Various well-developed views on discourse coherence has been formed by Western linguists. It was traditionally defined as a grammatical property, then as a semantic notion which distinguishes a meaningful text from a structurally well-formed one. Currently, the pragmatic approach of analyzing coherence as a product of utterance context is gaining in importance.

However, research on coherence in modern Chinese language is still at an elementary stage. This study therefore attempts to venture into Chinese texts, in order to provide a fuller insight into coherence in Chinese discourse.

This thesis first reviews the main theories of coherence proposed by different linguists, which serve as a theoretical foundation for further discussion. In Chapter Three, Four and Five, coherence in Chinese discourse is investigated through three different aspects. Firstly, linear progression between sentences and lexicogrammatical cohesive devices employed in inter-sentential connection is discussed. Secondly, attention is placed on the semantic completeness of a text, focusing particularly on the concept of “discourse topic” and its function as a foundation in text coherence. Lastly, pragmatic theories of conversational implicature is applied to written text, with an attempt to explain implicit coherence which prevails in Chinese literary works. The study concludes with an actual analysis of different text types, with the aim of examining the relationship between the three different aspects of coherence.

It is hoped that through this dissertation, an overview and better understanding of text coherence in modern Chinese discourse can be achieved.