

## The Concept of Cohesion and Coherence in Modern Linguistics with Reference to English and Kurdish

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**Abstract:** The study tackles the two notions of cohesion and coherence in modern linguistic study. Cohesion is the relation of meaning, the connections or the ties which exists within a text and provides the semantic unity required in the structure of that text. The semantic unity is expressed, partly through the grammatical resources and partly through the vocabulary. There are two kinds of cohesive ties: grammatical such as reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunctions and lexical, including reiteration and collocation.

In fact, the importance of cohesion lies in the fact that it does not only provide the structure of grammatical unity but it, also, participates in creating the semantic unity or the coherence of a text. Texts, presumably, the main area of operation for cohesion, are seen as language units which have a definable, communicative function, characterized by such principles as cohesion, coherence and informativeness which can be used to provide a formal definition of what constitutes their identifying textuality of a texture. A text, plainly, has to be coherent as well as cohesive. In short, cohesion is not a simple unitary concept. It has been one of the most controversial issues in modern linguistic studies.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, Coherence, Linguistic Cohesion, Text, Cohesive Ties, Texture, Grammatical Cohesive Ties, Lexical Cohesion, Presupposition

### 1. Introduction

Cohesion tackles the question of how sentences are tied up together to form a text. It studies the nature of cohesion elements, whether they are semantic or syntactic, and the distance in terms of the number of the sentences intervening between the cohesive items and the presupposed items. Linguistic cohesion is based on the idea of presupposition of items in a text. These are identified as the cohesive items and the presupposed items respectively. The presupposed items may be located in an earlier sentence or in the following one. The form of presupposition which points to some previous items is called “Anaphora”. What is presupposed anaphorically maybe in the sentence immediately preceding, or in some earlier sentence? Presupposition, however, may refer to the opposite direction; to an element that is following. This is referred to as “cataphora”.

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The study tackles the following headings:

- Introduction
- What does the Concept of Cohesion entail?
- The Etymological and Terminological survey of cohesion
- Cohesion and Text
- Cohesion and Coherence in English
- Cohesion and Coherence Theory
- Grammatical Cohesive Ties
- Lexical Cohesion, its Types and Features
- Cohesion and Coherence in Kurdish
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

## **2. What Does the Concept of Cohesion Entail?**

Cohesion is the relation of meaning, the connection or the ties which exist within a text and provide the semantic unity required in the structure of that text. The semantic unity is expressed, partly, through the grammatical resources and, partly, through the vocabulary. There are two types of cohesive ties: grammatical, such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunction, and also lexical, including reiteration and collocation:

Reiteration with the identity of reference such as in:

- Layla bit into a peach.
- Unfortunately, the peach was not ripe.

Systematic semantic relation such as in:

- Layla likes green apples.
- She does not like red ones.

In fact, the importance of cohesion lies in the fact that it does not provide the structure or grammatical unity, but it also participates in creating the semantic unity or the coherence of a text. In the sentence below for example:

- Give me two books. Put them on the desk.

The pronoun “them”, in the second sentence, is understood to refer to the “two books”. Here, both refer to the same referent. Therefore, “them” gives cohesion to the two sentences. Thus, the word “them” helps to establish a tie by which the two sentences are connected. Cohesion is related to the manner in which “the components of the surface text, the actual words, heard or seen are mutually connected within a sequence through grammatical dependencies.”

In short, cohesion is not a simple unitary concept. It has been one of the most controversial issues in modern linguistic study. What is still lacking is a clear-cut limitation of its dimensions, area separation, function and types of relationships with other linguistic concepts.

### 3. The Etymological and Terminological Survey of Cohesion

The verb “cohere” is the base form for nouns such as “cohesion”, “coherence”. “coherency”, “cohesiveness” and adjectives like “cohesive” and “coherent”. It is made up, according to (Dictionary of Word Origins, 1985:51), of the prefix “co-” which means “together” plus the Latin verb “haerere” meaning “to stick”. The resulting Latin verb “cohaerere” stands for “to stick together”. The first appearance of the verb “cohere” (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989: 449) in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night,

“Till each circumstance, of a place, time, fortune, do cohere and iumpThat I am Viola” whereas “cohesion” could not be found before 1678 when it appeared in Hobbs’s Natural Philosophy, page 139:

“The parts there, may be contiguous without any other cohesion”

The notion of cohesion as a linguistic phenomenon is traced back to the nineteenth century Alexander Bain (1870) stated that the relationship of each sentence to the preceding one should be explicit and unmistakable.

