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Grammatical Cohesion as a Criterion of Textuality: perspectives from Text Linguistics and Classical Arabic Sources

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Abstract:

Grammatical cohesion plays a pivotal role in contemporary linguistic research on texts and their analytical procedures, particularly within the framework of Text Linguistics. Within this approach, grammatical cohesion constitutes a key criterion by which a sequence of language is recognized as a text. Cohesion defines a text's nature and establishes its distinctive features, distinguishing it from other forms of discourse. This criterion relies on mechanisms through which cohesion is realized, enabling scholars to identify its characteristics and conduct systematic analyses. Building on this foundation, the present study examines the phenomenon of grammatical cohesion as delineated in contemporary research on Text Linguistics, highlighting both its theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches. Simultaneously, it explores the classical Arab linguistic tradition, reviewing historical contributions that illustrate early scholars' recognition of the significance of grammatical cohesion and their advanced conceptualization of its principles and mechanisms.

Keywords: Cohesion; Grammatical Cohesion; Textuality; Text Linguistics; Classical Arabic texts.

Introduction:

Cohesion represents one of the seven key criteria through which modern linguistic studies have sought to identify the components and characteristics of a text, distinguishing it from non-textual sequences. Cohesion is generally divided into two types: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion, each characterized by its own mechanisms. Grammatical cohesion, the focus of this study, is operationally realized through formal tools, the most important of which are reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. These tools work together within a text to ensure its integrity and the interconnection of its parts.

Classical scholars devoted significant attention to the sciences of the Arabic language. Their combined endeavors produced a rich intellectual heritage and laid the foundations for a comprehensive linguistic theory, shaped by experts from diverse fields such as grammarians, literary critics, rhetoricians, and, notably, Quranic exegetes. The latter, through their meticulous interpretations, revealed a range of linguistic features of the Qur'an, particularly the cohesion of its units and the resilience of its internal structure—an intricately organized system that leaves no room for inconsistency or contradiction, a phenomenon now recognized as textual cohesion.

Building on this background, the present study seeks to examine the phenomenon of grammatical cohesion as established in contemporary research in Text Linguistics, outlining its theoretical concepts and procedural tools. Simultaneously, it surveys the Arabic linguistic heritage, highlighting the efforts and ideas of classical scholars, which reflect their awareness of the importance of

grammatical cohesion and their deep understanding of its operational mechanisms.

1. Definition of Cohesion

In classical Arabic dictionaries, the term cohesion refers to union and joining. Al-Farahidi (n.d.) explained: «*Al-Wasaq*: bringing one thing to another; and *al-Ittisāq*: joining and alignment, like the moon when it is full. *Al-Istawsāq* is also used for camels gathered together; the shepherd *yasiquha* means he gathers them» (Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi, *Al-'Ayn*, Vol. 5, p. 191). Similarly, Ibn Manzur (1994) stated: «*The night wasqa and became muttafiq, and whatever is joined is said to have ittasaqa. The path yattasaq means it joins; al-Qasai said: ittasaqa al-qamar means it was aligned... where al-Furra' explained: "wasqa means it gathered and united"* (*Lisan al-'Arab*, Vol. 12, p. 1762).

Modern Arabic dictionaries offer definitions consistent with the classical ones. For instance, *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit* defines *ittasaqa* as "to gather, join, and become organized; the moon *istawa* when it rises and becomes full. *Al-Wasiqa* refers to the herd of camels or similar animals driven together" (Various Authors, 2000, Vol. 2, p. 1032). Western dictionaries generally agree with both classical and modern Arabic definitions. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopedia* (1989) defines cohesion as "the sticking of one element to another in such a way that they form a single unit, such as atoms combining to form a unified whole" (p. 173).

From a theoretical perspective, Halliday and Hasan (1976) introduced the term cohesion to describe "the set of formal devices that contribute to the linking of parts of a text or discourse, through which its linguistic cohesion is achieved" (Khatabi, 1991, p. 5). Following this approach, De Beaugrande (1998) defined cohesion as: «*The result of procedures applied to surface elements in the form of events, where the earlier leads to the later, thus establishing descriptive links*» (p. 103).

