

The Impact of Explicit Teaching of Lexical Cohesive Devices in English writing at Sentence Level (A Case Study: (University of Kassala)

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of English lexical cohesive devices by students enrolled in advanced academic writing course at University of Kassala. The data were quantitatively analyzed to examine the correct and incorrect usage of different lexical connectors in expository texts. Further examination of the lexical errors revealed the difficulties encountered and the strategies learners used to deal with lexical problems. An understanding of such strategies would illuminate appropriate approaches for teaching FL writing and vocabulary. The researchers constructed a test to assess the use of lexical items in students' writing. The test contained four areas of evaluation, synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy and inclusion. The findings supported the hypotheses that the students' writing demonstrated weak lexical cohesion due to lack of connector variety, inappropriate use of connectors, and long distance between cohesive ties in a chain. The results indicated that the subjects had limited vocabulary knowledge that did not enable them to express their ideas clearly, precisely, and made them prone to produce lexical errors. Such inadequate lexical knowledge did not enable them to produce well-structured texts. Therefore, it seems that second language instruction needs to focus on expanding the lexical knowledge of foreign language learners as well as familiarizing them with academic rhetorical features to help them to succeed in English academic settings. In addition, writing teachers need to engage their students in conscious learning tasks that are designed to make them aware of the gaps in their vocabulary knowledge and provide them with more opportunities to encounter new words in different semantic contexts.

مستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة استخدام الطلاب المسجلين في الفصول الدراسية المتقدمة للكتابة الأكاديمية في جامعة كسلا. وكيفية استخدامهم لمفردات اللغة الانجليزية المعجمية المتماثلة وقد تم تحليل البيانات الكمية لدراسة الاستخدام الصحيح وغير الصحيح للروابط المختلفة المختلفة في النصوص. كشف مزيد من الفحص الأخطاء المعجمية والصعوبات التي يواجهها الدارسون والاستراتيجيات المستخدمة للتعامل مع المشاكل المعجمية. أن فهم هذه الاستراتيجيات تضيء النهج المناسبة لتعليم كتاب ومفردات اللغة الاجنبية. أعد الباحثون اختبارا لتقييم استخدام المفردات في الكتابة لدى الطلاب. يتضمن الاختبار أربعة مجالات للتقييم، الترادف،

والتطابق، اللفظي والشمول. لقد دعمت النتائج الفرضيات إذ أن الدراسة قد اوضحت ضعف الطلاب في الكتابة وذلك بسبب عدم وجود تنوع في الروابط، والاستخدام غير الملائم للروابط، وتباعد أدوات التسلسل والتناسق. وأشارت النتائج إلى أن المدروسين يعانون من ضعف المفردات الشيء الذي لا يمكنهم من التعبير عن أفكارهم بشكل واضح، على وجه التحديد، مما عرضهم للوقوع في الأخطاء المعجمية. وهذا الضعف في المعرفة المعجمية أدى إلى عدم تمكنهم من إنتاج نصوص جيدة التنظيم. لذلك، يبدو أن تدريس اللغة الثانية يحتاج إلى التركيز على توسيع المعرفة المعجمية من متعلمي اللغة الأجنبية، فضلا عن تعريفهم بالميزات البلاغية الأكاديمية لمساعدتهم على النجاح في بيئات أكاديمية اللغة الإنجليزية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يحتاج المعلمون الذين يقومون بتدريس الكتابة لإشراك الطلاب في تعلم المهام بوعي وإدراك و توعيتهم للاستزادة من معرفة مفرداتهم وتزويدهم بالمزيد من الفرص للقاء كلمات جديدة في السياقات الدلالية مختلفة.

1.0 Introduction

Writing ability is one of the most important elements that determine students' success in an academic setting, but FL learners usually have difficulty in writing due to insufficient amount of vocabulary, lack of grammatical knowledge, unfamiliarity with appropriate rhetorical styles in English, and sometimes lack of experiences in writing.

Writing for an English academic audience requires writing well at the sentence level, the paragraph level, and at the organizational level. At the sentence level, students should be able to identify and write simple, compound, and complex sentences. At the paragraph level, students should be able to identify and write paragraphs including topic sentences

and supporting details. At the organizational level, students should learn how to write essays of the following genres: giving instructions, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and persuasion (Hyland, 2002).

It is difficult for FL learners to internalize and acquire the native speaker's awareness of degrees of polysemy and figurative dimensions of a language and at the same time be sensitive to the formal, collocational, and idiomatic restrictions of lexical items. FL learners, therefore, tend to produce inappropriate "nuances" in their choice of lexical items because they are unaware of the extra sense of these words and the conditions and relations that govern their correct usage (Hoey, 1993). Ferris and Hedgcok (1998), also accentuate that

due to lexical insufficiency, many FL learners avoid using collocations and idiomatic expressions in their writing and tend to use larger, rarer words, which make their writing sound odd and incoherent.

