

Finding out the Cohesive Devices Most Frequently Used by Iraqi EFL University Students in Their Monthly Examination Sheets

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ايجاد ادوات الربط التي تستخدم كثيرا من قبل طلاب الجامعات العراقية من المتعلمين للغة الانكليزية في اجوبتهم لامتحانات الشهرية

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المخلص

الربط ضروري في اللغة الانكليزية سواء كلاما او كتابة فالمتحدثون والكتاب يستخدمون انواعا من ادوات الربط لكي يوضحوا العلاقات بين الافكار. يكون النص المترابط بعدة طرق مختلفة. في كتاب (الترايط في اللغة الانكليزية) وضع هاليدي ورقية حسن خمسة أنواع لادوات الربط من شأنها ايجاد الترايط في النصوص: الاشارة والحذف والابدال والربط اللغوي والارتباط. تستخدم أدوات الربط لتوضيح المعنى والتعبير عنه بايجاز.

Section One: Introduction

Cohesion is necessary in both spoken and written English. Speakers and writers use a variety of cohesive devices to link or clarify the relationships among ideas. A cohesive text is created in many different ways. In *Cohesion in English*, M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan identify five general categories of cohesive devices that create coherence in texts: reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion and conjunction. Cohesive devices are used to keep the meaning clear and to express it more economically.

Cohesive devices are taught at the Iraqi universities through out the four years of their study at the university. And students are often advised to use these devices to make their writings more cohesive and thus clearer and more economic.

The purpose of this paper is to show how and which cohesive device used by the EFL students in their monthly examination sheets. The monthly examination sheets are chosen in stead of having a test for a reason: that is, if the students use the cohesive devices, they are using it while thinking of something else, that is the topic of the original exam. This is preferred for applying a test because in the case of a test the students will be having the cohesive devices in mind while writing.

The study tries to answer the following questions:

- 3- Do students of Iraqi EFL university learners use the different cohesive devices or not?
- 4- If yes, do they use it correctly?
- 5- Which cohesive device is most frequently used.

Within this aim, a number forty monthly examination sheets in different courses for students in their fourth studying year are analyzed.

The result show that in most cases the cohesive devices are used by the students but they use reference and conjuncts especially personal reference and demonstrative reference. While nominal and clausal ellipsis are totally ignored. The other cohesive devices: ellipsis, verbal substitution and lexical cohesion are ignored.

Section Two:

Theoretical Background

2-1 Definition of Cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:4), cohesion is a semantic concept that refers to relations of meaning that exists within the text and define it as a text. Gramley (1992:183) adds that it occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse dependent on that of another. In grammar, cohesion is a grammatical unit that refers to a defining property of the word known as cohesiveness (Crystal; 2003:77) . according to Yule (1985:140), cohesion means ties and connections that exist within the text. Cohesive ties give valuable information about how speakers/ writers organize and structure their text as well as the constraints and conventions they follow in this process.

Finally, Curse (2006:25) states that cohesion is a matter of form and concerns ways of linking one piece of language to another.

2-2 Cohesive Devices

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:5-6), there are five kinds of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjuncts and lexical cohesion.

2-2-1 Reference

Referential forms are the forms which "instead of being interpreted semantically in their own right... make reference to something else for their interpretation". Johnson (2002:101) agrees with Brown and Yule (1983:192) in saying that an item in one sentence is encoded by referring to another portion in another sentence.

For readers/listeners to interpret that item, they have to look for portion elsewhere for the interpretation. What characterized this particular type of cohesion is the specific nature of the information that is signaled to be retrieval, for example:

1- *Three blind mice, see how they run*

In '*see how they run*', '*they*' mean not merely 'three blind mice' but the same three blind mice we have just been talking about.(Halliday and Hasan: 1976:31).

There are two types of reference: endophora and exophora.

A- Exophora

It is outside the text so it is called exophoric reference, for example:

2- *for he's a jolly good fellow (context of situation)*

3- *and so say all of us.*

Here the text is not indicating "who is *he*?" But "*he*" can be recognized by the situation in which the expression is used. They are not source of cohesion because their presupposition cannot be resolved within the text rather the presupposition is found outside the text.

