

UNITY, COHERENCE & COHESION

Writing displays **UNITY** when all the sentences in a paragraph relate to and support the **topic sentence** (or when all the paragraphs in a paper/article/essay relate to and support **the thesis statement**). None of the sentences in a paragraph (or paragraphs in a paper/article/essay) are irrelevant or off topic.

Writing displays **COHERENCE** when all the sentences in a paragraph (or paragraphs in a paper/article/essay) make sense to the reader and follow each other in a logical order.

Writing displays **COHESION** when cohesive devices are used effectively to achieve clarity and flow. This means you must know how to use linkers, pronouns, key word repetition, synonyms and ellipsis to best effect.

Mastering **cohesion** is the most difficult task for non-native users of English as it requires a confident command of grammar and vocabulary and because the rules for good text cohesion in other languages may differ from English.

TASK 1: UNITY - Identify the topic sentences in the following paragraphs and assess them for unity. Cross out any off-topic sentence(s).

Paragraph 1

Another problem facing a number of elderly people is living on a reduced income. Upon retiring, old people may receive a pension from their company or Social Security from the government. The amount of their monthly checks is often half the amount of the checks they received when they were employed. Suddenly, retirees find that they can no longer continue the lifestyle they had become accustomed to, even if that lifestyle was a modest one. Many find, after paying their monthly bills, that there is no money left for a movie or a dinner out. Of course, sometimes they can't go out because of their health. Maybe they have arthritis or rheumatism and it is painful for them to move around. This can also change their lifestyle. Some older people, however, discover that the small amount of money they receive will not even cover their monthly bills. They realize with horror that electricity, a telephone, and nourishing food are luxuries they can no longer afford. They resort to shivering in the dark, eating cat food in order to make ends meet.

Paragraph 2

Since the mid 1960s, there has been a tremendous increase in the popularity and quality of Latin and South American novelists; in fact, some call this literary movement "El Boom." Mexico has produced, for example, Carlos Fuentes, who wrote *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. The 1967 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to the Guatemalan novelist Miguel Angel Asturias. Argentina has given us numerous impressive writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Luisa Valenzuela, and Manuel Puig, whose *Kiss of the Spider Woman* was made into a film. William Hurt won an Oscar for Best Actor for his role in that movie. Another recent novelist who has impressed the world is Chile's Isabel Allende (*The House of the Spirits*). The list could go on, but probably the biggest name associated with this movement is Gabriel García Márquez, a Colombian whose enormously popular *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, published in 1967, helped him earn the 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Paragraphs from: Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar 5th Edition; Regina L. Smalley, Mary K. Ruetten and Joann Rishel Kozyrev; Heinle & Heinle (Chapter 2)

TASK 2: COHERENCE - Study the following paragraphs, in which the sentences are out of order. Revise the paragraphs for greater coherence by arranging the sentences in logical order.

Paragraph 1

As a Frenchman and a radical left militant living in the UK, I was puzzled and even shocked by these comments and would therefore like to give you a clear exposition of what my leftwing French position is on these matters. Countless other comments stated that Muslims were being ostracised and finger-pointed. In the background lurked a view of France founded upon the “myth” of *laïcité*, defined as the strict restriction of religion to the private sphere, but rampantly Islamophobic. Soon afterwards, all sorts of criticism started pouring down the web against the magazine, which was described as Islamophobic, racist and even sexist. The wave of compassion that met last week’s assault on Charlie Hebdo didn’t last long.

