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Analysing the Cohesive Devices in the Essays Written by Second-Year English Major Students in the Université de Zinder, Republic of Niger

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyse the cohesive devices in the essays written by second-year major students in the Université de Zinder (henceforth, UZ), Republic of Niger. Eighty students enrolled for the second year in 2020-2021. And they were all taught essay writing by means of the process approach to writing for a period of 10 weeks or so. To collect data for the analysis, the students were assessed at the end of the course; i.e., they were asked to write an argumentative essay on one of the following topics: a) Should students be allowed to use their smart phone in class? b) Modern technology has made the world a better place to live in today. Drawing on the descriptive mixed method research design, this study randomly selected and examined ten of the students' essays: 5 on the first topic and 5 on the second one. The cohesive devices in these essays were first described, identified and classified. Next, the findings were contrastively presented with a view to unravelling and foregrounding the similarities and differences in the students' essays. The findings revealed that the students' texts contain, in varying proportions, such cohesive devices as conjunction, reference and lexical cohesion. Further, they indicated that most of the texts have little explicit conjunctive structure, suggesting a spoken mode. Likewise, they showed that the retrieval of the identity of reference in most of the texts is essentially text-internal. However, there is a lack of consistence and referential harmony in most of the texts, showing either negligence on the writer's side or the writer's lack of knowledge of how to use reference. Again, the findings revealed that all the texts are mainly constructed by means of superordination. But it is noted that there is a loose focus on topic in most of the texts, indicating thus a careless selection of lexical items. Based on the foregoing findings, the study formulates some pedagogical implications of an overt teaching of cohesive devices in an EFL writing class.

Keywords: Cohesive devices, conjunction, essays, lexical cohesion, reference.

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INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Nik *et al.* (2010, pp. 8-9), "Writing is one of the most difficult skills for students [in general and for EFL students in particular] to acquire. Writing is unlike spoken language, as it requires the readers or the audience to understand and interpret what has been written." Eun & Jeon (2009, p. 23) agree with the preceding view and further argue that what has been written need be well-organised if the writer really wants the reader to comprehend and grasp the message communicated. These scholars also add that good organisation implies that the writer has written the material, using coherent and cohesive devices properly. This suggests therefore that the writer needs to be trained on how to organise his/her ideas. Briesmaster & Etchegaray (2017, p. 186) seem to concur with the foregoing view when they claim that "Writing is a productive language skill" in that it requires the writer to have the ability to structure language resources in order to produce a meaningful message. By the expression 'a meaningful message' is meant a message which is internally organised or whose constituent parts cohere to form a unified whole (or a text to borrow Halliday & Hasan's terms).

Halliday & Hasan (1976, p. 1) view a text as "any passage of language, either spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole". It is also considered as a semantic unit; i.e., "the unit of language in use" (*ibid.*). What actually ensures the unity of a text is texture. Halliday and Hasan consider cohesion as what creates texture in text. According to Eggins (1994, p. 88), "cohesion refers to the way we relate or tie together bits of our discourse." For Yule (2010, p. 143), cohesion simply refers to "the ties and connections that exist within texts". Hinkel (2004, p. 279) seems to be in support of the foregoing claims when he holds that "Cohesion refers to the connectivity of ideas in discourse and sentences to one another in text, thus creating the flow of information in a unified way [...]". Halliday and Hasan define cohesion as "the set of possibilities that exist in the language for making text hang together" (*ibid.*, p. 18). The expression 'the set of possibilities' in the preceding quote simply implies cohesive features or devices. Cohesive devices are actually nothing else but text-forming potentials or patterns of meaning (Akogbéto *et al.*, 2015) or "semantic relations of meanings that exist within the text, and that define it as a text" (*ibid.*, p. 4). Drawing on the foregoing, He (2020) posits that cohesion plays an important role in ensuring clarity, appropriateness, and comprehensibility in text. In the same token, Abdul Rahman (2013, p. 1) submits that the mastery of the use

of cohesive devices is a crucial element in effective academic writing, and it is also essential for academic success in any university program where English is the medium of instruction.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) claim that cohesion is partly realised through the patterns of grammar and partly through the patterns of lexis. Hence, they subdivide it into two categories: lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion. Lexical cohesion is a cohesion which is drawn from “vocabulary items- referring and predicating expressions, nouns and verbs [...]” (Fowler, 1986, p. 64). For Eggins (1994, p. 101), “[t]he cohesive resource of lexical relations refers to how the writer/speaker uses lexical items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and event sequences (chains of clauses and sentences) to relate the text consistently to its area of focus or environment.” She further subdivides lexical cohesion into two broad categories: taxonomic lexical relations and expectancy relations. Taxonomic lexical relations occur where one lexical item relates to another through either class/sub-class (e.g. rodent/mouse) or part/whole (e.g. tail/mouse) relations. Words can be related taxonomically either through classification (also called meronymy) or composition. Expectancy relations, as the name implies, occur where there is a predictable relation between an action or a process (verb) and either the doer of that process or the participant effected by it (e.g. hand/take, ride/bicycle, teach/school, doctor/operate, etc.). Grammatical cohesion, on the other hand, is subdivided into four categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction (Eun & Jeon, 2009). This paper is concerned with reference and conjunction in addition to lexical cohesion.

Halliday & Hasan (1976, p. 308) describe reference as “the relation between an element of the text and something else by reference to which it is interpreted in the given instance”. According to Eggins (1994, p. 95), reference simply denotes “how the writer/speaker introduces participants and then keeps track of them once they are in the text.” Eggins (*ibid.*) also holds that the participants involved in a text are of two main types, viz.: presenting and presuming. Presenting reference occurs when the reference is new or unknown to the reader/listener. The reader/listener is not expected to know anything about the participant.

E.g.: “*My friend said he would travel to Agadez to visit his parents*” (*Essay Topic 1 or 2*).

(Obviously, the reader knows nothing about the participant “My friend” because the writer is presenting it to him/her for the first time in the text).

Unlike presenting reference, presuming reference occurs when the referent is already known to the reader/listener. It is presumed that the reader/listener knows the referent the participant refers to.