B- Endophora

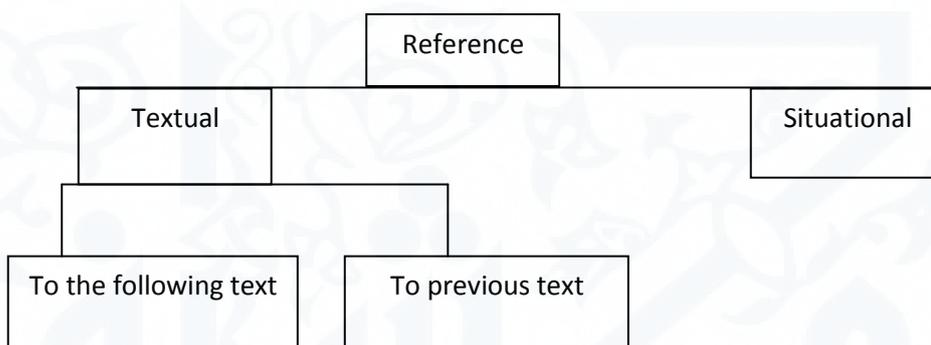
If the identity of reference exists within the text, the reference is endophora or (textual). It is either anaphora referring to preceding text, or cataphora referring to following text. (Widdowson;1978:47).

Thus to take an example, the pronoun '*he*' functions anaphorically in (4) below:

4- *When the prime minister was on his way to Romania, he astonished this advisers.*

But is is cataphora in (5) below:

5- *When he was on his way to Romania, the prime minister astonished his advisers.*



The distribution of reference is necessary to evaluate whether the text in question is self-contained by its internal reference or uses external reference (culture specific or real world reference) (McCarthy;1991:42).

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976:37) there are three type of reference: personal, demonstrative and comparative.

2-2-1-1 Personal Reference

It is the major source of reference. It includes three classes: personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns. These form the system or person. They refer to relevant person or thing by specifying its role in the speech situation (ibid:44). For example:

6- *There was a brief note from Susan. She just said. "I am not coming home this weekend".*

In example (6) above, we have personal pronoun '*she*' referring to '*Susan*'. (ibid:48-49).

7- *I know Red and Handly well. They are painters.* (Leech and Svartvik; 1996:185).

In the above example, we have the personal pronoun '*they*' to refer to '*Red*' and '*Handly*'.

2-2-1-2 Demonstrative Reference

It is a semantic category. We have class of proximity (*near, far, the, here, there, this, that, these and those*). It is essentially a form of verbal meaning. The speaker identifies or points out the referent by locating it on a scale of proximity, for example:

8- *These are my favorites and those are my favorites too.* (Halliday and Hasan; 1976:59-60).

2-2-1-3 Comparative Reference

It includes reference indirectly in terms of identity or similarity. There are two types of comparison are given: general and particular:

1- General Comparison

Here things are compared to show likeness or unlikeness without considering any particular property. Likeness or unlikeness is referential property as something can be liked something else, for example:

9- *It is the same cat as the one we saw yesterday*

2- Particular Comparison

Here comparison is made on the scale of quality or quantity. For example:

10- *It is a matter of degree, compare things on this scale*

In other words, we can say it expresses the comparability between things, for example:

11- *We are demanding higher living standard.* (ibid:82).

2-2-2 Substitution

Substitution is defined as a process of replacing a word or more by a substitute. It is used to avoid repetition of previous expressions or words. Also it is used when the meaning is so clear from the substitution so no need for words to be repeated. (Swan, 1995: 567). For example:

12- *Labour voted the proposals and the Liberals voted for the proposals too.*

Here is the same sentence with substitution:

13- *Labour voted for the proposals and the Liberal did too.*

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976:91) substitution is a grammatical relation in wording rather than meaning. The substitute elements must have the same structural function as the elements they substitute. There are three types of substitution: nominal, verbal and clausal.

2-2-2-1 Nominal Substitution

It is identified by the use of (*one, ones, and the same*). They function as head in the nominal group and substitute only those items that function as head of the nominal group. The nominal group with the substitute have not the same meaning as the presuppose nominal group. Same redefinitions are always carried by a defining modifier in the substitute item, for example:

14- *Those apples are tasty. Do you need some fresh ones?*

Yes, Mary sounded the same. (ibid:105)

In example (14) above, the nominal substitution is shown in the use of '*ones and the same*'.

