

EXPLORING COHESION IN STUDENTS' ESSAY WRITING
PRODUCTION: THE CASE OF THIRD YEAR ENGLISH
FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS AT MOHAMED
SETIF 2 UNIVERSITY, ALGERIA LAMINE DEBAGHINE

استكشاف التماسك في الإنتاج الكتابي للطلاب: حالة طلاب السنة الثالثة
لغة الإنجليزية كلغة الأجنبيّة في جامعة سطيف 2، الجزائر

Ait Aissa Mouloud ^{*(1)}

¹University Setif 2, aitaissamouloud7@gmail.com

Chami Wahid Hamza Mohamed ⁽²⁾

² University Setif 2, chamiwahid@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The current study investigates cohesion in students' essay writing. It aims at finding out students' awareness about the use of cohesion devices in essay writing production. The study mainly used quantitative and qualitative methods through a questionnaire with 50 third year English foreign language students at Setif 2 university. The results revealed that students are aware of the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing. Moreover, they encounter difficulties in using synonyms, antonyms, conjunctions, references, and lexical cohesion. The study ends with some pedagogical implications and recommendations for allocating more efforts to the integration of cohesion devices in essay production.

key words: Writing Production; Essay Writing; Cohesion; Cohesion Devices; Students' Awareness

ملخص

تتناول الدراسة الحالية التماسك في إنتاج الطلاب الكتابي للمقالات مع طلاب السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية الأجنبية في جامعة سطيف 2. وتهدف إلى معرفة وعي الطلاب حول استخدام ادوات التماسك في الإنتاج الكتابي. وقد استخدمت الدراسة الأساليب الكمية والنوعية من خلال استبيان مع 50 طالب في السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب غير مدركين لاستخدام التماسك في كتابة مقالات باللغة الإنجليزية. علاوة على ذلك، فهم يواجهون صعوبات في استخدام المرادفات والمتضادات والتماسك المعجمي. تنتهي الدراسة ببعض

التوصيات المفيدة التي تحث الطلبة على مزيد من الممارسة التي سيتم تخصيصها لدمج أجهزة التماسك في إنتاجات كتابة المقالات الخاصة بهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنتاج الكتابي : كتابة مقال : التعبير الكتابي : ادوات التماسك في الكتابة : توعية الطلاب

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the four language skills. It is defined as a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and to analyze and classify any background knowledge. Writing is considered as the most difficult skill compared to other language skills since it is the end skill. The teaching and the learning of academic writing in the foreign language classroom is, therefore, a challenging job to do, namely essays writing.

While an essay in English is regarded as an important skill for anyone to express their ideas and thoughts to others, students often face problems in learning writing since it is a complicated process. Foreign language writing involves cohesive devices which are a fundamental component that comprise the essential building of essays. Essay writing is a prose composition with a focused subject of discussion. It is a piece of writing in which the students give their own arguments. Writing essay requires short piece of writing on particular subject. In order to write an essay, students should use some important elements. The use of those elements leads to write good essay. Cohesion is the basic component in essay writing. However, while cohesion is necessary in writing essays, it is argued that it is a major challenge that students may face when they write. The use of cohesive devices is a scary task for most EFL students; this is because writing is a demanding process that requires various skills and strategies.

Similarly, third year students' at Setif 2 university seem to complain about the difficulty in writing cohesive essays which is a serious problem in students' written composition production as it is reported through the pre-questionnaire which addressed this issue. Consequently, students often misuse, overuse and do not use cohesive devices in their writing essays. Their writing consists of no clear logical organization and lack of surface relation among ideas in writing essays. The problem is noticed in essays of students who write different compositions and they do not know about the possible strategies that would assist them to improve this aspect in their production.

In the light of the above presentation, this study came to explore the problem of the difficulties encountered when students use cohesion in essay writing. This research paper has generated a number of research questions

and attempts to answer them. The multiple research questions are as follows;

- How do students perceive EFL essay writing?
- Are the students aware of the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing?
- What are the students' major difficulties with cohesion in EFL essay writing?