E.g.: “*And he added that he would buy them some presents*” (*ibid.*).

(If the sentence above is taken as a logical sequence of the text about “My friend”, it can be assumed then that the reader knows, or can establish, who the pronouns “he” and “he” refer to in the text).

Eggins (1994, p. 96) further argues that “[o]nly presuming participants create cohesion in a text, since ties of dependency are constructed between the presuming item and what it refers to (its referent)”. She also explains that the identity of a presuming reference item may be retrieved from two contexts: context of situation and context of culture. When the identity of a presuming reference item is retrieved from the shared context of culture, it is generally referred to as homophoric reference. But when the identity of the presuming reference item is retrieved from the immediate context of situation, it is called exophoric reference. Eggins (*ibid.* 97) further posits that homophoric and exophoric ties do not create cohesion in text, what they do is “contribute to the text’s (situational) coherence”. Cohesion and coherence are actually considered as distinct in the literature. While the former is considered as a property of language, the latter is perceived as a property of people (Yule, 2010, p. 144).

A presuming reference item can also be retrieved from within text. When the identity of a reference item is retrieved from within the text, it is referred to as endophoric reference. Unlike homophoric and exophoric, endophoric reference creates cohesion in text, given that only endophoric ties “create the internal texture of the text” (Eggins, 1994, p. 97).

E.g.: Whenever Aminou travelled to Niamey, he always bought many things for his siblings. (the tokens “he” and “his” have their referent– Aminou– within the text).

According to Eggins (1994), there are three main kinds of endophoric reference, viz.: anaphoric, cataphoric and esphoric. Other minor types of reference include comparative reference; bridging reference and locational reference (see Eggins, 1994, for more details). All the various types of reference outlined by Eggins are explored in this paper. The last type of cohesion considered in this study is conjunction. Conjunction refers to how the writer /speaker creates and expresses logical relationships between the parts of a text (*ibid.*, p. 105). Eggins identifies three kinds of conjunctive relations: elaboration (e.g. in fact), extension (for example, and) and enhancement (for instance, meanwhile). This paper is set against the backdrop of the foregoing theoretical claims. It aims to analyse the cohesive devices in the essays written by second-year English major students in the Université de Zinder (henceforth, UZ), Republic of Niger. Eighty

second-year students actually enrolled the in 2020-2021 academic year were all taught essay writing by means of the process approach to writing for a period of 10 weeks or so. At the end of the writing course, they were tested; i.e., they were asked to write an argumentative essay on one of the two topics below:

- Should students be allowed to use their smart phone in class?
- Modern technology has made the world a better place to live in today.

Ten of the written essays were randomly selected: 5 on the first topic and 5 on the second one. The first 5 essay papers are referred to in the discussion as Set 1 and the other five essay papers as Set 2. This paper draws on the descriptive mixed method research design which consists in describing, identifying and classifying the cohesive devices in the students' essays. The cohesive devices identified are first quantified and tabulated before the findings are contrastively presented with a view to unravelling and foregrounding the similarities and differences in the students' essays. The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What kinds of cohesive device do second-year English major students use in their essays?
- To what extent do these devices contribute to the meaning and the overall quality of their essays?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language educationists and linguists have increasingly explored how ESL and EFL learners develop and use cohesion or cohesive devices in their academic writing. Briesmaster & Etchegaray (2017), for instance, examined the impact of metacognitive training on the development of coherence and cohesion in the writing production of EFL learners at paragraph level. The study was conducted in an 8th grade Chilean public school and the sample population consisted of 19 students who took part in a 9-week class intervention. The study also considered a control group of 10 students who did not receive any special pedagogical intervention. The reason for this was to measure the impact of the metacognition-based intervention on the experimental student group's performance by comparing the progress of the two groups with regards to coherence and cohesion.

To collect data from the students' L2 writing proficiency, one of the researchers (the teacher researcher) used a pre- and post-test test which consisted of the production of one paragraph. The pre- and post-test was graded and the scores were compared with a view to identifying the learners' performance in terms of coherence and cohesion in L2 writing. Further, the data collected were processed by means of SPSS software in which both t-tests for independent samples and repeated measures analysis of variance (rANOVA) were used. From the findings, the researchers reported that the EFL learners improved the metacognitive

procedures they employed when writing in English. They also reported that there was a slight improvement in the learners' use of cohesion in their writing. As a result of the foregoing, they recommended that the EFL classroom should increase opportunities for writing and reflection activities when producing in the L2 within a more extensive intervention.

On the contrary, Siasi (2018) used discourse analysis to investigate the cohesive ties in a student's written text. The text was produced by a student studying English at STKIP PGRI Lubuklinggau. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion, this scholar analysed and evaluated the quality of the student's text. From the analysis, she noted that the student used lexical cohesion, reference and conjunction in the text. Pertaining to lexical cohesion, she noted that the student writer used simple lexical items to convey her ideas but these items were uncontrollably repeated all through the text. The foregoing indicated a writing problem, which was due, in the researcher's view, to the writer's lack of vocabulary and knowledge in writing. In the same token, as the analysis showed, the writer used a limited number of reference items (personal, demonstrative and comparative), most of which were personal pronouns. This denoted once again, in Episiasi's view, the writer's lack of vocabulary and most especially her lack of grammatical awareness. The preceding finding unmistakably suggests that, without the knowledge of grammar, there is no way a writer can structure his/her ideas into a semantic whole. The analysis of conjunctions further revealed that the writer used additive, adversative, causal and temporal conjunctions in her text. However, these conjunctions were not appropriately used. Based on these findings, Episiasi concluded that a student's inappropriate use of cohesive devices in his/her text creates a disorganised text indicative of a writing problem which needs to be addressed by lecturers.