In coherence, unlike cohesion, there are not observable links, neither syntactic nor semantic, that can join two coherent sentences.

For Webster (1971, Vol. 1, p.440), cohesion is the act, quality, or state of cohering (as tangibly or morally). Crystal, in A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (1988, p.54) highlights cohesion as referring to those surface-structure features of utterance of text which link different parts of sentences or larger units of discourse. Similar views are found in other definitions of cohesion where it has been equated with or subsumed under coherence. For example, at the end of its definition of the word “coherence”, The New Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language (1984, p. 2015) states that it is “another word for cohesion”. In the Dictionary of literary terms (1972, pp. 81-82), coherent composition is described as one in which “one paragraph, scene, or stanza grows from the preceding one, each group dealing with one section is closely connected, held together with other groups”. Likewise, linguistic cohesion is merged with coherence in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978, p. 204) “coherence: natural or reasonable connection; in thoughts or words.”

For example, if the same item is referred to twice within the same sentence, this reference is controlled by certain rules, namely the rules of pronominalization. The following sentence serves as an illustration as in:

Ahmed wrote a short story and gave Ahmed’s short story to Ahmed’s teacher of Kurdish.

The sentence structure determines whether the second and third mention of ‘Ahmed’ should be replaced by pronouns. Thus, assuming that there is only one ‘Ahmed’ here, reference must be expressed this way:

- Ahmed wrote a short story and gave it to his teacher of Kurdish.

#### **4. Cohesion and Text**

A text is a unified semantic unit which refers to any spoken or written passage to any spoken or written passage of whatever length. Texts, presumably, the main area of separation for cohesion, are seen as language units which have a definable communicative function, characterized by such principles as cohesion, coherence, and informativeness which can be used to provide a formal definition of what constitutes their identifying textuality or texture. “A text, plainly, has to be coherent as well as cohesive.” The fact that the notion of “text” is so prevailing nowadays should not delude us into concluding that all scholars believe in it, a text is expected to show a certain kind of structural integration among its parts different from that among the parts of a sentence or a clause. A text may be realized in one sentence only, and in this case the cohesive relations will be found among the parts of a text that is made up of a sequence of sentences; yet they attract less attention within a sentence because of the cohesive strength of grammatical structure since the sentence sticks together already.

#### **5. Cohesion and Coherence in English**

A clear-cut distinction between the two concomitant concepts of cohesion and coherence has been vehemently debated in the circles of text linguistics. The threads whereby these concepts are knitted are occasionally mingled. It is, therefore, prudent to take a close look at some approaches to these two concepts. Coherence concerns the ways in which the components of the textual world configuration of concepts and relation which underlie the surface text are mutually accessible and relevant. A concept is taken here to mean a configuration of knowledge which can be consistently retrieved in the mind. Relations are definable as bridges connecting the concepts which appear together in a textual world: each bridge would be constructed in a shape that reflects it connects to sometimes, the relation between the concepts is not made explicit by expression of the surface and it is here where coherence plays more important role than cohesion in fastening the stitches of texture, for the text users will premise as many relations as needed to fill the crevices in the content comprehension.

For instance: in the road sign “Reduce Speed Check Point”, “speed” makes better sense when perceived as an object to the imperative “reduce”, which should be postulated by the text user, than as the first noun of a genitive construction.

While cohesion can be illustrated particularly well by a group of syntactic devices, cohesion is often a relation between linguistically realized meanings, coherence is an interpositional relation that relies on both the textual world and the real world.

