

## Investigating the Problems of Using Grammatical Cohesion Devices in Sudanese EFL Learners' Writing

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates an important area of English language teaching and learning. It examines the present situation of teaching and learning grammatical cohesion devices, the problems students encounter during writing English texts and the learners' proficiency level of writing skills when they are in the final year at university level in Sudan (Alzaeim Alazhari University, Sudan University of science and Technology and Omdurman Islamic University). Thus, this study focuses on the problems facing the students in writing English texts properly using grammatical cohesion devices appropriately at university level. It is firstly hypothesized that Sudanese EFL university students have many problems in writing, most notably, in using grammatical cohesive devices. Secondly, Sudanese EFL university students do not use grammatical cohesion devices appropriately. Thirdly, there is an apparent weakness in Sudanese University students' written work due to their inability to apply grammatical cohesive devices adequately. Finally, Sudanese EFL University students differ to a large degree in achieving grammatical cohesive devices in their texts. To confirm or reject the hypotheses of the study the researcher used one tool; a test for final year students. The sample of the study consisted of 100 students. The data collected from these participants were statistically analyzed and the results were obviously discussed. The results of the study prove that some of the students lack the ability to write appropriately and accurately and some of them don't know the correct use of grammatical cohesion devices so as to write cohesive texts. Moreover, the findings of the study confirm that after using the ways of writing and having background knowledge about cohesive devices, the students attained higher test scores than before.

**Key words:** *cohesion, coherence, ellipsis, substitution, reference and conjunctions.*

### المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقصي قضية مهمة في تدريس وتعلم اللغة الانجليزية. وهي توضيح الوضع الحالي لتدريس وتعلم ادوات الربط النحوية، المشاكل التي تواجه الطلاب عند كتابة النصوص الانجليزية ومستوي كفاءة المتعلمين في مهارة الكتابة عند وصولهم السنة الأخيرة في الجامعات السودانية (جامعة الزعيم الازهري، جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا و جامعة امدرمان الاسلامية). لذا ركزت هذه الدراسة علي المشاكل التي تواجه الطلاب الجامعيين عند كتابة النصوص الانجليزية كتابة جيدة مستخدماً أدوات الربط النحوية بطريقة ملائمة وفعالة. تناولت هذه الدراسة أربعة فرضيات. الفرضية الأولى تقول: الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين الدارسيين للغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية لديهم مشاكل عديدة في الكتابة (أكثر وضوحاً في استخدام أدوات الربط النحوية). الفرضية الثانية: الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين الدارسيين للغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية لا يستخدمون أدوات الربط النحوية بطريقة مناسبة. الفرضية الثالثة: هنالك ضعف واضح في كتابة الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين نسبةً لعدم قدرتهم علي تطبيق ادوات الربط النحوية بطريقة متقنة. الفرضية الرابعة: الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين الدارسيين للغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية يختلفون عن بعضهم البعض بدرجة كبيرة جداً عند تناول أدوات الربط النحوية في كتاباتهم. لتأكيد أو رفض الدراسة؛ استخدم الباحث أداة واحدة: إختبار لطلاب السنة الأخيرة. تكونت عينة الدراسة من (100) طالب. تم تحليل البيانات التي جمعت من هذه العينة بطريقة إحصائية ونوقشت النتائج بوضوح. أثبتت نتائج الدراسة أن بعض الطلاب ليس لديهم القدرة

الكافية لكتابة النصوص كتابية صحيحة و مناسبة و البعض الاخر لايعرف الأستخدام الصحيح لأدوات الربط النحوية. بالأضافة لذلك؛ أكدت نتائج الدراسة التالي: بعد إستخدام طرائق الكتابة والألمام التام بأدوات الربط النحوية قد احرز الطلاب نتائج أفضل من ما سبق.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** التناغم, الترابط, الحذف, التبديل, الاسناد, الروابط

### INTRODUCTION:

Grammatical cohesion plays a vital role in writing texts. Its role in writing texts can be compared to the role of running in the game of football or ice - skating in the game of ice hockey. One cannot play football if one cannot run, and one cannot play ice hockey if one cannot skate. One cannot write a cohesive text in a language unless he / she knows that particular grammatical cohesion devices. If a student's knowledge and awareness of cohesive devices are poor, then his/ her writing will also be poor, and naturally also his/her writing texts. If there were only one aspect of language that learners could study (or that educators could teach), it would invariably be grammatical cohesion. A beloved cohesive device is a friend to nearly every teacher of a language.

