

## **Cohesive Devices Usage in Recount Text: An Analysis on High-Achieving Undergraduate EFL Students**

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### **Abstract**

Writing is crucial for language proficiency, ensuring clarity and flow through cohesion. This study analyzes the use of cohesive devices in recount texts by high-achieving undergraduate EFL students at a university in Kediri. Using discourse analysis, five student writings were examined to determine the frequency and types of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. The findings reveal that references and conjunctions are the primary grammatical devices used, with demonstrative references and temporal conjunctions being most prevalent. Lexical cohesion is mainly achieved through repetition, followed by synonyms, meronyms, and hyponyms. While students effectively use these devices to create coherence, there is a heavy reliance on repetition, indicating a need for more variety in lexical strategies. This study highlights the importance of cohesive devices in writing quality and provides insights for educators to develop targeted interventions to enhance students' writing skills.

**Keywords:** Cohesive Devices, Recount Text, High-Achieving Undergraduate EFL Students, Discourse Analysis

### **Abstrak**

Menulis sangat penting untuk kemahiran berbahasa, memastikan kejelasan dan aliran melalui kohesi. Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan perangkat kohesif dalam teks recount oleh mahasiswa S1 EFL berprestasi di kelas *writing* di salah satu kampus di Kediri. Dengan menggunakan *discourse analysis*, lima tulisan siswa diperiksa untuk menentukan frekuensi dan jenis perangkat kohesif tata bahasa dan leksikal. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa referensi dan konjungsi adalah perangkat tata bahasa utama yang digunakan, dengan referensi demonstratif dan konjungsi temporal menjadi yang paling umum. Kohesi leksikal terutama dicapai melalui pengulangan, diikuti oleh sinonim, meronim, dan hiponim. Meskipun siswa secara efektif menggunakan perangkat ini untuk menciptakan koherensi, terdapat ketergantungan yang besar pada pengulangan, yang mengindikasikan perlunya lebih banyak variasi dalam strategi leksikal. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya perangkat kohesif dalam kualitas tulisan dan memberikan wawasan bagi para pendidik untuk mengembangkan intervensi yang ditargetkan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa.

**Kata kunci:** Perangkat Kohesif, Teks Recount, Mahasiswa S1 EFL Berprestasi, Analisis Wacana

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing has fundamental role on someone's language proficiency. According to Nunan (2003), it is used for conveying thoughts or feelings into written form sentences. One of the crucial writing's parts is cohesion. It is an element that ensures clarity and flow within a text. It refers to the grammatical and lexical linking within a text or sentence that holds it together and gives it meaning. It makes the relationship between different parts of a text clear and comprehensible, aiding the reader in following the writer's line of thought seamlessly. The presence of cohesion in writing is often a marker of higher quality, making the text more accessible and engaging. Grammatical cohesive devices

consist of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. While lexical cohesive devices consist of repetition, synonym, antonym, hyponym, meronym.

This part will discuss about grammatical cohesive devices. The first is reference. It allows someone to determine an item's identity both inside and outside of a text. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) identified four distinct types of reference, namely anaphoric, cataphoric, exophoric, and homophoric. Anaphoric reference is when a word or phrase alludes to a different word or phrase that previously used in the text. e.g.: "*Malang Town Square is a crowded department store in East Java. The mall is located in Malang*". The phrase *the mall* refers backward to the phrase *Malang Town Square* in the previous clause. Then, cataphoric reference refers to the use of one word or phrase to another that is used later in the text. e.g.: "*Here are some advantages of living in a city, first is easy to access healthcare, second is easy to find public transports, third is easy to do business*". The interpretation of word *here* in the first clause goes forward to the other parts in the text.

Exophoric reference looks beyond the text to the situation's context. e.g.: "*In this occasion, let me tell you about the importance of education*". The interpretation of the demonstrative pronoun *this* in the clause goes outside the text to the situation available during the presentation. Next, homophoric reference refers to objects whose identities can be ascertained through reference to broader cultural knowledge. e.g.: "*When we booked a room, the receptionist asked if we wanted a smoking or non-smoking room*". In which the identity of the receptionist is retrieved by reference to the shared cultural knowledge we have and what we expect to find there. All of those references can be identified through the use of demonstrative and personal pronouns. Therefore, this study focuses on investigating grammatical cohesive devices based on demonstrative and personal reference.

