

Contextual References

In this lesson you will:



- recognize and identify different types of contextual references
- read and connect contextual references to the word that it refers to



Introduction

One of the most useful strategies in tackling reading is by using **Contextual references** (Reference words/ Transitional markers) or **words which substitute for other words**. They refer back to ideas that have already been expressed. They also refer forward to ideas that will

Being able to recognize and identify contextual references will help you understand the passage you are reading.

that will be stated. They may appear unimportant, but to understand them is crucial as they help you comprehend how the elements in a sentence or a paragraph hold together.

Sample paragraph:

A **computer**, like any other machine, is used because **it** does certain jobs better and more efficiently than humans. **It** can receive more **information** and process **it** faster than any human. The **speed** at which a computer works means **it** can replace weeks or even months of pencil-and-paper work. Therefore, **computers** are used when the time saved offsets **their** cost, **which** is one of the many reasons **they** are used so much in business industry, and research.



To cope with references, you must pay attention to reference words when they occur in the text you are reading. **You can find the meaning of references by searching the text and using your common sense and knowledge of the text.** It is a good tactic, if you find yourself unaccountably puzzled by part of the text, look for words of this kind. You may find that a wrongly

identified reference has led you to misinterpret.

The followings are some commonly used contextual references with examples:

Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives

| Subject Pronouns | Object Pronouns | Possessive Pronouns | Possessive Adjectives |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| I | me | mine | my |
| you | you | yours | your |
| we | us | ours | our |
| they | them | theirs | their |
| he | him | his | his |
| she | her | hers | her |
| it | it | its | its |

Examples:

- Animation is a component of multimedia; **it** is used in online video game as well as in moving banners displaying sports scores or stock prices.

it refers to animation

- Even though an optical fibre is as thin as hair, **its** signal carrying capacity is higher than copper wire.

its refers to optical fibre

- As companies unify **their** networks and systems, **they** must merge new technologies and legacy systems.

their refers to _____

they refers to _____



- Bill Gates knew that PCs would be big business and **he** imagined Microsoft playing a center role in this industry.

he refers to _____

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns are words which are used to give extra information. These words are **that, which, who, whom, whose, where, when, why**

Examples:

- Today, telecommunication is widespread and devices **that** assist the process, such as the television, radio and telephone, are common in many parts of the world.

that refers to devices _____

- An operating system is a master control program **which** controls the functions of the computer system as a whole and the running of application programs.

which refers to master control program _____

Practice-1:

Read the text, and then underline the relative pronouns and the words they refer to.



The Matrix is a cyber-thriller which captures the audience's attention from the beginning. The movie, directed by the Wachowski brothers, has a storyline that combines action, science fiction, and special effects. The world is a virtual environment created by computers, where people are just slaves to AI machines which generate energy from human bodies.



Neo is a computer hacker that looks for an answer to the question 'What's the Matrix?' He discovers the truth when he meets the rebels Trinity and Morpheus. Trinity helps Neo and kills 'agents' who are really machines in human form. Morpheus shows Neo what the Matrix is- a reality beyond reality that controls human lives. The Matrix is protected by 'agents' led by Agent Smith, the character who tries to kill Neo.

Neo receives strong powers and becomes 'The One' who will liberate humankind from the evil artificial intelligence known as the Matrix. In the end, he kills Agent Smith and saves the humans, butdoes he really kill him? Find out in the next Matrix movie.

Deleted Nouns

This technique is used by the writer to leave out the nouns which have already been mentioned. The writer will use the following words to refer to the noun that has been left out. They are: **one, another, the other, others, some, these, those, all, etc.**

Examples:

- There is no best answer to the question which online service is the best. Rating a particular online service over **another** is entirely subjective. Price is important to some people, while the number of files available for download is important to **others**.

another refers to another online service

others refers to other people

- Most programs are user-friendly but **some** are very complicated.

some refers to some programs

- DELPHIE's Hobby Shop is an online service which has two special-interest areas: **one** on classic vehicles and **one** on new cars and technology.

one refers to _____

- Optical fibers give very clear telephone conversations which are free from signal interference because light signals from one fibre do not interfere with **those** of **others** in the same cable.

those refers to _____

others refers to _____



- There are two technologies at work in a clipboard PC: **one** allows raw data to get into the computer and **the other** allows the computer to figure out what that data mean.

one refers to _____

the other refers to _____

Specific Words

In the passage the writer usually uses specific words that give specific meanings to make the text colorful and lively.

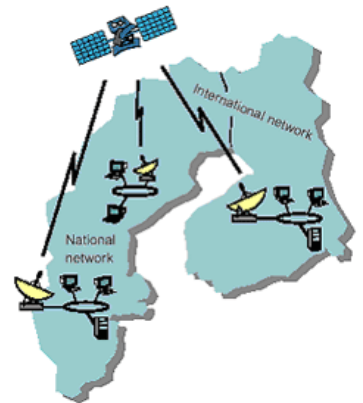
Examples:

- Everybody uses computers for many different purposes. **These smart machines** make their lives easier and more pleasant.

these smart machines refers to computers

- Telecommunications is the transmission of signals over a distance for the purpose of communication. In modern times, **this process** almost always involves the sending of electromagnetic waves by electronic transmitters but in early years it may have involved the use of smoke signals, drums or semaphore.

this process refers to _____



Pro-Clauses

The writer usually begins a sentence with '**that, it, this, or which**' to refer to the idea in the previous sentence.