Grammatical cohesion is an essential process in learning writing, because where there is little awareness and knowledge of cohesive devices, the texts will be less cohesive. In addition, cohesive devices, mainly grammatical cohesion devices are a highly effective means of extending the command of language. Writing skill is a major skill but it has been given little attention in the mid-sixties, writing for EFL learners is a complex skill that is learnt rather than acquired. Hayes and Flower (1981:55) in their analysis of the complexity of the writing process and its impact on the cognitive level state,

*“Writing is no longer considered a linear evaluation of successive drafts, but recursive articulated development that triggers the process of understanding and creates meanings”*

Thus writing is not an easy task for both EFL learners and even native speakers. EFL learners find it more difficult to write in a language which is not their mother tongue and they do not fully master. Composition writing particularly in a foreign language context is one of the formidable tasks that pose challenge even to advanced learners of English. Mohdy (2003:70-71) confirms,

*“Being learners of English as a foreign language, Sudanese students are poor writers in English”*. EFL Sudanese university students are usually asked to write acceptable texts. These texts vary. They may be notes, compositions, essays, articles or even research papers. The academic success of these students is often evaluated by what they write in papers and texts. Therefore, students who want to study English at university need to write as effectively as possible. Although these students are aware of the rules of grammar and are capable of producing well – formed sentences, they are often unable to produce unified and connected texts. Harris (1964: 35) states,

*“Language does not occur in stray words or sentences but in connected discourse”*

Accordingly, to write effectively and appropriately, EFL Sudanese university students are required to be able to relate and organize thoughts in unified and coherent texts. Thus the effectiveness of the texts lies in both coherence and cohesion. Having said so, the present study will focus on grammatical cohesion devices with regard to the concept cohesion.

## 2. Literature Review:

### 2.1 Reference:

Reference is one of the options used to create surface links between sentences. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 37), the features of reference cannot be semantically interpreted without checking some other features in the text. Similarly, Nunan (1993) confirms that referential cohesion plays a significant role in constructing cohesive ties between the elements which can be difficult, or even impossible to interpret if a single sentence is isolated from context. While pronoun is the most common referring device, there are other linguistic elements used to fulfill the same function, such as demonstratives and comparatives.

Reference can serve exophoric and endophoric functions. Regarding the first one, the reader is required to look out of the text so as to interpret the referent. In other words, through exophoric reference, the reader is directed out of the text towards an assumed world shared between him/ her and the writer (McCarthy 1991: 35) in order to retrieve the meaning of the sentences (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 33). An example of exophoric reference presented by Flower dew (2013: 34), is "... that picture is beautiful" in which that may refer to a picture hanging on the wall. The picture in this example is part of the context of situation, even if it does not appear in the text anywhere else. Although it interacts with the cohesion system and contributes to text coherence, exophoric reference is not incorporated as a component of cohesion since it does not connect two elements together in a text (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Pertaining to endophoric reference, it exists when readers refer to elements within the text itself to recognize it (Brown and Yule 1983). It is categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976:33) into two types: anaphoric and cataphoric. In the first type, readers review previous sentences to discover the referent, such as in the example: "look at the sun. It is going down quickly" (Brown and Yule

1983: 193), where "it" indicates the previously mentioned noun; the sun. In contrast, readers in the second type examine the following sentences to realize the referent, as in the example: "it's going down quickly, the sun", where "it" refers to the subsequently - mentioned noun; the sun.

Referential cohesion is classified by Halliday and Hasan (1976:37) into three sub-categories: personal, demonstrative and comparative. They enable writers to make several references to people and things within a text. Employed to identify people, objects or other things that are mentioned somewhere in the text. Personal reference items include: personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns. In the example: "*wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish*" (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 2), 'them' expresses an anaphoric reference which creates grammatical cohesion between the two sentences and can be interpreted only when readers refer back to the previous text.