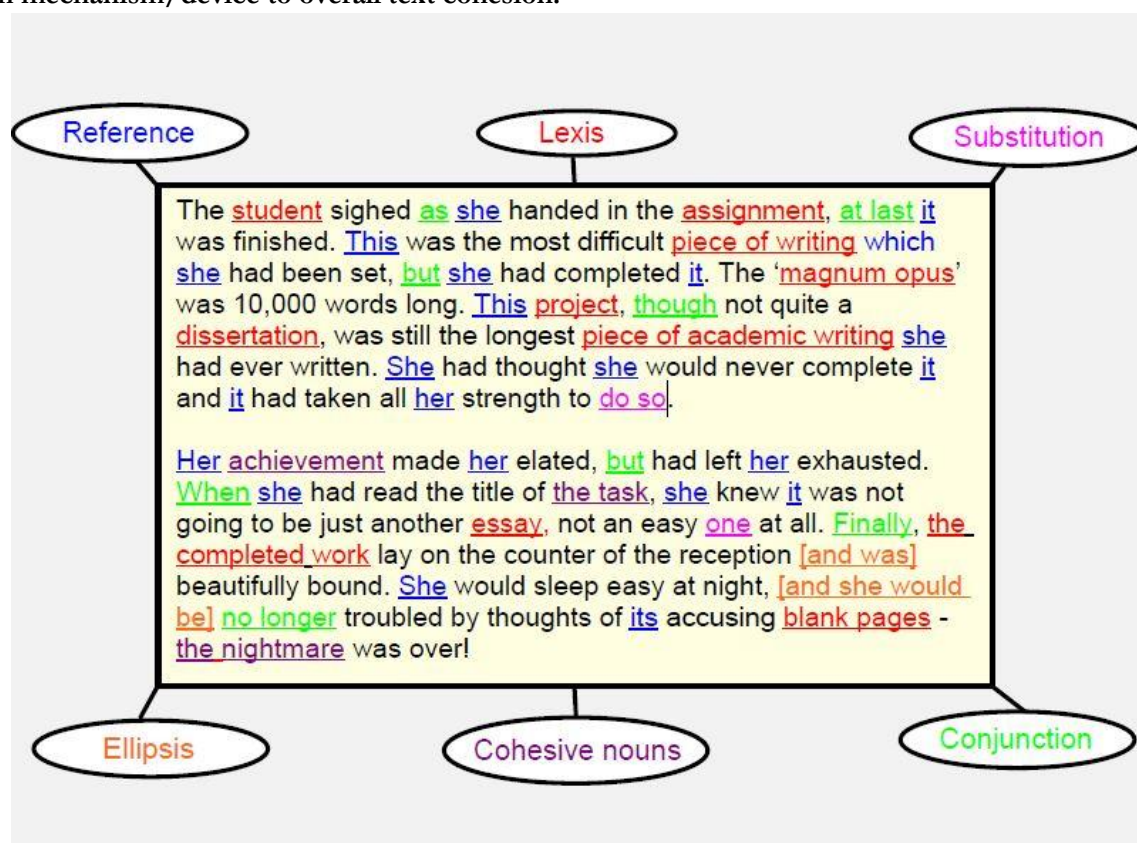
Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/13/charlie-hebdo-solution-muslims-french-arab-descent-newspaper-fight-racism>

Paragraph 2

Eager to redeem his reputation, he returned to Africa two years later, this time in search of the source of the Nile River. Nevertheless, he continued on his mission to find a navigable route through the River Zambezi. In 1862, his long-neglected wife, Mary, came to join him in Mozambique, but she quickly contracted malaria and died. He quickly fell from public grace as word got out about his failure to navigate the river. But yet again, his assistants soon began deserting him, and added insult to injury by taking all of his food and medicine with them. The last decade of David Livingstone’s life did not go well for the famed Scottish missionary and explorer. But in 1864, seven years before his famous run-in with Henry Morgan Stanley, Livingstone was forced to give up and return to Britain after most of his men abandoned him or succumbed to disease.

Source: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/decoding-lost-diary-david-livingstone-180953385/>

TASK 3: COHESION – Look at the below illustration highlighting the cohesive mechanisms employed in a 2-paragraph description of an essay writing task. Comment on the contributions of each mechanism/device to overall text cohesion.



Source: <http://ao.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>

TASK 4: COHESION – In the below text (TASK 1, Paragraph 1) the cohesive devices have been colour highlighted (reference, lexis, substitution, ellipsis, cohesive nouns, conjunctions).