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of cohesion

Cohesion is defined from a semantic point of view as a set of semantic resources that create the link between sentences with what has been mentioned before. That is, cohesion refers to the semantic relation found in text (Halliday & Hansan, 1976, p. 10). Furthermore, cohesion can be regarded as "The network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text. These relations or ties organize and, to some extent create a text" (Baker, 1992, p. 180).

Cohesion is created between words, sentences, clauses, and others because they are structured. The sentence is regarded as the most important unit for cohesion; it shows how cohesion is expressed in text. Cohesion is achieved also through a cohesive relation that exists between the presupposed item and the presupposing one (Halliday and Hansan, 1976). Thus, cohesion is realized through cohesive devices or also called cohesive ties.

The potential for cohesion lies in the systematic resources of reference, ellipsis and so on that are built into the language itself" (Halliday and Hansan, 1976, p.5). Cohesive devices such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, and so on create a cohesive text. Cohesive ties between sentences stand out more clearly because they are the ONLY (capitalized in original text) source of texture, whereas within the sentence there are the structural relations as well" (Halliday and Hansan, 1976, p.9). Cohesion is established between sentences or inside the sentence itself. To conclude, the sentence unit is the core of establishing cohesion precisely between supra-sentences.

2.2. The concept of writing and essay writing

Writing is a difficult and complex skill that requires enough effort and time from the writer. In this sense, Andrews (2001, p. 43) defines writing as

“a complex activity that draws on the imagination, feeling, state of mind, mood, cognitive state, capability with the medium, context and other factors”. Moreover, Blanchard (2004, p. 11) states that in order to write a piece of writing, most writers need to think, which may take a lot of time before embarking on writing.

Moreover, writing is considered as a skill that can be practiced and mastered. In this line of thoughts, Blanchard (2004, p.1) writes: “to write effectively in English, you must conform to the accepted patterns of organization. Practicing these patterns will put you on the road to becoming a better writer”. Regarding the peculiarities of Writing, Blanchard (2004, p. 4) stressed the importance of the form, the meaning, and the grammar when writing. He went on to argue that a good writing piece should include subject (topic), purpose (Why you write), and audience (To whom you write).

Essay writing builds on many of the skills one has already mastered in learning to write a paragraph. Once one knows how to write a paragraph, it is not much more difficult to write an essay; an essay is just longer (Blanchard, 2004, p.60). That is, an essay is a group of paragraphs. In order to write an essay, you have to learn how to write a paragraph. He claims that “several paragraphs are needed to support fully the main point of an essay. A typical essay contains five paragraphs, but many other types of essays are longer or shorter, depending on their purpose” (Blanchard, 2004). Essays can be short or long depending on their purpose.

Blanchard (2004) went on to explain that an essay has three main parts: an introduction, several supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion; the introduction provides some background information on the subject and the main idea is called the thesis statement. The supporting paragraphs explain and support the main idea. The conclusion summarizes the main points.

1/ the introduction

It is the first part of an essay in order to capture the reader's attention. As Blanchard (2004) argues “the introduction is the first paragraph of any essay. It should capture the reader's attention and create a desire to read the rest of the essay” (p. 63). It is the first part that discusses the subject and without it, the essay may start too abruptly.. The introduction thus leads readers to the subject of the essay in an interesting way (Boardman and Frydenberg, 2002, p. 78). Finally we can add that there are no specific rules for writing an introduction, but there are several techniques: Move from

general to specific, use an anecdote, use a quotation, ask a question, or present facts and statistics” (ibid).