Classified as the second type of reference, "demonstrative" is regarded as "...a form of verbal pointing". It is expressed through determiners and adverbs and it is realized by means of location (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 57); i.e. nearness in time, place, occurrence or relation. In the text: "*I like the lions, and I like the polar bears. These are my favorites*" (ibid), these is a demonstrative reference element acting as a grammatical cohesive device, i.e. linking the two sentences and expressing proximity to the speaker by referring to the animals mentioned in the first sentence. As for the definite article "the", which is included in the class of demonstrative reference, it cannot specify anything on its own because it has no content. Though it does not contain information in itself; as it depends on something else in the text, "the" signals definiteness by creating a cohesive link between the sentences it occurs in and the link it refers to (Halliday and Hasan 1976:57).

Regarding comparative, the third type of referential cohesion, Nunan (1993) elucidates that, it is expressed by using adverbs and adjectives in order to compare and contrast items within a text.

### 2.2 Ellipsis:

Cohesive relation of ellipsis is a relation within the text and in almost every case, what is left unsaid is present in the text. In other words, if something is ellipsis, then there is a presupposition in a sentence that something must be understood or reconstructed.

The relation between substitution and ellipsis is very close because it is merely that ellipsis is "substitution" by zero. What is essential in ellipsis is that some elements are omitted from the surface text, but they are still understood. Thus, omission of these elements can be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 142), ellipsis can be categorized into three categories, as illustrated below.

#### 2.2.1 Nominal ellipsis:

Nominal ellipsis means ellipsis within the nominal group, where the omission of nominal group is served a common noun, proper noun or pronoun.

e.g. "My kids practice an awful lot of sport. Both (0) are incredibly energetic". In this example, the omission concerned with "my kids".

#### 2.2.2 Verbal ellipsis:

Refers to ellipsis within the verbal group, where the elliptical verb depends on a preceding verbal group.

E.g. A: have you been working?

B: yes, I have (0).

Here, the omission of the verbal group depends on what is said before and it is concerned with "been working"

#### 2.2.3 Clausal ellipsis:

Clausal ellipsis functions as verbal ellipsis, where the omission refers to a clause.

#### 2.3.2 Verbal substitution:

E.g. A: why did you only set three places?

Paul is staying for dinner, isn't he?

B: Is he? He didn't tell him (0).

In this example the omission falls on the "Paul is staying for dinner".

### 2.3 Substitution:

This is the replacement of one item by another. It is a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning. This implies that as a general rule, the substitute item has some structural functions as that for which it substitutes.

It is important to mention that substitution and reference are different in what and where they operate, thus substitution is concerned with relations related with wording. Whereas reference is concerned with relations related with meaning. Substitution is away to avoid repetition in the text itself; however, reference needs to retrieve its meaning from the situational textual occurrence.

Halliday and Hassan (1976: 89), confirm:

*In terms of the linguistic system, reference is a relation on the semantic level, whereas substitution is a relation on the lexicogrammatical Level, the level of grammar and vocabulary or linguistic form.*

Kennedy (2003) points out there are three types of substitution. These are: nominal, verbal and clausal substitution. Let us analyze and support this statement with the following classification and explanations.

#### 2.3.1 Nominal substitution:

Nominal substitution happens where the noun or a nominal group can be replaced by a noun.

"One"/ "ones" always operate as a head of nominal group.

#### Example:

"There are some new tennis balls in the bat. These ones have lost their bounce". In this example, "tennis balls" is replaced by the item "ones".

Verbal substitution occurs where the verb or a verbal group can be replaced by another verb which is "do". This functions as a head of verbal group, and it is usually placed at the end of the group.

**Example:**

A: Annie says you drink too much.

B: So do you?

Here, "do" substitutes "drink too much".

**2.3.3 clausal substitutions:**

Clausal substitution takes place where a clause can be usually substituted by "so" or "not".

**Example:**

A: It is going to rain.

B: I think so.

In this example, the clause "going to rain" is substituted by "so".

**2.4 Conjunctions:**

Most researchers concur that conjunctions are words that bind a variety of language units together, though they define them a little differently. Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993) consider them as textual markers which facilitate the organization of discourse, whereas Hyland (2005), identifies them as frame markers, such as first, second and next, which are used to sequence information within a discourse.