In the same token, Gailea *et al.* (2018) identified the types of cohesive device, frequency of the various types of cohesive device, how the cohesive devices contribute to the meaning of the discussion texts written by fifteen students of twelfth grade at SMAN 1 Pandeglang. They also attempted to find out the cohesive device(s) which constitute(s) a problem for the students. Using the qualitative content analysis research method, the scholars examined the cohesive devices in the students' texts. From the findings, they reported that the texts consist of three types of cohesive device, namely: reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion. In other words, the texts do not comprise substitution and ellipsis. They also noted that reference is the most dominant cohesive device deployed in the texts. It is followed by conjunction and lexical cohesion in that order. The analysis further showed that, in the category of reference, the most used type in the texts is personal pronoun followed respectively by demonstrative pronoun and comparative pronoun.

Again, it indicated that causal conjunction is the most employed type of conjunction in the texts. It is followed by additive, adversative and temporal conjunctions in that order. The study showed too that repetition is the most deployed type of lexical cohesion in the texts. It is followed respectively by antonymy, meronymy, synonymy, hyponymy and collocation. From these findings, these researchers concluded that the students have some difficulties in the usage of conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Emilia *et al.* (2018) also investigated the cohesion of exposition texts written by eleventh graders of a school in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The researchers used a qualitative case study research design, especially text analysis, involving a teacher and 32 students. The students were categorised into low (with the English score 30-50), mid (60-79), and high achievers (80-100) by the teacher. Due to space, only data from six texts were presented and examined. The texts were actually analysed using systemic functional linguistics (SFL), especially in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features, especially those contributing to the cohesion of the texts such as Theme progression and cohesive devices. Pertaining to the findings from cohesion analysis, the scholars noted that all the texts use some simple cohesive devices, namely: reference, lexical cohesion and conjunction. In addition, they reported that the texts are fraught with some inappropriate word choices and grammatical problems, suggesting thus that the students still needed more guidance on academic writing and the use of cohesion, and time to do more research on the topic in focus, to go through the process of writing, as professional writers do, to allow them to create a better text with more elaboration and characteristics of written language with consistency and accuracy.

Likewise, Dossoumou *et al.* (2018) explored coherence and cohesive devices in Beninese EFL learners' written productions. The investigation was carried out in Sèmè Podji Secondary School, Benin Republic, in the academic year 2017-2018. One Senior Secondary School (SS3) class was purposively selected for the study. The class contained sixty (60) learners. To elicit data from the learners, the researchers collected their first-term test papers. Further, they administered a questionnaire to the learners and their teachers. The questionnaire addressed to the learners was meant to find out if they were taught coherence and cohesion, whereas the one addressed to their teachers aimed at collecting information about their writing-teaching practices and opinions on their learners' writing. Out of the sixty test papers collected, only 12 (i.e., 1/5) papers were analysed. This is to say, the cohesive devices employed in the learners' written productions were described, categorised and quantified. From the findings, they inferred that the learners used a total number of 214 reference devices. Out of the 214 reference devices, 176 were personal pronouns and 38

demonstrative pronouns. But there was no obvious use of comparative device in the productions.

Dossoumou *et al.* (2018) also reported that 99 out of the 214 reference items were used correctly even though they were awkwardly positioned in a way that did not contribute to the cohesion of the texts; i.e., either these items were exophoric in nature or a singular reference item was used to refer to a plural referent, etc. After identifying, categorising and quantifying the cohesive devices present in the learners' written productions, the researchers used a coherence-rating scale to check if they contained coherence or not. The coherence-rating scale included five coherence devices, namely: 'effectiveness of introduction and conclusion', 'relevancy to topic', 'elaboration of ideas', 'organisation into paragraphs and 'presence of writer's point of view'. From the findings, they reported that the most used coherence device in the learners' texts was *organisation into paragraphs*, followed by *elaboration of ideas*, *relevancy to the topic* and *presence of the writer's point of view*. The least type of coherence device found in the texts was *effectiveness of introduction and conclusion*. From the foregoing, they inferred that the learners' written productions lacked coherence devices. They then coupled the foregoing findings with data drawn from the questionnaires distributed to the learners and their teachers. As they noted, there was a link between the EFL learners' inability to use coherence and cohesive devices appropriately in their productions and how (and most especially what) they were taught in class. In fact, the analysis indicated that 72.5% of the learners avowed that they have little knowledge about coherence and cohesion and 87% of the teachers admitted that their learners are not good at writing. As the studies reviewed above clearly exude, the use of cohesion or cohesive in academic writing constitutes a major problem for students in general and for EFL students in particular.

ANALYSIS OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN THE TEXTS, AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Analysis of Conjunctive Relations in the Texts

The analysis of conjunctive relations in the texts is carried out based on the keys below:

= elaborating; + extending; × enhancing; explicit conjunctions are given; implicit conjunctions are lexicalised (in parentheses).

Text 1

1=2 (In fact); 3=4 (e.g.); 4=5 Thus; 5×6 Even though; 6×7 Because; 7=8 For example; 8+×9 And then; 9+10 Moreover; 10+11 Also; 15+16 And; 16×17 (So).

Text 2

1×2 In spite of; 2=3 (In fact); 3×4 (Firstly); 4=5 (That is to say); 5×6 (Secondly); 6=7 (e.g.); 7×8 So; 8×9 (Finally); 9×10 (So).

Text 3

1×2 Even though; 2=3 Thus; 3×4 (So); 4×5 In other words; 5×6 (So); 6×7 Although; 7×8 (So); 8+9 In addition; 9+10 In fact; 10×11 (So).

Text 4

1=2 (In fact); 2×3 However; 3×4 Since; 4=5 (e.g.); 5+6 Again; 6+7 In addition; 7+8 (In addition); 8=9 (In fact); 9=10 (e.g.); 10×11 (So); 11=12 (In fact); 12+13 (Also); 13×14 (So); 14×15 Why [That's why].

Text 5

1+2 And; 2=3 (In fact); 3×4 (However); 4×5 (Firstly); 5=6 (e.g.); 6+7 Also; 7×8 (So); 8×9 Secondly; 9=10 (e.g.); 10+11 (In addition); 11×12 (So); 12×13 Thirdly; 13=14 (e.g.); 14×15 (So); 15=16 (In fact); 16×17 (So); 17×18 Even though.

Text 6

1=2 (In fact); 2×3 (So); 3=4 (In fact); 4=5 For example; 5×6 (Then); 6+7 But; 7=8 (In fact); 8=9 (In fact); 9=10 (e.g.); 10×11 (So); 11×12 So.