2/the Body

Also called the Supporting Paragraphs, the body includes different supporting paragraphs. Each one of them has its own point about the subject. Blanchard (2004) claims: “the body of an essay consists of several supporting paragraphs that support the thesis. Each supporting paragraph develops one point about the subject; each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that is supported with specific details” (p. 67). Furthermore, insufficient supporting paragraphs make the essay look vague (Boardman and Frydenberg, 2002, p. 93)

3/the Conclusion

The conclusion is the last part that readers want to read. You have to make clear and interesting. “The final paragraph of the essay is the conclusion; it is the last thing readers will see, so you want to make it interesting” (Boardman and Frydenberg, 2002, p. 68). Furthermore, the conclusion provides the reader with the gist of the essay, since its purpose is to summarize, without using the same words, the main points that have been made in the essay, besides its role to make the reader reflect upon the thesis of the essay (Blanchard, 2004, p.68). Other ways that can be used to end an essay are a statement of the thesis, or a final comment on the topic. However, new information are not included in the concluding paragraph about the topic of the essay.

2.3. Cohesion and essay writing

Many researches dealt with the issue of cohesion in EFL essay writing. Mawardi (2014) investigated the use of cohesive devices in narrative essays. His study aimed at describing cohesion and coherence of narrative essays. He found that the types of cohesive ties used by the students in their narrative essays are reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Also, he found that other students did not use substitution or (least use) because they do not know how, when, where this type could be reached. They also overuse repetition, and they use reference inappropriately because of their awareness. Some of the cohesive ties are used inappropriately.

Egyptian student and teachers of English were reported face problem of using cohesion in essay. In a study aimed at investigating cohesion and

coherence in EFL essay writing, three reasons seemed relevant to cohesion and coherence problems (Ahmed, 2010). One of them is the distance (physical and intellectual) between teachers and students in class. Another reason is that students have negative attitudes towards essay writing, and Egyptian teachers use traditional teaching methods as book reading. He concluded that the most or at least used cohesive ties depend on student's writing experience.

Another study investigated the use of cohesion in texts (Azzouz, 2009). This study aimed to check the level of students in using grammatical cohesive ties in writing essays. It also aimed at finding out the significance of using cohesive devices in writing cohesive text. It was found that students made some inappropriate uses of grammatical cohesive ties. Also, some grammatical cohesive devices were widely used but inappropriately; and some of them were less used but appropriately. Conjunctions were the most used by students because they were the most common cohesive device for them, but most of them were used inappropriately. The study concluded that the use of grammatical cohesive ties differ from one type to another. Students are not familiar with the use of ellipsis and substitution. They fear about their appropriateness.

The use of cohesive devices in argumentative essay was investigated by a study conducted by SANCZYK (2010). The study aimed to examine the use of cohesive ties in the argumentative essays of Polish undergraduates. He found that Students used different cohesive devices and chains. Lexical cohesion is the most used device, and two other ties are reference and conjunction. They rarely use ellipsis and substitution in their written texts. Polish students encounter problems with the use of cohesive ties as the difficulties in employing cohesive ties appropriately or effectively .

Another study aims to examine problems faced by Palestinian EFL university students in their essay writing (Hammad, 2014). It was perceived by students themselves and instructors. It was found that students faced problems in their written essays such as cohesion errors, the lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of academic style, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and so on.

In the above related studies, different researches were about the use of cohesion in essay writing. Some of them dealt with cohesion and coherence, others studied specific type of cohesive devices (either grammatical or

lexical ties) by specifying type of an essay. The difference between the current study and those related studies is that the present study focused on cohesion only with both grammatical and lexical devices in EFL essay writing.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design: exploratory

This research was designed following an exploratory approach. This research design intends to explore the research questions. It is used to define and clarify the nature of the problem. An exploratory research is not used to provide final solutions to existing problems. It enables to have better comprehension of the problem. Kothari (2004, p. 35) claims that the main purpose of the exploratory research design is the formulation of the problem for more precise investigation. It is concerned with the discovery of ideas and insights. In reference to the current study, the design helps to describe the students' problems with cohesion use in EFL essay writing at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine –Setif 2- University, Algeria.

3.2. Population and sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting number of study units from population. It is defined as “the group of participants whom the researcher actually examines in an empirical investigation” Dornyei (2007, p. 96).