Likewise, kopple (1985) believes that conjunctions are called text connectives, which are used to link units of a text. Showing relationships between sentences in a text, conjunctive ties are significant devices that make text comprehension proceed more efficiently (Donnelly 1994: 96).

**Halliday and Hassan(1976:226), describe conjunction as follows:**

*In describing conjunction as a cohesive device, We are focusing attention not on the semantic relation as such, as realized throughout the grammar of the language, but on one particular aspect of them, namely the function they have of relating to each other linguistic elements that occur in succession but are not related by other structural means.*

Conjunctions are grammatical cohesive devices that mostly used by EFL learners for the purpose of not just establishing semantic relation within sentences, but for the purpose of joining a variety of language units together as well.

The following table represents Halliday and Hasan,s (1976: 230) classification of conjunctions:

Type of conjunction	Function	Example
Additive	To add more information to what is already there in the sentence.	And, also, furthermore, in addition, besides, that is, in other words, more over. To indicate comparison: likewise, similarly, in the same way. To indicate dissimilarity: on the other hand, in contrast, alternatively.
Adversative	To indicate contrast between information in each clause	But, however, although, yet, though, only, nevertheless, despite this, on the other hand, instead, on the contrary, anyhow, at any rate.
Causal	To indicate causality	So, hence, then, therefore, consequently, because, for this reason, it follows, on this basis, to this end.
Temporal	To indicate time	Then, next, before, after, during, when, at the same time, previously, Finally, at last, soon, next day, an hour later, meanwhile, at this moment, first, second, third, in conclusion, up to now.

Table 4: Types of conjunctions based on Halliday and Hasan (1976: 230), adapted from Almasi & Fullerton (2012: 132).

### 3.1 Methodology

The method selected to be applied in this research is a descriptive analytic one. It includes surveys and facts finding which requires describing the state of the students in using grammatical cohesion devices as it exists at present. This method depends on the collection of data and information which were analyzed and interpreted so as to arrive at acceptable solutions.

The researcher uses this method to define, describe and recognize the problems facing the students in using cohesive devices appropriately at university level. Validity and reliability were shown and confirmed. The subject of the study is consisted of 100 students from three different universities in Sudan.

The researcher used one tool to conduct this study. A test was given to the students in order to assess their performance and describe their current state of learning writing.

No doubt, the researcher could not contact everyone in the population. So he solved this problem by choosing a small and manageable number of people (sampling). So he used simple random sample from the population of students which represented the entire population.

### 3.2 Research Questions:

The following questions are the basic questions upon which the research is conducted:

1. What kind of problems do Sudanese EFL university students of the study encounter in writing?
2. To what extent do Sudanese EFL university Students of the study use grammatical cohesion devices appropriately?
3. To what extent can the weakness of the written work of university students be attributed to the lack of awareness of grammatical cohesion devices?
4. To what degree do Sudanese EFL university students differ in achieving grammatical cohesion devices in their texts?

### 3.3 Research Hypotheses:

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher proposes the following hypotheses:

- 1- Sudanese EFL university students have many problems in writing, most notably in using grammatical cohesive devices.
- 2- Sudanese EFL university students do not use grammatical cohesion devices appropriately.
- 3- There is an apparent weakness in Sudanese University students' written work due to their inability to apply grammatical cohesive devices adequately.
- 4- Sudanese EFL University students differ to a large degree in achieving grammatical cohesion devices in their texts.

### 4. Analysis and discussion of the results obtained by the means of test:

#### 4.1 Exophoric Reference:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	10	10%
Incorrect users	90	90%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.16 Correct versus incorrect use of exophoric reference.

According to the results shown in the above table, only 10% from the entire population of the students who participated in this study use exophoric reference correctly, whereas, 90% of them use it incorrectly. This may lead us to the point that through exophoric reference, the reader

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	52	52%
Incorrect users	48	48%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.17 correct versus incorrect use of endophoric reference (anaphora).