Cohesion is therefore a semantic concept referring to meaningful relationships within a text (Khatabi, 1991, p. 15). Beyond semantic links, textual or discursive cohesion also requires grammatical and lexical ties. Together, these links ensure that a text or discourse is distinct from non-textual or non-discursive material.

2. Grammartical cohesion Devices

Cohesion in a text can be realized through several devices: Lexical devices such as repetition and collocation and grammatical devices including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and These can be summarized as follows:

2.1. Reference

2.1.1..Definition of Reference:
Reference is considered one of the most important cohesive devices and is present in all natural languages. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), the links associated with reference are primarily pronouns, demonstratives, and comparative markers (Khatabi, 1991, pp. 16–17). Reference is a semantic relation subject to a semantic constraint: the features of the referring element must correspond to those of the referent. It has been defined as *"the relationship between expressions on the one hand, and between objects and situations in the external world to which the expressions refer"* (De Beaugrande, 1998, p. 172). In other words, reference links names to their designata, where the first points to the second, and a match between them is assumed. Referring elements are linguistic forms whose interpretation depends on the referent; their meaning cannot be fully understood in isolation (Bouguera, 2009, p. 81).

2.2.2. Elements of Reference
According to Afifi (2001, pp. 15–16), the components involved in reference include:

-The speaker or text producer.

-The referring expression, which may point to an element inside or outside the text.

-The referent, which can also be present within or outside the text.

-The relationship between the referring expression and the referent.

2.2.3. Types of Reference

Reference can be distinguished into two main types: situational (external) reference and textual (internal) reference, the latter further divided into anaphoric and cataphoric reference:

A. Situational Reference

Situational, or external, reference occurs when "*a linguistic referring element points to a non-linguistic element present in the external context*" (Al-Azhar Al-Zanad, 1903, p. 119). This type of reference links language to the situational context by pointing outside the text, where the referent exists, thereby contributing to textual cohesion, albeit indirectly (Khatabi, 1991, p. 17). Readers or listeners must attend to the external context to identify the referent (Brown & Yule, 1997, pp. 238–239). An example of situational reference is the use of a second-person pronoun referring to the addressee outside the text, whose presence must be recalled during interpretation.

B. Textual Reference

Textual, or internal, reference occurs when a linguistic referring element points to other linguistic elements within the text or discourse, either preceding or following the referring element (Al-Azhar Al-Zanad, 1903, p. 118). This type of reference plays a significant role in textual cohesion, which led Halliday and Hassan to consider it a central criterion for reference (Khatabi, 1991, p. 18).

Textual reference is divided into two subtypes:

A--Anaphoric Reference Anaphoric reference occurs when a linguistic element (the referring expression) points to another linguistic element that preceded it. It is the most common type of reference in texts and discourse (Afifi, 2001, p. 117). De Beaugrand (1998) refers to it as "anaphora", defining it as *"a type of shared reference in which the pronoun follows its antecedent in the surface text"* (p. 301).

B-Cataphoric Reference: Cataphoric reference is the opposite of anaphora, occurring when the referring element points to a subsequent linguistic element. An example in Arabic is the use of the pronoun of prominence (Al-Azhar Al-Zanad, 1903, p. 119). De Beaugrand (1998) describes it as "cataphora", defining it as "a type of shared reference in which the pronoun precedes its referent in the surface text" (p. 301).

2.2.4. Referential Devices

Reference in its various forms relies on a set of linguistic tools, including pronouns, demonstratives, relative pronouns, and comparative devices. What distinguishes these referential devices within the text is that their interpretation extends beyond their literal meaning to what they refer to or represent (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 230).