Although many FL learners can communicate their ideas orally, they may often fail to meet the standards of lexical appropriateness demanded by their teachers in writing. FL writers often produce writing which is characterized by long incoherent sentences, overuse of subordinate clauses, excessive repetition of lexical items, and inappropriate use of synonyms. More seriously, they often fail to recognize that their words imply relationships, which may be opposite to what they intend to express.

ESL/EFL students often have problems at the discourse level because of the wrong or inadequate choice of cohesive ties even at advanced levels of writing. Lack of cohesion in FL writing results from many factors, such as incoherent ideas and misuse or insufficient

use of lexical connectives. Liu (2000) asserts that lack of cohesion does not result from an absence of connective words, but mainly from inappropriate knowledge and use of lexical ties. He further accentuates that ESL educators, in general, tend to overlook deficient use of content lexical ties as a cause of lack of cohesion in students' writing and focus on teaching grammatical structures instead. Such deficient knowledge of lexical devices, together with other problems that cause incoherence, often leads to confusion and misunderstanding.

The researcher has had an experience of teaching writing courses for many years. Here, he has noticed that lexical cohesive devices are the most difficult items of English language for University of Kassala students to master. The correct usage of lexical cohesive devices is the greatest problem for students. They seem to have serious problems with lexical cohesive devices. Thus, it seems reasonable to conduct this study to discover the types and the rate

of errors on using lexical cohesive devices across different levels of language proficiency among University of Kassala students.

This study is expected to answer the following questions:

1. How do students use lexical cohesive devices to create local cohesion in their writing?
2. Which lexical devices are used most frequently in students' writing?
3. What kind of difficulties do students encounter in dealing with lexical cohesion?

It was hypothesized that the students' writing demonstrated weak lexical cohesion due to lack of connector variety, inappropriate use of connectors, and long distance between cohesive ties in a chain.

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the use of different lexical connectors in writing by determining the frequency of occurrences.
2. Examine lexical errors in FL writing.
3. Identify the strategies employed and the difficulties faced by students.

4. Propose methods and techniques for FL writing teachers so they can help students produce lexical cohesion.

This study is necessary for the following reasons:

1. The research is useful to the English Language teachers. It makes them aware of the problematic lexical cohesive devices for students.
2. It is also useful to the planners and designers of English language syllabuses to put more emphasis on techniques and activities of teaching lexical cohesive devices.
3. It is useful to the researchers in the area of English language teaching as a foreign Language to discover and identify the problems and difficulties that learners experience on using lexical cohesive devices in their compositions.
4. For teachers to improve and enhance their teaching skills and methods.

2.0 Cohesion

There are two important concepts in writing: cohesion and coherence, it is thus necessary to discuss them

in details with reference to relevant literature. Cohesive devices refer to the lexico-grammatical features of a text that give it texture. Cohesion and coherence are often used interchangeably; however, they do not refer to the same properties of text. Coherence, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), is a combination of two semantic features: register and cohesion. On the one hand, register refers to the variety of language which is appropriate for a particular situation. Cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the semantic relations found in a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define cohesion from a semantic point of view saying that “we can interpret cohesion ... as the set of semantic resources for linking a sentence with what has gone before”.

Cohesion, then, explains how meaning is constructed based on the semantic relations that are established between and among lexical and grammatical items in a text. In addition, to distinguishing a text from a non-text, it enables readers/

listeners to establish relevance between what was said, is being said, and will be said, through the appropriate use of necessary lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. Cohesion occurs when a semantic interpretation of some linguistic elements in the discourse depends on other linguistic elements. Baker (1992) gives more details to the definition of cohesion by defining its function 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, for instance by requiring the reader to interpret words and expressions by reference to other words and expressions in the surrounding sentences and paragraphs. Cohesion is a surface relation; it connects together the actual words or expressions that we can see or hear.

Obviously, cohesion is of prime importance in developing a text because it connects related ideas, allows a reader to interpret texts

smoothly, and creates a sense of connected discourse. It has to be noted that the appearance of Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English (1976) has had a major effect on the understanding and teaching of coherence features. Their work created controversy and interest, and spurred more ESL writing research.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that cohesion is displayed in the ties that exist between a presupposed item and a presupposing one. The presupposing and presupposed items define a cohesive relation, referred to as a cohesive tie. Halliday and Hasan explain that a tie's function is to direct the reader/listener to relate present ideas with earlier ones and, thus, create texture.