The two concepts of “cohesion” and “coherence” are not utterly parallel; they meet at certain points, which gives the distinction between them this uncategorical state. One of the points at which they meet is the “context of situation” which controls to a large extent, the existence of cohesion or coherence in a text. Sometimes, a cohesive device is used as a link between a certain situation and an utterance, in the example:

A housewife, on seeing her husband coming home and carrying a big watermelon, says: “But couldn’t you bring a smaller one”, here, the cohesive devices “But, a smaller one” are retrieved, not from the preceding text, but from the context of situation. Even when two sentences are related by a cohesive device, the hearer has to go beyond his linguistic resources in order to recover an interpretation.

The fact that cohesion and text-centered is beyond dispute as the text is the area of operation of both. Nonetheless, to be more specific, it has been noted that cohesion is more language-system-centered and system in natural language is grammar. Coherence, on the other hand, is more text-use-centered, coherence is brought to the text by the language user; thus, it resides in the user's mind rather than in the text itself. See the example:

Ali is going to get a promotion. His Dean says so.

The two sentences, here, hold the relation of cohesion, since the development of meaning between them is clear. "His" means "Ali" and "so" means that: "Ali is going to get promotion." If the two sentences are put together, the sequence of meaning becomes clear and correct.

The potential impact of cohesion lies in the systematic resources of two major categories: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical cohesive devices comprise reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Lexical cohesive devices are of two types; reiteration and collocation. Reiteration can be signaled by repetition of the lexical item, use of a synonym, use of a superordinate or a general word.

The twin concepts of cohesion and coherence seem to be so difficult to separate. In general, one may claim that there has been a unanimous resolution to deem coherence the underlying relation between the concepts of a text as controlled by the world knowledge; whereas cohesion is represented by the relations between sentences of the text as controlled by the language system.

Nonetheless, they are still interlocked by certain common aspects such as the context of situation. However, empirical studies have indicated that coherence is larger in scope than cohesion and that the latter represents only one of the factors contributing to the creation of the former. This is, virtually, the same to saying that not every coherent text should necessarily be cohesive, and not every incohesive text should be taken as incoherent.

Shakir and Farghal (1992, p.451) argue that for the text users, generally, assume that every piece of language is a text, and hence, try, by recouring to their knowledge of the world as well as the textual world to supply the types of relations required to create coherence and consequently meet on the condition which is instrumental in fulfilling texture.

The results of a number of recent empirical and theoretical studies have shown that cohesion is a sub-element of coherence and plays an important, but not exclusive role in creating coherence, in that it "embodies the internal semantic relationships of a text", but the mere presence of cohesive ties is not by itself a guarantee of a coherent text. It is not difficult, of course, to find texts that are immediately interpreted though they exhibit few, if any, explicit markers of cohesive relations.

## **6. Cohesion and Coherence Theory**

Cohesion and coherence theory plays a significant role in the field of discourse. However, the linguistic roots of this theory have not been investigated in the other linguistic cultures. Having these two theories in the literature of linguistics has proposed this study to concern itself with conducting across theoretical

contrast on them. This kind of contrast is done with the aim of finding out the similarities and differences between the two theories, in addition to identifying some aspects of convergence between them.

Cohesion and coherence theory has been formulated throughout the work of one of the major figures of London School of Linguistic. M.A.K. Halliday who co-authored his famous account on this theory with R. Hassan, since then, the study of cohesion and coherence, as well as the relationship that brings them together have seen several developments which are to be tackled here taking into account the Halliday's perspectives upon which the theory is based. For Halliday and Hassan, and other authors who support such a view, the organization structure of a text is composed of chains of relations that bring forth items in the text and those relations are realized by means of exploiting cohesive devices.

