Reference As A Cohesive Device

Dr. Abdul Rahman Ahmed[(*)]

Abstract

Cohesion is a relationship between elements of a text where proper interpretation and understanding of one element depends on another. It thus serves to relate elements of a text to each other.

Cohesive relationships are of different types: **substitution**, **ellipsis**, **lexical relationships**, and **reference**. It is the last, i.e. **Reference** that we are concerned with in this paper.

The paper falls into four sections, each of which is devoted to discuss an aspect related to this cohesive device. The first section deals with the CONCEPT of reference in a number of disciplines; section two sheds light on TYPES of reference with special emphasis on PERSONALS and DEMONSTRATIVES. Section three adopts Halliday & Hasan's model of analysing cohesion. It briefs their model as far as REFERENCE is concerned. To prove the validity and adequacy of this model in analysing reference as a cohesive device, a 23-sentence text is analysed. The paper ends with

(*) Dept. of Translation - College of Arts / University of Mosul.

some concluding remarks that are attained from the previous discussion of reference.

1. THE CONCEPT OF REFERENCE

In philosophy and semantics, Wales (1989: 396) observes that reference is concerned with the relation between words and extra-linguistic reality: what words stand for or refer to in the outside world or universe of discourse. So, the traditional semantic view of reference is one in which the relationship of reference is taken to hold between expressions in a text and entities in the world, and that of co-reference between expressions in different parts of a text (Brown & Yule, 1983: 204).

Thus, the REFERENT of the word 'elephant' is the animal elephant. Referential meaning is sometimes used instead of conceptual or cognitive or denotational meaning to describe the aspect of meaning of a word which relates it precisely to its extra-linguistic reference.

In linguistics, care is usually taken to distinguish knowledge of the world from knowledge of language: the extra-linguistic notion of reference is contrasted with the intralinguistic notion of sense, a property arising from the meaning relations between lexical items and sentences, (Crystal, 1985: 391).

In grammar and text linguistics, reference is used in a much broader sense to mean any kind of designation, TEXTUAL as well as SITUATIONAL. Even in semantics it is recognised that not all elements of a language refer to specific objects in the outside world, chiefly the grammatical or function words (e.g. prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and pronouns). Pronouns, however, like other classes of words, can point to something in the environment, whose semantic reference will yet change from situation to situation. In a text, the terms reference and refer are convenient to describe the function of words like pronouns and determiners to designate a noun phrase they identify within the immediate co-text (Wales, 1989: 397).

Morley (1985: 76) for his part, sees reference as the meaning relationship which links full lexical expression of an entity or circumstance with the pro-form/substitute to which it refers. Moreover, in presenting the traditional semantic view of reference, Lyons (1968: 404) states that "the relationship which holds between words and things is the relationship of reference: words REFER to things". Yet, Lyons, in a more recent statement on the nature of reference points out that: "it is the speaker who refers (by using some appropriate expression); he invites the expression with reference by the act of referring" (1977: 177). This is a more dynamic understanding of the nature of reference. Thus, in

discourse analysis (cf. reference is treated as an action on the part of the speaker or writer).

In this connection, Beaugradne & Dressler (1981: 60) emphasize that using cohesive devices shortens and simplifies the surface text, as one obvious device pro-forms are economical, short words empty of their own particular content, which can stand in the surface text in the place of more determinate, context-activating expressions. These pro-forms allow text users to keep content current in active storage without having to restate everything. The best pro-forms as Beaugrande & Dressler confirm, are PRONOUNS which function in the place of the noun phrase or noun with which they co-refer. In this well-known children's rhyme:

(I.I) There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

<u>She</u> had so many children, <u>she</u> didn't know what to do.

the pronouns 'she' makes it unnecessary to keep saying 'the old woman who lived in a shoe', 'the old woman', or even 'the woman'.

Donnellan (1978: 58) expresses a similar viewpoint. He states that "in some cases repetition of information makes the discourse sound like the awkward language of a child's first reader". If we find (c) below awkward, this is because normally, in genres other than children's first readers, speakers do not reiterate so much given information.

(1.2)   a. 1. A man came to the office today carrying a huge
suitcase.

2. It contained an encyclopedia.

b. 1. A man came to the office today carrying a huge
suitcase.

