

## The Role Of Cohesive Devices In The Quality Of Essay Writing.

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### **Abstract**

- One of the significant features of a text is cohesion, which is a semantic term and a part of the system of language. It is a relation between elements in the text and some other elements that is crucial for the interpretation of the text. Texture of a text is provided by the cohesive relations that exist between segments of it .The cohesive devices can be applied to both sentence and paragraph level. In writing, to link one section, sentence and paragraph to the next there exist some techniques such as repetition, synonymy, pro-form, adding transitions and so on. In the present study, an attempt is made to observe the impact of teaching cohesive devices on the Iranian EFL learners' writing. Within the framework of this pilot research 70 male adult English second language learners of an advanced level were tested for their homogeneity then they were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. A free composition test was given to the subjects as a pre-test to indicate their capability in writing. Afterwards, the experimental group was exposed to cohesive devises of writing. Subsequently, an identical free writing test was administered for both groups and an analytic marking was employed to score the test. The results of a t-test between the means of the experimental and control groups on the post-test was expressive of the

fact that the use of cohesive devices leads to a better quality in Iranian EFL learners' writing.

### **Introduction**

- The most convincing ideas in the world, expressed in the most beautiful sentences, will have no results unless these ideas are properly connected. Providing transitions between ideas is largely a matter of attitude. You must never assume that your readers know whatever you know. In fact it 's a good idea to assume not only that your readers need all the information that you have, but also that they are not quiet as quick as you are. You might be able to leap from one side of the stream to other ; believe that your readers need some stepping stones and be sure to place them in readily accessible and visible spots. There are some basic mechanical consideration in providing transitions between ideas. The interesting question here is how we can create coherence and cohesion in writing.
- Cohesion has been defined in a number of ways. Widdowson defines it in terms of the distinction that is made between the illocutionary act and the proposition. In his view (P.52), propositions, when linked together, form a "text" whereas illocutionary acts, when related to each other, create different kinds of "discourse."
- According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion and register enable us to create a text. Register is concerned with what a text means. It is defined by Halliday and Hasan as the "set of semantic configuration that is typically associated with a particular class of context of situation, and defines the substance of the text."
- Cohesion, as contrasted with register, is not concerned with what a text means. Rather, it refers to a set of meaning relations that exist within the text. These relations are not of the kind that link the components of a

sentence and they differ from sentential structure. The discovery of these meaning relations is crucial to its interpretation. For instance, in the following text:

- Mary bought a new pencil. She put it in her drawer.
- The interpretation of the elements she and it is dependent on the lexical items Mary and Pencil. So, cohesion is in the semantic relation that is setup between these elements.
- Halliday and Hasan recognize five types of cohesive devices in English and in the lexicogrammatical system of the language. They are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical; lexical cohesion is lexical; conjunction stands on the border line between the two categories. In other words, It is mainly grammatical but sometimes involves lexical selection.
- Constructionalists view language comprehension as an interactive process between the text and the person using the text. They assume that meaning does not exist in the text but becomes available to the reader as a result of his own contribution. Language users employ text in comprehension as a set of guidelines to the active (re)creation of meaning.
- Jonz (1987) in his explanation of the advantage(s) of adopting a constructionist point of view says:
  - ... one is able to speculate on the structure of language knowledge and on the various stages in the acquisition of such structures as well as their application to the cognitive tasks involved in comprehending.
  - From the above statement, it follows that constructionists emphasize the role of background knowledge as a feature of a text; and the cognitive tasks involved in the comprehension process. Below we will discuss these key points i.e. background knowledge and cognitive tasks at large.
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### **Review of literature:**

Many articles and books have appeared dealing with cohesive relations within the sentence ,especially pronominal reference and conjunction.A selection of these includes Robin lakoff,George lakoff and postal. According to Halliday and Hasan(1976), the function of cohesion is to relate one part of a text to another part of the same text. Consequently, it lends continuity to the text. By providing this kind of text continuity, cohesion enables the reader or listener to supply all the components of the picture to its interpretation. Halliday and Hasan hold that cohesion in its normal form, is the presupposition of something that has gone before in the discourse, whether in the immediately preceding sentence or not. This form of presupposition is referred to as anaphoric. The presupposing item may point forward to something following it. This type of presupposition is called cataphoric. On the other hand, exophoric and endophoric presuppositions refer to an item of information outside and inside the text, respectively.

#### **purpose of the study**

A number of researches have been done to find out if there is a positive relationship between the use of cohesive ties and the quality of essay writing .In the same way this paper wants to investigate whether there is any deference's between Iranian EFL learners of English who have been trained about the cohesive devices in writing and those who receive no training on cohesive devices.