2-2-2-2 Verbal Substitution

It is characterized by the use of '*do*' functioning as a head in verbal group and occupying the final position in the verbal group. For example:

15- *He never really succeeded in his ambition. He might have done one felt, had it not been for the restlessness of his nature.*

In example (15) above '*done*' serves as a cohesive device linking the two sentences. (ibid:114).

According to Swan (1995: 567), '*do so*' and '*do it/that*' can be used as substitution to avoid repetition, for example:

16- *I asked him to give me a contrast, but he wasn't prepared to do so.*

2-2-2-3 Clausal Substitution

The presupposed element is the entire clause and the contrasting element outside the clause. There are three environments of clause substitution: report, condition and modality. In such environments, substitution may be positive represented by '*so*' or negative represented by '*not*'.

A. Substitution for Reported Clauses

Report is the same as the concept of (direct and indirect speech). It is always declarative. Substitution is not used with imperative or interrogative, thus substitution cannot occur after such verbs like *wonder*, *order* or *ask*. Report is frequent in the first person singular and impersonal, for example:

17- *They've failed, then?*

18- a. *Has Ivan gone home?*

b. *I think so/ I hope so/ I suppose so* (Leech and Svartbid; 1996:189)

B. Substitution for Conditional Clause

This is a substitution of conditional structure with '*so*' or '*not*' following '*if*' or other expressions, such as '*assuming so*', '*supposing so*', etc. for example:

19- *Every one seems to think he's guilty. If so, no doubt, he'll offer to resign.*

C. Substitution for Modalized Clause

Modality means speaker's test of the possibility expressed in the situation. It may be expressed by modal verbs, such as *will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, *is to* and *ought to* or by modal adverbs like *perhaps*, *possibly*, *probably*, *certainly* and *surely*. In the latter group, those expressing certainty do not accept substitution in the positive case, but they do in the negative, for example:

20- a. *May I give you a slice" she said taking up a knife and fork and looking from one Queen to another.*

b. *Certainly not, the red Queen said.* (Halliday and Hassan; 1976:135).

2-2-3 Ellipsis

This relation expresses the familiar notion of something left unsaid, but it is understood never less (ibid:124). According to Quirk (1991:255) ellipsis is a grammatical omission.

In ellipsis the actual word or words that are implied must be exactly recoverable if grammatical sentence is missing. For example, the marker *to* occurs in (21) below without the infinitive which is normally introduced:

21- *If he works hard, I won't have to.*

When ellipsis is used, the meaning must not be changed, thus the following example is not elliptical at all:

22- *The poor need more help* (ibid:225).

Though *the poor* refers to people, if a word as *people* is added, the meaning will be changed. '*The poor people*' has specific reference to a particular group of people, where as '*the poor*' has a generic reference.

2-2-3-1 Verbal Ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis is the omission within the verb group presupposed one or more words in the preceding verbal group. The structure in itself cannot resolve the omission. A verbal group in which all the systematic features (positive, negative, finite, non-finite, present or past) are expressed is not elliptical. Verbal ellipsis can be of two types lexical and operator. (Halliday and Hassan; 1976:167).

- 1- Lexical Ellipsis occurs when the main verb is missing. It is something from the right.
- 2- Operator ellipsis occurs when the main verb is missing from verbal group. For example:
- 23- a. *Have you been swimming?*
b. *Yes, I have.*
- 24- a. *What are you doing?*
b. *Swimming* (ibid:170).

2-2-3-2 Nominal Ellipsis

The head noun denoted by individual or class is not expressed, and one of the other elements such as deictic, enumerative, epithet or classifier functions as head, such as:

- 25- a. *Which has longer, the curved roads of the straight roads?*
b. *The straight are less likely to break.*
- 26- *Although Helen is the oldest girl in the class, Julie is the tallest.* (Quirk; 1991:257).

2-2-3-3 Clausal Ellipsis

A clause is an expression of speech functioning as a statement, question or response. It has two parts: a model element (subject+finite) and a prepositional element (residue) for example:

- 27- a. *Are you coming?*
b. *Yes* (Halliday and Hassan; 1976:208)
- 28- a. *We are bound to win the prize some day.*
b. *Yes, but when?* (Quirk; 1991: 261).

