

**Omani Undergraduate Students', Teachers' and Tutors'
Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence
in EFL Academic Writing and their Perspectives of
Teaching Cohesion and Coherence**

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Teaching Cohesion and Coherence**

Submitted by Jamila Abdullah Kharboosh Al Siyabi to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, March 2019.

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(Signed)

Jamila

ABSTRACT

My interpretive study aims to explore how EFL university students verbally articulate their understanding of cohesion and coherence, how they perceive the teaching of cohesion and coherence and how they reflect on the way they have attempted to actualise cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic texts. The study also looks at how their writing teachers and tutors metalinguistically understand cohesion and coherence, and how they perceive issues related to the teaching/tutoring of cohesion and coherence. It has researched the situated realities of students, teachers and tutors through semi-structured interviews, and is informed by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy on cohesion and coherence. Further, the study employs text analysis of students' essays to find out how well students write with cohesion and coherence. It explores the diversity, density and accuracy of cohesion devices as well as some coherence-related concepts (i.e. text unity, content, logic, writer's subject and background knowledge and relationships with the reader). The study is largely qualitative, but it also has a quantitative element. It implements the triangulation of different sources of information: three participant groups (students, teachers and tutors) and two research methods (semi-structured interviews and text analysis).

The study findings indicate that the students found it hard to verbally articulate what cohesion and coherence are, and defined the two terms through referring more to concepts that were related to coherence than cohesion. They also struggled with writing cohesive and coherent texts. There were also some synergies and discrepancies between teachers and tutors in how they metalinguistically understood cohesion and coherence, and how they perceived issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence.

The study offers a deep discussion on its findings regarding its context and the prevailing body of research in the area. Its discussion focuses on researching cohesion and coherence and metalinguistic understanding in writing. It also discusses the characteristics of students' writing regarding their writing cohesion and coherence, the influence of Arabic on the cohesion and coherence of their EFL

academic writing, and the teaching of cohesion and coherence. The study offers some significant implications that inform practice, decision making and future research.

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1 Chapter one: Introduction

Cohesion and coherence are two areas that are essential in demonstrating writing quality and/or proficient academic writers, and therefore what my study is focusing on is worth pursuing. My study explores undergraduate students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in academic writing in the setting of EFL/ESL (English as a foreign/second language) in a university in Oman. The study also looks into how students, academic writing teachers and writing tutors at the university Writing Centre perceive issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. It also investigates students' written academic texts in order to identify the characteristics of cohesion and coherence that are evident in their academic writing. The study adopts an interpretive enquiry through interviewing the participants (i.e. students, writing teachers and tutors) and analysing students' academic essays. It aims primarily to understand the socially constructed context of the participants, but also to address the research enquiry in depth in order to generate understanding that can be relevant to and useful for other contexts of EFL academic writing, with the purpose of assisting both students and teachers with issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing.

My study deals with the concepts of cohesion and coherence, metalinguistic understanding and perceptions. The first two constructs are cohesion and coherence as theorised mainly by the two linguists Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work on cohesion. These reputable linguists offer a comprehensive definition of cohesion by asserting that it is realised through vocabulary or grammar. According to, Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 4), the term cohesion is related to semantics, and therefore is concerned with meaning that occurs within a text and contributes to its characteristics of being a text. Coherence, however, is about the unity of meaning and ideas in text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define it as the semantic alignments of cohesion and register, and Hinkel (2009) as elements of discourse that are organised in a logical manner. The third concept, students' metalinguistic understanding, is about how students verbally articulate their understanding of cohesion and coherence and how they discuss their understanding of what they do to make their essays cohesive and coherent. The fourth construct is perceptions,

as the study is concerned with how the participants perceive or view some teaching aspects of cohesion and coherence. Thus, in light of what has been discussed above, it is perhaps important to set the scene of my study by briefly introducing relevant issues to EFL students' academic writing and the area of cohesion and coherence. The following section of the introduction sheds light on areas pertinent to writing in the EFL/ESL setting, its complexity, its marginalisation, research carried out on EFL/ESL academic writing, the lack of research on cohesion and coherence, as well as the context of my study.

Writing in the context of EFL/ESL is complex. Not only is writing multi-dimensional and intricate in the EFL/ESL contexts, but also in settings in which English is a first/mother tongue language (Gordon, 2008). If this is the situation in contexts where English is the students' native language a person can appreciate the difficulty of writing in EFL/ESL settings (Kroll, 2003) where English use is mainly restricted to the classroom. Writing in general involves processes like building thought, developing content and integrating language use (Starkey, 2004). EFL/ESL writing, however, exceeds that to incorporate boundaries that add to its intricacy, such as culture and language (Dastjerdi & Samian, 2011; Kamil, 2011). EFL/ESL writers have to be oriented to a second or a third culture of writing, and contend with a second or third language in order for them to be proficient EFL/ESL writers. This clearly poses a source of challenge to students who have to deal with EFL writing assignments of various types and levels of difficulty.

Despite its complexity, writing in EFL classroom settings seems to have a history of being marginalised. According to Harmer (2006), writing has mostly been introduced in EFL writing classes merely as an expansion of other language skills (to enhance speaking, reading and listening) and language subskills (i.e. to develop vocabulary and accuracy). On the other hand, in the contexts of EFL writing, the attention has typically been focused on what is known as grammatical accuracy, structure or language use, while other aspects of writing such as the teaching of writing quality and writing development seem to lack emphasis (Gordon, 2008). Language structure is a significant element of the teaching of

writing; however, planning, text development, organisation and revising are equally crucial aspects in writing (Festas et al., 2014). Students at university level are faced with the reality of writing quality; are expected to write academic texts that show quality (Starkey, 2004). Academic writing has, therefore, become one of the essential subject areas that EFL university students have to deal with as part of their education irrespective of their subject areas.

EFL academic writing is of significant importance for students' academic and professional lives. Students have to do well in EFL academic writing, which is a specialism in EFL writing, to succeed in their academic endeavour (Light 2001; Street, 2003). Academic literacy practices (i.e. writing and reading) are essential in helping students with their managing their subject matter and in acquiring new knowledge in their fields of study (Lea & Street, 1998), and thus academic writing is becoming nowadays a fundamental part of EFL writing courses (Ponger, 2003). Academic writing is also of vital significance after students finish their study successfully and embark on their careers because academic writing plays a key role in the context of the workplace (Al-Khatib, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2003; Wiggleworth & Storch, 2009). On the other hand, despite its importance for students during and post study, and the abundance of research on EFL/ESL instruction, the research field of EFL/ESL academic writing is still young, and requires further exploration.

Just like its nature, researching EFL writing seems to be multifaceted and complex. This is due to the fact that research on EFL writing entails exploring different areas such as the setting of the classroom, the aims of writing beyond the classroom, learners' background, the teacher, the social setting, and interventions introduced to writing (Kroll, 2003). Other essential areas are students' writing context represented in their culture and native language (Kamil, 2011), and students' previous knowledge and experience of writing, such as in previous training (Myles, 2002). Another aspect that may have contributed to the complexity of researching writing is that writing has been studied by various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology and sociology. It has also been investigated by fields like applied

linguistics, first and EFL/ESL instruction and pragmatics (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000). These fields have looked at different aspects of writing and developed various theories that may overlap or differ from one field of study to another, a situation that has added to the complexity of investigating EFL academic writing. Further, in the area of foreign language teaching, research on writing instruction has mostly focused on the text syntactical aspects. For example, research investigating college level writing has given attention to two approaches to writing quality - error and syntactic features - but has neglected other aspects of texts that go beyond the boundary of the sentence (Witte & Faigley, 1981). However, two areas which greatly contribute to the quality of academic texts - represented in cohesion (i.e. relations that exist between elements within the text) and coherence (i.e. the meaningfulness and the connectivity of the written text) - have not yet been sufficiently explored.

Nevertheless, there has been a genuine concern in research that acknowledges the importance of notions relevant to cohesion and coherence. Cohesion and coherence have been researched by some disciplines adopting different approaches, and in the context of writing in language as a first language (L1), there is a relative depth and breadth in how research has dealt with these two areas (e.g. Bamberg, 1984; Duncan, 2007; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Light 2001). EFL students were reported to find it very challenging to write well (Celce-Murcia, 2001), which obviously involves writing with cohesion and coherence. There were also some propositions to look at writing discourse, with which cohesion and coherence are heavily associated, rather than merely focusing on the word or sentence level (Bamberg, 1984). Further, research in writing pedagogy has contributed to the growing interest in cohesion and coherence, as they constitute a great deal to writing quality. Cohesion and coherence have also been used to research writing development and text characteristics (Lintermann-Rygh, 1985). However, despite the relative attention cohesion and coherence have received in the field of L1 writing at different periods of time, they are still considered to be a prominent area in EFL writing that requires further investigation.

In the Omani EFL, there is a clear and rising interest in academic writing. For instance, over the last few years in tertiary education in Oman there has been a tendency to assign more teaching hours to developing students' academic writing (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004). Compared to other EFL courses on language skills and subskills, there are now more writing courses for college and university students that dedicate attention to academic writing, with the aim of preparing students academically and professionally (Al-Badwawi, 2011). EFL undergraduate students in Oman, however, wrestle with the requirements of their academic writing, and consequently their writing achievement is often low due to the poor quality of the texts they write (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004; Al-Issa, 2005). The quality of students' texts is largely influenced by the cohesion and coherence of these texts (Ahmed, 2011; Al-Badwawi). Cohesion and coherence are an area in which Omani EFL undergraduate students battle in their attempts to become proficient academic writers (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004). Students in the Sultan Qaboos University Centre for Preparatory Studies (SQUCPS) - the context of my study - are no exception. There is, however, a scarcity of research that looks into areas such as cohesion and coherence both of which can contribute to the development of quality academic writing and proficient academic writers. This situation illustrates a clear gap in the literature of EFL academic writing. My study aims to address this gap through offering some exploration of students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence and how their writing demonstrates this understanding. It also addresses the gap by investigating students', writing teachers' and tutors' perceptions of teaching this area in the field of EFL academic writing.

Writing cohesion and coherence is a struggle for many Arab students. Students in Kuwait, for example, are found to be unsure what their writing teachers mean when they talk about cohesion and coherence in class (Kamil, 2011). Egyptian students also experience these challenges in their writing classes (Ahmed, 2011). According to Ahmed, textual deviation or incoherent texts may result from misuse of devices, sentence length and repetition. The Omani EFL context to which I belong is no exception, as learners seem to face difficulties in managing writing cohesion and

coherence. During my four years' experience of teaching academic writing courses, I have come to realise that students tend to use inaccurate cohesive devices, overuse or underuse certain devices, produce run-on sentences and are prone to be too repetitive. They also find it hard to maintain a thread of thought throughout their texts, between their sentences and within their essay paragraphs. Some can go off-topic, omit to write topic sentences for their paragraphs and thesis statements for their essays, or discuss more than one main idea in a single paragraph. They sometimes encounter difficulty in developing well thought out and logical ideas. Regardless of their English language proficiency levels and their writing abilities, students seem to struggle, to different degrees, with their writing cohesion and coherence.

Therefore, researching EFL undergraduate students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence of their EFL academic essays, reflecting on the cohesion and coherence of their essays and analysing those essays will offer valuable insights into their understanding of cohesion and coherence. Exploring students, writing teachers' and tutors' perspectives about matters related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence is also going to add to the area of EFL academic writing. My study is, therefore, going to help propose implications for practice, policy and research. My study aims to achieve that through researching this area in the context of a university in Oman.

2 Chapter two: Study background

This chapter draws on a number of crucial areas relevant to the Omani setting which is the context of my study. It describes an overview of Oman, its economy, politics, language diversity and education. The chapter also specifically sheds light on higher education in Oman, and gives some focus to the context of the study which is the Sultan Qaboos University and the Centre for Preparatory Studies. It then underlines the teaching programmes that operate in the Centre for Preparatory Studies and the context of teaching academic writing in the centre, with some reference to my personal and professional experiences with teaching cohesion and coherence in the context. The chapter concludes with the aim of the study.

2.1 Sultanate of Oman: An overview

The Sultanate of Oman has a unique geographical location and distinctive weather, being located in the Arabian Peninsula and sharing borders with Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Emirates. Its coastline extends along the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, and is in charge of the infamous sea passage, the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most significant straits in the world due to its position in oil transport. To the West, Oman is bounded by the Empty Quarter Desert, along with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

Oman is divided into eleven administrative regions called governorates, each of which has a governor who represents the Sultan and who is in charge of ensuring the welfare of the governorate and its people. Each governorate has a number of states, locally referred to as 'wilayat', of which there are sixty two in total. The capital city of Oman is Muscat Governorate, a city that is historical but also modern, and is home to the country's most dynamic organisations, such as ministries and state centres, most higher education institutions and the head offices of banks and national and international companies. Oman is recognised for its distinctiveness, represented by both its political position and diverse cultures, a feature that is discussed in later sections of this chapter.

2.1.1 Oman's economic development

Oman's economy has changed dramatically since 1970. From the late seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Oman was an influential empire whose borders extended to Zanzibar, Iran and Pakistan, and was a powerful trading nation in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. However, in the twentieth century, Oman lost its glorious position and became weak and poor. A severe shortage of financial resources adversely affected Omanis and their lifestyles. Omanis lived in dire poverty in a society which depended on fishing that lacked modern equipment, and farming and animal keeping that suffered from a scarcity of rain. Civil wars between Omani tribes added to the hardship that Omanis experienced at that time. Many Omani men had to travel to neighbouring countries and Africa, in search of jobs that could help them support their families. This unpleasant situation continued till 1970, after which the Omani government, under the administration of Qaboos bin Said Al Said, devoted a great deal of the national budget to eradicate poverty and to enhance the country's infrastructure, such as transport, hospitals and schools. Omanis now enjoy free health services and are entitled to treatment abroad if they cannot find treatment in local hospitals. Limited income families receive monthly allowances, and their children's higher education is sponsored by the government. The government has also initiated job opportunities for Omanis, invested in the oil industry, improved people's standards of living and increased the individual income of the citizens.

When His Majesty came to power after peacefully taking over power and sending his father into exile, he made it clear that he aimed to transform Oman from a broken country to a prosperous one. He had a vision, ambitions and plans, which differed from the reserved policy that was implemented by his father, the previous sultan. The majority of Omanis believe that His Majesty's promise was kept, and that his fulfilling the promise is evident nowadays in all aspects of life inside the country. However, Oman currently encounters economic challenges with the falling prices of oil in the world, as Oman mainly relies on oil exportation, a situation which may influence the country's current and future developmental plans and the Omani people's privileges and life style. Time will reveal how Oman is going to overcome this economic ordeal and survive the reduction of financial resources.

2.1.2 Political context

Oman has an international reputation for promoting peace in the region and worldwide. It usually refrains from interfering with the internal affairs of its neighbouring countries and maintains good relations with most countries around the world. Its policies emphasise that peaceful negotiations and dialogue are key in solving tensions and problems that may arise between governments. The Omani government, therefore, extends its support to promote discussion between countries that go through conflicts, such as the civil riots in Bahrain, dispute over the three islands between the UAE and Iran, and the Saudi-led alliance over Yemen to eliminate the Houthis' influence and operations. Oman has also worked on establishing understanding between the West and Iran. This was evident in its coordination of the dialogues to negotiate peace and understanding between America and Iran, and those concerned with the release of Western hostages.

The sultanate advocates similar political practices inside the country. It promotes equality among Omanis irrespective of their origins and social status. Expatriates' rights in Oman are also protected according to the country's constitution, and everyone, nationals and expatriates, is entitled to take their cases to the court of justice if they believe their rights have been violated by individuals or institutions whether governmental or private. Women's and children's rights are also preserved according to the law, and women are considered equal to men in their civil rights. Voluntary and civil associations are permitted by the government, and there are active non-governmental associations such as associations for women, lawyers, doctors, poets and artists. There are also other associations concerned with the disabled and the environment.

The country has also been influenced by what is referred to as the Awakening Arab Spring, that took place in Oman in 2011. Omanis organised peaceful demonstrations asking for more freedom of speech and solutions to reduce unemployment. Their demands also addressed issues relating to eradicating corruption, taking measures against personnel involved in manipulating the country's resources and sustaining more transparency about the government's

short and long term developmental plans. This civil movement also called for more involvement of the citizens and more accountability on the part of decision makers whose tasks impact the country's economic and educational development. Due to this rising, which represents a critical phase of the Omani current history, a new culture of dialogue was opened between Omanis and their government. Some major changes have consequently been initiated in the country regarding its policies, development plans, economy and education.

2.1.3 Language diversity in Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the oldest countries in the Arabian Peninsula with a unique heritage which has contributed to its linguistic diversity and identity. It had strong trading ties with areas in Persia, Africa and India, and the impacts of Oman's relations with these nations are evident in the diversity of the cultures from which the Omani people are descended. Omanis continue to maintain their ethnic diversity, as currently there are in Oman tribes that come from Indian, Pakistani, Persian and African backgrounds where the people of these tribes maintain their original cultural ways of life to varying degrees. They also speak their native languages, so one can still hear Urdu, Balochi, Persian and Swahili spoken among Omanis who belong to these cultural groups. However, only the spoken version of these languages is usually used in the Omani context, as these languages are not introduced in schools.

Further, language diversity in Oman is not limited to the languages mentioned above. In the far north of Oman, in Musandam Governorate, Kumzari is spoken by the native people of one of its villages called Kumzar. This form of language is considered by some linguists to be a pidgin, in that it comprises loan words from other languages, in this case mostly Portuguese, Persian, Arabic and English. Also, two spoken versions of Semitic languages called Mehri and Shehri, also known as Jibbali, are used in the southern most part of Oman, Dhofar Governorate, by its mountain inhabitants who are locally referred to as Jibbali (an Arabic word that means the resident of the mountains). Generally speaking, there is typically a strong sense of tribal pride among Omanis - a feeling that may have been instrumental in preserving the languages that exist in Oman. However, as

English and Arabic are the two languages that are adopted as the only media of instruction in Oman's different educational institutions, there is a concern about the decline in the number of people who fluently speak these languages, especially among the younger generations, as younger Omanis generally tend to be less confident in using their native languages for communication. In addition to this, Arabic is predominantly used between Omanis of different ethnicities as a lingua franca in their cross cultural communication in the Omani society as a whole.

2.2 Education in Oman

Before the 1970s, Omanis had limited access to formal and informal education. Formal education in Oman started in 1930 (Ministry of Education, 2017); however, according to estimations, in 1969 there were only 900 male students in the whole country enrolled in three schools which merely offered elementary schooling (Ministry of Education, 2017). Most of the education was informal, and took the form of sessions in mosques where boys were taught basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills and were trained in how to recite the Holy Quran. Even though some girls joined the boys in these mosque sessions, education was mostly devoted to boys. Girls were expected to work in more domestic jobs like cooking, sewing, animal keeping, farming and taking care of younger siblings. A few women were fortunate enough to receive informal education, either because they did not have to work in their homes due to their economic status, or because they happened to have educated family members in their households who taught them reading, writing and recitation of the Quran.

Formal education at primary, elementary and secondary levels that is free and available to all Omanis was set up only in 1970 with His Majesty's arrival and accession to the throne. There was more focus on the education of boys and girls and, simultaneously, the eradication of illiteracy among Omani men and women. There were morning and evening schools for male and female children; some schools were co-educational and others were not, depending on the area population and the availability of school campuses. There were also morning and evening classes for men and women who wanted to learn how to read and write or continue their education and receive academic degrees. The medium of instruction

in public schools (i.e. grades one to twelve) is Arabic, and students start learning English in grade one. However, other native languages of Omanis belonging to other cultural backgrounds are not introduced in schools. Some see that as a marginalisation of the cultural ethnicities that Oman has, while others perceive it as a way of blending all Omani cultural groups into one melting pot where Arabic is regarded the national language of all Omanis irrespective of their cultural groups. Beside public schools, there are private schools whose curriculum is nationalised but bilingual, such as Al Sahwa Schools and the Sultan's School, and other types of schools such as the American International School, the American British Academy and the British School. Some expatriate workforce in Oman have their own schools, for example the Pakistan School, the Indian School and the Philippine School.

Education in Oman has gone through two distinct stages, each of which had its primary objectives. The first phase (between the 1970s and the end of the 1990s) was concerned with the building of schools and the implementation of literacy programmes throughout the country for all citizens of all age groups. This phase concentrated mainly on the quantity of education, where the main concern was creating an educated younger generation and helping the older one to become educated or at least able to read and write. Quality, however, started to receive more attention after this period, when education was subject to scrutiny and reform (Ministry of Education, 2017). Programmes of quality assurance that take the form of auditing, appraisals and international cooperation for consultancy have become part of the educational institutions' plans. This has led to more evaluation and critique of the current Omani educational settings - schools and institutions of tertiary and higher education. The public and media have had a bigger role in critiquing the effectiveness of the curriculum and the different educational institutions in the country, particularly after the rise in 2011. Part of what has been asked of government administration is more transparency of the country's educational plans and more accountability of the individuals involved in measures that aim for change and quality.

2.2.1 Higher education in Oman

Many Omani students join higher education to do their undergraduate studies after twelve years of formal schooling. Many high school graduates receive free higher education, as it is possible that they may get places in local government universities and colleges, or receive local scholarships to study in one of the local private universities or colleges. Others are given full scholarships to study abroad. Their study choices (i.e. the educational institutions they join, the subject areas they opt for and the countries they go to) are determined by their performance in grade twelve and their preferences. All high school graduates are required to apply to a unified online centre, the Higher Education Admissions Centre, where all study options are offered and all students compete for seats locally and abroad on an equal basis.

Higher education in Oman takes the form of private and state universities and colleges that are tailored to certain fields of study. The biggest university in terms of size and capacity is a government university, Sultan Qaboos University. There are also government colleges that are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and are referred to as applied colleges. They offer degrees in majors like information technology, design and engineering. The Ministry of Higher Education supervises some private universities that are affiliated with Australian, American or European universities and others that are not. The Ministry of Manpower runs some government colleges of technology, and the Ministry of Health manages some health institutes that offer degrees in nursing, pharmacology and paramedics. The language of instruction in the sweeping majority of these universities and colleges is English, a situation that stresses the significant role of English as a language of knowledge and communication.

This dominance of English as a medium of instruction in college and university education has historical and political factors. Oman has never been directly colonised by the British; however, the diversity of the labour force nationalities in Oman has led to English being used as a lingua franca for communication between Omanis and other nationalities (Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radwan, 2011; Al-Busaidi,

1995). Even though Arabic is Oman's official language, English is more prevalent as a language of communication in the workplace (e.g. universities, banks and national and international companies) (Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Jadidi, 2009). On the other hand, despite the emphasis and prevalence of English in higher education, Omani students encounter an assortment of challenges when learning English. An essential challenge is the writing courses that students have to complete in order to successfully pass their undergraduate courses in their different areas of study. They struggle with the requirements of the academic writing courses, therefore mastering academic writing can help them handle their college courses (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004; Al-Issa, 2005).

2.2.2 Sultan Qaboos University

One popular destination that high school students opt for is Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). SQU is the only public university in the country and one of the biggest universities in the Gulf region. It was established in 1986 and now contains nine colleges, nine support centres, ten research centres and four deanships. It is also viewed as a house of expertise, as it offers consultancies for and shares knowledge and experience with government and private institutions in the sultanate. Its academic and technical staff come from different cultural and educational backgrounds around the world; its students are mainly Omanis, but it also offers some seats for faculty children and a few students from the Gulf countries. SQU has also started to place more of a focus on research, quality education and staff enrichment, in its attempt to maintain a good ranking among the universities in the region and worldwide.

The SQU students orient themselves to the university academic and non-academic environment. Its setting differs from that of a school in that most of its students have to leave their hometowns to be able to join the university in Muscat, which is far from where many of them come from. Students start to make meaning out of what they experience: perhaps for the first time in their lives, they live on their own, take care of their living, attend to the university requirements, abide by the university regulations, and manage their time and money. SQU offers services such as extracurricular opportunities, orientation activities, counselling assistance,

recreational activities and academic advising. Students seem to react in different ways to this novel experience and to the cultural interaction to which they are exposed, and they experience challenges both inside and outside their academic domains.

The Sultan Qaboos University Centre for Preparatory Studies (SQUCPS) is concerned with equipping the university students with the language and academic skills that prepare them to handle their subject areas in their various colleges. It is the biggest language centre in Oman and one of the biggest in the Middle East. The SQUCPS proposes that its chief mission is

to provide high quality language services to meet the requirements of academic study, the challenges of a changing work environment and the needs of the wider community (Curriculum Unit, 2016, p. 2)

The SQUCPS academic staff represent more than thirty countries, a context that can enrich teaching, learning and professional development at the SQUCPS. The SQUCPS organises an annual international conference that is considered a major event for EFL teachers of all teaching levels in Oman. This event brings together practitioners and researchers from the region and all over the world to share their knowledge, experience, research and innovations on areas related to EFL. The centre also organises symposiums, sessions and workshops in cooperation with ministries, universities or private institutions in Oman.

The SQUCPS runs the Writing Centre, which contributes to maintaining its mission. It targets students doing the foundation and the credit programmes who need support with their writing. Students take the initiative, or are advised by their writing teachers, to sign for an appointment or go to the centre to get the opportunity to discuss specific areas of their writing or receive some feedback on particular points about their writing.

On the commencement of their university career, students are required to undertake the English language foundation and credit programmes. Depending on their placement test scores (accepted students have to sit a placement test at the beginning of their university academic year), they are placed into the foundation or the credit programmes. In the foundation programme, there are six levels (level one being the lowest and level six the highest). After they successfully pass the foundation, students join the credit programme. Prior to being eligible to join the credit programme, students must spend at least two months (i.e. one term) in each level of the foundation programme, starting from the level in which they are placed.

The foundation and credit programmes offer courses that are geared to enhancing learners' language skills and sub skills, with varying degrees of emphasis. The two programmes are streamed to sciences and social sciences programmes in line with students' disciplines. In the foundation programme there are: English for English Education and Arts, English for Medicine, English for Engineering, English for Sciences and English for Commerce. There are similar majors in the credit programme, for example, engineering students do a credit programme (English for Engineering), but with higher English requirements than that of the foundation programme. Along with their English courses in the credit programme, which are tailored to support them with their college courses, students start doing their other discipline-specific modules.

Regardless of the programmes they are enlisted in, students are obliged to attend English courses that equip them with the required skills and address their immediate language needs. Part of the modules in the two programmes is writing. These writing courses aim to meet their college academic demands in a context where English is of vital significance for teaching, assessment and communication. They vary in their language difficulty level and focus depending on the students' language proficiency and discipline respectively. In the foundation programme writing modules in the lower levels address writing tasks such as short stories, writing informal letters, giving directions/instructions and short paragraphs describing school, family, daily routine or places (Curriculum Unit, 2016). Writing

tasks are more advanced and more academic in the higher courses of the foundation programme (i.e. levels five and six) and the credit programme. Writing courses in the higher levels of the foundation and credit programmes are referred to as academic writing.

Academic writing courses at the SQUCPS foundation and credit programmes take different forms. The sciences and social sciences students in levels five and six of the foundation programme do two types of academic writing: students in the sciences are required to write a library-based paper reporting a research they have conducted during the term; students in the social sciences produce texts such as cause and effect and compare and contrast essays (Curriculum Unit, 2016). Academic writing courses in the credit programme, however, are more advanced and are designed to help students in their disciplines. Sciences students write academic reports based on library research on their discipline-specific topics, and social sciences students write academic essays (i.e. compare and contrast essays and argumentative essays). Whether students are in the foundation or credit programmes, they are expected to demonstrate a command of language use, organisation and content - three categories that are considered in the writing assessment criteria.

My study focuses on two academic writing types offered by the social sciences credit programmes. The two types are compare and contrast essays and argumentative essays. Academic writing in the SQUCPS programmes seems to be perceived by students as difficult, time consuming, involving multi-tasks and even frustrating. Students are also oriented to think that, as long as there are not too many language errors/mistakes, their writing is effective. To demonstrate that their writing is worthy of high evaluation, they tend to use a variety of lexical words, phrases and structures, and are also vigilant about their language accuracy. They generally expect As or Bs even if less effort and thinking are invested in their writing development, including cohesion and coherence.

2.3 Cohesion and coherence in academic writing at the CPS: My personal and professional experience

Teachers at the SQUCPS seem to have different views on the prominent challenges that Omani EFL undergraduate students experience in their academic writing and what, therefore, needs to be given priority. Some think that students' language accuracy is lacking, and therefore students have to enrol in courses whose syllabi give attention and weight to the explicit teaching of language accuracy. Other teachers think that language accuracy is manageable with merely some implicit teaching of grammar, a situation that, according to them, can allow teachers to give more attention to other areas of student writing development. They think that students' repertoire of language should be prioritized, as students lack a store of vocabulary and this may limit successful communication in their academic essays.

While I can see the relevance of these concerns in relation to enhancing students' academic writing, I remain convinced that cohesion and coherence for student's writing is a major issue that is worth investigating. Based on my experience of teaching academic writing to Omani EFL undergraduate students and interacting with teachers at the CPS, and my memories of teachers' comments in teachers' meetings and writing exam moderation sessions, I have started to believe that cohesion and coherence are indeed a principal challenge that students of all language proficiency levels seem to battle with. Even if students' language accuracy and store of language are relatively adequate, their cohesion and coherence may still be problematic.

I have noticed that Omani EFL undergraduate students struggle with some prominent cohesion issues. Some students use cohesive devices in inappropriate or awkward positions in their sentences. They may use the wrong pronouns, start with a pronoun that has no item or reference to point back to or unnecessarily overuse cohesive conjunctives such as *and*, *also*, *furthermore* and *moreover*. Students may have run-on sentences, finish their sentences abruptly or write a series of very short sentences, which negatively influence the flow of their

sentences. Their sentences may not have cohesive ties that link them to other sentences in the text. They may want to demonstrate their sophisticated language use through using diverse lexical items and phrases, but end up choosing inaccurate or awkward words, neglecting the rules of writing cohesion.

Many students also struggle with writing coherence. I remember feeling puzzled sometimes, wondering why students tend to be too repetitive in terms of the ideas they develop in their essay paragraphs. The ideas that they generate in certain paragraphs may overlap with other ideas in other paragraphs. Some of their ideas may also be irrelevant. A text that constitutes a whole in terms of unity of ideas is probably a hard task. Their sentences are sometimes incoherent, as their ideas are unconnected, illogical, not organised or not well-thought out. They may not think of their potential readers when making decisions about what to include in their writing. Often their background and subject knowledge of the topic of writing are limited, a situation that negatively impacts on their writing coherence.

Furthermore, it is harder to evaluate coherence in academic writing than it is to evaluate language accuracy and lexical use. Marking academic essays that are reasonable in terms of their grammatical accuracy and lexicon seems to be more straightforward compared to evaluating their coherence. In writing exam moderation sessions, I noticed that it was sometimes difficult for teachers to justify to their colleagues why they had allocated a lower grade to an essay due to coherence-related issues. In addition, some teachers seemed to be over-occupied with students' grammatical accuracy and choice of lexicon, and therefore were more inclined to reward students' grammar and choice of words at the expense of writing coherence. This area poses a source of discussions and some discrepancies among teachers who seem to hold different assumptions about what makes a good essay. The justification for why a certain essay has received less credit becomes even more daunting when teachers explain to a student that a deduction of marks is due to a lack of coherence. For many students, an essay that is sound in terms of language accuracy and lexical variety is a piece of writing that is worthy of high marks.

Beside the universal features of cohesion and coherence in English writing, crosslinguistic characteristics may also contribute to the complexity of cohesion and coherence in EFL writing. Some of my Western expatriate colleagues at the CPS were wondering if Omani students' difficulties with cohesion and coherence were due to the influence of the Arabic writing which the students did at school. I myself was not sure whether the Arabic writing style was a factor in how students understood and implemented cohesion and coherence into their English writing, or whether the challenges that they had in writing cohesively and coherently merely came from the complexity and the nature of writing in English and the task of making writing cohesive and coherent. However, being a native speaker of Arabic, I know that Arabic syntactic characteristics are topic prominent rather than subject prominent, and that Arabic sentences tend to be much longer than English, and are more flexible with pauses, commas and full stops. I am aware that word order in Arabic is far more flexible than word order in English. Problems that Omani students have in their attempts at becoming cohesive and coherent might, thus, be due, at least partially, to a crosslinguistic influence.

2.4 Study aims

My study, therefore, aims to explore a significant area of EFL academic writing, namely cohesion and coherence. It focuses on a group of arts and education students (i.e. social sciences students) of English majors, doing an undergraduate programme at the SQUCPS. The study looks into their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing, how they perceive issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence and how they reflect on how they made their essays cohesive and coherent. The study also investigates how their writing teachers and writing tutors from the Writing Centre view cohesion and coherence, and how they perceive issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. Along with conducting semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and tutors, the research also includes text analysis of the students' academic essays to ascertain how they made their essays cohesive and coherent.

3 Chapter three: Literature review

My study attempts to investigate the area of undergraduate students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing, how teachers and tutors perceive their students' cohesion and coherence and how students write with cohesion and coherence. The chapter sheds light on the theoretical frameworks by giving an overview of prominent and relevant concepts of cohesion and coherence and exploring what cohesion and coherence signify according to the theorization of Halliday and Hasan and others. The second section of the chapter identifies a relevant gap in the literature, indicates the significance of the study and proposes the main research questions. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework on metalinguistic understanding, and my working definition of the two areas, and it ends with the study significance and its main questions.

Introduction

Language never functions in an isolated manner, "*it functions as text, in actual situation of use*" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 142). Part of the difficulty of using language, however, is not just the linguistic skills and knowledge represented in lexicon and grammar. Language users are able to identify more than just linguistic forms and structure, as they can recognize relation expressed by fragments of language and scattered phrases of language, and make sense of texts that do not abide by the rules of English (Yule, 2006). There are also cognitive and social dimensions involved in language use (Gumperz, Kaltman & O'Connor, 1984, p. 3). In writing, which is one form of language use, the text writer cannot depend on a response (i.e. an immediate feedback) in the way that the speaker in an oral discourse gets from the interlocutor. The writer performs the task without knowing to what extent the points the text deals with are understood by the reader, if at all. S/he, therefore, has to rely on other elements to make the text more accessible to the reader, namely by demonstrating connectedness in the text surface level (i.e. cohesion) and at a deeper text level (i.e. coherence). Via cohesive and coherent texts, the writer, and obviously the reader, can increase the potential of a more

successful interaction with the text content. This shows the significance of the area of cohesion and coherence in writing.

Even though the two concepts may overlap, cohesion and coherence denote distinct concepts that are concerned with text unity, connectedness and meaning (see section 3.7). Cohesion chiefly represents the surface links created in texts, while coherence deals with the deeper text level that has to do with meaning development and ideas. Cohesion refers to grammatical or lexical relationships between the text elements, which lead the reader or speaker to infer a meaning from the text. Grammatical cohesion is divided into distinct categories - reference, conjunction, substitution and ellipsis - while lexical cohesion is classified into reiteration and collocation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Coherence, on the other hand, is independent of how cohesive and organised the text is. It is brought about by the text sentences that relate to a unified idea, which means that meaning is established by text coherence. Therefore, cohesion is about the notion that elements in the text tend to “*hang together*”, whereas coherence relates to the assumption that the text has “*sense*” (Morris & Hirst, 1991, p. 2).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) did seminal work on the unity of written texts, represented in the investigation of cohesion and coherence. They have contributed greatly to the understanding of English texts’ cohesion and coherence. They have worked on defining, categorizing and explaining cohesion relations, and on analysing texts to illustrate cohesive relations, texture and coherence. Their work is still influential and relevant to any research work on areas relevant to the text relations. However, prior to discussing what cohesion and coherence are, and their properties, functions and significance, there are some concepts that have to be discussed. Below is an elucidation of some major concepts and understandings that relate to the areas of text cohesion and coherence. These concepts are text, text and discourse, text and situation, text and textuality. The term cohesion and its two main types, and the investigation and analysis of cohesion are then discussed in detail. The concept of coherence and the main similarities and differences

between cohesion and coherence are also dealt with, and crucial arguments relevant to how cohesion is defined and theorized are looked into.

3.1 Text

The concept of text is used to designate the unity that exists between the related sentences in a passage (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). A text, therefore, is not merely a series of sentences linked together, but rather a series of units whether the units are full sentences or not. A text is also seen by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 1) as

a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence; and it is not defined by its size.

Sometimes a text is not even a full sentence but rather “*a verbal, nominal, adverbial or prepositional group*”, such as advertisements, slogans and warnings (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 294.) A text is, however, considered a semantic unit. According to this understanding, a text's length is not an issue, as it may be long or short, or even just a single sentence. In addition, a text that may be written or spoken may also be in different forms such as “*prose or a verse, dialogue or monologue*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 1).

The discrepancy between what is a text and what is viewed as a pseudo-text (i.e. unrelated sentences) denotes that there are elements which characterise what a text is. Text is defined by Schiffrin (1994, p. 363-364) as

a linguistic content; the stable semantic meaning of words, expressions, and sentences, but not the inferences available to hearers depending upon the context in which words, expressions and sentences are used.

Hence a text is defined as a semantic unit, not a grammatical unit, whereas a sentence or a clause is a grammatical unit. A text compared to a sentence is, therefore, not similar to what a sentence is to a clause. This is because the text is considered to be a semantic unit, a unit of meaning rather than form (Halliday and

Hasan, 1976). With this understanding, the text is somehow relevant to the sentence or clause, not in terms of size but “*by realization*” because the text does not comprise sentences, but is realized by sentences. In short, it is different from a sentence in nature; it is not a matter of size, and a text is not a whole that constitutes sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 2). They state (1976, p. 1-2) that

A text is sometimes envisaged to be some kind of super sentence, a grammatical unit that is larger than a sentence but is related to a sentence in the same way that a sentence is related to a clause, a clause to a group and so on: by constituency, the composition of larger units out of smaller ones .But this is misleading .A text is not something that is like a sentence, only bigger; it is something that differs from a sentence in kind... . A text does not consist of sentences, it is realized by, or encoded in, sentences.

Thus, the assumed framework of how the text is conceptualised (i.e. the nature of integration established among the various text parts) differs from the structural integration among the different parts of a clause and a sentence. The text progresses in a linear manner where a sequence of lexical words follows another and the proceeding part of words refers to the previous one (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In brief, the unity that exists between the different parts of a text is unique.

A text is also defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in relation to cohesion, as a semantic unit connected together via explicit ties that denote cohesion. They (1976, p. 8) specifically define cohesion in relation to the text as

a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it.