Examples:

- Multimedia combines text with sound, video, animation and graphic. **This** greatly enhances the interaction between user and machine.

this refers to 'the fact that multimedia combines text with sound, video, animation and graphic'

- When Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) was first introduced, the connection had to be made between PCs online at the same time. **This** is no longer necessary.

this refers to _____



- Technology has been developed increasingly, **which** makes our lives more convenient.

which refers to _____

Sequence of Two Items

They are words that show the order of situations and events. The most common reference words used are **the former, the latter**.

Example:

- Some students read slowly and know it; others read slowly and don't know it. **The former** can be helped more easily than **the latter**.

the former refers to students who read slowly and know it

the latter refers to students who read slowly and don't know it

- There is a struggle between "Web Services" and the "Semantic Web". **The former** was thought to be rooted in the W3C and academia, **the latter** in IBM-Microsoft-Sun and industry.

the former refers to _____

the latter refers to _____

Grammatical Subject and Object of 'it'

In the passage, the writer might use 'it' to refer to the subject or the object of a sentence.

Examples:

- It** is easy to install new programs.

It refers to 'to install new programs'

- All computers do not use the same operating systems. Therefore, **it** is important to assess the operating system used on a particular model before initial commitment because some software is only designed to run under the control of specific operating systems.

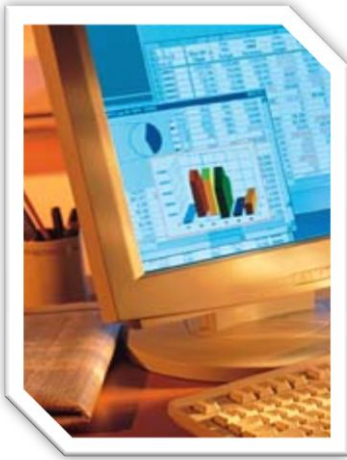
it refers to 'to assess the operating system used on a particular model before initial commitment to analyze a system currently in use'

- It** must be taken into account that printers vary in cost, speed, print quality and other factors such as noise or compatibility.

It refers to _____

Practice-2:

Draw a rectangle around the word, or words, that the circled words refer to. Then, join the ○ and the □ with the arrows.



Modern accounting firms use spreadsheet software to do complicated calculations. (They) can provide (their) clients with an up-to-date report whenever (it) is needed. (This) software has many functions and can be integrated with other software. The spreadsheet's basic component is a cell. (This) may contain a formula which performs a mathematical operation. (It) could also contain a label or data. (The former) describes the information on the worksheet. (The latter) is the information itself.

The worksheet is the basic work area of a spreadsheet program. (It) is made up of cells arranged in rows and columns. The number of (these) varies depending on the software you are using. You can change the width and format of cells. (Such) parameters are usually quite easy to change with just a few keystrokes.

Source: Oxford English for Computing

Practice-3:

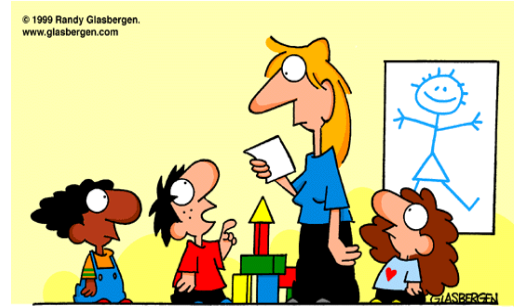
Read the following text about the DVD market and try to connect the underlined words to the word or words that they refer to.

FORGET Harry Potter. No matter that the film about this schoolboy with magic powers broke all box-office records on its opening weekend, taking \$94m in the United States and \$23m in Britain. The truly momentous phenomenon in the film industry is not a pre-pubescent wizard but a humble circular piece of plastic: the digital versatile disc (DVD).

Next year, for the first time, sales of movies in DVD format are forecast to outsell those on video cassette in America, reaching a total of \$9.5 billion, according to Morgan Stanley. Already, some 24m American households have DVD players, 80% more than a year ago. This technology which was considered a flop when it was launched in 1997 is now the basis for the fastest-growing consumer appliance ever.

People appear to want to build up collections of DVDs, rather as they do of recorded music. The DVD is steadily gaining shelf space, even in the movie-rental store, and it should overtake the cassette even there within three years. And shops like DVDs, not least because they take up less space.

But how lasting will the DVD effect be? Some 80% of a film's revenue comes from its distribution after the cinema release: to home video and pay-TV for example. "The largest single portion of that revenue will be the DVD business," says Christopher Dixon of UBS Warburg, an investment bank, which in turn will help to reduce the risk involved in making movies. "The DVD is the most exciting development in the film industry," he adds, "but every eight years there has been a new distribution platform in the entertainment business. None of them lasts forever."



"My name was David, but that sounded old fashioned. So I shortened it to DVD!"

Source: http://www.unibz.it/web4archiv/objects/inf_downloads/contextual_reference_dvd.pdf