

## COHESION AND COHERENCE IN INTERPRETED SPEECH: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES AND INTERPRETATIVE STRATEGIES

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### Summary

The text examines cohesion and coherence as key categories of text organization, with a focus on their transformation in oral translation. Traditionally, cohesion – defined by Halliday and Hasan as a system of formal linguistic ties – has been treated as a structural property of well-formed texts. However, contemporary research increasingly views cohesion as a flexible, context-dependent resource shaped by genre, communicative purpose, and cognitive constraints. In oral translation, where processing is linear and time-pressured, cohesive markers are often reduced or restructured.

In contrast, coherence is understood as a cognitive phenomenon emerging from the interaction between text, context, and the interpreter's mental models. It ensures meaningful integration of information and remains central even when formal cohesion is weakened. Studies show that in interpreting, coherence is typically preserved or enhanced despite a decrease in explicit cohesive devices.

The text also highlights translation universals such as explicitation and simplification, which dynamically affect cohesion. Gile's Effort Model explains these changes as a result of limited cognitive resources. Both international and Ukrainian research demonstrate a shift toward a cognitive-discursive approach, emphasizing the interpreter's active role in meaning construction. Ultimately, coherence is identified as the dominant category in oral translation, while cohesion plays a secondary, adaptive role.

**Key words:** interpreting; discourse organization; text connectivity; cognitive load; explicitation; simplification; mental models; translation universals; reference relations; lexical ties; discourse processing; communicative purpose.

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### 1. Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, the issue of textual cohesion occupies a central position, as it determines the ability of speech to fulfil a communicative function. Within the fields of translation studies and text linguistics, the categories of cohesion and coherence are traditionally regarded as fundamental parameters of discourse organisation.

At the same time, in the context of interpreting, these categories undergo significant transformations, due to cognitive constraints, the linear nature of speech, and the need for rapid decision-making. This highlights the need to rethink their relationship.

## 2. Cohesion and coherence in international research

The classical understanding of cohesion was formulated in the works of M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, who defined it as a system of formal links that ensure textual unity (*Halliday, Hasan, 1976*). Within systemic-functional linguistics, cohesion is viewed as an objectively fixed level of textual organisation that can be described and classified. The typology they proposed – reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion – became the foundation for further research and retains its heuristic value to this day.

At the same time, a certain methodological tension is already evident within this concept: cohesion is described as a formal mechanism of coherence, yet its functioning cannot be fully explained without taking semantics and context into account. This led to the further development of the theory towards the integration of cognitive factors.

Recent international research has seen a gradual re-evaluation of the status of cohesion. It is increasingly viewed not as a universal characteristic of a ‘well-formed text’, but as a variable parameter dependent on genre, register and communicative conditions (*Krein-Kühle, 2021*). This approach effectively shifts the emphasis from normativity to functionality: what matters is not how saturated the text is with cohesion markers, but how well they serve the communicative purpose.

This trend is particularly evident in studies of spoken language and translation, where excessive formalisation can even hinder comprehension. Thus, cohesion begins to be interpreted as an adaptive resource rather than as a prerequisite for textuality.

Unlike cohesion, coherence in the international tradition has, from the outset, had a more abstract and cognitively oriented character. In the works of Teun A. van Dijk, it is defined as the result of constructing mental models that integrate information into a single semantic structure (*van Dijk, 2019*). This approach fundamentally shifts the focus of analysis: instead of the text as the object of study, the process of its interpretation takes centre stage.

This means that coherence is not a property of the text in the strict sense, but arises as a result of the interaction between the text, the context and the recipient’s cognitive resources. Accordingly, the same text may be more or less coherent depending on the conditions of reception. This position has important implications for translation studies, as it emphasises the role of the translator as an active interpreter, rather than merely a conveyor of linguistic forms.

Within the field of contemporary translation studies, Mona Baker has made a significant contribution to understanding the transformation of cohesion by formulating the concept of translation universals. In particular, phenomena such as explication and simplification (*Baker, 2018*) directly influence the structure of cohesive links. Explication involves adding links that were implicit in the original, whilst simplification often leads to the reduction of complex syntactic and lexical structures.

It is important to note that these processes are not mutually exclusive but coexist within the translation process. As a result, the translated text may simultaneously demonstrate both an increase and a decrease in the level of cohesion in its various segments. This indicates that cohesion in translation is dynamic and uneven.

Daniel Gile’s cognitive effort model (*Gile, 2020*) plays a particular role in explaining this dynamic. According to this model, the translator works under conditions of limited cognitive resources, which are distributed between perception, memory and speech production. Under such conditions, there is a need for optimisation, which manifests itself, in particular, in the reduction of redundant cohesive elements.

This approach helps explain why a tendency towards the reduction of formal cohesion is observed specifically in interpreting: such elements are regarded as secondary compared to the conveyance of meaning. At the same time, this does not imply a loss of cohesion, as its function is taken over by coherence.

Recent empirical studies (*Li & Gao, 2025*) confirm this hypothesis, demonstrating that in interpreting there is a systematic reduction in the level of cohesion whilst coherence is maintained or even enhanced. This result indicates the asymmetrical nature of the interaction between these categories and calls into question the traditional view of their interdependence.

From an analytical point of view, this allows us to formulate several fundamental propositions. Firstly, cohesion is not a necessary condition for coherence, but merely one of the possible means of achieving it. Secondly, coherence has priority in the communication process, as it is precisely this that ensures the interpretability of the text. Thirdly, in translated discourse, there is a redistribution of functions between these categories: formal links may be reduced, but semantic unity is preserved.