2. The suitcase contained an encyclopedia.

c. 1. A man came to the office today carrying a huge
suitcase.

2. The huge suitcase carried by the man who came to
the office today contained an encyclopedia.

Finally, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 31-32) who stress that "what characterises reference is the specific nature of the information that is signalled for retrieval", that is, "the information to be retrieved is the referential meaning, the identity of the particular thing or class of things that is being referred to". Accordingly, "cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time".

2. TYPES OF REFERENCE

Co-referential forms are, as Halliday & Hasan (1976: 31) put it, forms which "instead of being interpreted semantically, in their

own right,…make reference to some thing else for their interpretation". Where interpretation lies outside the text, in the context of situation, the relationship is said to be an Exophoric relation which plays no part in textual cohesion. Where the interpretation lies within a text, they are called Endophoric relations and do form cohesive ties within the text.

The various markers refer either back to something that has already been mentioned (or implied), in this case they have ANAPHORIC REFERENCE or forward to something which is about to be said, in this case they have CATAPHORIC REFERENCE, (Morley, 1985: 76).

What is essential is every instance of reference whether endophoric (textual) or exophoric (situational) is that there is a presupposition that must be satisfied, the thing referred to has to be identifiable somehow. Further, a reference item is not of itself exophoric or endophoric; it is just 'phoric' it simply has the property of reference. Any given instance of reference may be either one or the other, or it may even be both at once. There are tendencies for particular items or classes of items to be used exophorically or endophorically; but the reference relation is itself neutral: it merely means 'see elsewhere' (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 63; Levinson, 1983: 73; Verschueren, 2003: 104).

To illustrate the dichotomy mentioned above, it seems appropriate to give Halliday and Hasan's (1976: 33) diagram:
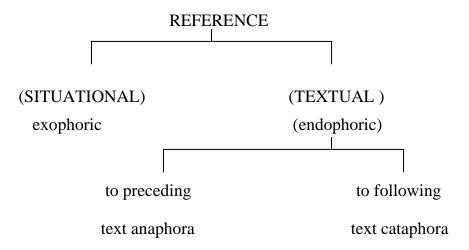
REFERENCE

(SITUATIONAL)   (TEXTUAL)
  exophoric   (endophoric)

to preceding   to following

text anaphora   text cataphora

Diagram (1): Types of Reference

Two types of reference are given by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 51) namely, PERSONAL and DEMONSTRATIVE. Personal reference is reference by means of function in the speech situation, through the category of PERSON; demonstrative reference is reference by means of location, on a scale of PROXIMITY.

In the following pages, the significant points of personal and demonstrative reference will be reviewed.

2.1 PERSONAL REFERENCE

The category of reference includes the three classes of personal pronouns, possessive determiners (usually called possessive adjectives) and possessive pronouns.

This system of reference is known as PERSON where 'person' is used in the special sense of 'role'; the traditionally recognised categories are FIRST PERSON, SECOND PERSON, and THIRD PERSON, interesting with the NUMBER category of SINGULAR and PLURAL.

The significance of the PERSON system is that it is the means of referring to relevant persons and objects. The principal distinction is that between the persons defined by their roles in the communication process, on the one hand, and all other entities on the other. The former is called SPEECH ROLES; they are the roles of speaker and addressee. The latter, which we shall call simply OTHER ROLES, include all other relevant entities other than speaker and addressee. In terms of the traditional categories of person, the distinction is that between first and second person on one hand, and third person on the other (Ibid.: 52)
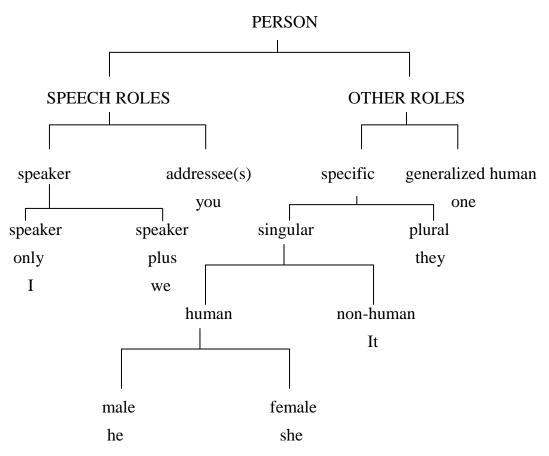
PERSON