The two elements that are semantically linked in a text may exist within or outside of the text. The cohesive tie within the text is referred to as endophoric (either

anaphoric or cataphoric) (see section 3.5.1.1), and outside of it as exophoric. An exophoric reference usually assists with connecting the text to its situational context, which, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), does not lead to text cohesion. To them, text cohesion is exclusively achieved via lexical and grammatical types of cohesion. Endophoric and exophoric references are elaborated on in the section of cohesion. Further, to Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 5) text is “*natural language used for communication, whether it is realized in speech or writing*” They propose that there is difference between the two terms “complete text” and a “*text excerpt*”. An example of a complete text is a book or a research paper.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) acknowledge the fact that there are occasions when a person becomes uncertain about how much the sentences relate to each other, because it can be difficult to work out whether the passage is a unified passage (i.e. a text) or merely disconnected scattered sentences. Consistent with Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 1), the existence of a definite text becomes “*a matter of degree*”, a situation that teachers are probably aware of due to their interaction with their students’ written texts. However, this does not refute the assumption that readers and listeners can usually distinguish between what can be referred to as a text or just a group of unrelated sentences. Further, readers and listeners can usually determine whether they are interacting with one text only or more than one, though this does not mean that there may not be potential instances of uncertainty as to whether passages can be seen as one text or more. Eventually, one has to remember that “[*a*]ny piece of language that is operational, functioning as a unity in some context of situation, constitutes a text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 293).

3.2 Text and discourse

Text and discourse are similar terms, but they at the same time indicate diversity. They are largely used as the same, and researchers who use them both may differentiate between the two terms or use them “*almost interchangeably*” (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 3). Text is “*a unit of language in use*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 1), and discourse analysis is “*necessarily, the analysis of language in use*” (Brown & Yule 1983, p.4). However, some studies that use both terms draw a

systematic distinction between them (Tanskanen, 2006). Text is regarded as static, whereas discourse is considered as dynamic - an understanding that considers text as a product, and discourse as a procedure (Brown & Yule, 1983; Widdowson, 2007). According to van Dijk and Kintch (1983) and de Beaugrande (1980), text is viewed as a theoretical concept underpinning discourse. Another common contrast between the two is that discourse has a context while text does not (Hoey, 1991; Widdowson, 2007), and that discourse is not tangible but can be realized through text (Sunderland, 2004). Stubbs (2001, p.147) proposes further that discourse has a crucial function as it is “*a way of structuring knowledge and social practice*”, a notion also emphasized by Gumperz (1982). Further, Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 5) defined a complete text as “*an instance of extended discourse that has a clear start and finish*”, and propose that the texts we normally deal with (e.g. paragraphs from a novel) are actually text excerpts that are “*segments of discourse that are extracted from a larger complete text*”. Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 5) argue though that the use of text according to this definition is “*fluid*”, not “*explicit*” nor “*clear cut*” as texts can be “*at different levels of generality*”. For example, a book chapter can be considered a complete text, and the whole book is a complete text, and the same can be said about a part of a conversation discussing a certain topic versus the whole conversation. de Beaugrande (1980), proposes that both text and discourse share the same function, but discourse is more comprehensive: the text is not merely a set of oral or written words, but rather a communicative event that carries linguistic, social and cognitive meanings. Discourse in contrast, is a series of *texts that are interconnected, an approach that signify that both text and discourse are contextualized and dynamic*. This approach *also indicates that discourse is a communicative event, and therefore similarly involves linguistic, cognitive and social aspects*.

In the context of my study it is not feasible to regard text as decontextualized, otherwise significant contextual information can be lost. Text then is not merely a “*record of discourse*” (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 4). In addition, it is hard to conduct text analysis if texts are decontextualized (Brown & Yule, 1983; Gumperz, 1982; Widdowson, 2007). Contextualizing text is, however, not easy as this entails

considering the text as a communicative event (i.e. involving linguistic, social and cognitive meanings) (de Beaugrande, 1980). My study gives more prominence to the text linguistic aspect (grammatical and lexical cohesion), but also involves cognitive and social areas as it looks into a number of coherence-related concepts (meaning, unity, content, world knowledge, logic and relationship with the reader) and at the same time approaches EFL academic writing as cognitive understanding and as a social practice.

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 4) also offer a definition of cohesion that goes in line with the similarity of the function of text and discourse proposing that cohesion

occurs where the INTERACTION of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposition and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text.

Discourse analysis (i.e. the study of language in use) is therefore one area that deals with the characteristics of text and factors that contribute to text development. It analyses language (i.e. oral or written) as it happens (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Gee, 2014). Approaches to discourse analysis look into content, themes or issues discussed in texts (oral or written), and linguistic approaches to discourse analysis adopt diverse grammar theories and different understanding of meaning (Gee, 2014). Discourse analysis, which is mostly done on written texts (Biber & Conrad, 2009), may therefore focus on the language structure or grammar and how structure leads to meaning in certain contexts (Gee, 2014). It is also concerned with the impact of context and culture on language use (Gumperz, 1982; McCarthy, 1991). Yule (2006) also proposes that we actually embark on the activity of discourse analysis when we investigate how it is that readers, for instance, attempt to interpret the texts they interact with, understand what writers mean and distinguish between coherent versus unconnected texts.

Further, even though texts are more structured than conversations, they may vary in their forms of discourse from one genre to another (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 327). The structure of a certain text has “a *typical*” “*organization*” or some “*typical organizations*”, and it “*acquires the texture by virtue of adhering to those forms*”. Therefore, the different discourse forms of the different genres establish texture when these forms “*combine with intrasentence structure and intersentence cohesion to provide the total text-forming resources of the culture*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 327).

3.3 Text and situation

Deciding on whether a certain passage is a text or not is prior to the process of the text evaluation. When one hears or reads some language, one can make out the status of what is being heard or read. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 20) argue that

[s]ituationally, he takes into account all he knows of the environment: what is going on, what part the language is playing, and who are involved.

S/he bases her/his judgment in a conscious or subconscious manner based on external or internal evidence. The clues s/he adopts can be linguistic or situational. If s/he relies on linguistic clues, s/he responds to the text characteristics (i.e. whether the text is connected together apart from the structure or what is referred to as the text cohesion). However, situationally, the reader or listener utilizes the text environment clues that s/he is aware of that are represented in the “*material, social and ideological environment*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 20). Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 294) argue that as individuals learn their mother tongue, they develop an awareness of written texts that is not restricted by time but mostly depends on “*contextual relevance and integration of the language with the environment*”. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 21) explain further that

[t]he linguistic patterns, which embody, and at the same time also impose structure on, our experience of the environment, by the

same token also make it possible to identify what features of the environment are relevant to linguistic behaviour and so form part of the context of situation.

The properties of the text situation, however, form a different field of enquiry that is starting to gain attention from researchers, but it is not part of the scope of my study.

3.4 Texture and textuality

The term texture is used to refer to the characteristics of a text, and it determines whether a passage is a text or not. The texture in a text stems from the unity the text has in relation to its environment. A text, therefore, “*has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text*”, and that the texture “*is provided by the cohesive relations*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 2). According to this understanding, a text that is composed of more than one sentence has linguistic properties that make a text, not merely a passage, and cohesion is one of the key criteria that signal texture. For instance, the anaphoric *them* in *Nuts and milk are good for the child’s health. The body needs them to produce energy* refers back to a preceding noun phrase in the previous sentence, which contributes to the cohesion of the text represented in the cohesion relation that exists between the two sentences. In other words, cohesion is achieved by the referring item and what the referring item refers to, and that “*it is not enough that there should be presupposition; the presupposition must also be satisfied*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 3). The cohesion relation between “*them*” and “*nuts and milk*” is considered by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 4) as “*identical in reference or conferential*”. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 4) also argue that “*the cohesive agency*” that creates the texture is actually the “*coreferentiality*” of the anaphoric pronoun and the item that the pronoun points back to. The text is not “*a structural unit*”, and cohesion does not express a relation that is structural in nature (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 6). Thus, the type of relation between the different parts of the text differs from that of the clause or the sentence.

Texture is also referred to as textuality, which is also concerned with the characteristics of texts. de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 3-10) propose that textuality is the communicative function which the text actualises. According to this understanding, textuality is defined, along with cohesion and coherence, by elements such as the participants, the setting and the intention. de Beaugrande and Dressler categorised textuality into seven major elements, namely cohesion, coherence, acceptability, intentionality, intertextuality, informativity and situationality. They clarify the seven criteria as follows:

- Cohesion: represents the surface relations that connect the sentences in a text with each other. Cohesion enables the writer and reader to understand language cues and uses.
- Coherence: is the deeper relations in the texts, as it represents concepts (i.e. knowledge in the writer's and reader's mind) and relations (i.e. connections between the different parts of the surface texts), and how they are relevant to the development of the text's main thoughts and ideas.
- Acceptability: refers to the reader's attitude and how s/he receives the concerned text linguistic resources in terms of how useful and relevant the text is.
- Intentionality: denotes the intention of the text writer who manipulates linguistic resources appropriately and successfully to communicate the intended message from writing the text.
- Intertextuality: refers to the elements that determine the kind of knowledge required for the reader to acquire, prior to interacting with the concerned text. This type of knowledge may be a preceding discourse or genre that the text may belong to.
- Informativity: signifies to what extent the information delivered by the text is familiar to the reader; it also represents the quality and/or quantity of the new or familiar information in the text. Readers are at different levels of familiarity with any written text.
- Situationality: indicates how relevant the text is to a particular situation.

All types of texts may vary in their textuality, as there is sometimes a high density of cohesive ties in some parts of the text and in others there is scarcity of cohesive devices. This indicates that textuality is a matter of degree. If there is a collection of cohesive devices, this may result in a tight texture that contributes to the connectedness and the independence of the different parts of the text in terms of meaning. Fewer cohesive devices indicate a looser texture, so texts are usually signalled by some alternation of close and loose texture which offer “a very *definitive flavour to the whole*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 296). Some writers also develop a form of periodicity in their texts, where they have a tendency towards some alternation between close and loose texture. This alternation leads one to reflect on the notion of paragraphing in compositions, whereby the paragraph has a periodic pattern as there is more cohesion within the paragraph in contrast with that between paragraphs. This is typical of what written English writing usually is; however, there are writers in English who tend to be “*contrapuntal*”, and do the opposite: they have tight texture via the use of dense cohesive ties across their paragraphs but tend to have somewhat loose texture within the paragraphs (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 297).

As is obvious from the discussion above by de Beaugrande and Dressler, and Halliday and Hasan, cohesion and coherence are only part of the components of texture and textuality. Cohesion and coherence are the chief ingredients of textuality that represent relations between the different sentences in the text (i.e. cohesion) and meaning relations between ideas in the text (i.e. coherence) (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1976) propose that cohesion does not by itself achieve texture, as there are other components that, along with cohesion, create texture in texts.

3.5 Cohesion

Cohesion is about grammatical and semantic relations between language items. A comprehensive proposition of cohesion is offered by Halliday and Hasan (1976): that cohesion is realised through vocabulary or grammar. The construct cohesion is “a *semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4). Cohesion is also “*the*

linguistic means whereby texture is achieved" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 293). Simply put, cohesion is divided into two types of cohesive relations: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. The division is, therefore, based on linguistic form, which means that cohesion types can be defined in a lexicogrammatical system. As mentioned earlier, the categories of grammatical cohesion are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction; and lexical cohesion, as the term indicates, is mainly words that are lexically cohesive, which means that they are semantically connected to each other and are about the same topic. Lexical cohesion that involves reiteration and collocation also creates a pattern in the text. All the different types of cohesion contribute, as discussed earlier, to the creation of what is commonly referred to as a text. Similarly, cohesion is defined by Yule (2006, p. 140) as "*the ties and connections which exist within texts.*" The cohesive relations are, therefore, relations of meaning and so is the continuity they create in text. More discussion on endophoric (i.e. anaphoric or cataphoric) and exophoric cohesive relations is offered in the section on reference (see section 3.5.1.1). Presupposition is also key in cohesive relations: presupposition and resolving the presupposition both provide sentence cohesion, "*and in so doing create text*" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4).

However, cohesion is more concerned with relations between sentences – i.e. intersentence - than within sentences, which results in texture. It is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 227) as "*the relation between sentences in a text*". They also argue that text sentences "*can only follow one after another*". Cohesion is also the evident relation that exists between propositions conveyed via sentences (Widdowson, 1978), and it is "*unrestricted by sentence boundaries*", as Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 14) maintain, and also add that

in its most normal form it is simply the presupposition of something that has gone before, whether in the preceding sentence or not.

There is less focus, however, on the presupposition within sentences (i.e. intra-sentence relations). The sequence of the text sentences, therefore, matters as far

as cohesion is concerned. To Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 9), cohesive ties in inter-sentences

stand out more clearly because they are the ONLY source of texture, whereas within the sentence there are the structural relations as well.

The text structure relies on factors that differ from those that a single sentence depends on (Yule, 2006). There is no structural relation between sentences, a situation that depicts the significance of the study of cohesion.

According to the structural relation, Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that in language there are three types of relation that play a role in connecting the different parts of a text with one another: relatedness of form, relatedness of reference and semantic connection. Each type of relation corresponds to certain cohesion types. Form relation stands for substitution, ellipsis and lexical collocation, while relatedness of reference corresponds to reference and lexical reiteration. On the other hand, semantic connection corresponds to conjunction. Cohesion in practice can be defined as “*the set of semantic sources for linking a sentence with what has gone before*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 10). With this understanding, cohesion is relevant to various different parts of the text: words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. Cohesion is, thus, essential for the writer and the reader as it helps the former to write a text that can be understood and the latter to comprehend the text. Writers of written texts utilize cohesive ties to connect “*stretches of text*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 294). In terms of the nature of cohesive relations, cohesion is subcategorized into grammatical and semantic relations as the section below illustrates.

3.5.1 Grammatical cohesion

Grammatical cohesion represents the grammatical devices used to signify connectedness between sentences. The purpose of these grammatical cohesive devices is to assist the reader with comprehending what the writer has referred to in the text, replaced or even omitted (Harmer, 2006). Grammatical cohesion is

grouped into reference, substitution ellipsis and conjunction. Below is a brief discussion of what each means.

3.5.1.1 Reference

Every language has items that have the feature of reference. The reference items are three kinds: personals, demonstratives and the definite article *the*, and comparatives. Personal reference is reference through function via the person category (e.g. I, mine, my and she, hers and her); demonstrative reference is via location on a proximity scale (e.g. this, these and that, those), and comparison is considered as indirect reference via identity (i.e. *same*, *equal* and *identical*) or similarity (e.g. *similar* and *such*) or no identity or similarity (e.g. *different*, *other* and *else*). Comparison can also be in quantity (e.g. *ordinals*, *more*, *less*) or quality (e.g. *as + adjective*; *comparatives* and *superlatives*). All the reference types function within the noun phrase (i.e. nominal groups) except the demonstrative adverbs (e.g. *here* and *there*) and comparative adverbs (e.g. *similarly*, *differently* and *otherwise*).

The reference items themselves do not have a semantic interpretation; however, for their interpretation they indicate reference to something else. Reference is semantically oriented as it establishes a communicative link in the text between words and sentences. When there is reference, this means there is a retrieval of information that characterizes “*the referential meaning, identity of the particular thing or class of things that is being referred to*”, and cohesion in the case of reference is represented in “*the continuity of reference*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 31). Reference also has the feature of specificity and definiteness and it is, as noted earlier, signalled via two types of referencing: endophora or exophora. Endophoric or textual reference can be anaphoric (i.e. referring backwards) or cataphoric (i.e. referring forwards) to a thing or a person in the text. Reference can also be exophoric or non-textual, which indicates that reference is made to the context of situation rather than a person or a thing in the text itself. Regardless of the type of reference, a presupposition has to be satisfied through identifying what the element referred to is. It is worth noting here though that only endophoric (i.e. anaphoric or cataphoric) reference is cohesive. This is due to the assumption that

exophoric reference contributes to cohesion as it connects the context of situation with language when creating text; however, it does not contribute to connecting a passage to another to form one part of a text. Exophoric reference, therefore, is not directly involved in creating text cohesion.

3.5.1.2 *Substitution*

Substitution is replacing an item with another. In contrast to reference, substitution is a relation that involves wording (i.e. lexicogrammatical relation), while reference entails meaning (i.e. semantic relation) (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). A substitute functions as a replacement of a certain lexical item instead of repeating it, where the structural function of the substitute is the same as the item substituted. A very similar notion to substitution, where a word is substituted by zero substitution or nothing, is called ellipsis, which is discussed in the next section. Substitution is of three types: nominal, verbal and clausal. Below are sentences exemplify the identical structural function of the substitute compared to the item that it replaces.

My computer is always out of order. I think I need a new one.

Your friend Alice came to your birthday party? Everybody did.

Is the child better now? I think so.

The examples above illustrate each type of substitution (i.e. nominal, verbal and clausal) respectively. The grammatical function of the substitute and the substituted items is the same. 'Computer' and 'one' are Head in the nominal group; 'came' and 'did' are Head in the verbal group; and 'so' substitutes the clause (*that the child is better now*). Compared to reference, substitution has more restriction, as the structural function of a reference item may differ from that of the item it refers to. Substitution, however, is similar to reference when considering textual cohesion, as both are usually anaphoric, and therefore, create connectedness between the different parts of the text.

Nominal substitution with *one*, *ones* or *some* indicates that the substitute (i.e. *one*, *ones* or *some*) presupposes a noun (i.e. a person, creature, an object, an abstraction etc.), which functions in the nominal group as Head. The substitute, however, may carry only some of the information relevant to the item substituted where the information “*differentiates the instance in which it occurs from the other*

instance to which it relates to by cohesion" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 93). In the two examples below, the substitute carries "some modifying element which has the differential function" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 93). *One* and *some*, therefore, carry the differential function which differentiates *fresh* from *awful* and *warm* from *cold*.

This apple is awful. Can I get a fresh one?

This water is too cold. Can I get some warm?

The modifying element, thus, accompanies the nominal substitute, and it may not have the same grammatical structure as that of the nominal substitute. The modifying element can be an epithet (i.e. adjective), a classifier or a qualifier, and it repudiates the substitute (i.e. rejects or proves it not true). Some modification or specification is added which makes the relation more grammatical than semantic; however, it may not be cohesive and is not anaphoric if it occurs at the beginning of the sentence such as in this example:

Man is responsible for helping to protect the environment.

In English, *do* is the verbal substitute which functions as a Head for the verbal group and is always located at the end of the group. It is equivalent to the nominal substitute *one*, and expresses an action, a relation or an event. Unlike the nominal substitute that replaces a noun only, *do* may substitute a verb, except for its auxiliaries, or a verb along with its complement or what is referred to as a predicate in a subject-predicate analysis. Therefore, the verbal substitution can extend to include elements in the clause that are not repudiated. Repudiation may also take place in the verbal substitution as the example below shows:

Have you finished buying everything you need for the party? I have done only the beverages because I was extremely busy with my exam preparations.

Done substitutes for *finished buying the beverages* only but *everything you need for the party* is repudiated by *the beverages*.

The presupposed in clausal substitution is not merely an item but a whole clause. The clause's positive form is *so* and its negative is *not*. The structural function of the clausal substitute in this type of substitution is usually the same as the clause it is substituting. The following example illustrates this.

Is there going to be a display of fireworks tomorrow? It says so.

The substitute *so* presupposes the entire clause, *there's going to be a display of fireworks tomorrow*, and *says so* provides the contrastive environment that is not part of the substitute clause. Clausal substitution occurs in three environments: report, condition and modality, where the clause may be positive and thus expressed by *so*, or negative and expressed by *not*.

3.5.1.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis or what is referred to as zero substitution is a form of anaphoric cohesion where an element in the text is presupposed via what is deleted (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Ellipsis presupposes that an item or a clause is deleted and the preceding one is not, a case that indicates a cohesive relation. Just like substitution, ellipsis does not create a semantic relationship but a lexicogrammatical one, as its relationship is represented in the wording rather than precisely in the meaning, clearly distinct from reference. Ellipses, however, differ from substitution in the types of structural mechanism, and therefore the patterns they show are different and more complex. Ellipsis in English also has three principal groups: nominal, verbal and clause.

Nominal ellipsis anaphorically presupposes a noun phrase, and therefore the deleted item is the noun phrase inclusive of the Head noun and its modifiers, whether pre modifiers or post modifiers. The modifier that modifies the Head noun may be a number of elements, such as deictic (e.g. demonstrative), numerative (e.g. ordinals and cardinals), epithet (i.e. adjective), classifier (i.e. noun) or qualifier (i.e. phrase that indicates quality). Thus, if the nominal group is replaced by one of these modifiers, it is usually a case of nominal ellipsis. The example below illustrates this point - the nominal noun phrase deleted in this example is *pair of sports shoes*:

Which pair of sports shoes did you go for at the end? The red. I have got all the other colours.

Verbal ellipsis takes place when all or part of the verb phrase is deleted. Verbal ellipsis may take two forms: deletion may be in the left parts of the verbal phrase

where the preceding auxiliary elements are omitted (i.e. operator ellipsis), or it may involve the right part of the verb phrase where the lexical verb and one or more auxiliary items are deleted (i.e. lexical ellipsis). The elliptical verbal group has certain principles concerning its presupposition which are polarity, fitness and modality, voice, tense and lexical verbs (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Clausal ellipsis involves deletion inside the clause which can be expressions of different speech functions like question, statement and response where the clause comprises model element and proposition element. It is worth noting here that the verbal ellipsis, including its two types (i.e. operator and lexical) involve external ellipses that go beyond the verbal group to include elements in the clause structure.

3.5.1.4 Conjunction

Conjunction differs in nature from the other three types of grammatical cohesion (i.e. reference, substitution and ellipsis). It is merely an anaphoric cohesive relation, and conjunctive elements are not cohesive on their own right but indirectly (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). They convey meanings that presuppose the existences of some components in text. Conjunctives express general relations (i.e. relations that are less definable compared to other types of grammatical cohesion) that are linked to different meanings. Conjunction can, therefore, be considered a grammatical and lexical phenomenon (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Conjunction is grouped to five categories: additive (e.g. also, and), adversative (e.g. however, yet), causal (e.g. then, therefore), temporal (e.g. in the end, then) and continuatives (e.g. well, anyway, of course, now, after all, surely). In relation to conjunctives, however, there are three types of conjunctive adverbs: simple adverbs, compound adverbs and prepositional expressions. The example below exhibits cohesion via the conjunctive adjunct, *as a result*:

She has always been very tough with her three children. As a result, they all show a disruptive behaviour when they interact with their peers.

3.5.2 Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion comes from the relationships that are semantic in nature, established between words in texts (Morris & Hirst, 1991). Gutwinski (1976, p. 80) proposes that lexical cohesion

occurs when the lexical item is found in two or more adjacent clauses or sentences in the same sense, and it can also result from the repetition of a lexical item in two or more clauses/sentences which, although not adjacent, are in close proximity.

Lexical cohesion, as mentioned earlier, can be two types: lexical reiteration and collocation.

3.5.2.1 Reiteration or repetition

Reiteration is about repeating the same lexical item, using a general word to point back to a lexical item or using synonyms, near synonyms including hyponyms (i.e. part-whole relations e.g. leaves-tree) or superordinates/hypernyms (i.e. specific-general relations e.g. chair-furniture). In the example below, the lexical words in the second sentence which can be used to refer back to the lexical word *assignment* are as follows: *the assignment* (i.e. repetition of the same word), *essay* (i.e. synonym), *task* (i.e. superordinate) and *thing* (i.e. a general noun).

It took me a whole month to complete the writing assignment. The assignment/essay/task/thing was challenging but rewarding.

The personal pronoun item *it*, could also replace the lexical items, an example that demonstrates that the difference between grammatical and lexical cohesion is not a cutoff point. The general lexical word in this example (i.e. *thing*) is also on the borderline with substitution. Both cases also indicate that there is a fine line between vocabulary and grammar (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Further, referential relation is an important concept in lexical reiteration. There is an assumption in reiteration that there is an identity of reference between the different lexical items (i.e. general lexical items, synonyms, near synonyms or superordinates), a situation that leads to a link between lexical cohesion and grammatical reference. It is not always the case, however, that the lexical items have the same referents, as the following example shows. There is no identity of reference, and *they* as a personal item cannot be used here. This is despite the cohesive relation that exists between the first sentence and the following one because of the relation between girl and girls.

Why is this girl always a trouble-maker?

Girls are normally well behaved.

However, cohesive relations may exist between a lexical item and a preceding one whether they have the same referent and whether they have no referential relations. The following example illustrates this point:

Why is this girl always a trouble-maker?

- a. *The girl is going to be told off by the librarian if she does not stop causing chaos.*
- b. *Those girls always misbehave.*
- c. *There is another girl reading quietly on the reading pillow.*
- d. *Girls normally like drawing and painting.*

With respect to reference, the second occurrence of the lexical item can be described as identical (a), inclusive (b), exclusive (c) and unrelated (d).

3.5.2.2 Collocation

Collocation is about the link that connects lexical items that usually occur together. It is, however, described by Halliday and Hasan (1976) as the most problematic type of lexical cohesion. Boys and girls are opposites and their adjacency in discourse leads to cohesive relation and texture. Based on this understanding, cohesion occurs between lexical items that represent some word meaning or “*lexicosemantic... relation*”; however, Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 285-286) argue that the cohesive effect of lexical pairs relies more on “*the tendency to share the same environment*” than on their systematic semantic relation. Cohesive effect, then, arises in collocation with lexical pairs and other lexical items that are not necessarily pairs that occur in cohesive chains, and therefore establish lexical relations that are not bound by grammatical structure. Thus, all the lexical relations that are not built by reiteration, tend to co-occur in similar environments, are in some way associated with each other, and are actually linked by collocational cohesion. Collocational relations, however, can be hard to define if they are culturally specific or not widely known among the speakers of the language.

It is worth noting here that Halliday and Hasan’s conceptualization of collocation differs from more usual and recent uses of the term. Collocations as defined by

Granger (2019, p. 236) are “*arbitrarily restricted pairs of lexical words (e.g., heavy smoker)*” and “*lexical bundles*” that are “*highly recurrent sequences of contiguous words (e.g., on the other hand)*”. Two common relevant terms to collocation are formulaic and phraseological patterns or units of language. Siyanova-Chanturia and Pellicer-Sanchez (2019, p. 13) define collocation as “*formulaicity and lexical patterning*”. Some researchers focus on Verb + Noun collocation and adopt a more general understanding of the formulaic and phraseological patterning of language (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009).

L2 research on collocation was primarily done on the basis of frequency or phraseological “*traditions*”, and these categories sometimes overlap (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009, p. 2). Frequency and statistics are normally adopted for the frequency-based tradition, and syntactic and semantic analysis are implemented in the phraseological tradition (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009; Granger, 2019).

Collocations, in the frequency-based tradition are words that co-occur with a certain distance. Some researchers mention that this distance can range from two words up to fifteen (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009). Research studies on collocations, however, cannot be easily compared as researchers adopt “*different definitions and operationalizations*” (Granger, 2019, p. 238).

3.5.3 Investigation of cohesion

The division of cohesion into different categories, however, is not always clear-cut. There are instances of borderline cohesive forms that are situated between two categories (i.e. grammatical and lexical cohesion), and can be grouped into either one of them. This is usually common in fields of research that deal with complex notions. The area of cohesion characterizes a multifaceted phenomenon (i.e. human language), and therefore investigating the concept of cohesion entails interacting with two different phenomena - grammatical and semantic - a situation that poses complexity and challenges. This is particularly true when the two terms (i.e. grammatical and semantic phenomena) typically adopt different criteria that address different interpretations. Consequently, describing and defining the term cohesion has to bear in mind both phenomena.

Every sentence in a text except for the first sentence typically demonstrates some type of cohesion, and this form of cohesion or connection is normally connected to the previous sentence/s. The first sentence of a new text, thus, does not exhibit cohesion as this sentence has no presupposition to what has preceded it (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In narration and other types of texts, however, starting the text with a sentence that has a cohesive device, like the reference item '*he*', can be a tool to establish "*an effect of solidarity*" with the reader (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 298). In this way, the reader is portrayed as an insider who has a shared experience with the writer, and his/her assumed prior knowledge of the plot, characters and the background in the written fiction, for instance, creates a setting that is in the anaphoric form (i.e. some reference to something that has been mentioned). This is obviously despite the fact that there is no other sentence in the text that precedes the particular first sentence, which contains the unresolved cohesive element. Instances of the first sentence in texts that have a false cohesive anaphora may also occur in newspaper articles, children's conversations and comedian talks, all of which may presuppose a shared knowledge with the audience be it the reader or listener. It is hard in these instances to distinguish between what a real or a false anaphora is, as readers are at different levels of awareness of what the text is about.

There may be instances, however, of a sentence occurring in the middle of a text that shows no cohesion to the other sentences in the text around it, despite the fact it is part of the text as a whole (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). According to them, the particular sentence may represent "*a transition between different stages in a complex transaction*", or it may show a transition between a description and narration in a prose (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 295). This can be seen as "*discontinuities*", indicating the start of a new type of text. Although reasonably defined and characterized, there are no straightforward criteria that can be applied to all instances of texts to confidently state what a text is. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 295) argue though that despite the existence of instances of doubt as to what a text is, this does not hinder them from confirming the usefulness of examining the concept of text as "*the basic semantic unit of linguistic interaction*".

The meaning of cohesion is, hence, implied in what text is. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 299) propose that cohesion contributes to creating text through establishing texture, as text is composed of a “*textual, or text-forming, component of the linguistic system*”, one of whose essential components is cohesion. The textual components that constitute text are language resources whose “*semantic function is that of expressing relationship to the environment*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 299). What creates text, therefore, is the meaning that stems from this component, which also makes language that operates in a particular context as opposed to “*language that is not operational but rather citational*” that exists in an index or a verbal inventory.

As discussed earlier, the textual component, including cohesion, creates a text. Cohesion has an essential role within the textual component in creating text, in that it “*expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 299). However, the continuity established by the textual component is not “*sufficient*” in the creation of texture, because the organization of the discourse in terms of “*its information structure and thematic patterns*”, for instance, is equally essential (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 299). The continuity exemplified by cohesion, however, is vital, since it brings life to the discourse in the form of text. The continuity conveyed by cohesion contributes to connecting the different stages of the discourse with what has been mentioned earlier. The continuity makes connections between meanings and arguments, and maintains a thread of thought during the semantic linguistic process. Another function of the continuity offered by cohesion is the discourse interpretation, as also proposed by Gumperz (1982). The reader, then, manages to grasp the pieces of the jigsaw that are directly stated by the text, and are crucial for its interoperation. One source of the continuity provided by cohesion is the cohesive ties, particularly the ones immediately preceding the presupposed items; however, there are also other equally significant elements of continuity such as more remote textual and situational clues that contribute to the continuity in text. They all contribute to the discourse or text's constant intelligibility (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

3.5.4 Cohesion analysis vs. linguistic analysis

Linguistic analysis is regarded as an “*explanation*” rather than an “*interpretation*” of texts (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 327). Linguistic analysis aims at explaining “*how and why the text means what it does to the reader*” and “*how and why he evaluates it in a certain way*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 328). Therefore, the role of linguistic analysis is not to determine whether the text is good or bad, effective or not, but to demonstrate why and how it is interpreted in a particular way. Linguistic analysis also explains the text ambiguity, the reader’s inferences or what the reader presupposes from the text without resorting to the writer’s clear statement utilizing the reader’s culture, experience, the surrounding text and the situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The presuppositions that the reader makes rely on “*the linguistic means*” that are provided by “*the text-forming or ‘textual’ component of the semantic system*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 328). Cohesion analysis is a strand of linguistic analysis, and by the same token it does not aim to show whether a text is good or effective or not in a certain context, but it shows instead why the reader/analyser thinks it is good or not.

3.5.4.1 Cohesion analysis

A primary concept in the analysis of cohesion is the tie. Consistent with Halliday and Hasan, (1976), the tie is not a simple concept, because it comprises the cohesive element along with what the element presupposes and is, thus, viewed as a relation between the two notions. Not only is the tie relational but also directional, as this concept is “*asymmetric*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 329). The relational, as discussed earlier, can go forwards (i.e. cataphoric) or backwards (i.e. anaphoric) where the typical relation is anaphoric, the presupposition of what has preceded. The presupposition, though, is not necessarily linked to the immediately previous sentence, but it may be aimed at some other adjacent sentence that precedes the prior one. The simple format of a preposition is one tie cohering between two elements in two nearby sentences where the second element presupposes the first one. However, although this set-up may “*be regarded as the paradigm form of a cohesive tie*”, cohesion relations are to some extent more complicated (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 329). This means that the sentence may not have one cohesive tie only; a common pattern in connected texts regardless of

their genres. The presupposed element in the previous sentence may be cohesive too and presuppose another item in another adjacent preceding sentence. A series of presuppositions is built up in the text in this way, before finding out what a particular presupposed item it is.

However, Halliday and Hasan (1976) note that their proposed framework for cohesion analysis is merely a means rather than an end. This analysis can prove useful in serving some significant purposes. Cohesion analysis can help with composition writing, computer text automatic analysis and stylistic studies. They further put forward that, alongside conducting cohesion analysis via examining the cohesive ties, the distance and the cohesion types, it would be interesting to explore “*the individual instances of cohesion*”, and carefully investigate “*the actual words and phrases that enter into cohesive ties*”, and find out “*what patterns of texture then emerge*” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 332). Certain genres or texts tend to demonstrate particular modes or features more than others. The narrative genre, for instance, may have the tendency towards the prevalence of reference to people as a cohesive device. Furthermore, other types of enquiry within the area of cohesion analysis may be whether a particular individual, a writer or a speaker, tends to prefer to use a certain type of cohesion rather than another; also, whether the density of using cohesive devices differs or remains the same, and if it varies, whether the variation is systematically relevant to certain factors. Another valid question for researchers suggested by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is about the kind of relation that can be established between cohesion and dividing texts into paragraphs, an area that overlaps with the notion of coherence. However, to some linguists, cohesion alone is not adequate in helping the readers “*make sense*” of they what read, a proposition that draws attention to the significance of coherence (Yule, 2006, p. 141).

3.6 Coherence

Definitions of coherence by researchers touch on various areas that reflect the backgrounds they come from. Linguists express notions related to the text unity of ideas, the meaning and/or the interaction between the writer and reader. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define coherence as having two types of semantic

configurations: cohesion and register. Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 97) state that coherence is “*primarily a matter of abstract semantic relations*”. When the reader looks back to what has been mentioned earlier in order to be able to interpret the passage (i.e. cohesion represented in anaphoric relationships), this actually leads one to conclude that cohesion contributes to connecting passages together, which has the effect of turning two passages “*into a coherent unity*” (Halliday, 1985, p. 291). Coherence is also defined as “*the extent to which the ideas in a text are interrelated*” (Irwin, 1980, p. 325). However, the “*connectedness*” (i.e. coherence) that readers experience when they interpret the texts they read, does not only stem from the connection that exists between the text words (Yule, 2006, p. 141). Coherence is seen as a “*complex concept, involving a multitude of reader- and text-based features*” (Johns, 1986, p. 247). Coherence is also viewed as a dialogue that takes place between the text and the reader/listener (Tanskanen & Benjamins, 2006). Reader-based characteristics are related to the reader's interaction with the written text, which relies on their previous knowledge, whereas text-based features are about unity and not going off topic. Coherence is also defined as “*the organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically*” (Hinkel, 2009, p. 265). There is a reference in the latter definition as to what a coherent composition denotes, concerning having an introduction with a thesis statement, support or detail and a conclusion (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Coherence is still, however, not an easy concept to define.

Unlike cohesion, coherence resists analysis. This is a problem that leads to frustration among learners and applied and theoretical linguists, since they all need more understanding and clarity as to what distinguishes some texts as more coherent than others (Hubbard, 1993). Halliday's (1994) framework emphasizes the language social dimensions and explores significant metafunctions: ideational (i.e. meaning), interpersonal (i.e. writer/reader) and textual (i.e. text organisation), and how they are represented in grammar. This framework is viewed as an acceptable model for text analysis. Coherence relies on and interacts with sources of information that are linguistic and extra linguistic, both of which function together in a structured manner. When considering the coherence of written versus spoken

language, there is propositional coherence in written texts that is reflected by textual cohesion and content, while in conversations there is interactional coherence that relies on communicative acts (Lautamatti, 1990). Textual cohesion is replaced in oral dialogues by “*prosodic and paralinguistic*” cohesion (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 99). Meaning is conveyed through “*signs*” that are considered “*emic*” in terms of the grammatical system of a language (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 97). Other factors that contribute to establishing coherence are the reader’s assumed knowledge of the text, which may be the reader’s background knowledge, his/her expectations and genre expectation (Renkema, 1993, p. 35). To Yule, 2006, the notion of coherence exists in people rather than in texts. When they interpret texts, or “*make sense*” of what they read, they actually draw conclusions that are based on their world experience and how they perceive the world (Yule, 2006, p. 141). Thus, coherence, in a general sense, refers to the text quality as to whether it makes sense, due to the fact that its parts fit well with one another and in a logical manner.

Coherence is also seen as a “*mental phenomenon*”, rather than a phenomenon that exists in the text (Givón, 1995, p. 60). It is the writer and reader who visualize a picture image of the meanings in the text. Coherence, hence, is not “*an inherent property of the text but rather of the mind that produces or interprets the text*”, and readers, therefore, are highly unlikely to agree that a certain text has more coherence than another (Gernsbacher & Givón, 1995, p. VII). According to this proposed assumption, neither the words in the text indicate coherence nor do the text sentences hinder comprehension, a proposition that slightly clashes with role of textual cohesion in establishing coherence and texture, as posited by Halliday and Hasan (1976), which is discussed earlier in some detail. Coherence is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1989) in their other works as the connection that is partially initiated via cohesion. Coherence is also further defined by Gernsbacher and Givón (1995, p. VII) a

a property of what emerges during speech production and comprehension- the mentally represented text, and in particular the

mental process that partakes in constructing the mental representation.

A text that is coherent is a text that enables the reader to have approximately “*the same text-representation*” that the writer “*had in mind*”, and thus, “*to the extent that the receiver’s mental representation matched that of the sender’s, the text is coherent*” (Gernsbacher & Givón, 1995, p. VII).

Therefore, in the process of producing and comprehending a written text, the writer and reader cooperate towards coherence and reach a shared understanding in terms of “*topicality, reference and thematic structure*”, which also means a shared mental representation (Gernsbacher & Givón, 1995, p. VII). In the case of writing, the interlocutors collaborate in the production and comprehension of written texts via writing, revision and editing, and the writer processes a cognitive mediation of what he knows (i.e. his/her own mental representation) and what s/he supposes about what the receiver knows (i.e. his mental representation of the reader’s knowledge). Perceiving coherence in the way suggested by Gernsbacher and Givón (1995, p. VIII) stresses a vital role of the writer namely to maintain coherence with the reader, which is referred to as the “*litmus test*”, which is used to measure the success of the reader’s “*coherent comprehension*”. It is an understanding of coherence that proposes that coherence arises from the negotiation and the collaboration between the writer’s and the reader’s minds. In the discourse comprehension process, however, the reader constructs his/her own coherence of the written text, which may differ from the writer’s coherence of the text.