## 7. Grammatical Cohesive Ties

1. Reference: In some earlier studies, such as that of Lyons (1968, p. 404), the relationship which holds between words is called preference. This device incorporates utilizing language by speakers to refer to things and thoughts in every language. Reference is represented by certain items which are not interpreted semantically in their own rights, but they refer to something else. Personal demonstratives and comparatives are good examples on these items, e.g.:

A. Would you like these seats?

B. No, as a matter of facts, I'd like the other seats.

2. Substitution: It is an attempt to illustrate Halliday and Hasan's (1976) account of substitution. Salkie (1995) states that there are some certain words in English which contribute to cohesion by substituting for words that have been already used by means of the substitution cohesive relation. This relation resides mainly in the wording rather than in the meaning. Substitution is the replacement of one item by another. See the example:

A. Did you read the novel?

B. No, my brother did.

3. Ellipsis: Ellipsis is defined as an omission of a linguistic element. It can be thought as a zero tie or nothing owing to the fact that the tie is left unsaid. The idea of omitting part of a sentence on the assumption that an earlier sentence will make the meaning clear is known as "ellipsis".

Ellipsis can be verbal, nominal or clauses.

See the example:

1. Bedridden brought some vegetables and Saif some fruits.

2. A. Have you been working?

B. Yes, I have Ø.

4. Conjunction: It is a cohesive relation which differs in nature from other cohesive relations in that conjunctive elements are indirectly cohesive. They express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. Conjunction indicates a different type semantic relation in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before.

See the example:

They stayed in London for six weeks. Then they came back.

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.80) maintain that conjunctive elements are cohesive in themselves, but indirectly by virtue of their specific meaning, they express certain meanings which presuppose the

presence of other components in a discourse. The other types of cohesion, the lexical one involves diverse and complex relations of collocations and structural semantic sense connections.

### **8. Lexical Cohesion, its Types and Features**

Halliday and Hassan (1976, p.82), argue that lexical cohesion is established through the structure-lexis or vocabulary. Lexical cohesion encompasses reiteration and collocation. It, also, involves using the characteristics and features of words as well as the group relationship among them to achieve cohesion.

Some cohesive devices are realized through the grammar and vocabulary. Cohesive form may be expressed through the vocabulary, which is called lexical cohesion. The latter involves diverse relations of collocations and structural-semantic sense connections.

There are three aspects of lexical cohesion:

- A. Repetition of an item
- B. Occurrence of synonyms or items formed on the same root:  
e.g. run/sprint or run/running
- C. Occurrence of an item of the same lexical set.  
e.g. train/track, station, platform

Grammatical cohesion, including reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction is a closed system. Lexical cohesion, on the other hand, involves selections of a lexical item which is a member of an open set; it is a kind of choice which is open-ended.

Lexical cohesion is expressed through the structure of the lexis, or vocabulary. It is established through the selection of lexical item in which in some way related to one occurring previously. This term is used to refer to the lexical connection that links different parts of a text through the use of its lexis or vocabulary; that is through either the repeated use of a lexical item, or the use of an equivalent lexical item.

In most cases, reiterated elements point back (anaphoric) to other elements, signaling that there is a referential identity or equivalence between those elements, i.e., they are systematically connected by having a common referent.

- Textual ellipsis (anaphoric)  
e.g. I am happy if you are (happy).
- Textual ellipsis (cataphoric)  
e.g. Those who prefer (to stay indoors) can stay indoors.

As far as generality in meaning is concerned, although generated words are more general than all other reiterated lexical cohesive items, it is, still, more specific than such grammatical cohesive as reference.

(e.g. one, do, etc.). To this point, it is noteworthy that it is not easy to draw a sharp line between lexical and grammatical cohesion, because of the overlap between the class of general nouns, as a type of lexical cohesive devices, and the reference, as a type of grammatical cohesive ones.

In linguistics, the concept of “Collocation”, refers to a group of lexical items that are often used together to form a natural-sounding word accompaniment (combination).

The main objective of the study of collocations is to establish the collocational range of lexical items. To collocate two (or more) lexical items, is to define and delimit meanings of each other, by eliminating their other possible meanings, e.g. the combination of “pay” with “attention” as a collocation reduces the number of meanings that “pay” holds, meanwhile it excludes such meanings held by “attention” as “care” “solicitude” collocational restrictions e.g. “to buy a hat” does not delimit the sense of “buy” or “hat”.