The second is substitution. It is when a noun, verb, or clause is replaced with a substitute form, such as "*one/ones*", "*do/does*", or "*so*". These is an example from Platridge (2000) where the word *one* replaces the word *money* as can be seen below:

A: "*I've lost my money.*"

B: "*I get a new one*"

The third is ellipsis. It is a cohesive pattern where a cohesive element is lost but can be found by referring to a previous section of the text. A noun, verb, or clause can all have ellipsis. Below are three instances from Platridge (2000). For example:

A: "*Why didn't you lend him some money?*"

B: "*I didn't have any (money)*"

The fourth is conjunction. It is a cohesive pattern in which phrases, clauses, or sections of a text are joined in ways that express logical-semantic relationship by the use of words, such as *and*, *but*, or *then*. Conjunction comes in various forms. Martin (1992) divided conjunctions into four categories: additive, adversative, temporal, and causal.

The idea of addition is used by additive conjunctives, which include "*and*," "*or*," "*moreover*," "*in addition*," and "*alternatively*". These words can be used in both positive and contrapositive

contexts. Words like "whereas," "but," "on the other hand," "likewise," and "equally" are examples of adversative conjunctives that use the idea of comparison in both positive and negative contexts. Words like "while," "when," "after," "then," and "finally" are examples of temporal conjunctives. Words like "so that," "because," "thus," "therefore," and "in conclusion" are examples of causal conjunctives.

The next part is about lexical cohesion. It is a cohesive pattern in which lexical items in a text are related to one another, especially among content words. Repetition, synonym, antonym, hyponym, meronym, and collocation are the primary forms of lexical cohesion (Paltridge, 2000). Terms that are used again in the text or that have been altered to reflect a tense or number such as "think", "thought", and "thinking" are referred to as repetitions. The relationship between words that have similar meanings, such as "students" and "pupils," is referred to as synonym. Antonym speaks of contrasting or opposing meanings, such as "big" and "small". Classes of lexical items with a "general-specific" or "a type of" relationship such as "dish" and "burger" are referred to as hyponym. Words that have a "whole-part" relationship, such as "handphone" and "battery" or "screen" are said to be meronym.

Several studies on cohesion in writing were done previously. Sari and Putra (2023) investigated the use of cohesive devices in recount texts written by Indonesian EFL students. The study analyzed essays from high-achieving students at several universities, revealing a frequent use of conjunctions and lexical ties to enhance the flow and coherence of their texts. This mastery of cohesive devices significantly contributed to the quality of the recount texts. Then, Anwar and Fitri (2022) conducted a study on the use of cohesive devices in different types of essays, written by Indonesian university students. The research highlighted that high-achieving students employed a broader range of cohesive devices, particularly references and conjunctions, to maintain the coherence of their narratives. The findings suggested that these students were skilled at using cohesive devices to create logical connections between ideas.

Rahmawati and Nugroho (2023) explored the relationship between cohesion and writing quality among Indonesian high school students. Although the study primarily focused on argumentative essays, it provided insights into the use of cohesive devices across different text types, including recount texts. The research found that high-performing students effectively used pronouns and lexical ties to achieve cohesion, which significantly contributed to the overall quality of their writing. Next, Widyastuti and Harahap (2022) examined the use of cohesive devices in narrative essays written by Indonesian EFL students. The research found that students who scored higher utilized a variety of cohesive devices, including conjunctions, references, and lexical ties. These devices helped to enhance the narrative flow and coherence, making the texts more engaging and comprehensible.

Pratama and Wijaya (2023) studied the impact of different instructional methods on the use of cohesive devices in recount texts by Indonesian university students. The research revealed that students exposed to explicit instruction on cohesive devices performed better in using these devices effectively in their writing. This study highlighted the importance of targeted teaching strategies to improve cohesion in students' writing.

This study aims to analyze the frequency and types of cohesive devices of the second-semester students' recount texts in one of the colleges in Kediri. The number of texts that will be analyzed is five which are taken from the top five students with the highest score in the class. Although the previous research has included recount texts among other essay types, there is a need for studies that specifically focus on recount texts. Then, a more detailed analysis of how different cohesive devices are used by high-achieving students in recount texts would be valuable. Hence, the researchers intend to conduct this study with the hope of providing valuable insights for educators to develop targeted interventions that enhance students' writing skills in recount texts.

## **METHOD**

This study employs discourse analysis design. According to Flowerdew (2013), discourse analysis involves structural analysis in which a text or group of texts would be broken down into their component parts. These components, typically identified by their functions or meanings, might be based on topics or speaking turns in spoken discourse, or on paragraphs, sentences, or propositions in written discourse which are more related into technical units (Flowerdew, 2013). The rationale for using discourse analysis lies in the study's focus, that is investigating cohesive devices used on three recount texts written by undergraduate students in an English department. The researchers examine the most commonly used cohesive devices of the five high achieving students.