2.1 Coherence

The second important feature of establishing a text is coherence. Coherence could be defined from two distinct perspectives: text-based and reader-based. A text-based perspective considers coherence as a feature of text, either in terms of the linking sentences (cohesion) or as the

relationships among propositions in the text. In contrast, the reader-based definition of coherence considers the schemata model and points out that a text cannot be considered separately from the reader's knowledge of form and content. Coherence, then, requires successful interaction between the reader and the discourse to be processed (Carrell, 1983).

Accordingly, the degree to which a reader grasps the intended meaning and the basic structure of a text depends on whether the reader's schemata or expectations are consistent with the text (Miller & Kintsch, 1980). Such expectations, as Carrell (1983) points out, are modified as the reader processes the text to establish consistency with the text form and content. Anderson (1991) emphasizes that since reading is an interactive and interpretive process (bottom-up and top-down processing), the writer must keep the intended audience in mind to be able to meet the reader's expectations and provide guidance throughout the text. It is necessary to point

out that the notion of coherence is discussed briefly here because it is not the focus of this study. This study mainly addresses the importance of cohesion, in general, and lexical cohesion, in particular, as a valuable way to establish text unity.

2.2 Lexical Cohesion

Second language students in English-medium universities need to demonstrate an extensive variety of academic skills. To perform effectively in these academic settings, foreign language learners need a good command of vocabulary to read about research in their own areas, to listen to and comprehend lectures, to write papers integrating the research of others, to present written or oral evaluation of methods and results, and in most cases to present their own research findings (Ried, 2000).

However, it is generally recognized that many foreign language learners have difficulties with academic writing in English. Some of these difficulties are related to discourse organization, and others are the

result of sentence-level problems related to grammar, and, particularly, vocabulary (Bloch, 2001).

The area of lexical cohesion is broad and puzzling, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) state: "The concept of the lexical item ... is not totally clear-cut". This is because of the numerous ways word meanings can be related to one another and can co-occur. Lexical cohesion, as defined by Halliday and Hasan, is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary. This selection of vocabulary is further divided into two main categories: reiteration and collocation. Halliday and Hasan (1976) examine the semantic relationships in a text from a writer/reader perspective. They point out that the way writers develop semantic relations through lexical choices helps to determine the coherence and readability of a text. In addition, the degree to which readers are able to recognize and respond to these relationships influences the quality and rate of comprehension.

Reiteration and collocation, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), rely on interpreting one vocabulary element through the presence of another. Reiteration is a phenomenon in which one lexical item refers back to another to which it is related by having a common referent. They identify four types of reiterated items that commonly occur in text: a) repetition of the same word, such as “newspaper” and “newspaper” b) synonym or near-synonym, c) super-ordinate word, and d) general and specific word.

The second category of lexical cohesion, collocation cohesion, refers mainly to the sense of connected discourse created by the close co-occurrence of relatively low frequency words that tend to appear in similar contexts. Halliday and Hasan (1976) include four types of semantic relations in the category of lexical collocation: a) antonyms, b) words from ordered sets, such as days of the week, c) words from unordered sets, such as names of colors; and d) whole-to- part or part-

to-whole relations.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggest that the cohesive power of the co-occurrence of two or more words is affected by three factors: the frequency of their occurrence in the language as individual words, the frequency of their co-occurrences in texts in general, and their physical proximity in a text. While sometimes the relation between the members of a tie is easy to identify, like near-synonymy (disease/illness), complementarity (boy/girl), or whole-to-part (box/lid), it is difficult in most cases to classify lexical cohesive devices because the semantic meaning of the lexical connectors is interconnected (Morris and Hirst (2004) .

2.3 Repetition

Semantically related words assist lexical cohesion when some of the essential words of a text are repeated several times directly (repetition), or through (near) synonyms or other relations, such as antonymy and hyponymy, to establish effective inter-paragraph relations.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that semantically related words or reiteration can be easily identified whereas collocation is the most difficult type of cohesion to analyze because items said to collocate do not involve repetition, antonymy, synonymy, or hyponymy.

Repetition refers to the presence in a single text, oral or written, of one or more linguistic segments following an early occurrence. It enables speakers/writers to add information to or supply further details in their discourse by employing identical or similar linguistic forms (Hoey, 1991). Hoey argues that lexical repetition is a form of lexical cohesion, whereby words are repeated across the sentences of the text in a way which reminds the reader of the thread of the argument.

