

## Investigating the Impact of Multimedia-aided Coherence Teaching on the Quality of EFL Writing in Sulaymani City

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### پوختە

ئەم توێژینەوێهە بەشیكە لە ماستەرنامەییەك. توێژینەوێهەكە ئامانجی گەرانه بەدوای کاریگەرێهەكانی فیرکردنی بەستنهوه وچینی دەقی زمانهوانی بەشیوهی فیرکردنی راستهوخۆ لەسەر مۆدیلهكە ی (۲۰۰۲)، ههروهها کاریگەرێهەكانی فیرکردنی بەستنهوه وچینی دەقی زمانهوانی بەشیوهی تهواوکاری بە هه ماههنگی لهگهڵ پيشاندانی فیديو وهك ئامرازیکي هاندەرپۆ بەرزکردنهوهی کوالیتی نویسی بهشداربووهکان. توێژینەوێهەكە پهیرهوی شیوازی لیکۆلینهوهی چهندیته دهکات، بهسودهرگرتن له شیکردنهوهی دهقی و ئاماری نویسی خویندکارهکان. ۴۵ فیرخواری زمانی ئینگلیزی بهشداري توێژینەوێهەكەیان کردوو به ۹۰ نویسن که زمانی ئینگلیزییان بۆ مه بهستی گشتی خویندوو له سێ سهنتهري زماندا له شاری سلیمانی - ههریمی کوردستانی عیراق. دۆزینەوێهە سهرهکیهەکانی توێژینەوێهەكە ئەوه دردهخات که فیرکردنی بەستنهوه وچینی دەقی زمانهوانی بەشیوهی راستهوخۆ وه فیرکردنی بەستنهوه وچینی دەقی زمانهوانی بەشیوهی تهواوکاری و بههه ماههنگی لهگهڵ پيشاندانی فیديو وهك ئامرازیکي هاندەر بۆ بەرزکردنهوهی کوالیتی نویسی بهشداربووهکان کوالیتی نویسی خویندکاران بهشیوهیهکی گرنگ بهرهوپیش دهبات به بهراورد به فیرکردنی نویسن له رپیی کتیبهکانی وتنهوهی زمانی ئینگلیزییهوه که له کۆرسهکانی فیرکردنی ئینگلیزیدا دهوترینهوه. دۆزینەوێهەكە ئەوهش نیشان ددهن که دوو رپگا پيشنیا زکراوه که یارمهتی بهشداربووهکانی داوه که چالاکیهکی باشتریان هه بیته له گه شه کردنی بیروکهکانیان و رپکخستنی بهندهکان و دامهزراندنی پهیرهندی درووستی زیاتر له نیوان رستهکان و بهکارهینانی ئامرازی په کگرتنی جیاواز بهشیوهیهکی ژیرانه بۆ نیشاندانی پهیرهندی نیوان بیروکهکان و درخستنی راکانیا بهشیوهیهکی روون له نویسنهکانیاندا. ههروهها بهکارهینانی رپگا پيشنیا رکراوهکان له م توێژینەوێهەدا دهکریت بهشیوهیهکی ئه رپینی نویسی خویندکارهکان پيشبخات له کۆرسهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزیدا بۆ مه بهستی گشتی. دۆزینەوێهەكە دهکریت یارمهتیده ریش بن بۆ دانهرانی بهرنامهی خویندنی زمانی ئینگلیزی بهگۆرپینی شیوازهکانیان بۆ فیرکردنی نویسن به دانان و زیادکردنی بهستنهوه وچینی دەقی زمانهوانی بابهتهکان و چالاکی فیرکاری لهسهر بنه مای مه لتي میدیا بۆ کتیبهکانی فیرکردنی زمانی ئینگلیزی و پیدانی چه ندين ستراتییی نویسن بۆ مامۆستایانی فیرکردنی زمانی ئینگلیزی که دهتوانن له پۆلهکانی فیرکردنی زمانی ئینگلیزیدا به کاری بهین.

### الملخص

الدراسة الحالية هي جزء من رسالة الماجستير. يهدف البحث إلى استكشاف تأثير عناصر الترابط اللغوي استنادًا إلى نموذج لي (2002) Lee، وتأثير عناصر الترابط اللغوي المدعم بواسطة الوسائل المتعددة (مقاطع الفيديو) كأداة مُحفِّزة على جودة كتابة المشاركين. اتبعت الدراسة تصميم طريقة البحث الكمي باستخدام التحليل النصي والإحصائي لكتابات الطلاب. حلّت ٩٠ ورقة كتابية مأخوذة من ٤٥ طالبًا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية للذين درسوا اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض العامة في ثلاثة مراكز للغات في مدينة السليمانية بإقليم كردستان العراق. أوضحت نتائج الدراسة بأن تدريس الترابط اللغوي بشكل مباشر، وتدريس الترابط اللغوي مدعّمًا بمقاطع الفيديو كأداة محفزة تحسن بشكل كبير من جودة كتابة الطلاب مقارنة بتدريس الكتابة عبر الكتب اللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية لأغراض عامة. أظهرت النتائج أيضًا أن الطريقتين المقترحتين لتدريس الترابط اللغوي ساعدت المشاركين على تحسين أدائهم في تطوير أفكارهم، وتنظيم كتابتهم، وكتابة جمل أكثر ترابطًا باستخدام أدوات الربط المختلفة لإظهار العلاقات بين الأفكار والقدرة على إظهار آرائهم بشكل واضح في كتاباتهم. اعتمدت النتائج المقترحة في هذه الدراسة قد تحسن إيجابيًا من كتابات الطلاب في دورات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض العامة. وقد تساعد نتائج الدراسة أيضًا مصممي مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية على تغيير أساليبهم في تدريس مهارة الكتابة من خلال دمج عناصر الترابط اللغوي والأنشطة التعليمية القائمة على الوسائط المتعددة في الكتب المختصة بتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، وتزويد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية بمجموعة من استراتيجيات التعليم المتعلقة بمهارة الكتابة التي يمكن استخدامها في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية.

