Introductory Academic Program (IAP)
Cohesion in Academic Writing

Learning Advisers
UniSA
Reflect and discuss

Tell a partner about an example of a communication that was not successful.
• What happened?
• Did you overcome the communication problem? How?

What strategies can we use to make sure what we say or write makes sense to others?
Making your writing meaningful

When you write an assignment:

• **be relevant**
  ▪ select information and ideas that relate to a particular topic
• **be organised**
  ▪ collate your material logically
• **make connections**
  ▪ create meaningful links within and across sentences
A paragraph consists of:

- A topic sentence (which states your paragraph’s key topic)
- Development or explanation of the key topic
- Supporting evidence, ideas, examples, and comment
- A concluding sentence and, possibly, a link to your next paragraph

Each sentence also needs to ‘connect’ from one to the next to make the ideas ‘flow’.
Another word for this is ‘coherence’

‘the situation when the parts of something fit together in a natural or reasonable way’
(Cambridge University Press 2013)

‘systematic or logical connection or consistency’
(Merriam Webster 2014)

‘the set of relationships within a text that link sentences by meaning’
(Oxford Press 1994)

Water naturally occurs in a variety of forms. Only a very small proportion is fresh water (Pigram 2006, p.1).

Water naturally occurs in a variety of forms (Pigram 2006, p.1). This form only accounts for a very small proportion of all water.
What creates cohesion in this paragraph?

‘In the management and HRM disciplines it is common practice to expect students to read scholarly academic journal articles as part of either stand-alone activities or in preparation for a written assessment task. The scholarly literature provides a foundation for students who may wish to pursue research in HR and provides important knowledge they will need as future HR professionals. The activity of reading internalises and applies academic literature as part of a student’s apprenticeship into the academic discourse of the discipline (Duff 2007).’

(Fujimoto et al. 2011, p.1)
As global mobility increases, the diversity of learners (cultural background, language, age, experience, country of domicile) presents challenges to the learner, educator and higher education institution. Where learners have their own identities and languages, the educators face additional issues in the classroom (Slee, 2010). Raising awareness with educators to address international issues can be demanding (Caruana and Ploner, 2010). Issues are also exacerbated as resources in the UK higher education sector are limited and international learners face a transition (process of changing from one state to another) between their own culture and their new culture (Kelly, 2009). Traditional institutions expect the international learners to fit into their educational system. International learners do find it difficult to adjust since they may be ignorant of the implicit social rules that regulate interaction in the host country..

(Adapted from Kelly & Moogan 2012, p. 25)
Use a variety of cohesive devices

As global mobility increases, the diversity of learners (cultural background, language, age, experience, country of domicile) presents challenges to the learner, educator and higher education institution. Where students have their own identities and languages, the lecturers face additional challenges in the classroom (Slee, 2010). Raising awareness with staff to address international issues can be demanding (Caruana and Ploner, 2010). Such challenges are also exacerbated as resources in the UK higher education sector are limited and international students face a transition (process of changing from one state to another) between their own culture and their new culture (Kelly, 2009). Traditional institutions expect the IMS to fit into their educational system but international students do find it difficult to adjust since they may be ignorant of the implicit social rules that regulate interaction in the host country.

(Adapted from Kelly & Moogan 2012, p. 25)
Initial word choice  Cohesion ‘links’

- learners
- challenges
- educator
- higher education institution
- face a transition

- the learner, students, international students, IMS, they
- additional challenges, issues, such challenges
- the lecturers, staff
- higher education sector, traditional institutions
- fit into, adjust
Use cohesive devices to make your writing flow

• pronouns
• synonyms
• substitution
• transitional words
• appropriate tense
• articles
• ellipsis (omission)
• related vocabulary
Use pronouns to link nouns

They can refer back to a word already mentioned:
I have studied psychology for years. It is a fascinating field of study.

Or forwards to a word that follows them:
Before it is introduced, the new law must be approved by the government.
Use synonyms to create links in your writing and to avoid repetition

In an earlier slide, you saw synonyms for the phrase ‘academic literature’:
• scholarly literature
• academic journal articles

What alternatives can you think of for these nouns/phrases:
• method
• wide range of choices
• experiment

• Technique
• Large selection
• Test / investigation
Some words other than pronouns can be used to substitute

Will you come to the meeting?
I might do.

He has a cold, and I have one too.

People didn’t participate in the survey. Such methods haven’t worked in the past either.
Transitional words create cohesion

Relationship of meaning

• To provide an example…
• To contrast…
• To compare…
• To indicate order of ideas…
• To indicate order of time…
• To indicate the cause…

Example transition word

For instance
On the other hand
Similarly
Secondly
After that
Due to

(Arnaudet & Barrett 1984, pp.27-68)
Use appropriate tenses and correct subject-verb agreement

What are the problems with the following sentence?

Over the last decade, the company’s share price are increasing markedly.

Over the last decade, the company’s share price has increased/increased markedly.
The articles ‘a/an/the’ contribute to cohesion

The first reference to a noun often uses the **indefinite** article ‘a/an’:

*A* student was elected to the council.

References after the first mention use the **definite** article ‘*the*’ as it is clear which student is being written about:

*The* student will serve on the council for one year.
Leaving words out (ellipsis) to avoid unnecessary repetition

The reader retrieves the meaning from the context:
I started writing and I stopped (writing) at 12pm.

Ellipsis is possible after some verbs only:
I started writing and I kept all day.  X
I started writing and I kept writing all day.  ✓

And some grammatical patterns only:
I telephoned Susie and told her the results. ✓
When I telephoned Susie, told her the results.  X
A variety of vocabulary

When you write on a particular topic, you tend to choose vocabulary within a related group.

What related words might you use if you are writing about an election?

vote, marginal, majority, percentage, preference, electorate, constituency, lead, swing
Practice activity

Use some of the cohesive features we have been discussing to help you order a jumbled text.

Homework

Use the information from today’s session on paragraph structure and cohesion to help you edit your short essay.
References

Arnaudet M, & Barrett, M 1984 Approaches to academic reading and writing, Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Cliffs.