Some linguists, therefore, accentuate the significance of the coherence of the mind rather than the text. Gernsbacher and Givón (1995, p. V111) argues that the

coherence we are after is not the coherence of the external text but rather the coherence of the mind that produces, stores and retrieves the external text [...] we study the coherence of the external text as a

useful heuristic in order to get insights about the coherence of the mental text, and about the mind that produces it.

What Gernsbacher and Givón (1995) seem to adopt is the supposition that it is not the text characteristics that establish the text coherence, because whether the text is regarded as coherent or not eventually depends on the writer's/reader's interpretation of how well-connected/cohesive the text is. What these scholars also seem to suggest about the mental rather than the text representation of coherence can be held true in the case of a cohesive text. This is because the text mental representation will be blurred by the chaos of a text that lacks cohesion. Differently put, the mind will not be able to draw a sound and logical picture of the text if the text is scattered, not well connected and not logically organised. When readers try to interpret a text that is incoherent due to being incohesive, they desperately work on making use of their world knowledge and experience to fill in the gaps that exist in texts (Yule, 2006). However, he maintains further that when readers interpret texts, they go through the same process with all kinds of texts, including those that are coherent and incoherent.

3.7 Cohesion and coherence: Similarities and differences

Researchers generally agree that cohesion and coherence are not the same concept. What they disagree about is "*what actually differentiates between the two*" (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 7). Language users, for example, make grammar choices in grammar depending on factors that are not linguistic such as purpose, relationship between the writer and reader and circumstances related to the text production (Biber & Conrad, 2009). Despite the interrelatedness between cohesion and coherence as the discussion above demonstrates, they still differ in a number of aspects. Irwin (1982, p. 44-49) has drawn some similarities and differences between cohesion and coherence: cohesion is easier to be assessed, depends more on cohesive markers and is more related to text as opposed to coherence being more concerned with meaning and establishing a relationship with the reader.

Cohesion and coherence, therefore, are related but also differ in terms of some major areas. Cohesion contributes to coherence since a cohesive text leads to a coherent text; however, coherence is more linked with meaning, and it depends on how the reader interprets the text. Coherence also exists when clauses, sentences and paragraphs in the text relate to a single theme or topic. As far as the textual level is concerned, cohesion is “*related to*” “*syntax*” and coherence to “*semantics*” (Zoltán, 2013, p. 5). Cohesion is, thus, evaluated by linguistic measures, whereas coherence is meaning based. Cohesion is independent from coherence, which implies that a text may be cohesive but not coherent (Morris & Hirst, 1991). It is also obvious that cohesion triggers coherence: it is one way of “*signalling*” text coherence (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 7), and therefore is significant in judging the text coherence. Coherence can be evaluated or measured when analysing the extent to which elements in the text are cohesive via cohesive chains (Halliday, 1994). Coherence analysis is otherwise a harder task, as there is no consensus on classifying coherence types, so it is not easy to determine textual coherence (Morris & Hirst, 1991). This is despite the fact that the analysis of both cohesion and coherence is considered objective - cohesion involves understanding the different terms utilized to define cohesion, while coherence implies an absolute elucidation of meaning. Cohesion, hence, is a more explicit feature and is characterized through overt markers, while coherence is more global and is recognized via meaning. Cohesion, however, can still be viewed in the usual contexts as a feasible indicator of coherence. The aspects that represent the similarities and differences are succinctly summarized by Tanskanen (2006, p. 7) as,

cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical elements on the surface of a text which can form connections between parts of the text. Coherence, on the other hand, resides not in the text, but is rather the outcome of a dialogue between the text and its listener or reader. Although cohesion and coherence can thus be kept separate, they are not mutually exclusive, since cohesive elements have a role to play in the dialogue.

Table 3.1 demonstrates a summary of the similarities and difference proposed by the different researchers.

	Cohesion	Coherence
1.	Cohesion can be measured.	Coherence is broader and difficult to measure for the sake of evaluation.
2.	Cohesion occurs within the text and contributes to coherence.	Coherence is filtered by the reader when interacting with the text.
3.	Cohesion is a phenomenon that is relevant to the text.	Coherence is a phenomenon that is relevant to the text and the reader.
4.	Cohesion utilises cohesive devices that connect words or phrases with elements in the discourse.	Coherence regards discourse as a process, and thus, texts are regarded as dynamic manifestations of meaning, unity, logic, content, world knowledge that are negotiated between the writer and the reader.
5.	Cohesion looks into areas like the nature of cohesive devices whether lexical or grammatical, the directions they take - whether they refer to what comes first or follows - and the distance represented in the number of sentences separating the cohesive device and the element the device points to.	Coherence in the discourse is not limited to semantic and syntactic connections between the text parts but it comprises the extra-textual and the intra-textual.

Table 3.1: *Similarities and differences between cohesion and coherence drawn by different researchers*

3.8 Critical view on the theorization of cohesion and coherence

Assuming that cohesion has a major role in text unity and coherence has been criticized by some researchers. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 197) contend that cohesion can sometimes lead only to “*a concatenation of sentences*”. They provided an example from Enkvist (1978, p. 110) that demonstrates their argument which reads as follows:

Yesterday I drank green tea. Greenpeace is an international organization. Being organized makes one’s life easier. Food keeps us alive. Eating healthy is a sure way to living longer. Tall people usually have long legs. Wearing high heels can hurt your legs. I wore my new dress to a party last week.

Although the passage above reveals a variety of cohesive devices, it still cannot be regarded as a text. The reader probably tries to make sense of the existing lexical cohesive elements between (green-Greenpeace), (organization-organized), (life-

alive-living), (longer-long) and (wearing-wore). But his/her attempts may be in vain as the passage does not represent any source of unity or coherence that leads to creating a solid text. The example may seem overstated; however, it indicates how the features of cohesion do not necessarily ensure coherence of ideas and meaning. Highly cohesive texts that demonstrate many cohesive links (i.e. grammatical and lexical) may not necessarily be easy to interpret, and therefore cannot be referred to as coherent (Yule, 2006). This is perhaps not what Halliday and Hasan aim to achieve from theorising cohesion. EFL learners may end up being obsessed with the notion of including explicit cohesive devices in their writing to the extent that they lose track of coherence: i.e. unity of ideas and meaning. They may resort to superficially filling their writing with cohesive elements that make less sense in terms of coherence and unity.

On the other hand, a text that lacks cohesive devices except for some lexical ties is considered to be a coherent text as the text below exemplifies.

Someone come my house. Says give me money. Husband take gun shoot. Go outside die. Call police. Emergency 911. Policeman come. Take black man go hospital die. (Koshik, 1999, p. 11)

Likewise, although there is no explicit grammatical cohesion in the example below, the text is still coherent. It lacks grammatical cohesive relations such as reference, substitution, ellipsis or conjunction. Its coherence is based on what is normally referred to as the familiarity with the context, knowledge of the world or background knowledge that is shared between the writer and reader. A text becomes coherent, therefore, if particular knowledge of the world is available.

The net bulged with the lightning shot. The referee blew his whistle and signaled. Smith had been offside. The two captains both muttered something. The goalkeeper signed for relief. (Enkvist, 1990, p. 12)

By the same token, Widdowson (1983) and Gumperz (1982) contend that if the world knowledge that the writer and the reader share, which is provided by contextual ties, does not support the cohesive ties used in a text, the text will still lack coherence. Morgan and Sellner (1980) also argue that beside the reader's familiarity with the topic and his/her background knowledge, the intelligibility of a text depends on other factors like the purpose of the text, the reader's logic and reasoning ability, as well as the assumption that underlies coherence. Cohesion is therefore perceived as a consequence rather than a cause of coherence.

Halliday and Hasan, however, argue for the vital significance of cohesive elements to achieve coherence. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 9) propose that

cohesive ties between sentences stand out more clearly because they are the ONLY source of texture.

This proposition lays a huge emphasis on the explicit use of cohesive ties in comparison to the semantic relations that exist between the textual units. Halliday and Hasan's (1976, p. 23) own emphasis on explicit cohesion is also evident in their statement that

one can construct passages which seem to hang together in the situational semantic sense, but fail as a text because they lack cohesion.

This stance was seen by Brown and Yule (1983) and other researchers as an overstatement of the role of cohesion in creating texts that cohere.

There seems to be some misinterpretation and misreading of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theorization of cohesion and its role in establishing texture and coherence, and many researchers have fallen into this, as is confirmed by Meurer (2003). A

genuine investigation of Halliday and Hasan's proposition of cohesion indicates that they evidently and repeatedly emphasize that cohesion is not the whole story behind texture or coherence. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 324) maintain that

[t]exture involves much more than merely cohesion. In the construction of text the establishment of cohesive relations is a necessary component; but it is not the whole story.

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 23) also clearly emphasise the significance of “*the underlying semantic relations*” that connect “*between parts in a text*”. They acknowledge that a passage can be entirely cohesive but at the same time makes no sense in terms of its situational context. Therefore, according to this understanding, the passage fails to meet the criteria of a text because it lacks unity and coherence. They state that

one can construct passages which are beautifully cohesive but which fail as texts because they lack consistency of register-there is no continuity of meaning in relation to the situation. The hearer, or reader, reacts to both of these things in his judgment of texture.

On the other hand, research that challenged or critiqued Halliday and Hasan's (1976) position has generated results that are inconsistent and/or contradictory about the link between cohesion and coherence - therefore the argument as to whether cohesion is the reason for or the effect of coherence is not yet determined (Meurer, 2003; Zoltán, 2013). Meurer (2003) further argues that there is no universal or continuous relation that can feature all types of discourse in regards to the link between cohesion and coherence.

Further, Sanders and Maat (2006) argue that, regardless of Halliday and Hasan's substantial and useful work on cohesion, their framework of lexical cohesion in particular remains somewhat problematic. This claim is attributed to the difficulty of defining the concept of lexical cohesion. Associations between lexical words in

English are not always shared between language users in the Western world. According to Sanders and Maat (2006, p. 454), in an example like “[t]he winter of 1963 was very cold. Many barn owls died” it is not easy for many people in the modern Western World to figure out the cohesive lexical relation involved. It is, therefore, hard for them to classify *cold winters*, *barn owls* and *the death of owls* into one of the lexical cohesion categories proposed by Halliday and Hasan. Such a dilemma is not addressed by Halliday and Hasan’s (1976, p. 290) assertion regarding the function of “*common sense combined with the knowledge*” of that of the language speakers “*of the nature and structure of its vocabulary*” in resolving cohesive relations in English texts. This example proves that the lexical cohesion approach to text unity and connectedness is not sufficient.

However, in a later treatise that explores connectedness, Halliday and Hasan have attempted to respond to critics of their theory of the function of cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1989) propose that it is the semantic relations, along with the lexico-grammatical elements that express these relations, that establish texture in a text. Lexico-grammatical relations (i.e. cohesion) are fundamentally crucial but not adequate on their own to create unity in texts. Halliday and Hasan (1989, p. 71) propose that texture is essential for the unity of the text, and that cohesion

is the foundation on which the edifice of coherence is built. Like all foundations, it is necessary but not sufficient by itself.

Halliday (1994) has also revisited the classification of conjunction via working on a logic-semantic approach: elaboration, extension and enhancement. Hasan (1984) has also modified the classification of cohesive relations by extending the notion of cohesion by integrating structural elements to the term cohesion, such as theme-rheme development and given-new organization.

3.9 Theorization of cohesion and coherence: Why Halliday and Hasan’s framework?

Below is a review on how different taxonomies, mostly inspired by Halliday and Hasan’s, differ in how they define cohesion, especially lexical cohesion.

I conclude this section with why I opted to adopt Halliday and Hasan's framework of cohesion and coherence, and not other models.

First, Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy was modified by Halliday's and Hasan's later separate research and the work of other researchers who focused mainly on redefining lexical cohesion. Halliday's and Hasan's taxonomy of grammatical cohesion is less criticised than that of lexical cohesion. There are fewer studies that have worked on modifying the classification of grammatical cohesion, but many more studies have revisited the definition of lexical cohesion. Halliday (1984) introduced a logic-semantic approach into the category of conjunction- which is grammatical cohesion- by incorporating the structural aspect of sentences through the theme-rheme structure and given-new organization. Hoey's (1991) classification of cohesion is extensively elaborate, as it consists of simple lexical repetition, complex lexical repetition, simple paraphrase, complex paraphrase, substitution, co-reference, ellipsis and deixis. Based on this, and in light of the assumption that the findings of researching cohesion and coherence can have different interpretations based on the taxonomies adopted by researchers, the concepts used in analysing, reporting and discussing the data coming from these findings can have different meanings.

Below is an illustration of how researchers, who were inspired by Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy on cohesion and coherence, have classifications that involve, at different levels, concepts with different meanings, particularly of lexical cohesion. This also includes different interpretations of the findings of the studies that adopt any of these models.

Hasan (1984) categorized lexical cohesion into 'general' and 'instantial', where the general classification involves repetition relations and general relations (synonymy, antonymy, meronymy (part-whole relation) and hyponymy). According to this categorization, if the lexical item cannot be

categorized under repetition or general relations, it is considered too vague and too subjective to be classified, and therefore words that normally co-occur, but do not fall within the classification of 'general' are not included in this type of text analysis. The second sub type, instantial, is based on relations that are not general in the sense that they are established by the text itself, such as equivalence (Ann, the baby sitter), semblance (his figure was like a ghost) and naming (the man is David).

Hasan (1984) developed a further taxonomy on lexical cohesion, which she referred to as 'cohesive harmony', where the focus is on how a chain of cohesive ties, as opposed to individual ties, cooperates to generate cohesion. According to this understanding, cohesion is more meaningful when cohesive ties combine with other ties, and therefore cohesion can be investigated best when this integration of cohesive devices and ties is kept in mind (i.e. lexical cohesion chains).

On the other hand, Halliday's (1984) taxonomy of lexical cohesion is grouped into repetition, synonymy and collocation. Repetition is as theorized by Halliday and Hasan; however, synonymy has a broader sense as it includes not only synonymy, but also antonymy, superordinates, hyponymy, co-hyponymy, meronymy, and co-meronymy. The collocation here is not as broad as Halliday and Hasan's (does not include antonymy), and is recognised as a "*co-occurrence tendency*", and "*one of the factors on which we build our expectations of what is to come next*" (Halliday, 1984, p. 312–313).

Another classification of lexical cohesion is Jordan's (1984), whose purpose is to explain techniques that can be used by learners to re-enter topics into texts in order to achieve cohesion and coherence. His taxonomy has three categories: basic re-entry, associated re-entry and perspective re-entry. Basic re-entry is composed of repetition, synonymy and substitution. Substitution may be repetition of pronouns, partitive substitution (re-entering

a part of a topic previously mentioned) or embracing substitution (re-entering two or more previously introduced topics). Repeating the previously introduced topics is referred to by Jordan as a 'trigger'.

Morris's and Hirst's (1991) classification is also inspired by Halliday and Hasan. Their taxonomy of lexical cohesion contains reiteration and collocation, reiteration being composed of proper reiteration (including synonymy) and reiteration by superordinate. Collocation, however, is grouped in systematic semantic relations: (hyponymy and antonymy) and nonsystematic semantic relations (e.g. shooting-hunting).

Martin's (1992) three divisions of lexical cohesion involve taxonomic, nuclear and activity sequence relations. Taxonomic relations include: repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, co-hyponymy, meronymy, and co-meronymy- which make them very similar to Hasan's (1984) 'general' relations and Halliday's (1984) relations of synonymy, as depicted above. Nuclear and activity sequence relations incorporate Halliday and Hasan's collocation. Nuclear relations present the ways where "*actions, people, places, things and qualities configure as activities*", and the activity sequence relations reflect the ways where "*the nuclear configurations are recurrently sequenced in a given field*" (Martin, 1992, p. 309).

Furthermore, Enkvist's (1975) and Källgren's (1979) classifications of lexical cohesion (cited in Tanskanen, 2006) are comparable to Halliday and Hasan's, but Enkvist for Finnish and Källgren for Swedish. Enkvist developed a category that is comparable to collocation, referred to as implication, which can be about relations that are causal, cultural, or relating to condition or state or change of condition or state. Källgren, however, used 'reference cohesion' to indicate grammatical and lexical cohesion together, and her lexical cohesion category includes not only repetition, hyponymy and synonymy, but also comparison (big-bigger). 'Inference' is a category similar to collocation (Halliday and Hasan's) and implication (Enkvist's): it

represents words that have some association with one another. Enkvist's and Källgren's classifications seem to be relevant in the sense that their work indicate that languages have similar strategies to establish cohesion, and therefore have some shared strategies to facilitate coherence.

It is worth noting here that in their investigation of cohesion, many researchers make a decision to focus on one type of cohesion only: grammatical or lexical, and most of them focused on lexical cohesion. They normally add modifications to the models they adopt for their studies, to suit their study purposes and the type of discourse /genres their studies are focused on.

Most of the models developed by many linguists, however, were less convenient for my purpose of text analysis, as these models were mostly designed for, and therefore more appropriate for, narratives and often children's stories, not expository writing or argument writing (e.g. Halliday (1984) and Hasan (1984)). Other models are very complex (e.g. Halliday's (1984) semantic approach of conjunction: elaboration, extension and enhancement, and Martin's (1992) taxonomic and nuclear and activity sequence relations). Yet other models are heavily elaborate (e.g. Hoey (1991)), seem very much linked to Halliday and Hasan (e.g. Morris and Hirst (1991)), or have left out notions placed in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) under collocations (e.g. Hasan (1984)). As regards detecting collocational relations, there are words that occur in similar environments but are not antonyms, synonyms or repetition of same words. They are words that do not have specific-general or part-whole relationships, but still occur in similar environments due to their association with the topic of writing and the context of the writing argument- an assumption that led me to incorporate collocation relation into the division of lexical cohesion.

3.10 Studies on cohesion

Cohesion includes the kind of available grammatical and lexical options for the purpose of connecting an element of language in a text with what has preceded or

what is coming after. Relations in meaning that occur between and within sentences contribute to the achievement of this connection (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Yule (2006, p. 141) argues further that the cohesive links that exist in texts, such as anaphoric reference pronouns, lexical connections, connectors and verb tenses, offer some understanding on how writers “*structure*” the texts they write and whether what they compose is of good quality or not. Halliday and Hasan (1976) offer a comprehensive theoretical framework and a sound taxonomy of cohesion relations and ties that have become the bases for many studies. Some of these studies are: Bae, 2001; Khalil, 1989; Johnson, 1992; Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Liu & Braine, 2005; Zhang, 2000 and Zoltán, 2013. Their research areas comprise comparative analysis of learners’ texts, assessment studies, descriptive studies and exploration studies of the role of the native culture. Below is a discussion of some of the prominent propositions and results these studies have come up with in relation to cohesion and coherence.

Studies that probe cohesion in writing seem to underscore in particular the vital significance of lexical cohesion in written texts. A study conducted by Zoltán (2013), which is quantitative and large scale, reveals that cohesive lexical ties are the most common types of cohesion relations, followed by reference and then conjunctions. This study result echoes other studies on cohesion (e.g. Bae, 2001; Khalil, 1989; Liu & Braine, 2005; Zhang, 2000) which have come up with similar findings. The difference, however, lies in the ranking of the second and third most frequent lexical ties. Johnson's (1992), Liu and Braine's (2005), and Zhang's (2000) studies indicate that conjunctions are the second, and reference items are the third - a phenomenon that highlights the role that the three types of cohesion play in writing. Substitution and ellipsis, on the other hand, seem to be under-represented in written texts, an assumption evidenced by Hu, Brown and Brown (1982), Khalil (1989) and Zoltán (2013). Ellipsis and substitution are more common in oral conversations (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1976), and they are rarely used in formal writing (Bae, 2001). The use of these two grammatical cohesive relations is a choice that the writer makes - they are not obligatory cohesive features to use in writing (McCarthy, 1991). Substitution and ellipsis, therefore, are

not normally included in up-to-date studies, due to their rare use in formal writing (Liu & Braine, 2005).

In cohesion analysis, the identification of cohesive lexical ties is not as straightforward as the grammatical ties, and therefore the same is true about quantifying the lexical ties (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The quantification of lexical ties can be carried out by counting the number of lexical items in the text (e.g. synonyms, antonyms, whole-part relations, general-specific relation, idiomatic expressions and collocations). Same item repetition and collocation, in the area of lexical cohesion, were prevalent in students' writing (Zoltán, 2013), where repetition tended to be adopted more by less-able writers, whereas collocation was used more by writers who score high (Khalil, 1989; Liu & Braine, 2005; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013).

Beside the type of cohesive relations, two areas addressed in investigating cohesion are cohesion density and cohesive distance. Cohesion density does not necessarily indicate high evaluation of writing cohesion and coherence. Lexical ties correlate weakly with the rating of cohesion and coherence in students' writing (Zoltán, 2013). A study by Johnson (1992) suggests a similar proposition: cohesive density is not an indication of cohesiveness. For instance, more complex cohesive ties like *in addition*, *moreover*, *furthermore* and *on the other hand* do not really help with better scores for writing cohesion and coherence (Field & Oi, 1992; Johnson, 1992). These studies propose that the use of numerous cohesive ties is not associated with high scores for writing cohesion and coherence, which means that an abundance of these ties does not necessarily reflect writing quality. In respect of cohesive density, the most common cohesive types in terms of distance used by students are immediate ties and then remote ties (Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013). In reference, most of the cohesive reference ties are anaphoric and immediate (Bae, 2001; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013). Cataphoric reference is rare and mostly immediate, as mentioned by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 339). Further, L1 and L2 (First and Second Language) learners seem to be similar concerning the distance that features in their use of cohesive ties in

writing, as the most frequent cohesive ties are immediate and then remote (Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Zoltán, 2013).

Unlike errors in coherence, cohesion errors can easily be noticed, defined and counted, and thus cross-group comparison can be done for the different types of cohesion relations (Bae, 2001). Based on Zoltán's (2013) study, the frequency of cohesion-related mistakes is low. They range between mistakes in grammar, the addition of redundant words, the use of wrong words, the misspelling of a cohesive tie and the omission of a word from a cohesive tie. The most common errors with cohesive relations, however, concern reference - the use of unclear references, the wrong uses of *a* and *the* and the deletion of determiners required for reference - along with problems that are relevant to conjunctions (Bae, 2001). Less-able writers repeatedly and typically tend to overuse the definite article in the position of the zero article (Liu & Braine, 2005; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013). Other errors are grammatical and syntactic, but they are not related to cohesion relations as they are to do with relations within sentences (Bae, 2001).

3.11 Studies on coherence

Coherence is seen as primary to cohesion, and, as pointed out earlier, is also viewed by some researchers as a cause of cohesion, rather than cohesion being a source of textual coherence. As also previously accentuated, coherence does not have overt linguistic markers, as is the case with cohesion or grammar. Coherence is achieved if there is a mutual interaction between the text writer and reader (Bae, 2001; Zoltán, 2013). According to Bae (2001), coherence is also closely linked with content. Khalil (1989) proposes that inadequate topic elaboration also results in less coherence. Beside some types of cohesive ties, the overall structure of text and genre expectations (e.g. the setting, topic continuity and conclusion) account for coherence (Bae, 2001). Raters in Zoltán's (2013) study define cohesive ties as merely linguistic, not ideational constituents, and show that cohesive ties are seen as insignificant when logical unity and text development (i.e. coherence) are maintained in texts. More specifically, most of the raters in Zoltán's (2013) study associate cohesive devices with conjunctions or reference, and some limit

cohesive ties to the sentence level only, while others link coherence with connectedness, meaning and logic.

On the subject of the relation between cohesion and coherence, some studies come up with interesting results. According to Bae (2001), coherence correlates highly with reference and lexical cohesion (i.e. 7.66 and 7.67 respectively); however, the study reveals a low correlation between coherence and conjunction, substitution and ellipsis. Reference and lexical ties are significant predictors for coherence, while substitution, ellipsis and conjunction are not. This implies that some cohesion types (i.e. reference and lexical ties) contribute more to coherence than other types (i.e. substitution, ellipsis and conjunction). Exam raters in Zoltán's (2013) study initially looked at how coherent the students' compositions were, and then checked if the text unity was supported by appropriate cohesive devices. In other words, they largely tended to seek in students' compositions ideas that were organised logically and then linguistic markers that demonstrated the relations between the ideas (Zoltán, 2013). Further, one of the raters' observations was that students used cohesive ties but failed to integrate the ties into their texts to establish logical connections. From the raters' points of view, students tended to use cohesive markers that they did not grasp well (Zoltán, 2013). However, this observation is not adequately evidenced via the analysis of the students' compositions conducted by Zoltán (2013), who found out that the wrong use of cohesive devices was minimal, only 5.14%. This raises questions about practitioners' perceptions and students' actual practices, as well as both groups' understanding of cohesion. Through the use of temporal (i.e. conjunction) ties, lower-level writers were able to link sentences in succession where they merely devoted a simple sentence to discuss an idea in a linear manner, whereas more-able writers tended to elaborate on discussing a particular idea (Zoltán, 2013).

3.12 Cultural dimension of studies on cohesion and coherence

Many studies have started to focus on L2 writing for its own sake instead of comparing its quality to its native counterpart. Studies by Khalil (1989) and Mohamed and Omer (2000) have attempted to observe and explore cultural aspects that relate to cohesion and coherence in students' writing. Yule (2006, p.

141) puts forward an important observation about the notion that languages have different “*conventions*” which may pose a source of challenge in text translation. This conclusion can be drawn further to include language learners too who may face difficulty using the right cohesive devices when they write in English. Arabic culture is characterized as collectivist, oral, high context and high contact, and thus, as a sign of a collectivist ownership, Arabic learners overuse the reference definite article *the* instead of possessive pronouns, use repetition and resort to memorized chunks of texts and use them as templates in their writing (Mohamed & Omer, 2000). Arab learners, according to them, also tend to use repetition more than reference. Further, Arab learners seem to give more attention to the relevance of topic and mode of delivery than the amount of information included in their compositions (Khalil, 1989). They also tend to employ same word repetition as lexical reiteration, resonating Arabic classical and religious texts (Khalil, 1989).

3.13 Significance of the study

Researching cohesion and coherence so as to inform research, policy and pedagogy is of vital significance. When used appropriately, cohesive devices lead to connecting ideas with each other, and therefore create coherence. Explicit links demonstrated by cohesive devices are particularly crucial for EFL learners who may not be competent in the target language. Students’ familiarity with a variety of cohesive devices can help them produce more cohesive and coherent writing, and therefore better quality writing. If they have mastered the art of using various cohesive devices, they are more likely to be able to write different patterns of sentences and connect them properly. Further, when students are aware of issues relevant to the unity of the text, its meaning, its characteristics and its interaction with the reader, they become more able writers. Cohesion and coherence can help the writer in signalling the logical relationships in his/her text to avoid misunderstanding. They serve as a marker that indicates and reveals for the text reader logical relations between ideas in texts. Through cohesive devices, for instance, the reader can identify the type of logical relationships between the different ideas in the text. The cohesive devices used in different parts of the text signal that the text goes around a unified central idea referred to as the text unity. The section below illustrates how the study specifically investigates issues that

have been addressed in the literature of researching cohesion and coherence, but at the same time adds other dimensions to the current research literature.

My study explores the most common cohesion types, whether grammatical or lexical, and examines whether its findings comply with other studies. Findings of other research studies reveal that lexical ties are the most common cohesive ties, followed by either reference or conjunctions. The text analysis helps to confirm or disconfirm the absence of substitution and ellipsis (i.e. two types of grammatical cohesion) in students' formal written texts, a phenomenon that is proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and confirmed by many studies. My study also investigates whether there are some more common cohesive ties than others within the lexical cohesion category, and whether its results correspond with other studies such as Khalil, 1989; Liu & Braine, 2005; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013, all of which show that same-item repetition and collocation are the most frequent lexical cohesive types.

My study text analysis also investigative cohesion diversity, density and accuracy along with coherence. It reveals the cohesive ties that are most common. According to some studies like Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Zhang, 2000; Zoltán, 2013, immediate followed by remote ties are the most common ones. It also looks at whether the density of ties means higher cohesion and coherence. The study also attempts to find out if its results reflect other studies whose findings indicate no association between cohesion density and high evaluation of cohesion and coherence. The text analysis also looks at the coherence of the students' essays, and explores what they do to show coherence in their sentences, paragraphs and essays. The study investigates the most common errors they make in their efforts to become cohesive and coherent.

My study, however, is distinct because it does more than conducting text analyses of students' writing and exploring teachers' perspectives. It adds to the existing literature by exploring students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in their texts and how they reflect on their academic writing when they

are asked to refer back to what they have done to make their essays cohesive and coherent. The study also incorporates the perspectives of three types of participants - students, teachers and tutors - all of whom are directly involved in the context of learning, teaching and tutoring EFL academic writing respectively. My study explores how the three groups perceive a number of crucial issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing and whether there are matches or mismatches between the three groups.

The study is also distinct because it explores coherence from various perspectives. The concept of coherence is theorised by researchers whose backgrounds are diverse, and therefore their propositions of what coherence is vary. The study looks at students' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in their writing, and probes into whether their verbalisation of their understanding of coherence goes in line with the notions put forward by different researchers. Coherence is proposed in the literature as connectedness, unity, meaning, logic, organization of ideas, the interaction between the writer, the text and the reader, the text content and the utilisation of the knowledge of the world and field. The study also examines whether students are aware of what they do to make their academic essays coherent. Besides researching students' perceptions of some issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence, my study also explores teachers' and tutors' perceptions of the role of cohesion in coherence, and investigates whether they use cohesive ties to judge the coherence of the student's text or whether they initially make judgements about coherence and then determine if coherence is accompanied by proper cohesive devices.

3.14 Working definition of cohesion and coherence

Based on what has been discussed earlier, my proposed definitions of the two terms 'cohesion' and 'coherence' are as follows: cohesion is the presence of explicit clues in a text that signify relationships between words and sentences which help the text reader to make connections between the different parts of the text. In contrast, coherence refers to a number of aspects of the text connectedness, represented in the unity of meaning and ideas, the logical ordering of thoughts, the interaction that occurs between the writer and reader, the textual

information (e.g. cohesion that helps establish the connectedness in the text) and the non-textual information (e.g. the assumed knowledge of the subject matter, experience and the knowledge of the world) utilized in the production and comprehension process of a certain text.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy is used in my study as a basis for the text analysis of students' academic essays. It functions as a working model for the analysis of text cohesiveness via the description, quantification and classification of cohesive ties used in texts. Besides analysing cohesion relations between sentences, one modification I am adding when analysing the types of cohesive ties/relations utilized by students in their academic texts, is to take into consideration the cohesive relations that are within the sentences. This minor adjustment to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model is mainly in order to obtain a more comprehensive and closer picture of the kind of cohesive ties that students tend to use in their writing, whether between or within sentences. Focusing on ties that are inter-sentence only, which are advised by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model, may not be adequate in clearly and elaborately demonstrating the cohesive ties that students generally tend use in their academic texts. A relative scarcity of the cohesive devices that students use between sentences was detected by Zoltán (2013), who, in his investigation of students' use of cohesive devices, also resorted to integrating ties that occur within sentences as well.

3.15 Metalinguistic understanding

Introduction

The term 'metalinguistic' is not straightforward and cannot easily be defined in clear-cut terms. '*Metalinguistic*' is considered problematic "*in contrast to the abstract noun designation of its sister word, 'metacognition'*" (Myhill & Jones, 2015, p. 842). Myhill and Jones (2015, p. 842) note the irony that a term

used to describe grammatical knowledge should itself be ambiguous as a consequence of its grammatical designation.

Metalinguistics is largely used indiscriminately in a wide range of literature (Gombert, 1992, Myhill, 2011; Myhill, Jones & Wilson, 2016). It differs according to “*discipline*” (Watson & Newman, 2017, p. 383): it has linguistic or psychological dimensions. It is, therefore, crucial to first elucidate what metalinguistic understanding is, since “*there is no consensus regarding the precise domain of activities which properly may be called metalinguistic*” (Bialystok & Ryan, 1985, p. 229).

3.15.1 Defining metalinguistics: Contention

Metalinguistics is viewed as imprecise because it draws on various notions approached by different researchers who have also referred to other terms that may or may not overlap with metalinguistics. Researchers seem to agree that metalinguistic understanding is about reflecting on language and language use, and that metalinguistic understanding is intentional (Bialystok 1987; Gombert 1992). Conceptualizing ‘metalinguistic activity’ slightly varies between linguistics and psychology, as metalinguistics may consider language as an object of study, or deal with the cognitive processes of the production of language (Myhill, Jones & Wilson, 2016, p. 25): in linguistics it is “*language about language*”, and in psychology “*language cognition*” (Wang & Wang, 2013, p. 47). The adjective from metalinguistics- ‘metalinguistic’- is broadly linked with terms like understanding, awareness, knowledge, skill, activity, development or behaviour (Myhill, Jones & Wilson, 2016, p. 25).

Gombert (1992) proposed two levels of cognitive control: metalinguistic and epilinguistic. It is an inclusive taxonomy on metalanguage aimed mainly at understating children's speech and reading development, but not their writing. Metalinguistics, to Gombert (1992, p. 13), is a “*subfield of metacognition concerned with language and its use*” and composed of “*activities of reflection on language and its use*” and “*subjects’ ability intentionally to monitor and plan their own methods of linguistic processing*”, represented in the comprehension and production stages. On the other hand, epilinguistics is a “*behaviour manifested from an early age which is related to metalinguistic behaviour*”, and not

“*consciously monitored by the subject*”, and learners’ activities in this behaviour are “*explicit manifestations of a functional awareness of the rules of the organization or use of language*”. Based on this classification, unlike the epilinguistic, the metalinguistic level is conscious, intentional and controlled (i.e. monitored and planned, not spontaneous or automatic). However, a clear shared definition of metalinguistic knowledge is still not yet fully framed, as is the case with the concepts of implicit versus explicit knowledge (Myhill & Jones, 2015).

Explicit and implicit knowledge are relevant to metalinguistic understanding. They are also linked to other pair terms: “*procedural-declarative; conscious-unconscious; verbalizable-non verbalizable; direct-indirect tests; automatic-voluntary control*” (Myhill & Jones, 2015, p. 847). Implicit knowledge (tacit) cannot be accessed (Kirsh, 1991) or verbalized (Myhill & Jones, 2015). Explicit knowledge, however, can be reached and researched. Language speakers may be able to produce grammatically correct sentences, but be unable to explain or verbalize how they constructed those well-formed sentences. Further, in the EFL, which is the context of my study, students may have the implicit knowledge of reference and would produce reasonably cohesive sentences using personal, comparative and/or demonstrative reference, without being able to say in clear terms what the cohesive reference types are. Explicit versus implicit knowledge is, thus, linked to conscious versus unconscious control of linguistic choices. This also means that the learner’s awareness of language is actually monitored and planned, rather than spontaneous and automatic, a theoretical conception that relates to Gombert’s levels of cognitive control. Further, conscious versus unconscious knowledge and implicit versus explicit knowledge are used similarly, as they are both about control.

Gombert (1992) proposed a classification of metalinguistic activity which is subcategorized into:

- 1 Metamorphological development: According to Gombert’s (1992, p. 15) taxonomy, it means “*identifying the phonological component in linguistic units and intentionally manipulating them*”. It is seen by Gombert as one of

the earliest stages of metalinguistic development, and is considered crucial for reading, writing, spelling and oral speech.

- 2 Metasyntactic development: defined by Gombert (1992, p. 41) as “*the ability to reason consciously about the syntactic aspects of language, and exercise intentional control over the application of grammar rules*”. This ability is associated by Gombert with the teaching of grammar “*through school work on the formal aspects of language, in particular the explicit learning of grammatical rules*” (p. 61).
- 3 Metasemantic and metalexical development: “*Metasemantic awareness refers to both the ability to recognize the language system as a conventional and arbitrary code and the ability to manipulate words or more extensive signifying elements, without the signifying elements being automatically affected by this*” (p. 63). In contrast, metalexical awareness is “*the subject ability, on one hand, to isolate the word and identify it as being an element of the lexicon, and on the other to endeavour to access the internal lexicon intentionally*” (p. 63). These two elements were seen by Gombert as similar, and were therefore dealt with as the same.
- 4 Metapragmatic development: “*Pragmatic abilities permit the effective use of language in its (social) context, and the metapragmatic abilities allow the comprehension and control of this use*” (p. 49). Metapragmatic awareness is not limited to language only, but extends to reflecting on the use of language in context.
- 5 Metatextual development: “*Metatextual operations involved in the deliberate control, in both comprehension and production, of the ordering of utterances in larger linguistic units*” (p.121). This involves observing cohesion, coherence, inference and the textual structure of language.

Further, Gombert (1992) offered four developmental stages of achieving a high metalinguistic control. The first stage precedes metalinguistic understanding, and is about learning to speak and understand spoken language. According to Gombert, this stage leads to epilinguistic knowledge (i.e. implicit and unconscious): the second stage. The third stage is metalinguistic knowledge, where language use is

conscious, explicit, planned and intentional. The final stage is when the learner's awareness is automated and happens without conscious consideration, unless an area of language is intentionally processed for conscious and explicit attention. Within the four developmental stages, Gombert maintains, metamorphological, metasyntactical and metasemantical development occur earlier, followed by metapragmatic and then metatextual development.

Research has dealt with metalanguage and grammatical metalanguage in writing as the same. However, besides grammatical metalanguage, there are more divisions of metalanguage: literacy, genre specific and process metalanguage (Myhill & Jones, 2015). According to this understanding of multi-dimensional metalanguage in writing, the teaching of writing, as is the case of my study context, involves metalanguage categories such as genre specific (i.e. compare and contrast writing and argumentative writing), grammatical (i.e. grammatical agreement, dependent and independent clauses and simple, compound and complex sentences) and process (i.e. outlining, paragraphing, drafting and peer editing). Such understanding of metalanguage development in writing is "*more comprehensive*" and involves, besides linguistic understanding, the understanding of writing as a social practice (genre theory) and cognitive understanding (cognitive theory) (Myhill & Jones, 2015, p. 846). What adds to the complexity of metalinguistic understanding of writing is that writing has no immediate feedback from the reader (Gombert 1992), while oral language involves mutual, timely, and perhaps multiple feedback. Further, an aspect of metalinguistic development that was not covered by Gombert's (1992) taxonomy is metalinguistic thinking, as proposed by Myhill (2011), where students discuss high-level concepts about their writing but do not possess the metalanguage to articulate their understanding/discussion in clear terms.