### Abstract

The present study is an extract from an MA dissertation. The study aimed to investigate the impact of teaching coherence elements explicitly based on Lee's (2002) model, and the effect of teaching coherence elements integrated with videos as a stimulus tool on the quality of participants' writing. The study followed quantitative method research design utilising textual and statistical analysis of students' writings. 90 writing papers taken from 45 EFL students who studied English for general purposes in three language centres in Sulaymaniyah city, Kurdistan Region, Iraq were involved in the study. The main study findings showed that teaching coherence explicitly and teaching coherence integrated with videos as a stimulus tool significantly improve the quality of the students' writing compared to teaching writing via ELT textbooks taught in those EFL courses. The findings also showed that the two proposed ways of teaching coherence helped participants to have better performance in developing their ideas, organising their paragraphs, establishing more logical relations between sentences, using different cohesive devices judiciously to show relations between ideas and indicating their opinions explicitly in their writings. Adopting the suggested approaches of teaching coherence in this study may positively improve students' writing in English language courses for general purposes. The findings of the study may also help writing EFL curricula designers change their approaches to writing by integrating coherence elements and multimedia-based instructional tasks and activities into ELT textbooks and equip EFL teachers with a range of writing strategies that can be used in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: EFL Writing Strategies, Coherence, Cohesion, Multimedia, Videos, ELT Textbooks, Writing Instruction, EFL Teachers

### 1. Introduction

Writing is one of the essential skills in the English language. Being an essential mean of communication in the twenty-first century, writing plays a vital role in determining language learners'

academic success. Even beyond academia, writing continues to be an important attribute of many disciplines such as business, commerce, science and many more (Hyland, 2003; Light, 2001). Nonetheless, this importance is usually associated with much difficulty for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and native speakers alike (Hyland, 2003; Kellog, 2008). This difficulty can be traced to several factors that are both related to the nature of the writing itself and the way it is often taught in many EFL classes.

Researchers were able to recognise two elements, which they perceive to have an important influence on the quality of written texts: coherence and cohesion. De Beagrande and Dressler (2002) assert that a well-written text derives its communicative value from its conformity to two important standards of communication: cohesion and coherence. They argue that “to some degree, cohesion and coherence could themselves be regarded as operational goals without whose attainment other discourse goals may be blocked” (p.3). Similarly, Richards (1990) states that coherence is “an essential practical construct in discussing the quality of written discourse” (p. 104)

## 2. The Rationale of the Study

A clear distinction between coherence and cohesion is not provided in most of the writing textbooks used in writing courses in terms of their roles and their appropriate implementation. Lee (1998) states that “coherence is central to effective writing. However, it is often regarded as a fuzzy and elusive concept that is difficult to teach and difficult to learn” (p.36). For example, Boardman and Frydenberg’s (2002) *Writing to Communicate* elusively describes a coherent paragraph as a group of “sentences that are ordered according to a principle (p.31). This principle is achieved simply by organising sentences in certain orders (chronological, spatial and logical). Students with this vague description are left with no clear explanation of how to implement these orders in their writing. Opposed to the previous explanation, Oshima and Hogue’s (2006) *Writing Academic English*, widely used in writing courses, advises students that the way to gain coherence is through the skilful use of key nouns, pronouns and transition signals.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Richard, Platt and Weber (1985) assert that cohesion is “the grammatical and/or lexical relationships between the different elements of a text in order to create a unified text” (p. 45). Lee (2002) believes that “such conceptions of coherence, [...] construe coherence narrowly in terms of sentence-level connectedness and paragraph unity rather than discourse unity” (p.33).

This difficulty is probably one of the reasons why despite the fact that coherence and cohesion are important features of writing, they are hardly taught in many EFL textbooks such as *New English File*, *Interchange*, *New Headway*, and *Face2Face*, which are commonly used in English language institutes and centres around the world. The writing skill is neglected, and no appropriate and explicit materials and activities are included to focus on coherence and cohesion. Furthermore, English language teachers at many language institutes and centres do not supplement those books with appropriate materials due to writing complexity, time limitations and lack of training and knowledge in designing materials.

This gap has created a major issue for many English language learners in EFL classes in terms of their writing skill since the majority of people, especially adults (engineers, accountants, lawyers, teachers, educators) in Sulaymaniyah city choose to learn the English language using those textbooks, which are taught in different private language institutes. As a result, EFL learners complete those classes without developing appropriate writing skills and be capable of passing international language exams.

Therefore, adopting a practical definition of coherence and its elements and suggesting how it can be integrated into EFL textbooks will be of great importance and would solve some major issues that face EFL students both in Sulaymaniyah city, Kurdistan Region and the other countries that use the common ELT textbooks. Based on the literature, this research adopts Lee’s (2002) model as the basis for teaching elements and adds to it videos as a stimulus tool to maximise the effectiveness of the instruction.

### 3. Elements of Coherence

Lee (2002) suggests five important elements, which form coherence: cohesion, information distribution, propositional development, macrostructure and metadiscourse. Those five elements may not only provide a more explicit definition for coherence, but it also can provide the theoretical knowledge to develop educational materials needed to teach coherence in different EFL and ESL classes. Adopting this model can help change students' perspective on writing. Ferris and Hedgecock (1998) found out that ESL/EFL students focus almost exclusively on the word and sentence levels rather than the level of the whole discourse when writing. This is because they believe that "their only sense of security comes from what they have learned about grammar" (Leki 1996, p.34) and that grammar is the only tool they can use in writing English essays, (Silva, 1992). Therefore, Lee (2002) believes that this pedagogical emphasis on the elements of coherence can move students' attention from phrase-level grammar to discourse features such as textual structuring and propositional cohesion, which are critical to creating meaningful texts.