In conclusion, repetition expands the possibility of discourse connectedness. In this respect, Hoey (1991: 243) stresses that “*the traditional advice to avoid repetition needs to be couched with special care if it is not to interfere actively with*

the development of mature writing skills”. The presence of repetition in speech and in writing, besides facilitating textual organization, reinforces a particular idea and enhances interaction between the reader and the text. Hoey asserts that writing teachers should adopt a flexible attitude with regard to teaching practices. By doing so, they would come to see forms of repetition not merely as a trait of spoken language or a linguistic defect, but rather as a source which learners can resort to in developing their writing skills. In conclusion, Hoey stresses that the presence of repetition in L2 learners’ discourse should not be viewed as a negative feature that impoverishes their language development because it could serve as a useful bridge between oral and written language. As mentioned before, the use of lexical repetition differs according to cultural background and language proficiency.

Overall, the use of repetition in a particular context has to be viewed

with reference to its role and function and how it presents a smooth flow of information from one paragraph to another. If used reasonably without redundancy, repetition of lexical devices helps in engaging the reader in a text, facilitates comprehension, and most importantly, provides the basis for introducing new information, ultimately assisting the reader to establish the appropriate schemata.

2.4 Synonyms

Synonymy refers to the relationship between semantically equivalent words, which are exchangeable in all textual contexts. Salkie (1995:9) argues that mastering synonymy is essential for writing quality because *“It can get boring if the same word is repeated, and this is one reason why synonyms are used instead.... Using synonyms adds variety”*. It has often been suggested that English is mainly rich in synonyms for historical reasons and that its vocabulary has come from two different sources, from French, Latin, and Greek on one hand and from Anglo-Saxon

on the other hand. Words borrowed from such different origins long ago have now become an essential part of the language and considered native words because they are used frequently and are known by many people.

To sum up, appropriate use of synonymy is a vital aspect of language proficiency. Native speakers are able to use synonymy appropriately because of multiple exposure of a word in several contexts. In contrast, non-native speakers do not use synonymy effectively and appropriately because they lack linguistic proficiency that enables them to distinguish the denotations and connotations of words. In addition, because of insufficient knowledge of style and register, L2 students are vulnerable to wrong word choice. Researchers, therefore, stress that explicit vocabulary instructions along with stylistic awareness are necessary to enhance the lexical knowledge of L2 learners.

2.5 Collocation

Collocation is a language of

specific phenomenon and is of a great importance in all kinds of discourse. In order to understand the concept of collocation in the field of SLA, it is vital to know the historical background of the term “collocations”. Its origin is from the Latin word “collocare” which means to arrange/to set in order. The introducer of this term was Firth in 1975, who is called “the father of collocations”. Firth defines the term as “.... The company that words keep”. He thinks that it is important to know the company that a word keeps. Collocations and idioms fall under the syntagmatic relationship between words in order to form natural phrases or sentences.

3.0 Research Methodology and Tools

This research is a descriptive and analytic study. The theoretical framework consists of a description of cohesion and cohesive devices according to some linguists. Its practical part is of an empirical nature. It uses analytical tools: the discourse textual analysis of literary

samples from students’ writing.

The aim of the test is to provide an analysis of the students writing and shed light on the students’ real level of knowledge about cohesive ties. The reason behind choosing tests lies in the fact that the tests will reinforce the purpose of the study. They will provide us with the necessary information which is relative to knowledge about cohesive markers.

3.1 Description of the Population and Sample of the Study

The participants were (120) university students at University of Kassala. Tests were used to screen the required number of students who were supposed to take part in the main part of the study. Among (120) students taking the test, (100) students qualified to be classified into the control and experimental groups because their scores were between 1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean scores of all the subjects.

The study was carried out through an experimental design with control and experimental groups, both

randomly formed. While the former involved (50) students, the second group (50). The advantage of such groups is that, the students possess the same educational background which will be required for writing. The subjects are also homogeneous in terms of language proficiency.

The participants were already taught in their Secondary schools such cohesive devices. A fact which makes them already familiar with a quite good number of the cohesive ties and linking words that they studied earlier. These cohesive ties might have been taught during the grammar sessions or during the reading and/or the writing ones.

3.2 Procedures

The test of language proficiency was given to the participants. In order to come up with a homogeneous number of subjects, the exam papers were scored and the scores were scattered over a normal distribution diagram with a mean of 37 and a standard deviation of approximately 12. After this, (100) out of (120) subjects were classified into Control

(50) and Experimental (50) groups.

As for the experimental group, the researcher administered a treatment which lasted for 7 weeks, two hours sessions per week. During the experiment, both groups had the same instructor, curriculum, and schedule of instruction, while in the control group, the students had conventional learning methods, as they worked just with the writing exercises without any explicit instruction or without any awareness, by being underlined, about the cohesive devices which were the target of the study. The experimental group received explicit instruction and were made aware of the cohesive devices which were the target of the study.

4.0 Introduction

The researcher has used the statistical methods so as to fulfill the objectives of the present study. The (SPSS) program, version (10.0) was used for data analysis. The frequency tables and percent were used for presenting and to give general ideas for the areas in the students test (pass-fail).