In reference to this definition, the sample of this study was fifty (50) students who were randomly selected to represent the whole population of two hundred forty seven (247) third Year English students at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine-Setif 2-University, Algeria. The reason behind choosing third year English students out of others is that their level in writing skill is sufficient to be assessed. They have background in written expression module in terms of writing an essay and the use of cohesion.

3.3. Data collection tools: A questionnaire for students

A questionnaire is “Any written form that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” Dornyei (2007, p. 102).

The questionnaire is, thus, a research tool that consists of a set of questions (items) in order to gather data from participants. It is used to gather primary data and views about a particular issue of interest. It should

always have a clear goal that is linked to the objectives of the research. The questionnaire is presented to the respondents in a written form.

In the present study, the students' questionnaire aims to know students' perceptions towards essay writing, and their awareness about the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing. It also aims to find out students' major difficulties with cohesion in EFL essay writing. This questionnaire is composed of closed questions (yes/no), questions with multiple choices; where the students are asked to put an (x) in the appropriate box. It is composed of 16 questions, which are divided into two sections. The first section is about EFL students' use of cohesive devices in essay writing in English in which 12 questions are involved. This section is divided into two parts which are students' attitudes towards an EFL essay writing in English in which 6 questions are involved, and students' awareness about the use of cohesion in essay writing where 6 questions are included. The second section deals with students' major difficulties with cohesion in EFL essay writing in which 4 questions are involved.

4. Analysis of the data

This section deals with the data generated by means of the questionnaire for third year students. It is an attempt to identify EFL students' perceptions towards the use of cohesion in essay writing. The tables and figures below present the data organization, description and analysis.

4.1. Students' attitudes towards writing in English

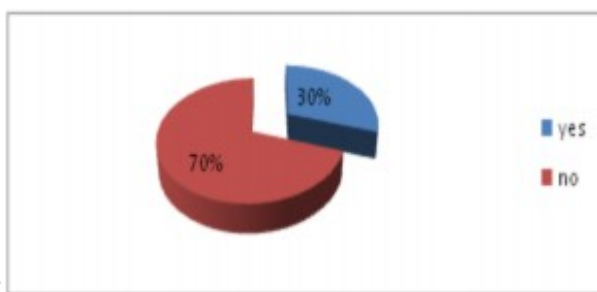


Fig.1.

riting

According to the students' responses, 35 (70 %) of the respondents enjoy the action of writing in English, while only 15 (30 %) said the opposite. The answers reveal that the majority of the respondents (70%) enjoy writing in English (fig.1). They have positive attitudes towards writing in English which in return demonstrate that the respondents like writing skill in English. One can conclude that the third year English students are motivated to write. These responses confirm what Blanchard,

2004, p.1) states that writing is a language skill that can be practiced, learned and mastered.

4.2. Tasks of writing in English

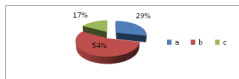


Fig.2. Reasons leading students to write

From the above figure, it is shown that 54% of the respondents often write in English especially essays, but only in connection with class assignments (a). While, 29 % of the respondents declared that they sometimes write private stories, paragraphs, or essays (b). 17 % of them said that they keep a journal and write anything that comes to their minds (c).

The majority of the respondents (54%) often write in English especially essays, but only in connection with class assignments. This demonstrates that students are motivated to write essays only under the assignments of teacher because of teacher's obligation and for getting extra marks.

4.3. The students' frequency of writing essays

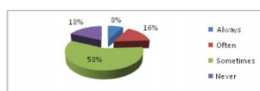


Fig.3. Students' frequency of writing essays

This question sheds light on the students' writing essays. The majority of them (as seen in fig.3.) stated that they sometimes write essays in English. This demonstrates that they are not interested, and are not aware of writing essays. So the task of writing essays in English seems more imposed than a volunteer action. This tendency towards this language task may be due to the fact that the writing skill is the most language skill and it involves the integration of all the other skills in terms of rules and proficiency as it is raised in the literature review. In addition, the use of English language through writing seems less frequent than using it through other language

skills. This state can be justified by the nature of the writing skill itself in relationship with other language skills and have nothing to do with the participants answers and interests.