#### 3.1 Cohesion

Cohesion, as explained above, is defined as a distinctive element yet related to coherence that connects words, phrases, clauses and sentences via cohesive ties aiming to construct a coherent text. Different sentences in a text are connected according to the linguistic, lexical or grammatical meanings of the cohesive ties rather than the accumulated meaning of the individual words themselves. Therefore, cohesion is considered to represent the surface structure of the text (Peterson and McCabe, 1991). Cohesion achieves coherence through the use of cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion and conjunctions (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

#### 3.2 Propositional Development

This element is based on the notion that if the meaning and the information of sentences are not taken into consideration, the text could easily lose its coherence. Van Dijk (1980) describes propositional development to be the result of relations expressed by sentences' propositions (information, ideas) which are ordered in certain sequences and it through this arrangement that meaning is formed. He further explains that cohesive ties (cohesion) should be used according to the meaning which sentences convey and not vice versa. Van Dijk (1980) distinguishes between two fundamental types of sentence sequencing or arrangement: conditional and functional.

The sequence of sentences is conditionally coherent when their different information or facts are conditionally related to each other. That is, when "the first fact [sentence] allows, or necessitates the subsequent fact [sentence]" such as causes and consequences (Van Dijk, 1980, p. 53). The following example illustrates this relationship:

Many newly married couples lack money. They end up living in small houses.

It can be understood that the first sentence acts as the reason *lacking money* which led to a consequent action which is *living in small houses*. Therefore, without the cause, which the first sentence provides, there will be no consequent. The semantic relationship that both sentences convey allows the reader to comprehend the relation between the two and identify this conditional, sequential relationship.

Functional sequencing of sentences occurs when "the respective propositions have themselves a semantic function defined in terms of the relationship with previous propositions. Thus, a proposition may function as a specification, explanation, example, comparison, contrast or generalisation with respect to a previous proposition" (Van Dijk, 1985, p. 110). This relation can be understood if we re-arrange the two sentences in the previous example:

Many newly married couples end up living in small houses. They lack money.

Here, the sentence *they lack money* is no longer the reason which leads to a consequent action. It rather functions as an *explanation* for the first sentence. The relationship between the two sentences is understood through their semantic relationship where the first sentence expresses a general level of information which is specified by the second sentence and thus establishes a general-specific relationship.

This knowledge of propositional development is essential as it can assist learners in developing the unity and coherence of their writing. By justifying, explaining, exemplifying, and/or elaborating on the ideas' presented, coherent writing is more likely to be attained (Lee, 2002).

### 3.3 Information Distribution

As the name indicates, information distribution is about how information is ordered in a sentence and how this “distribution” can create a smooth transition between sentences. Cook (1989) argues that the ordering of information is determined by “sender’s [writer’s] hypotheses about what the receiver does and does not know” (p.64). That is, writers have to keep in mind the audience they are communicating with in terms of the knowledge they already possess regarding a certain topic as well as the knowledge of the world that one shares in this world.

The sequence of information distribution is reflected in the structure of the English sentence/clause. The English sentence/clause is usually divided into two parts: the part which the writer thinks his/her audience already knows (*Given/Theme*), and the part which the writer thinks that his/her audience does not already know (*New/Rheme*) (Paltridge, 2006).

Paltridge (2006) emphasises the significant role that theme and rheme play in determining the "focus and the flow of information in the text" (p.145). Paltridge explains that this flow of information is created through the way in which a theme of a clause may pick up, or repeat a meaning from a preceding theme or rheme. That is, the *new* part of a sentence could change into the *given* in the next sentence as the text develops. It is through this way, a smooth transition between sentences is established. Consider the following extract taken from the introduction of this paper:

*Writing* plays a vital role in determining language learners’ academic success. Nonetheless, *this importance* is usually associated with much difficulty for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and for native speakers. *The challenging aspects of writing* could be traced to the nature of written texts themselves.

Here, it can be noticed that the *new/rheme* of the first sentence *plays a vital role in determining* changed its status into the *given/theme* part of the second sentence *this importance* and the *new/rheme* of the second sentence *is usually associated with much difficulty* changed into the *given/theme* of the third sentence *the challenging aspects*. It can be noticed that the text has developed as follows:

Given/Theme...New/Rheme. Given/Theme...New/Rheme. Given/Theme...New/Rheme.

This example illustrates the smooth movement of sentences. It also shows how information distribution is highly useful to make sentences “hang together” in a way that creates unity in texts (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000). Therefore, teaching information distribution to students can help them greatly learn how to develop and connect their sentences smoothly and achieve unity in their texts.

### 3.4 Macrostructure

Van Dijk (1980) views macrostructure as the theme, the upshot, the idea, the gist, or the outline of a discourse or a passage of a discourse. He argues that macrostructure “explains what is most relevant, important, or prominent in the semantic information of the discourse as a whole” (p.15). Martin and Rothery (1986) believe that macrostructure provides the text with its communicative purpose. It can be inferred from Van Dijk’s explanation that macrostructure establishes global coherence through two levels of text: paragraph and essay (or other types of texts such as articles, dissertation).

The first global coherence is established in a paragraph through "the overall control upon the local connections and continuations" (p.115). That is, although sentences could be connected coherently if the sequence of the sentences is not developed under a certain idea or theme, they would more likely diverge from their main idea. In this way, macrostructure controls the relevance of the discourse’s individual propositions, their importance, and the nature of the relations that link together (Van Dijk, 1985).

The second level of global coherence of the whole text is established through the overall control over different paragraphs of the text. That is, not only each paragraph should have its own overall

idea, but also any set of paragraphs should have an overall idea, theme or outline that controls different paragraphs together in order to serve a larger purpose.