Text 7

1+2 (Also); 2=3 (e.g.); 3×4 Even though; 4=5 (In fact); 5=6 (e.g.); 6+7 (Also); 7+8 (In addition); 8+9 (In addition); 9=10 (In fact); 10=11 (e.g.); 11=12 (That is to say); 12×13 Then; 13+14 (Also); 14×15 (So); 15+16 (In addition).

Text 8

1=2 (In fact); 2=3 (e.g.); 3=4 (In fact); 4×5 First; 5+6 (Also); 6+7 Also; 7=8 (In fact); 8×9 Second; 9+10 Moreover; 10×11 Last; 11=12 (e.g.); 12×13 (So); 13+14 (And).

Text 9

1×2 (In other words); 2×3 (So); 3×4 First; 4=5 (In fact); 5+6 Moreover; 6+7 (Also); 7×8 Second; 8=9 For example; 9+10 Also; 10×11 Thirdly; 11=12 (e.g.); 12+13 (Also); 13×14 (So).

Text 10

1×2 Even though; 2=3 (In fact); 3=4 (e.g.); 4×5 However; 5×6 (Firstly); 6×7 Second; 7×8 Finally.

The conjunctive relations identified in the texts under study are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Conjunctive Relations in the Texts

Distribution of Conjunctive Relations in the Texts										
Feature	Text1	Text2	Text3	Text4	Text5	Text6	Text7	Text8	Text9	Text10
Elaborating	4	3	2	5	5	6	6	5	3	2
Extending	4	0	1	4	3	1	6	4	4	0
Enhancing	4	6	7	5	9	4	3	4	6	5
Implicit	3	7	4	9	12	8	13	8	7	3
Explicit	9	2	6	5	5	3	2	5	6	4
Number of sentences	17	10	11	15	18	12	16	14	14	8

As the table above clearly exudes, Text 1 contains 12 conjunctive relations, out of which 9 (i.e., 75%) are explicitly stamped. This suggests that this text is somehow well-rehearsed in that it is only in a well-rehearsed written text that one naturally finds such an explicit conjunctive structure. The presence of the 3 (i.e., 25%) implicit conjunctive items in the text, on the contrary, denotes a spoken mode. In fact, the 12 conjunctive elements identified in this text are evenly distributed: 4 (33.33%) elaborating, 4 (33.33%) extending and 4 (33.33%) enhancing. This implies that Text 1 is equally concerned with explaining by restating information in another way, with explaining either through addition (i.e., one sentence adds to the meanings made in another), or variation (i.e., one sentence changes the meanings of another, by contrast or by qualification), and with explaining by stating causes, consequences, conditions or concessions, time, etc. As elaboration is an internal (rhetorical) conjunctive relation, its use in this text is indicative of a written mode. The table also shows that Table 2

comprises 9 conjunctive relations in total, out of which 7 (i.e., 77.77%) are implicitly stamped. This clearly suggests that this text, unlike Text 1, has little explicit conjunctive structure, which is suggestive of a spoken mode. The dominant category of conjunction identified in the text is enhancing. In fact, 6 (i.e., 66.66%) out of the 9 conjunctive elements identified in the text are enhancing. The predominant use of enhancing conjunctive relations in this text denotes that the text is much more concerned with explaining by stating causes, consequences, conditions or concessions, time, etc. The remaining 3 (i.e., 33.33%) conjunctive items used in the text are all elaborating, and their use indicates that the text is internally or rhetorically structured to some extent. And this points to a written mode.

In addition, the table reveals that Text 3 contains a more even implicit/explicit distribution of conjunctive relations. In fact, there are 10 conjunctive elements in the text distributed as follows: 4 (i.e., 40%)

implicit and 6 (i.e., 60%) explicit. The dominance of explicit conjunctive relations suggests that this text's structure is well-planned. Also, with the dominant conjunctive category being enhancing (7/10 [i.e., 70%] conjunctive items), this text is built mainly to explain by stating causes, consequences, conditions or concessions, time, etc. In Text 4, on the contrary, we count 14 conjunctive relations, out of which 9 (i.e., 64.28%) are implicitly stamped, suggesting thus a spoken mode. The 14 conjunctive elements in the text are distributed unevenly: 5 (i.e., 35.71%) elaborating, 4 (i.e., 28.57%) extending and 5 (i.e., 35.71%) enhancing. Likewise, we notice the dominance of implicit conjunctive relations in Text 5. The text counts 17 conjunctive items, out of which 12 (i.e., 70.58%) are implicit. The dominant conjunctive category here is enhancing (9/17 [i.e., 52.94%]). This exudes that the text is primarily constructed to explain by stating causes, consequences, conditions or concessions, time, etc.

In the same token, Text 6 has little explicit conjunctive structure. It contains all in all 11 conjunctive relations, out of which only 3 (i.e., 27.27%) are explicitly stamped. The dominant conjunctive type being elaborating (6/11 [i.e., 54.54%]), this text is mainly concerned with explaining by restating information in another way. Similarly, Text 7 includes little explicit conjunctive structure. There are 15 conjunctive elements in this text, out of which only 2 (i.e., 13.33%) are explicitly stamped. The 15 conjunctive items are not distributed evenly: 6 (i.e., 40%) elaborating, 6 (i.e., 40%) extending and 3 (i.e., 20%) enhancing. Unlike in Texts 4-7, in Text 8, we notice a fairly balanced distribution of conjunctive relations. The text comprises 13 conjunctive relations distributed as follows: 8 (i.e., 61.53%) implicit and 5 (i.e., 38.46%) explicit. The dominance of implicit conjunctive relations is indicative of a spoken mode. The dominant conjunctive category here is elaborating (5/13 [i.e., 38.46%]), suggesting that the text is much more concerned with explaining by restating information in another way. Texts 9 and 10 seem to have a fairly balanced distribution of conjunctive relations too. In Text 9, for instance, we count 13 conjunctive items distributed as follows: 7 (i.e., 53.84%) implicit and 6 (46.16%) explicit. The dominance of implicit conjunctive items denotes a spoken mode. With the dominant conjunctive category being enhancing (6/13 [i.e., 46.15%]), this text is constructed to explain by stating causes, consequences, conditions or concessions, time, etc. In Text 10, we see that there are 7 conjunctive relations distributed as follows: 3 (i.e., 42.86%) implicit and 4 (57.14%) explicit. The dominance of explicit conjunctive relations here is indicative of a well-rehearsed written text. The dominant conjunctive type is enhancing (5/7 [i.e., 71.43%]), suggesting thus that the text is much more concerned with explaining by restating information in another way.

