

## Coherence and Cohesion

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.

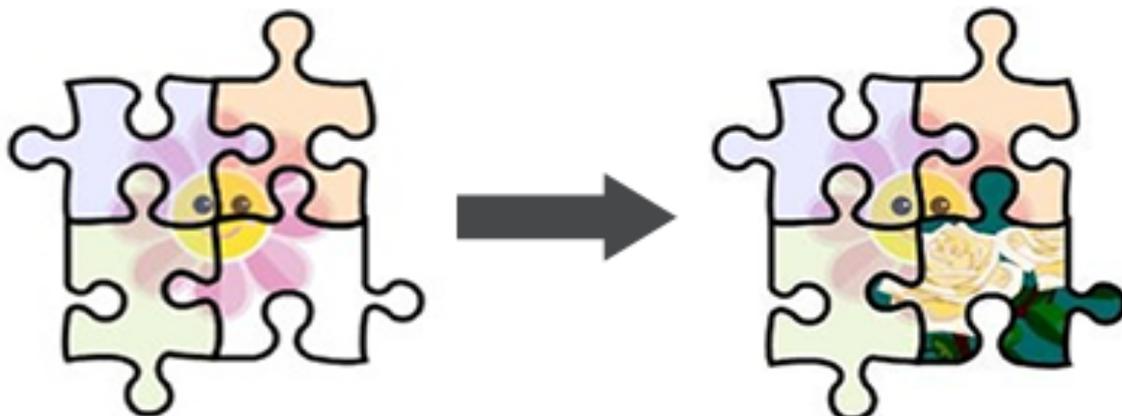
Bricks and cement can be put together to create any form of structure. However, it is only when they are laid together properly that a building can be built. Similarly, a text will be cohesive if cohesive ties are used however it will only be coherent if the cohesive ties are used appropriately to create 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 years'.

However, the string of sentences together do 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 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 Victorian's it may include lexemes such as "Mornington Peninsula" or "Shepparton" which Victorian's can infer as locations within Victoria, however 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.

**Link to a summary of cohesive devices:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRP6WkJ8Egw>