

COHESION AND COHERENCE IN ACADEMIC WRITING OF EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract. Academic writing is one of the most important skills for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). To produce effective academic texts, students need to understand and apply the principles of cohesion and coherence. Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical connections that link different parts of a text, while coherence refers to the logical organization and overall meaning of a written work. This article discusses the importance of cohesion and coherence in academic writing, common difficulties faced by EFL students, and strategies for improving these aspects of writing.

Keywords: cohesion, coherence, academic writing, EFL students, discourse, writing skills, cohesion devices, coherence strategies.

Introduction

Academic writing plays a significant role in higher education because it allows students to communicate ideas clearly and effectively. For EFL students, academic writing is often challenging due to limited language proficiency and lack of experience in organizing ideas. Among the many factors that contribute to successful writing, cohesion and coherence are particularly important. A text may contain correct grammar and vocabulary, but without cohesion and coherence, it may still be difficult for readers to understand.

Cohesion in Academic Writing

Cohesion refers to the linguistic features that connect sentences and paragraphs within a text. According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesion is achieved through various grammatical and lexical devices that create links between different parts of a text.

Common cohesive devices include:

- **Reference:** using pronouns and demonstratives to refer to previously mentioned information.
 - Example: John completed the assignment. He submitted it on time.
- **Substitution:** replacing a word or phrase with another form.
 - Example: Some students preferred online learning, while others did not.
- **Ellipsis:** omitting information that can be understood from the context.
 - Example: Some students attended the workshop, and others Ø did not.
- **Conjunctions:** using linking words such as however, therefore, moreover, and because.
 - Example: The experiment was successful; therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.
- **Lexical cohesion:** repeating key words or using synonyms.
 - Example: Education is important. Effective learning improves educational outcomes.

These devices help readers follow the relationships between ideas and understand the text more easily.

Coherence in Academic Writing

While cohesion focuses on linguistic connections, coherence concerns the logical flow of ideas. A coherent text presents information in a clear and organized manner. Readers should be able to understand how one idea relates to another throughout the text.



Coherence can be achieved through:

- Clear thesis statements.
- Logical paragraph organization.
- Consistent development of ideas.
- Appropriate use of topic sentences.
- Effective transitions between paragraphs.

For example, each paragraph should focus on one main idea and support it with relevant explanations and examples. When ideas are organized logically, readers can easily follow the writer's argument.

Challenges Faced by EFL Students

Many EFL students experience difficulties in creating cohesive and coherent academic texts. One common problem is the overuse or incorrect use of linking words. Students may use connectors such as however or therefore without understanding their exact functions.

Another challenge is the lack of logical organization. Some students present ideas randomly without establishing clear relationships between them. As a result, readers may struggle to understand the intended message.

Limited vocabulary also affects cohesion and coherence. Students often repeat the same words excessively or fail to use appropriate reference words and synonyms. Additionally, interference from the first language may influence how ideas are structured in English writing.

Strategies for Improving Cohesion and Coherence

Teachers can help students improve their academic writing through several strategies. First, explicit instruction on cohesive devices should be provided. Students need opportunities to practice using references, conjunctions, substitution, and lexical cohesion in different writing tasks.

Second, students should be encouraged to plan their writing before drafting. Creating outlines and organizing ideas logically can improve coherence. Peer review activities may also help students identify unclear connections and organizational problems.

Furthermore, reading academic texts can expose learners to effective examples of cohesive and coherent writing. By analyzing model texts, students can better understand how experienced writers organize information and connect ideas.

Conclusion

Cohesion and coherence are essential components of effective academic writing. Cohesion ensures that sentences and paragraphs are linguistically connected, while coherence provides logical organization and meaningful progression of ideas. EFL students often face challenges in developing these skills; however, appropriate instruction, regular practice, and exposure to academic texts can significantly improve their writing quality. Developing cohesion and coherence not only enhances academic performance but also strengthens overall communicative competence in English.

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