Each table is followed by a pie- chart to show the relationship between the aspects in terms of percentages. T-test for one sample allowing for a comparison, to see if the students answers marks of the test equal to mark of pass or not.

4.1 Presentation of the Students' Answers to the Test Coordination

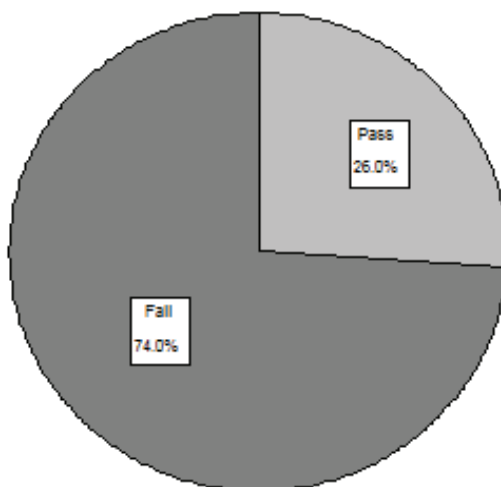
The Exercise on coordination contains pairs and groups of sentences to be combined.

Table4.5 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Coordination

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	13	26.0
Fail	37	74.0
Total	50	100.0

The Frequency table shows that In Coordination (37) of the students failed to choose the correct

coordinating conjunction to combine the pairs of the sentences where as only (13) of them passed.



Graph 4.1 Students' answers to exercise on Coordination

The graph above shows the number of students into percentages: (26%) for the students who pass and (74%) for the students who fail.

Subordination

The Exercise on subordination area represents the largest group

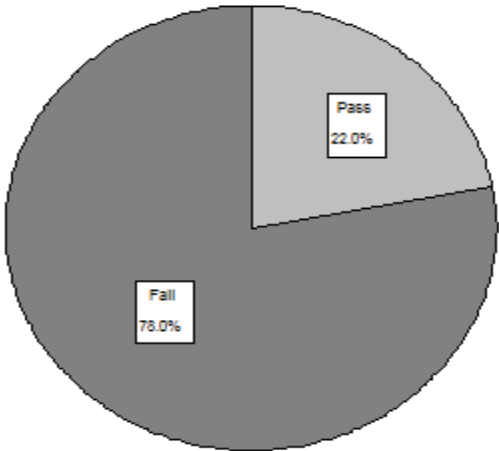
of sentences for combining. It contains test questions on the adjective clauses, noun clauses, and adverbial clauses which are divided into clauses for: time, purpose, causes, place, result, condition and concession respectively.

Table 4.6 Frequency distribution of Students’ answers to exercise on Adjective Clauses

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	11	22.0
Fail	39	78.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that (11) of the students combine the adjective

clause correctly whereas (39) of them fail to combine them correctly.



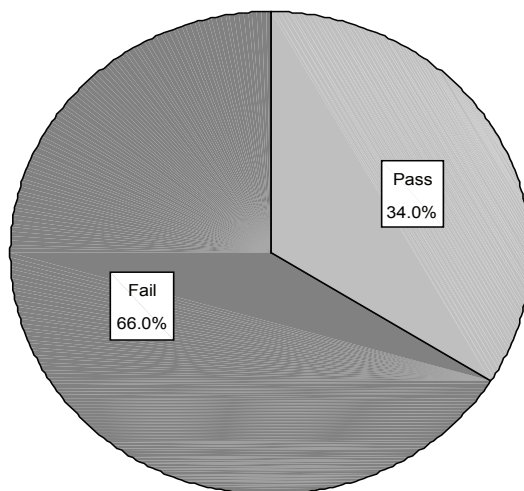
Graph 4.2 Students’ answers to exercise on Adjective Clauses

Graph 4.2 shows that (22%) of the clause correctly whereas (78%) of students combined the adjective them failed to combine them correctly.

Table 4.7Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Noun Clauses

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	17	34.0
Fail	33	66.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that (17) of the correctly whereas (33) of them fail to students combined the noun clauses combine them correctly.



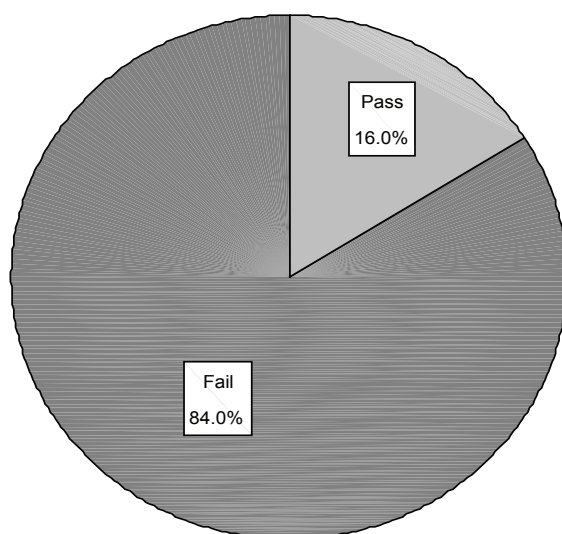
Graph 4.3 Students' answers to exercise on Noun Clauses

Graph 4.3 shows that (34%) of the correctly whereas (66%) of them fail to students combined the noun clauses to combine them correctly.

