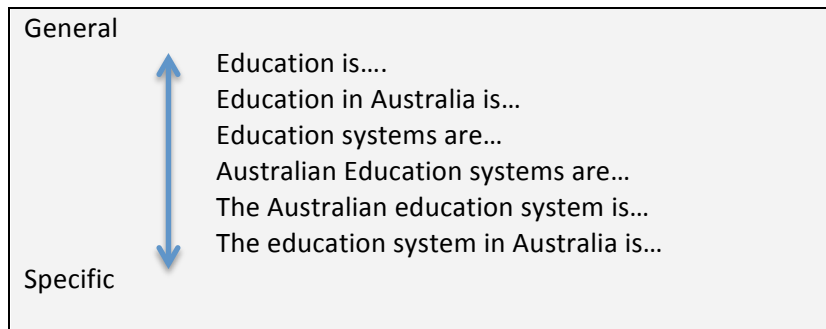
When 'the' is used in a written text it is always a signal to the reader that the noun/noun group which 'the' is attached to can be identified by the reader either from within the text itself or in the environment outside the text (either the immediate situation or the cultural environment). The following diagram shows you how 'the' reference works.



* This is the only type of *the* reference which is cohesive.

The is used here generically to refer to the class of tigers as a whole.

Words which refer to abstract things tend not to use **the** e.g. *education, love* etc. However, the article can be used to refer to specific instances. For example,



★ Exercise 3

Put an article (either 'a' or 'the') in the following gaps, where necessary.

- (a) For example, _____ classic problem suited for solving by _____ Linear Programming method is that of _____ farmer who may purchase and mix one or more of several types of grain for cattle feed, each containing different amounts of nutritional elements important for a balanced diet. _____ farmer would like to determine _____ amount of each type of grain to be mixed.
- (b) On July 21, 1969 two American astronauts stepped onto _____ moon, and were able to communicate this historic occasion to _____ earth through both radio and television broadcasts.
- (c) There are many avocado cultivars but all belong to _____ three major national types, previously mentioned, although some are hybrids of two types. Table 2.2 shows there are 14 varieties of avocado cultivated in Australia but _____ major commercial varieties are Fuerte, Hass, Sharwil and Bacon (Alexander, 1978).
- (d) Legal Aid provides access to _____ law for many people who would otherwise not be able to afford _____ lawyer or to take their case to court.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

★ Exercise 4

Put in an article (either 'a' or 'the') **ONLY** where necessary in the following gaps.

_____ success of any business is dependent upon its ability to accurately make _____ decisions. _____ decision-making process is certainly not new to _____ business but has been relevant since _____ man became involved in _____ most elementary business ventures. Today, however, with _____ industrial world becoming increasingly more competitive and complex, both _____ accuracy and _____ speed are _____ necessary prerequisites to _____ most aspects of _____ business decision-making. _____ type of data processed by _____

companies varies according to _____ nature of their operations. However, every business organization is concerned with _____ information processing and _____ methods needed to guarantee appropriate action by _____ management.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

★ Exercise 5

Put in the following 13 reference words in the appropriate place in the gaps in the next paragraph.

the, this, the, those, the, this, other, it, they, this, the, their, the.

In addition to allocation, ownership of economic resources normally involves a problem of safeguarding and protecting _____ resources from misuse or misappropriation. _____ becomes particularly important when _____ resources are entrusted to someone _____ than _____ owner. _____ may occur by way of loan, or where someone is employed to manage _____ owner's affairs. _____ also arises when people invest some of _____ funds in a business venture which _____ are not personally conducting.

Sound decisions regarding resource allocation and protection often depend upon _____ availability of financial information. It has been to meet _____ need that **accounting** and some associated methods of producing financial information have evolved and _____ practice of financial management has developed.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

★ Exercise 6

Reference can be used to diagnose problems in writing. Look at student Text 6 below.

- What kinds of reference words are used?
- What comparisons can you make between the use of reference in this text and the reference used in the earlier text about poverty (Text 1 on p.3)?

Text 6

1. Poverty is a major concern all over the world.
2. A number of years ago, poverty was mainly related to third world countries.
3. And one would think of the starving people in the streets of India, or the children with swollen bellies in Africa.
4. Today, poverty has become an issue in the Western world as well.
5. There are different grades of poverty.
6. It all depends on how you look at the definition of poverty.
7. There is obvious poverty.