Analysis of Reference Chains in the Texts

Ties are anaphoric unless otherwise indicated with the keys below:

C: cataphoric; S: esphoric; P: comparative; L: locational; B: bridging; H: homophoric; X: exophoric.

Text 1

(1) Cell phones- (2) It- (4) it- it- (5) it- (7) it- (9) it; (1) our life (H); (2) students- their work- (3) their study- (4) them- (5) their stud[y]ing- (7) them- (8) their teachers- them- they- they- (9) their lesson- (10) they- (11) some of them- (12) they- (13) they- their lesson- they- (14) their brains- they- themselves- (15) they- (16) they- their study; (6) the study (H); (15) using cell phones for students in class- it; (17) the world (H).

Text 2

(1) Cell phone- (2) it's [its]- it- it; (1) people- their interactions; (2) students- them- their academy- (15) their research- (6) their mind- (8) himself- him- his reading- (9) their handout- they- their cellphone [cell phone]; (9) the pictures of the handout (H)- it; (10) we- we; (10) the use of cell phone for the students in class (H)- it's [its] importance; (10) the negative [aspects] of this use (H); (10) it (B) ("it" bridges its reference from "...the use of cell phone...").

Text 3

(1) Cell phones- (3) it- (4) it- (6) it- (10) it- it; (2) the students (H)- them- their cell phones- (4) their study- them- their academic [studies]- (5) their own research- (9) their own business; (10) their own business- it.

Text 4

(1) Cell phone- (2) it- (3) it- (12) it- (13) It- (14) it- it; (3) the life of students in class (H); (4) [a] student- (5) He- he- he- his lessons- (6) his lessons- he- he- his cell phone- (7) he- he- (9) He- his own mind- (10) he- (11) he- him- him; (6) the pictures of his lessons (H); (12) the mind of [a] student (H); (13) someone- his life; (15) it (B) ("it" bridges its reference from "I can say...").

Text 5

(1) Cell phone- (7) it- (9) it- (10) It- (12) it- (16) it- (18) it; (2) some students- (3) their study- (7) them- their lecturers- (10) their researches- (12) their lesson...- their cell phone- their hand out [handout]; (11) the lecturer (H)- he; (11) something- it; (14) your cell phone (X)- you- your- you; (15) the permission of the lecturer (H); (16) some- others.

Text 6

(1) we- (4) we- we- (5) we- ourselves- (6) I- I- my great mother- (11) we- (12) we; (6) our time (H); (6) you- you- you; (7) you (X)- your pelerinag [pilgrimage]- you- (10) you- your friends or brothers- you- you- you- your house; (10) people- their rooms.

Text 7

(1) Modern technology- (2) It- (3) It- (4) it- (6) It- (7) It- (8) It- (11) It- (14) It- (16) It; (7) people- they; (9) you (X); (13) many people- they- their rooms/homes; (14) people- their pactures [factures meaning bills in English]... of Nigelec or SEEN (H).

Text 8

(2) modern technology- (3) It- it- (6) It- (8) it; (4) people- they- their country; (5) This (B) (“This” bridges its reference from “First modern technology...”); (6) students- they- their cell phones- (7) them- them; (7) This (“This” bridges its reference from “It also helps...”); (8) many people- their product- they- their rooms- (9) them- their time; (9) These (“These” bridges its reference from “Second, it helps ...”); (11) many

people- their working places; (12) many companies and some working places- their; (12) workers- their homes; (14) I- my; (14) you (X).

Text 9

(1) Technology- (2) It; (1) life- it; (2) people- their lives; (3) we- (8) us- (9) we- we- we- our cellphones [cell phones] and computers- (10) us- (12) we- (13) we- (14) we; (2) the simple conditions (H); (5) your bed (X)- (6) you- (7) you- you- (12) you- you; the present world (H).

Text 10

(2) modern technology- it- (6) its territories- (7) it- it; (3) Human being- he- him- (4) he; (5) the world (H)- it.

The reference chains identified in the texts are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Reference Chains in the Texts

Feature	Distribution of Reference Chains in the Texts									
	Text1	Text2	Text3	Text4	Text5	Text 6	Text7	Text8	Text 9	Text10
N° of head items	3	6	3	3	5	4	4	7	5	3
N° of major participant chains (3+ items)	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	2
Head items of longest chains (N° of items in chains)	Cell phones (7) & student s (23)	Cell phone (4) & student s (11)	Cell phones (6) & the student s (8)	Cell phone (7) & studen t (17)	Cell phone (7) & some student s (8)	we (10) & you (12)	Modern technolog y (10) & many people (3)	modern technolog y (5) & many people (6)	we (10) & your bed (6)	modern technolog y (5) & Human being (4)
Homophoric	3	3	1	3	2	0	1	0	2	1
Exophoric	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Cataphoric	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Esphoric	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bridging	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0
No. of sentences	17	10	11	15	18	12	16	14	14	8

Table 2 clearly shows that there is little or no major difference in the number of reference chains the ten texts under study contain. It also reveals that the texts contain 2 major participant chains including 3 or more items. Recall that Texts 1-5 (Set 1) were written on the same topic while Texts 6-10 (Set 2) on the same topic. As the analysis clearly reveals, the head items of longest chains in Set 1 are similar both in number and type. There are actually two head items in the longest chains: ‘Cell phones & students’ in Text 1, ‘Cell phone & students’ in Text 2, ‘Cell phones & the students’ in Text 3, ‘Cell phone & student’ in Text 4 and ‘Cell phone & some students’ in Text 5. These head items obviously seem to reflect the main focus of the students’ essay-writing question: ‘Students should be

allowed to use cell phones in class. Do you agree or disagree?’ However, the head items structurally differ a bit in that while they are given in the plural form as the case is in Text 1, for instance, they are given in the singular form as the case is in Text 4, for example, or a combination of singular and plural forms as in Text 2. They also differ with regards to the number of times they occur in reference chains. Surprisingly, Text 1 which scored a lower mark compared to Text 4, for example, apparently seems to include the head item ‘Cell phones’ in the same number of chains (7 reference chains) as Text 4 does. But it seems to include the head item ‘students’ in a slightly greater number of reference chains (23 chains) compared to Text 4 still, which perceptibly includes it in 17 chains.