3.15.2 Importance of metalinguistic understanding in developing writing

Research on metalinguistic development has focused on speech production, reading, spelling and second language acquisition (Watson & Newman, 2017), while there is much less research into metalinguistic development in the area of writing (Myhill & Jones, 2015). This indicates a clear gap in the literature.

Metalinguistic development is crucial for “*the acquisition of writing*” (Gombert, 1992, p. 151). Unlike speech, writing is taught (Gombert, 1992), and is typically a metalinguistic activity: based on some level of deliberation as the text writer selects, retrieves and translates language, which is different from speaking (Gombert, 1992; Myhill & Jones, 2015). Writing is also a “*decision making*” “*process*” (Watson & Newman, 2017, p. 383). Based on a study investigating the metalanguage that students use when they talk about writing, Robinson (2005) maintains that metalanguage has an extremely important role in developing students’ language abilities. Englert, Raphael and Anderson (1992, p. 441) propose that

the importance of the students’ increased mastery over the language of the writing process cannot be over-emphasised.

Metalanguage can reveal students’ understanding of their writing (Robinson, 2005). When students have a high level of metalanguage, they can clearly “*refer to concepts*” in their communication with teachers and academics (Robinson, 2005, p. 53). To some researchers, learners acquire their metalinguistic awareness of language, and this enables them to consciously discuss different areas of language (Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005). Learners, therefore, can acquire new metalinguistic knowledge of some linguistic areas, which is planned, controlled and conscious and then becomes part of their automated linguistic capabilities (Myhill & Jones, 2015). Metalinguistic understanding is therefore crucial, because it can help learners discuss processes and strategies and the choices they make about language.

3.15.3 Studies on metalinguistic understanding in writing

Few studies have investigated the metalinguistic understanding of older learners in the area of writing. There are, however, some studies that have looked into different areas of the EFL/ESL field. Myhill, Jones and Wilson (2016, p. 23-24) argue that even though there is established research on the significance of talk in learning to read and speak, including Britton’s (1983) work, there is a scarcity of research on how talk can improve learners’ “*understanding of writing, and how to write*”.

Metalinguistic ability is found to correlate with cognitive development (Bialystok & Ryan, 1985). This means that older learners tend to be more metalinguistically aware than younger ones. In Myhill's study (2011), students were interested in the function of words, phrases, sentences and texts and how their "*metalinguistic choices*" could impact how the reader might receive their writing.

3.15.4 Definition of metalinguistics in my study

In my study context, metalinguistic understanding is about the ability to articulate thinking, awareness, knowledge and behaviour concerning language. Students were asked in the interviews to verbally articulate what they understood cohesion and coherence to be, and to explain what they had done with their writing to make it cohesive and coherent. They expressed in their own words their understanding of cohesion- and coherence-related concepts and the relationship between cohesion and coherence in the context of their EFL academic writing. Based on the review here of how metalinguistics is defined, metalinguistic understanding, awareness, and reflection are used interchangeably in this study. It is also worth noting here that the complexity of verbalizing their understanding of cohesion and coherence is twofold, as the task of metalinguistic discussion was carried out in English, a foreign language.

3.16 Study questions

This study addresses gaps in the literature on metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. Previous research on metalinguistic understanding has focused on areas in language development such as reading, spelling, children's speech production, and second language acquisition. Metalinguistic understanding of writing-related areas, however, is still understudied. Unlike this study, most of the other studies have not included cohesion (grammatical and lexical) and coherence together, and thus this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the two interrelated concepts. It also incorporates qualitative and quantitative data into its inquiry.

My study therefore explores university EFL students' metalinguistic understandings and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in their academic writing settings, and

teachers' and tutors' perspectives about cohesion and coherence in their students' writing. The study is also about how cohesive and coherent students' texts are.

My study main questions are

- What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?
- What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing?
- How do students, teachers and tutors from the Writing Centre perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?

4 Chapter four: Study methodology

Introduction

An overview of my research theoretical assumptions and methodology is proposed by this chapter, by noting the philosophical framework that underlies the study in relation to its ontology and epistemology. The chapter details my adopted methodology and depicts how my study is in compliance with the principles of interpretive research. It also offers an overview of how my study complies with qualitative research, and discusses key details about my study, including the study site, participants, sampling and research methods. The chapter elucidates the study trustworthiness, data analysis and ethics, and ends with the strengths and limitations of the study.

4.1 Philosophical assumptions: Research paradigms

The ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs that drive any research are incorporated in what is normally referred to as the research paradigm. The paradigm, thus, determines the research processes, such as the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research and decisions about participants, the research methods, data collection and data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Two key research pillars are positivist/post-positivist versus constructivist/interpretive paradigms, which have been the topic of discussion of many researchers like Bryman (2012), Creswell (2009), Crotty (2009), Pring (2006), Silverman (2006) and Willis (2007). Research has generally gained interest from researchers with reference to the philosophical assumptions that motivate research, which involve ontology (i.e. the nature of reality), epistemology (i.e. the nature of knowledge), methodology (i.e. the set of beliefs that rule the selection decision of a suitable research method), and the set of research methods embraced by various methodologies. The two principal paradigms differ in how they identify reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Robson, 2002), and subsequently adopt diverse methodologies (Flick, 2006).

4.1.1 Positivism/post-positivism

The notion on which positivists/post-positivists base their assumptions is realism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). They hold the assumption that there is one single reality

or truth that is objective, and is discovered rather than constructed. According to this assumption, the reality is absolute (Grix, 2004), independent from the mind of the participants, and is discovered by the researcher who conducts the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). With the utilization of logic, events can be observed and measured (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) via statistics or experiments (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). According to this paradigm, the aim of research is to predict and/or influence the research context via causal relationships that reveal the impact of the independent variable/s on the dependant variable/s; and also to find out whether there are variables that can be anticipated by examining correlations. A positivist researcher's methodology, hypotheses, research methods and data analysis are usually prearranged (Willis, 2007), where the research process is thoroughly governed by the researcher (Rosaline, 2008). The research results are intended to be generalizable to the wider population from which the research sample is drawn, and to other similar contexts (Esterberg, 2002).

4.1.2 Interpretivism

The understanding of reality in interpretive research is, however, based on constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is viewed as subjective because each informant's version of reality differs (Noy, 2008), and as multiple, as it is about individuals' diverse views and experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008). According to interpretive research, meaning is constructed rather than discovered, since the researcher/s and participants subscribe to the construction of meaningful data (Geertz, 1973). The data created are also complex (Creswell, 2009; Yilmaz, 2013), and are about the worldviews and social realities of the participants, and how they construct the realities of their social contexts (Nevan & Losekoot, 2012).

Interpretivism is linked to relativism – i.e. the assumption that truth is never absolute but relative and subjective (Crotty, 2009). In keeping with this view, in the social world there is no objective truth that exists separately from the human mind, as participants come up with diverse understandings of similar events and phenomena, due to each individual's varied experiences and understandings (Creswell, 2009). The created realities are obviously the interpretations of the researcher as to how the respondents in the study see their contexts or worlds. My interpretive study does not aim to generalize the findings to the total population.

This indicates that the interpretive researcher is concerned with depicting the participants' actual understandings and perceptions in relation to the phenomena of enquiry, and hence the depth and particularity of the findings result in the difficulty of making generalisations of the study findings (Esterberg, 2002; Pring, 2006). Therefore, while it is true that an interpretivist does not aim to understand the world to generate generalizable truths – in accordance with their view that there is no generalizable truth to be had – an interpretivist also believes that their research does have wider implications. So while this is not about the direct transfer of outcomes from one situation to another – it is about building understanding of complex phenomena.

4.1.3 Paradigm divisions: Reflections

When reflecting on the two philosophical assumptions of viewing research, and the different propositions and approaches they advocate, there are some points of vital significance that need to be considered. The approaches adopted by the two paradigms vary in their purposes, research focuses and types of data analysis (Flick, 2006), and research rigour in the two types of research is sustained differently (Weber, 2004). Educational research has been governed by these two key philosophical conventions: one that views educational research as a division of the social sciences, and the other that pursues understanding the phenomena investigated (Pring, 2006). For example, the first philosophical tradition, as discussed earlier, pursues conditions and laws that can help practitioners and policy makers in the educational field to predict what may happen and to look for empirical evidence that can efficiently and effectively lead to obtaining goals. It is therefore important for the researcher to remain constantly aware of the assumptions that inspire the research s/he conducts and the required intellectual capabilities that can allow him/her to manage the different stages of the research (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Some researchers, however, warn against falling for positioning oneself in one paradigm rather than the other in pursuing education enquiry. To them, philosophical dualism is therefore a “*trap*” which descends back to the ancient argument on the mind and the body (Pring, 2006, p. 33).

4.2 Current study

4.2.1 The philosophical assumptions of my study: Its ontology and epistemology

My study embraces an interpretive/constructive position, since it is in accordance with the assumptions of the interpretivist ontology and epistemology. Ontologically, it aims to understand the subjective and multiple realities of my participants, in their natural social setting via investigating their understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic texts. Epistemology, which is also linked to ontology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), is about how the research attains knowledge (House, 1991). I have been constructing knowledge during my research through exploring the participants' understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence, where the knowledge obtained is also multiple and depends on the participants' real contexts (Pring, 2006). This knowledge is thus personal and contextual (Alexander, 2006).

4.2.2 Key characteristics of my interpretive study

My study is interpretive due to particular features: it is based on fragments that constitute meaning (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). It seeks to understand meanings and perspectives generated by the participants in their natural social settings (Willis, 2007). The case study provides description or analysis of a certain phenomenon, and it covers a whole range of behaviours and the relationships between the individuals' behaviours and their history and environment (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorenson, 2006). The emphasis of such a study is usually on why participants do what they do and how their behaviours change as they interact with their environment. This is why it is a longitudinal study, that takes time to carry out - a situation that allows the researcher to pursue the enquiry in depth (Alexander, 2006; Esterberg, 2002). In keeping with interpretivism, my view of research is as an event that is socially created, where the reality that the research generates is socially created too (Alexander, 2006). The interpretive practice, therefore, researches the kind of social realities that the participants construct and how the participants construct their realities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011), where these realities are unique and particular. Further, my study is interpretive as it seeks to understand a phenomenon rather than merely describe it: a key difference

stressed by researchers between interpretive and positivist research (Sarantakos, 2005). Description does not suffice when attempting to explore people, their cultures, worldviews and experiences, and this obviously requires obtaining a deeper level of knowledge. Interpretive research achieves this aim through striving to fathom intricate and multifaceted lived experiences and perspectives in real social settings (Crotty, 2009).

The practicality of the findings has, however, led to criticism against interpretive research and its usefulness for professional development programmes and policy makers in the field of education (Bryman, 2012). The deep meaning of the event investigated, that is obtained from the interviewees, is hard to generalize; and the particularities in the participants' understandings and perceptions show that it is not possible to make generalisations in relation to the findings (Pring, 2006).

Implications and conclusions obtained from interpretive studies, however, can still have an impact on policies and practices, as findings generated from interpretive research can assist practitioners in the field of education, who can see the relevance of the interpretive research work to their settings (Willis, 2007).

Transferability is used to refer to this concept of relevance of findings of interpretive research (Golafshani, 2003; Krefting, 1991). The researcher, hence, works on investigating in depth the participants' understanding, experiences, artefacts and details that are relevant and particular to their natural settings.

4.2.3 Aims of my interpretive study

My study aims align with interpretive assumptions. It seeks to probe the students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understandings and perceptions in their natural social settings. It offers further exploration of cohesion and coherence explaining why this matters and how the struggles students face are evident in the texts they write, and it juxtaposes what they write and what they metalinguistically understand. The study's two data sets (interview and text) and exploring the relationship between the data sets and the link to pedagogy through the focus on teaching from the student, teacher and tutor perspective give the study its edge and contribution. Further, as discussed above, concerning the interpretive nature of my research and its philosophical assumptions and methodology, which are

underpinned by interpretivism, my study context is also positioned well within the principles of qualitative research. The section below shows how qualitative research also abides by with the aims of my study.

4.2.4 The value of qualitative data for my own research intentions

Since the use of qualitative data facilitates an attention to meaning and context, and explores the study sample in depth (Gray, 2013), it seems that the collection of qualitative data fits my study purpose. My research aims to understand students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understandings and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in academic writing. It also aims to investigate students' understanding of cohesion and coherence through analysing their academic essays. Gaining a deep understanding of the phenomena can be achieved through the analysis of their qualitative understandings, rather than quantifying the presence of certain ideas. With this in mind this study allows the informants to respond to the research questions and freely express themselves, a notion discussed by Lichtman (2013), when she talks about the features of qualitative research, and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) in their elucidation of fitness for purpose.

The characteristics and aims of qualitative research comply with interpretive research. Interpretive research seeks to understand people's lived experiences in their own socially constructed worlds and the complexity of their world realities. The researcher will have to get closer to the participants to explore the meanings, details, heritage, artefacts and views of the world that are peculiar to them in their natural contexts (Willis, 2007). Lichtman (2013) contends that there are ten central elements applicable to any qualitative research study. Qualitative research:

- understands behaviour,
- describes,
- is dynamic, and there are different ways of doing it,
- is all-inclusive,
- involves varied data in natural contexts,
- adopts inductive thinking,
- emphasizes the importance of the researcher's role,
- investigates phenomena in detail,

- is not linear, and
- is categorised by words, themes and writing.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p11) also accentuate that the aims of qualitative research, which are compatible with the aims of interpretive research, are to

stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relation between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.

The features of qualitative research discussed by Lichtman (2013), and its aims, suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), which are deliberated above, are consistent with the nature and aims of my research. My research renders itself to these characteristics and aims that are particular to qualitative research: is after depth, it looks for to understanding a phenomenon in its natural social context, and has evolved as it progressed when more interaction occurred between me (the researcher), the informants (i.e. students, teachers and tutors) and the study context. Identifying the function of qualitative research also indicates that qualitative data are appropriate in pursuing my interpretive research enquiry: by exploring students', teachers' and tutors' understanding and perceptions through conducting semi-structured interviews and analysing students' academic texts, to see how they actualise cohesion and coherence via text analysis. Interpretive research usually exploits qualitative data that may be generated from semi-structured interviews, policy documents, artefacts, observations, participant observations, online information and texts (Walsham, 2006).

Further, interpretive research tends to collect qualitative data, but this does not mean that it rejects the quantitative ones. It may, therefore, adopt quantitative instruments, such as structured interviews, close-ended questionnaires and observation checklists. What interpretivism merely does is question whether the

numerical data represent the socially constructed reality. The interpretivist, thus, opposes the way the quantitative results are interpreted in post-positivism (Willis, 2007). Interpretive research, therefore, does not use quantitative data to propose that there are generalizable truths about the social world, but rather individual interpretations of their realities. The methods adopted by my interpretive study mainly comply with the qualitative data; however, part of the text analysis method is quantitative. In the text analysis of my study, the number/frequency of cohesion types (i.e. grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion- reiteration and collocation) was measured. This was in order to explore what cohesive devices students had a tendency to use, what they used accurately and what they struggled with.

4.3 Key information about my study

4.3.1 Study site

Some practical factors have contributed to my choice of study site, which is the Sultan Qaboos University Centre for Preparatory Studies (SQUCPS). I am one of this centre's members of staff, and am aware of the vital importance of academic writing which is my study context, and the challenges that students encounter in meeting the requirements of the academic writing courses offered by the centre. I am aware of the context and familiar with its culture, formalities and the regulations necessary to carry out a research project. Understanding the setting is significant in the research process (Seidman, 2006), whereas selecting a sample that is representative is not of vital significance- what matters most is settling on a site that enables the researcher to insider knowledge and awareness that enable him/her to successfully conduct the study, such as being a familiar presence for those participating and being able to access documents (Burgess, 2002).

4.3.2 Study participants

My research study sample was ten students, three teachers and three tutors. English specialist students had already joined their colleges (i.e. colleges of arts or education). They had completed their preparatory foundational programmes and had started doing courses offered by their colleges and/or the SQUCPS (i.e. credit courses). These students were required to write compare and contrast essays and

argumentative essays as part of their academic writing course- a setting that enabled me to investigate the characteristics of cohesion and coherence manifested in their academic texts. The study sample also involved three teachers who each teach a similar group of students, and three tutors from the Writing Centre who attend to all interested university students, including those who made up my study sample. Teachers and tutors do not normally differ in their work experience, qualifications or level of expertise in English, but they work in different settings (teaching writing in class versus managing writing conversations in the Writing Centre). The English specialist programme generally attracts female students more than males, and the teacher and tutor interviewees are largely females. There was one male only in each of the three group of participants.

4.3.3 Study sampling

My study sample comprises a participant sample of students, teachers and tutors; and a document sample of student writing (see Table 4.1). The type of sampling adopted is both convenient and purposeful. The sampling is convenient because I could access the participants, all of whom are students, teachers or tutors at the CPS centre that I work for. Convenient sampling allows the researcher to actualize the research purposes, and helps him/her obtain rich data when seeking to answer the research questions (Robson, 2002). The sample in qualitative research is regarded as convenient since the sample has an appropriate focus, enables the researcher to gain adequate access to data and can address the research questions (Robson, 2002)- three characteristics that are applicable to and fulfilled by my study sample. The sample of the study is also purposeful because they do two types of writing, compare and contrast and argumentative as part of their writing modules and the participant teachers and tutors deal with these students. A purposeful sampling allows the researcher to be exposed to diverse perspectives in relation to the research questions (Creswell, 2009), and selecting the particular participants is also based on the potential qualities they can add to the study inquiry (Esterberg, 2002).

Type of data	Number of interviews/scripts
Student semi-structured interviews	10
Writing teacher semi-structured interviews	3
Writing tutor semi-structured interviews	3
Student Scripts (compare and contrast essays)	36 texts
Student Scripts (argumentative essays)	36 texts

Table 4.1: *My study sample*

In addition, the study sample in interpretive qualitative research generally comprises a small number (Englander, 2012), which is the case in my research. The sample is ten students, three writing teachers and three tutors working at the Writing Centre. The small size of the sample allows for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon (Age, 2009; Creswell, 2009); qualitative research does not seek a large sample, as the sample statistical representation of the wider population is not a main concern in qualitative studies (Mason, 2002).

The second research method is text analysis. A total of seventy-two academic essays were analysed, half of which were compare and contrast essays and the other half argumentative. They were originally written for the writing course mid-term exam and the course graded continuous assessment respectively, and were written by thirty-six students including the ten student interviewees. Their word limit is about 350 words, written in five required paragraphs, including the introduction and conclusion paragraphs. The essays were a genuine representation of the students' ability, being originally written for assessment purposes, and later used for the purpose of this study.

4.4 My study methodology: Interpretive case study

My study methodology is also consistent with the principles of interpretive research. Methodology is also linked with the ontology and epistemology of research (Crotty, 2009), and it embraces the principal assumptions that influence the researcher when in the selection process of adopting an appropriate research method (Wahyuni, 2012). My study methodology is a case study, more specifically an interpretive case study. It is a case study since it aims to explore the respondents' understanding of a specific phenomenon, where the respondents may be individuals or groups (Stake, 1995). The researcher attempts, through the

case study, to understand the participants' perceptions, and their interactions with individuals and with their environment in their particular social contexts (Bryman, 2012). My research case study also aims primarily to investigate how a group of university students understand cohesion and coherence in their academic texts, and their interaction with writing teachers, tutors and the writing texts. To this end, semi-structured interviews were run with students, writing teachers and tutors, to study their understanding of cohesion and coherence and their perceptions of issues related to teaching cohesion and coherence. Further, my case study includes text analysis of students' essays, in order to investigate how the students demonstrated their understanding of cohesion and coherence in their academic texts. Research is bounded, in this case, within a single setting rather than simply being a small sample. It is a specific example of phenomena that is being explored, and the multiple data sets aim to create a detailed picture of this phenomenon, notions proposed by Yin (2009).

4.5 Study research methods

Methodology, in comparison to the research ontology and epistemology, is more associated with the practical side of research (Walsham, 2006), represented in the research method/s adopted to answer the research questions. The research methods used in research are informed by the research methodology (Angrosino, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Further, using more than one research method is commonly acknowledged in research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018 & Yin, 1984). Beside the advantage of triangulating the data, it is more likely to capture more comprehensive and more vigorous data. Some researchers give emphasis to the effectiveness of adding an ethnographic research method in research, which involves conversing with people, to a method that depends on some kind of authentic texts (Flowerdew, 2014). Seidman (2006) proposed that combining another research method with semi-structured interviews is essential. According to these researchers, the grouping of two different methods is ideal for building up an inclusive picture about a particular research context. Yin (1984, p. 92) proposes that

any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information.

My study utilised two types of research methods: semi structured interviews and text analysis. What follows is an elaboration of the two research methods and their contributions in the investigation of the study questions (see section 3.16).

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

My research's main enquiry is pursued through semi-structured interviews. My interpretive approach informed the way in which the interviewing took place. If the aim of the study is to understand people's lived experiences, understandings, perceptions and the meanings they link with their perceptions, the interview as a research method offers a great opportunity to seek this inquiry (Sideman, 2006). The interview is also regarded as a social event (Hammersley, 2003), and is regarded as an effective research method because people are able to express their lived experiences through language (Layder, 1993). In addition, the semi-structured interview is defined by Kvale (2008) in a manner that complies with the ontology and epistemology of interpretivism; to him, the semi-structured interview is similar to a journey of exploration, where the traveller (i.e. the researcher) journeys with the participants and invites them to express their worldviews, experiences and understanding of their natural settings. The semi-structured interviews, or what are referred to as in-depth interviews (Esterberg, 2002), are characterised by important characteristics that indicate their nature as a fundamental research method in qualitative research. A discussion of the characteristics of the semi-structured interview concerning its structure, research questions and purpose is as follows.

The particular structure of semi-structured interviews contributes to them being a unique research method. They combine the advantages of structured and unstructured interviews, as they have a focus and structure like the structured interviews, but at the same time allow for the interviewees' spontaneity and particularity like the unstructured interviews (Laforest, 2009). Even though the

semi-structured interview structure is pre-arranged by the researcher or the interviewer, there is still an avenue for spontaneous responses for the interviewer to pursue (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The interviewees can share ideas and themes that may not have been anticipated by the researcher/ interviewer (Silverman, 2006). Further, some researchers believe that the semi-structured interviews should be similar to real dialogues with the participants, where researchers do not mind sharing their beliefs with their participants; while other researchers think that researchers should keep their neutral roles (Esterberg, 2002). Using semi-structured interviews had the potential of helping me to obtain the insight I was seeking, as my study participants expressed themselves fully; moreover, this opportunity offered by the semi-structured interviews is also compatible with interpretative research. In addition, this type of interviewing in interpretive research is flexible (Grix, 2004), and thus allows the interviewer to navigate different areas of enquiry (Wengraf, 2001), a characteristic that I worked on utilizing when administering my semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interview, referred to as a guided interview (Litosseliti, 2003), is also defined as a number of questions which interviewees respond to. During semi-structured interviews, interviewees disclose their feelings and ideas (Laforest, 2009), and in response to the interviewer's questions, they construct their own meanings (Rapley, 2001), a concept that is also in line with interpretive research. Semi-structured interviews are aimed to unveil the interviewees' behaviour and understanding (Laforest, 2009), and probe their meanings and the experiences which they associate with their actual experiences (Seidman, 2006), as opposed to using the researcher's observation or understanding (Esterberg, 2002). The participants "*speak for themselves*", and a good interviewer is one who is able to extract from the respondents "*the deeper significance of the event*" (Pring, 2006, p. 39). The researcher, via the semi-structured interview, can generate not only intricate but also varied responses (Rapley, 2001), and the participants may share information that is rich, valuable and relevant for the study enquiry (Laforest, 2009). This means that the interview questions can be tailored to suit the type of thoughts and ideas that the interviewees have shared with the interviewer. Thus, semi-

structured interviews offer the interviewees more space to express their views than do other research methods, such as observations and surveys (Pring, 2006), and they also offer an opportunity for participants to let others know about their experiences and views (Wellington, 2000). In the process of designing the interview questions, the interviewer can plan to ask the interviewees for confirmation, clarification or elaboration, by including probes, prompts and follow-up questions (Robson, 2002). In addition, the participants can create their own understandings and interpretations of the issues covered by the research enquiry (Rapley, 2001), and therefore this will be an avenue for the interviewer to receive intricate and comprehensive details covered by the study questions. There is more than one voice, within a person, that is constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer (Luttrell, 2010), and thus the researcher and the researched together create the notions asked during the interview (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Furthermore, the participants can share issues that are not asked by the researcher (Wellington, 2000). Since the interview may progress in an unpredictable way (Rapley, 2001), a good semi-structured interview is therefore one that responds to unpredictable issues shared by the interviewees (Braun & Clarke, 2014). This can also positively influence the participants' responses to the research questions. The researcher's interpersonal skills are also significant in conducting successful interviews, as good interpersonal skills can help the interviewees to feel relaxed and willing to share information about themselves with the interviewer; this can also lead to the development of trust among the two, or what is called rapport (Esterberg, 2002).

4.5.1.1 Development of student, teacher and tutor interview schedules

Through the design of three semi-structured interview schedules for the three types of participants (students, teachers and tutors), I aimed to achieve some crucial purposes. First, I sought the students' perceptions about issues around the teaching of cohesion and coherence and their verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence (Appendix 1.1). The first part of the student interview schedule included questions that assisted me in exploring how they perceived their experience of the teaching of writing cohesion and coherence (Arabic and English writing at school) and EFL academic writing at university,

importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality and challenges of making students' academic essays cohesive and coherent. The interview schedule also had questions on students' awareness level of cohesion (i.e. grammatical cohesion that includes reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion that involves reiteration and collocation) and cohesion density (i.e. common cohesive ties used by students). It also aimed to investigate how well they could articulate coherence-related concepts (e.g. coherence between sentences in text, coherence between and within paragraphs, coherence in the essay as a whole and the role of cohesion on coherence). The schedule also looked into how they would verbalize their understanding of the relationships between coherence and some other related terms (e.g. essay connectedness, logic or making sense, background and subject knowledge and interaction between the writer and the reader). The final part of the interview schedule aimed at exploring how well they could reflect on the cohesion and coherence of their own texts. In this part there were questions on their awareness of their use of grammatical and lexical cohesive ties in their essays. There were also questions that explored their metalinguistic understanding of coherence- namely their understanding of text connectedness, their awareness of what a coherent introduction, body paragraph and conclusion are, and their awareness of the role of content and world knowledge and the interaction between the writer and reader on coherence.

Second, in the case of the writing teachers, I was seeking their awareness of cohesion and coherence and their perceptions of issues in the teaching of this area (Appendix 1.2). The teacher interview schedule had questions that investigated the teachers' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion (i.e. grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation). The schedule also included question on their metalinguistic understanding of coherence-related concepts (e.g. coherence between sentences in text, coherence between and within paragraphs and coherence in the essay as a whole). It also looked into how they would verbalize their understanding of the relationships between coherence and some other related terms (e.g. relationship between coherence and essay connectedness, logic or making sense, background

and subject knowledge and interaction between the writer and the reader). The schedule also looked at how the teachers taught cohesion and coherence (i.e. how they viewed their experience of teaching cohesion and coherence to students in EFL academic writing classes, how they perceived the importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality, and what they thought teachers should do with their students to help them improve their writing cohesion and coherence). It also explored the teachers' perceptions of their students' difficulties (i.e. their perceptions of students' understanding of cohesion and coherence, key challenges encountering students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing and solutions to problems/challenges arising with teaching cohesion and coherence to students).

Third, the tutor interview schedule also helped me to obtain the writing tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence and their perspectives of their students' understanding of cohesion and coherence and of the teaching and tutoring of cohesion and coherence (Appendix 1.3). The schedule had similar questions on metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence to the ones in the teacher interview schedule, as mentioned above. The tutor interview schedule also aimed to investigate how the tutors tutored cohesion and coherence (i.e. their experience as a tutor at the Writing Centre of helping students improve their cohesion and coherence in their academic essays) and how they perceived their students' difficulties (i.e. their students' understanding of cohesion and coherence, key challenges encountering students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing and solutions to problems/challenges arising with teaching cohesion and coherence to students). The schedule also had questions on the tutor's perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence (i.e. how they perceived the teachers' teaching of cohesion and coherence to students, how they saw the importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality and what they thought teachers should do with their students to help them improve cohesion and coherence in academic writing).

Further, I aimed at looking at matches and mismatches in what the students, teachers and tutors perceived about the teaching of cohesion and coherence. Further, part of the interviews with the three participant groups involved an elicitation task where they were asked, using cards, to verbalize their understanding of what they thought was familiar types and concepts related to cohesion and/or coherence.

However, the rigour of the data that come from the semi-structured interviews may be problematic, if not properly addressed, and may influence the quality and depth of the participants' responses. What students say may be rushed and not well thought out as they are often under pressure to attend to many commitments. They may, thus, not reveal their genuine reflections of what they understand and/or perceive about cohesion and coherence in their writing. In addition, as the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews come from the different students', teachers' and tutors' understandings of their realities, the ways in which they communicate this understanding to the researcher/interviewer may be different. The version of reality they choose to disclose to the researcher might be idealised or partial (Hyland, 2013). For example, what students reveal about when they discuss their understanding/perception of what teachers do with them regarding teaching cohesion and coherence can be an interpretation of their high expectations of teachers' practices (what teachers should do for them), rather than an interpretation of their teachers' real practices. Consequently, the interviewer might not capture the precise meanings that the participants conceive, as the researcher has his own particular world constructions, and the respondents' meanings and understanding, therefore, are constructed by the researcher's meanings and understanding (Pring, 2006)- a situation that signifies that alteration can never be avoided. However, as the researcher, I was still-able to form a good level of certainty about how serious they were about what they said in response to the questions of my interviews. The connectedness of what they said, and how consistent their talk was, served as indicators of their credibility (Klein & Myers, 1999).

Since the students in my study context are native speakers of Arabic, and English is a foreign/second language to them, I initially thought that they might have difficulty in responding to the interview questions entirely in English. My initial assumption was that they might feel more comfortable expressing their feelings, thoughts and experiences in Arabic; however, I had also assumed that since my topic of enquiry was relevant to the context of their EFL academic writing course, they would most likely prefer to use English. Therefore, my potential student participants were notified that they could use Arabic or code-switch between Arabic and English whenever they wanted to during the interviews. However, all ten student participants chose to use English. Their level of spoken English enabled them to express themselves freely, and they referred with ease to writing-related terms such as topic sentences, thesis statements, paragraphing and signposting. They used Arabic only occasionally to socialize with the researcher before and after the interviews. I came to realize later on that it was difficult even for me to come up with precise writing-related Arabic equivalents, including cohesion and coherence-related terms, and therefore using English terms that the students were already familiar with was easier and more practical. Teachers and tutors were obviously not expected to experience challenges when responding in English to the interview questions, due to their command of English and awareness of the EFL writing context.

4.5.2 Text analysis

Text analysis is another research method used in my study. Text analysis is about interpreting and analysing texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), whether the text is written as a direct response to the study enquiry or written for other purposes (Lichtman, 2013). In my study context, the students' academic essays were part of a writing course assessment. The scripts were used in my research to respond to one of my one of the study main questions, namely what features of cohesion and coherence are evident in their essays. Analysing their essays served as an essential method to demonstrate the level of their understanding of cohesion and coherence; to provide evidence of how they understood and actualised cohesion and coherence in their texts.

Another significant advantage of using text analysis is the assumption that content analysis is “*unobtrusive*” (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorenson, 2006, p. 465), since the observer cannot influence the observed. Two main purposes of text analysis in educational research are error analysis of students’ writing and capturing dominant practices of individuals (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorenson, 2006)- both of which are relevant to my text analysis, in that it demonstrated how well the students wrote with cohesion and coherence. The text analysis of the students’ essays demonstrated the students’ use of cohesion and coherence (Appendix 1.4), as explained in the section below.

4.5.2.1 Development of text analysis grid

The text analysis specifically showed the students’ use of cohesion and coherence (Appendix 1.4). The text grid was designed to capture cohesion (i.e. grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation). Through the grid, I could count the students’ correct use of the four sub types of grammatical cohesive devices; reference (i.e. personal pronouns, demonstratives, the definite article *the*, comparatives), conjunction (i.e. additive, adversative, causal, temporal, continuative), substitution (i.e. nominal, verbal, clause) and ellipsis (i.e. nominal, verbal, clause). The grid also looked into the frequency of the occurrences of the two sub types of lexical cohesion, which are reiteration or repetition (i.e. same word repetition, synonym or near synonym, hyponym, general word, superordinate, hypernyms) and collocation. I was therefore able to identify cohesion density (i.e. the frequency of cohesive devices whether grammatical or lexical) and cohesion distance (i.e. whether cohesive ties are immediate, mediated, intermediate, or both mediated and remote), and whether density and accuracy of cohesion devices meant better writing coherence. The grid also investigated areas that indicate how coherent the students’ essays were in relation to coherence-related concepts. (i.e. background and subject knowledge, content, unity, meaning, logic/sense making and relationship between the writer/text and the reader) in the different parts of their essays (i.e. induction, body and conclusion paragraphs). The data coming from the grid enabled me to determine whether the essays’ cohesion and coherence matched what the students were able to verbally express during the interviews about their

understanding of cohesion and coherence and how they reflected on their use of cohesion and coherence in their essays.

4.6 Research trustworthiness

There are measures in qualitative research that address research quality, just as reliability and validity do in quantitative research. Quality, however, or what is normally called trustworthiness, in qualitative research, is evaluated differently (Silverman, 2006). Guba (1981) proposes that the constructs of trustworthiness involve four criteria that correspond to the criteria of validity and reliability in positivist/post-positivist research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They indicate quality or rigour in interpretive/constructivist research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Credibility is parallel to internal validity in positivist/post-positivist research, transferability to external validity (generalisability); whereas dependability is parallel to reliability and confirmability to objectivity (Shenton, 2004).

4.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is the most significant criterion that evaluates the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It responds to the question as to whether the results are congruent with reality, in order to establish confidence that the research has properly recorded the phenomenon being explored. Credibility is also linked to the research focus and to ensuring confidence in how the processes of research data and data analysis handle the research focus (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The use of triangulation is one procedure to establish and maintain credibility.

Triangulation occurs when different sources address the same question. It is about joining several sources of data to generate themes or categories to corroborate confirmations collected using various research methods (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In the context of my research, triangulation occurs in the level of sources of methods and participants as follows.

The study data come from my two research methods: the semi-structured interviews and text analysis, both of which focused on students' understanding of cohesion and coherence (see Table 4.2). The interviews were utilized to probe students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion represented in their knowledge of cohesion types, and their understanding of particular notions associated with defining coherence: connectedness in their essay introduction paragraphs, body paragraphs, conclusion paragraphs, the whole essay (i.e. between paragraphs), thesis statements and paragraph topic sentences, and the role of cohesion in establishing coherence.

Sources of methods	Main questions
Semi-structured interviews	What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?
Text analysis	What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing?

Table 4.2: *Triangulation in the level of sources of methods*

The text analysis of the students' essays was similarly used to examine their understanding of cohesion and coherence. It looked at how they demonstrated their understanding of cohesion in terms of their use of cohesion types and ties. It also revealed how coherent the students' sentences, paragraphs and whole texts were, and determined whether the connectedness of ideas existed in students' essays. Table 4.2 illustrates this type of triangulation.

Sources of participants	Main question	Sub-questions
Students	How do students, teachers and tutors perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you see the teachers' teaching of cohesion and coherence to students? • How do the participants perceive the importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality to? • What are the challenges that students face in making their academic essays cohesive and coherent?
Teachers		
Tutors		

Table 4.3: *Triangulation in the level of sources of participants*

My study data were also generated from various sources signified in different groups of participants, namely students, academic writing teachers and writing tutors, who were all used in order to examine the participants' responses to a unified question which exemplified their perceptions of issues relevant to the

teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing. Table 4.3 illustrates how the semi-structured interviews were utilised to address three sub-questions that related to the main question.

4.6.2 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the study findings can be applied to another setting (Shenton, 2004). This notion, represented in the generalisability in positivist/post-positivist research, is of vital significance, as there is always an emphasis in this type of research on whether the results can be generalised to a larger population. However, qualitative research typically has a small sample, and this makes it difficult to generalise. But some researchers contend that, even though the cases researched in qualitative research are particular, they can still serve as examples in broad groups- which would indicate that transferability is possible (Stake, 1995). I propose that my research is transferable, since it investigated in depth ten undergraduate learners, and its results can, therefore, be relevant to similar groups of learners in other contexts. For the same reason, transferability also comes from the results that were constructed from the text analysis of the students' academic essays.

4.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is about whether similar results can be found if the study were to be conducted again using the same research tool/s, in the same setting, with the same respondents. In positivist/post-positivist research, reliability is based on particular techniques to find out how reliable the research tools are (Boudah, 2010). On the other hand, in qualitative research obtaining similar results when repeating the research with the same respondents in the same setting is problematic, due to the changing nature of the researched phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Guba and Lincoln (1994) emphasize the interrelation between dependability and credibility, and contend that when credibility is ensured, this means that dependability is also achieved. Dependability can be established through the use of overlapping research methods like focus group interviews and individual interviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In my study design, there is an

instance of overlapping that created dependability, as both the student interviews and text analysis investigated students' understanding of cohesion and coherence.

Dependability can also be addressed if the researcher reports the research process thoroughly and in detail. When being comprehensively explicit about the process of research in terms of, for example, the research design and the data collection, the research can be repeated following the same research procedures and processes even if the same findings cannot be generated (Shenton, 2004). A similar notion suggests that in qualitative research dependability is characterised by the interrogation of the research setting and methods (Richards, 2009). The thorough reporting of the research should allow the reader to create an inclusive picture of the research design and gain a comprehensive understanding of the adopted research methods and their effectiveness (Shenton, 2004). This can be done through outlining the research design, the process of the data collection and the research strengths and limitations. I have worked on actualising dependability throughout my thesis, as I discussed the study philosophical assumptions, and explained how the study methodology was consistent with the research aims and how my methodology underpinned the research methods that were utilised in my research. My thesis also clarifies how my research is best pursued through qualitative data, and gives details about the study site, the research methods and study participants.

Dependability, however, can be further enhanced by the repeated collection of data. It can be strengthened when the study data from participants are collected a number of times over a long period of time that may extend for a year or so- an approach that was difficult to implement in my case, as I am conducting a PhD project where time and resources are limited to a two-month duration of data collection that took place only once.