Thus, in the international academic tradition, a clear evolution can be traced from formal-structural text analysis to a cognitive-discursive approach. This shift is of fundamental importance for the study of interpreting, as it allows for a more adequate description of its specific features and an explanation of the transformations of coherence in real-time conditions.

### 3. Rethinking cohesion and coherence in Ukrainian studies

In contemporary Ukrainian linguistics and translation studies, the study of cohesion and coherence is developing in line with pan-European trends, yet at the same time exhibits a number of specific features resulting from the combination of the structural-semantic tradition with the active integration of the cognitive approach. This leads to a gradual shift from the description of formal links to their functional and interpretative understanding.

In most contemporary Ukrainian studies, cohesion is defined as a system of linguistic devices that ensure the formal coherence of a text, whilst emphasising its multi-level nature. Thus, in the work by Molodtsova, Rusachenko and Vydaychuk (*2025*), cohesion is viewed as an integrative mechanism encompassing not only grammatical but also lexical-semantic links, in particular repetitions, synonymic series, thematic chains and hyponymic relations. The authors emphasise that it is lexical cohesion that plays a key role in forming the thematic integrity of a text, as it is directly linked to the structure of the content.

Analytically, it is significant that in this approach, cohesion is no longer treated as a purely formal level of text organisation. It is viewed as a functionally determined tool that serves a communicative purpose. This interpretation brings Ukrainian research closer to contemporary foreign concepts, where cohesion is understood as an adaptive resource rather than a rigid structural norm.

A separate strand of Ukrainian research is linked to the study of referential and coreferential links. Darchuk's (*2022*) work demonstrates that coreference is one of the key mechanisms for ensuring the stability of textual interpretation. The author argues that a breach of referential consistency leads to a reduction in the comprehensibility of the text, even in the presence of other cohesion markers. From an analytical perspective, this indicates a hierarchy among cohesion devices: not all of them are equally important for maintaining coherence.

In the context of translation studies, this proposition takes on particular significance, as it is precisely referential shifts that are one of the main causes of the loss of coherence in translated

discourse. Thus, Ukrainian research effectively leads to the conclusion that cohesion has an internal hierarchy of priorities, where its individual components perform more critical functions.

Alongside this, a clear trend towards rethinking coherence as a central category of text can be observed in the contemporary Ukrainian academic tradition. In a number of studies, it is defined as semantic unity, formed not only through textual links but also as a result of the recipient's cognitive activity. This brings the Ukrainian approach closer to the cognitive-discursive paradigm presented in foreign works.

In particular, contemporary publications emphasise that coherence depends on interpretative strategies, background knowledge and communicative context. It is viewed as the result of the interaction between text and consciousness, which helps explain the variability in its perception. Such an approach is of fundamental importance for translation studies, as it emphasises the active role of the translator as an interpreter (*Koroleva, Zhmayeva, Popova, 2017*).

An important direction in the development of Ukrainian research is the attempt to formalise coherence. In their work, Pogorily and Kramov (2020) propose a method for its quantitative assessment based on the semantic cohesion between sentences. This approach demonstrates a desire to integrate linguistic and computational methods, opening up new perspectives for the study of textual cohesion.

Analytically, this means that Ukrainian scholarship is gradually shifting from qualitative description to quantitative analysis, in line with global trends. At the same time, such approaches require further development, as coherence as a cognitive category cannot be fully reduced to formal indicators.

Particular attention in Ukrainian research has been paid to interpreting as a specific type of discursive activity. In the work by Povoroznyuk and Podugolnikova (2025), interpreting is viewed as a process of deverbalisation and reconstruction of meaning, involving the manipulation of semantic structures rather than linguistic forms. This approach is directly linked to the concept of coherence, as it is precisely this that ensures the integration of information during the translation process.

From an analytical point of view, this allows us to draw an important conclusion: in translated speech, cohesion loses its status as a primary category, yielding to coherence. The translator does not reproduce the text as a formal structure, but reconstructs it as a semantic model.

A comparative analysis of Ukrainian studies also reveals a trend towards interdisciplinarity. Contemporary works combine approaches from linguistics, cognitive science, translation studies and computational linguistics. This allows for a more comprehensive description of the nature of cohesion and its functioning in various types of discourse.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study enables us to summarise current understanding of cohesion and coherence in interpreted speech and to draw a number of key conclusions.

First and foremost, it has been established that cohesion and coherence are interrelated but not equivalent categories. Cohesion ensures the formal organisation of the text, whilst coherence is responsible for its semantic unity and interpretability. In the contemporary scientific paradigm, there is a clear shift in emphasis from formal aspects to cognitive ones.

It has been demonstrated that in the context of interpreting, cohesion undergoes a systematic transformation, manifested in its reduction, restructuring and variability. This is due to

the limitations of cognitive resources and the need to optimise speech. At the same time, coherence is maintained through cognitive and pragmatic mechanisms that ensure the integration of information.

A comparative analysis of foreign and Ukrainian studies has shown that both academic traditions demonstrate convergence towards a cognitive-discursive approach. At the same time, Ukrainian studies are characterised by a more pronounced emphasis on the functional-pragmatic aspect and interdisciplinarity.

Of particular significance is the role of the translator as an active agent of interpretation, who does not mechanically reproduce the text but reconstructs it in accordance with the conditions of communication. This confirms that translation is not merely a linguistic but, above all, a cognitive process.

In summary, it can be argued that coherence is the dominant category of translated spoken language, whilst cohesion performs a supporting function and is subject to functional adaptation. This has important implications for translation theory, particularly for the evaluation of translation quality and the training of translators.

Prospects for further research relate to the development of experimental methods for analysing cognitive processes in translation, as well as to the study of coherence in multimodal and digital discourse.

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