The sequences of prepositions could also be arranged according to the functional or the communicative purpose of the text (Lee, 2002). For example, if the purpose of a text is to argue a controversial issue, the writer could arrange his/her ideas so that both sides of the issue are examined, followed by a conclusion in which the writer weighs the pros and cons of each side of the argument (Lee, 2002). Similarly, Van Dijk (1977) suggests that it is typical for narratives to use the following pattern: "Setting-Complication-Resolution-Moral" (p.101). Therefore, it can be said that teaching macrostructure explicitly to learners could be highly effective to improve their writings in terms of unity and relevance of their ideas both inside paragraphs as well as in a text as a whole.

### 3.5 Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse is linguistic features in texts that help readers to organise, interpret and analyse knowledge, making it more reader-accessible (Lee, 2002). It also indicates ways writers can express themselves in their texts to interact with their receivers (Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993). Hyland (2005) states that "metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating" (p.3). Hence, two distinctive yet related parts can be found in communication: informational and attitudinal that a writer adopts regarding the information. Similarly, Crismore et al. (1993) and Kopple (1985) report that there are two different levels of meaning which can be found in a text: the propositional and metadiscoursal. The former Kopple (1985) describes as the one that "provides information about the topic of the text, and it increases the propositional [information, ideas] content", while the latter "helps our receivers organise, classify, interpret, evaluate and react to such material" (p.83).

It can be said that metadiscourse has great importance in writing because it helps writers to adopt a critical perspective towards their writings. Tavakoli et al. (2010) explain how the use of metadiscourse help students understand and interpret author's communicative intentions and stance, move along the text, and keep schemas and process the flow of information efficiently by raising their awareness of the presence and the functions of different metadiscourse markers. Discourse markers can be classified into different categories according to their purpose. For example, they vary from the one used to express logical connections, e.g. *infer, support, prove, therefore*; to hedge how certain we are by writing e.g. *it seems that, perhaps, I believe, probably*; or when we refer to our own thinking and writing as we think and write e.g. *To summarise, on the contrary, I believe* (Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al. 1985; Hyland, 2005).

It can be argued that by raising learners' awareness of the use of metadiscourse, students will not only learn how to get other writers' stance and perspectives but also learn to introduce theirs. Consequently, it will positively reflect on student's writings if they are taught how to use metadiscourse markers appropriately.

### 4. Videos as a Stimulus Tool: Features and Potentials

The use of videos<sup>1</sup> in classrooms is associated by many teachers with entertainment; it is considered to be a way to pass the time, a reward for students after doing well in a quiz, or a filler whenever teachers are not in the right mood to teach. This attitude towards films is common around the world, and it has been well-documented in the literature by many researchers (Voller and widows, 1993; King, 2002; Vetrie, 2004). The misconception towards viewing videos as a tool to entertain is caused by misunderstanding the nature of videos by many teachers.

It is certainly true that videos are fun; yet, this does not devalue their pedagogic importance. It is well-known that enjoyment and entertainment are two important aspects of any learning process. For

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<sup>1</sup> In this research the word videos acts as an umbrella term that refers to films, short films, DVDs, TV shows and documentaries

example, when learners enjoy what they are involved in, a relaxed atmosphere is more likely to be established, and their motivational level increases positively towards learning activities which in its turn will be reflected on their performance. Voller and Widdows (1993) and King (2002) assert that entertainment and enjoyment have a strong influence on learners' motivational level and offer a varied collection of pedagogical options and represent a rich source of intrinsically motivating materials for learners.

One of these effective features that can be a very useful tool in teaching writing is the *dynamic multimedia aspect* of videos. Videos integrate visual, aural and animated characteristics in one piece creating a “dynamic medium” (King, 2002, p.509) that presents ideas and events in a multi-dimensional aspect. This characteristic can positively increase the clarity of ideas and events presented to learners. *The emotional response* is another distinctive feature yet related to the dynamic aspect of videos that can be very influential in writing. Videos establish a meaningful context in front of learners by showing interactions, settings, people, and things in a much more realistic way (Bo, 2008).

The third feature, which is not less important than the previous two in teaching writing is the *relaxed environment* which videos create for learners to reflect upon their ideas and responses. In addition, videos are linguistically less threatening than other texts such as reading or listening materials because videos offer learners more than one opportunities to comprehend and follow the ideas in the video. The role of videos and the potentials they offer in writing instruction can also be understood through Multimedia Learning Theory (MLT), (Mayer, 2001). MLT theory demonstrates how videos interact with viewers and describe the processes involved in this interaction and how it allows learners to have more than one opportunity to understand the presented materials and have a better interaction with them (Mayer and Moreno, 2005).

##### 5. Teaching Coherence and the Role of Materials

Lee (2002) provides a model of explanation on how materials can be designed for teaching coherence in writing. The model consists of five elements which are ordered as follows: "introductory activities, explicit teaching, student handouts, awareness-raising tasks and follow-up writing practice" (p.34). Each stage is given an equal prominence when teaching the five elements of coherence. Lee (2002) illustrates that *introductory activities* aim to introduce the role and importance of coherence in writing. For example, students might be asked to narrate an embarrassing story or event, and then elements of macrostructure such as *situation, problem, solution, and evaluation* can be discussed to identify macrostructure role in the story.

This activity is followed by *explicit teaching activities* which aim to involve students in analysing authentic texts or simple text-analysis tasks to ensure that learners explicitly comprehend the target coherence element. For example, to teach macrostructure, students can analyse texts that contain the *problem-solution structure* by rearranging jumbled sentences. The third type of activities is done through *students handouts*. Lee (2002) recommends using handouts to explain the targeted terms and provide further examples on features of coherence in order to scaffold and strengthen learners' understanding. Similarly, *awareness-raising tasks* aim to engage learners in a variety of text analysis, reading and re-writing to consolidate their understanding and use of coherence elements. It is important to note that the types of modification and rewriting activities at this stage are rather controlled since they are specifically designed to improve specific elements of coherence in students' writing. Thus, they can be viewed as accuracy-based activities.