8. People that live without a home,
9. and find their food in bins.
10. But there is also poverty that is less obvious.
11. It is within the four walls of a house of of someone who is struggling with unemployment or other social problems.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

2.0 Problems with Reference

In this section we will look at some of the problems created when the reference system is not used correctly and give you some practice in recognising problems and using reference appropriately.

2.1 Problems with ambiguity

Something is 'ambiguous' when it is possible for us to give it more than one meaning and we can't decide between one meaning and another. Pronouns can cause many problems in this area as the following sentence illustrates:

The counsellor told her she needed more time to think about the question.

If the counsellor is a man and we know this from elsewhere in the text, then there is no problem — 'her' and 'she' are the same person. If the counsellor is a woman then there is a problem and the sentence must be changed to take away the ambiguity, for example:

The counsellor told her that, as a counsellor, she needed more time to think about the question.

It is now clear that 'she' refers to the counsellor. The other possible meaning would be written like this:

The counsellor suggested to the girl that she think about the question at greater length.

When a reader encounters an ambiguous situation, they look back in the text to the nearest noun group to try to find who or what the reference refers to. The following examples illustrate this.

Aborigines experience social, economic, nutritional and housing underprivileges that cause medical problems beyond **those** of the general community (Saunders 1990:71). There is discouragement of Aborigines from visiting **them** except for serious emergency cases.

1. The reader can see that *those* refers to medical problems of the general community (forward-pointing reference)
2. The reader then asks: 'Who or what does *them* refer to?'

3. To answer this, the reader looks back to the nearest noun, which is *Aborigines*. 'Aborigines visiting themselves' doesn't seem to make sense.
4. The reader then tries each of the other noun groups — *general community*, *medical problems*, *underprivileges* — none of which seem to make sense either.

In this case, then, the writer has probably left something out. The example can be rewritten to show what this is:

Aborigines experience social, economic, nutritional and housing underprivileges that cause medical problems beyond those of the general community (Saunders 1990:71). Even though medical facilities such as hospitals may be available, there is discouragement of Aborigines from visiting them except for serious emergency cases.

It is now clear that 'them' refers to 'medical facilities'.

★ Exercise 7

Read the following paragraph and work through the above steps to resolve the ambiguity.

The importance of the bed and bedding of the patient was beginning to be realised in preventing the spread of disease. If the bedding and bedclothes were not changed regularly, disease could be harboured within it.

- ★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

2.2 Problems with naming

Referring words can also be used to refer to pieces of text (not just noun groups), this is called 'text reference'. When referring to a piece of text, it is sometimes necessary to also give it a name, as in the following examples:

1. The literature strongly suggests that cotton gowns offer nothing more than a false sense of security (Gill and Slater, 1991: 54). **This statement** is supported by a recent study on the most economical and effective protection.

In this example, the writer has referred to the underlined piece of text and has appropriately named it as a 'statement'. The writer is then able to use this statement in the next part of his argument i.e. the statement is supported by a recent study.

2. When the Coalition was re-elected in 1969, they started improving the Earle Page scheme by increasing the level of subsidy thus making provisions for low income earners by establishing fees for doctors. **These new improvements** were approved by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) (Palmer and Short, 1989: 3).

The main problem that writers experience with text reference is knowing what to call the piece of text they are making reference to. The following example illustrates this problem:

The impact of poor working conditions would therefore increase the medical bill as illness develops; however, many workers simply ignore the services provided. There are **many reasons** why this is so. Firstly, the under-employed, experiencing personal and social crises such as poor housing and strong feelings of helplessness may find it difficult to improve their health either because the services provided are not close or the standards of the services may be low. **Another assumption** is that they do not seek help for stress-related illnesses because they are considered to be minor.

The writer has inappropriately named the piece of text an ‘assumption’, whereas previously in the text it has been called a ‘reason’. It would have been more appropriate to say:

Another **reason** is that they do not seek help for ...

★ Exercise 8

Put the most appropriate name in the following examples (some suggestions are provided for you to choose from in the first three examples.) Underline the piece of text being referred to.

1. In examining the major causes of illness and death it has been found that they are associated with diet, cigarette-smoking and an individual’s country of origin. Another important * _____ is the hereditary component to some major illnesses.