## 9. Cohesion and Coherence in Kurdish

Languages are regarded as tools to express meaning. They are rich in linguistic items that convey different meanings. Cohesion refers to the overt semantic relations in text, whereas coherence refers to semantic and pragmatic relations between the parts of a text.

Cohesion is the set of linguistic means which are gradable for creating texture. The texture is the basic units in a text that makes it more meaningful by creating relationships between sentences and paragraphs besides the semantic relations. Without these units, the sentences and paragraphs would be isolated and not organized.

Regarding Kurdish language, it is of Indo-European group of languages. It has a great literary heritage before the Islamic era and it has expanded during the Islamic empire. Nowadays, it is widely used and it is a language of more than five million people and it is considered as an official language in many countries geographically close to each other.

Regarding the application of text analysis in Kurdish, up to now, studies and investigations in the field of Kurdish language did not exceed the sentence level our boundaries, ie, beyond sentence level. After investigating the other theories, it seems that M.A.K. Halliday’s approach is more practical on which one can base his study on. Thus, one can say that this theory or approach of Halliday’s model is useful in Kurdish language particularly, southern Kurdish (Sorani).

e.g. The guest arrived. (English)

میوانهکه گهیشته. (Kurdish)

Thus one can conclude that many studies have demonstrated that lexical cohesion devices are so important in writing and in the sufficient use of such lexical cohesive in Kurdish which contributes to the lack of cohesion devices in Kurdish language. Deficient lexical cohesion devices in writing like other problems that cause incoherent, lead to the confusion of misunderstanding.

## 10. Grammatical, Lexical-Semantic Cohesive Ties in Kurdish

### 1. Grammatical cohesive ties:

- Reference:

(1) من ئەرۆم... به تهنیا ئەرۆم، سه‌ری خۆم هه‌ڵده‌گرم و لێت دوور ده‌که‌ومه‌وه  
هه‌ر چه‌نده له‌وانه‌یه ئه‌مه به تر سه‌توکی وه‌ه لاتن دا بیهێتی، به‌لام چاره‌م نیه. (SL)

I will go ...I go alone. I will leave and get away from you. You may consider it as being afraid and to escape, but I have n't got any other choice. (TL)

This is an example of anaphoric, cohesive, grammatical reference ties in Kurdish.

(٢) دواتر سواری سهبارم کرد ووتوم رێ، باوکم برد بۆ ئهو نهخوشخانهی که خۆم لهوێ بووم بۆ هواندنهوه. (SL)

Later on, I helped my father ride the car and drove him to the hospital where I was there for stay and relax. (TL)

This example stands for cataphoric grammatical reference ties.

- Substitution:

(٣) هاواری کورم... من دهزانم تو چهند زیرمک و بههره داریت، حهیفه دواروژی روناکی خوت بدورینیت بهو مروقه بوودهله وخوری یانه.

ئهوانه داخی دلی خویمان به خهلهتاندنی ئیوه ومانان دهڕێژن. (SL)

My son Hawre, I know how clever and talented you are. It is not wise to lose your glory future with such crazy and naughty people. They are cheating you and show the hatred feelings buried in their hearts to you. (TL)

- Ellipsis:

(٤)

أ- ئهو بهرمو خوارموه ملی دهننا وتو بهرمو ژوور... (SL)

He was going down wards and you towards the inside. (TL)

ب- زامی نهشتهس ساریژ ئهیی، بهلام زامی قسه ههڕگیز... (SL)

Sword's pain can be treated but, harsh speech can't be treated. (TL)

- Conjunction:

(٥) ئیستا ئیم روونه دایکی وهک ههموو ئیوارانی تر ئهو خواردنهی ئاکو حهزی ئهکرد ئامادهی دهکات و لهسهس

سفرهکه دای ئهین، چاوهکانیشی له دهڕگای ههوشهکهیه به تهمای بیتهوه، تا درهنگانیش خواردنهکه ههروا

ئههیلایتهوه. (SL)

It is quite clear to me that AKO's mother, as in all the evenings is preparing the food he likes it and putting it on the dining trip, her eyes are on the house yard door, hoping to come back. The food will be left there till late hours. (TL)



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