The last type of activity is called follow-up *writing practice activities*. As its name indicates, this stage aims to allow students to implement what have they learned. Lee (2002) suggests giving students a topic and asking them to write according to the conventions they have learned and practised in the previous activities.

Lee (2002) suggests starting from the general features of a text and moving towards smaller elements. After identifying the purpose, audience and the context of the situation, the macrostructure of the text will be introduced, and then the information distribution and the way it can facilitate

developing the topic of the writing and the development of ideas is tackled. After that, the information distribution/local coherence and cohesion are taught. Finally, metadiscourse is introduced emphasising "the importance of the text as a vehicle for communication" (p.41). In other words, it can be called a top-down approach to sequencing different elements of coherence.

Reflecting on the first four types of activities mentioned earlier and the way they can be ordered, it can be seen that the Lee's (2002) model adopts a top-down approach to writing, moving from general into a detailed explanation to writing. One can also categorise those materials under support and model materials mentioned by Hyland (2003). This is because the four types of activities aim to provide explicit explanations of coherence features and to engage students in text analysis tasks that improve the coherence various aspects in a controlled manner.

The analysis also shows that Lee (2002) model of teaching coherence lacks the third type of stimulus materials mentioned by Hyland (2003) as the last writing practice activities only requires students to implement what they have learnt in terms of coherence knowledge. That is, they do not provide any stimulus input in terms of engaging learners to think and elaborate creatively on the ideas that they want to include in their writings. Therefore, there is a need to include stimulus materials in Lee's (2002) model of teaching coherence for a complete and effective set of materials to be present. Videos' features, as noted above, can best serve writing in terms of stimulating, generating ideas and supporting learner's creativity. Thus, they will be used to provide stimulus input for learners before they start writing.

## 6. Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of teaching coherence explicitly on students' writing and teaching multimedia-aided coherence teaching on the quality of EFL writing. This is done by developing working and practical writing materials that explicitly teach the five elements of coherence and combine it with video-based stimulus materials to improve participants' writing. The study took place at three language centres in Sulaymaniyah city. The three places provided English language courses for general purposes. Three groups of intermediate level students have participated in the research, the Control group (The CTR), the Experimental group A (The EXP A), and the Experimental group B (The EXP B). Each group had 15 participants; 45 students (21 males and 24 females) were part of this study in total.

The intermediate level was chosen as it is a critical stage for learners to develop their writing skills and move from paragraph to the essay level. It can also be argued that students at this stage would have gained the linguistic competencies needed to write longer texts. Furthermore, students can gain Band 5 in the IELTS test, or 56 in the TOEFL iBT test at this level. Those are the score required by the Kurdistan Higher Ministry of Education for students to be admitted for the master's programme. All the participants went through a language placement test to determine their English proficiency level before joining the courses. Therefore, it can be said that all participants had the same level of the English language when they joined their English for general-purpose courses. Apart from that, all participants were randomly grouped. Therefore, there was no need for random sampling as it is needed in this type of experimental researches.

The CTR group were taught writing following their ELT textbook, The EXP (A) writing instruction was based on (Lee's (2002) model and the EXP (B) writing instruction was based on five elements of coherence (Lee, 2002) integrated with videos as a stimulus tool. Each group had a pre-test and a post-test (see Appendix 1). Thus, a total of 90 papers were textually and statistically analysed following Chiang (1999) assessment tool (see Appendix 2). SPSS analytical software was used to conducted One-way ANOVA and post hoc test Tukey HSD to derive the descriptive data. A pilot test was conducted to verify the validity and clarity of the instructional materials. The pilot study lasted ten weeks and yielded positive results in terms of the appropriateness and clarity of the designed materials and data collection tools.

## 7. Findings and Discussion

This section provides the major findings obtained from the data collection. It is important to note that further details are provided in the dissertation.

### 7.1 Pre-test

**Table 1. Descriptive Data on Participants' Pre-test writing**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Pre-test	CTR Group	15	37.20	7.073	1.826	33.28	41.12	24	48
	EXP (A)	15	41.47	11.837	3.056	34.91	48.02	25	69
	EXP (B)	15	36.87	8.070	2.084	32.40	41.34	21	47
	Total	45	38.51	9.258	1.380	35.73	41.29	21	69

**Table 2. One-way ANOVA Data on Participants' Pre-test writing**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre-test	Between Groups	197.378	2	98.689	1.160	.323*
	Within Groups	3573.867	42	85.092		
	Total	3771.244	44			

\* The main difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results of the three groups in the pre-test indicated that their overall performance was almost the same. Furthermore, one-way ANOVA yielded a no significant difference between the three groups writings in the pre-test at the  $P < .05$  level,  $F(2,42) = 1.160$ ,  $p = .323$ . For the difference to be statistically significant, the p-value between the three groups has to be between ( $\leq .05$ , and  $< .001$ ). However, the p-value in the pre-test is .32, which is much higher than 0.05. Therefore, it can be confirmed that there was no significant difference between the three groups in terms of writing quality when their courses started.

Each coherence aspect that had received less than 4 according to the assessment tool scale (see Appendix 2) is considered problematic. This value is chosen because number 4 indicates that an aspect is considered to be good according to independent 1 to 5 scale ( $5 = Strongly Agree$ ,  $4 = Agree$ ,  $3 = Undecided$ ,  $2 = Disagree$ ,  $1 = Strongly Disagree$ ). Therefore, it can be seen that all aspects of coherence were problematic for the three groups at the beginning of their courses as no average means of any aspect reached 4. To further understand each group performance in the pre-test and to identify which aspect in each category was the most problematic and the least problematic, the five coherence elements were analysed and explained in details.