2-2-4 Conjuncts

Conjuncts are defined as terms used in grammatical classification of words and morphemes to refer to an expression that joins linguistic units such as:

- 29- *The committee decided to continue with its arrangement.*
- 30- *Morgan, however, left London on the midnight train.*

In the above examples the conjunct '*however*' indicates the relationship between the two sentences (Widdowson; 1978:30).

Considerable attention is given to conjuncts by applied linguists and text analysts. They are style-sensitive devices referring (as signals of textual cohesion) to the way speakers and writers arrange information in discourse, and the constraints that control this process (ibid:133).

According to Conner (1996:49) conjuncts help to notice how texts are recognized and how various parts of the text are linked together functionally and semantically.

Halliday and Hassan (1976:249) refer to conjuncts by using terms connectives, conjunctions as they are coordinate extended to operate between sentence, for example:

- 31- *He was very uncomfortable. Despite this, he fell a sleep.*

'*Despite this*' in example (31) above, is an example of conjunctive expression.

Conjuncts are divided into four kinds: additive, adversative, causal and temporal. The four types are explained in the following example:

- 32- *For the whole day he climbed up the steep mountainside, almost without stopping,*

- a. and *in all this time he met no one* (additive)
- b. so *by night time the valley was far below him.* (causal)
- c. yet *he was hardly aware of being tired.* (adversative).
- d. Then *as dusk fell, he sat down to rest.* (temporal).

2-2-4-1 . Additive

This is text forming component of the semantic system. In general it is a semantic relation. The very relation is expressed by the following elements (*and, or, thus, furthermore, in addition, by the way, that is, for instance, etc.*).

2-2-4-2 Adversative

This relation has the meaning "contrary to the expectation". This expectation is either derived from the content of what is being said or from the communicative process. The relation can be expressed by *nevertheless, only, but, however, on the hand, instead, at the same time, rather, at last, I mean, etc.*

2-2-4-3 Causal

Notions such as (reason, result, purpose) are expressed by this relation. The elements used to express this relation are *so, then, for, this reason, on this bases, in that case, by this, hence, by this respect, etc.*

2-2-4-4 Temporal

This is the relation sequence in successive sentences. This is expressed by the word '*then*'. In addition, sentence may be temporally cohesive not because it stand in a particular time relation to the presupposed sentence, but it indicates the terminal of same sequence relation but also conclusive and summative relations as well. It is expressed by the elements *then, finally, previously, at once, meanwhile, next time, etc.* (ibid; 238-241).

2-2-5 Lexical Cohesion

It is a semantic relation between words. It provides the semantic context for text by giving interpretation to all the elements like words, concepts and sentences (Halliday and Hassan; 1976:285). A text is not seen as a random selection of sentences. Rather, sentences tend to be about the same thing that is the quality of unity. Lexical cohesion does not guarantee unit, but it is a device for creating unit by means of getting the text stick together to function as a whole. Lexical cohesion is divided into two types: reiteration and collocation.

2-2-5-1 Reiteration

The class of general nouns have the same reference as the items they presupposed, usually accompanied by a reference item. It involves the repetition of lexical item, on one hand and use of a general noun to refer back to a lexical item on the other hand.

- 1- The repetition of the same item.
- 2- The use of synonyms.
- 3- The use of superordinate.
- 4- The use of near synonyms.
- 5- The use of general noun (ibid:277-278).

2-2-5-2 Collocation

This relation expressed cohesion by the occurrence of lexical items which stand to each other in the same recognizable lexical – semantic (word-meaning) relation. (ibid:281).

According to Cruse (2006:27), the term collection is used in two main ways. First, it is used to refer to any grammatically well-formed sequence of words that go together without oddness. Second, it is used to refer to a sequence of word that are compositional.

It indicates two relations systemic and non systemic:

- 1- systemic relation is the relation that can be classified in easy way which includes:
 - a. Opposite (complementaries): *boy- girl*
 - b. Antonyms: *male – female*
 - c. Converse: *order – obey*
 - d. Ordered series of lexical items: *north – south*
 - e. Unordered lexical sets: *red – green*
- 2- non-systemic relation. Such relations are the most difficult, in particular from a knowledge base point of view. Lexical items occur in the same lexical environment, that is they occur in similar context and situation. For example, the following words occur in

encounter context (post office, service stamps, pay, leave) or driving situation (priest – church), (citizen – USA), (garden – digging). (ibid).