The analysis indicates that the head items of longest chains in Set 2 are similar both in number and type too. In fact, there are two head items in the longest chains: ‘we & you’ in Text 6, ‘Modern technology & many people’ in Text 7, ‘modern technology & many people’ in Text 8, ‘we & your bed’ in Text 9 and ‘modern technology & Human being’ in Text 10. In fact, these head items seem to encode, in varying degrees, the focus of the essay, which is to agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Modern technology has made the world a better place to live in today’. Structurally, these head items appear to look alike. For instance, the head items in Texts 7, 8 and 10 are evidently similar. The ones in Texts 6 and 9 are not an exception either. These head items, however, differ with regards to the number of times they occur in reference chains. Let us illustrate this aspect with Texts 6 and 9. Text 6 scored a lower grade compared to Text 9 but it obviously seems to include the head item ‘we’ in the same number of chains (10 reference chains) as Text 9 does. Nevertheless, it seems to include the head item ‘you’ (the variant of which is ‘your’ in ‘your bed’) in a slightly greater number of reference chains (12 chains) compared to Text 4 still, comprising it in 6 chains. Note that the participants in the two texts are personal and specific, which indicates a spoken mode. Note also that only a small number of personal and specific participants are developed in the two texts, suggesting thus a written mode. While both texts project both the student writer (we) and the addressee (you) somehow, Text 9 seems to maintain consistence far better than Text 6, and this is what contributed to its quality and fairly good grade.

While all the ten texts showcase their head items in a varying number of reference chains, they actually differ with regards to how they maintain what we term here *a referential harmony*; i.e., harmony between the referent and its reference item, in these chains. And this is where Text 4 strikingly stands out in Set 1. For instance, in Text 1 the student writer wrote this: 1. **Cell phones** is very important in our life. 2. **It** can help [help] students in their work.’ In the foregoing example, it is obvious that the referent ‘Cell phones’ and the reference item ‘It’ do not or cannot form a cohesive tie, and this poses a crucial grammatical problem. The problem is that the referent is plural, and as such, it deserves ‘They’ as a reference item in the subsequent clause complex. The foregoing confirms Dossoumou, Mèhouénou & Koukpossi’s (2018) discovery that EFL learners awkwardly positioned reference items in a way that did not contribute to the cohesion of the texts; i.e., either these items were exophoric in nature or a singular reference item was used to refer to a plural referent, etc. In addition, there is a breach of a basic rule of concord here (see 1): **a plural subject goes with a plural verb**. This was actually one of the most common grammatical errors

that most EFL learners made in their written productions (Maignero, Tankari & Allagbé, 2020).

In contrast, consider how the student writer of Text 4 coped with the aforementioned grammatical problem to score a fairly good grade in what follows: 1. [A] **Cell phone** is a means by which people use to communicate. 2. This element plays an important role in the life because it facilitates exchanging between people. 3. However, **it** has an impact in the life of students to use in class for many reasons such [as] cheating being dependent or being lazy.’ As is obvious in the preceding example, the referent ‘[A] Cell phone’ in (1) and its reference item ‘it’ in (3) indisputably form a cohesive tie. The foregoing observation can also be made concerning Set 2. Consider the extract from Text 6: ‘1. Of course **modern technology** has made the world [world] a better place to live. 2. Today [it] is a reality that every body [everybody] knows **the modern technology** has made a world a better place to live in, but how can we know this? 3. This question will be discussed.’ As it appears in the extract, the tokens ‘modern technology’ in (1) and ‘the modern technology’ in (2) are not referentially related. This is to say, though the two tokens visibly constitute a cohesive tie, this tie is independent of reference. And this clearly indicates the writer’s lack of ability to use reference. Another proof of the writer’s lack of ability to use reference is the absence of the token ‘it’ in (3), and this can be highly misleading as it gives one the impression that ‘Today’ is the subject of the clause complex in question.

Further, the ten texts under study are similar and differ with regards to the reference types they contain. Note that all the texts are constructed chiefly by means of endophoric reference, mainly by means of anaphoric reference (more than 50%). Eggins (1994, p. 97) posits that the use of endophoric reference in text ensures its (internal) cohesion. The differences that emerge from the texts actually stem from the student writers’ selection or not from the other types of reference. As the analysis indicates, only Texts 2, 4 and 8 include bridging reference. The use of bridging reference in text, like endophoric reference, contributes to its (internal) cohesion. The analysis also reveals that only Texts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 contain homophoric reference. Again, it shows that only Texts 5, 6, 7, 8 comprise exophoric reference. Eggins (ibid.) argues that the use of homophoric and exophoric ties in text contributes to its (situational) coherence.

Analysis of Lexical Relations in the Texts

Ties are superordination unless otherwise indicated with:

X: expectancy; C: composition

Text 1

(1) Cell phones- (3) cell phone- (5) cell phone- (6) cell phones- (8) cell phones- (15) cell phones- (17); (1) important- (15) important- (16) important; (2) students-

(3) students- (5) students- (6) students- (9) students- (12) student- (15) students; (2) work- (8) work- (12) work- (15) work; (3) study- (4) research- (5) stud[y]ing- (6) study- (13) revise- (16) study; (4) forget- a bad grade (X); (4) have- a good grade (X); (5) classe [class]- (11) class- (15) class; (7) lazy- (16) lazy; (8) give- a work (X); (8) find- a book (X); (9) destroy- knowledge (X); (9) students- have not time to read their lesson (X); (9) read- a book (X); (9) take- a document (X); (10) they (students)- have no time to share something with friends (X); (11) have- a bad grade in examen [exam] (X); 13 they (students)- cannot work or revise their lesson (X); (14) look at- a new words [word] or function (X).