[*factor, cause, component]

2. Nightingale travelled to the continent collecting statistics comparing success and failure rates and it was through these * _____ that she became an expert on hospital administration.

[*means, trips, methods]

3. A study of religious groups, particularly Seventh Day Adventists (SDA’s) and Mormons showed that members of such groups have a lifestyle which places great emphasis upon family and friendship networks and they rarely smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. Another * _____ of this study was they limit their intake of stimulants.

[*aspect, finding, suggestion]

4. In some countries, refugees and migrants both suffer poor health, economic hardship, communication barriers and lack of knowledge about the health care system. All * _____ * _____ have an effect on their overall health and illness.

5. In their experiments, Nordon and McMahon placed a fine copper wire in a fibre bed, and measured its heat transfer co-efficient by passing a current through it. * _____ * _____ was extremely effective.

★ ★ You can now check the answers in the Answer Key at the back of the unit.

Unit 4: Answer Key to Exercises

★ ★ Exercise 1: Answer

Text 1

1. Poverty is generally defined as deprivation of material needs.
2. However, the term 'poverty' (DEFINITE) can also apply to deprivation in other circumstances (COMPARATIVE), such as emotional deprivation in young children.
3. While it has long been recognised that children living without family support are more at risk, increasingly research is indicating the impact of emotional deprivation.
4. This (DEMONSTRATIVE:NEAR) is particularly so in regards to the development of a child's self-esteem, in their ability to form relationships (PERSONAL) and in their learning capabilities (PERSONAL).
5. Anecdotal evidence has for some period of time recognised the lack of self worth among orphans who have spent their early years in institutional environments (PERSONAL).
6. But comparative, longitudinal case studies of these children reaching adulthood (DEMONSTRATIVE: NEAR) have confirmed that their ability to form lasting emotional relationships (PERSONAL) is less successful than children from a nuclear family.
7. These (DEMONSTRATIVE: NEAR) same studies (COMPARATIVE) also took into account comparative learning difficulties encountered by both groups and found that those without family support and consistent emotional input (DEMONSTRATIVE: FAR) had the greater difficulties.
8. Although a child may be materially well-off, if they (PERSONAL) are denied on-going emotional support from an early age then the long term prognosis is of emotional impoverishment.

Text 2

1. In addition, methane contributes to the formation of ozone in the troposphere, which is another greenhouse gas (COMPARATIVE).
2. Along with other hydrocarbons and CO, methane (COMPARATIVE) can be proto oxidised in the presence of oxides of nitrogens to form ozone.

Text 3

1. Plants acquire their energy in a different way (COMPARATIVE), although many details of the process are surprisingly similar (COMPARATIVE).

★ ★ Exercise 2: Answer

NB: Referents are underlined and in capitals for reference words in bold.

Financial information may be described most simply as the representation of some real phenomena in terms of money. For example A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY, AN AUTOMOBILE or A TAPE-RECORDER may be described in terms of **their** size, type, age, technical features and so forth. For some purposes, such as arranging insurance cover or negotiating a loan, an even more important aspect than **these** might be the value of the property or machine in dollar terms. The question of how to best assign such a value will be considered in subsequent chapters. The point to recognise is that MONETARY VALUE can be an important attribute of goods or property. **It** may also be a useful way of describing various activities, for example the size of sales made by a supermarket in a week or the productive output of a factory over a year.

The need for financial information arises from the basic human problem of making effective use of limited resources. Mankind, collectively and individually, has many GOALS, OFTEN INTANGIBLE ONES, SUCH AS HAPPINESS, FREEDOM, SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OR PERSONAL FULFILMENT. Pursuit of **these** aims can only take place within the limits set by the availability of such requirements as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical services, entertainment and so forth. All **those** GOODS, SERVICES, PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, which in a modern community have a price in money terms, are known as 'ECONOMIC RESOURCES'. **They** are not the sole or even the most important concern of individual men and women, but acquisition and appropriate use of economic resources is an essential basis for most personal goal attainment. Since there are competing ways in which A PERSON can use **his** LIMITED FUNDS and **other** resources, A KEY PROBLEM arises. **This** is the decision on how to spread **them** (LIMITED FUNDS AND OTHER RESOURCES) over different purposes to gain the greatest benefit or satisfaction. In the jargon of economics, **this** (refers to previous sentence and back to 'problem') is the problem of 'resource allocation'.