4.4. Students' attitudes towards writing essays in English

The majority of the respondents (44%) declared that writing essays is neither too difficult nor too easy, that is, it is average, 32% said that it is difficult, which is a considerable percentage that needs to be taken into account. Third division among the participants is due to the difference in the frequent use of the writing skill. Furthermore, this difference can be justified by the difference in the level and the state of proficiency in language especially writing among the respondents. As Ahmed (2010) claims that students have negative attitudes towards essay writing.

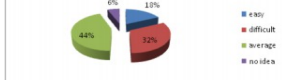


Fig.4. Students' attitudes towards writing essays in English

4.5. Students' self-description in EFL essay writing

The figure below shows that 88 % of the respondents have described themselves as an average EFL essay writers, whereas 8% have declared that their level is poor, and only two respondents who amount to 4% have declared that they are good in EFL essay writing. This question is seen as means to assess the students' level in EFL essay writing at the present time with regards to the EFL essay learning that they acquired during the previous years as background knowledge. The students have been asked to make a description about their own level for the reason that their personal opinion is worth considering.

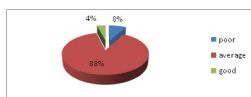


Fig.5. Students' self-description in efl essay writing

4.6. Factors affecting the students' essay writing

According to students' answers, the figure below demonstrates that 46 % of the participants have declared that structural organization is the most important factor in essay writing in English. While, 38% indicates coherence as the most important factor in essay. 16% of the respondents said that cohesion as the most important factor. The majority of the respondents (46%) declared that structural organization is considered as the most important factor in essay writing. This demonstrates that students are only aware of the essay's structural organization (introduction, body, and conclusion). The lowest percentage (16%) is related to cohesion as the most important factor in essay writing, which demonstrates the lack of students' awareness of cohesion in EFL essay writing, which is a considerable percentage that needs to be taken into account.

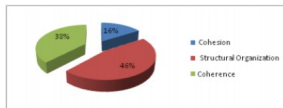


Fig.6. Factors affecting the students' essay writing

4.7. Connection between words, sentences and paragraphs

From the below figure, it is shown that 58 % of the participants declared that they do not check the connection between words, sentences, and paragraphs when writing an essay, while 42% said that they do. The results in the above table reveal that the majority of the participants (58%) are not aware of the connection between words, sentences, and paragraphs when writing an essay. This demonstrates that cohesion is not taken into consideration by the majority of students when writing an essay.

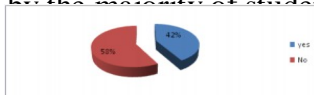


Fig.7. Students' answers about whether they check connection between words, sentences and paragraphs

4.8. The students' awareness of cohesion function in essay writing

In this question, it is noticed that 62 % of the respondents answered with “no”, and 38% of them answered with “yes”. The majority of the respondents ignore the fact that cohesion signals relations, links ideas and enhances connectedness of the elements in sentences, between sentences in a paragraph, and among paragraphs in an essay. They are not aware of the function of cohesion in enhancing connectedness of the elements in an essay.



Fig.8. the students' awareness of cohesion function in essay writing

4.9. The importance of cohesion in essay writing

The majority of the respondents have ranked cohesion as being not important. This demonstrates that the majority of the respondents are not aware of the importance of cohesion in their essay writing; only 9 participants who amount to 18% consider cohesion as the most important one in essay writing.

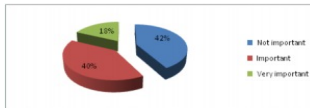


Fig.9. The importance of cohesion in essay writing

4.10. The use of cohesive devices in essay writing

As Ahmed (2010) argues that the majority of students (52%) do not use cohesive devices because of the lack of experience in writing. The 48% of the participants declared that they use cohesive devices in their essay writing. This demonstrates that only some students are aware of, but they may use them incorrectly and inappropriately.