The five high-achieving students are selected as the participants of the study purposively helped by the writing class lecturer based on students' writing achievement. Moreover, the text analyzed is one of the texts that has been created in one semester of the *writing for general information* class. The researchers analyze the cohesive devices by using the table of cohesion check lists which adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). Some codes are used to identify the data. For the students, they are symbolized with the letter "L" refers to learner and number refers to their writing achievement rank. Meanwhile, for the sentence, it will be coded by using the letter "S" refers to sentence and followed by number which refers to the sentence sequence number in the text. Subsequently, the results are organized into tables and explanations of some important findings will be provided. At last, the researchers interpret the findings and relate them to some relevant previous studies.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study investigates the most common grammatical features that connect ideas in recount texts written by undergraduate students at one of university in Kediri. These features, known as grammatical cohesive devices, typically include reference, conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution, but the study only found references and conjunctions used in the five texts analyzed. In simpler terms, the student essays relied on just two types of grammatical connections to create a smooth flow of ideas. The result can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Grammatical Cohesive Devices Used by the Students

Grammatical Cohesive Devices	Types	N	Percentage (%)
Reference	Personal	63	24.8%
	Demonstrative	96	37.8%
Conjunction	Additive	21	22.1%
	Adversative	10	3.9%
	Causal	12	4.7%
	Temporal	52	54.7%
Ellipsis	-	-	-
Substitution	-	-	-
Total		254	100%

From the table above, there are 254 grammatical cohesive devices used by the students. Reference is the most frequent used with the number of 159 (62.6%). Furthermore, demonstrative reference places as the most used reference with the number of 96 (37.6%). Whereas, in terms of conjunction, it is used 95 times (37.4%) with temporal conjunction placed as the most used conjunction by the students with 52 appearances (54.7%). Here are some examples of grammatical cohesive devices found in the texts.

*Example 1. Personal Reference*

*“That was an unforgettable moment for **me** because **we** used to be the weakest team.”*

(L1, S2)

The sentence above is the second sentence in the text. Personal reference in it shown by the bold words, those are “me” and “we”. The pronoun “me” refers to the writer himself which is mentioned in the previous sentence as “I”. Furthermore, the pronoun “we” refers to the writer and his friends which are mentioned in the first sentence as “my friends and I”.

*Example 2. Demonstrative Reference*

*“**The** match was Liverpool’s match against Real Madrid in 2009.”*

(L2, S2)

The sentence is also the second sentence of the text but it is taken from the student number two. In that sentence, the demonstrative reference shown by the bold word “the” which refers to the phrase “a football match” in the previous sentence. From the two examples above, we can see how reference, a type of grammatical cohesive device, strengthens a text's flow by connecting different elements.

The domination of reference used found in this study is also in line with the findings from Kirana et al. (2020) and Priangan et al. (2020). Furthermore, both of the studies also found that demonstrative reference is the most type of references used by the students.

Hameed (2008) argues that references effectively retrieve previously mentioned information, but for them to function cohesively, they must be clear and identifiable. Demonstrative references, for instance, use words like “the”, “this”, “that”, “here”, and “there” to point to information based on its location in the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) describe demonstrative references as a form of “verbal

pointing" that establishes a "scale of proximity" to the information being referenced. In essence, demonstrative references help readers track information within the text and understand what's being discussed.

The analysis revealed that demonstrative references, particularly the definite article "*the*" were the most frequent grammatical cohesive devices used in the five recount texts. Halliday and Hasan (1976) explain that "the" acts as a definite article, pinpointing specific information within the text. This suggests a deliberate effort by the writers to clarify the information they are presenting, ensuring readers can easily grasp which ideas are being discussed. Furthermore, the consistent use of "*the*" contributes to the overall coherence of the texts by creating a clear connection between related information and ideas.

Meanwhile, in the aspect of conjunction, the most common usage is temporal conjunction, such as *then*, *when*, *after that*, and so on. This shows its own characteristics in recount text writing, which indeed tells about past events that require a coherent chronology of time. Therefore, students are good at applying temporal conjunctions to create cohesiveness in a recount text. The characteristics of the text lead the use of particular conjunctions. Different from the finding of this study, Saputra & Hakim (2020) who investigated cohesive devices use in undergraduate students' argumentative essays found that the most used conjunction is additive while temporal conjunction is the most less used.