Section Three:

Practical Study

3-1 Introduction

Based on the theoretical framework presented in the previous section, an expository analysis of some of the students' writings in their monthly exams is being analyzed.

In this section a total number of 40 monthly examination sheets are going to be carefully examined looking for the cohesive devices used in by the fourth year students. The sheets are chosen from different courses in their study.

One may ask why monthly sheets? Why not doing a test? The answer is that when a test the students will have the topic of cohesive devices in their mind while writing and/or answering the questions of the test. This is not preferred because the normal undeliberate use of these devices is being looked for. During monthly examination, students concentrate at the main topic of the exam what ever it is. In this case we can find out whether the students do really make benefit of the cohesive devices in achieving clarity of their texts or not.

3-2 Text Analysis

Going through the sheets of the monthly examination sheets, it was found that the students use the cohesive devices in a way that helps achieving the clarity and cohisivness of the text:

3-2-1 The Use of Reference

Reference is used tremendously by the students comparing it with the other types of cohesion. Starting with personal pronounce which are used a lot by the students and scored a high percentage (42.01%) especially the personal pronounces (*he, she, it*). For example:

- (1) " *The girl* *her hobby*"
- (2) " ... *the man suffer a lot* ... *he*..."
- (3) "*Life can never be*, *it is*"

Demonstrative reference is also one of the devices that is mastered and widely used by the students, even more that the personal reference and its percentage is 47.9% , for example:

- (4) "*Those people who advocate*..."

In the above example, '*those*' is used to refer to certain people.

Anther example shows the use of reference is:

- (5) " *I had one of these old*....."

In this example, the cohesive device used is the demonstrative pronoun '*this*'.

Finally, the third class of reference is comparative reference that scored a much lower percentage than the two previous classes demonstrative and personal. Its percentage is (10.04%). Comparing this percentage with the two types percentage, one can see the difference of the use of each type. For example:

- (6) *Ali's hobby is reading and my hobby is the same.*

Here the comparative reference represented by '*the same*' is used to refer to a similar thing mentioned previously.

Also we have in example (7) below, the use of '*different*' which represents a vice function to the first one '*the same*':

- (7) " *Pain and suffering are different from one*...."

Table (1) The Use of Reference in the Students Monthly Examination Sheets

Type of Reference	Frequency	Percentage
Personal	92	42.01%
Demonstrative	105	47.9%
Comparative	22	10.04%

3-2-2 The Use of Substitution

Turning to another device which is substitution, this device is little used by the students (as shown in table (2) below), though its use is important to avoid repetition. Its total percentage is (4.9%), for example:

(8) *"I think my pain is the worst one...."*

In the above example, "my pain" is substituted with "one" there is no need for repetition.

Nominal substitution scored the higher percentage in use among the other classed of substitution (57.1%).

Verbal substitution scored a lower percentage than the nominal substitution (28.6%). For example:

(9) *"I hate imagination and my father do"*

In example (9) above we have verbal substitution 'do' for a previous function or verb.

Clausal substitution scored just (14.3%). It is rarely used by the students. For example:

(10) *"My favorite hobby is drawing and climbing so"*

Table (2) The Use of Substitution in the Students Monthly Examination Sheets

The type of substitution	Frequency	Percentage
Nominal	12	57.1%
Verbal	6	28.6%
Clausal	3	14.3%

3-2-3 The Use of Ellipsis

The third device is ellipsis, it is, like substitution, used little by the students. Its total percentage is (21%) and one of the types of this device is very little used by students (that is the clausal), it is used only 3 times the percentage is 14.3% . Nominal and verbal ellipsis are used by the students but not a lot. Nominal's percentage is (57.1%) and verbal's percentage is (28.6 %).

(11) *" I am happy if you are.*

(12) *"The big insects and the small are harmful.*

In the two above examples (11 and 12) we have a nominal ellipsis.

(13) *I suffer too much and you.*

In the above example (13) we have verbal ellipsis.