As shown in the above table, only 52% from the entire population of the students who took part in this study use anaphoric reference correctly, while, 48% of them either use it incorrectly or overuse it. The large number of correctly used anaphoric

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	38	38%
Incorrect users	62	62%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.18 Correct versus incorrect use of endophoric reference (cataphora)

According to the results displayed in the above table, it is clear that only less than half of the students use endophoric reference (cataphora) correctly when it comes to writing, whereas, 62% of them use it incorrectly. This may lead us to the

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	17	17%
Incorrect users	83	83%
Total	100	100%

is directed out of the text towards an assumed world shared between him/her and the writer in order to retrieve the meaning of the sentences. That is why they are not familiar with such kind of reference as they are less experienced and poor learners when it comes to writing.

4.2 Endophoric Reference (anaphora):

reference (52%) could be due to systematic form-focused instruction, revision, practice and feedback on cohesion in one of the courses throughout their study. In other words, this might be attributed to the learners' familiarity with this sub-type of reference which is taught in early stages.

fact that cataphoric elements can be interpreted only by looking forward in the text for their interpretation (cataphoric relations). Moreover, as a result of misunderstanding cataphoric relations, learners make a lot of errors when using them.

Table 4.19 Correct versus incorrect use of nominal ellipsis.

Based on the results illustrated in the above table, only 17% from the entire population of the students who took part in this study know how to use nominal ellipsis correctly, whereas, 83% of them do not use it correctly. This could be partially attributed to the lack of proper teaching of nominal

ellipsis and getting enough practice in the form of classroom exercises. As nominal ellipsis is concerned with the omission of a noun or nominal group within the same text, students are not aware of such technique of writing as it poses a great difficulty for them, particularly when dealing with academic writing.

#### 4.5 Verbal Ellipsis:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	13	13%
Incorrect users	87	87%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.20 Correct versus incorrect use of verbal ellipsis.

The above table shows that only a small minority of the students which represents (13%) use verbal ellipsis correctly as they are well trained by their teachers, while, the large majority of the students which represents (87%) use it in an inappropriate

way that changes the intended message or the ideas conveyed by the texts. That is to say learners lack the ability to omit the unnecessary words with concentration on the meaning delivered by the text.

#### 4.6 Clausal Ellipsis:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	27	27%
Incorrect users	73	73%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.21 Correct versus incorrect use of clausal ellipsis.

As clausal ellipsis refers to the omission of a clause within the same text for the sake of conciseness, it is obvious that only 27% from the entire population of the students who participated in this study use clausal ellipsis appropriately and accurately, while, 73% of them do not use it correctly or they

misuse it to the extent that makes the meaning unclear and creates new texts which convey different ideas to the readers. This is due to the lack of having enough practice and being aware of clausal ellipsis when dealing with writing courses

#### 4.7 Nominal Substitution:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	30	30%
Incorrect users	70	70%
Total	100	100%



Table 4.22 Correct versus incorrect use of nominal substitutions

As shown in the above table, only a small minority of the students which represents 30% know how to use nominal substitution appropriately in their writing, whereas, the 4.8 Verbal Substitution:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	27	27%
Incorrect users	73	73%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.23 Correct versus incorrect use of verbal substitutions

The above table shows that the students did not use a remarkable number of verbal substitutions among other cohesive devices to achieve cohesion. The correctly used number of verbal substitution (27%) were far less than the incorrectly used ones (73%). This finding leads us to the process 4.9 Clausal Substitution:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	23	23%
Incorrect users	77	77%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.24 Correct versus incorrect use of clausal substitutions

According to the results displayed in the above table, only 23% from the entire population of the students who took part in this study use clausal substitution accurately, whereas, 77% of them either misuse it or do not use it at all. So, this is a statistically significant result and leads us 4.10 Additive Conjunctions:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	89	89%
Incorrect users	11	11%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.25 Correct versus incorrect use of additive conjunctions

According to the results displayed in the above table, it is clear that the majority of the students who took part in this study use additive conjunctions properly and accurately when it comes to writing academic papers, whereas, a small minority of the students which represents 11% do not use them correctly. These data illustrate

large majority of them (approximately 70%) use it in an inappropriate way. That is to say most of the students misuse nominal substitution as a result of not taking it into consideration while writing their own texts outside the classroom as well as inside.

of making sweeping generalizations about the difficulty of using cohesive ties in EFL writing. That is to say most of the students do have problems in using verbal substitution appropriately as a result of not being aware of and having background knowledge about it.