#### **Research questions:**

Consequently, the following question was addressed:

Does the application of cohesive devices have any significant impact on the coherence of essays of Iranian EFL learners.

#### **Research hypotheses:**

To find the answer of the research question in practice the following hypotheses were proposed:

**H 1:** the use of cohesive devices including inferences, lexical and conjunctive items leads to more coherent essays.

- **H 2:** the use of cohesive devices has no effect on the coherence of essays.

## **Methodology**

- **Participants:**

- The subjects who took part in this research were 30 adult male Iranian EFL learners who were selected for this study through a placement test. They were allocated to both control and experimental groups.

- **Materials**

- In this study an achievement test was used to select the subjects and a composition grading scale was employed to score the writings of the subjects.

- **Procedure:**

- In this study, at first for subject selection a placement test was given to 70 students. Among these 70 learners, 30 of them who were approximately at the same level of proficiency in English were selected as subjects. These learners then, were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. The main process of this paper starts from now on. A free writing test was administered on both control and experimental groups as a pre-test and also to check the writing proficiency of subjects. This test was evaluated using a method which is called analytic marking. This method uses a composition grading scale according to which a text is assessed based on its organization, logical development of ideas (content), structure, punctuation, spelling and mechanics, style and quality of expression with a special range of scores for each criterion. The result of this pre-test went through the process of standardization and the descriptive statistics were calculated and are displayed in table 1

- .Table1

Statistics	Experimental group	Control group
N	15	15
Mean	13.4	15
Median	9.5	15
Range	13	15
Variance	18.102	9.142
S	4.25	3.022
Low-High	8-12	10-20

In order to ensure the homogeneity of the two groups a t-test was administered. The results are displayed in table 2:

Table2

Level of significance(2-tailed)	T-observed	T-critical	D.F
0.05	1.761	2.045	28

- Based on the statistics of the table the t-critical(2.045) is more than t-observed (1.755) at the 0.05 level of significance at 28 degrees of freedom therefore ,the variances were homogeneous
- After administration of the pre-test and being sure about the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups , .the participants in control groups underwent a3 weeks period in writing with special focus on using various types of ties in text. The first step in training was to familiarize the subjects with the concept of cohesion in text and the features of a coherent text. They were taught about what provides the texture of a text and also they were given different tasks of essay writing ,each session some essays were checked in class and some notes about ties and

connections between ideas were reminded to the subjects along the course a brief review of approximately all of the cohesive devices were taught to the subjects in experimental group

- After this course ,again a test of free writing was given to the subjects now as a post-test. The tests were scored through composition grading scale. Table 3 illustrates the results of this test which have underwent the process of standardization.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the post test**

<b>Statistics</b>	<b>Experimental group</b>	<b>Control group</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>16.46</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Mode</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Low-High</b>	<b>11-20</b>	<b>11-19</b>
<b>Range</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Variance</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.07</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.25</b>

- In order to check the obtained means of the experimental and control groups on the post-test another t-test was run. As the results in table 4

shows the t-observed value(3.57) exceeded the t-critical value (2.021)at 58 degrees of freedom so the null hypothesis was rejected.

- Table4

Level of significance(2-tailed)	T-observed	D.F	T-critical
0.05	3.57	28	2.021

### Discussion

- Based on the above results , an English language learner who wins the favor of using the cohesive ties and try to provide a proper texture for an essay will do better and scores higher in comparison with a learner who doesn't use the ties and connections between paragraphs and sentence

### Conclusion

- The results of this research although conducted on a small population, indicates that the learners who are trained in the field of cohesion in essays, can produce papers which are more understandable and sensible s.Cohesion is the grammatical and lexical relationship between the different elements of a text Since cohesive relations are not concerned with structure , they may be found within (a) sentence(s) Halliday and Hasan stated that cohesion refer to "relation of meaning that exist within the text ,and that define it as a text"(1980) and according to McCarthy ," Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the text is independent of that of another"

### **Limitations of study:**

- This study was limited only to 30 students therefore; the generalization of the result should be done cautiously. On the other hand the students who took part in this study were in advanced level of language proficiency. So, this research can be conducted on learners in other levels, namely elementary or intermediate. Furthermore, only male subjects were involved in this study. At last only the writing proficiency was checked.

### **Further research**

- The next stage may consist of larger numbers of learners since, the learners involved in this study were just 30 and also the line of this research may be followed on the role of using cohesive devices in speaking, because this paper was done only in writing. In this study only general essays were observed, so various types of essays including argumentative and descriptive essays can be observed independently. Taking the former notes in to consideration the following question can be a further research question: What is the role of using cohesive devices in argumentative and or descriptive essays.?

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