Table (3) The Use of Ellipsis in the Students Monthly Examination Sheets

The type of Ellipsis	Frequency	Percentage
Nominal	3	60%
Verbal	2	40%
Clausal	Zero	0%

3-2-4 The Use of Conjunctions

Conjunctions, the fourth type of cohesion, is also used widely by the students. Additive conjunctions are the most frequently used by the students among other types of conjunctions, especially the two conjunctions *or* and *and*. Its percentage is 38.4%. For example:

(14) *"They fell that pain or suffering ..."*

(15) *" Some of them are useful and others are harmful"*

Causal conjunctions are also used by the students but not as much as the additive. Its percentage is (32.4%). Also we have certain ones concentrated by the students (e.g. *because*, *for* and *so*). Examples are:

(16) *"because I find them interesting and useful"*

(17) *" I hate the insects so I cannot bear....."*

Additive conjunctions scored a lower percentage than the two previous types, additive and causal (17.9%). 'But' is used a lot by the students among the other types of this class. For example:

(18) *"but all my pain can be..."*

The last type of conjunct is temporal, its percentage is (11.1%). (19) is an example of temporal a temporal conjunct used by the students:

(19) " *Then we go to....*"

In the above example we have the conjunct "*then*".

Table (4) The Use of Conjuncts in the Students Monthly Examination Sheets

Conjunct Type	Frequency	Percentage
Additive	45	38.4%
Adversative	21	17.9%
Causal	38	32.5%
Temporal	13	11.1%

3-2-5 The Use of Lexical Cohesion

The last type is lexical cohesion found the monthly examination sheets is the lexical cohesion. Both collection and reiteration types of lexical cohesion are used. There are variant uses of the sub-classes of the two types of lexical cohesion. The total percentage of the appearance of lexical cohesion is (15.02%). Collocation scored percentage more than reiteration but there is no great different in use between them. The percentage of collocation is (56.3%) while the percentage of reiteration is (43.8%).

Table (5) The Use of Lexical Cohesion in the Students Monthly Examination Sheets

Type of Lexical Cohesion	Frequency	Percentage
Collocation	36	56.3%
Reiteration	24	43.8%

In almost all of the sentences in the text, there are instances of the use of '*they, them and the people*' which all refer to the same set of people. For example:

(20) "*He helped the country*"

(21) "*People did not trust him*"

In example (20) the word '*country*' is a subordinate term to '*people*'. Also we have repetition of the word '*people*' in (21) above.

Table (6) below gives a cumulative picture of the cohesive devices used by the students in their writings. It includes the frequency of the cohesive devices and the sub-devices. Also the table shows the percentage of each device in relation to the other devices and the percentage of the sub-devices in relation to its main device.

Table (6) The use of the cohesive devices in students' monthly examination sheets.

Cohesion Devices	Frequency	Percentage	Sub-devices	Total number of words	Percentage
Reference	219	51.4%	Personal	92	42.01%
			Demonstrative	105	47.9%
			Comparative	22	10.04%
Substitution	21	4.9%	Nominal	12	57.1%
			Verbal	6	28.6%
			Clausal	3	14.3%
Ellipsis	5	1.2%	Nominal	3	60%
			Verbal	2	40%
			Clausal	0	0%
Conjuncts	117	27%	Additive	45	38.4%
			Adversative	21	17.9%
			Causal	38	32.5%
			Temporal	13	11.1%
Lexical cohesion	64	15.02	Collocation	36	56.3%
			Reiteration	24	43.8%
Total	426				

Section Four: Conclusion

The present study reveals the following findings:

- 1- Despite the fact that all the writings of the students lack good linkers and contain a lot of grammatical errors, the high percentage of the use of cohesive devices helps in understanding the text.
- 2- The use of ellipsis and substitution is little by the students, these two types of cohesion are more typical of conversation and literary text.
- 3- It is evident that the students have not dominated the use of all the cohesive devices; hence the students have not been able to use a variety of them. Some of the devices that were used lack adequate coordination and sentence links.
- 4- It is noted that students only repeat simple conjunction words, including 'and' and 'also' in additive relation; 'but' and 'on the other hand' in adversative relation, 'so' and 'because' in causal relation, 'when' and 'now' in temporal relation. On the whole quantity of 'that' is the largest.
- 5- Reference and conjuncts are phenomenally used by the students especially personal reference and demonstrative reference.
- 6- Verbal ellipsis, verbal substitution and causal conjunctions are rarely used.
- 7- Nominal and clausal ellipsis, are ignored by students.
- 8- Lexical cohesion is not ignored by students but scarcely used by them.
- 9- Reference is the most frequently used type by the students.

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