A. Pronouns

Pronouns are an important textual referential device. Textual cohesion requires that pronouns correspond with their antecedents, creating a reciprocal reference in which both the pronoun and its referent point to the same entity. Pronouns can be divided into two categories:

-Existential pronouns, e.g., *I, you, we, they*

-Possessive pronouns, e.g., *my book, your book, their book*

From a cohesion perspective, pronouns help distinguish speech roles, including the speaker and the addressee. They often serve as references outside the text, and only function as in-text references in quoted speech or written discourse, including narrative texts. Nevertheless, texts may include contextual references outside the text, using pronouns that

refer to the author (*I, we*) or the reader (*you, you all*) (Khatabi, 2000, p. 18).

The pronouns that play a major role in textual cohesion are third-person pronouns (he, she, they), in singular, dual, and plural forms, which contribute to connecting different parts of the text and linking its sections (Khatabi, 2000, p. 18).

B. Demonstratives

Demonstratives play an important role in textual cohesion, similar to third-person pronouns, as they refer to elements within the text. They serve as tools to connect subsequent parts with preceding ones and can refer to an entire sentence or a sequence of sentences. If pronouns indicate participants' involvement or absence in communication, demonstratives, or temporal/spatial markers, are primary and do not necessarily depend on another previous or subsequent reference; the demonstrative element represents a reference in itself, whose understanding does not rely on others (Al-Zanad, 1999, pp. 117–118).

Demonstratives can be classified according to:

-Gender: Masculine (*this, these two…*), Feminine (*this, these two…*).

-Proximity: Near (*this, these*), Far (*that, those*).

-Number: Singular (*this, this*), Dual (*these two*), Plural (*these, those*).

-Circumstantial usage:

-Spatial (*here, there…*).

-Temporal (*now, tomorrow, yesterday…*).

C. Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is semantically incomplete unless connected to a clause that completes its meaning, hence the term "relative" (Ibn Yaish, n.d., p. 150).

Relative pronouns can be: Specific:

-Referring to a single entity, e.g., *who, which*. For example, *who* is specific in terms of gender (masculine) and number (singular).

-Generic: Referring to multiple entities or meanings, e.g., *whoever, what, any*, applicable to masculine/feminine and singular/dual/plural, without being restricted to a specific meaning.

D. Comparative Devices

Comparative devices play a major role in textual cohesion by linking subsequent elements to preceding ones. They include words used to express comparison, similarity, difference, quantity, or quality. According to Halliday and Hassan, comparative devices can be categorized as follows (Khatabi, 2000, p. 19):

a-General Comparison, subdivided into:

-Identity: e.g., *same.*

-Similarity: e.g., *similar* .

- Difference: e.g., *other*, *otherwise.*

B-Specific Comparison, referring to quantity or quality:

-Quantity: e.g., *more* .

-Quality: e.g., *more beautiful than, as beautiful as.*

D. Conjunction

Conjunction is considered one of the most important rhetorical and textual phenomena. It refers to the systematic manner in which a subsequent element is connected to a preceding one, since a text requires a variety of cohesive devices that link its parts together. These devices take the form of lexical cues that ensure textual continuity (Hassan, 1994, p. 213).

As a cohesive device, conjunction is classified into additive conjunction, which links two elements sharing unity or similarity (Al-Sa'īd, 2012, p. 112). It represents one of the most significant means of textual linkage. Conjunction may also be causal, adversative, or temporal (Hamdani, 1996, p. 73). These types of conjunction correspond to those identified by Halliday and Hasan, and cohesion is achieved through specific conjunctive markers (Khatabi, 1991, pp. 23–24):

a. Additive conjunction

Additive conjunction is realized through the use of the coordinators *and* and *or*. It also includes other semantic relations, such as:

-Semantic equivalence, which appears in sentence linkage through expressions such as *similarly*.

-Explanatory relations, expressed by markers such as *that is* or *in other words*.