### 7.1.1 Macrostructure

**Table 3. Pre-test Means of Macrostructure**

Macrostructure	CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Relevant Ideas	2.47	2.93	2.47
Division of Paragraphs	1.53	1.87	1.67
Effective Introduction	1.93	2.13	1.60
Closure	1.13	1.33	1.40
<b>Sum</b>	<b>7.06</b>	<b>8.26</b>	<b>7.14</b>

The results show that participants in both the CTR group and the EXP (B) had almost the same performance in macrostructure with 7.06 and 7.14 mean sum, respectively. EXP (A) had a slightly higher performance with 8.26 as an overall sum. Participants in the CTR group scored 2.47 while the EXP (A) and the EXP (B) scored 2.93 and 2.47, respectively. One of the major issues that affected the relevance of ideas was participants' lack of understanding of argumentative essay requirements by providing solutions paragraph, which was not required.

In terms of paragraph division, the CTR group had the lowest performance. Similarly, participants in the other two groups did not know how to distinguish between their introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion resulting in one very long block piece of writing that lacked organisation. Furthermore, it was common by participants to combine all body paragraphs together in one long body paragraph or do the opposite by separating one body paragraph into separable independent sentences.

Providing effective introduction was also problematic for the majority of the participants, as most of them did not know how to introduce the topic of their essays and their thesis statements. One of those problematic areas was immediately stating their thesis statement at the beginning of the introduction without mentioning the hook and the topic of their writings, Hence, making it difficult for the readers to understand the writing topic and its scope before reaching the supporting details.

In addition, providing an appropriate conclusion and closure were also problematic for many participants. The most frequent issue was not dedicating a proper paragraph for the conclusion or reducing the conclusion paragraph into one sentence containing a general suggestion without summarising and paraphrasing the main ideas of the essay. Thus, no closure was provided.

### 7.1.2 Information Distribution

**Table 4. Pre-test Means of Information Distribution**

Information Distribution	CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Given / New	2.13	2.20	1.73
Relation between Ideas	1.93	2.60	2.00
<b>Sum</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>3.73</b>

The average mean for Given/New principle and establishing relationships between ideas was below 4 for all the three groups. This indicates that almost all participants had serious problems in implementing these two aspects in their writings. The EXP (B) had the lowest performance, with a mean of 1.73 in implementing the given/new principle. It was followed by the CTR group 2.13 and the EXP (A) with 2.20 as an average mean.

A closer look at participants' papers reveals that many of them did not know how to introduce their ideas in an appropriate place or manner. Students presented their new ideas/sentences without taking into consideration the previously given/introduced ideas when developing and supporting their

arguments. This had resulted in a disconnection between the presented ideas and made it difficult to follow the thread of their arguments.

In terms of establishing a relationship between their ideas, the average mean for the EXP (A) is 2.60, followed by the EXP (B) 2.00 and CTR group 1.93. The first main challenge was not establishing a clear relation between the topic sentence of the paragraph and the supporting details. The second most frequent issue in participants' writing was not providing a proper and clear topic sentence to control the supporting details. Thus, it was left for readers to infer the main idea of the paragraph.

### 7.1.3 Propositional Development / Local Coherence

**Table 5. Pre-test Means of Propositional development/Local Coherence**

Propositional Development / Local Coherence	CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Exemplification	1.67	2.20	1.73
Causal Relationship	2.07	2.33	2.07
Problem / Solution	1.73	2.07	1.80
Compare / Contrast	1.53	1.93	1.67
Elaboration	1.87	2.13	1.60
<b>Sum</b>	<b>8.87</b>	<b>10.66</b>	<b>8.87</b>

Table 5 shows that the EXP (A) had the highest sum mean 10.66, while both the CTR group and the EXP B had the same sum Mean 8.87. In terms of exemplification, it was evident that providing appropriate examples to support their ideas was one of the most challenging aspects for a good number of participants in the three groups since many papers did not contain appropriate examples at least for one or more of their main arguments when it was needed.

Developing clear causal relations between different details was another challenge for the participants as it was difficult to establish a logical connection between different presented details. Problem/solution is the third aspect of propositional development. This aspect in argumentative essays is considered successful if the writer clearly explains why the reason mentioned in an argument is problematic. The solution part is not required as the topic given to the participants did not entail providing any solutions. A large number of papers had issues with this aspect as learners did not clearly state why at least one of their main arguments is problematic and could lead to divorce.

The fourth aspect of propositional development is comparison and contrast. The overall means of the three groups were under 2, which shows that a good number of participants were not able to properly implement this aspect in their papers. The last aspect of propositional development is elaboration. Participants' major issue with elaboration was listing their ideas exhaustively rather than expanding on their topic sentences; thus, making it hard for the readers to comprehend the presented arguments fully.

### 7.1.4 Cohesion

**Table 6. Pre-test Means of Cohesion**

Cohesion	CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Repetition	2.47	2.53	2.53
Synonymy	2.20	1.87	2.13
Reference	2.67	2.80	2.93
Conjunction	2.47	2.33	2.13
Sentence Transition without Conjunctions	2.13	2.13	2.00
Punctuation	1.60	1.53	1.33
<b>Sum</b>	<b>13.54</b>	<b>13.19</b>	<b>13.05</b>

The results of table 6 indicate that the CTR group had the highest mean, followed by EXP (A) and ending with the EXP (B) 13.54, 13.19, and 13.05, respectively. In three groups, all participants had average means less than 3, which indicates that different cohesion aspects were challenging for most of the learners. The major issue for the learners in the repetition aspect was largely due to the overuse of the same keyword. Due to participants' over-reliance on repetition and reference to refer back to their previous mentioned ideas, synonymy was not mostly used by the learners when it was needed.

