

COHESION AND COHERENCE IN ACADEMIC WRITING: LINGUISTIC MECHANISMS AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS

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Abstract: Cohesion and coherence are crucial aspects of effective academic writing. Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical tools that link sentences and clauses. Coherence relates to how ideas are organized logically and how clear the meaning is in a text. This article looks at the linguistic tools that create cohesion, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. It also discusses coherence as a cognitive and rhetorical concept shaped by logical structure, thematic flow, and reader expectations. Drawing on functional linguistics and discourse analysis, particularly the work by M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, this study shows how cohesive tools and coherent organization work together to create effective academic writing.

Key words: cohesion, coherence, academic writing, discourse analysis, lexical cohesion, thematic progression.

1. Introduction

Academic writing is not just a collection of grammatically correct sentences. It is a structured and meaningful discourse that leads readers through complex ideas. Two essential traits of successful academic texts are cohesion and coherence.

Students often produce grammatically correct sentences that do not form a logically connected text. This issue highlights the difference between sentence-level correctness and overall organization. Cohesion works at the surface level of language, linking words and

sentences through grammatical and lexical means. Coherence, meanwhile, relates to meaning and logic.

Understanding how cohesion and coherence interact is important for both native and non-native English speakers who want to write effective academic texts.

2. Theoretical Background

The ideas of cohesion and coherence were clearly outlined in the book *Cohesion in English* (1976) by M. A. K. Halliday and Ruquaiya Hasan. In their functional approach, they define cohesion as the linguistic elements that connect parts of a text.

They identified five main types of cohesive devices:

- Reference
- Substitution
- Ellipsis
- Conjunction
- Lexical cohesion

Their framework continues to influence studies in discourse analysis and academic writing.

3. Cohesion: Linguistic Devices

3.1 Reference

Reference occurs when one element in a text points to another.

Example:

The experiment was successful. It produced significant results.

The pronoun "it" refers back to "the experiment." This creates a cohesive link.

Types of reference include:

- Personal (he, she, it, they)
- Demonstrative (this, that, these, those)
- Comparative (such, similar, different)

Reference helps avoid unnecessary repetition and keeps the text flowing.

3.2 Substitution

Substitution replaces one element with another word.

Example:

The first method was ineffective. The second one proved successful.

The word "one" substitutes for "method."

3.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis leaves out information that is understood from the context.

Example:

Some participants preferred online learning; others preferred face-to-face.

The verb "preferred" is missing in the second clause but is understood.

3.4 Conjunction

Conjunctions clearly show logical relationships between sentences.

Examples:

Addition: furthermore, moreover

Contrast: however, nevertheless

Cause: therefore, as a result

Sequence: first, then, finally

Example:

The hypothesis was rejected. However, further research is required.

Conjunctions are essential in academic argumentation.

3.5 Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion involves repetition and semantic links.

Example:

The study focused on climate change. This environmental issue affects global stability.

The link between "climate change" and "environmental issue" creates lexical cohesion.

Types include:

- Repetition
- Synonymy
- Hyponymy
- Collocation

Lexical cohesion is especially important for maintaining thematic unity.

4. Coherence: Logical and Conceptual Unity

While cohesion is seen in language, coherence is a conceptual matter. A coherent text presents ideas in a logical order that readers can easily follow.

A text may be cohesive but not coherent.

Example:

The experiment was conducted carefully. Therefore, apples are nutritious.

This sentence contains a cohesive connector ("therefore") but lacks logical coherence.

Coherence relies on:

- Logical progression
- A clear thesis statement
- Well-structured paragraphs
- Consistent argument development

5. Thematic Progression and Information Flow

Coherence is supported by thematic progression, which is how information moves from sentence to sentence. Academic writing often follows:

- Theme (known information)
- Rheme (new information)

Example:

Academic writing requires structure. This structure ensures clarity.

The repetition of "structure" creates thematic continuity.

Proper thematic progression improves readability and understanding.

6. Cohesion and Coherence in Academic Genres

6.1 Research Articles

Research articles need strong logical sequencing:

- Introduction
- Literature review

- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion

Each section must connect logically to the next.

6.2 Essays and Theses

In student writing, coherence is often achieved through:

- Clear topic sentences
- Logical paragraph order
- Explicit transitions

Teachers often stress linking words to boost cohesion.

7. Common Problems in Student Writing

Many learners face issues such as:

- Overusing conjunctions
- Repeating without variety
- Lacking logical paragraph development
- Sudden topic shifts

Improving cohesion does not automatically ensure coherence. Writers must plan their argument structure carefully.

8. The Relationship Between Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion supports coherence, but they are not the same.

Cohesion = linguistic tools

Coherence = meaningful organization

Effective academic writing needs both. If a text lacks cohesion, it feels fragmented. If it lacks coherence, it seems confusing.

9. Pedagogical Implications

Teaching academic writing should include:

- Clear instruction on cohesive devices
- Practice in organizing paragraphs
- Analyzing examples of academic texts
- Peer reviews focused on logical flow

Developing coherence requires critical thinking, not just grammar skills.

10. Conclusion

Cohesion and coherence are vital to academic writing. Cohesion happens through grammatical and lexical tools that link sentences, while coherence ensures logical flow and clarity of ideas.

The framework created by Halliday and Hasan remains very relevant for understanding how to organize a text. Academic writers must use cohesive devices thoughtfully while maintaining logical consistency throughout their work.

Ultimately, cohesion and coherence turn separate sentences into meaningful academic writing.

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