4.6.4 Confirmability

This criterion is a concern in qualitative research, which is in line with the concern of objectivity shared by quantitative researchers (Shenton, 2004). The task of maintaining objectivity is a challenging one, as tests and questionnaires are

developed by humans- a situation that implies possible bias via the involvement of human skills and perceptions in the design process of the quantitative research tools (Patton, 2005). Confirmability in qualitative research depends on making the process of the research study accessible for the reader by presenting the study data in a transparent manner (Richards, 2009). Therefore, researchers should take measures to ensure that the constructed results are based on the participants' experiences, understandings and perceptions, and are not affected by the researcher's preferences and predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation can boost the study research position, as it offers evidence which proves that the results are not attributable to the subjectivity of the researcher (Huberman & Miles, 2002). There are indicators of the confirmability of the qualitative research study; the assumptions that underpin the research, the decisions that lead to selecting one research tool over another, and the limitations of the adopted research methods (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). Besides working on having a clear research design, I worked on making the research data analysis and discussion systematic and rigorous in order to allow the data to lead the analysis.

4.7 Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is an essential part of interacting with the generated research data. It comprises putting the collected data together, structuring them and attempting to interpret them (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). A more thorough and in-depth definition of the process of the data analysis, proposed by Creswell (2009), discusses more elements, such as preparing the data, organising them, dividing them into categories/themes and codes/sub-codes, and then presenting the data in the form of discussions, figures and tables. This process does not necessarily mean that the data analysis should be handled after finishing the process of the data collection, as the researcher may start to see some of the data intricacy, patterns and themes before the data collection process is finished. Furthermore, data in interpretive research are commonly complex and detailed, as they deal with the perceptions, experiences, understanding and meanings that are part of a person's real social settings (Nevan & Losekoot, 2012). For instance, the social interaction in the semi-structured interviews is complex, and the characteristics of this intricacy are acknowledged in the data analysis

process (Robson, 2002). Therefore, the study sampling plan has to be selected and the coding scheme is developed in such a way as to ensure that the results obtained are consistent (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorenson, 2006) - a situation that contributes to the reliability of the text analysis.

Thematic analysis is a process that entails identifying themes, analysing them and then reporting the generated patterns or themes that exist within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2014). I adopted thematic analysis as a coding framework for analysing the texts' and interviews' data. My coding framework relied mainly on a set of pre-ordinate themes that were informed by the study questions (and the sub-themes and categories in the text analysis grid and the main and sub questions of the interview schedules).

Further, qualitative data can be analysed inductively (bottom up) or deductively (top down). They are typically analysed inductively where themes are developed based on the interpretation of the data (Thomas, 2006). An inductive approach moves from the particular to the general where the researcher starts with data collection and analysis, not with what is already known about the study, and then looks into how the findings relate to the existing literature (Harding, 2018). The deductive approach, on the other hand, involves basing the research questions on the existing knowledge (Harding, 2018). It may risk the “*wholeness*” of the individual, data may be “*decontextualized*” and the analysis may be “*unresponsive*” to relevant data that are not covered by the prearranged framework (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018. p. 662).

I opted, however, to approach my data mainly deductively due to some reasons. I did a thorough reading on the study area prior to the data study design and data collection and analysis. My study objective is relatively focused; my aim was to explore the participants' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion (predetermined types and sub-types), coherence (predetermined coherence-related concepts) and their perceptions of teaching cohesion and coherence (e.g. their previous writing

experience/training, challenges and solutions) and cohesion- and coherence features evident in students' essays. However, I was still able to detect data that were not preconceived by my deductive framework, and the individuals' responses were considered. The influence of Arabic on students' writing cohesion and coherence, as indicated in my text and interview analysis chapters, was a theme that constantly occurred from the data analysis. The study sample was relatively small, a situation that made it easier to detect the individual interviewee's voice in the analysis process of their responses.

My study investigated how the students had made their academic texts cohesive and coherent (see Table 4.4). In order to determine the presence of some linguistic features, I adopted a linguistic text analysis grid as an approach for analysing the data coming from the students' essays (Appendix 2.1). The analysis focused on the accuracy of the use of cohesion types, cohesive ties and the density of the cohesive ties to make their essays cohesive. Therefore, a significant step that the text analysis involved was analysing the data which comprised frequencies of the cohesive ties and cohesion types. It also explored how successfully the students made the essay's different parts coherent, and how cohesion was used by them to show coherence.

Participants	Themes
Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cohesion (grammatical and lexical) evident in students' writing 2. Coherence evident in students' writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabricating facts in writing, resulting in distorting coherence-related concepts • Producing irrelevant sentences • Background and subject knowledge, content, and relationship between the writer/text and the reader 3. Tense and aspect influence on cohesion and coherence 4. Influence of Arabic writing on students' writing cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference cohesive device: the definite article <i>the</i> • Run-on sentences • Redundancy

Table 4.4: *Text analysis themes*

Coding was primarily done by one coder, myself as a researcher. Double-coding was not systematically done as only four sample texts were double-coded at the

initial stage of the coding process, which raises a concern about the reliability of the coding process. I therefore attempted to raise the reliability level of coding by repeating the coding process of all the scripts for three times, comparing the findings of coding each script, and then resolving any discrepancies between the findings of each coding by going back to the script and finalizing totals of the occurrences of the cohesive devices and/or the accuracy of their use. When the coding process of all the texts was over, I would compare, for example, between the total frequencies of the occurrences of each of the five subtypes of conjunction (i.e. additive, adversative, causal, temporal, continuative), and the accurate and inaccurate use of each subtype. In the coding process, a native speaker, who is also a primary school teacher at Exeter, was consulted to check the accuracy and appropriacy of the use of some of the cohesive devices (grammatical and lexical) that I was not sure about, being a non-native speaker of the language. Double-checking the accurate/appropriate use of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices was applied on all the scripts which had syntactic or lexical language choices that the students made, and that I was not confident about their use in the context provided by the students.

The coding process was done manually for each essay. Each essay was given a code that represents its number and type (e.g. 10/C means essay number ten/a compare and contrast essay; 17/A means essay number seventeen/an argumentative essay). I used colours and initials for each type of grammatical and lexical cohesion to make it easier for me to do the counting of the total number of the use of each sub type of the cohesive devices for each script. After I was done with the coding process and getting the total of each subtype in each essay, I calculated the total use of each subtype in all the essays together, and then presented the data in the form of tables (see chapter 5).

Throughout the coding process, I kept a diary log where I made note of the script details and the students' use of words/expressions that I needed to receive a native judgment on. I then incorporated her judgments on my classification of the accurate/inaccurate use of these cohesive devices whether grammatical or lexical.

It is worth noting here that not being able to adopt a systematic double-coding for the seventy-two essays is a limitation of my study due to the limited resources available for me as a PhD researcher in terms of time and resources.

Although this framework could be limiting since only the relevant data that answered the study questions were focused on, I was still able to detect data that denoted a major theme that was not previously noted by the text analysis grid. This theme that was not part of the predetermined categories, and therefore was coded inductively, was the influence of Arabic (being the students' native language) on their writing cohesion and coherence, where relevant sub-themes were illustrated by examples from the students' essays.

The students', teachers' and tutors' data coming from my semi-structured interviews were analysed thematically with a top down coding framework, where the interview themes were categorised into pre-ordinate meaningful patterns (see Appendix 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 for three samples of the interview scripts, one of each group participant). The interviewed participants' data were imported into Excel software and were categorized into themes and sub-themes, and the data were deductively coded (see Table 4.5).

Participants	Themes
Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students' perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How teachers teach students to write with cohesion and coherence • Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality • Challenges of making students' academic essays cohesive and coherent 2. Students' experience with English and Arabic writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching of Arabic writing at school • Teaching of cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing class • Similarities/differences between the teaching of English writing at school and at the university 3. Students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion and coherence • How they would teach cohesion and coherence 4. Students' metalinguistic understanding of grammatical and lexical cohesion 5. Students' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of an essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence between sentences in an essay • Coherence between and within paragraphs • Coherence in the essay as a whole

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Students' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and some coherence-related concepts 7. Students' metalinguistic understanding of the role of cohesion on coherence in their writing 8. Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created grammatical cohesion in their writing 9. Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created lexical cohesion in their writing 10. Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created coherence in their writing
Teachers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of grammatical and lexical cohesion 2. Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of the essay 3. Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and coherence-related concepts 4. Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of whether cohesion or coherence is judged using the other 5. Teachers' perceptions of students' difficulties with writing with cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' understanding of cohesion and coherence • Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing • Solutions to problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students 6. Teachers' perceptions of teaching cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' experience of teaching cohesion and coherence • Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality • How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence
Tutors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tutors' understanding of grammatical and lexical cohesion 2. Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of the essay 3. Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and coherence-related concepts 4. Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of whether cohesion or coherence is judged using the other 5. Tutors' perceptions of students' difficulties in writing with cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' understanding of cohesion and coherence • Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing • Solutions to problems/challenges that arise when teaching cohesion and coherence to students 6. Tutor's perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' teaching of cohesion and coherence • Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality • How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence

Table 4.5: *Semi-structured interview themes*

4.8 Research ethics

4.8.1 Issues of anonymity, confidentiality, harm and consent form

Research ethics is an essential aspect of research. It is a central part of the research process, regardless of the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research (Hewitt, 2007; Kimmel, 1988). Anonymity, confidentiality, harm and consent form are key notions associated with research ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Protecting the participants' privacy, being clear about how the data are going to be managed, making them aware of the potential risks of taking part in the study, and ensuring that the participants are freely and voluntarily willing to participate, are crucial factors that need to be considered before starting any research (Esterberg, 2002). Anonymity and confidentiality are crucial ethical concerns in my research context. At first glance, confidentiality might look as if it may be violated, due to the limited number of teachers teaching the group that my student sample comes from. The writing tutors working at the Writing Centre might also seem at risk of being identified. Teachers and tutors could also be seen to be under the threat of being portrayed negatively due to the data that might come out of the study results. All these situations might entail causing harm to my respondents. However, most of the teachers and tutors, from whom my selections were made, usually change the programmes they teach every two years, and there are more than 200 teachers who come from more than thirty countries, and whose administrative posts and teaching roles are rotated: a setting that can help with the anonymity and confidentiality of the academic staff participating in my study. Students' anonymity and confidentiality, however, are at less risk, as in every year there are hundreds of students who are enrolled in the same programme as my student sample. I am responsible as a researcher, in that I demonstrate that the informants' perspectives, rights and welfare are honoured, and their anonymity is maintained. Thus, anonymity, confidentiality, and not causing detriment to the students, teachers or tutors were central ethical concerns to me that I had to be continuously aware of. I sought and got full ethical approval for this study from the University of Exeter and the CPS (Appendix 3.1 and 3.2). The consent forms that I designed and gave to my participants also dealt with the ethical issues that were relevant to my study. To ensure I did not use my insider status to evoke a sense of

compulsion or dutiful compliance, the consent forms clearly indicated that their participation was completely voluntary (informed consent) and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. I also made sure that the participants understood what they were involved in, before I started conducting my study interviews and collecting the essays that were initially used for the course assessment (Appendix 3.3-3.8).

Research ethics may also have other dimensions. Ethics is signified by the researcher's integrity, represented in his/her knowledge, experience and honesty, as these characteristics impact the researcher positively when making decisions that are informed and well thought of concerning the research requirements and ethics (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). For the sake of reducing bias, researchers are encouraged not to reveal much detail about themselves, and therefore interviews, with some limitations, are viewed as less "*interchangeable*", where trained interviewers should be able to generate similar data from the interviewees, while at the same time intimacy may be absent if the researcher does not reciprocate (Esterberg, 2002, p. 90). The issues that involve the nature of the relationship between the researcher and researched, and what respondents get out of their participation, pose concerns that relate to power relations in research.

4.8.2 Research power relations

Power relations in research constitute a substantial element of research ethics. Power is a constant process of interchange between the researcher and respondents, where equality is maintained (Maiter, 2008) and dialogue is sustained to establish a culture of communication (Christensen, 2004). The concept of power is diverse because its meaning varies from one research context to another (Mears, 2009). Two prominent power concerns specifically related to my study context are characterised by the researcher's role and by the language. Below is an elucidation of these two ethical considerations that I had to wrestle with during my data collection.

4.8.2.1 Researcher's role as a power concern

The role of the researcher in research is a key concern that researchers have to be aware of while conducting research. The researcher may experience the paradox

of struggling with two roles while doing his/her study (Yee & Andrew, 2006). The nature of the dual identities that some researchers have to manage establishes power relations that may lead to confusing the respondents (O'Leary, 2004). The researcher is accountable for continuously making his/her participants aware of the role s/he plays in the study (Lukes, 2005). In my study context, I was probably associated with two roles: the researcher and the teacher. This dual identity might have led to a power dilemma, as proposed by Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009, that might have negatively influenced the rigour of my data that I extracted from my student interviews. The students might still have viewed me as a teacher or as their writing teachers' colleague more than as a researcher, and therefore might have chosen not to share their genuine perceptions, understanding, concerns and perhaps reservations. The research respondents obviously do not only interact with the researcher but also with the social realities and identities that s/he is associated with in the research setting (Finch, 1993), which could well have been the case with my student participants. On the other hand, interviewing teachers and tutors to discuss their metalinguistic understanding was perhaps less problematic. They were generally accustomed to discussing, with their colleagues at work, pedagogical and professional topics concerned with the realities of classes, teaching and students. Hence when interviewed they were less likely to experience conflict in terms of my roles as a colleague in their institution and as a researcher.

However, in the context of my study there is a different aspect to my role as a researcher. The researcher's familiarity with the study participants may help the respondents to feel less stressed and to elaborate more on their understandings (Leech, 2002). This was perhaps relevant and applicable to my role and identity as a researcher, and may have helped me to obtain more rigorous data, as my participants did not hesitate to share their actual perceptions and understanding with me because I was familiar to them. Further, because I was part of the setting they were talking about, the students shared with me genuine insight, which could prove valuable for my study enquiry. In summary, the challenge that researchers face when pursuing authentic data is the overcoming of power issues which, if not

handled well, can hinder them from exploring the participants' understandings in their natural social contexts, or generating data that are authentic and credible (Lukes, 2005).

4.8.2.2 Language as a power concern

Another prevalent ethical concern in my research is language, which implies power relations. Language as a power attribute is regarded as a factor that may intimidate the respondents (O'Leary, 2004). It may result in miscommunication owing to translation-and interpretation-related challenges. The participants may misunderstand the words the researcher uses, and similarly the researcher may construct inaccurate interpretations of the words used by the respondents (Roulston, 2010). As the data analysis is expected to come from the participants' understandings and perspectives (Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985), any misunderstandings that may take place between the researcher and the researched may negatively influence the rigour of the data (Klein & Myers, 1999). In my case, misunderstanding owing to language barriers was not an issue with the writing teachers and tutors, since they were in command of English; but it might have been when it came to interviewing the students. Therefore, the students were encouraged to use Arabic whenever they needed or wished to. My initial assumption was that they might need to refer to their experiences and thoughts in Arabic, but they might resort to English when they would touch on concepts/terms that specifically related to their EFL academic writing. Giving the option of using Arabic in the interviews was also meant to reduce power barriers, proposed by Guzzini (2005), since Arabic is a language that is shared between them as interviewees and myself as the researcher and interviewer. The students, however, used English throughout the interviews and only resorted to Arabic when they made humorous comments and/or socialized with me before and after their interviews. In addition, I utilised prompts, probes and follow-up questions, mentioned by researchers like Rapley (2001), Robson (2002) and Wengraf (2001) whenever I was not quite certain what the participants students were referring to in their responses, and whenever I needed more elaboration on the interview questions.

4.9 Strengths and limitations of the study design

4.9.1 Strengths

The study offers an in-depth exploration of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing. The students in my research were in a position where they informed the study and revealed significant data. Participants' informing research and enriching data are notions proposed by researchers like Garthwaite (2009); Gergen and Gergen (2000) and Miller and Boulton (2007). My respondents' contributions have benefited and enriched my study greatly, and therefore their insight has resulted in implications for the teaching of EFL academic writing, a setting that indicates a strong position of power. Triangulation of resources in the level of participants and research methods has also enhanced the study position regarding its transferability.

4.9.2 Limitations

However, the study has its limitations of which the most important is perhaps its relevance to the issue of credibility. Credibility is one key criterion in assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. It is established through an interaction that takes place for a lengthy period of time with the participants and the research context. Longitudinal research studies are significant because they provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon investigated (Leki, 2007). The researcher's extended interaction with the research field means that the researcher was exposed to a more diverse, more comprehensive and deeper perspective from the respondents and therefore gained a better understanding of the research setting (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I spent two months with my study informants in their natural setting during the data collection process. This planned period of time of engagement with students, teachers and tutors, which took place while administering the semi-structured interviews, was still limited, and therefore may not be adequate to generate a deep and comprehensive understanding of the students', teachers' and tutors' perspectives on the study enquiry. Besides, the interviews were conducted only once. This was due to the fact that I was time bound by the PhD timeline, and therefore could not do more rounds of data collection or have more than one site for my research data. Greater credibility

would, however, have been achieved if the data collection was repeated over time and several sites for data were arranged, which was not the case in my research study. This would probably have had implications on the depth, comprehensiveness, diversity and quality of the data gained from the interviews and text analysis.

Another limitation is to do with the use of semi-structured interviews. The planned and organised movement from one question to another during the interview might make the interviewee feel that the researcher is after detecting practices that had not been stated in the study objective (Drever, 2003). The difference between what is announced and what is asked about in the interview might result in a feeling of deception and mistrust among participants. Also, it is possible that the participants might feel that the researcher is trying to make them say things that are not part of their world construction (Hammersley, 2014). They might feel that the researcher/interviewer is directing them towards certain answers that are not related to or true about their settings. In addition, participants generally hold an assumption that the researcher is after recording their understandings, perceptions and experiences based on the research aim stated in their consent forms and on the way the interviewer interacts with them (Hammersley, 2014). This might lead them to answer questions in ways that they assume could please the interviewer (Lichtman, 2013), which might not be in line with what they actually feel- a situation that might negatively impact the quality of the data retrieved from the interviews.

Conclusion

The study enquiry was initiated by my genuine concern about and personal interest in students' academic writing cohesion and coherence. The cohesion and coherence of EFL academic writing is a reality that students for whom English is a second language have to manage during their academic life, starting from school through to university and post-university. Even though I am a teacher of EFL undergraduate academic writing, and frequently talk about cohesion and coherence with my students, I have always felt that EFL university students still find it hard to write with cohesion and coherence. My research explores this area to gain some understanding about the reality of students, teachers and tutors. This

chapter has addressed major philosophical assumptions, and has then focused on what drives my study in terms of its ontology, epistemology, methodology and its qualitative research data. It has also given an overview of the study site, participants, sampling procedures and research methods. The chapter has then looked into my study trustworthiness, its data analysis, ethics and strengths and limitations.

5 Chapter five: Students' text analysis

The text analysis of the EFL undergraduate students' academic essays aims to investigate what characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in their writing (see section 3.16). The analysis was conducted on seventy-two essays (thirty-six compare and contrast essays and thirty-six argumentative essays) whose word limit is about 350 words. Two main themes that the analysis covers are cohesion (i.e. grammatical and lexical) and coherence. The students' essays were analysed deductively, where categories and subcategories of grammatical and lexical cohesion, as well as concepts pertinent to coherence, were predetermined in order to explore how students write with cohesion and coherence in accordance with these categories and concepts (see Table 4.4 and Appendix 1.4). However, a theme that prominently emerged out of the students' texts, and therefore was analysed inductively, was the influence of Arabic on students' writing in relation to their cohesion and coherence. What follows is an analysis of the students' essays according to these categories and themes.

Note:

In the chapter students' essays are referred to using a number followed by C or A indicating a compare and contrast or an argumentative essay respectively (e.g. 12/C means essay number twelve compare and contrast, and 12/A essay twelve argumentative).

Students' examples in this chapter appear as they are with no attempted corrections of meaning or form.

5.1 Cohesion

5.1.1 Grammatical cohesion

The analysis below (see Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4) contains the four subcategories of grammatical cohesion: reference, conjunction, substitution and ellipsis.

Reference

Reference types	Correct/ Incorrect	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Pronouns	Correct	358	800
	Incorrect	22	14
Demonstratives	Correct	151	120
	Incorrect	5	6
Definite article <i>the</i>	Correct	661	518
	Incorrect	190	186
Comparatives	Correct	363	186
	Incorrect	14	4
Total	Correct	1,533	1,624
	Incorrect	231	210

Table 5.1: Showing the results of the analysis of 'reference'

The highest instances of inaccurate use of reference (i.e. personals, demonstratives and the definite article *the*, and comparatives) was found to be in the students' use of the definite article *the* (see Table 5.1). Generally, less able writers used it before indefinite plural nouns and before abstract nouns where *zero* article is used. An elucidation of the students' inaccurate use of *the* is elaborated on section (5.4.1), which looks at the influence of Arabic writing. The students' inaccurate use of other reference cohesive devices was occasional: mainly the use of singular demonstratives with plural nouns (e.g. *this arguments*), or the construction of incorrect reflexive pronouns, such as *themselves*, *themselves*, *themselves* or *himselves*.

All of the cohesive personal reference ties were anaphoric (i.e. no incident of cataphoric reference). It might be worth noting here that all of the interviewed students who successfully defined reference talked about anaphoric reference only. Further, concerning cohesion distance, all of the reference ties that the students used were immediate, and there were no instances of mediated, intermediate or both mediated and remote ties. This might be because the students' texts were relatively short, but could also be due to their lack of confidence in connecting sentences that are relatively far apart in terms of distance. The students also frequently used the *dummy it* (e.g. *It is thought that...*).

There was a similar density of demonstratives and the definite article *the* used by the students in their two types of essay, while pronouns were much more numerous in the argumentative essays (i.e. more frequent reference to their arguments and their opponents'), and there were more comparatives in the compare and contrast essays (i.e. higher use of compare and contrast words) than in the argumentative essays (see Table 5.1). This appears to suggest that the students had genre specific understanding of appropriate reference use. The interview data revealed the students' understandings of this type of cohesion.

Conjunction

Conjunction types	Correct/ Incorrect	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Additive	Correct	169	254
	Incorrect	0	6
Adversative	Correct	184	172
	Incorrect	7	2
Causal	Correct	130	265
	Incorrect	4	3
Temporal	Correct	110	116
	Incorrect	7	6
Continuative	Correct	18	9
	Incorrect	0	0
Total	Correct	611	816
	Incorrect	18	17

Table 5.2: *Showing the results of the analysis of 'conjunction'*

The students used conjunction cohesive devices (i.e. additive, adversative, causal, temporal and continuative) intensely- considering the relatively short essays they wrote, they overused them (see Table 5.2). Out of the 36 essays (± 350 words), conjunction was used more than 15 times in 23 of the compare and contrast essays and in 35 of the argumentative essays. Below is two examples of students' heavy use of conjunction devices in the two essay types.

***Finally**, the opponents claim that people who smoke are only damaging themselves. If they are smoking and know that it is harmful for their bodies, **but** they still smoking, **finally** they will harm themselves, **but** they also harm their families and societies. The bad effects of smoking touch who are surrounding the smokers **too**. **As a result**, families' relationships will collapse and societies will be destroyed. (17/A)*

*On the other hand, nowadays children sometimes abandon home's food and eat fast food instead **also** they eat in tables with knife and spoon so they can feel their sense of prestige when eating.*

***Secondly**, is the daily routine children **nowadays** have a TV to watch and IPad... (34/C)*

This may be linked to the teaching practices of over-emphasizing the use of conjunctive devices. The students used most of the conjunction types correctly, but there were occasions when they made mistakes with conjunction meanings or forms. Examples of meaning-related mistakes were: using *moreover* immediately after the statement sentence of the paragraph, where the student was only starting his/her first support/detail sentence, and using *moreover* at the end of the conclusion paragraph, where the student was not actually adding a point, but only a final comment:

*In conclusion, because of the fact that smoking is not good for smokers and non-smokers' health and it effect countries' economy negatively, smokers are not allowed to smoke. **Moreover**, countries need to impose strict laws to decrease the number of smokers. (5/A)*

The following two examples demonstrate students' use of *as* and *despite*, where the meaning conveyed was not actually a cause relationship:

*In conclusion, **as** travelling in the past and now are the same in one aspect, which is reasons for travelling, that do not mean that there are no differences. (32/C)*

***Despite** travelling now and in the past they are similar in reasons for travelling, but there are very significant differences between them which they are kinds of transport and the period. (1/C)*

The form-related mistakes represent conjunctions that were structured incorrectly, using, for example, *because of* instead of *because* and *on other hand/in the other*

hand instead of *on the other hand*. Below is an example of incorrectly structuring a sentence with *although*:

Although travelling in the past and now is similar in the benefits gained from travelling, different in reasons for travelling and kinds of transportation. (8/C)

They also used *on the other side*- an expression that comes from Arabic- to express controversy, as demonstrated by this example:

Now it is rare to see a child out-side his house playing with other children. The children now play with I pad, playstation and other electronic games. **On the other side**, the children were playing out-side their houses. They were playing football, basketball and all the dynamic games... (23/C)

Substitution and ellipsis

Grammatical cohesion type	Correct/ Incorrect	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Substitution	Correct	4	3
	Incorrect	1	1
Ellipsis	Correct	17	2
	Incorrect	1	3

Table 5.3: Showing the results of the analysis of 'substitution and ellipsis'

The students' essays contained occasional incidents of substitution (i.e. replacing a lexical item with another, e.g. *one*, *do* and *so*) and ellipsis (i.e. zero substitution), mostly only one (see Table 5.3). Based on Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy, grammatical substitution and ellipsis are rare in English writing, a proposition that was confirmed by this text analysis data, as substitution and ellipsis were hardly used by the students.

Further, they made mistakes with their few instances of applying substitution and ellipsis, as illustrated below:

Substitution

Smoking also endanger the people who breath in these smokes as if they were the **one** to smoke. (11/A)

*People in the past and now travel around the world to search for new beautiful places and also the ancient **one**. (14/C)*

Ellipsis

*There are people who have ability to achieve it and there are people who **can't**. (9/A)*

*Its growth came along with people supporting smoking and others who **not**. (21/A)*

*Those transportation are faster than **other** which are invented recently. (14/C)*

5.1.2 Lexical cohesion

Lexical substitution/reiteration

Lexical cohesion is divided into reiteration or repetition (i.e. same word repetition, synonyms/near synonyms, including hyponyms), the general word 'thing', and superordinates (hypernyms) and collocation. Below is a full analysis of the lexical cohesion types and sub-types that the students used in their essays:

Lexical reiteration types	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Same word repetition	1824	1820
Synonyms/near synonyms (including hyponyms)	69	77
General word <i>thing</i>	40	19
Superordinates (hypernyms)	46	26

Table 5.4: *Showing the results of the analysis of 'lexical substitution/reiteration'*

Same word repetition

The students resorted intensively to repeating the same word and word forms (i.e. word cognates). The total count of the words used in each of the two types of essay was almost the same (see Table 5.4). The number of repeated lexical items in the students' writing did not necessarily indicate how cohesive and coherent their writing was. It was hard to judge sometimes whether repeating a certain word was meant to be for signposting, and therefore enhancing cohesion and coherence, or whether it was due to a limited repertoire of lexical words. The

interviewed students talked about repeating key words in their writing in order to maintain cohesion and coherence. Same word repetition was very prominent, considering the length of the essays, which may indicate that they lacked the ability to express their ideas using diverse lexical items. Below is an example of how same word repetition (i.e. travelling and its cognates) in a single paragraph of a compare and contrast essay is a sign of lack of vocabulary rather than an effective management of lexical cohesion:

***Travelling** now and in the past are similar in some ways. The most important similarity is in the reasons of **travelling**. Both of them are **travelling** for some reasons; for example, They are **travelling** for the treatment, so they travel to isolate county for getting the appropriate treatment. In addition, They are **travelling** to study and get high education, also they may **travel** for the pleasure and get an amazing time. In other word they will **travel** to any country in order to get what they want from that country. Furthermore, many people **travel** to for doing religious thing Just like Arab who They are **traveling** to Maca. Also, they **travel** to trade an get more money. (25/C)*

Another example of this is from an argumentative essay paragraph, where there is also an over repetition of the words 'grades' and 'students':

*Each university has a different system from the others. Some universities have a system that **students** must be given quizzes and **grades**, but in some of them **students** just study without taking quizzes and **grades**. A lot of people think that there is no need for tests and quizzes at the universities because **students** can study more confidently and in an excellent way if there are no **grades** at the end. However it is believed that there are obvious advantages for giving quizzes, tests or **grades** to **students** which are **students** will be more responsible, teachers are able to distinguish between the*

bad and good **students** and parents can know about their children's' **grades** (31/A).

Synonyms/near synonyms (including hyponyms)

The students did not use synonyms/near synonyms (including hyponyms) intensively in their essays (see Table 5.4). This perhaps indicates their limited repertoire of English words and that they lack the ability to express themselves using a variety of English words. This situation may also serve as additional evidence to their same word repetition, in that their limited use of synonyms/near synonyms and hyponyms was due to lack of the necessary vocabulary, rather than effective cohesion. Examples of the synonyms/near synonyms that appeared in the students' essays were 'disadvantages-drawbacks', 'effect-impact', 'troubles-problems', 'disease-illness' and 'relieved-relaxed'. Some of the hyponyms they used were 'car-wheels', 'car-steering', 'world-countries', 'body-heart' and 'body-lung'.

General word

The students did not use the general word *thing* heavily (see Table 5.4), possibly because they wanted to be specific in their choice of words.

Superordinates (hypernyms)

The students used, though not intensely, some superordinates (hypernyms) in their writing (see Table 5.4). They came up with similar words such as 'diseases-lung cancer', 'vehicle-buses', 'devices-smart phones' and 'assessment-quizzes'. This is possibly because they were given a list of ideas that they could develop in their writing, a situation that resulted in them expressing their ideas in a similar way to each other.

Collocation

Lexical cohesion type	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Collocation	501	581

Table 5.5: Showing the results of the analysis of 'collocation'

The students had similar total counts of collocation in the two types of essays (see Table 5.5). Their use of the collocation was, however, limited and resorted to using

repeated patterns of words, which could be due to their limited knowledge of English words. An overview of the number of collocations the students used for each type of essay is in Appendix 4.1. Examples of the collocations that appeared in comparing and contrasting travelling in the past and present are 'similarities-differences', 'spend-time', 'spend-money', 'reaching destinations', 'customs-traditions', 'cultures-religion'. Appendix 4.2 has more examples of the collocations in each essay.

5.1.3 Grammatical and lexical cohesion: Comparison of frequency

Below is a comparison of the density/frequency of grammatical and lexical cohesion in students' essays:

Cohesion types	Compare and contrast	Argumentative
Reference	1,764	1,834
Conjunction	629	833
Lexical cohesion	2,480	2,525

Table 5.6: *Showing the results of the analysis of 'grammatical and lexical cohesion'*

Below are the findings of the analysis of cohesive density of grammatical and lexical cohesion. The use of reference devices, among grammatical cohesion types, was considerably more frequent than conjunction (see Table 5.6), and ellipsis and substitution respectively were the least frequent (see Table 5.3). Lexical cohesive devices were more common than reference and conjunction (see Table 5.6), a result that echoes many studies of cohesion. In lexical cohesion, reiteration had more frequency than collocation (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5), and within lexical reiteration same word repetition was the most common type, followed respectively by synonyms/near synonyms (including hyponyms), superordinates and general word *thing* (see Table 5.4).

5.1.4 Grammatical and lexical cohesion: Students' use versus metalinguistic understanding

In the area of grammatical cohesion, the results indicate the following: the type of essay, whether compare and contrast or argumentative, determined the cohesive density of the reference devices used by the students. For instance, the compare and contrast had more comparatives and the argumentative had more pronouns, as the students had to repeatedly refer to their arguments while at the same time

acknowledge the opposing arguments. The students encountered challenges mostly with their use of the definite article *the* (i.e. reference), a situation that indicates its complexity and the interlanguage influence of Arabic, and, as discussed in section 5.4.1, the influence of Arabic on cohesion and coherence. They also overused conjunctions, which influenced the natural flow of their writing. They may have wanted to demonstrate their ability to use a variety of explicit cohesive conjunctive devices, but, despite their accurate use of conjunctives in most cases, ended up writing in a somewhat artificial way. Merely using cohesive devices was not sufficient as they did not manage them effectively, which might link to a lack of metalinguistic understanding of grammatical cohesion. Further, the students' scarce use of grammatical substitution and ellipsis in writing corroborated the findings of other earlier studies.

Grammatical cohesion is more straightforward to measure compared with lexical cohesion, particularly collocation. Collocation has a history of being researched differently, depending on the models adopted for investigation. Antonymy, for instance, is considered by some researchers as a relation that is part of lexical reiteration not collocation. The findings of the different research work, therefore, vary accordingly. However, including collocation in this text analysis, despite Hasan's (1984) recommendation not to due to its vagueness, would still give an indication of the lexical items that normally occur in similar environments (i.e. collocation), which the students used in their writing, and potential issues/challenges that come with their use.

Further, in view of the students' lexical cohesion, the language of their writing was largely repetitive. The students came up with similar lexical words (e.g. same word repetition and synonyms/near synonyms), phrases and sentence structures. This might be attributed to their limited vocabulary, but also to the language phrases that the students were introduced to and had the option of using in their essays. This perhaps made the teachers' job easier when helping their students to become more cohesive and coherent, but it also limited the students' creativity and led them to use repetitive lexical items and sentence structures in their essays. It is possible

that the students could not make appropriate linguistic choices, which might link to their lack of metalinguistic understanding. This may also have increased their resentment about how restricting they felt English academic writing could be, a perspective that was repeatedly expressed by the interviewed students and brought up by teachers and tutors.

5.2 Coherence

Coherence is less direct than cohesion, and elusive and more resistant to being quantified or classified. It can, however, be evaluated through investigating the text content, structure/organization, meaning, unity, logic, background and subject knowledge and the relation established between writer/text and the reader. Below is an analysis of the students' writing coherence concerning these concepts.

5.2.1 Fabricating facts in writing, resulting in distorting coherence-related concepts

The students made up scientific statements, stated over-generalizations and/or reported unevidenced research, which negatively affected their writing coherence (essay content, meaning, logic and relationship with the reader), as illustrated below (more in appendix 4.3).

In addition, according to doctors smokers cannot live more than sixty-five years. (6/A)

..., and a lot of research said that more than 90% from the smokers do not let their children smoke. (12/A)

...smoking decres the percentage of youth... (22/A)

A university without grades is the most thing that students in all generations wish to have. (26/A)

5.2.2 Producing irrelevant sentences

Coherence-related concepts (i.e. meaning, unity, logic, and relationship between the writer/text and the reader) were negatively influenced due to students writing somewhat irrelevant sentences that did not match the ideas/arguments in their writing, as shown below by paragraphs taken from four essays on four different topics (more in appendix 4.4).

In the essay body paragraph below (comparing and contrasting childhood in the past and present), the student wrote an irrelevant idea that did not express the contrast indicated in the paragraph topic sentence. The paragraph main idea was on the difference in the kind of games played now and then, but s/he stated that children nowadays tend to forget about the games played in the past:

*Second difference between children today and children fifty years ago is kinds of games. Children today depend on technology, so they play on technology devices. **Also, children today maybe forgot the simple past games.** On the other hand, children before fifty years ago depend on simple tools to make simple games; for example, they use stones, sticks, etc. (24/C)*

In the essay conclusion paragraph below (comparing and contrasting travelling in the past and present), the student wrote an irrelevant final comment stating that people “*appreciate the old ways*” and “*use*” them to “*show*” how their “*history is rich*”, which was not part of the essay argument:

*In brief, The essay discuss a significant similarity in the reasons of travel, but also highlight an important differences between travelling now and travelling in the past in the kind of transport and the benefits of travelling. Technology now is trying to discover alternative ways which can help people to reach any destination quickly. **People now also appreciate the old ways and they try use it to show how our history is rich.** (25/C)*

In this argumentative essay conclusion paragraph, the student has restated the three reasons why s/he argued that smokers “*do not have the right to smoke*”, but also added an additional reason that was not initially developed by the essay:

*In a brief, smokers do not have the right to smoke because they produce side effects to others, destroy the environment and collapse the state economy. Never mind, **smokers are a bad example for others; for example, when one of the parents smokes, their***

children imitate him/her instinctively which cause huge problems in different aspects. (15/A)

In the following argumentative essay conclusion paragraph, the student argued for universities having quizzes and exams for three specific reasons, but concluded the paragraph with a fourth reason that was not mentioned or developed earlier in the essay:

*To sum up, universities should give grades because of three main reasons which are students' motivation will be faded, it is not fair to not give grades, and the country needs students who got well education. **Besides, students will leave a university which does not help them because it will not be useful anymore.** (26/A)*

5.2.3 Background and subject knowledge, content, and relationship between the writer/text and the reader

In the context of my study, the students were expected to have sufficient background and subject knowledge to be able to write their essays. Their knowledge, however, seemed lacking, which led writing teachers, when preparing students for high-stake writing exams, to resort to providing them with content/ideas that they could use in developing their writing (Appendix 4.4). The coherence-related concepts (relationships between the writer/text and the reader, content and background and subject knowledge) were, therefore, not genuine.

For example, in the high-stake essays (comparing and contrasting travelling, and childhood in the past and present), the students wrote similar ideas/content to each other in their essay thesis statements, and the key ideas and supporting details in their paragraphs were to a certain extent identical. Most of them ended up following very closely the teachers' lists of ideas, developed almost identical ideas for their arguments and scarcely came up with ideas of their own (Appendix 4.5 and 4.6).

- e. Essay thesis statements on comparing and contrasting travelling in the past and present:

Travelling in the past and now are different in reasons for travelling and kinds for transport, and similar in benefits gained from travel.

(4/C)

Although travelling in the past and now is similar in the benefits gained from travelling, different in reasons for travelling and kinds of transportation. (8/C)

Travelling in the past and now differ in their kinds of transport, but they are similar in terms of their reasons for travelling and benefits gained from travel. (10/C)

Travelling in the past and now differ in kinds of transport and reason for travelling, but are similar in terms of the benefits gained from travelling. (11/C)

In addition, travelling in the past and now differ in terms of kinds of transport and reasons for travelling and both of them are similar in benefits gained from travelling. (15/C)

This essay will talk about the differences and the similarities between travelling in the past and travelling now in terms of reasons for travelling, kind of transport and the benefits gained from travelling.

(29/C)

- Essay thesis statements on comparing and contrasting childhood in the past and present:

Children life today and children life fifty years ago are similar in life styles, but they differ in terms of children's responsibilities and the available kinds of games. (5/C)

There are many differences between our childhood and our parents childhood in terms of children's lifestyles and responsibilities, and are similar in games played children. (12/C)

Children today and children fifty years ago share the same responsibilities, but they differ in their lifestyle and the kind of games played by them. (17/C)

Childhood nowadays and childhood fifty years ago are different in terms of responsibilities and their lifestyle; however, they are similar in the games that children play. (21/C)

Therefore, children today and children before fifty years ago are similar in responsibilities and they are different in lifestyles and kinds of games. (24/C)

There is a similarity between childhood today and childhood fifty years ago which is the responsibilities, also there are obvious differences between them which are lifestyles and types of games. (31/C)

Conversely, for the argumentative essays, which happened to be not high-stake exams, the teachers did not assist students with ideas (Appendix 4.7). The students produced thesis statements that were more likely to establish genuine relationships between the writer/text and reader, were a more truthful representation of the students' background and subject knowledge and the content and meaning represented in their writing were actually the students'.