★ ★ Exercise 3: Answer

(a) For example, **a (or the)** classic problem suited for solving by **the** Linear Programming method is that of **a (or the)** farmer who may purchase and mix one or more of several types of grain for cattle feed, each containing different amounts of nutritional elements important for a balanced diet. **The** farmer would like to determine **the** amount of each type of grain to be mixed.

(b) On July 21, 1969 two American astronauts stepped onto **the** moon, and were able to communicate this historic occasion to **the** earth through both radio and television broadcasts.

(c) There are many avocado cultivars but all belong to **the** three major national types, previously mentioned, although some are hybrids of two types. Table 2.2 shows there are 14 varieties of avocado cultivated in Australia but **the** major commercial varieties are Fuerte, Hass, Sharwil and

Bacon (Alexander, 1978).

(d) Legal Aid provides access to **the** law for many people who would otherwise not be able to afford **a** lawyer or to take their case to court.

★ ★ Exercise 4: Answer

The success of any business is dependent upon its ability to accurately make ⊖ decisions. **The** decision-making process is certainly not new to ⊖ business but has been relevant since ⊖ man became involved in **the** most elementary business ventures. Today, however, with **the** industrial world becoming increasingly more competitive and complex, both ⊖ accuracy and ⊖ speed are **the** necessary prerequisites to ⊖ most aspects of ⊖ business decision-making. **The** type of data processed by ⊖ companies varies according to **the** nature of their operations. However, every business organization is concerned with ⊖ information processing and **the** methods needed to guarantee appropriate action by **the** management.

★ ★ Exercise 5: Answer

In addition to allocation, ownership of economic resources normally involves a problem of safeguarding and protecting the resources from misuse or misappropriation. **This** becomes particularly important when **the** resources are entrusted to someone **other** than **the** owner. **This** may occur by way of loan, or where someone is employed to manage **the** owner's affairs. **It** also arises when people invest some of **their** funds in a business venture which **they** are not personally conducting.

Sound decisions regarding resource allocation and protection often depend upon **the** availability of financial information. It has been to meet **this** need that **accounting** and some associated methods of producing financial information have evolved and **the** practice of financial management has developed.

★ ★ Exercise 6: Answer

Text 6

1. Poverty is a major concern all over **the** world. (DEFINITE: CULTURAL)
2. A number of years ago, poverty was mainly related to third world countries.
3. And one would think of the starving people in **the** streets of India, (DEFINITE: FORWARD) or **the** children with swollen bellies in Africa. (DEFINITE: FORWARD)

4. Today, poverty has become an issue in **the** Western World as well. (DEFINITE: CULTURAL)
5. There are different grades of poverty.
6. It all depends on how you look at **the** definition of poverty. (DEFINITE: FORWARD)
7. There is obvious poverty.
8. People that live without a home,
9. and [who] find **their** food in bins. (PERSONAL)
10. But there is also poverty that is less obvious.
11. **It** (PERSONAL) is within **the** four walls of a house of someone who is struggling with unemployment or other social problems. (DEFINITE: FORWARD)

General comment

The main form of reference used in this student text is the definite article *the*, which is either forward pointing or refers the reader to shared cultural knowledge. However these uses of the definite article do not pick up previously mentioned ideas so there are no strong referential links being made between parts of the paragraph. The only real reference is the use of the personal pronoun *their* in 9 and the dubious use of *it* to pick up on the idea of less obvious poverty in 11. The writer makes no use of demonstrative or comparative reference to relate, condense or compare ideas in the text, as in Text 1.

★ ★ Exercise 7: Answer

The importance of the bed and bedding of the patient was beginning to be realised in preventing the spread of disease. If the bedding and bedclothes were not changed regularly, disease could be harboured within **it**.

The relevant reference is 'it'. The nearest noun group is "disease" but this doesn't make sense so it is likely that 'it' refers to either bedding or bedclothes (it can't be both or the reference word would need to be plural, i.e. 'them').

The importance of the bed and bedding of the patient was beginning to be realised in preventing the spread of disease. Disease could be harboured within the bedding and bedclothes if they were not changed regularly.

★ ★ Exercise 8: Answer

1. cause
2. trips
3. finding
4. these factors
5. this method