Table4.8 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Time

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	8	16.0
Fail	42	84.0
Total	50	100.0

A glance at the table above will reveal that the majority of students (42) failed to combine the correct adverb. Only (8) of them combined them correctly.



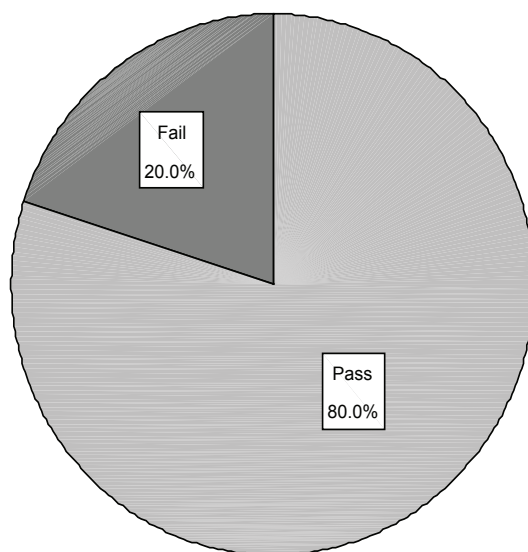
Graph 4.4 Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Time

Graph 4.4 reveals that the majority of students (48%) failed to choose the correct adverb in Ex. 3.3 whereas only (16%) of them choose them correctly.

Table 4.9 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Purpose:

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	40	80.0
Fail	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

This table indicates that students who combined the adverb clause of purpose right are (40) whereas (10) combined them wrong.



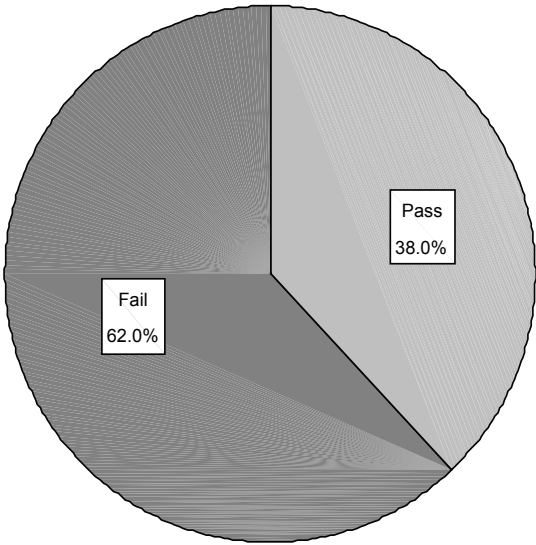
Graph 4.5 Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Purpose

Graph 4.5 indicates that students who passed in combining the adverb clause of purpose are (80%) whereas (20%) failed to combine them.

Table 4.10 Frequency distribution of Students’ answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Cause

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	19	38.0
Fail	31	62.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that (19) of the students combined the adverb clause of cause correctly whereas (31) of them fail to combine them correctly.



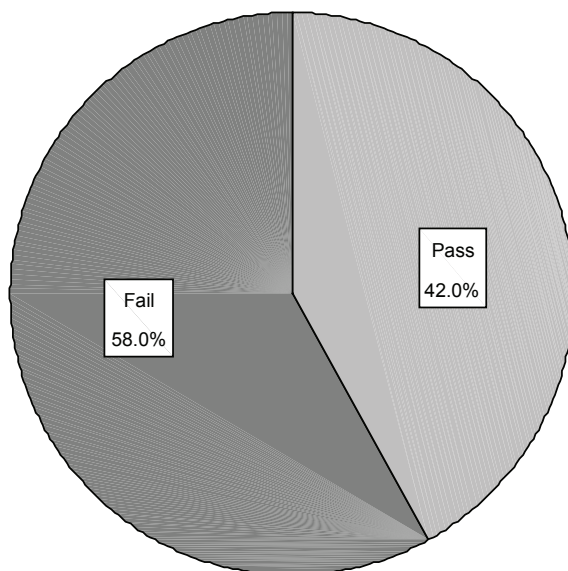
Graph 4.6 Students’ answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Cause

Graph 4.6 shows that (38%) of the students combined the adverb clause of cause correctly whereas (62%) of them failed to combine them correctly.