Text 2

(1) Cell phone- (3) cell phone- (4) cell phone- (5) cell phone- (6) cell phone- (7) cell phone- (9) cell phone- (10) cell phone; (1) use- (2) use- (3) use- (7) use- (9) use- use- (10) use- use; (2) students- (3) students- (4) students- (5) students- (6) students- (7) students- (8) students- (9) students- (10) students; (2) class- (10) class; (7) use- cell phones ... (X); (9) students- has [have] not money to by [buy] ... handout (X); (9) they (students)- use ...cellphone [cell phone] to take pictures of the handout (X); (9) use- it (the picture of the handout) during the course (X); (10) forget about- the negative [aspects] of this use (X).

Text 3

(1) Cell phones- (2) cell phone- cell phones- (3) cell phones- (5) cell phones- cell phones- cell phones (7) cell phones- (9) cell phones- (10) cell phone- (11) cell phones; (1) people- (2) people- (5) people- (7) people; (1) people- think (X); (2) students- (5) students- (8) students- (9) students; (3) school- (9) school- (11) school; (2) class- (3) class- (5) class- (9) class; (5) using cell phones- help [helps] students to do... research (X); (5) research- (6) research.

Text 4

(1) Cell phone- (2) This element- (4) cell phone- (6) cell phone- (7) cell phone- (8) cell phone- (12) cell phone- (14) cell phone- (15) cell phone; (3) students- (4) student- (6) student- (7) student- (8) student's- (11) student- (12) student- (13) student- (14) student; (3) class- (14) class- (15) class; (4) cell phone- makes life easy (X); (5) He (a student)- downloads all the answers of the questions (X); [a] student- can take the pictures of his lessons (X); (7) get- a grade (X); (7) he (a student)- cheats (X); (9) he (a student)- types on dictionary (X).

Text 5

(1) Cell phone- (3) cell phones- (4) cell phone- cell phone- (5) cell phone- (6) cell phone- (8) cell phone- (9) cell phones- (11) cell phone- (12) cell phone- (13) cell phone- (14) cell phone- cell phone- (15) cell phone- (16) cell phone- (17) cell phone; (2) students- (3) students- (4) students- students- (5) students- (6)

students- (9) students- (10) students- (11) students- (16) students- (17) student; (4) researching- (5) researching- (10) researching- (12) researches- (17) researches; (7) lecturers- (11) lecturer- (15) lecturer; (8) learned [learn]/practise- some activities or exercises (X); (9) use- cell phones (X); (10) students- not to spend (X); (11) revise- lesson; exercises (X); (13) avoid- spending of money (X); (14) download- something (X).

Text 6

(1) modern technology- (2) modern technology- (5) technology- (8) modern technology- (9) modern technology- (10) technology- (11) modern technology; (1) modern technology- social media (C); (1) worl[d]- (2) world- (8) world- (10) world- (12) world; (2) reality- (4) reality; (4) time- time (5) time- (6) time- (10) time; (4) time- (5) years- (7) hours (C); (5) years- (6) month[s] and months (C); (10) inform- your friends or brothers (X); (10) write- a letter (X); (10) chat with- everybody (X); (10) buy and sell- things from ...rooms (X).

Text 7

(1) Modern technology- (5) Modern technology- (9) new technology- (10) Technology- (15) modern technology; (1) communicating- (4) communication- (5) communication- (8) communication- (15) communication; (1) people- (2) people- (6) people- (11) people- (12) people- (13) people- (14) people- (16) people; (4) communication- (6) Facebook, Twit[t]er, etc.- (7) letters (C); (8) encourage- communication among family members (X); (9) new technology- (11) ATM services (C); (11) many people- work at home (X); (13) many people- buy or sell ... (X); (14) give- people opportunities (X).

Text 8

(1) Modern technology- (2) modern technology- (4) modern technology- (11) modern technology- (12) modern technology- (14) modern technology; (2) world- (4) world- (12) world- (14) world; (4) people- (8) people- (11) people; (3) educational field- (4) education- (13) education; (3) banking- (10) bank- (13) banking; (3) business- (8) business- (13) business; (3) working- (12) working- workers- work; (4) online- (13) online; (5) reducing- the transport and [the] living expenses (X); (6) students- browse and download ... (X); (8) many people- advertise (X); (11) work- at home (X).

Text 9

(1) Technology- (8) New technology- (14) modern technology; (2) people- (3) people- (4) people's- (5) people- (7) people- (11) people- (14) people; (1) Technology- (5) cell phones- radio (6) computer (C); (3) communication- (4) communication- (5) communication; (3) study- (7) studied- (8) study; (3) travelling- (11) travel- (12) go- reach- (13) travel- pass- attend; (5) cell phones- (8) cell phones- cell phones; (5) radio- (7) radio; (5) listen to - radio (X); (5) get-

information (X); (6) computer- (8) computers-computers; (6) download- the newstory [new story] (X); (9) can't buy- cell phones or computers; (13) boat- ship.

Text 10

(1) modern technology- (2) modern technology- (3) modern technology- (4) modern technology- (6) Technology- (7) modern technology- (8) modern technology; (1) dawn- (4) dawn; (1) perspectives- (8) perspective; (1) life on earth- (3) life on earth- (7) life on earth- (8) paradise on earth; (1) new- (3) new- (4) new- (5) new; (2) age- (3) age- age- (5) age; (2) world-

(4) world- (7) world- world- (8) world- world; (2) social network- (7) communicative network- social network; (2) evolution- (8) evolutive; (3) Human being- has always facinated [fashioned] so much life on earth (X); (6) known- unknown; (6) Technology- has made an incredible progress (X); (7) Modern technology- has facilitated so much life on earth (X); (8) modern technology- has made the world a paradise on earth (X).

