

Coherence and Cohesion

Ekaterine Maruashvili

Doctor of Philology

When it comes to planned, non-spontaneous texts including written discourse and speeches, the manner in which the text is put together can be explained by elements of coherence and cohesion. While spontaneous discourse will also display coherence and cohesion, it is emphasized in planned texts because there is a greater deal of thought and intention behind the use of cohesive ties and devices of coherence. They can however often be difficult concepts to grasp. For starters, it is essential to understand the difference between the two terms. Coherence is defined as the quality of being logical, consistent and able to be understood. Imagine coherence as a building (It's an analogy, go with it). Cohesion on the other hand refers to the act of forming a whole unit. It is effectively a subset of coherence. Picture cohesion as the bricks and cement which make up the building. Bricks and cement can be put together to create any form of structure. However, it is only when they are laid together properly that they form a building. Similarly, a text will be cohesive if cohesive ties are used however, it will only be coherent if the cohesive ties are used appropriately to create meaning. You can have cohesion without coherence but you cannot have coherence without cohesion. The picture does not make sense unless the correct pieces are placed in the correct order, even if certain pieces may be the same size and shape. "I bought some hummus to eat with celery. Green vegetables can boost your metabolism. The Australian Greens is a political party. I couldn't decide what to wear to the new year's party." In the example above, there are lexical links from one sentence to the next; cohesive ties are used to join the sentences. There is evidence of lexical repetition, 'green' 'party' and collocations, 'new year's. However, this string of sentences does not make any sense; there is no binding semantic link. This is an example of cohesion without coherence. Cohesive devices effectively help the discourse flow. They include collocations, lexical repetition, linking adverbials, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, synonymy/antonymy, hypernyms/hyponyms and referencing (anaphoric, cataphoric, deictic). These devices create physical links between the words in a discourse. Coherence which we previously defined as understanding can be achieved through devices such as cohesive ties, formatting techniques, inference, logical ordering of information, semantic patterning and consistency. These all enhance the ability of a text to be successfully interpreted and understood. Recipes, terms and condition documents, informative brochures all make use of formatting in the form of headings, bolding, underlines etc. to emphasis certain aspects of the text and draw audience attention to the most important elements. The focus of coherence

factors is determined by the social purpose of the text. Is the text made to entertain? Inform? Persuade? Celebrate? If so, why? What is the overarching intention of the text? Answering such questions can help explain the purpose of coherence factors and cohesive devices within a discourse.

This is effectively what you are aiming to do in your analytical commentaries and short answer questions in the exam. Identify the social purposes of the text and use them to explain the role of coherence and cohesion within the discourse. The other major factor of consideration is the intended audience of the text. Is the text aimed at teenagers? the Australian public? Or specifically to “bogan” Australians? The language choices and ideas implied in the text will reflect the intended audience. If a text is aimed at Victorians, it may include lexemes such as “Mornington Peninsula” or “Shepparton” which Victorians can infer as locations within Victoria, however these terms would need to be further explained to those who reside outside this state. Lexical choices which require outside inference would be included if it can be reasonably interpreted that the intended audience would be aware of their meaning. Finding examples of inference in texts can be useful in identifying the social purpose of the text. The main thing to be mindful of is that finding cohesive devices and evidence of coherence in texts alone is not enough. You will gain your marks in your exam for linking these fragments of evidence to the wider social purposes of the text. Coherence is an essential quality for good academic writing. In academic writing, the flow of ideas from one sentence to the next should be smooth and logical. Without cohesion, the reader will not understand the main points that you are trying to make. It also hampers readability. Cohesion necessarily precedes coherence. There is a difference between cohesion and coherence: cohesion is achieved when sentences are connected at the sentence level, whereas as coherence is achieved when ideas are connected. In addition, cohesion focuses on the grammar and style of your paper.

What is Coherence in Writing?

Coherence also means “clarity of expression” and it is created when correct vocabulary and grammar are used. After all, the goal of writing is to benefit the readers. Without both coherence and cohesion, the readers may detect choppiness in the text and feel as if there are gaps in the ideas presented. Needless to say, texts without coherence are difficult to read and understand. It defeats the whole purpose of writing, which is to relay ideas in a clear and efficient manner. There are strategies that you can use to ensure coherence and cohesion in academic writing. Paragraph coherence and cohesion results in paragraph unity. To ensure that your paragraphs have unity, there are two things to keep in mind: it must have a single topic (found in the topic sentence) and sentences provide more detail than the topic sentence, while maintaining the focus on the idea presented. The paragraph below shows a lack of unity: non-cohesive sample: Dogs are canines that people domesticated a long time ago. Wolves are

predecessors of dogs and they help people in a variety of ways. There are various reasons for owning a dog, and the most important is companionship. Cohesive sample: Dogs are canines that people domesticated a long time ago, primarily for practical reasons. Even though dogs descended from wolves, they are tame and can be kept in households. Since they are tame, people have various reasons for owning a dog, such as companionship. Notice that the ideas in the non-cohesive sample are not arranged logically. The sentences are not connected by transitions and give the readers new ideas that are not found in the topic sentence. Thus, the paragraph is hard to read, leaving readers confused about the topic. On the other hand, the cohesive sample has ideas arranged logically. All ideas in this sample flow from the topic sentence. In addition, they give more details about the topic while maintaining their focus on the topic sentence.