Table 4.11 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Place

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	21	42.0
Fail	29	58.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that (21) of the students combined the adverb clause of place sentences correctly whereas (29) of them failed.



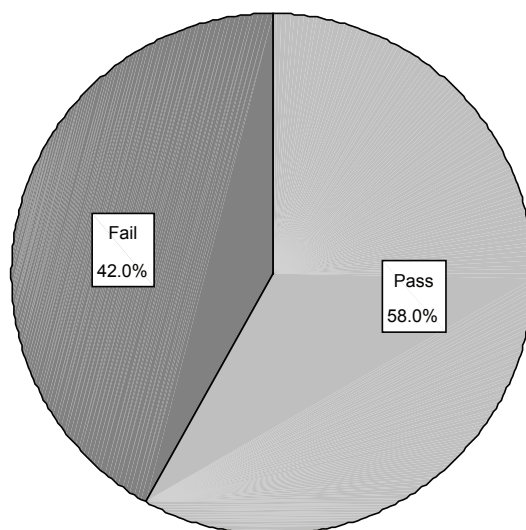
Graph 4.7 Students' answers to the exercise

Graph 4.7 shows that (42%) of the students combined the adverb clause of place sentences correctly whereas (58%) of them fail.

Table 4.12 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Result

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	29	58.0
Fail	21	42.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that (29) of the students combined the adverb clause of result sentences correctly whereas (21) of them failed.



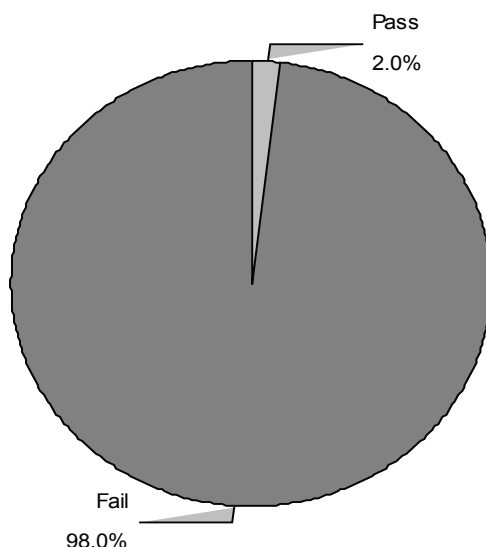
Graph 4.8 Students' answers to the exercise

Graph 4.8 shows that (58%) of the students combine the adverb clause of cause correctly whereas (42%) of them fail to combine them correctly.

Table 4.8 Frequency distribution of students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Condition

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	1	2.0
Fail	49	98.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that only one of the students combine the Adverb clause of Condition sentences correctly whereas (49) of them fail.



Graph 4.9 students' answers to the exercise

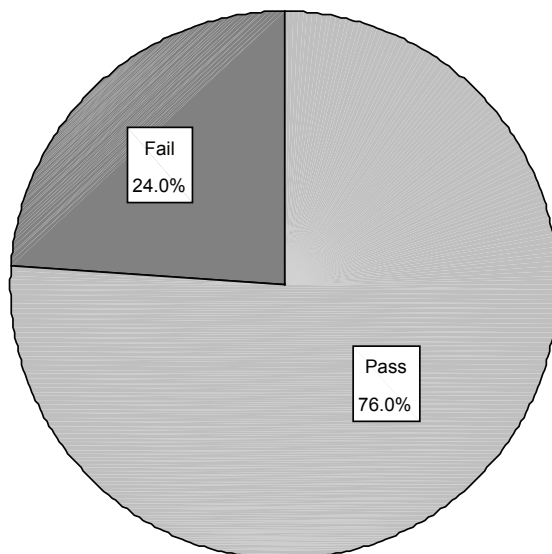
The Graph shows that only (2%) of the students combine the Adverb clause of Condition sentences correctly whereas (98%) of them fail.

Table 4.14 Frequency distribution of Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Concession

Result	Frequency	Percent (%)
Pass	38	76.0
Fail	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

The table shows that only (38) of the students combined the Adverb clause of concession correctly

while (12) of them fail to combine the clauses correctly.



Graph 4.10 Students' answers to exercise on Adverb clause of Concession

The Graph 4.10 shows that only (24%) of the students combined the Adverb clause of concession correctly while (76%) of them

combine the clauses incorrectly.