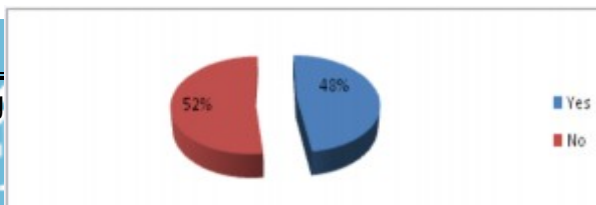


Fig.10. students' answers about whether they use cohesive devices in their essay writing

4.11. Most used cohesive devices

The figure 11 below shows that 39% of the students declared that conjunction is most used cohesive device when writing an essay, 29% of them stated that reference is the most used one, while 24% stated that they use more lexical cohesion, 6% declared that they use substitution, and only one student who amount to 2% declared that he uses ellipsis. The 29% represent reference also as being the most used cohesive device. This demonstrates students' awareness of the use of conjunction and reference in their essay writing. They are the most known cohesive devices for students in essay writing. The figure has revealed that substitution, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion are the most difficult cohesive devices to be used by students in essay writing. The lowest percentage 2% is related to the use of ellipsis.

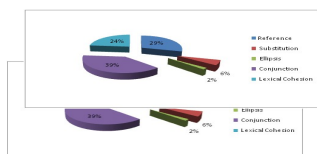


Fig.11. Most used cohesive devices

4.12. Students' difficulties about the use of personal pronouns

According to students responses, 50 % of the respondents declared that they never find it difficult to deal with the use of personal pronouns (he, she, it) when referring item(s), person, people, or thing(s) mentioned earlier in an essay, 24 % stated that they sometimes encounter difficulties regarding the same cohesive aspect, 22% stated that they often find it difficult to use personal pronouns in an essay, and 4% have declared that they always meet such difficulties.

Fig.12. Students' difficulties about the use of personal pronouns

4.13. Students' difficulties about the use of demonstratives pronouns

From students' answers, we have noticed that 36% of the respondents declared that they never find it difficult when dealing with the use of demonstrative pronouns (e.g. this, that, those) when referring item(s), person, people or thing(s) mentioned earlier in an essay, 30 % of them said that they sometimes encounter difficulties to deal with demonstrative pronouns, 26% stated that they often face such difficulties, and 8% have declared that they always meet such difficulties.

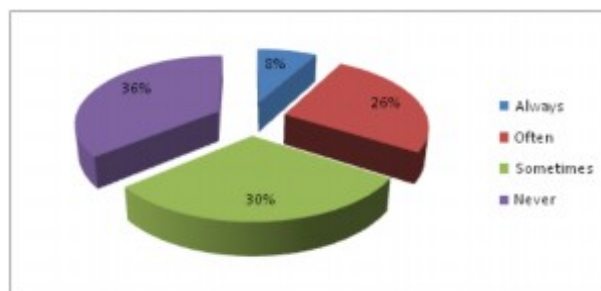


Fig.13. Students' difficulties about the use of demonstratives pronouns

4.14. Students' difficulties with the use of adverbs

The responses are given as follow: 48% of the respondents declared that they never face difficulties when dealing with the use of the definite article "the" instead of using personal pronouns (he, she, they) or demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these) to refer to the person, thing, or item mentioned earlier, 26 % of them stated that they sometimes face the same difficulties, 20% of them declared that they often encounter such difficulties, and the left 6% stated that they always face such difficulties.

From the bellow figure, it is shown that 44 % of the participants declared that they never find it difficult to deal with the use of adverbs/ adverbials to express time sequences, or sequences of events such as first, second, and so on whereas 34% of them said that they sometimes encounter the same difficulty, 22% of the respondents stated that they often face that difficulty.

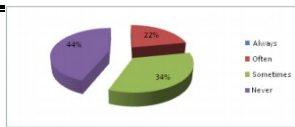


Fig.14. students' difficulties with the use of adverbs

4.15. Students' difficulties about the use of articles

The responses are given as follow: 48% of the respondents declared that they never face difficulties when dealing with the of the definite article "the" instead of using personal pronouns (he, she, they) or demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these) to refer to the person, thing, or item mentioned earlier, 26 % of them stated that they sometimes face the same difficulties, 20% of them declared that they often encounter such difficulties, and the left 6% stated that they always face such difficulties.