Connecting sentences via reference was the most common method by the three groups. The CTR group had the highest average mean 2.67 for this aspect, followed by the EXP (A) 2.80 and the EXP (B) 2.93. Participants had three major issues with reference. First, they either did not use them when it was needed, overused them, or misused them. Connecting sentences via conjunctions and transitional signals were also common to be used by learners. As a result, students had some issues while using them. Conjunctions were either overused by the learners or misused.

The last aspect of cohesion is punctuation. All the three groups had the lowest average mean in this aspect compared to the other aspects. The CTR group had 1.60, the EXP (A) had 1.53, and the EXP (B) had 1.33 as an average mean. Participants' awareness of punctuation was very poor. Those difficulties include overusing the comma by placing it instead of the full stop or not using a full stop at the end of a sentence and starting with another one without a connector. Thus, many participants had many comma splice, run-on sentences and stringy sentences. Capitalisation was also problematic. Participants capitalised words when it was not needed and did not capitalise on others when it was needed.

### 7.1.5 Metadiscourse

**Table 7. Pre-test Means of Metadiscourse**

Metadiscourse	CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Clarity of Ideas	2.47	2.67	2.60
Paragraph Transition	1.20	1.87	1.47
<b>Sum</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>4.07</b>

Table 7 results show that the EXP (A) had the highest mean sum 4.54 in terms of the overall clarity of ideas followed by EXP (B) 4.07 and ending with the CTR group 3.67. Clarity of ideas stands for learners' ability to clearly state their attitude and position on the topic given to them. The results also indicate that all participants in the three groups had a very low performance in paragraph transition.

Problems related to paragraph transitions are categorised into two types. The first was related to the participants' lack of understanding of how to move from one paragraph into another; thus, they moved to another main idea without signalling it. The second identified problem in paragraph transition was not providing a clear view of what the body paragraphs are about. Readers should be able to identify the main idea of each body paragraphs when reading the first sentence. However, many participants did not clearly state the main idea in the topic sentence. Thus, making it difficult to understand the writer's perspective and attitude towards the topic.

### 7.2 The Post-test

This section presents the results of participants and their scores in the post-test. It also examines whether any improvement had occurred in participants' performance, their writing quality and the five elements of coherence. This is done by comparing their results to their pre-test scores and statistically analysing them via one-way ANOVA and post hoc test Tukey HSD to determine if those improvements were random or whether they were the outcomes of the two proposed methods of coherence teaching.

**Table 8. Individual Coherence Aspects Means in the Post-test**

Post-Test		CTR Group	EXP (A)	EXP (B)
		Mean	Mean	Mean
<b>Macrostructure</b>	Relevant Ideas	3.13	4.47	4.6
	Division of Paragraphs	2.13	4.33	4.73
	Effective Introduction	2.87	4.13	4.47
	Closure	2.13	4.07	4.4
<b>Sum</b>		10.26	17	18.2
<b>Information Distribution</b>	Given / New	2.6	4.2	4.47
	Relation between Ideas	2.4	3.87	4
<b>Sum</b>		5	8.07	8.47
<b>Propositional Development/Local Coherence</b>	Exemplification	2.67	3.87	4.47
	Causal Relationship	2.8	4.2	4.2
	Problem / Solution	2.13	3.8	4.13
	Compare / Contrast	2.07	3.53	3.87
	Elaboration	2.33	3.8	4.33
<b>Sum</b>		12	19.2	21
<b>Cohesion</b>	Repetition	3.13	4.2	4.67
	Synonymy	2.8	4.07	4.4
	Reference	3.27	3.8	3.8
	Conjunction	2.67	3.87	4.07
	Sentence Transition without Conjunctions	2.6	3.73	4
	Punctuation	2.47	3.53	3.4
<b>Sum</b>		16.94	23.2	24.34
<b>Metadiscourse</b>	Clarity of Ideas	3	4.4	4.67
	Paragraph Transition	1.67	4.33	4.6
<b>Sum</b>		4.67	8.73	9.27
<b>Total Mean</b>		<b>2.57</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>4.27</b>

Comparing the post-test to the pre-test scores can show a notable difference between participants' performance in different aspects of coherence. It is important to note that the pre-test and the post-test were of the same genre of writing (*argumentative essay*). However, each with a different topic (see Appendix 1). In the pre-test, all aspects of coherence were problematic for the three groups as none of them had reached an overall mean of 4 according to the assessment tool. In contrast, post-test scores reveal that the number of problematic aspects had decreased from 19 to only 2 in the EXP (B). That is, 17 aspects of coherence had an overall mean equal or higher than 4 in the EXP (B). The only two aspects that did not reach the average mean 4 were in cohesion: reference and punctuation. The total mean of the EXP (B) is 4.27, which is highest in comparison with the other two groups.

The EXP (A) had a notable improvement both in the overall total mean and coherence individual aspects. EXP (A) had 4.01 as an overall total mean, and 11 coherence aspects out of 19 elements had significant improvement. The improved aspects could be seen in macrostructure elements as all its aspects received more than 4 according to the assessment. In addition, implementing the given/new

principle, providing casual relation between ideas, using repetition, synonyms, clarity of ideas, and paragraph transition were significantly enhanced. However, 9 elements did not reach scale 4. Those aspects were establishing relations between ideas, problem/solution, compare and contrast, elaboration, reference, conjunction, sentence transition without conjunctions, and punctuation. The CTR group had the least improvement compared to the EXP (A) and the EXP (B) with 2.57 as an overall mean for all the aspects. The CTR group did not improve the problematic aspects of coherence identified in the pre-test.