SPEECH ROLES

OTHER ROLES

speaker   addressee(s)   specific   generalized human

you   one

speaker   speaker   singular   plural

only   plus   they

I   we

human   non-human

It

male   female

he   she

Diagram (2): Types of Speech Roles

2.1.1 SPEECH ROLES AND OTHER ROLES

There is a distinction to be made between the speech roles (first and second person) and the other roles (third person). Only the third person is inherently cohesive, in that a third person form typically refers anaphorically to a preceding item in the text. In other words, it is only anaphoric type of reference that is relevant to cohesion, since it provides a link with a preceding portion of a text. Furthermore, when we talk of the cohesive function of personal

reference, it is particularly the third person forms that we have in mind. But we shall find instances of these which are not cohesive, as well as instances of the first and second person forms which are:

	SPEECH ROLES	OTHER ROLES
	I, you, we ('you and I')	he, she, it, they, we ('and other(s)')
typically:	exophoric (non-cohesive): speaker, addressee(s); writer, reader(s)	anaphoric (cohesive): person(s) or thing(s) previously referred to
secondarily:	anaphoric (cohesive): speaker, addressee in quoted speech	exophoric (non-cohesive): person(s) or thing(s) identified in context of situation

(Ibid.: 48)

2.1.2 *Personal Pronouns, Possessive Determiners, and Possessive Pronouns*

Neither the syntactic function of the personal itself, nor the syntactic function of its referent, has any bearing on the anaphoric relation between the two, notice the following example:

(2.1)   *a.John has moved to a new house./ x.He had built it last year.*

     b. John's house is beautiful. / y. His wife must be delighted with it.

     c. That new house is John's. / z. I didn't know it was his.

In the example above, (x) has personal pronoun 'he', (y) has possessive determiner 'his' and (z) has possessive pronoun 'his'.

52

There is, however, one respect in which possessive pronouns differ from other personal reference items as regards their anaphoric function. Whereas the other personals require only one referent for their interpretation, possessive pronouns demand two, a possessor and a possessed. The difference can be seen as:

(2.2)   *a. John's is nice.*

          b. His house is nice.

          c. His is nice.

Given (a), we need the answer to 'John's what?'; given (b), the answer to 'Whose house?'; but given (c) we need the answer to 'Whose what?'. So any occurrence of a possessive pronoun involves two ties, only one of which is a form of reference (Quirk et al., 1972: 208-213)

2.1.3 CATAPHORIC REFERENCE

Personal can refer cataphorically as in:

(2.3)   *He who hesitates is lost.*

where 'he' does not presuppose any referent in the preceding text bit simply refers forward to 'who hesitates'. Unlike demonstratives which do refer cataphorically in a way that is genuinely cohesive; they refer forward to succeeding elements to which they are in no way structurally related – personals are

normally cataphoric only within a structural framework, and therefore do not contribute to the cohesion of the text. However, there is one cataphoric use of 'it' that is cohesive, illustrated by:

(2.4) I would have never believed it, They've accepted the whole scheme.

This happens only where 'it' is text-referring (Ibid.: 216)

2.2 DEMONSTRATIVE REFERENCE

Demonstrative reference is essentially a form of verbal pointing. The speaker identifies the referent by locating it on a scale of proximity. The system is illustrated in the diagram below (Chalker, 1987: 56):
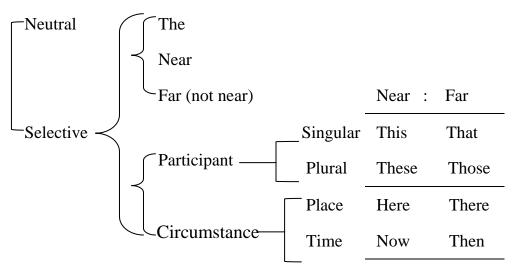
	Near :	Far
Singular	This	That
Plural	These	Those
Place	Here	There
Time	Now	Then

Neutral

Selective — The / Near / Far (not near)

Participant — Singular / Plural

Circumstance — Place / Time

Diagram (3): Types of Demonstrative Reference

54

We are not concerned here with exophoric reference, for the reasons already given; it is not textually cohesive. But the uses of <u>this</u> and <u>that</u> in endophoric reference are explainable by reference to their exophoric meanings.