-Exemplification, which is manifested through expressions like *for example* or *such as*.

b. Adversative conjunction

Adversative conjunction refers to a relation that runs counter to expectations. It is expressed through markers such as but, yet, however, and nevertheless. According to several scholars, yet is the marker that most precisely conveys this type of conjunctive relation.

c. Causal conjunction

Causal conjunction is the type through which the logical relationship between two or more clauses is perceived. It is expressed by markers such as *so*, *therefore*, and *thus*, and it encompasses specific relations such as cause and result.

d. Temporal conjunction

This final type of conjunction functions to link two clauses that follow one another temporally. The simplest marker expressing this relationship is *then*.

2.2..Substitution

Substitution is one of the fundamental devices employed to achieve textual cohesion and to avoid the repetition of words and expressions within a text. It refers to the replacement of one element by another within the text. Unlike reference, substitution operates at the lexical level, involving words or expressions that carry the same meaning. In most cases, textual substitution is anaphoric, as it occurs between a later element and a preceding one (Afifi, 1996, p. 122; Khatabi, 1991, p. 19). Depending on its structural functions, substitution is divided into three types (Afifi, 1996, pp. 123–124):

a-Nominal substitution: realized through the replacement of a noun by nominal linguistic elements such as *another*, *others*, or *the same*.

b-Verbal substitution: achieved through the use of the verb *do*.

c-Clausal substitution: realized by replacing whole clauses with linguistic items such as *so* or *not*.

2.3.Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a device that contributes to textual cohesion and constitutes a linguistic phenomenon shared by human languages. De Beaugrande defines it as "t*he omission of surface expressions whose conceptual content can be recovered in the mind, expanded, or modified through incomplete expressions*" (De Beaugrande, 1980, p. 301). Discourse may contain repeated elements that can be omitted, as well as accompanying cues—whether textual or semantic—that facilitate comprehension and allow for the omission of certain linguistic elements without impairing meaning (Al-Faqi, 2000, Vol. 2, p. 191).

Ellipsis is similar to substitution; however, it differs in that it represents a *zero substitution*, since the omitted element leaves no overt trace in the linguistic context except at the level of meaning. In contrast, substitution has a clear surface realization because it relies on explicit

linguistic elements that replace others (Afifi, 1996, p. 126). Whereas the listener or reader relies on such elements in cases of substitution, ellipsis requires them to refer back to the preceding context in order to fill the gap created by the omitted segment.

Ellipsis thus constitutes an intra-textual relation. In most cases, the presupposed omitted element is found in the preceding text, which indicates that ellipsis is an anaphoric relation (Khatabi, 1991, p. 21). Depending on the type of the presupposed omitted element, ellipsis is classified into nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis (Khatabi, 1991, p. 22).

2-Cohesion in the Classical Arab Linguistic Tradition

Although the Arab researchers did not explicitly use the terms *cohesion* or *textual coherence*, their classical linguistic tradition clearly reflects an awareness of these concepts. Classical Arabic contains several terms that relate to cohesion, such as *al-sabk, al-habk, al-itraad, al-insijam, al-ta'alif,* and *hosn al-rasf.* These terms indicate both formal and semantic interconnectedness, and they underpin the development of early systems theory in Arabic linguistic thought (Rushid, 2015, p. 340).

While grammarians primarily focused on syntactic cohesion at the sentence leve**l**, literary critics adopted a more holistic perspective (Rashed, 2015, p. 340). Al-Jahiz, for example, evaluated poetry based on the integration of its parts, stating:"*The finest poetry I have seen is that whose parts are tightly interwoven and whose expression is fluid; from this, one can discern that it has been realized as a single, unified composition*" (Al-Jahiz, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 75).

The classical awareness of textual cohesion is further exemplified in Al-Jurjani's theory of *(al-nazm)* and its connection to grammatical meanins, as well as in his discussions of rhetorical devices such as ellipsis and conjunction, which are considered fundamental to textual cohesion in modern discourse studies. Regarding (*al-nazm),* Al-

Jurjani clarifies:"*It refers to the consideration of the interrelation of the parts of the composed text, rather than simply the sequence of elements*" (Al-Jurjani, n.d., p. 83).He compares (*nazm)* to weaving, composition, formulation, structuring, stitching, and embellishment, emphasizing that each part has its proper place and reason for being; if displaced, it would no longer function appropriately (Al-Jurjani, n.d., p. 83).