- Essay thesis statements on arguing for/against a speed limit lower than 100km/h:

This essay will explain that speed should not be lower than 100 because it leads to road congestion, violating traffic rules and a long time for short destination. (3/A)

The speed on Omani roads has been the subject of discussion for a long time, as it is believed that the speed limit should not be lower than 100 km/h because it saves time, causes less traffic jams and less accident. (28/A)

However, there are several disadvantages for speed limits on Omani road which is lower than 100mk. per hour, in terms of causing accidents, crowds and arriving late. (30/A)

- Essay thesis statements on arguing for/against university having quizzes and exams:

It is believed that grades are important because they are considered as assertion of student understanding, reason for revising and the criteria for rewarding. (16/A)

This essay will discuss why it is believed that there are more disadvantages, like the students will not compete each other, they will be careless and will not study hard to be different and to increase their knowledge. (23/A)

However, it is believed that there are other obvious advantages for giving quizzes, tests or grades to students which are students will be more responsible, teachers are able to distinguish between the bad and the good students and parents can know about their children's grades. (31/A)

- Essay thesis statements on arguing for/against smokers having the right to smoke:

However, smokers have the right to smoker for a logical reasons such as nobody can run away from dith, a person have the right to spend his money wherever he want, and each person have a faults thus people must accept the smokers reasons. (4/A)

However, smoking should be ban worldwide because it affect in smokers' health, it causes many health problem for the people who are near the smokers, it is waste of money and energy. (7/A)

Smokers should not have the right to smoke because they cause health problems to themselves and to passive smokers, they create more economic crisis with their expensive treatments, and they effect the environment with toxic gases. (21/A)

While the students still used similar chunks of language peculiar to arguing for or against an issue (i.e. phrases for argumentative essays), they still had the opportunity to develop their ideas independently, which resulted in students coming

up with their own unique ideas and arguments for their stands. The students' individual ideas might lack focus, overlap with other essay ideas, and/or indicate students' lacking background and subject knowledge, but they were original and authentic in establishing relationships with the reader, and were more likely to help them develop their writing, including their cohesion and coherence. However, they may have all included the same points as each other in the compare and contrast essays because the teachers had given them a list of ideas and suggested that they might use these ideas in their essays, so the students may have felt that there was an expectation that they use them, and that maybe they might 'lose marks' if they did not; whereas when it came to writing the argumentative essays they were not given any suggestions, so they may have felt freer to use their own ideas. They may even have felt that they were not supposed to use their own ideas in the compare and contrast essays, which may be why none of them did. It seems ironic that the teachers complained about their students' lack of background and subject knowledge and typicality in developing ideas, as was clear from the teachers' interviews, while at the same time they provided their students with a list of ideas to use in writing, which only seemed to perpetuate the problem.

Further, writing with coherence was not an easy task for the students, as they had difficulty with some coherence-related concepts. Their writing had statements that lacked logic, their content was not focused, their background and subject knowledge were lacking and their essays' meaning, unity and relation with the reader were distorted on some occasions. When students lack the background and subject knowledge of the writing topic, they may resort to inventing studies or reporting research without proper citation, which hinders coherence in terms of text content, meaning and logic. Students may cease to think of their text reader, and therefore write irrelevant sentences that do not belong to the argument of their writing.

5.3 Tense and aspect influence on cohesion and coherence

Tense and aspect are not directly addressed by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy, but are crucial in students' writing, as inaccurate use of tense and aspect can negatively impact on writing cohesion and coherence. This was mostly

evident in the students' references to the past and present in their compare and contrast essays on travelling or childhood, where some of them could not accurately make a smooth transition in their reference to the past and present, and made mistakes with tense/aspect when expressing comparison and contrast. The compare and contrast essays involving time may have been particularly linguistically challenging in this respect. In the sentences below, the cohesive links between and within their sentences (i.e. cohesion) and their intended meaning (i.e. coherence) were disturbed, a situation that indicates that the students encountered challenges with cohesion and coherence (more in Appendix 4.8):

...they used to help their parents with work and some take care of their siblings. (9/C)

I think travelling in the past was something so important for people and they cannot do it every time. (28/C)

In contrast, nowadays the life became easier because they use cars, houses and planes. (6/C)

What is more, some people travel for treatment when a person didn't find the suitable treatment in his country he travels to other country to get the appropriate treatment. (20/C)

There are a lot of things that we can do it fifty years ago. (31/C)

Many studies show that the number of the accidents in Oman has increased completely, and one reason of that was because of low speed as well. (14/A)

5.4 Influence of Arabic writing on students' writing cohesion and coherence

One unanticipated finding was the influence of Arabic on the cohesion and coherence in students' essays. In some cases, Standard Arabic (i.e. a modern variety of classical Arabic that is mostly used in writing) could be heard, and in others it was Everyday Arabic (i.e. a modern variety of spoken Arabic).

5.4.1 Reference cohesive device: the definite article *the*

Expressing meanings of definiteness is more flexible in Arabic. Abstract and plural nouns in Arabic tend to be defined by a corresponding definite marker *the*, which

is *el*. (i.e. an example of reference). The students used the definite article *the* with indefinite abstract and plural nouns in their essays, which negatively affected their accurate use of cohesive devices (see Table 5.7 and Appendix 4.9).

The definite article 'the' before abstract nouns	Essay	The definite article 'the' before plural nouns	Essay
Many people think that smoking can reduce the stress .	7/A	This attitude will never change if the parents didn't deal with it.	22/C
They further argue that smoking brings the happiness .	10/A	Travelling in the past is difficult because they use the animals to travel.	28/C
... they might have an illness because of the smoking .	12/A	..., which help the people to have a perfect life as they can travel wherever they want by airplanes, cars and planes.	30/C
Furthermore, the cigarettes have a lot of toxic gases which affect the health and make air pollution.	13/A	...it cause many health problem for the people who are never the smokers , it is waste of money and energy.	7/A
Firstly, the opponents assert that speed limits cannot save the time .	28/A	Many studies show that the number of the accidents in Oman has increased completely.	14/A
Nowadays, the life style is changing and the technology affecting in our life.	22/C	Smoking habit becomes a big issue in the societies .	18/A
Finally, the childhood is changing by the time .	22/C	... since students hate school because of the quizzes and tests.	25/A
... they may travel for the pleasure and get an amazing time.	25/C	It is believed that students will be excited to study if the universities give no grades.	26/A
Because of the development the transportation became easier than in the past.	28/C	Sometimes the bad grades make the students do better in the future.	31/A
		... so the crowd will increase in roads; thus, it will make the drivers nervous .	30/A

Table 5.7: Showing the results of the analysis of the use of the definite article 'the'

5.4.2 Prolonged/lengthy (run-on) sentences

The students wrote sentences that reflect the Arabic sentence structure, which is on the whole more flexible than the English equivalent. They wrote lengthy sentences- which negatively impacted on their writing cohesion and coherence (more examples in Appendix 4.10). Prolonged sentences are permissible in Arabic writing, where a sentence can extend to a whole paragraph. The students wrote lengthy sentences where they overused cohesive devices, attempting to link their multiple sentences together, which could hinder coherence, as in the sentences below:

First of all, travelling in the past and now differ in the kind of transportation; for example, in the past they used donkeys and camel

to travel for long distance; therefore, it takes a long time to reach the place which they want; on the other hand, travelling now is more easy because of the great struggle from the inventors who invent a varied of inventions and transports which help the people to have a perfect life as they can travel wherever they want by airplanes, cars and trains. (30/C)

Speed is an issue that argued by some that speed limits on Omani roads should be lower than 100km.per hour because that makes the roads organsied, all drivers will follow the same rule and that will help people to arrive to their destination rapidly; however, it is obvious that speed should not be lower than 100 km. per hour since that leads to road congestion and drivers will violate traffic rules. (3/A)

So that, they have the ability to arrange the cars in the street in an organized way; therefore, that makes the drivers feel comfortable and relax while they are driving; nevertheless, driving on that speed has its advantages if person takes the rules seriously, also there are a lot of people who feel nervous while they are driving who may not follow the instructions, so they cause accidents, that depends on a person if he follows the rules or not. (30/A)

5.4.3 Redundancy

Some redundancy (tautology) appeared in the students' essays. In formal spoken Arabic, speakers tend to combine two synonyms/near synonyms using the conjunctive device *and* or *or* for certain communicative purposes (e.g. trying to be more specific, accurate, comprehensive or politically correct), which is viewed sometimes as unnecessary tautology. In the sentences below, the students have combined synonyms/near synonyms (more in appendix 4.11), which has negatively influenced the accuracy of their lexical cohesion:

*Sometimes the need to travel to get **remedy and treatment**. (1/C)*

*It was very **tough and difficult**. (15/C)*

*... travelling in the past is similar to travelling in the present in terms of **reasons or goals** of travelling.... (19/C)*

*Another argument is that **adults and mature people** who are aware of the concept that smoking is devastating their health. (17/A)*

*The income of people can affect particularly those whose get low **salary or income** because people might spend more than ten rials a week on buying carton of cigarette. (18/A)*

*... smoking helps the smokers to be **calm and less stress**. (22/A)*

The students' EFL academic writing seems to be influenced by the characteristics of Arabic writing and Arabic style, as Arabic represents their native language and previous training. It is worth noting here that students' experiences with Arabic writing was a notion that was continuously brought up by the interviewed students, teachers and tutors in their discussions of writing cohesion and coherence.

5.5 Summary

This text analysis was conducted to explore how cohesion and coherence are manifested in students' EFL academic writing. Cohesion can facilitate coherence; however, overusing explicit cohesive devices such as conjunctions, and over repetition of lexical items, do not necessarily lead to coherent essays, as was the case with these students' writings. The students overused conjunction and same words and underused synonyms/near synonyms/hyponyms, which influenced the natural flow of ideas (i.e. coherence). This raises a question about whether there is a relationship between students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesive devices and their capacity to use them effectively in their writing. The students' use of reference was mostly unproblematic, except for the use of the definite article '*the*'. Their over-use of conjunction perhaps reflects an over-teaching of conjunction, and the students' difficulty with the lack of diversity of lexical items might indicate a lack of knowledge of English vocabulary. Further, it was not surprising that the students hardly used grammatical substitution and ellipsis, as they are not common in English writing. The study findings of substitution and ellipsis confirmed the findings in this area of many studies on cohesion in writing.

Based on this text analysis, it would appear that the students encountered coherence-related challenges. Sometimes their statements were illogical, the

content was not focused and their subject and background knowledge was lacking, all of which negatively impacted on their coherence. The student writers seemed to have a lack of knowledge of the topics they were asked to write about, a concern that teachers addressed through giving lists of ideas to students to use in developing their arguments, which resulted in distorting the students' relationships with their readers. When the content is somehow controlled by the teacher through the teachers' lists of ideas, the relationship between the writer and reader becomes artificial as, by doing this, the teachers have created part of the writing content, while at the same time are meant to interact with the students' texts as readers. Besides, this approach to writing does not support students' originality and ownership of their writing development. Further, the language phrases that the students received from their teachers could lead them to rely on these phrases and not make their own linguistic choices in writing their arguments, which could limit their creativity and independence in expressing their ideas and could also lead them to view EFL academic writing as restraining. Even when the students independently chose their own content (i.e. no lists of ideas were given), they still resorted to using their teachers' ready-made language phrases peculiar to the compare and contrast and argumentative writing. Their essay ideas and content were unique and authentic and the relationships established with the reader were solid, but part of their language was a matter of copy and paste from their teachers' phrases.

The influence of Arabic on the students' writing cohesion and coherence was not anticipated. Students' inaccurate use of the definite article '*the*' seems to stem from Arabic, as their use of it reflected the more elastic Arabic meaning and use of definiteness. They used the article '*the*' extensively with indefinite English plural and abstract nouns, and their sentence structure was occasionally a reflection of the Arabic one. There were also incidences of redundancy (tautology) coming from the rhetoric of Arabic. Most of the study participants (students, teachers and tutors) brought up the notion of students' previous experience with Arabic writing and the Arabic influence on students' cohesion and coherence.

6 Chapter six: Analysis of students' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence

The study explores students, writing teachers' and tutors' perceptions and understanding of cohesion and coherence in the context of EFL undergraduates in a university in Oman (see section 3.16). Based on semi-structured interviews, this chapter focuses on the findings relating to ten students' perceptions and their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence.

6.1 Students' perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

Below is a presentation of the themes pertinent to students' perceptions about issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence of English writing at university:

- How teachers teach students to write with cohesion and coherence
- Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality
- Challenges of making students' academic essays cohesive and coherent

6.1.1 How teachers teach students to write with cohesion and coherence

All of the students agreed that the writing teachers helped them with areas relevant to both cohesion and coherence in academic writing. Iman felt that the teacher helped them become "*aware of writing*". They all stated that they were shown how the introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion are constructed for both types of academic writing essays (i.e. compare and contrast and argumentative). Nine of them clearly indicated, however, that teachers tended not to use explicit terms relevant to cohesion and coherence, focusing more on what the students referred to as "*meaning*", "*general ideas*" and "*application*". They "*don't explain cohesion and coherence in a deep way, just in a general way*", Reem contended; and Muna stated further that cohesion was "*discussed but not in depth*". But, on the other hand, Hamad felt that teachers "*start with basic things and then they go deeper*". Teachers seem to be more concerned with how cohesion and coherence function in the context of the students' academic writing and less focused on the explicit teaching of terms relevant to cohesion and coherence.

Additionally, seven of the ten students specifically touched on points in the area of cohesion: namely grammatical and lexical. Some students mentioned being taught how to construct sentences that are related to each other by introducing “*specific*” phrases and words which they could use when writing their sentences, in order to establish “*relations*” between sentences. Examples of the terms that the students reported are “*conjunctions*”, “*transitional signals*”, “*transition words*”, “*signal words*”, “*coordinators*” and “*subordinators*”. Moza referred to “*the words we use in sentences*”, and Aisha talked about “*phrases that help with cohesion and coherence*”. Fatma mentioned using words in a “*proper way*” and discussed the use of “*words*” that are “*related*” to the essay topic. Muna said that “*transitions words and how sentences are linked are taught*”.

Some of the students used precise terminology, such as 'conjunctions', 'coordinators' and 'subordinators', and words related to the essay topic, to refer to how teachers taught with cohesion. Others used less precise terms like '*transitional signals*', '*transition words*' and '*signal words*'. A few students even used rather vague terms, such as 'words used in sentences', 'phrases that help with cohesion and coherence' and 'using words in an accurate way'. The students seemed to be at different degrees of specificity in their allusion to cohesive devices, whether grammatical or lexical, when they were discussing how their teachers taught with cohesion and coherence.

In their discussion of how they were taught to write with cohesion and coherence, eight students also specifically referred to concepts pertinent to coherence. Some of them reported that their teachers talked about “*ideas in the text*”, “*unity*”, “*connectedness*”, “*making meaning*”, “*logical order*”, “*organisation*” and “*one building*”. Nada talked about the teacher encouraging students to “*consider*” how the paragraph is built as “*one unit*”, and how to avoid making “*off topic*” sentences. Iman said that the teacher showed them how the essay “*introduction is connected to the body paragraphs*”, and Fatma mentioned sticking to the points stated in the introduction. Iman also said that the teacher showed them how “*the writer*” orders “*ideas smoothly in the essay*”. Four students emphasised that teachers regularly

discussed with them whether ideas in the text are related or not. Some of the students reported that they are routinely tested on unity, as it is covered by short theoretical tests throughout their academic writing course. Coherence did receive some emphasis from writing teachers where they attended to notions of unity, connectedness, meaning and logic. However, it is possible that they did not explicitly bring to their students' attention that some of these concepts are cohesion-related and others are coherence-related. This may explain the overlap in the concepts that the students reported in their response to how teachers teach writing with cohesion and coherence.

According to the students, the writing teachers seemed to employ manifold strategies and tools to help their students become more cohesive and coherent in their writing. Muna, Iman and Reem mentioned model essays used by teachers to introduce the two types of academic essays. The students had also been introduced to writing summary and paraphrase prior to the writing of these essays. Teachers arranged writing practices and group work activities. They also shared with each student his/her mistakes in writing, and before tests they usually did revisions comprising activities that required students to detect problems with paragraph unity. Aisha and Hajer also referred to the teachers' use of technology in discussing concepts relevant to cohesion and coherence, and in organizing online quizzes.

However, three students brought up some issues that they thought were problematic in relation to how they were taught to write with cohesion and coherence. Reem and Heba problematized the time allocated to them to do the academic writing course, arguing that it was not adequate. Heba reflected on this saying that "*the problems is that we need a long time to avoid these mistakes*". Reem also challenged the teachers' overemphasis on what she referred to as "*grammar and tests*". In the context that the interviewed students come from, the term "*grammar*" is typically used to mean language accuracy. To Reem, language accuracy and tests were overstressed in the academic writing course at the expense of cohesion and coherence. She added, though, that in the editing stage

of students' academic writing, teachers "*focus more on cohesion*". Hamad also thought that teachers were "*only following the curriculum*", and tended not to respond to students' immediate queries. Instead of offering clarifications, teachers asked their students to postpone their questions, arguing that they were going to learn that in "*two weeks or four*" and that "*it's going to be a little bit confusing*", as Hamad put it. Students had a limited time in which to finish writing essays as only an hour and a half was allocated for planning, writing and editing an essay, a situation that left little room for students to think deeply about making their essays cohesive and coherent. They also seemed so overwhelmed with the different tasks they had to attend to, that they did not have time to reflect on how they could improve the cohesion and coherence of their academic essays. The teachers' focus on language accuracy perhaps inhibited the students and led them to think that cohesion and coherence did not receive much attention in the teaching of writing. Teachers following the course syllabi might not address the individual needs of some students, who might wonder about issues that were planned to be covered at a later stage in the course.

Thus, based on the students' responses on how their teachers taught cohesion and coherence, one could infer the following: first, the vast majority of the students talked of cohesion and coherence as if the two terms are more or less the same, but were able to detect concepts that are associated with cohesion or coherence without necessarily realizing that, for instance, one concept is more coherence- than cohesion-related. Second, the writing teachers may have had to address some areas in the academic writing course other than cohesion and coherence. Examples of such areas could be: introducing students to the two types of academic writing (i.e. compare and contrast essays and argumentative essays); working on students' writing accuracy; and arranging practice and graded quizzes with the purpose of helping students improve their different writing skills. Third, it is possible that the writing course included so many writing-relevant requirements for students and teachers to deal with, that students could not comprehensively reflect on the cohesion and coherence of their writing.

6.1.2 Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality

When asked about how they perceived the link between cohesion and writing quality, the students brought up some understandings that can be discussed as the following: three of the ten students (Moza, Fatma and Aisha) joined the two terms cohesion and coherence together and pointed out some concepts. Moza referred to relatedness of ideas and argued,

there must be cohesion and coherence in quality because the quality of writing it depends on the ideas o are related to each other.

Fatma talked about connectedness and unity, and proposed,

If the paragraph has cohesion and coherence, it is more perfect because when the student has the ability to create “tamasuk and tarabut”, (i.e. two Arabic terms that denote connectedness) in the paragraph, this student is distinguished. S/he has a strong ability in language and writing in this topic. He can make connectedness in the paragraph which demonstrates how the student conveys his ideas through the writing.

Aisha brought up the relationship between the writer and the reader arguing,

when you write a piece of writing, the reader needs to understand what you want to reach for him or her. If you achieve cohesion and coherence in your paragraph, your ideas will reach for the reader easily.

Further, Nada and Iman explicitly used the term coherence instead of cohesion in their responses to the question about how cohesion is linked to writing quality.

Nada contended that the paragraph unity leads to the comprehension of the essay,

if there is no coherence or unity in the paragraphs, the quality of writing is poor because the coherence and the unity of the paragraphs makes the writing more interesting and understandable.

Similarly, Iman explicitly used coherence in place of cohesion stating that “coherence” is “major” in determining writing quality. She stated,

I think quality of writing depends on coherence. It is a major concept or a major part of each essay. If there is any problem with the essay or there is off topic. So the essay, it's not good.

Iman continued arguing that coherence is “major” even when compared to elements like grammar and vocabulary, “*even there is grammatical mistakes or vocabulary mistakes, coherence is major*”. Hajer brought up the significance of the writing marking criteria used in the academic writing course, and proposed that the criteria help “*define what quality writing is by providing categories of the level a student shows in writing*”, and that a student has to “*succeed in the following to be categorized as this*”.

Four of the ten students, however, seemed to be uncertain about the link between cohesion and writing quality. Heba stated that she had no idea how cohesion is linked to writing quality, and Reem said that she was not sure. The other two students (Hamad and Muna) decided not to respond to the question. However, most of the students’ responses perhaps indicate the overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence, and the complexity of the potential links that may exist between the two terms and writing quality.

Further, when the students were asked about how they saw the link between coherence and writing quality, seven of the students discussed their understanding. Moza and Iman explicitly stated that the link between coherence and writing quality is similar to that of cohesion. Aisha highlighted the significance of unity by proposing that coherence “*makes our writing as one building*”, and therefore contributes to writing quality. In her discussion of how she perceived the

connection between coherence and writing quality, Fatma brought up two crucial coherence-related concepts, namely “*connectedness*” and “*links*”. She stated that coherence

make some different things in writing. The student has experience in using all the things that achieve connectedness and links in the paragraph.

Hajer referred to the text connectedness, and also to the writer’s relationship with the reader, as she argued,

when your writing is coherent, you give the idea that it is one piece and that your ideas are fulfilled in that piece of writing and that the reader will understand. You give all that you have.

In her discussion of the link, Heba considered the concept of grammar. She argued that coherence is very crucial because,

if there is no grammar in writing the essays or in the writing, the writing will miss its value or something like this.

This perhaps reflects Heba’s uncertainty about how she understood the connection between coherence and writing quality, as indicated earlier in the discussion of her understanding of the link between cohesion and writing quality. Nada briefly stated that coherence and writing quality “*make the essay strong*”. She may have resorted to making a rather general statement that could prove true to coherence and writing quality no matter what the link between the two concepts are. Muna, Reem and Hamad did not respond to the question, a stand that maybe mirrored the students’ uncertainty about the link between coherence and quality writing, and their overall lacking metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence.

However, some of the students were able to verbalise the link between coherence-relevant concepts (i.e. connectedness, links and relationships with the reader) and quality writing. This reflects their metalinguistic understanding of the significance of coherence in establishing quality writing. On the other hand, the students seemed to think of cohesion and coherence as more or less the same, and therefore their roles in creating quality writing as similar.

6.1.3 Challenges of making students' academic essays cohesive and coherent

All students expressed different challenges in keeping their academic writing cohesive and coherent. Maintaining clarity was difficult, since reading one's essay was different from reading one's "*thoughts*", as Hajer contended. The topic familiarity posed another challenge to the students. If the topic was "*new*", Nada found it hard to "*keep the unity of the essay*", and, similarly, Muna argued that the "*knowledge of the topic*" was essential in writing with cohesion and coherence. Fatma also stated that she had "*difficulty connecting the ideas at the beginning*", and later it was hard to "*link them with the ideas at the end*". She added that "*confusion in the introduction*" could negatively impact on the whole essay, and

when we talk about the topic in general. Generating ideas is hard, and looking for reasons is difficult. Topics are similar. The sub-topics are usually similar and hard to develop in paragraphs.

Further, working on "*separating writing from speaking*" and avoiding "*informal language*" and the use of "*verbs contraction*" were not easy tasks, as stated by Hajer. Another dimension of challenge was "*creativity*" in writing, which was hindered by the fact that students were "*required to write in a certain way*" proposed Muna. Besides, students had a limited time to write, as Iman and Heba put forward and, thus, ended up "*writing anything*", as Iman put it, which resulted in problems with cohesion and coherence. Heba argued that, had she had the time, very few mistakes would have posed her a genuine difficulty that could not be overcome. Nervousness can lead to a wrong use of coordinators and subordinators, which results in "*disorder in the writing*", proposed Fatma. Nada blamed on school teachers her struggle with maintaining the unity of her writing at

university level, as she believed that they over-evaluated the writing of high achiever students like herself, without giving much attention to the unity of the writing which students produced. Additionally, to maintain cohesion and coherence in academic writing, students had to attend to “*vocabulary, terms and ways of writing*” as Aisha put it. This position, in relation to the challenges students encounter in becoming cohesive and coherent, also illustrates students’ limited metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence, both of which involve concepts directly relevant to vocabulary, and “*terms*” that link ideas and sentences in students’ writing.

Generally speaking, the students’ seemed to undergo a great difficulty in producing cohesive and coherent writing. They had to attend to the demanding requirements of academic writing at the university level. They found themselves forced to bridge the wide gap between school and university, and were expected to do this in a limited time – i.e. only three months, which is the duration of one academic semester at the university. They were, for example, expected to demonstrate the fairly good knowledge of the world in different topics that a university student is expected to have, and to be able to develop that into a cohesive and coherent academic piece of writing. The students’ responses indicated that topic knowledge (i.e. world knowledge represented in their subject and background knowledge) could be a challenge, and that they may have been more preoccupied with what to say, rather than how to communicate coherently and with cohesion. They were also required to show a tangible improvement in the quality of the writing they produced, in terms of its content, idea development, organization, language use, grammar and concepts of cohesion and coherence.

6.2 Students’ experience with English and Arabic writing

A major theme in the analysis of the students’ perceptions was their experience of being taught Arabic and English writing at school, with specific focus on the areas of cohesion and coherence in writing, as indicated below:

- Teaching of Arabic writing at school
- Teaching of cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing class

- Similarities/differences between the teaching of English writing at school and at the university

6.2.1 Teaching of Arabic writing at school

All ten students discussed how they were taught Arabic writing in school. A major issue mentioned by five of the students in their discussion was how Arabic writing was approached. The students reported different types of Arabic writing, or what is commonly referred to as 'ta'beer'. This Arabic noun means composing and expressing ideas, thoughts and feelings orally, visually or in the form of writing; but in the context of language teaching and learning it specifically refers to Arabic writing compositions or Arabic writing. At school, the students studied opinion writing, cause and effect writing, formal letters, stories and plays. However, as all the students expressed, there was no explicit teaching of Arabic writing throughout most of their school years. Ta'beer was not taught, and "*procedures*" on how to write were not given to students, stated Aisha. Hamad asserted that the teaching of Arabic writing was only done in the first three years of his schooling; Iman echoed this and stated that she too did not do much Arabic writing at school. Heba added that she had had no Arabic writing lessons in the last two years of her schooling. Hamad, Fatma and Heba mentioned having no explicit teaching of grammar or lexical words in Arabic writing class. Students did not study grammar in Arabic writing sessions, but they were expected to "*utilize*" what they did "*learn*" in their other Arabic language classes, Heba pointed out. Hajer emphasized a similar perspective when she stated,

they did not teach us Arabic writing, we just get one final exam called ta'beer. In an Arabic language class we talk about rules, reading and that it.

As is obvious from the students' responses, the approach to the teaching of Arabic writing was completely different from that of English academic writing. There was very little instruction to do with Arabic writing, compared with regular and systematic lessons teaching English academic writing, where the students received intensive training on grammar, vocabulary, writing academic essays and other

writing-relevant areas. The students might, therefore, struggle with how English academic writing was taught in contrast with their previous training of Arabic writing.

In their reflection on their Arabic writing experience, six students pointed out issues relevant to what was valued more in Arabic writing class. Planning and outlining were not highlighted in Arabic writing lessons, a perception shared by Aisha and Iman. The Arabic text is typically composed of an introduction sentence, a body paragraph and a conclusion sentence, as discussed by Muna. The Arabic text might also be two paragraphs long, or three, depending on the number the student chose, Fatma pointed out. Moza asserted that the organisation of the Arabic writing text is perceived as “*different*”, as it is mostly just one idea where students write one paragraph which could be a page or two long. In Arabic writing, the focus was on how students used certain phrases to express feelings and thoughts, stated Muna. The evaluation of how good someone’s Arabic writing was depended on the student’s accurate use of Arabic grammatical rules - “*al nahw*” - and vocabulary, as reported by Fatma and Hamad. Students received feedback from their Arabic teachers stating that their writing was “*perfect*”, said Fatma. The students seemed to find it hard in their English writing class to be limited by certain guidelines for outlining, paragraphing, organization of ideas and use of words in their EFL academic writing, a situation that they did not experience in their Arabic writing.

Additionally, five students put forward that they perceived their experience with ta’beer as more positive compared to their experience with English academic writing. When students wrote in Arabic, they actually responded to a question, and the content of the student’s written text was expected to be relevant to the question, a situation that was similar to English writing, as argued by Fatma. The interviewed students, however, felt that in Arabic writing, there was more “*freedom*”, “*open writing*”, “*interesting writing*” and “*creative writing*”, in contrast to the structure that they had had to abide by in their writing of English academic essays. Students also thought that they could write better in Arabic, as they could convey ideas “*more accurately and precisely*” than in English. In English writing,

students needed to work harder to deliver ideas, perceived Nada and Hamad. To Reem, writing in Arabic was “*easier*” than in English, as it was the students’ “*language at the end*”, a perspective that was also shared by Aisha who, for the same reason, thought that she could write well in Arabic “*about any topic in no time*”. This stand was also echoed by Hamad, who mentioned that writing in Arabic was “*easy*”.

The students viewed their experience of Arabic more positively than their English academic writing. Although writing in Arabic is inevitably easier as it is their first language, nevertheless it seems that they feel they have more freedom when they write in Arabic and their ideas are important. In contrast, writing in English is constrained by a need to adhere to particular conventions for academic writing, and what they say seems less important than how it is written. On the whole, the students seemed to perceive English academic writing largely as a struggle, due to factors related to their experiences with writing in the two languages. The Arabic writing at school was approached in a different way from English writing at the university. The teaching of Arabic at school had a different focus and purpose, a setting that to a certain extent created a barrier among the students towards English writing.

6.2.2 Teaching of cohesion and coherence in the Arabic writing class

For six of the students, cohesion and coherence were rarely discussed in the Arabic writing classroom at school. Students did not receive instruction on how to write with cohesion and coherence, as Fatma pointed out. Similarly, Muna argued that the teaching of cohesion and coherence was not done in a way that was “*clear*” to students. This perspective was also shared by Moza, who felt that teachers did not talk about how students put ideas together, and Hajer, who argued further that there was “*nothing on cohesion and coherence because there was no writing class*”. Cohesion and coherence only appeared in the explicit teaching of Arabic writing in the early years of schooling, proposed Fatma. Whether or not to focus on cohesion and coherence, Heba thought, depended on the teacher and what the teacher considered was important for the students, but most of the teachers did not do much. Some students, however, believed that they

did not need an explicit teaching of Arabic writing as they were native speakers of Arabic. Students “*speak and understand Arabic*” and “*cohesion and coherence are easier for them*” as stated by Reem. Similarly, Muna proposed that teachers thought there was perhaps “*no need*” for them to discuss cohesion and coherence since Arabic was the students’ first language. This means that throughout the limited instruction of Arabic writing at school, cohesion and coherence were rarely addressed. The students, therefore, were almost never introduced to concepts relevant to cohesion and coherence.

In their discussion on their experience of whether cohesion and coherence were part of their writing classes at school, three of the students talked about testing and teachers’ written feedback. First, with respect to testing, the general perception among the students was that schools did not teach Arabic writing but examined it. Students sat writing exams only, as stated by Moza, and Fatma mentioned that there was only one exam in the whole term. She also said that, while students may never have practised story writing throughout the course, the writing exam might be on writing a story to raise awareness of car accidents. Secondly, although most teachers did not discuss or teach cohesion and coherence, their written feedback might touch on these aspects. According to some of the students, teachers wanted students to focus on the organisation of ideas. Teachers wanted everything organised and clear, and wanted the ideas related to the “*opinions that we wrote about*”, said Aisha. The teaching of Arabic writing was obviously not emphasized in school, despite the fact that it was examined twice in the academic year. Teachers of Arabic language classes seemed merely to respond to students’ writing through their written feedback, which may indicate points for further development, including concepts on cohesion and coherence.

Further, in their reflections on the teaching of cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing classes, three students perceived cohesion and coherence in their Arabic writing as connectedness. Cohesion and coherence do exist in students’ Arabic writing, as students “*write about one idea*”, and therefore “*cannot talk about other ideas*”, as put by Moza. Nada added that when students write an essay, or Ta’beer,

the topic has to be based on “*a single idea... one unity*”. Connectedness in writing, or “*tamasuk*” (the Arabic term for connectedness), is about talking about a “*particular point*” and not “*going off topic*”, but at the same time using the terms in “*the right place*”, for example, not using words that are “*irrelevant*” to their writing, explained Fatma. Her perception clearly covers concepts related to cohesion and coherence.

The students seemed to be aware of the differences between teaching Arabic writing as a first language and English writing as a foreign language. The differences in the way in which Arabic writing and English writing are approached might hinder the students’ performance of producing well written English academic essays, since Arabic writing is part of their previous training of writing. It might take the students a long time to grasp and master the way in which English writing is done, which is completely different from the way that Arabic writing was introduced to them at school.

6.2.3 Similarities/differences between the teaching of English writing at school and the university

In their discussion of how they saw their experience of being taught English writing at school, and how similar/different it was from how they are taught at the university, all the students stated that English writing at school was different, and they voiced a number of points. They described their experiences at school and university as “*totally different*”, and representing “*a big difference*” and “*a big jump*”. Writing at school was also referred to as “*simple*”, “*easy*” and “*basic*”, as opposed to being “*more complex*” and “*deeper*” at the university. Writing was not intensively done at school, expressed Moza. School did not offer academic writing, only general writing, stressed Reem and Moza, and only narrative and opinion writing, as mentioned by Nada. In terms of vocabulary and grammar, Nada described the writing as “*incomparable*” compared to the writing students do at the university. This perception was shared by Fatma, Muna and Heba, who emphasized that the level of vocabulary expected is much lower. Students at school were also taught simple sentences and trained to write a single paragraph, as emphasized by Aisha.

Furthermore, there were no classes at school on how to write. There was “*no guidance*”, and students could write “*whatever they wanted*” argued Hamad and Reem respectively. Teachers at school “*didn’t focus on the coherence and cohesion*”, and students “*only knew that*” at the university, stated Iman. There was no focus on “*the relations between sentences*” added Moza. School students were taught only how to compose their sentences starting with “*nouns and then verbs*”, whereas at the university, students were taught how to “*create connectedness between paragraphs*” and how to “*convey*” “*ideas*”, claimed Fatma. Students at school were encouraged to use “*more adjectives and adverbs*”, but they were not taught how to “*use complex sentences and compound sentences*”, as mentioned by Hajer. Some students also talked about punctuation: for example, there were no rules such as “*when to use apostrophe or dot*”, as brought up by Reem, or that it is “*not right*” to start a sentence with *and*, or use a comma before *as*, as proposed by Hajer. Further, marking was arbitrary because school teachers “*are just correcting like it is*”, as suggested by Hamad.

The students seemed to notice a big difference between English writing at school and at university. The students experienced a big contrast in terms of the type and difficulty level of the writing between school and university. They possibly felt inhibited by the big transition and the expectation to show a real improvement in their academic writing course in terms of sentence structure, use of words, grammar, content, cohesion and coherence. Considering the level they start at in university, students are under pressure to meet the requirements of an academic writing course that expects them to demonstrate a big improvement in their writing abilities in a relatively short time – the course is only three months long.

6.3 Students’ metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence

The second part of the semi-structured interview aimed to explore students’ metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence (i.e. how they verbally articulate what cohesion and coherence are to them). Therefore, in order to investigate students’ metalinguistic understanding of cohesion, they were asked to discuss how they would define and teach cohesion and coherence. This elicitation

task was intended to draw out metalinguistic understanding indirectly; a second task, using cards, was intended to be a more direct way. The students in this task were asked to talk about cohesion types and sub types, followed by coherence-related concepts, that they had heard/known of in the context of their academic writing.

The following is an overview of the students' metalinguistic understanding of the concepts below:

- Cohesion and coherence
- How they would teach cohesion and coherence

6.3.1 Cohesion and coherence

As mentioned above, the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence was explored by asking them about cohesion and then about coherence. Even though they were asked about cohesion first and then coherence, the majority associated the two concepts as similar, and therefore the analysis of how they defined the two was joined together, as indicated below:

Six of the ten students were unanimous in the view that cohesion and coherence are similar. After responding to the interview questions on cohesion, and when later asked questions on coherence, Moza, Nada, Iman, Muna and Hajer explicitly stated that they thought that cohesion and coherence were the same. When asked about coherence after her sharing her understanding of cohesion, Aisha retorted, "*Are they different?*", and then added that she thought "*each completes the other*". Moza even used cohesion and coherence interchangeably. When first asked about how she would define cohesion, she frequently used the term coherence in her response alongside her use of the term cohesion. This was despite the fact that she, just like all the other student interviewees, was asked first about cohesion only. Throughout her responses to the three questions on cohesion, she used the word coherence instead. Then, when asked later in the interview about how she would define coherence, she responded saying that it is "*similar to cohesion*". This understanding was shared by Nada, Iman and Muna, who also thought that cohesion and coherence were similar and used cohesion and coherence

interchangeably. Cohesion and coherence were obviously terms that the students thought of as more or less the same thing. This perhaps reflected the way cohesion- and coherence-relevant concepts were introduced to the students by the writing teachers during their academic writing courses. The two terms were most likely addressed implicitly where the focus was on how to improve students' writing in terms of unity and connectedness, be it through cohesion or coherence.

Additionally, in their discussion on what the term cohesion was to them, nine of the ten students used concepts that are more relevant to coherence than cohesion. They associated the two terms with concepts related to connectedness and unity (i.e. linking ideas and not going off topic) and relating to the reader. When initially asked about cohesion, Moza's response highlighted the connectedness of ideas (i.e. a concept more relevant to coherence than cohesion), saying that cohesion is about "*how to make the ideas related to each other*". To Fatma, cohesion was also about connectedness - links, sticking to the topic and developing ideas that go in line with the topic of writing. She stated that cohesion is the

connectedness and links between things in the same area like in the same topic. For example, the terms are restricted to that particular topic and does not go off topic. At the same it is ideas. You have to talk about ideas that are suitable for the topic you are talking about. This way you achieve the links you want.