2.2.1 EXTENDED REFERENCE AND REFERENCE TO 'FACT': 'THIS' AND 'THAT':

This applies only to the singular forms <u>this</u> and <u>that</u> used without a following noun. For example:

(2.5)   *a. They broke a Chinese vase.*

      b. That was careless.

In (b) <u>that</u> refers to the total event, 'their breaking of the vase'.

It is worthmentioning that whereas <u>that</u> is always anaphoric, <u>this</u> may be either anaphoric or cataphoric. This use of <u>this</u>, together with the parallel use of <u>here</u>, is the only significant instance of cataphoric cohesion in English (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 66).

2.2.2THE SELECTIVE NOMINAL DEMONSTRATIVES: 'THIS', 'THESE', 'THAT', 'THOSE'

Halliday and Hasan (Ibid.: 59) states that these demonstratives occur extensively with anaphoric function. In principle, they embody within themselves THREE systematic distinctions:

(1) between 'near' (this, these) and 'not near' (that, those)

(2) between 'singular' (this, that) and 'plural' (these, those)

(3) between modifier (this, etc., plus noun, e.g.: This is an oak).

2.2.3 THE

Cataphoric or forward reference with <u>THE</u>, is limited to the structural type. Unlike the selective demonstratives (this, these, there), 'the' can never refer forward cohesively. Nevertheless, there is anaphoric reference the only one in which 'the' is cohesive. The clearest of this are those in which the item is actually repeated, e.g.: <u>hall</u> in.

(2.6)   *She found herself in a long, low hill was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof. There were doors all around the hall, but they were all locked.*

(Ibid.: 70)

2.2.4 DEMONSTRATIVE ADVERBS

Quirk et al. (1972: 701) state that there are four of these, HERE, THERE, NOW, and THEN, although NOW is very rarely cohesive. As reference items, HERE and THERE are closely parallel to THIS and THAT, respectively. For example:

56

(2.7) *'Do you play croquet with the Queen today?'*

'I should like it very much' said Alice, 'but I haven't been invited'.

'You'll see me there', said the Cat, and vanished.

The meaning of THERE is anaphoric and locative; it refers to 'playing croquet with the Queen'.

The temporal demonstratives THEN and NOW are much more restricted in their cohesive function. The cohesive use of demonstrative THEN is that embodying anaphoric reference to time; the meaning is 'at the time just referred to':

(2.8) *In my young days we took these things more seriously.*

We had different ideas then.

3. ANALYSIS OF COHESION

In this section, the cohesion of a selected text has been analyzed depending on the method proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 329-340).

The following coding scheme is used to refer to the types of cohesion:

A. TYPE OF COHESION		CODING
Reference: Personals and Demonstratives		R
1. Personals:		1
(1) singular, masculine	he, him, his	11
(2) singular, feminine	she, her, hers	12
(3) singular, neuter	it, its	13
(4) plural	they, the, their, theirs	14
2. Demonstrative and Definite Article:		2
(1) demonstrative, near	this/these, here	21
(2) demonstrative, far	that/those, there, then	22
(3) definite article	the	23

B. DIRECTION AND DISTANCE OF COHESION

IMMEDIATE

Not immediate:

Mediated (number of intervening sentences)   M(n)

Remote non-mediated (number of intervening sentences)   N(n)

58

3.1 THE SELECTED TEXT

Physics gives us information about the ultimate constituents of matter as revealed by contemporary analysis (1). These constituents are, it seems, not solid; indeed, they lack all the familiar properties of the objects of the common sense world (2). Their movements are not always in accordance with discoverable laws, while their behaviour is analogous sometimes to that of waves, sometimes to that of projectiles (3). If they are to be pictured at all, they may most appropriately be conceived after the model of electrical charges which are, nevertheless, not charges in anything (4). But if we ask what is their real nature, physics does not tell us. It only gives us information about their behaviour (5).