Another problem facing a number of elderly people is living on a reduced income. Upon retiring, old people may receive a pension from their company or Social Security from the government. The amount of their monthly checks is often half the amount of the checks they received when they were employed. Suddenly, retirees find that they can no longer continue the lifestyle [that] they had become accustomed to, even if that lifestyle was a modest one. Many find, after paying their monthly bills, that there is no money left for a movie or a dinner out. Some older people, however, discover that the small amount of money they receive will not even cover their monthly bills. They realize with horror that electricity, a telephone, and nourishing food are luxuries they can no longer afford. They resort to shivering in the dark, eating cat food in order to make ends meet.

Now analyse the other 3 paragraphs from TASKS 1 and 2 for grammatical and lexical cohesion. Identify the cohesive mechanisms employed (reference, lexis, substitution, ellipsis, cohesive nouns, conjunctions). You will not necessarily find all six in each text.

Since the mid 1960s, there has been a tremendous increase in the popularity and quality of Latin and South American novelists; in fact, some call this literary movement “El Boom.” Mexico has produced, for example, Carlos Fuentes, who wrote *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. The 1967 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to the Guatemalan novelist Miguel Angel Asturias. Argentina has given us numerous impressive writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Luisa Valenzuela, and Manuel Puig, whose *Kiss of the Spider Woman* was made into a film. Another recent novelist who has impressed the world is Chile’s Isabel Allende (*The House of the Spirits*). The list could go on, but probably the biggest name associated with this movement is Gabriel García Márquez, a Colombian whose enormously popular *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, published in 1967, helped him earn the 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature.

The wave of compassion that met last week’s assault on Charlie Hebdo didn’t last long. Soon afterwards, all sorts of criticism started pouring down the web against the magazine, which was described as Islamophobic, racist and even sexist. Countless other comments stated that Muslims were being ostracised and finger-pointed. In the background lurked a view of France founded upon the “myth” of *laïcité*, defined as the strict restriction of religion to the private sphere, but rampantly Islamophobic. As a Frenchman and a radical left militant living in the UK, I was puzzled and even shocked by these comments and would therefore like to give you a clear exposition of what my leftwing French position is on these matters.

The last decade of David Livingstone’s life did not go well for the famed Scottish missionary and explorer. In 1862, his long-neglected wife, Mary, came to join him in Mozambique, but she quickly contracted malaria and died. Nevertheless, he continued on his mission to find a navigable route through the River Zambezi. But in 1864, seven years before his famous run-in with Henry Morgan Stanley, Livingstone was forced to give up and return to Britain after most of his men abandoned him or succumbed to disease. He quickly fell from public grace as word got out about his failure to navigate the river. Eager to redeem his reputation, he returned to Africa two years later, this time in search of the source of the Nile River. But yet again, his assistants soon began deserting him, and added insult to injury by taking all of his food and medicine with them.

FOR REFERENCE AND PRACTICE ...

Unity, Coherence and Cohesion

- ✓ http://www.uefap.com/writing/parag/par_coh.htm
- ✓ <http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>
- ✓ http://www.ugdsb.on.ca/ccvi/english/courses/ENG4U1/analyticapproach_files/unitycoh3.pdf
- ✓ http://www.elc.byu.edu/classes/buck/w_garden/classes/buck/transitions.html

HOMEWORK

1. **READ** sample biographies at <http://www.biography.com/news/section/history-and-culture> or http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/ and assess individual paragraphs for unity, coherence and cohesion.
2. **WRITE** a paragraph about one aspect of the life of a person (living, dead, famous, infamous or little known) you find interesting. Focus on making your paragraph properly unified, coherent and cohesive. Include: a strong topic sentence, at least three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Try to use a variety of sentence types. Bring your finished paragraph to the next lesson (for peer editing/evaluation).

Don't forget ... the SEVEN STAGES of the WRITING PROCESS

<u>PLANNING</u>	<u>DRAFTING</u>	<u>REVISING</u>
1. Choose a topic	4. Write the first draft	5. Edit and revise
2. Generate ideas		6. Proofread
3. Create an outline		7. Submit