**Table 9. Descriptive Results of the Post-test between the Three Groups**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
						Post-test	CTR Group		
EXP (A)	15	76.20	11.918	3.077	69.60		82.80	54	95
EXP (B)	15	81.27	8.405	2.170	76.61		85.92	66	89
Total	45	68.78	16.944	2.526	63.69		73.87	36	95

**Table 10. One-way ANOVA Results of the Post-test between the Three Groups**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre-test	Between Groups	9112.711*	2	4556.356	54.380	<.001*
	Within Groups	3519.067*	42	83.787		
	Total	12631.778*	44			

\* The main difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The one-way between-groups ANOVA yielded a very highly statically significant effect between the three groups in the post-test,  $F(2,42) = 54.308, p < .001$ . It can be seen that the significant value is  $<.001$ , which is below  $.05$ . Thus, the null hypothesis, which means that there is no statistical difference between the groups, is rejected. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the improvements in the EXP (A) and the EXP (B) are the results of the proposed methods of teaching coherence explicitly and teaching coherence explicitly via videos as a stimulus tool in the post-test since the p-value is less than  $<.001$  which means that difference is very highly significant.

**Table 11. Post-test Post Hoc Test Tukey HSD**

Multiple Comparisons (Post Hoc Test: Tukey HSD)						
(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CTR Group	EXP (A)	-27.333*	3.342	<.001*	-35.45-	-19.21-
	EXP (B)	-32.400*	3.342	<.001*	-40.52-	-24.28-
EXP (A)	CTR Group	27.333*	3.342	<.001*	19.21	35.45
	EXP (B)	-5.067-	3.342	.294	-13.19-	3.05
EXP (B)	CTR Group	32.400*	3.342	<.001*	24.28	40.52

	EXP (A)	5.067	3.342	.294*	-3.05-	13.19
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\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post hoc comparison using Tukey HSD test indicated that teaching coherence explicitly in the EXP (A) ( $M = 76.30$ ,  $SD = 11.91$ ,  $P = <.001$ ) was very highly significant compared to the CTR group who were taught via ELT textbooks. It also revealed that teaching coherence explicitly via videos in the EXP (B) ( $M = 81.27$ ,  $SD = 8.40$ ,  $P = <.001$ ) was very highly significant compared to the CTR group which taught writing via ELT textbooks. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the EXP (A) and the EXP (B) ( $P = .29$ ) since the P-value 0.30 is higher than the 0.05.

The findings indicate that the answer to the first research question: *does the explicit teaching of coherence positively improve writing quality?* is positive. The statistical analysis clearly shows that teaching coherence elements explicitly in the EXP (A) positively improves the participants' writing quality in argumentative essays provided in the post-test. With respect to the second research question 2: *does the use of videos as a stimulus tool in teaching coherence positively improve writing quality?* The answer is yes. The statistical analysis clearly shows that multimedia-aided coherence teaching was the cause of the improvement identified in participants' papers in the EXP (B).

Furthermore, the comparative analysis of the participants' performance in the post-test, and the numbers of improved aspects of coherence showed that the participants in the EXP (B) had a better performance compared to the students in EXP (A). In other words, multi-media aided coherence teaching materials performed better than explicit teaching of coherence without videos in terms of enhancing participants' writing quality. However, although there was more improvement in the EXP (B) compared to the EXP (A), the improvement difference between them was not statistically significant.

## 8. Conclusion

The main study findings showed that teaching the five elements of coherence explicitly and teaching the five elements of coherence integrated with videos as a stimulus tool significantly improve the quality of the students' writing. The findings showed that teaching coherence approaches helped participants to have better performance in developing, elaborating and organising their ideas, establishing more logical relations between sentences, using different cohesive devices judiciously to show relations between their ideas and indicating their opinions explicitly in their writings.

Adopting the suggested approaches of teaching coherence in this study will positively improve students' writing in English language courses for general purposes because it tackles some of the major problems and weaknesses identified their writings especially in Sulaymaniyah city in Kurdistan and Iraq and other countries which uses the same ELT textbooks in their English classes. The results of the study may also equip English language teachers with a range of writing strategies that can be adopted for teaching EFL learners in different contexts.

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**Appendix 1: Pre-test & Post-test****Pre-writing Task**

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about the rapid divorce rate among newly married couples, and some people believe that this rate will continue to rise. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Support your opinion by using specific reasons and details. Write a 250 words essay.

**Post Writing Task**

The most important aspect of a job is the money a person earns. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Support your opinion by using specific reasons and details. Write a 250 words essay.

**Appendix 2: Adapted Chiang (1999) Scale for Scoring Participants' Writing**

Please circle the number that reflects the degree to which you agree with the statement about the essay. Circle NA (Not Applicable) when insufficient or no information is available concerning the particular feature.

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Undecided 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Macrostructure**

5 4 3 2 1 NA The ideas in the essay are all very relevant to the topic.

5 4 3 2 1 NA The division of paragraphs is justifiable in terms of content relevance.

5 4 3 2 1 NA The beginning section is effective in introducing the reader to the subject.

5 4 3 2 1 NA The ending gives the reader a definite sense of closure.

**Information Distribution**

5 4 3 2 1 NA New information is introduced in an appropriate place or manner.

5 4 3 2 1 NA The ideas in the essay are well-related one to another.

**Propositional Development / Local Coherence**

5 4 3 2 1 NA Examples are introduced judiciously, not just to form an exhaustive list.

5 4 3 2 1 NA The causal relationship between ideas is clear.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Problem statements are followed up by responses/solutions.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Different ideas are effectively compared/contrasted.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Ideas mentioned are elaborated.

**Cohesion**

5 4 3 2 1 NA The exact same vocabulary/expressions/structures are repeated consistently.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Equivalent words/paraphrases, when used, are used appropriately.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Pronouns of reference are used appropriately and accurately.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Junction words are used judiciously and accurately.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Where no junction words are used, transition between sentences is smooth.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Punctuation is employed appropriately to separate ideas and sentences

**Metadiscourse**

5 4 3 2 1 NA The writer's overall point of view is clear.

5 4 3 2 1 NA Transition between paragraphs is smooth.