Chemistry investigates the laws of the combination of these ultimate constituents of matter, establishes formulae for the composition of elements, tells us how many elements there are and explores their relations to each other (6). Carrying its researches into more highly organised forms of matter, it describes the combining of elements to make molecules and of molecules to make compounds (7).

Biology gives us information about a particular class of highly organised chemical compounds which exhibit the property known as being alive (8). How, if at all, it asks, do these organic compounds, as they are called, differ from so-called inanimate matter? (9). How many forms of life are there? (10). How does one form pass into another, and what are the laws which determine whether a particular form will survive and develop or die out; and what, incidentally does 'development' mean? (11). All these are questions with which biology concern itself (12). Branching off from biology, there is the science of genetics, which gives information about the laws of inheritance and asks what precisely it is that the offspring receives from its parents at conception (13). If, as seems to be the case, its inheritance consists of packets of chemicals called genes, can we say anything about the laws which will determine what genes it will receive, and how they will determine its characteristics?(14).

Anthropology takes for its subject-matter a special sub-section of the creatures that are living – namely, those that are called human beings, describes their forms of behaviour and social grouping, seeks to discover the emotions by which they are swayed and the beliefs which they entertain (15). It shows how early groupings develop into more complex ones (16). Sociology asks the same questions and seeks the same information in regard to those more

complex and recent forms of human grouping which we call civilised societies (17).

Physiology and anatomy describes the contents and seeks to elucidate the laws determining the workings of the human body(18). Psychology, albeit with marked lack of success, seeks to describe the constituents and workings of the human mind or, as some psychologists prefer to say, of the living organism considered as a whole (19).

Each science working within its own sphere obtains its own set of results (20). But it is not the business of any one of the sciences to co-ordinate its results with those reached by the others, with a view to draw up a map of the whole territory each department of which has been separately investigated (21). It is as if each science were entrusted with the cultivation of a separate set of trees, but it was nobody's business to concern himself with the wood (22). Inevitably, then, no scientist sees the wood; he is too preoccupied with his allotted trees (23).

3.2 TEXT ANALYSIS

The basic concept that is employed in analysing the cohesion of a text is that of the <u>TIE</u>. A tie is a complex notion, because it includes not only the cohesive element itself but also that which is presupposed by it. A tie is best interpreted as a relation between two

elements. It is thus a RELATIONAL concept. It is also DIRECTIONAL; the relation is asymmetric one. It may also go either way, i.e. anaphoric or cataphoric.

As has been brought out, any sentence may have more than one tie. This, in fact, is the usual pattern in connected texts of whatever variety. In the second place, however, the form of cohesive ties may diverge from the simple, idealized type in either, or both, of the two ways. (1) The presupposed item may be not in the immediately preceding sentence, but in some sentence that is more distant in the past. (2) The presupposed item may itself be cohesive, presupposing another item that is still further back; in this way there may be a whole chain of presupposition before the original target item is reached.

Ties are of three types: (1) IMMEDIATE: This is the simplest form of presupposition, relating the sentence to another which immediately precedes it. (2) MEDIATED and (3) REMOTE/

It should be stressed that in all cases it is the number of intervening sentences that is being counted, and not (in the case of a mediated tie) the number of occurrences of a mediating cohesive element. This is because our interest lies in the way in which cohesive relations build up a text.

As far as texture is concerned, the important question is, is this sentence related by cohesion or not?; and if it is, in how many different ways? Which items in the sentence enter into cohesive relations and what is the type and distance of the cohesion in each instance? Once we have established that 'she', for example, is functioning in the sentence as a cohesive agent by personal reference, we have established the salient fact; it does not much matter for cohesive purposes whether 'she' occurs once or half a dozen times within the sentence.

For any sentence, we shall indicate how many cohesive ties it contains. For each of these ties we shall specify what type of cohesion is involved in terms of reference (personals and demonstratives). Finally, for each tie we shall specify whether it is immediate or non-immediate, and if non-immediate, whether mediated or remote.

