



وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

جامعة تكريت

كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الرابعة

المادة: علم اللغة

عنوان المحاضرة: Cohesion and Coherence in Discourse

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## Cohesion and Coherence in Discourse in Yule's *The Study of Language*

### 1. Introduction to Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis goes beyond analyzing individual sentences to explore how language functions in larger units—paragraphs, conversations, narratives, or complete texts. According to George Yule, discourse is essentially “language in use,” meaning it must be interpreted in context. To understand how sentences fit together and how meaning is communicated effectively, two crucial concepts are cohesion and coherence. These elements help us understand why a sequence of sentences can be understood as a connected, meaningful text rather than as a random collection of statements.

## **2. What Is Cohesion?**

Cohesion refers to the explicit linguistic connections within a text that bind sentences and clauses together. These are surface-level grammatical and lexical links that create unity. Types of Cohesive Devices:

1. Reference Words like he, she, it, this, that refer to something mentioned earlier (anaphora) or later (cataphora). Example: “Lisa lost her phone. She searched for it everywhere.” (She refers to Lisa; it refers to the phone.)

2. Substitution Replacing a word or phrase with another word to avoid repetition. Example: “I need a pen. Do you have one?” (one substitutes a pen)

3. Ellipsis Omitting part of a sentence when it is understood from context. Example: “John can play the guitar. Mary can too.” (play the guitar is omitted in the second clause.)

4. Conjunctions Using linking words like and, but, so, therefore, however to show logical relationships. Example: “He was tired, so he went to bed early.”

5. Lexical Cohesion The use of repeated words, synonyms, or related vocabulary. Example: “The child was crying. The boy had lost his toy.” (child and boy refer to the same person.) These tools allow readers and listeners to track meaning across sentences and interpret them as part of a larger whole.

## **3. What Is Coherence?**

While cohesion involves visible links, coherence is about the logic and meaningful connection between ideas in a text. A text is coherent if

the ideas make sense together—even if some cohesive devices are missing. Yule emphasizes that coherence is not just found in the words themselves but is often a product of the reader's or listener's interpretation, based on background knowledge, expectations, and shared assumptions. Example of a coherent text:

> “I dropped the glass. It shattered immediately.”

The connection is logical—even without explicit markers. There's an implicit causal relationship between the two events. Example of a non-coherent text:

> “I went to the store. The moon is beautiful. My cat likes tuna.”

Despite being grammatically correct, the statements lack logical connection—there's no coherence.

#### **4. Relationship Between Cohesion and Coherence**

A text can be cohesive but not coherent: > “The car is fast. It likes apples. Therefore, it flew away.” Cohesive words are present (it, therefore), but the ideas don't logically connect. A text can be coherent without much cohesion:

> “Can you pass the salt?”

This utterance may not contain clear cohesion, but within the context of a meal, it is perfectly coherent as a request. Yule suggests that both cohesion and coherence work together to produce effective discourse, but coherence is more crucial for comprehension, as it is built through context, logic, and shared knowledge.

#### **5. Cultural and Contextual Aspects of Coherence**

Coherence is not universal—what is considered coherent in one culture or language may not be in another. For instance: English texts

often follow a linear, direct structure, stating the main idea early. In contrast, some Asian rhetorical styles prefer indirectness, delaying the main point until later. Understanding coherence thus requires sensitivity to cultural discourse norms, genre expectations, and communicative goals.

## **6. Classroom Applications and Exercises**

To help students understand cohesion and coherence, instructors can use the following activities:

Activity 1: Identify Cohesive Devices Give students a short paragraph and ask them to underline: References Conjunctions Repetition or synonyms

Activity 2: Fix the Incoherent Text Provide a series of unrelated sentences and ask students to rearrange or edit them to form a coherent paragraph.

Activity 3: Rewrite for Coherence Ask students to write two versions of a paragraph: One that is cohesive but not coherent One that is coherent but uses minimal cohesive devices

## **7. Conclusion**

Cohesion and coherence are foundational for effective communication in discourse. While cohesion provides structural links between sentences, coherence ensures that the ideas make sense in context. George Yule's discussion of these concepts shows how deeply meaning depends not only on grammar and vocabulary but also on logic, background knowledge, and shared cultural norms. For language learners and analysts alike, developing an understanding of these two principles is

essential to both producing and interpreting connected, meaningful language.

**Recommended Reading:**

- George Yule, *The Study of Language*, Chapter on Discourse Analysis .
- Halliday and Hasan (1976), *Cohesion in English*.