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EDITORIAL BRIEF

Volume 10 No. 2 of the *Journal of Liberal Studies* is being published simultaneously with No. 1 in order to accommodate our numerous subscribers and gradually clear the backlog of articles. We appeal to our subscribers whose articles are not still in this volume to bear with us. Efforts are being made to publish all articles already in our resource bank.

This number of *JOLS*, like all others, offers you items of information, ideas and research findings from all shelves of knowledge for your consumption and enjoyment. Selections have been made from topical issues of interest and relevance to students, scholars and the general public.

We are immensely grateful to our assessors for the threshing and winnowing work they have done to some of the articles in the volume.

We acknowledge the all-round assistance of the Dean of General Studies, Professor A.O. Okore in the production of the journal.

Mrs. Cordelia U. Ogbuehi,
Editor-in-Chief.

PRACTICAL GUIDES TO COHERENCE IN ENGLISH

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper on practical guides on achieving coherence comes in a more natural, more spontaneous way than organizing facts and ideas clearly. Also, imperfections in coherence can be handled more easily when revising or editing a memorandum, letter, report or speech.

There is a similarity between achieving coherence and running a new play in football practice. After first studying the play diagram, the players get in position the ball is snapped, and everyone runs his assignment. The players return to the starting point, the coaches show them what was not done right, and they run the pattern again, hoping to do better. Now, the blocking, running, and ball-handling assignments are run at full speed and as naturally and instinctively as possible. For example, if the play is a pass, the quarter back does not think as he rolls out about how best to cock his arm, use a blocker or compute the differences in relative speed of the pass receivers and defenders. If he did, he would never get the ball in the air. He might even suffer the fate of the centipede who, when asked how he coordinated the action of his legs, fell over and died in the effort of trying to explain.

Similarly, if you stop to think analytically about the numerous elements and techniques of coherence, as you try to write or dictate a paragraph, you would probably become so self-conscious, you would do a miserable job. Sufficient unto the moment is the problem thereof. What you must do as a writer, is, think about what you want to say and then let it flow in your usual way. Afterward, you will need to go over it and do some fixing - but, just as with the football play, that will not be hard if there are the right makings to begin with. And these must come naturally.

The paper moves on to explain the term coherence and quickly too explains the difference between coherence and incoherence.

Charles Farrar Brown (1834-1867) preoccupied by this factor queried: Why is this thus? What is the reason of this thusness? Robert Frost (1874-1963) sharing in this reflection explained that:

"Talking is a hydrant in the yard and writing is a faucet upstairs in the house". David Lambuth (1964) posit that, "One rightly knew from thousands of hours of teaching, how hopeless it is to try to write with one half of the brain trying to remember rules of rhetoric." When you have found an idea write it down as clearly as possible as you would express it in speech; swiftly, unself-consciously, without stopping to think about the form of it. Revise it afterwards but only afterwards to stop to think about the form in mid-carrier, while the idea is in motion, is like throwing out your clutch half way up a hill and having to start in low again, you never get back your old momentum.

A sentence or a paragraph is said to be coherent when the reader can readily grasp the relationship between the thought expressed and its logical connection to the topic sentence. In Ogbuehi's *Towards Effective Writing Skill for Higher Education* (2002) she upholds that "A paragraph is a group of related sentences that go to develop one single idea in an essay; ... it helps the writer to organize his thought in blocks of major points, ... One of the characteristics is that it must stick together rather than stand as individual actors. They do possess appropriate and effective transitional words". Sharing this view with Ogbuehi, the paper therefore proves a theory that: when the words in a sentence or sentences in a paragraph or paragraphs in a section do not clearly show the relationship of the points and ideas expressed, the sentence, paragraph or section is said to be incoherent.

You may wish to examine the transcripts of meetings in which the members talked freely and spontaneously about their ideas, and you will see the wisdom of this approach. If the speakers knew what they wanted to say, coherence will show forth in many ways to be described and through all the aside, grammatical errors and other imperfections of extemporaneous, speech. For example, it will show in the repetition of key words and sentences (so much so that the usual need in editing is to reduce the extent of repetition). It will show in the use of transitions and conjunctions. It will show in the way thoughts and sentences "echo" one another. This is why an editor is