The lexical relations identified in the texts are tabularized in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Lexical Relations in the Texts

Distribution of Lexical Relations in the Texts										
Feature	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6	Text7	Text8	Text9	Text10
No. of strings (2+ items)	6	3	4	3	5	3	3	7	9	8
No. of major strings (4+ items)	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	5
Lexical items in strings/ all words in text	59/274	37/188	32/279	31/275	50/314	34/320	32/193	36/256	47/295	44/265
Head items of longest Strings (No. of words in strings)	Cell phones (7); student work (7)	Cell phone (8); student use (8)	Cell phone (11); people (4); student (7)	Cell phone (9); student (9)	Cell phone (16); student (11); researching (5)	modern technol ogy (7); world time (5)	Modern technol ogy (5); people (8); commu nicatin g (5)	Modern technol ogy (6); workin g (4)	people (7); travelli ng (7); technol ogy (4)	modern technolo gy (7); world (6); life on earth (4); new (4); age (4)
Meronymy	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	0
Expectancy	12	5	2	5	5	4	4	4	5	4
No. of sentences	17	10	11	15	18	12	16	14	14	8

As it appears in Table 3, there is little difference between Texts 1-5 (Set 1) and Texts 6-10 (Set 2) in terms of the number of lexical strings they comprise. In Set 1, for instance, Texts 2 and 4 contain three lexical strings (consisting of two or more lexical items) each. But these texts differ slightly with regards to the number of major lexical strings (including four or more lexical items) they encompass. While Text 2 has three major strings, Text 4 only contains two. This clearly indicates that one of the lexical strings in Text 4 is short, suggesting thus that this text has a less sustained focus on topic compared to Text 2. In the same vein, Texts 1, 3 and 5 consist of in that order six, four and five lexical strings (containing two or more lexical items). But only four, three and three respectively out of these lexical strings really constitute major strings. This implies that these texts have a relatively more sustained focus on topic. In Set 2, the same observation can be made.

Texts 6 and 7, for instance, have the same number of lexical strings (comprising two or more

lexical items). As the analysis shows, these texts also have the same number of major strings. This suggests that Texts 6 and 7 have a more sustained focus on topic compared to Texts 8, 9 and 10. On the contrary, Texts 8, 9 and 10 have a far greater number of lexical strings (comprising two or more lexical items). However, only few of these lexical strings constitute major strings in Texts 8 and 9. In Text 10 where they seem to constitute a greater number of major strings, the text does not exhibit a sign of a tightness of focus and a careful selection of lexical items. Another proof illustrating and supporting the foregoing claim is the number of lexical items in strings over the total number of words in each text. Apart from Text 1 wherein the number of lexical items in strings is slightly more than 20 per cent, in the rest, it is less than 20 per cent.

In addition, as the table shows, the ten texts hardly differ with regards to the types of lexical relation they contain. Actually, a great proportion of the lexical relations identified in all the texts are of superordination (mainly of repetition). In Set 1 (Texts 1-5), for example,

we notice that the highest repeated lexical item is ‘Cell phones’, whereas in Set 2 (in Texts 6, 7, 8 and 10 precisely), the most repeated lexical item is ‘modern technology’. In Text 9, on the other hand, the most repeated lexical items are ‘people’ and ‘travelling’. Note that the longest strings identified in the texts span the texts. And as such, they can be said to encode the field or area of focus or social activity of the texts (Halliday 1985/1989, Eggins, 1994). The analysis further reveals that the texts differ with regards to meronymy. In fact, meronymy is absent from Texts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10. But it is scantily used in Texts 6, 7 and 9. Unlike meronymy, expectancy relations are identified in all the texts. However they are used in varying proportions in the texts. Some examples of expectancy relations in some of the texts are: (4) forget – a bad grade; (4) have – a good grade (Text 1), (7) use – cell phones; (9) forget about – the negative [aspects] of this use (Text 2); (10) inform- your friends or brothers; (10) write- a letter (Text 6), (8) encourage-communication among family members; (11) many people- work at home (Text 7), etc. As it appears, these expectancy relations serve to encode ideational meanings in the texts.

CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed the cohesive devices in the essays written by second-year major students from UZ. Eighty students actually enrolled for the second year in 2020-2021. And they were all taught essay writing by means of the process approach to writing for a period of 10 weeks or so. To elicit data for the analysis, the students were assessed at the end of the course; i.e., they were asked to write an argumentative essay on one of the following topics: a) Should students be allowed to use their smart phone in class? b) Modern technology has made the world a better place to live in today. Drawing on the descriptive mixed method research design, this study randomly selected and examined ten of the students’ essays: 5 on the first topic and 5 on the second one.

The findings show that the students’ texts contain, in varying proportions, such cohesive devices as conjunction, reference and lexical cohesion. Further, they indicate that most of the texts have little explicit conjunctive structure, suggesting a spoken mode. Likewise, they exude that the retrieval of the identity of reference in most of the texts is essentially text-internal. However, there is a lack of consistence and referential harmony in most of the texts, indicating either negligence on the writer’s side or the writer’s lack of knowledge of how to use reference. Again, the findings indicate that all the texts are mainly constructed by means of superordination. But it is noted that there is a loose focus on topic in most of the texts, indicating thus a careless selection of lexical items. It follows from the foregoing findings to highlight some pedagogical implications of an overt teaching of cohesive devices for/in an EFL writing class. The first pedagogical

implication is that an EFL writing class (whether undergirded by the process approach to writing or the product approach to writing or a combination of both) which incorporates an overt teaching of cohesive devices will unquestionably raise the EFL students’ awareness on how to use these devices to develop and construct coherent and cohesive texts in the English language. This awareness will also guide the students in identifying and distinguishing a text from a non-text across many registers and genres. Second, given the fact that spoken language is similar to and differs from the written one to some extent, teaching EFL learners how to use cohesive devices becomes mandatory as it will help them know the similarities in and the differences between them. To reach this goal, spoken and written texts on the same topics should be repeatedly introduced to EFL students or the students should be repeatedly taught how to write both spoken and written texts on the same topics in the writing class. This will ultimately help the students to avoid sounding more speaking when they write an academic text, for instance, in English.

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