Building on the above discussion, the diagram below shows and specifies the types of reference found in the selected text:

Sentence Number	Number of Ties	Cohesive Item	Type	Distance	Presupposed Item
2	2	these	21	O	constituents
		they	14	O	constituents
3	2	their(2x)	14	M.1	constituents
4	2	they (2x)	14	M.2	constituents
5	2	their(2x)	14	M.3	constituents
6	1	these	21	M.4	constituents
7	2	its	13	O	chemistry
		it	13	O	chemistry
9	2	it	13	O	biology
		these	21	O	chemical compounds
12	1	these	21	O M.1-3	S (8, 9, 10, 11)
14	3	its (2x)	13	O	offspring
		it	13	O	offspring
16	1	it	13	O	anthropology
17	3	the (2x)	23	M.1 N.1 M.1	S (15)
		those	22	O	forms of social groping + more complex grouping
21	1	the	23	O	each science

It is worth noting that many other reference items are there in the text but are dropped from the table simply because they occur in one and the same sentence. For example, 'that' occurs twice in

sentence (3) but the presupposed item occurs in the same sentence[1].

From the table above, we observe that five types of reference are there in the text, namely, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23. The total number of cohesive ties in the 23-sentence text is (22). The number of cohesive items of type 13 is (7); of type 14 (7); of type 21 (4); of type 22 (1); and of type (23) (3).

With regard to DISTANCE, most of the ties are either IMMEDIATE or MEDIATED; whereas there is only one instance of REMOTE tie.

4. CONCLUSION

The following points are concluded:

1. Reference is a relationship by means of which one detects the meaning of an item by referring to another previous item that stands for it. It is a semantic relationship that is employed for economical purposes to avoid repetition and redundancy.

2. Reference, therefore, constitutes a pillar that contributes to texture of the text and makes it well-connected.

---

(1) In this respect, Halliday & Hasan (1976: 9) state "In the interpretation of a text, it is the intersentence cohesion that is significant, because that represents the variable aspect of cohesion, distinguishing one text from another".

3. Analysing a text in order to derive the cohesive devices makes one more sensitive to the way in which sentences are related and, ultimately enhances his linguistic sense.

4. Objective analysis requires a model that should be reliable and practical. Halliday and Hasan's model proves again to be adequate in specifying and analysing the cohesive tie reference.

Bibliography

Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). Discourse Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chalker, S. (1988). Current English Grammar. London: Macmillan.

Crystal, David (1985). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

De Beaugrande, R. & Dressler, W. (1981). Introduction to Text Linguistics. London: Longman.

Donnellan, K. S. (1978). "Speaker references, descriptions and anaphora' in (ed.) P. Cole Syntax & Semantics 9: Pragmatics. New York: Academic Press.

Halliday, M. & Hasan, R. (1976). Cohesion in English. London: Longman.

Levinson, Stephen (1983). <u>Pragmatics</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, John (1968). <u>Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1977). <u>Semantics</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morley, G. D. (1985). <u>An Introduction to Systemic Grammar</u>. London: Macmillan.

Quirk, R.; Greenbaum, S.; Leech, G. and J. Svartvik (1972). <u>A Grammar of Contemporary English</u>. London: Longman.

Verschueren, J. (2003). <u>Understanding Pragmatics</u>. London: Arnold.

Wales, Katie (1989). <u>A Dictionary of Stylistics</u>. London: Longman.

ملخص

م. د . عبدالرحمن أحمد عبدالرحمن (*)

يشير تماسك النص إلى العلاقة بين أجزاء النص إذ يكون فهم وتفسير تلك الأجزاء وتفسيرها معتمداً على الأجزاء الأخرى. يتناول هذا البحث الإشارة (Reference) كأحد أساليب تماسك النصوص المستخدمة في اللغة الإنكليزية.

وينقسم البحث إلى أربعة فصول تناول كل منها موضوعاً يتصل بالإشارة. حيث يعرف الفصل الأول الإشارة ويبين سبب استخدام هذا الأسلوب. إذ يقف الأول منه على تعريف الإشارة وبيان سبب استخدام هذا الأسلوب ويسلط الثاني منه الضوء على أنواع وأساليب الإشارة. ويتبنى الباحث في الفصل الثالث الأنموذج المقدم من قبل (Halliday & Hasan) لتحليل النص المختار وإثبات صلاحية الأنموذج في بيان وتحليل أساليب الإشارة المستخدمة في هذا النص. وينتهي البحث بخاتمة تبين النقاط المستخلصة من البحث.

(*) قسم الترجمة – كلية الآداب / جامعة الموصل.