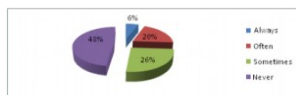


Fig.15. Students' difficulties about the use of articles

4.16. Students' difficulties about the use of substitution

From students' answers, it is noticed that 64 % of the participants said that they always lose the ability to substitute an item by another one such as the use of items 'one(s),' (the) same, 'do so' , 'so' , 'not' in order to avoid repetition, whereas 20% of them stated that they sometimes encounter to such difficulty, and 16% declared that they have never faced such problem.

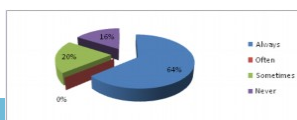


Fig.16. Students' difficulties about the use of substitution

4.17. Students' difficulties about the use of synonyms and antonyms

From the bellow figure, it is shown that 38% of the respondents stated that they often encounter difficulties when dealing with the use of synonym and antonym to avoid repeating the same words several times, 24% of them declared that they always find it difficult, 20% of them stated that they sometimes find it difficult, and the left 18 % said that they never encounter such difficulty.

All the cohesive devices are met with difficulties, and using them appropriately is difficult skill to achieve. Hartnett (1980) summaries best this question: "Using cohesive ties successfully is apparently not easy. Both good and poor writers may use the same kinds of cohesive ties, but they use them differently". The main difficulty is always met in the use of substitution (substituting an item by another one such as the use of terms 'one(s)', '(the) same', 'do so', 'so', 'not' in order to avoid repetition. They always face the problem of ellipsis (omitting unnecessary repetition by substituting an item by zero). As it is confirmed and agreed with Sanczyk(2010) claims that students rarely use substitution in their written essays. They fear about their appropriateness.

In addition, they often have obstacles in using synonym and antonym to avoid repeating the same words several times when writing an essay. As El-Ghazzar (2006) argues that the inappropriateness use of lexical cohesion is the result of limited vocabulary knowledge. Thus, the lack of students' awareness, practice, reading, experience and knowledge about cohesion (cohesive ties) seem to be causing most problems perhaps indicating a poor level of students with these cohesive devices in essay writing.

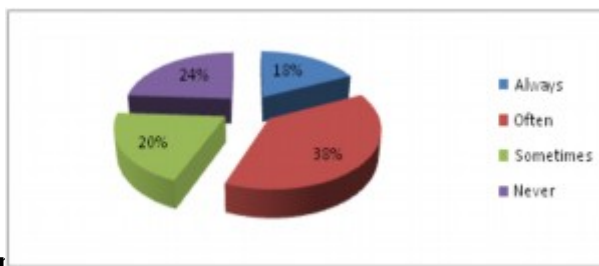


Fig.17. student... d antonyms

4.18. The students' Self. Evaluation of Cohesion in Essay writing

In this question, 60% of the respondents declared that their level is average in using cohesion in essay writing, while 20% of them said that their level is poor, 12% stated that they are good in using cohesion, and only 4 respondents who amount to 8% stated that their level is very good. The majority of the respondents declared that their level is average in the use of cohesion in essay writing. This demonstrates that they are not aware of using cohesion in essay writing, and they do not practice a lot in using cohesive devices.