to the point that most of the students are not familiar with such type of substitution in the same way that they are familiar with others. And this may happen as a result of not giving clausal substitution the same weight as others when teaching and practicing cohesive ties

that additives have a significant relation in their utilization in the research corpus. Thus, the research null hypothesis which shows “there are not any significant differences in the application of additive conjunctions in the research corpus” will be rejected. Moreover, the above table reveals that the first most application of

conjunctions is related to additives, in which the learners significantly use a higher number of additives conjunctions. This might be attributed to three reasons. The first is that additive conjunctions are known to the learners from early stages of studying EFL. The second is intra-lingual

interference; direct translation from L1, as the equivalent of additive conjunctions in Arabic are extensively used in written Arabic expository texts. The third possible reason is that learners might find additive conjunctions more common than other conjunctions.

#### 4.11 Adversative Conjunctions:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	71	71%
Incorrect users	29	29%
Total	100	100

Table 4.26 Correct versus incorrect use of adversative conjunctions

According to the results presented in table(4.26), most of the learners relied heavily on the application of adversative conjunctions in their writing (approximately 71%) to establish cohesive relations between sentences, whereas, 29% of them do not rely neither heavily nor slightly on the application of adversative conjunctions while writing. So, this is statistically significant result and leads us to the conclusion that there are differences in the utilization of adversatives in the research corpus, but those who use them

correctly are far more than those who do not use them. Therefore, the research null hypothesis which states that “Sudanese EFL learners do not use grammatical cohesive devices appropriately” will be rejected partially. In addition, as far as the use of adversatives is concerned, Sudanese EFL learners report higher extent of adversatives application. Thus, learners in general may also need to resort to adversative conjunctions as grammatical cohesive devices to write cohesively.

#### 4.12 Clausal Conjunctions:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	51	51%
Incorrect users	49	49%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.27 Correct versus incorrect use of clausal conjunctions

As shown in the above table, only 51% from the entire population of the students who participated in this study use clausal conjunctions appropriately when it comes to writing academic texts, whereas, 49% of them do not apply them properly. Consequently, this is a statistically significant relation, i.e. there are

differences in the application of clausal conjunctions in the research corpus. As a result, the research null hypothesis which suggests that “there is an apparent weakness in Sudanese university students’ written work due to their inability to apply grammatical cohesive devices adequately” will be confirmed with some restrictions.

#### 4.13 Temporal Conjunctions:

Users	Number of Users	Percentage
Correct users	58	58%
Incorrect users	42	42%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.28 Correct versus incorrect use of temporal conjunctions

Based on the results displayed in the above table, it is clear that only more than half of the students (approximately 58%) use temporal conjunctions correctly in the research corpus, whereas, 42% of them use these devices inappropriately. This could be attributed to the learners' awareness of how to begin and end their expositions, but gradually some might forget to use other linking words to introduce and organize further ideas in the texts. Moreover, the examples provided by the students in the research corpus illustrate that more than half of the learners succeeded in creating temporal cohesive relations. Accordingly, the research null hypothesis which indicates "Sudanese EFL university students differ to a large degree in achieving grammatical cohesion devices in their texts" will be approved.

#### 4.14 General Discussion:

The aim of the current study is to disclose the extent to which Sudanese EFL university learners could employ GCDs in writing essays, the frequency of these devices in the texts, and the problems they encounter in using them. The overall conclusion that can be drawn is that only some learners succeeded in adopting the four types of grammatical cohesion devices introduced by Halliday and Hasan (1976), despite their significantly different frequencies in the research corpus. Out of the whole number of correctly used cohesive devices that were employed in the research corpus, the learners relied heavily on conjunctions, followed by referential ones, whereas, ellipsis and substitution devices appeared third and fourth respectively. The findings are in line with some national and international researches; particularly, Meisuo's (2000), Azzouz's (2009) and Manahil (2010) studies with regard to using the types of conjunctions the most in expository essays, but they are

different from Abadiano's (1995) which shows that reference was the most predominant. Nevertheless, corresponding to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) views, the results in all of the five studies illustrate that ellipsis and substitution were hardly utilized. This can be attributed to many factors. Firstly, they used the commonest words in English more frequently. Secondly, they are still inexperienced writers despite the fact that they had more than five writing courses throughout their study. Thirdly, the lack of continuous practice, since the skill of writing is developmental.