5.1 Findings

The findings of the data analysis suggest that particular consideration

should be given to the teaching of lexical cohesion when teaching writing. The results discussed in chapter four indicated that despite many years of studying English, some students still may not be capable of producing well-written discourse in English. It is suggested that merely exposing non-native speakers to written academic texts and engaging them in the writing process to encourage their self-expression by focusing on content, organization, and grammar do not help the learners to attain a high level of English proficiency that approximates “near-native”. Moreover, the students, in this study, had a tendency to overuse and misuse some lexical connectives in their writing, which may negatively affect the coherence of the writing. More importantly, the findings suggested the necessity of teaching vocabulary to improve students’ writing. Since the learners’ deficiency in the use of appropriate lexical ties in written texts has been identified, how students make use of these connectors while writing and how they deal with

improper connector usages while writing are issues worthy of note.

An important finding from the present study is that lack of cohesion in writing results from inappropriate use or lack of use of lexical devices. Therefore, to help students overcome lexical problems, it is suggested that students should have a series of exercises to allow them to increase their vocabulary knowledge as well as help them to understand better the semantic boundaries of the words being studied, such as synonyms, antonyms, super-ordinates, and hyponyms. A better understanding of the lexical sense relations between words allows students to use appropriately them to improve cohesion in their writing. The proposed exercises include finding synonyms, antonyms, super-ordinates, and hyponyms, or classifying words into these categories, identifying lexical ties or the lack of them in writing, and finally asking students to create lexical ties. These activities, as Liu emphasizes, are very practical and do not require complex preparation by teachers.

Successful vocabulary teaching and learning is achieved in an ordered and systematic way to prevent misuses and assist retention .

We observed that the students in this study had a tendency to overuse lexical repetition. Therefore, one would suppose that it would be a good idea to encourage the students to use less lexical repetition. This is because inexperienced writers will resort to restating what has already been said when they do not know what else to say. It is illuminated that restricted by limited vocabulary and not knowing how to repeat what had been said in a way that is not clumsy hinder students from using repetition more effectively. Worries concerning repetition are reasonable; nevertheless, advising students to avoid repetition may be harmful if they are not given alternative methods.

Kassala University learners in this study showed limited collocational competence. Lack of collocational knowledge, as Reid (2000) highlighted, makes learners vulnerable to all sorts of lexical and

grammatical errors. Having said that, two important questions arise: What kinds of collocational information do learners need? In what ways can such information facilitate learning? Since the two questions are interrelated, any attempts at answering one are bound to involve issues concerning the other.

To summarize, many L2 learners feel uncomfortable using collocations, yet it is access to collocations that assists them in acquiring near-native like language proficiency. While collocations may be a difficult aspect of vocabulary for teachers to teach and learners to acquire, it is possible to achieve successful results if systematic procedures are adopted. Therefore, researchers stress that collocations need to be integrated with the teaching of vocabulary. Learners need to “notice” collocations and then use them. If teachers could help learners to understand the use of collocations in discourse patterns often enough, such familiarity may lead to confidence in using them eventually. Furthermore,

dictionaries on collocations can foster the development of collocational competence as long as they provide examples, and draw attention to the fine differences between collocations that appear structurally similar. Finally, teachers need to be aware of their students' learning styles and adopt relevant teaching techniques accordingly. By doing this, they can understand the needs of their students and change their methods when necessary. The question remains, however, as to how to achieve these desired goals.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The main aim of the study was to identify how Kassala University students use grammatical and lexical devices in their FL to develop cohesive academic texts. Grammatical and lexical cohesion, an important determiner of establishing text cohesion, were investigated in terms of repetition, reference, derivation, collocation, synonymy, antonymy, and inclusion. To comprehensively investigate the research questions and hypotheses, errors that appeared in

the students' essays were examined. Identifying the types of cohesive errors in ESL essays would help teachers take relevant pedagogical measures to deal with such errors in students' writing.

The findings confirmed some of the hypotheses and revealed that Kassala University students faced difficulties in their writing resulting from insufficient knowledge of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. These difficulties were demonstrated in the form of the lack of connector variety, inappropriate use of connectors, long distance between cohesive items in a chain, and uncertain inference that could lead to several interpretations.

The findings showed that repetition was the most frequently occurring type of lexical device. This coincided with previous research and reflected earlier characterization of FL essays as resorting mainly to repetition to maintain lexical cohesion (Castro, 2004). Lexical repetition is the most frequent type of lexical devices in FL essays because it is governed by few syntactic and pragmatic constraints

and is therefore, easier to use. L2 writers do not favor the use of Repetition allows writers who have synonyms in their essays because little in common with their readers to of their limited lexical knowledge. build up enough shared knowledge to Moreover, the findings showed establish a clear theme. The fact that that Kassala University students did not have sufficient mastery of synonymy, inclusion, and opposites collocations, in particular, phrasal also occurred with relatively low frequency in the essays confirmed verbs and lexical collocations. Connor's (1984) argument that

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