Grammatical meaning (*ma'ani al-nahw*) plays a central role in Al-Jurjani's framework. He stresses the necessity of observing formal grammatical rules that link parts of speech, rather than merely arranging words according to superficial syntactic conventions. The correctness or incorrectness of textual order depends on adherence to grammatical meanings and rules, highlighting the role of grammar in achieving cohesion (Al-Jurjani, n.d., pp. 51, 53).

This clearly demonstrates the sophisticated understanding of formal grammatical and **textual** devices by classical Arab scholars in ensuring textual cohesion and coherence within the classical Arab linguistic tradition.

2.1.Reference in Classical Arabic Sources

Classical scholars extensively discussed the phenomenon of reference. For example, Sibawayh emphasized the importance of using a pronoun to refer back to a previously mentioned noun, highlighting its role in textual cohesion (Sibawayh, 2006, pp. 81–88).

Exegetes of the Qur'an also paid particular attention to reference, providing numerous examples of both textual and contextual reference. Although they did not explicitly distinguish these two types as modern researchers do, they consistently ensured coherence between the referring elements and their antecedents. Differences of interpretation occasionally emerged, and a single exegete might propose multiple possible antecedents for a pronoun within a given context.

In general, exegetes determine pronoun reference primarily through the lexical antecedent, but when this leads to an incoherent interpretation, they resort to semantic inference, establishing reference based on meaning rather than the literal wording. This approach demonstrates their sophisticated understanding of textual cohesion and the interplay between form and meaning.

2.2. Substitution

Substitution differs from reference in that it operates within the text at the syntactic and lexical levels, whereas reference functions at the semantic level, establishing meaning-based connections between referring elements (Afifi, n.d., p. 14). Another distinction is that most cases of substitution are anaphoric. As Ibrahim Khalil explains: "T*he difference between substitution and reference is that the latter sometimes refers to something non-linguistic, whereas substitution involves replacing one lexical item with another to strengthen the connection between this word and the adjacent word, which itself denotes the previously mentioned entity*" (Khalil, 1997, p. 138). Exegetes of the Qur'an provide numerous examples of substitution. In general, exegetes determine pronoun reference primarily through the lexical antecedent, but when this leads to an incoherent interpretation, they resort to semantic inference, establishing reference based on meaning rather than the literal wording. This approach demonstrates their sophisticated understanding of textual cohesion and the interplay between form and meaning.

2.3. Ellipsis in Classical Arabic Grammar and Rhetoric

Grammarians have studied the phenomenon of ellipsis (*hadhf*) from a syntactic perspective, while rhetoricians and literary critics have examined it from a stylistic perspective, emphasizing its distinctive features and artistic value. Ellipsis is regarded as one of the most prominent figurative devices in the Arabic language and a manifestation of brevity, which rhetoricians define as *"expressing meaning with the fewest possible words"* (Al-Rumani, n.d., p. 80). For these scholars, ellipsis constitutes a core feature of literary language, which naturally favors conciseness and suggestiveness.

Omissions occur when contextual or semantic cues allow the listener or reader to infer the missing elements. As Ibn Jinni observes:

"The Arabs omitted sentences, words, letters, and even vowel markings, and nothing of that was done except when evidence supported it" (Ibn Jinni, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 362).

Al-Jurjani further highlights the rhetorical value of ellipsis

: *"It is a subtle and delicate device, astonishing in its effect and resembling magic, for in it omission can be more eloquent than explicit mention, and silence can enhance the meaning"* (Al-Jurjani, n.d., p. 146).

Other scholars emphasize that ellipsis allows for expanded interpretation, imparting nuanced meanings that are absent when the omitted element is explicitly stated. Ibn Rashiq Al-Qayrawani explains:

"It is considered a type of rhetorical device because it allows the listener's mind to expand in conjecture and estimation; everything that is already known is easily grasped, as it is limited" (Ibn Rashiq Al-Qayrawani, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 253).