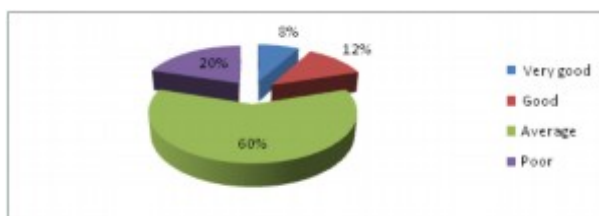


Fig.18. the students' self evaluation of cohesion in essay writing

5. Discussion

This study identified the major encountered difficulties with the use of cohesive devices in essay writing among EFL student at Setif 2 University. Among the most sounding remarks are:

- ❖ The findings elicited from the questionnaire offer students' with an overview of major difficulties which are met with the use of substitution. The reason behind this problem is the lack of students' awareness, the lack of confidence, and the lack of reading since writing could not be developed without reading.
- ❖ Students' lack of vocabulary is considered as the reason behind students' lack of using synonym and antonym. The latter is one type of lexical cohesion which is faced.
- ❖ The grammatical cohesive devices reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion (repetition of the same words) are not taken into the list of encountered difficulties.
- ❖ Students' responses agreed on the fact that they can use reference (personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and articles especially the definite article "the"), and conjunction. Besides, their use of repetition too much demonstrates their weakness in using synonym. Thus, students are aware of using such cohesive devices.

- ❖ The students' answers have shown positive attitudes towards writing in English, but their level in writing an essay is average. This demonstrates the lack of students' awareness towards writing essays since they write it just in connection with class assignments.
- ❖ In terms of the students' knowledge about the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing, the multiple answers are indicative of their general knowledge in the sense that the respondents do not have enough knowledge about cohesion, cohesion devices, and they are not aware of the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing. They rated themselves as weak and their awareness about the use of cohesion (cohesive devices) when writing in English is low.
- ❖ In terms of the major difficulties in the use of cohesion in EFL essay writing, the multiple answers are indicative of their rate about the use of cohesive devices that they do not have an adequate level of using cohesion especially the use of substitution, lexical cohesion (synonym and antonym). They proved the reason behind this problem is that the sessions provided for teaching cohesion are not enough, the lack of students' awareness, practice, and reading.

6. Pedagogical Implications

In this present study, the important pedagogical implications and recommendations are derived from the findings which reveal the following:

- ❖ Teachers should raise students' awareness and direct them to their major difficulties with cohesion in EFL essay writing by teaching different cohesive devices. This would absolutely help students to use cohesion in their essay writing.
- ❖ Teachers should provide explicit instruction about the elements of cohesion which are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. They should be clear on the type of cohesive devices are to develop. In addition, they should encourage students to participate during correcting exercises about cohesion in writing essays. So peer work is imperative in the EFL setting
- ❖ Students should revise their drafts by focusing on cohesion and read other students' essays. They should also revise their teacher's feedback on the use of cohesive ties and have high competence of writing skill in general and writing essays in particular. This procedure helps them a lot to develop their own essays to be cohesive ones.
- ❖ The comprehension of the meaning of 'cohesion' is important for students to reach, thus, it is recommended that teachers should teach students how, when, and where use each type of cohesive devices in essay.

- ❖ Teachers should encourage students to write cohesive essays and train them through practice, application, and revisions. For example, students should try to select a paragraph from piece of writing (article journal) and highlight all the different types of cohesive devices used. For example, reference, substitution, and so on. Then they should try to write a cohesive paragraph by using their own words and using the most common cohesive ties.
- ❖ Teachers should raise students' awareness that an effective cohesive essay is not the one that includes huge quantity of cohesive devices but it is that one which includes the appropriately, purposefully, and correctly use of cohesive ties.

7. Conclusion

This study was concerned with the students' perceptions towards the use of cohesion in essay writing production. It relied on the concepts of cohesion and writing skill as two paradigms. The study relied on mixed method and questionnaire for data collection. The empirical section of the current study made use of different steps related to the data collection and analysis procedures. The multiple results indicated that students do not use cohesive devices sufficiently and successfully in essay writing. They encounter problem with the use of cohesive devices in general. The study concludes at the end that cohesion is an important aspect to be taken into account when writing an essay and students awareness in imperative in such a task. Having stated the analyses and the interpretations of the findings, a number of sound pedagogical implications and recommendations were suggested at the end of the study. To conclude, all the procedures of the research from the first steps to the last ones may help the researcher to suggest that all the main and sub-research questions are answered to some extent.

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