Establishing Coherence

It is important to focus on coherence when writing at the sentence level. However, cohesion smoothens the flow of writing and should be established. There are various ways to ensure coherent writing: Write sentences that flow by varying the lengths and structures, the use of correct punctuation, and broadening your word choices. Use simple transitions, such as “in addition, additionally, furthermore, therefore, thus, on the contrary, by the same token, at the same time, in other words, etc.” Repeat your keywords but be careful of excessive repetition. Repeat sentence structures, which is used as a rhetorical technique rather than cohesion to highlight parallelism between sentences.

Ensure thematic consistency

Start every sentence or paragraph with information that hints at the content of the next sentence. Academic writing is improved by coherence and cohesion. Without coherence and cohesion, readers will become confused and eventually disinterested in the article. Your ideas then become lost and the primary objective of writing is not achieved.

Tips and Strategies

There are six ways for creating coherence, which you will find useful while polishing your manuscript. Creating coherence is not as difficult as it seems, but you will need the right tools and strategies to achieve it. Lexis creates cohesion using synonyms, hyponyms, and superordinate's. The use of lexical chains creates variety in writing and avoids monotony. Reference creates cohesion by using possessive pronouns (e.g., your, their, etc.), pronouns (e.g., she, me, etc.), and determiners (e.g., those, these, etc.). Substitution, which is the use of a different word in place of a previously mentioned word (e.g., “I bought a designer bag today. She did the same.”). Ellipsis is the removal or omission of words because their meaning is implied through context (e.g., “He goes to yoga classes in the afternoon. I hope I can too.”).

Cohesive nouns are also called umbrella nouns because they summarize many words in one. Conjunctions include words that list ideas (e.g., first, next, then, lastly, etc.). Academic writing should be concise, coherent, and cohesive. Maintaining these three qualities involves using a number of strategies to impart ideas to the reader. After all, that is the whole point of any type of writing.

Cohesion and coherence are important aspects of the structure of academic writing as they have an influence on the readability and logical flow of the argument of a text. Cohesion refers to the logical flow and connection in a written text and is achieved through the use of devices to link sentences together so that there is a logical flow between ideas from one sentence to the next. Coherence refers to the unity or togetherness of the text as a whole and is achieved through the effective grouping and arrangement of ideas in a logical order. In academic writing paragraphs are essential to the structure of the text. Information and ideas are sorted into paragraphs to make the writing more logical and to ensure that the argument flows and develops logically. To achieve cohesion and coherence paragraphs and sentences need to be clearly linked to each other to logically and linguistically form a whole. Every paragraph needs a focus or a theme and all parts of the paragraph must contribute to this (Enquist & Oates 2009: 34). Paragraphs generally follow a typical structure: The first sentence in the paragraph is the topic sentence. This sentence defines the scope of the paragraph, encapsulates or organises the paragraph and relates to the thesis of the text. The topic sentence is usually followed by supporting evidence for the claims made in the paragraph and an elaboration on the claims. It is important to draw the reader's attention to the point you want to make with your claims. Cohesion in paragraphs can be achieved by the use of linking devices and logical connectors to link sentences. These devices include a variety of elements, e.g. conjunctions, the use of pronouns and the repetition of certain words. It is important to note that conjunctions link on a grammatical level, while linking devices link meaning. There is a wide variety of words that can be used to make a logical connection between concepts and sentences. It is important to use them correctly and not overuse certain linking phrases. Paragraphs have to be coherent. This means that the parts of your paragraph need to link to each other in a logical way so that the reader may easily follow the development of your ideas and argument. "I have defined incoherence as writing in which separate, unrelated ideas appear to be juxtaposed: they are next to, but not connected to each other ... coherence exists in a sequence of words, sentences and paragraphs in which the reader can perceive connections... To produce a coherent stretch of discourse, writers use basic thought patterns, or logical patterns, in both simple and complex ways." (Brostoff, 1981). All parts of the text have to relate to each other in the context in which it appears and there has to be effective transition from one part or idea to the next. Coherence ensures that the 'bigger picture' is clear. Coherence in writing can be achieved through the use of words, but also through context. Kies (2003) offers the following advice: "Coherence is a

product of many different factors, which combine to make every paragraph, every sentence, and every phrase contribute to the meaning of the whole piece. Coherence in writing is much more difficult to sustain than coherent speech simply because writers have no nonverbal clues to inform if their message is clear or not. Therefore, writers must make their patterns of coherence more explicit and much more carefully planned. Coherence itself is the product of two factors – paragraph unity and sentence cohesion."

გამოყენებული ლიტერატურა

1. Leech, G. –Principles of Pragmatics, London: Longman, 1983
2. Levinson St. – Pragmatics, New-York, 1983.
3. Morris, Charles W (1938/1970): Foundations of the Theory of Signs. Chicago: Chicago .

რეზიუმე

ეს ნაშრომი ეხება სტილისტურ სახეს, რომელიც იკვლევს თანმიმდევრულობას. თანმიმდევრულობა არის აუცილებელი თვისება კარგი აკადემიური წერისთვის. თანამედროვე ლინგვისტური ლინგვისტური პრაგმატიკა, რომელიც ენობრივი ნიშნის ერთ-ერთ სემიოტიკურ განზომილებას შეისწავლის, კომუნიკაციის განახლებულ გაგებასა და კომუნიკაციური აქტის მოდელს ეფუძნება. ამდენად, შესაძლებელია ვილაპარაკოთ არა მხოლოდ კომუნიკაციურ, არამედ კომუნიკაციურ-პრაგმატიკულ მიდგომაზე.