Exegetical works on the Qur'an also discuss ellipsis within verse contexts, justifying it based on the audience's comprehension. Scholars note that the omitted element can be inferred either from preceding or subsequent context, thereby preserving both textual cohesion and meaning.

2.4. Connection in Classical Arabic Rhetoric

Classical scholars addressed the phenomena of connection (wasl), but Al-Jurjani is widely regarded as the first to systematically define their boundaries, unveil their intricacies, and highlight their stylistic significance. His work remains a key reference for subsequent scholars. He emphasized the originality, importance, and complexity of this subject within rhetorical studies, stating:

"Know that understanding what should be done in sentences—whether to conjoin some with others, or to leave them separate and present them individually in sequence—is among the secrets of rhetoric. Its mastery is attainable only by the most dedicated scholars… Its significance is such that some have regarded it as the ultimate measure of eloquence. When asked about it, they said: 'To know separation from connection,' due to its subtlety and methodological precision. No one achieves full excellence in it except one who has mastered all other aspects of rhetoric" (Al-Jurjani, n.d., p. 222).

Al-Jurjani highlighted the value of conjunction at the word level as an entry point to explore this stylistic phenomenon. According to him, this value lies in a syntactic constraint, where the conjoined element shares the grammatical case and function of the element it is linked to. Regarding sentence-level conjunction, Al-Jurjani distinguishes between sentences in which the second retains a syntactic role relative to the first and sentences treated as independent. For example:

"Zayd is standing and 'Amr is sitting."

In this case, the conjoined sentence does not share the syntactic constraint of the first; rather, the sense of combination and interrelation operates at the semantic or rhetorical level. Al-Jurjani e*xplains:*

> *"…We do not say 'Zayd is standing and 'Amr is sitting' so that 'Amr' is a consequence of*

Zayd, but rather they are like counterparts or partners, so that once the listener understands the state of the first, they also understand the state of the second" (Al-Jurjani, n.d., p. 224).

He further notes that sentence conjunction can occur between one sentence and another, among several sentences, or between groups of sentences, showing that classical scholars did not limit their analysis to single sentences or sentence pairs but examined broader textual contexts. Al-Jurjani states:

"The process of conjunction may involve joining one sentence to another, a sentence to two sentences, or some sentences to others, then combining entire groups. What is established in terms of conditionality and consequence should be considered a foundational principle" (Al-Jurjani, n.d., pp. 245–246).

Conclusion:

This study examined grammatical cohesion at the intersection of text linguistics and the Arabic linguistic heritage. It presented key concepts, terminology, and procedural tools, including reference (situational and textual, anterior and posterior), substitution and ellipsis in nouns, verbs, and statements, and linkage in its additive, inverse, causal, and temporal forms.

Our analysis of the Arabic linguistic heritage in relation to modern linguistic studies demonstrates that classical scholars, while not explicitly using the terms "cohesion" or "consistency," clearly understood the concept. Their terminology and analyses reveal both formal and semantic interconnectedness. Classical critics adopted a holistic approach, extending beyond the sentence level. Notably, Al-Jurjānī's theory of textual systems linked cohesion with grammatical meaning, complemented by rhetorical discussions of

ellipsis and linkage, which align with modern criteria for textual cohesion.

Reference was a particular focus, especially among exegetes, who provided numerous examples of textual and situational reference, though without the distinctions used by modern researchers. Rhetoricians and literary critics highlighted ellipsis for its stylistic and aesthetic value, as a central tool of linguistic economy and figurative expression. Exegetical works also discuss ellipsis in Qur'anic verses, justified by the audience's comprehension of the omitted material, expressed in relation to preceding or succeeding elements.He clarifies that the conditional aspect pertains to the combination of the two clauses, not to each individual, thereby preventing the interpretation of two separate conditions with only a single consequence.

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