Regarding the problems that faced the learners in using GCDs, it is clear that most of them used these devices inappropriately, inadequately and excessively. These problems can be attributed to some factors, such as intra-lingual interference, the learners' incompetency in adopting some devices and they may have been taught by inexperienced teachers with limited discourse knowledge and experience in teaching cohesion and coherence. Moreover, the analysis of the cohesive devices used in these texts understudy revealed that a discourse or text can only be meaningful if various segments are brought together to form a unified whole. Therefore, for a text to be cohesive, it must be held together by some linguistic devices.

#### 5.1 Results:

Based on the results of the data analysis, the study revealed the following results: As relates to the first hypothesis, which states, Sudanese EFL university learners have many problems in writing, most notably in using grammatical cohesive devices. The results showed that this hypothesis is true according to the scores of the students in the research corpus. So, the first hypothesis was confirmed and accepted.



عمادة البحث العلمي  
DEANSHIP OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



The second hypothesis states, Sudanese EFL university learners do not use grammatical cohesion devices appropriately. According to the results obtained from the students' written test, their use of cohesive devices was not appropriate and accurate. Moreover, the percentage of the frequency of the categories of cohesive devices varied greatly from one student to another. Thus, the second hypothesis was approved.

As for the third hypothesis, which says, there is an apparent weakness in Sudanese university students' written work due to their inability to apply grammatical cohesive devices adequately. The results revealed that this hypothesis is true according to the scores of the students in the written test. Therefore, the third hypothesis was confirmed.

The fourth hypothesis states that, Sudanese EFL university students differ to a large degree in achieving grammatical cohesion devices in their texts. The results obtained from the analysis of the written work of the students of Alzaeim Alazhari University, Sudan University of science and Technology and Omdurman Islamic University indicated that most of the students encounter the same problems. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was partially rejected.

Accordingly, the main findings of this study are as follows:

1-Sudanese EFL university learners have many problems in using grammatical cohesion devices when it comes to academic writing.

2-Sudanese EFL university learners do not use grammatical cohesive devices appropriately.

3-There is an apparent weakness in Sudanese university students' written work due to their inability to apply grammatical cohesive devices adequately.

4-There are not any significant differences in the application of cohesive devices by Sudanese EFL learners. They all encounter the same problems.

To sum up, the analysis of the cohesive devices used in the texts understudy revealed that a discourse or text can only be meaningful if various segments are brought together to form a unified whole. Therefore, for a text to be cohesive, it must be held together by some linguistic devices. Furthermore, the learners lack the competence in producing linguistically well-formed written material to create meaningful texts that convey the information appropriately and accurately as well as coherently. These problems may happen due to the linguistic knowledge of English they have been offered so far, or they may have been taught by inexperienced teachers with limited discourse knowledge and experience in teaching cohesion and coherence.

#### 5-2 Recommendations:

Based on the findings and conclusions illustrated above, the current study provides some recommendations for students and EFL teachers. They are as follows:

1. Sudanese EFL university learners should be given enough exercises to practice writing essays inside the class as well as outside to make it an easy task for them.
2. There should be a writing club in every Sudanese university, in which the students can write a variety of essays and receive feedback from their teachers on time.
3. Teachers should motivate and encourage their students to write short stories of their own interest so as to improve their written work gradually.
4. Teachers should revise and evaluate the students' written work continuously and give comments on them. Doing so, the learners can recognize the importance of their written work and take the comments into consideration to improve their use of cohesive ties in creating texture.

5. A great emphasis should be given to grammatical cohesion devices when teaching writing in general and cohesion in particular. Then the students' attention should be drawn to the importance of these devices in making the writing process more comprehensible.
6. English syllabus designers should give a considerable attention to cohesive devices when designing writing syllabuses.
7. Sudanese EFL learners should be given weekly writing assignments in which they can apply cohesive ties more appropriately, accurately and cohesively.
8. A writing WhatsApp group should be made for each group of learners to write at least two compulsory essays monthly and the teachers should comment on that. They should be considered as a part of their continuous assessment. Having done so, learners can benefit a lot from both the correction of their teachers and the automatic one.
9. Learners are in an urgent need to be taught how to think in English, not in Arabic, while writing in English.

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