Beside investigating students use of grammatical cohesive devices, this study also examines the most frequently used lexical devices (vocabulary choices) that contribute to a text's cohesiveness. These devices include repetition, synonyms, hyponyms (more specific terms), and meronyms (words referring to parts of a whole). However, the analysis of the five recount texts revealed that not all essays utilized every type of lexical cohesive devices. The details of this finding can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Lexical Cohesive Devices Used by the Students

<b>Lexical Cohesive Devices</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Repetition	13	38.2%
Synonymy	9	26.5%
Meronymy	8	23.5%
Hyponymy	4	11.8%
Total	34	100%

From the table above, we can see that repetition is the most lexical cohesive devices used by the students with 13 times of occurrences (38.2%). This is followed by synonym in the second place with 9 times of occurrences (26, 5%) and meronym in the third place with 8 times of occurrences (23.5%). In the last position is hyponym with only 4 times of occurrences (11.8%). In total, there are 34 lexical cohesive devices used by the students. Here are some examples of the lexical cohesive devices found in the text.

*Example 3. Repetition*

*“I watched the **K-wave** program on Trans TV which invited the famous boyband from South Korea, namely **NCT Dream**.”*

(L3, S2)

*“After watching the show, I was interested in finding out more about **NCT Dream**.”*

(L3, S5)

The repetition in the sentences above are indicated by the bold words. It shows how repetition, a lexical cohesive device, strengthens the connection between ideas in a text. In the example, the repeated word "*NCT Dream*", a famous Korean boyband, indicates that it is the central topic of the recount text. This repetition aligns perfectly with the title, "*My Journey to Get to Know NCT*" emphasizing the essay's focus. By repeating "*NCT*" the writer clarifies the main idea for the reader.

This study found that repetition, a type of lexical cohesion that involves repeating words or phrases, was the most common technique used by the writers of the five recount texts. Repetition dominated the use of other lexical cohesive devices like synonyms. This finding aligns with previous research by Kirana et al. (2020), Priangan et al. (2020), and Sidabutar (2021). In essence, repetition involves continuously reiterating a word or phrase throughout the text. This repetition serves two purposes: it strengthens the text's cohesion by emphasizing key information or ideas, and it's a relatively simpler strategy for writers to employ compared to other lexical cohesive devices. Essentially, repetition allows writers to directly reiterate the points they want readers to remember.

*Example 4. Synonymy*

*“I watched a **football** match with my father.”*

(L2, S1)

*“My friend from senior high school invited me to play a **soccer** game.”*

(L2, S4)

Synonymy occurs when lexical items are identical and have the same meaning. Synonymy may not be in the same word class such as "*cheered*" (verb) – "*applause*" (noun) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Synonymy in those sentences showed in bold. The word "*football*" is synonymous with the word "*soccer*". The function of synonymy is to create cohesiveness in the text particularly by avoiding the massive use of repetition. This finding is in line with several studies in similar area which found that unlike repetition, synonym is less used by the students in writing (Kirana, et al., 2020; Priangan, et al., 2020; Sidabutar, 2021).

However, a study from Saputra & Hakim (2020) who investigated high-achieving students writing found that synonym is more used rather than repetition. While the analyzed essays earned A grades, this study suggests the student writers may have overused repetition. Excessive repetition can lead to redundancy, which weakens the writing's quality. Reynolds (1995) recommends replacing

unnecessary repetition with synonyms. However, Hasan (1984) acknowledges that repetition can be a useful tool to create coherence between sentences when used strategically. In other words, the key is finding a balance between avoiding redundancy and using repetition effectively for clarity.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis identified two main types of grammatical cohesive devices: references and conjunctions, with a marked preference for demonstrative references and temporal conjunctions. This preference suggests that students effectively use these devices to maintain a logical flow and ensure clarity in their writing. Furthermore, the examination of lexical cohesive devices indicates that repetition is the most frequently used technique among students, followed by synonyms, meronyms, and hyponyms. This reliance on repetition, while contributing to text cohesion, also points to the need for students to diversify their lexical cohesion strategies to avoid redundancy and enhance writing quality.

The study's findings align with previous research, affirming the importance of cohesive devices in achieving coherence and high-quality writing. However, it also highlights the necessity for targeted instructional strategies to improve students' use of various cohesive devices, thereby enhancing their overall writing skills. By focusing on these aspects, educators can better support students in developing more sophisticated and effective writing techniques. Future research should explore a broader range of text types and student proficiency levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of cohesive device usage.

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