To Iman as well, cohesion was about connectedness, the relevance of the ideas to the topic of writing and the unity of the paragraph and sentences – an understanding that includes coherence (i.e. connectedness and unity of ideas in text, paragraphs and sentences) and cohesion (i.e. unity of sentences). She maintained that cohesion

means that how the ideas are connected to each other and how the ideas are related to the topic. For example, if we are talking about the university, we have to be specific when we talk about the university.

What we are talking about when we talk about the university. Are we talking about the courses? So all the ideas should be about the courses. So what I mean that all the ideas in each paragraph should be related to what I am talking about, and should not be any sentences that are off the topic.

Muna defined cohesion as “unity” too, and viewed coherence as the “same”. Nada also thought of cohesion as connectedness and unity:

if we want the topic or the essay to talk about one idea, one unity that is connected, we have to see or reconsider cohesion.

However, Aisha viewed cohesion as concepts particular to cohesion, (i.e. words in sentences that relate to each other), but also as coherence-related concepts (i.e. unity of ideas in paragraphs and sentences). She stated that cohesion was about “one idea in one paragraph and all words and sentence in this paragraph should carry the same idea”. To Heba, cohesion was to do with “perfect writing”. She stated that it is to “make your writing as perfect as possible as you can... like from all sides”, and, unlike the other students, she regarded coherence as grammar, “like some rules that we have to follow when we write”.

To some of the other students, cohesion relates to another concept of coherence, namely the interaction with the reader. To Reem, cohesion was to do with the interaction that the writer establishes with the reader, which is more linked to coherence than cohesion. She defined cohesion as

the message that you want to reach it to the reader so I think that it is more important than anything in the whole essay.

Besides viewing cohesion as unity and connectedness, Nada also thought that cohesion was concerned with the interaction with the reader. She stated that if the writer does not “follow” the principles of cohesion,

the reader will not be interested in our writing. Our writing will be boring. Our writing is nothing.

When first asked about what cohesion was to her, Hajer said that she was not sure, but when asked later about coherence, she responded that she felt that they were “*the same*”. She added that they were to do with the interaction that takes place between the writer and reader from the beginning of the text till the end. She said,

I think of cohesion and coherence are the same. If your paragraph is coherent, the reader is going to understand your first idea to the end, and your ideas are finished through your conclusion. You can use your title and the conclusion to show the reader that your writing is finished and that it is one piece.

On the other hand, one out of the ten student interviewees, Hamad, was not quite certain what either cohesion or coherence exactly meant. He replied with the question, “*Coherence is what the essay contains?*” He was, however, able to express that cohesion and coherence are to do with producing better writing texts, but he couldn't remember what cohesion or coherence meant, even though, according to him, he had previously known what the two terms were. He stated,

I heard about them in class. But I don't remember. Sometimes when I am learning writing I don't focus on the words or the meaning of writing from the instruction and how to write the essay.

As it can be seen from the analysis above, six of the students regarded cohesion and coherence as similar, and nine linked cohesion to concepts that in the literature are seen to be more associated with coherence than cohesion. This indicates the great overlap in the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. This may be to do with how the teachers approach

cohesion and coherence and concepts relevant to each of the terms in the academic writing class, and how explicitly they go about the teaching of these two terms. Further, as it is indicated by the following section, the students' metalinguistic understanding of how they would teach cohesion and coherence corroborates the overlap in their understanding of the two terms.

6.3.2 Teaching of cohesion and coherence

Six students clearly regarded cohesion as coherence (see Table 6.1).

No.	Student	How student understood cohesion as coherence in teaching cohesion	Student's quotes/statements
1.	Moza	Cohesion is about connectedness of ideas and sentences.	<i>I would teach them how to write sentences that relate to each other, not jump from one idea to another different idea.</i>
2.	Muna	Idea development Cohesion is to do with relations with the reader	<i>Each sentence has an idea. Easier for the reader what the writer is talking about.</i>
3.	Aisha	Working with students on their paragraph topic sentences.	<i>I would teach them how to write a topic sentence and this topic sentence control this paragraph.</i>
4.	Iman	Draw students' attention to the unity of the topic and help them work on keeping the unity of the ideas in the paragraphs and the whole text	<i>I will give them a topic and I will ask each one to give an idea that is related to that topic, and all of us will gather these simple ideas to write a paragraph or write an essay that contain all these ideas and I will tell them that all these ideas should be related to the topic.</i>
5.	Reem	The reader's familiarity of the topic (i.e. the reader's background and subject knowledge) The reader's interest	<i>The topic of the writing "must be known by the reader". The student writer should put himself in the reader's shoes and see what s/he would "want to read".</i>
6.	Nada	Unity of ideas and logical order	<i>We use the other things... logical order, ideas... between paragraphs.</i>

Table 6.1: Showing the results of students regarding cohesion as coherence in how they would approach teaching cohesion and coherence

In addition, some of the students did refer to cohesion-related concepts in their discussion of how they would teach cohesion. Hajer and Nada alluded to different types of cohesion in their suggested ways of approaching cohesion: Hajer emphasized the teaching of one type of lexical cohesion, namely collocation:

you need to read a lot so you know how you put words together, what word collocate. They have to memorize words that go together.

Nada thought of grammatical cohesion through referring to different terms that come under conjunctions (*i.e. coordination, subordination and signal transitions*). She proposed,

we use the other things...the coordination, subordination, logical order, ideas and signal transitions between paragraphs.

Further, in her definition, Muna also addressed cohesion-related concepts such as verbs and other lexical items (*i.e. lexical cohesion*), and transitional signals (*i.e. grammatical cohesion*), that mark the “*smooth movement*” between sentences. She indicated that in her teaching of cohesion she would emphasise

a smooth movement from one sentence to another. They connect with each other. Easier for the reader what the writer is talking about. The writer is careful about the tense. Terms are important.

Aisha, however, joined concepts of lexical cohesion and coherence in her discussion on “*words*” that are related to the paragraph topic sentences. She stated,

and all the words in this paragraph should be related to this topic sentences

Additionally, in their reflections on how they would approach cohesion, certain students seemed to echo some of their previous training experiences with the teaching of writing. Fatma specified introducing “*easier ways*” and a “*variety of ways to convey the information*”. Heba emphasized that in order for students to achieve cohesion in their writing, she would encourage them to “*utilise or use everything they have learned*”. Nada highlighted the importance of the text title:

the important thing is the title. We write it is accurate and it is brief, our writing is understood.

The students' ideas as to how they would approach the teaching of cohesion to others evidently suggest that there is a great overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and of coherence. The ways they suggested reflected the overlap between the two terms, and the prevalence of concepts which in the literature are more associated with coherence than cohesion. The concepts they specified in their teaching of cohesion to others were the connectedness of topic and ideas, unity, logical order, and the relevance of the lexical items used in the text and in the paragraph topic sentences. They did, however, also report concepts that are particular to the term cohesion, such as the use of collocation and conjunctions which they referred to using different terms.

Further, when asked in a later stage of the interview about how they would teach coherence, six of the students' responses strongly reflected the previously indicated overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. Four of them made explicit statements saying that they would teach coherence in the same way that they would teach cohesion, as they clearly regarded the two as the same. Aisha argued that she would "*follow same procedure*" that she would use in teaching cohesion, as she thought "*they are the same*" - an understanding that was echoed by Fatma, Nada and Iman, who also gave the same rationale for their understanding. Although initially not sure what was meant by 'cohesion', Hajer also thought of helping students to consider the connectedness of ideas, unity of text and logical order, when she indicated that in order to teach students coherence she would "*write some sentences*" and then "*tell them to order them in the right order*". Heba stated that she would ask them to "*write an essay and then catch the mistakes from their essay*" and "*correct it*". Two students, Muna and Reem, however, said nothing on how they would teach coherence to others. Hamad also opted not to discuss how he would go about teaching coherence, as was also the case with cohesion: he was not sure what coherence or cohesion really meant.

This was perhaps on account of the overlap in the students' metalinguistic understanding of what the two terms meant in the context of writing, and therefore they could not elaborate on their understanding of how the teaching of coherence could be approached.

6.4 Students' metalinguistic understanding of grammatical and lexical cohesion

The following section offers an overview of the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion categories and sub categories indicated below, and how they defined them in the context of EFL academic writing. As part of the elicitation tasks, cards were set out with each of the terms below, and the students were asked to explain them, if they had heard of/known them.

- Lexical cohesion
- Reiteration
- Substitution
- Ellipsis
- Grammatical cohesion
- Reference
- Conjunction
- Collocation

6.4.1 Lexical cohesion, reiteration, substitution and ellipsis

Without exception, all the participants decided not to select the cards labelled as 'lexical cohesion' (i.e. semantic relations between words in texts), 'reiteration' (i.e. the use of a word that refers back to an item, or the use of a synonym, near-synonym, hyponym etc.), 'substitution' (i.e. replacing an item with another) and 'ellipsis' (i.e. zero substitution), which would indicate that these concepts were poorly understood. Nada wrongly defined substitution as making “*sentences complex or compound*”, perhaps mistaking substitution for subordination, and argued that it is crucial as it “*makes the essay more interesting*” and also “*helps not to write stringy or choppy sentences*”. Moza, Fatma and Hajer stated that they had heard of substitution but could not remember what it was, and Heba said the same of ellipsis.

6.4.2 Reference

All of the students opted to discuss 'reference' (i.e. three kinds: personals, comparatives, and demonstratives and the definite article 'the'); however, they articulated what it meant to them in two different ways. Two of the students only defined reference as referring backwards in the text to a "*thing*" or a person. Aisha mentioned "*agreement*" and gave as an example "*her book*" referring to a "*pronoun which is she*". Hajer further proposed that "*you refer things to other like using pronouns to make your paragraph coherent*". Eight of the ten, on the other hand, defined reference as the "*information*" or "*ideas*" that students may refer to in their writing, and which they could derive from "*sources*" like books, the internet or articles. Eight students interpreted reference in terms of evidencing and citation, rather than in the grammatical sense. Hamad, Reem, Moza, Heba and Iman gave similar definitions of the term reference, saying that reference was about retrieving information from other sources. Fatma proposed that sources can be consulted if the writing task is not carried out in class. And Nada added that if students write "*a number of paragraphs, they need at least three sources*". Muna mentioned the APA referencing style in her discussion of what reference meant to her.

6.4.3 Grammatical cohesion

Only half of the students, and in broad terms, discussed elements that touch on what 'grammatical cohesion' (i.e. denotes connectedness between sentences) is about. Nada talked about grammatical cohesion in a general sense when she argued that without having grammatical cohesion "*the essay will not be that strong*" and will lose its "*meaning*". She also advised that there are "*steps*" that need to be followed in order to "*make our writing cohesive*". Aisha was more specific, as she stated that students need to consider "*adverb clauses, verb clauses and noun clauses*" in order for them to be able to "*use all types of clauses*" to "*make clear and organized writing*". To her, grammatical cohesion is also associated with "*editing*". Reem, however, defined grammatical cohesion more as grammar when she proposed that it is about a "*grammatical type of rules that we follow in the essay*". She gave an example of tense, and argued that "*sometimes the past*" is needed and some other times it is "*the present*". Moza also proposed that it is about "*how to use the grammar in writing*". Fatma also mentioned grammar in her

discussion of grammatical cohesion. She talked about using “*appropriate grammar for writing*”. She further explained that

if you don't know how to use this grammar, don't include it in your writing because you may ruin the idea or you may convey the idea to the reader in a differently way. To achieve connectedness, you have to use accurate grammar in your writing.

Half of the students, however, did not make any comments in relation to the grammatical cohesion card. Hamad mentioned that he had heard of cohesion but could not remember what it meant. Muna, Iman, Hajer and Heba decided not to include the card label on grammatical cohesion in their discussion.

6.4.4 Conjunction

Six of the students succeeded to varying degrees in verbally articulating a definition for 'conjunction' (i.e. an anaphoric cohesive tie that can be additive, adversative, causal, temporal or continuative). Three students gave a general definition of what conjunction is: Heba defined it as “*linking or making the sentences that you are writing linked and connected*” and Reem referred to it as “*specific words we can use to conjunct sentence, between two sentences or more*”. Iman said that it is about “*some phrases or words that connect two sentences together*”. Another three students (Aisha, Fatma and Hajer) voiced a more elaborate definition of conjunction. Conjunction as stated by Aisha is

about how we can use conjunction in writing to link our ideas. There are many types and each one carries a different meaning; for example: but, so, for, or, nor, yet.

Fatma mentioned that it is about “*FANBOYS and some adverbs*”. By FANBOYS, she was referring to *for, and, nor, but, or, yet* and *so*. She further proposed that

this make cohesion for writing. You can convey a particular idea through conjunction like subordinators and coordinators to achieve

for you the connectedness you want. For example, you want to express a reason or a results, these will help to add this specific characteristic to you paragraph.

To Hajer conjunction was about

words that we use to support dependent clauses because they cannot stand by themselves. We use subordinators with conjunctive clauses and with an independent clause we make a complex sentence... like in FANBOYS to make complex sentences.

The remaining four (Hamad, Muna, Nada and Moza) did not talk about the term.

6.4.5 Collocation

Six of the interviewees had some knowledge of 'collocation' (i.e. the cohesive link that ties the words that normally appear together), but with various levels of elaboration. Collocation was briefly defined as "*words that come together*" by Heba, and as "*words that go together*" by Hajer. It was also succinctly articulated by Moza as "*the words that collocate with each other*" and by Iman as "*two words that are connected to each other*". Muna defined collocation as "*words that go together, but also gave an example of it*", and gave an example of "*free trial*". Only one student, however, gave a more comprehensive definition of the term: Nada stated that collocation

means that there are words that go with other words which must follow it. These two words refer to a certain meaning. What words that go together like the adjective 'interesting', what words that could follow it.

The remaining four either did not respond to what collocation was to them, or gave erroneous answers. Three students made a decision not to include collocation in their discussion of cohesion types: Fatma mentioned that she had heard of it, but had forgotten what it meant, and Reem and Aisha left out the card label that had

the term 'collocation'. Hamad, on the other hand, gave an inaccurate definition of collocation saying that it is about “*what is similar. It’s something completing somethings*”. He did not seem positive about his response, as he followed it by asking the interviewer, “*It’s like that?*”

Conjunction was the most familiar type of grammatical cohesion and collocation in lexical cohesion. The students, however, seemed to have some limited metalinguistic understanding of cohesion types and sub types in general, but a fairly reasonable knowledge of collocation and conjunction, and less of an understanding of reference. This perhaps indicates the level of emphasis and relevance of these concepts in EFL academic writing. It is possible that teachers had explicitly touched on some relevant concepts but not others. The students might also know the meaning of some terms, but were unable to articulate their understanding in clear and precise words. Further, grammatical substitution and ellipsis are rare in writing, as indicated by Halliday and Hasan and confirmed by many studies on writing cohesion and coherence, a situation that perhaps led to their lacking knowledge of these terms.

6.5 Students’ metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of an essay

- Coherence between sentences in an essay
- Coherence between and within paragraphs
- Coherence in the essay as a whole

6.5.1 Coherence between sentences in an essay

All students chose to talk about coherence between sentences in an essay (see Table 6.2).

No.	Student	How sentence coherence is understood by student	Student's quotes/statements
1.	Muna	sentence relatedness	<i>Sentences should be related to each other</i>
2.	Moza	sentence relatedness	<i>The sentence relate to the other sentence.</i>
3.	Iman	significance of conjunctives	<i>how the sentences are connected to each other and how they are connected by using some conjunctions by coordinators</i>
4.	Hajer	concepts associated with cohesion (i.e. use of pronouns) and coherence (i.e. use of key words)	<i>You can succeed in this when you use the same pronouns and repeating the key nouns. Writing is not just about one words. It is like a map. When you have a word in the thesis statement, you colour it in red and then when you go to the paragraph, you could see that word that you've coloured in red there. You could use it when you write pronouns.</i>
5.	Fatma	connectedness and going off topic	<i>If the paragraph talks about a topic, when you move from one sentence to another, they have to have a link when you talk about the topic and you don't go off topic.</i>
6.	Nada	connectedness between sentences and smooth transition of ideas from one sentence to another	<i>When there is coherence between all the sentences in the essay, the essay will be more stronger, and the reader will enjoy reading the essay moving from one point to another.</i>
7.	Reem	paragraph connectedness (i.e. in a more general sense)	<i>Each body paragraph should contain the same idea and we shouldn't go out of these ideas and when we write. It is about these ideas in the text.</i>
8.	Hamad	use of sentences and paragraph structure	<i>how to use them</i> <i>how to put in the paragraph</i>

Table 6.2: Showing the results of students' metalinguistic understanding of coherence between sentences

Heba, however, commented that the coherence-related concepts (i.e. coherence between sentences in the essay, coherence between and within paragraphs and coherence in the essay as a whole) seemed “*similar*”. Aisha added to that saying that “*we focused more on coherence in the essay as a whole*”.

In summary, all students seemed to have a good metalinguistic understanding of coherence between essay sentences and linking sentences in a text. This again might be due to the kind of exposure to coherence that the students had in their academic writing classroom, their experience of learning academic writing and their interaction with their writing teachers. The ideas they came up with were about relatedness of sentences, connectedness of ideas and the role of cohesive devices in establishing coherence between sentences.

6.5.2 Coherence between and within paragraphs

Seven students touched on various notions in their deliberations on what coherence between and within paragraphs was to them (see Table 6.3).

No.	Student	How coherence between and within paragraphs is understood by student	Student's quotes/statements
1.	Aisha	Whole text connectedness Paragraph relatedness to topic sentence	<i>Coherence should exist in our writing</i> <i>All ideas in the paragraph should be related to our topic sentence</i>
2.	Nada	Importance of coherence to appear in all of the text paragraphs, not only in one	<i>If we focus on one paragraph and coherence exists in one paragraph only, this is problematic because the essay will only be based on one paragraph and the other paragraphs are meaningless.</i>
3.	Muna	Coherence between and within paragraphs is realized through the ideas expressed by the different paragraphs	<i>The paragraph should discuss a specific idea, and the second paragraph should also discuss another specific idea, but about the same topic.</i>
4.	Iman	Connectedness through use of "transitional conjunctions" and "transitional paragraphs"	<i>How the paragraphs are connected to each other by using the transitional conjunctions or there is something called transitional paragraphs. It is a sentence that we have to use when we move from talking, for example, about differences, to similarities... movement between paragraphs.</i>
5.	Moza	Steps students can follow to achieve coherence between and within paragraphs	<i>between paragraphs...like at the beginning of the first paragraph we write first and the second paragraph second... and inside the paragraph... furthermore</i>
6.	Fatma	Using some techniques; "specific ways" to keep the "link" between paragraphs and generate "connectedness"	<i>The links between two paragraphs is achieved through specific ways. For example, you have written a compare and a contrast, you talk first in the introduction about the similarities and differences. Then you talk in a certain way....you move in a specific way between one idea and another. This creates connectedness</i>
7.	Hajer	Importance of coherence for the paragraph A technique to achieve is "repeating the key nouns and using transition words"	<i>Coherence is important for the paragraph like repeating the key nouns and using transition words</i> <i>So we can show that this is your first idea and this is your second idea and this your last one.</i>

Table 6.3: Showing the results of how students understood coherence between and within paragraphs

On the other hand, three students (Reem, Hamad and Heba) seemed unsure and chose not to talk about what coherence is between and within paragraphs, a situation that perhaps indicates their limited metalinguistic understanding of this concept.

The majority of the students seemed to have a fairly reasonable metalinguistic understanding of the concept of coherence between and within paragraphs. Their understanding covers such notions as the significance of connectedness of ideas between and within paragraphs, the role of cohesive devices in establishing coherence, and the significance of logical order in creating coherence. It would appear that their teachers had drawn the students' attention to the importance of working on their paragraph coherence, both between and within.

6.5.3 Coherence in the essay as a whole

Nine students reflected on what coherence in the essay as a whole was to them, with various degrees of elaboration and focus. Fatma gave a succinct definition of the concept when she explained that "*you should talk about one topic*". Nada highlighted the significance of coherence in a more comprehensive manner, stating that it "*should be in the essay as whole, between the paragraphs and sentences*". Another brief and inclusive definition was offered by Moza, who stated that it is about "*how to make the whole writing coherence with each other*". Reem added,

all essay should have a general idea which when you read it so you can decide that is about a specific thing but one idea in the end.

Additionally, in her definition of this concept, Iman brought up the significance of connectedness of ideas in terms of "*how the ideas are connected between each other*". This, according to her, is represented by the assumption that "*all the paragraphs are talking about one topic*" and "*all the sentences are talking about one topic*" and that "*there is no off topic sentence*". Muna suggested also that sentence and paragraph coherence entails coherence in the whole text, when she argued that "*when you have coherence between sentences and paragraphs, the whole essay will also be coherence*". Hajer seemed to have the same understanding, as she argued that she felt that she had already explained coherence in the essay as a whole as she had talked earlier about coherence between sentences in text and coherence between and within paragraphs. Aisha remarked that in her experience of academic writing, holistic coherence was given more emphasis: "*we focused more on coherence in the essay as a whole*". On the

other hand, Heba discussed another dimension, “*grammar rules*”, in the coherence of text as a whole when she proposed,

here we are talking, for example, grammar rules, the tense and how the writer uses the tenses maybe modals like the parts of speech like gerund and infinitive.

Hamad, however, stated that he was not sure what coherence in the essay as a whole meant.

The students seemed to draw on the essay's different parts in their discussion of coherence in the essay as a whole - unity of the topic that the essay focuses on, connectedness of ideas and the relevance of the coherence of the essay other parts, namely sentences and paragraphs.

6.6 Students’ metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and some coherence-related concepts

- Relationship between coherence and logic, or making sense
- Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge
- Relationship between coherence and the interaction between the writer and the reader
- Role of cohesion on coherence

6.6.1 Relationship between coherence and logic or making sense

Seven students reflected on the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense, and came up with some significant insights. Fatma proposed that this concept is about “*not going off topic*”. Hamad referred to the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense, when he narrated the story of one of his classmates whose argument for his stand (i.e. on smoking) was not valid, did not make sense. He said,

it’s like an argumentative essay when you argue about something, you have to make sense and not something that is out of the subject, and like one of my friends... He was with smoking. He doesn’t

smoke. He wanted to be something unique, not like others, but what he has written does not have that power to argue about.

In their discussion of coherence and logic or making sense, four students considered relationships with the reader. Hajer stated that when a student makes his/her writing coherent, their “*writing is going to make more sense to the reader*”. By the same token, Aisha contended that “*when we achieve coherence in our writing, the logic will affect the reader and the reader will understand our writing*”. Iman proposed that this concept is similar to coherence and the interaction between the writer and the reader, arguing that when the reader is “*convinced*” with the writer’s ideas and “*sense*” making, this means there is coherence.

Further, Muna brought up the issue of translating thoughts from Arabic to English and proposed that one’s “*thinking in Arabic is different than English*”. She added,

I may have ideas that I can express it in a good way. I may think they are the same in Arabic and English, but for the reader it doesn’t make sense. Translating from Arabic to English can cause problems for the reader, whether the teacher is not Arabic or the classmate Arabic.

To Moza, the relationship between coherence and other concepts such as logic or making sense, background and subject knowledge, and interaction with the reader are “*the same*”. This position indicates the intertwined relationships between coherence and these concepts. Three of the ten students, however, preferred not to respond to the question about the concept of coherence and logic or making sense.

Some of the students expressed a fairly good level of awareness about keeping the logic or making sense of the text. They talked of different dimensions in maintaining that, such as keeping to the topic of the essay, relating with the reader, and the issue of the translation of ideas from Arabic to English when writing. They

were possibly exposed to these concepts in their writing class and in their previous experiences and training of writing.

6.6.2 Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge

Eight students were able to articulate the relevance of some of the relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge. Aisha argued that having a “*strong background knowledge*” about the topics students are required to write about contributes to the coherence of their writing. She put forward that

if you have strong background about the topic and we understand it clearly, sure we will achieve coherence in our writing.

Moza proposed that writing is “*more focused*” when students have knowledge of the writing topic because they are in command of what they “*are talking about*”. Muna suggested that students struggle when they do not have sufficient knowledge of the topic on which the writing is based. They therefore “*face problems*” which may lead to writing essays that “*have no unity or coherence*”. Moza added further that if she lacked knowledge of the topic she is expected to write about, she “*cannot write a coherence writing*”. Muna also highlighted the variation in the extent of background and subject knowledge of the different topics among students. She stated,

if the teacher gives us a topic to write about, I sometimes see a big difference between what I write and what my friends write and this is because the background knowledge of the subject or because I see it from another side.

Further, Hamad commented that teachers have to reconsider the type of topics they ask their students to write about in class, where students cannot access other sources to orient themselves to the writing topic if they lack the knowledge of the topic. He stressed,

if I have a background knowledge about a topic, I will write about. If not, how I will write about it. Teachers sometimes have to focus about the subject because they want to know how we write, not about our information about something. Why don't they ask about? It's something usual that everyone knows about it. Something is familiar for the people because they want our writing, how it's improved. The quality I mean, not knowledge because someone, the writer at home who writes novels or whoever who argue about something in the newspaper, they sit from his computer. They search for information. Unlike us, we are really struggling with thinking about the things that we are going to write about.

Similarly, Iman emphasized the importance of reading about the writing topics, arguing,

If I know about the subject and I have a background of the subject so I can write about the topic. If I read more about that subject, I can write about it. I have a lot of ideas to write about that topic.

Heba, however, went further to propose that coherence in writing actually leads to the display of the background and subject knowledge “in a good way”. Coherence, she argued,

make it easier for the writer to show his/her knowledge in a good way because if you have a background knowledge or information or background of the topic that you are writing about, so that will not be enough if you don't have the coherence because the coherence helps the writer to clarify his information about the topic of the essay so coherence is very important to show your knowledge or background.

On the other hand, the subject knowledge was viewed by Nada as knowledge of the language used in writing texts. She therefore emphasised the importance of grammar, the composition of different sentence types, the connectedness of writing, and to what extent the writing is interesting. She stated that

if the writer know a lot of writing styles and grammar, grammatical writing, so his or her essay will be more coherence. He knows how to compose compound and complex sentences, and how he uses subordination and coordination. So absolutely the essay will be one unit and connected and the writing will be more interesting.

Hajer thought teachers were the ones to be blamed for causing this problem. She used the word “*weird*” to describe unfamiliar writing topics that teachers sometimes gave to students to write about. She said,

if we don't have an idea about the topic, we are going to have vague ideas. Sometimes they give us a weird topic, and we go like what do you want us to do? It is hard to produce new ideas.

Two students (Reem and Fatma) did not talk about the relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge. They might have been uncertain about coherence and its relationship to the students' background and subject knowledge when writing an academic essay.

Some of the students verbalized some major challenges that concern their background and subject knowledge. The challenges stemmed perhaps from the students' limited knowledge of the world, the level of depth of their subject knowledge, how well-read they were and the fact that the teachers were not providing students with content knowledge of the topic on which the writing was to be based. The students probably needed to have a reasonable knowledge of their writing topics beforehand in order to be able to successfully write with cohesion and coherence.

6.6.3 Relationship between coherence and the interaction between the writer and the reader

In their response to the question on the relationship between coherence and the interaction between the writer and the reader, six of the ten students referred directly to issues relevant to coherence and relationships with the reader. Aisha stated that when there is coherence, the writer's "*meaning will reach the reader quickly*". Similarly, Fatma proposed that coherence makes it "*easy for the reader to follow*". Hajer argued that coherence contributes to the comprehension of the text and minimizes vagueness. She stated,

if your writing is coherent, the reader is going to understand what you mean. You will give everything you have so that it is not unclear.

Coherence is fundamental to the interaction that takes place between the writer and reader: "*If we want the reader to interact in the writing we write*", contended Moza, "*the writing have to be coherence*". The reader can relate better to the writing if s/he is made "*convinced or satisfied*", and if the writing makes "*sense*", and all of this, as Iman stressed, can be achieved through establishing coherence. She argued,

how I can make the reader convinced or satisfied about my ideas and making sense and make the reader interact with me and with my ideas by making coherence in the essay.

Besides indicating the writing connectedness and the reader's comprehension and interest, Nada also referred to "*the order of ideas*" (i.e. logic) in her discussion of the relationship between coherence and the interaction between the writer and the reader. She said,

the writing is one unit, and the writer writes everything connected and not off topic. The reader will enjoy when he reads and will understand what the writer is talking about and the order of ideas.

In their responses to other interview questions, nine students also explicitly stated concepts relevant to the relationship between the writer and the reader. For example, right from the beginning of the interview, when she was sharing her understanding of what cohesion was in the context of academic writing, Reem voiced an important concept related to the relationship between the writer and the reader. She defined cohesion then as “*the message*” that is meant to be conveyed to the reader. Muna, in her articulation of what cohesion is, viewed the reader’s comprehension of the writer’s text as an aim that the writer has to reach so the reader “*can understand*”. Muna also referred to the relationship with reader when she discussed the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense. She warned against mistakes that could occur on account of thinking in Arabic when writing because, according to her, the reader may not be able to “*make sense*” of the ideas translated from Arabic to English. It is worth noting here that, throughout the interview, nine of the ten students brought up relationships with the reader in their responses to the other interview questions. Hamad, however, decided not to discuss the nature of the relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader, and did not bring up this concept at all throughout the interview.

Relationships with the reader often came up in the students’ responses to the different interview questions. This could be because it is a concept that may have been stressed by the writing teachers in the writing class, as it can help students to consider their essay clarity, and even cohesiveness, and to eliminate vagueness in their writing.

6.6.4 Role of cohesion on coherence

None of the students were able to reflect on the concept of the role of cohesion on coherence. Only four of them decided to respond to the question that asked them to discuss this concept, but their responses did not quite address it. Aisha and Hajer stated that they thought of the two terms as the same, and therefore could not tell what role cohesion may have on coherence. Iman was also uncertain, and wondered whether this concept was about “*how the title is connected to the whole*

essay". Muna, on the other hand, commented that cohesion "*plays a big role in your essay so the reader can understand it*", but she did not directly discuss the role of cohesion on coherence. Giving inaccurate responses, or not responding at all to the questions, perhaps indicates that the students lacked metalinguistic understanding of what cohesion and coherence exactly mean, and therefore what role cohesion may play in coherence.

The role of cohesion on coherence was possibly too complex a matter for the students to explain. Not only does the ability to reflect on this concept involve some understanding of cohesion and coherence, but it also includes being aware of the potential impact cohesion may have on coherence. Perhaps the students were also not used to reflecting on concepts in a deeper sense, where they might analyse and synthesise concepts and constructs relevant to terminology they happened to come across in their academic writing classes. Their teachers might not have encouraged this kind of reflection in a course where the emphasis may have been more directed towards the actual writing of academic essays and the issues that stem from that writing.

6.7 Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created grammatical cohesion in their essays

In this task, the students discussed their own writing with two pieces of writing in front of them (i.e. compare and contrast and argumentative essays). By this stage of the interview, the students should have had a slightly more accurate and comprehensive metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. This was because they had been introduced to cohesion and coherence-related concepts through the early interview questions and the elicitation tasks (i.e. card labels). Below is an illustration of the students' findings on their use of the following sub categories of grammatical cohesion.

- Students' use of reference
- Students' use of conjunctions
- Students' use of substitution
- Students' use of ellipsis

6.7.1 Students' use of reference

Only two of the ten students accurately articulated what reference was in relation to the grammatical cohesion of academic essays. Hajer verbalized the term by explaining it with respect to her compare and contrast essay on children nowadays and in the past, saying that “*instead of saying 'game', I used different things to describe game*”. Aisha used an example from her argumentative essay to talk about reference, and stated that, “*for example, she or he to refer to the smoker*”. Moza, however, erroneously discussed reference in her essay as “*grammar and tense*”. Similarly, Fatma mistakenly defined reference as using sources that she could cite in her writing. On the other hand, six students (Reem, Hamad, Iman, Nada, Heba and Muna) opted not to talk about their use of reference in their essays. Reference is perhaps a term that was discussed only occasionally in the students' writing classes.

6.7.2 Students' use of conjunctions

Seven students were able to discuss their use of conjunction, and gave illustrative examples of how they had used conjunction in their essays. They extracted the following examples of the conjunctives that they had used in their academic essays: Reem talked about her use of *although* in her essay introduction paragraph and “*however*” in one of her body paragraphs. Iman stated that she frequently used “*however*” and “*therefore*”, and referred to them as transitional conjunctions. Fatma gave the examples “*in spite of*”, “*for example*”, “*because*”, “*before*” and “*also*”. Nada mentioned “*in addition*” and “*we notice that*” and Hajer “*furthermore*”, “*however*” and “*moreover*”. Muna used “*beside*” and “*in addition*”, and Aisha “*for example*” and “*so*”. Moza, Hamad and Heba did not discuss what conjunctions they had used in their essays.

6.7.3 Students' use of substitution and ellipsis

None of the students were able to verbally articulate their use of substitution or ellipsis in their essays.

In relation to the students' metalinguistic understanding of their use of grammatical cohesion in their academic essays, one can infer the following. The students seemed to have a reasonable metalinguistic understanding of conjunction and

some but less knowledge of reference. Their knowledge of conjunction and reference might be better than that of the other types of grammatical cohesion (i.e. ellipsis and substitution). The students had possibly received more explicit teaching about conjunction and reference than they did on ellipsis and substitution. Their seeming lack of knowledge of ellipsis and substitution perhaps limited their abilities to describe or discuss clearly their use of these two terms in their essays.

Grammatical substitution and ellipsis are, however, considered less common in English writing, as proposed by Halliday and Hasan and confirmed by other related studies, which might justify the students' lack of knowledge of these two concepts.

6.8 Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created lexical cohesion in their essays

- Students' use of reiteration/repetition
- Students' use of collocations

Apart from collocation, students' knowledge of lexical cohesion (i.e. lexical reiteration) was lacking. Below is more detail of the students' responses:

6.8.1 Students' use of reiteration/repetition

Only Muna responded to the interview question that asked whether the students had used reiteration in their writing. However, she did not directly talk about how she had used it, but rather mentioned that she had resorted to the use of active and passive for variety, as feedback received from her teacher tended to say that her writing was repetitive. She also stated that she would usually avoid risking the use of lexical items that she was not entirely confident about, especially in graded writing assignments. This was because she was worried that she might lose marks due to errors in the spelling or the appropriate use of word. Hajer, on the other hand, did refer to reiteration in another part of the interview, when she discussed how she had made her whole essay connected. She mentioned having used it in her argumentative essay, which argued that smokers do not have the right to smoke, in that the word 'smoking' should appear throughout the essay.

The situation of the students not responding to this question complied with their initial decision in the interview not to select the card label that had the term 'lexical reiteration or repetition'. Not choosing to define what the concept reiteration or

repetition meant to them, or opting to discuss how they had used reiteration or repetition in their scripts, could indicate their lack of metalinguistic understanding of this concept.

6.8.2 Students' use of collocations

Three of the ten students responded to the question that asked them to indicate whether they had used collocations in their essays. Only Nada was able to give an example, which was "*spread rapidly*". Iman merely commented that she had "*used collocations a lot*". Muna proposed that collocation was "*not easy to do*" and that students do not "*have someone to check with*" about their use of collocation when they write in class. The seven other students were not able to indicate whether they had used collocation. This was despite the fact that six of them were able to correctly define collocation when they were presented earlier in the interview with the card labelled 'collocation'.

A number of points can be raised about the students' metalinguistic understanding of their use of lexical cohesion in their essays. Unlike collocation, the other types of lexical reiteration did not seem to be part of what teachers explicitly discuss in the writing class. Even though the students appeared to be fairly familiar with collocation, being able to verbalise what it meant to them, they were not able to refer to specific examples of the collocations they had used in their actual essays. The students tended not to elaborate on what they thought and did in their writing. This raises a question about the extent to which students are used to getting involved in reflecting at a deeper level on what they do and think when they write, including issues relevant to the cohesion of their writing.

6.9 Students' metalinguistic understanding of how they had created coherence in their writing

Seven students (see Table 6.4) talked about different concepts of coherence in their reflections on how they had made their essays coherent.

No.	Student	How the student had made their essays coherent	Student's quotes/statements
1.	Hajer	using knowledge of major key concepts in coherence such as using cohesive ties, lexical reiteration and relationship with the reader to establish coherence in her argumentative essay	<i>transition signals by using the repetition of key nouns in this essay... the key noun is smoking. So we are going to use smoking, smoking, smoking. We are not going to use tobacco. The reader is going to be like... what?</i>
2.	Nada	through the essay title, relating to the reader, the content of the thesis statement and the organization of ideas in her introduction before moving to the essay body paragraphs	<i>I write the title and make it brief but at the same time the reader can understand from reading the title that essay talks about this idea. Then I need to focus on the thesis statement. For example, in the compare and contrast it contains three points; two similarity and one difference. And before the thesis statement I write general sentences. I first write about myself about something that has preceded and then the society. Then I talk about the topic in general. Then I move to the body paragraphs.</i>
3.	Aisha	"paraphrasing" to avoid repetition and using "vocabulary and other tenses" to make the essays coherent	<i>I paraphrased some sentences to make my essay clear and good. I don't repeat. That's why I paraphrase some sentences in a special way and used vocabulary and other tenses</i>
4.	Hamad	bringing "life experience" into one's writing, "brainstorming" and "outlining" the "information" students have and "thinking about" what they are "going to talk about" before starting to write organizing ideas in the thesis statement that introduces the points to be included in the essay	<i>Our life experience... what we see in the media... what we learn from this experience. Before we start writing the essay we do like an outline... brainstorm to how we collect our information ... think about what we are going to talk about then we start our essay..</i> <i>the first thing organize things in a thesis statement ... when you have the thesis statement you can talk as much as you want because you have all the points you're going to talk about</i>

Table 6.4: Showing the results of how student had made their essays coherent

Further, coherence was still seen as similar to cohesion according to three students: Fatma clearly stated that she had created coherence in her essay "in a similar way to" the way in which she had made her essay cohesive, a proposition that indicates that she could not clearly distinguish between the two terms. Heba explicitly referred to the relationship between cohesion and coherence and stated that cohesion leads to coherence. She proposed,

if I make my sentences cohesive, they will be coherent. We studied a lot of grammar. I just try to memorize and remember what I have learned. So I'm trying to utilize this.

To Iman, cohesion and coherence are different, but overall they “*mean connections*”. She proposed,

they have similar idea in general but of course they have a difference, a slight difference. I don't remember exactly, but cohesion is about how the title or the topic itself is connected to the whole essay. Coherence is how the ideas and the paragraphs are connected to each other.

Three of the ten students did not discuss how they had made their essays coherent: Muna and Moza decided not to respond at all to this question, and Reem commented that she “*did not focus on coherence that much*”.

When asked for their reflections on how they had created coherence in their essays, the students seemed to display a fairly good metalinguistic understanding of coherence. Their knowledge included coherence-related concepts such as awareness of the reader, the role of cohesive devices on the coherence of their writing, and the relationship between coherence. It is worth noting here that the students were asked to reflect on how they had created coherence in their writing, after they were introduced earlier in the interview, through card labels, to concepts crucial and relevant to cohesion and coherence. They were, hence, more confident about discussing how they had worked on making their compare and contrast or argumentative essays coherent. However, a few students were still uncertain and therefore struggled with referring to concepts relevant to coherence, or they merely viewed coherence as cohesion.

6.9.1 How students showed coherence in the essay parts

Below is how the students showed coherence in the following parts of their essays.

- Introduction paragraph
- Body paragraphs
- Conclusion paragraph

6.9.1.1 Introduction paragraph

Eight of the ten students discussed different points about how they had demonstrated coherence in their essay introduction paragraphs. Moza proposed that the introduction paragraph includes general and specific statements, beside the thesis statement that refers to the specific points in the essays. Hamad discussed creating a connection between general information and specific information, to introduce the ideas that the essay is to cover. Iman also stated that the introduction has to be connected to the ideas in the essay body paragraphs. Similarly, Heba argued that the general ideas in the introduction paragraph have to be “*related*” to the ideas covered by the essay. In her response, Aisha focused on the thesis statement in the introduction and proposed that she had demonstrated connectedness by including the essay main ideas in her thesis statement. Hajer remarked that the introduction is “*kind of hard*” because

*you have to think of general ideas. You have to say the most clear ideas. Then you need to give the explanation. In the argumentative essay I said that **smoking is number one issue in the world and there are people who support and there are other who are not,** and then I stated my opinion.*

Fatma proposed that the ideas presented in the introduction have to appear in the essay. For example, if the compare and contrast essay is composed of one similarity and two differences, the essay introduction has to introduce the one similarity and two differences. Nada gave a detailed illustration of what she had done with her argumentative essay introduction, explaining that she had made a smooth transition between the general and the specific information in the introduction before moving on to the thesis statement. She said,

*I write: ‘**When I was a child, my parents told me that smoking is a bad behaviour, but I did not know the reasons**’. The other sentence I write ‘**By the time that I grew I realized that my parents’ opinion is true**’. So it’s my idea. Then I write: ‘**Smoking has a great***

controversy in the society as it generates bad effects'. In the introduction paragraph I wrote about myself and then the society.

Muna and Reem, though, did not talk specifically about connectedness in their introduction paragraphs.

The students seemed to have a good metalinguistic understanding of how they could establish coherence in their introduction paragraphs. They also seemed to echo what their writing teachers had emphasized in class concerning what their introductions should be composed of, as the majority seemed to refer to the introduction funnel structure, where the students were expected to go from general to specific.

6.9.1.2 Body paragraphs

All ten students pointed out how they had created coherence in their essay body paragraphs. “*Each paragraph in the essay has a specific idea*”, Reem stated. The body paragraph discusses an idea and the same is true for the following body paragraphs, but at the same time each paragraph deals with the topic of the essay, as proposed by Muna. Fatma mentioned that she had kept the body paragraphs connected by keeping ideas in the body paragraphs relevant to the topic of the essay. Moza stated that she had tried to indicate the chronological order of the ideas by using “*first*” for the first body paragraph and “*second*” for the second paragraph, and so on. Iman remarked that she had worked on building a “*connection*” in the body paragraphs through the topic sentence of each body paragraph, as well as the other sentences that offered the “*supporting*” details. Nada said that she had achieved that through writing “*the main idea*” and then “*the supporting details*”. Hajer reported the repetition of key nouns in all of the essay body paragraphs to show connectedness. Aisha also highlighted the use of lexical items (i.e. terms and vocabulary) and tenses, both of which are connected to the essay, as she proposed,

I used different terms and vocabulary and tenses but they are all go around the same topic which is the topic of the essay, for example, in

the second paragraph I connected my ideas by using transition signal words such as in addition, first and also.

Maintaining coherence in the body paragraphs was carried out through keeping the connectedness of the subject of the essay, as discussed by Hamad. Heba, however, problematized an issue that had impacted on how well she had demonstrated coherence in her essay body paragraphs: because of the pressure of time, students felt they were forced to present ideas that they knew were not well developed or connected. They had had to finalize their writing because they needed to finish the task of outlining and writing the essay within the designated hour and a half.

The students seemed to be aware of the mechanics of establishing coherence in their body paragraphs. They appeared to be aware of the role of the paragraph topic sentences and the sentences that follow, which offer the supporting details in each paragraph. Some of the students also seemed to be aware of the relationship between the paragraph and the whole text, and between one paragraph and another. However, the gap created between what was expected of the students at school and what was expected at the university might have placed a great demand on the students to demonstrate in a limited time (i.e. three months) a noticeable improvement in their writing achievement, including the coherence of their writing.

6.9.1.3 Conclusion paragraph

Six of the ten students specifically referred to how they had shown coherence in the conclusion paragraph, and discussed this notion from different perspectives. The conclusion is “*a summary of what my essay is about*”, stated Aisha. The same proposition was offered by Nada, who also added that to show coherence, she would rephrase the thesis statement and end the paragraph with a conclusion sentence. Nada also mentioned that she would start her conclusion paragraph with such phrases as “*in brief, in conclusion, or in a summary*”. The conclusion as a way of paraphrasing the introduction paragraph was also proposed by Hamad, who added further that this contributes to the connectedness of one’s writing.

Paraphrasing what the introduction is about, abiding by the topic of the essay, and

not going off topic were three concepts highlighted by Iman in her discussion of how she had shown coherence in the conclusion paragraph. A similar deliberation was offered by Fatma, who contended that coherence in her conclusion was maintained through keeping to the topic of the essay and not going off topic. Connectedness in the conclusion is necessary, as it also re-“*support*” students’ ideas, as viewed by Reem. The conclusion should read as part of the essay and should show that the essay is finalized, offered Hajer. The remaining three students (Moza, Muna and Heba) did not reflect on how they had shown coherence in their conclusion paragraphs.

The majority of the students seemed to have a good level of awareness of the role of the conclusion paragraph in the coherence of their essays. They also seemed aware of the different parts of the conclusion paragraph and the function of each part in maintaining coherence in the conclusion paragraph in particular, and the essay as a whole.

6.9.2 How students showed coherence concerning some coherence-related concepts

Below is the students’ metalinguistic understanding of how they had showed coherence regarding the following.

- Content
- Background and subject knowledge
- Relationship with the reader

6.9.2.1 Content

In their response to how they had made the content of their essay coherent, seven students came up with the following points. According to Aisha, she had maintained her content connectivity through paraphrasing and using signal words. Moza proposed that she had done it by allocating an idea for each body paragraph in the essay; and Iman stated that the ideas in the essay have to be connected to each other. Reem said that the content had to be “*connected to the ideas*” presented in the essay. Fatma argued that students show that the content is connected when they “*stick to the topic and not go off*”, and when the students’ reasons in the argumentative essay are “*relevant to this topic and the words are*

relevant to this topic” too. Nada reported that her argumentative essay was about smokers not having the right to smoke, and thus her writing had to be focused on that and avoid repetition. She stated,

*my paragraphs will be about why smokers don't have the right to smoke so in the thesis statement I write why smokers don't have the right to smoke because **'generate bad effects for other people, destroy the environment and devastate the state economy'**. These cause I will talk in three paragraphs. I should make sure that I don't repeat ideas in the three paragraphs or otherwise my essay will be weak.*

In this regard, Hajer recounted that she had learned from a mistake she had once made: that the points in body paragraphs did not match the order in the thesis statement. Hamad, Heba and Muna chose not to respond to the question on how they had tried to demonstrate that the content of their essays was connected.

The students expressed essential features about their essay content coherence, such as the relevance of the ideas in the essay, keeping to the topic of writing, and the use of signal words, paragraphing and the order of ideas. These areas seemed to be highlighted by their writing teachers, and therefore the students were perhaps familiar with them and consequently more able to articulate them.

6.9.2.2 Background and subject knowledge

All students without exception voiced their reflections on how their background and subject knowledge as writers helped in making their texts coherent. Students' background and subject knowledge was viewed as crucial, because students “*must know about what*” they “*are going to write about*”, as put by Moza. If students “*don't know anything about the subject*”, how could they “*write about it?*”, pondered Reem. When the student is aware of the essay topic, this helps him/her to write better essays, as proposed by Aisha, Muna and Heba. Heba further explained saying,

sometimes, for example, we have a topic and we have write three reasons that make use agree or against, for or against. But sometimes we couldn't find like three arguments or three reasons maybe because the lack of information or maybe because we didn't have a background so we have two reasons or maybe one.

Having background knowledge about the topic helps the student to “*write a good paragraph*”, as put by Aisha. It makes the student “*more confident*” about his/her writing, proposed Hamad. Besides, the student’s knowledge of the topic varies and, thus, students who have insufficient knowledge of the topic will have to exert extra effort to come up with “*strong ideas*”, but when they “*know*” what they “*are talking about*”, then they can easily develop “*specific ideas*” for their arguments, as Hajer put it. This perspective was also shared by Iman, who added that being fully aware of the topic of the argumentative essay, for instance, enables the student to take a stand that s/he in reality is “*against*”. Fatma mentioned knowledge of the writing topic in her discussion of the similarities and differences between English writing at school and at the university: she suggested that students at the university are actually assessed on their knowledge of topics, and not only on their abilities to write. She added that they are also graded on “*how much knowledge*” they “*have*”. Reflecting on her argumentative essay on *smokers do not have the right to smoke*, Nada also argued that having a “*full background about smoking, its symptoms, its reasons and that it has currently been banned*” is crucial to being able to write a well-developed essay. She would write then, she argued, “*accurately and in a scientific way*” and “*all the paragraphs*” would be “*truthful*”. She continued,

but if I don't have a background about the topic, it will be hard to think of ideas to put in my thesis statement and essay.

Lacking knowledge in the topic, however, can lead to students writing essays that are not well developed, owing to reasons that have nothing to do with their abilities to write well or their skills in forming arguments. An example of that was offered by

Nada, who proposed that in her final exam she had had the option to write about two topics: university attendance or fast food. She clarified,

because I didn't have enough knowledge about the second, I decided to write about the first one. If I wrote about the topic that I am not sure off, I would end up not writing well.

Some students explicitly associated the notion of the student writer's knowledge of the topic of writing with that of cohesion and coherence. Aisha, for instance, argued that "*understanding*" the topic of writing "*surely helped*" her "*achieve*" the "*cohesion and coherence*" of her writing. Reem also contended that the knowledge of the topic helped with "*making the text coherent*", and added that background and subject knowledge and coherence are "*related to each other*". When, earlier in the interview, she discussed the relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge, Moza also wondered that if she lacked the knowledge of the writing topic, how she would write a coherent essay.

A challenge encountered by student writers is the lack of background and subject knowledge, which might hinder their efforts to write well-developed essays, as proposed by Heba, Nada, Muna, Fatma and Iman. Further, knowledge of topic makes the student more "*certain*" about his/her writing, as offered by Hamad. As an example, Hajer described the topics of the final exams (i.e. university attendance and fast food) as "*kind of stupid*", arguing that they were not good enough for developing argumentative essays. She proposed,

with fast food everybody knows that it is kind of stupid. If you're going to talk about fast food, you're going to say that it is not healthy and that's it. You're not going to have any other ideas. And I had to choose the one about absence, and I kind of blew it.

The writer's background and subject knowledge was highlighted by the students as being an essential factor in the writing of coherent essays. They seemed, however,

to struggle with the topics they were asked to write about. They felt that they were disadvantaged when they were asked to write about topics of which they thought they had limited background and subject knowledge. This could negatively influence the coherence of the writing they could produce, a situation that could be avoided by enhancing the students' knowledge in their writing topics.

6.9.2.3 Relationship with the reader

All students expressed, from different perspectives, their understanding of the need to consider the reader. The writer has to keep the reader in mind, suggested Muna. This is because, when students “*don't write technically right, the reader is not going to understand*” what the writer is trying to convey, as argued by Hajer. Aisha justified establishing relationships with the reader as s/he “*needs to understand*” the writer's message.

The language used by the writer should be “*a language that will be understood by the reader: simple language and ideas*”. Nada stated that her teacher “*advised*” students “*to write in a scientific and simple way*”, and she added that she would “*try to combine both; writing simple but creative*”. There is a need, therefore, to adjust the level of language used in writing in line with the level of the expected or target reader, as brought up by Iman, who proposed,

I always think about who is going to read my essay. For example, I know that the teacher will correct it and read it. So I have to reach to the level of the teacher. I try to reach the level, but I when write something for someone who is younger than me or if I write a book, for example, I have to make sure that everybody will understand it. So I have to think of the reader.

Similarly, Fatma argued that students should modify their language in accordance with the reader: they

should use certain terms that are not too difficult for the reader. Because some of the terms have more than one meaning which may

confuse the reader. They are in between... not too easy and too hard. So you could convey your idea to the reader.

Being open to changing one's writing in line with the reader, and continuously modifying what one writes, were also recommended by Hamad, who proposed,

what our teacher ask us: you don't have to fall in love with your writing because when you fall in love, you find it has no mistakes. It's not good. You have to see it like you are the reader and you have to judge and how to judge our writing and to see the mistakes.

The reader was also referred to as the writing "examiners", and thus, the student writer holds the responsibility to "*make them happy when they read*", offered Moza. In the context of academic writing, what matters, according to Hamad, is maintaining a certain "*organization*" and "*structure*" of the text that is predictable for the reader. This goes in line with what Nada raised about making sure that what students "*write is accurate*". She remarked that the teacher advised students about not being "*too creative*" because it "*may lead to more mistakes*". Hajer also discussed the importance of revisiting what one writes and being open to modifying writing, which, as she proposed,

actually happens to me when I read my own writing. For example, after a day if I am going to read it, I go like why did I write this thing? I don't understand why I did it. So you have to be more clear. The flow of sentences have to be clear so the reader is going to understand you step by step.

An opposing stand was expressed by Heba, who thought there was no need to think of the reader in the context of the academic writing that is done in class. Considering the reader, according to Heba, comes only at a later stage:

when I graduate and I have my job as a translator, I will think of course and I will be responsible...more responsible... more than now.

Cohesion and coherence were also raised by the students in their discussion of how they considered the reader. When students achieve cohesion and coherence in their writing, Aisha argued, their “*ideas will reach for the reader easily*”. Muna stated that the cohesion of the essay is essential because “*the reader can understand it and benefit from it*”. The relationship with the reader was also mentioned in Reem’s discussion of what cohesion meant to her, when she stated that cohesion was about what she wanted to convey to the reader.

Keeping the reader in mind is a notion that was repeatedly brought up by the students in their responses to different questions on cohesion and coherence and their experience of writing at school and at the university. This was despite the fact that their potential readers did not go beyond the writing teacher or the teacher examiner and occasionally their peers. Addressing a reader was a notion that the students seemed to have had some training on throughout their experiences with writing. The reader’s needs were considered by the students in terms of the level of language used in writing, the clarity of the text, knowledge of the writing topic, and the writer’s readiness and responsibility to adjust according to the reader.

6.10 Students’ metalinguistic understanding of the role of cohesion on coherence in their writing

Seven students reflected on the concept of the role of cohesion on coherence in their essays in a way that showed their level of metalinguistic understanding of the two terms. Three students came up with perspectives that indicated that they viewed cohesion and coherence as similar. Cohesion and coherence to Nada are “*one thing*” and “*each one influences the other*”, a stand that was also shared by Hajer and Fatma. The other four students offered vague statements that indicated their uncertainty of the concept of the role of cohesion on coherence, which perhaps led them to resort to playing it safe by giving rather general statements when discussing this notion. Cohesion and coherence “*complete each other, no one can stand alone without the other*” contended Hamad, and “*each one is*

important for the other", as stated by Heba. Iman confirmed Hamad and Heba's uncertainty when she said,

they are connected to each other. Cohesion is how the topic: the ideas are talking about one topic so when I am talking about one topic that helps me to make the sentences connected.

However, in her response as to how she made her essays coherent, Heba made an explicit statement that cohesion leads to coherence: "*if I make my sentences cohesive, they will be coherent*". Cohesion was regarded similarly by Aisha: "*it lead to coherence*", but she also expressed her perspective in general terms, saying that it is "*more essential... the basic*". On the other hand, the remaining three students (Reem, Moza and Muna) explicitly stated that they were not sure what this notion was about.

This notion is obviously complex, as it involves a deep metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence and of the relationship and potential overlap between the two terms. The students might find it hard to reflect in depth and detail on their understanding of the effect of cohesion on coherence.

6.11 Summary

There are a number of themes that prominently emerge from the analysis of the students' responses. The students seemed to struggle with the demands and requirements of the academic writing course at the university. They felt they needed to prove through their writing that they were able to bridge the gap between the writing expectations at school and at university, and in a period of three months. Their writing at the university was expected to demonstrate improvement in the quality of the writing they produced, including the cohesion and coherence of their essays. Additionally, the written feedback received from writing teachers was seen by the students as problematic because of its focus on what the students did not do well, and its lack of suggestions for further improvement. Some of them felt that the feedback needed more clarity, as they were not sure what to do with their writing, based on their received comments.

The students also sensed the big difference in how Arabic writing was approached in school and how English writing was approached in school and at the university. While there was more room for freedom in Arabic writing for constructing their thoughts and arguments the way they saw feasible, the students felt quite constrained by the university EFL academic writing. There were guidelines that they had to follow and planning that they had to do in order for them to perform well in writing their EFL academic essays. Their varied experiences of writing in the two languages created some resentment among the students towards EFL academic writing, as it was associated with being rigid, uncreative, tedious and time-consuming.

Further, the students seemed to think of cohesion and coherence as similar. They seemed unable to make a clear distinction between cohesion and coherence. They also associated the two terms with concepts that in the literature are more linked to coherence than cohesion. This overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence was also evident in their discussion of how they would teach cohesion and coherence to others. It corroborated how similar they saw cohesion and coherence, and how they associated cohesion with concepts that are more related to coherence. The overlap in the students' metalinguistic understanding was also confirmed when the students discussed how cohesion and coherence are linked to writing quality: they continued talking about cohesion and coherence as similar, and linking cohesion with concepts that are more relevant to coherence than cohesion. They therefore saw the impact of both concepts on writing quality in a similar way.

In contrast, the students revealed a good metalinguistic understanding of other coherence-related concepts. They discussed maintaining the topic of the essay, and considering the reader, and they regarded the background and subject knowledge as an area of struggle which could negatively influence the coherence of their essays. The students' problems might be owing to their inadequate world and subject knowledge, which could be linked to how well-read they were. This is

an area of challenge for writing teachers, who may need to work more on how to enhance their students' knowledge on the writing topics.

There were, however, some coherence-related concepts that the students could not articulate in clear terms. They were not able to reflect on the potential influence that cohesion may have on coherence: this notion may well be quite complex for them, as it entails being fully aware of cohesion and coherence, and how cohesion could relate to coherence.

In their general reflections on how they had created cohesion in their writing, the students talked of cohesion mostly as coherence, which also corroborated the hypothesis that they thought of the two as the same. They particularly referred to the movement from general to specific in keeping connectedness between ideas and sentences in their introduction paragraphs, a situation that perhaps echoed their training experience with writing. A primary concern regarding this concept is how well the students were capable of maintaining smoothness in their transition between general to specific. When they discussed how they had made the sentences in their essay body paragraphs and conclusion paragraphs connected, the students gave examples of conjunctions (i.e. coordinators and/or subordinators) and of fixed phrases that they might have learned from their writing class. They seemed to be aware of the role of the organization of the different paragraphs and the meanings of some explicit cohesive devices, but did not articulate in detail how they had connected the sentences in the different essay paragraphs. They simply made generic statements that went around the connectedness of ideas and the expected structure of the paragraphs.

The students differed in the extent to which they could verbally articulate their use of cohesion - grammatical cohesion (i.e. reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (i.e. reiteration and collocation) - in their essays. They seemed to have some metalinguistic understanding of their use of conjunction, less understanding of reference and no understanding of substitution and ellipsis: besides their rare use in English writing, grammatical substitution and

ellipsis might not, for practicality reasons, have been discussed in their writing class. The students were able to verbalise what collocation (i.e. type of lexical cohesion) meant, but could not refer to specific examples of the collocations they had used in their essays. Neither did they seem to know what lexical reiteration meant in the context of their writing. They did not appear to be able to engage in prolonged reflections on the grammatical and lexical cohesion of their essays. Being involved in elaborate reflections was perhaps not one of the activities they were used to.

However, the students seemed better at reflecting on how they had created coherence in their essays. They discussed coherence-related concepts such as addressing the reader, the role of cohesive devices on the essay coherence, and the relationship between coherence and the content of the essay introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs.

Further, the students indicated that background and subject knowledge were central in creating coherent and connected essays, but they also maintained that their knowledge on the writing topics was an area of struggle for them. They felt that they were often required to write compare and contrast and argumentative essays about topics on which they lacked the background and subject knowledge. However, they did seem to have a good metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader. The subject of the relationship with the reader came up repeatedly throughout their interview discussions, as they felt they needed to be thinking of who their reader was and how to address him/her, so that clarity and connectedness could be maintained throughout their writing.

The students' previous experience of the teaching of cohesion and coherence at school and in the university might be a factor in to what extent the students were able to articulate about cohesion and coherence and other related concepts. The overlap in the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence might also be due to the way in which the terms were approached by the writing

teachers at school and university. The students perhaps echoed what their teachers may have emphasised and verbalised in their writing class. For instance, the conjunctions and fixed phrases the students mentioned were very similar, an indication that there was perhaps more focus on some explicit cohesive devices than others. Teachers may have given more focus to some cohesion and coherence-related concepts than others, depending on what they perceived their students' immediate needs to be, and their EFL context of academic writing. Also, it is possible that teachers had so much to attend to in their teaching of academic writing that little room was left for explicitly and holistically teaching cohesion and coherence.

7 Chapter seven: Analysis of teachers' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

Besides investigating the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence and their perceptions of issues in teaching the two concepts, the study also explores three writing teachers' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions (see section 3.16). The first part of this chapter shows how the teachers understood cohesion and coherence and how they perceived some issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. The interviewed teachers were initially given an elicitation task, where they were invited to discuss cohesion- and coherence-related concepts and how they might use them with their students. They were then asked to discuss their perceptions of issues pertinent to the teaching of cohesion and coherence.

7.1 Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion

Below is the teachers' metalinguistic understanding of the following cohesion types:

- Grammatical cohesion
- Lexical cohesion
- Reference
- Reiteration
- Conjunction
- Collocation
- Substitution
- Ellipsis

7.1.1 Grammatical and lexical cohesion

All three teachers defined what grammatical and lexical cohesion meant to them. Emily proposed that the cohesion-related terms (i.e. grammatical or lexical) were not important in the setting of academic writing, as the terms were "*irrelevant*" to her students. She was "*not in favour of sticking to terms a lot as long as students understand*". Tylor frankly stated that lexical cohesion, for instance, was "*not exactly that something*" that he "*read about or heard about*". To Amal though, grammatical cohesion covers everything that has to do with cohesion. She

concluded her reflection on the different terms that indicate the two types of cohesion (i.e. grammatical and lexical) saying,

that's because when I look at them they all relate. Once you explain what grammatical cohesion is, everything else... a lot of that comes under it. This is the focus and they are subtitles.

Below is a deliberation of the findings that highlighted how the teachers understood the different types of grammatical and lexical cohesion.

7.1.2 Reference, reiteration and conjunction

The teachers expressed their understanding of reference, reiteration and conjunction as the following. In her talk of how she understood reference, Emily explained that reference was taught when pronouns were discussed with examples, and this was done to achieve cohesion and coherence. Reference was similarly perceived by Tylor. He explained,

what comes to my mind with reference is that to me in order to write well, you need to be referencing either sources or referencing some sort of experiences and incorporate that into your writing. I don't know if students really have that in their mind as that the purpose of academic writing.

Tylor also indicated that reference and reiteration “go together”. He explained this relationship saying,

when you are writing, you are basically putting a relation between two things you are referring to and when I think of that, I do think of the students in this class and students in general. They do have a difficulty with doing that. And part of it is that they don't really refer to it as references as we know of them that as in sources because they don't have that base of being well read or knowledgeable. But that is in one point, but on another point in their writing I also know that they

really have this idea to refer to points in the same paragraph or in the same writing.

In defining what reiteration was to him, Tylor stressed further that repeating “key nouns” is a significant factor. He maintained,

in writing, the first thing I think of is to make writing more cohesive and make unity. You need, for example, to repeat key nouns as part of English language way of building cohesion. Reiteration to me is that aspect of it.

Of all the types of grammatical and lexical cohesion, conjunction was the most commonly discussed term among the writing teachers. Both Amal and Tylor associated conjunction with notions that involve grammar. Amal pointed out that conjunction is “*related to*” grammatical cohesion, and Tylor linked it to grammar, as he stated that it

brings to mind the grammar and using certain words in the right way...grammar... clauses, for example, conjunctives, that enable them, for example, to make complex sentences.

To help her explain what conjunction was all about, Amal would share with her students the Arabic term for grammar, “*al nahw*”, even though she would normally “*avoid comparing between Arabic and English*”. She proposed,

I will explain to them the sentence structure, how they can combine clauses and the arts of combing clauses whether they subordinate or coordinate or just punctuate, and all of that to help them with conjunctions.

In his discussion of his understanding of cohesion types, Tylor addressed a major challenge with students' writing cohesion. The challenge the students encountered

involved mainly conjunction, but partially related to reference and reiteration. Cohesive devices between sentences were used superficially and/or awkwardly by the students where the sentences did not really express the meanings suggested by the devices. This resulted in academic writing that lacked cohesion. He stated,

students seem to think that they just pile on point one after another, and that's why they often misuse transition signals. They have a very a generic idea of what transition signals are, or they are just vague or perhaps misunderstood because what I have seen recently when I was marking their papers that they just misuse it. They'll misuse however. They'll misuse further. They think that those transition signals are the key to making cohesion regardless of what comes after the transition signals. So in their mind like: I used furthermore here, so good. The last sentence and this sentence are connected. But when you look at the last sentences and the sentence coming after furthermore, there is no relation. As I said there is no reference to what is proceeding. Maybe in their mind, they thought they are building blocks and they think they are building them, but the pieces that are holding them together are transitions, but then the main part of the building is missing. So it is sort of the transition signals keeping the building straight, but it is not really like solid.

To deal with students' problems with cohesion, Tylor also stressed the importance of working on students' experience with using cohesive devices. He argued,

they need a lot more experience not only with the meaning of those transition signals but appropriately using them. Like I said they often use also and furthermore. They view that if you use also and furthermore and moreover, it does not matter what you are saying. It just that is the connection which I think something that they need to work on.

7.1.3 Collocation, substitution and ellipsis

With reference to collocation, substitution and ellipsis, the teachers came up with the following: as regards collocation, Tylor mentioned that he associated it with vocabulary, and in the context of academic writing he would not “*really get into that*”; while Amal decided not refer to it in her discussion of cohesion types. Emily, however, talked about introducing collocation “*occasionally with examples*”. She explained,

students may write do a mistake instead of make a mistakes, so certainly I need to teach them these verbs do not collocate with certain nouns.

To Tylor, substitution is related to grammar, whereas Emily proposed that substitution is to do with synonyms. None of the teachers, however, opted to bring up the term ellipsis in their discussion of what cohesion and coherence were to them. This perhaps indicates that the teachers did not bring up this term with their students in their teaching of academic writing. Ellipsis might be a term that did not have much relevance to their writing.

The three teachers’ discussion of their understanding of grammatical and lexical cohesion, and their sub-types, also illustrates the connectivity and the overlap that exist in their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion types. Cohesion to them was about developing unity in the essays, connecting sentences, and writing sentences and texts that indicate connectedness. In their reflections on their students’ writing cohesion, the teachers also talked about the challenges that their students faced when writing with cohesion, which negatively influenced how cohesive their writing was. The teachers, thus, proposed approaches to dealing with the students’ challenges with cohesion and coherence, as the findings below indicate.

In their discussion of what grammatical and lexical cohesion meant to them, and how they would define them to their students, all three teachers alluded to the explicit versus the implicit teaching of cohesion. Amal seemed to strongly favour the explicit type of teaching of cohesion, and directly associated lexical and

grammatical cohesion-related terms with two common concepts in EFL English teaching, namely 'accuracy' and 'fluency'. She stated,

I try to tell them that you need to pass the message to the listener or to your audience, the speed of your talk, how you talk, how you communicate your message, and how correct your language is.

When discussing cohesion, Amal emphasized that the students “*have to study grammar to the core*”. She also talked about the significance of 'memorizing the rule', as she considered this to be a vital part of what students need to do to master cohesion (i.e. through mastering grammar), in order for them to be good English language teacher candidates. She explained, “*you need first to know the rule, memorize the rule, apply the rule*”.

Amal stressed that she would help her students - for example in the case of conjunctions, she would “*ask them to identify the ones they know and the ones they do not know and then work from there*”. Amal added that she would “*always*” give her students the opportunity to self evaluate and assess how well they could produce sentences that were error-free in terms of grammar, and this would be an indication of their good lexical and grammatical cohesion. She clarified:

I always explain the rule from 1 to 4: 1 to be the worst and 4 to be the best. And I usually have a set or errors in sentences. If you can only identify one, then you have to think about getting yourself to 2.

With regards to introducing cohesion-related terms to students, the teachers had different perspectives. Amal stated that her students were “*usually fascinated with terminology*”, so she would “*usually*” prepare “*a ready list of the basic terminology*”. Emily, on the other hand, preferred the implicit teaching of grammatical and lexical cohesion, and would only address cohesion-related terms if there was a genuine need to do so, because, to her, students might not be able to relate to terms. She explained,

a lot of times terms have no meanings to students. I'd rather show an example. I don't teach grammatical and lexical cohesion per se like specifically, but they do come up if, for example, you use words that interfere with cohesion or the kind of grammar that interferes with cohesion. Let's say, you're talking about something which is a habit and then use a past form of the verb so that the grammatical cohesion is distorted.

Similarly, Tylor stated that he did not explicitly approach grammatical and lexical cohesion with his students, and even indicated that he was not familiar with the term 'lexical cohesion'. Emily, however, thought that conjunction “*comes up a lot*”, as teachers “*teach*” it “*specifically*”, and that students “*know other names for conjunction*” because in writing teachers “*spend a lot of time teaching*” them “*compound and complex sentences*”, and therefore conjunctions are “*a lengthy part of teaching*”.

The teachers seemed to differ in how explicitly cohesion was addressed in the teaching of academic writing. Amal viewed the teaching of cohesion as crucial, while Emily thought she would not teach cohesion unless there was a need, and considered conjunction to be the most common term addressed in class among cohesion types. Tylor, however, asserted that he did not teach cohesion explicitly. The way they approached cohesion in their teaching of academic writing was perhaps influenced by the way they understood cohesion and perceived issues related to teaching it.

7.2 Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of an essay

Below is an analysis of the teachers' data on coherence in the different parts of an essay:

- Coherence between sentences in text
- Coherence between and within paragraphs
- Coherence in the essay as a whole

- Role of cohesion on coherence

7.2.1 Coherence between sentences in text

Emily contended that coherence is achieved when “*ideas flow*” and when “*one sentence continues the sentence before.*” To Amal, the four coherence-related concepts (i.e. coherence between sentences in text, coherence between and within paragraphs, and coherence in the essay as a whole) were “*related*”. Coherence between sentences in a text was regarded by Emily as “*coherence in paragraphs*”. In his discussion of coherence between sentences in a text and the different coherence-related concepts, Tylor pointed out a significant area of struggle for the students, namely content knowledge. He argued that it impeded coherence, and therefore content could be incorporated to help students write with better coherence. He stated,

I am wondering if it's appropriate to actually push a lot more content because I sort of have this presumption that a lot of them are not very well read and they're not very knowledgeable. They don't have a pool of information to pull from when they're writing their essays. So I sometimes feel there may be a connection between making it a more coherent essay if they are just exposed more to coherent writing even like discussing and lecturing.

According to Tylor, another example of the struggle which the students went through in their attempts to write with coherence was writing statements that were too general in their introduction paragraphs. He stated that

to them with junk food, they structure it a little too much because the focus was whether there should be a Burger King at SQU. But at the beginning Ok... what I'm going to say junk food is really unhealthy for you. It is too general and too generic in a way. But even beside that - that is another point - within those I would say three parts of the introduction lacks cohesion.

7.2.2 Coherence between and within paragraphs

Emily thought that coherence between and within paragraphs was similar to coherence in the essay as a whole, and explained her thinking saying, “*they create coherence in the essay*”. It was also similarly seen by Amal, except that each paragraph in the essay (i.e. the introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs) has its own distinguished features that contribute to the essay coherence as a whole. Amal maintained that

the only difference for the essay coherence is that I make them distinguish between that there are certain parts that should be in any introduction and that certain parts that should be in any paragraph in the body and certain parts that should be in any conclusion.

Tylor explained in detail his explicit teaching approach to writing an introduction with coherence (i.e. between and within paragraphs), using the argumentative essay as an example. He said,

*I basically say there is no point of writing this essay if it's not contentious. It has to be two sides and they have to not only present their own views but present the opponent's view. So basically in the book, the way they organize it, there is one sentence in the introduction usually that comes at the middle part of the introduction which students memorize and also use. The sentence is **this subject has been in dispute for some time**. So students see that as a way of making the purpose of the essay to the core.*

Emily indicated that in class she approached coherence explicitly, and stated that it was “*part of*” her “*teaching*”. According to Tylor, the students experienced more difficulty with the introduction and conclusion paragraphs, and were “*a bit confused about what to do*”, but were “*more comfortable with the body paragraphs*”. In his clarification of his understanding of coherence between and within paragraphs, Tylor alluded to his students’ struggle with writing with coherence, and how he handled that with an explicit teaching approach. He proposed:

*the problem is that and I tell them that before that statement you have to say that what is the issue? Before saying that ‘**this issue has been continuous for a long time**’, you have to basically introduce the reader to the topic and the issue. So, for example, if they are going to be talking about attendance whether they should be taking it here at SQU or not, what I tell them to do is that in the introduction there has to be a building of a background which means that what is the background of this issue. You could talk about the role of attendance. You could talk about how some universities are changing their policies on it. But the idea is that between that background and then the statement showing it's contentious and then finally the thesis statement. There has to be some sort of cohesion in the sense that at first you are approaching it from the stance of trying to just introduce it to the reader. Then you are trying to say this is the issue and it's been debated and finally the thesis statement they have to push in the idea that where they stand. But often times the way they write the introduction, those three parts are not cohesively built. They struggle with that. They struggle with this idea.*

In Tylor's discussion above on how he explicitly taught coherence in the introduction of the argumentative essay, he also referred to coherence-related concepts (i.e. unity of ideas between the sentences in the introduction paragraph) as cohesion. This obviously indicates an overlap in his metalinguistic understanding of the two terms. Amal discussed her explicit teaching of coherence within and between paragraphs, and in the essay as a whole, through her deliberation of how she understood coherence. She said,

I usually have a set of paragraphs: ones that have really all of the full aspects and criteria of coherence and then missing one or two or more. I start with the coherent one and we look at it and we say Ok do all the sentences talk about the same idea? And we look at the

nouns and pronouns and the key nouns. And then Ok, let's see if the pronouns that are used for them are accurate. So this paragraph has all four. Now read it. Do you feel that it conveys a message and you understand the message? We go to the next one. It has one or two sentences that don't. Do all the nouns and the pronouns match? Is there the misfunction of the nouns? We try to choose the paragraphs that fit within each other and then those paragraphs would be coherent with each other and then we all just void all the rest.

Her discussion above also shows an overlap in her metalinguistic understanding of coherence and cohesion. She referred directly to cohesion-relevant concepts (i.e. reference of pronouns and use of nouns) as coherence. The coherence of the introduction and conclusion paragraphs were seen by the teachers as problematic, because students often found it difficult to maintain unity and connectedness in these two paragraphs.

7.2.3 Coherence in the essay as a whole

In her discussion of coherence in the essay as a whole, Emily proposed that there was a focus on only a “*very basic kind of coherence*”, represented in “*how to connect paragraphs with each other*” and “*how to connect the whole essay and within paragraphs*”. As indicated earlier, to Amal coherence in the essay as a whole was similar to coherence between and within paragraphs. In his discussion of what coherence in the essay as a whole was to him, Tylor suggested that the students managed the essay in a mechanical manner, so he would show them examples, as otherwise they might not identify the unity that exists between the paragraphs. He stated,

I wonder sometimes. They approach this essay in a very formulaic way because they emphasize the transition of it. I almost I could say show by examples rather than explanation and breaking up apart of points. Because overall I don't think they necessarily see that there should be some kind of connection between paragraphs.

The teachers' metalinguistic understanding of coherence seemed to be associated with connectedness, and they looked at coherence in the essay largely in a holistic manner.

7.2.4 Role of cohesion on coherence

Emily felt that the students were not “*explicitly*” taught this, but that there was “*a message to all students*” about the role of cohesion on coherence. Further, in her talk about how she understood this role, Amal suggested that the main focus of the discussion on coherence was largely on cohesion. “*So we are were talking about cohesion in the essay as a whole*”, she argued. Once again, this indicated an overlap in her metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. She further explained the relationship between cohesion and coherence in essay writing in general, and specifically in the essays her students had written, saying,

it depends on the type and kind of the essay. So there are general rules and there tailored rules. So the general rule of the essay's parts of the introduction: you should check that there are three parts of the paragraphs. In the body: you should check and make sure they are there, and the same thing for the conclusion. Now once you have mastered that, then you start tailoring each of the parts to each of the kinds and types of the paragraph.

Tylor, on the other hand, opted initially not to discuss his understanding of this notion. However, later in his discussion of the relationship between coherence and knowledge of the subject, he did propose that coherence is “*more fundamental*” than cohesion. To him, “*the depth of the idea*” worked as a “*facilitator*” to cohesion. In their discussions of the potential role of cohesion on coherence, there seemed to be an overlap in how the teachers understood cohesion and coherence.

In summary, the findings of the writing teachers' metalinguistic understanding of the coherence-related concepts above, indicate that there was a clear overlap in the teachers' understanding of cohesion and coherence. This goes in line with the overlap in the students' understating of cohesion, which also overlapped with that

of coherence. The findings also showed that some teachers tended to approach the teaching of coherence explicitly and others implicitly, which may have had implications on their teaching of academic writing.

7.3 Teachers' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and coherence-related concepts

The findings below illustrate in detail the teachers' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and the following and coherence-related concepts:

- Relationship between coherence and logic or making sense
- Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge
- Relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

7.3.1 Relationship between coherence and logic or making sense

Emily stated that she had had to discuss logic or making sense with her students, as they would “*compare and contrast*” in a way that did not “*make sense*” or that was “*very simplistic*”. Tylor proposed that the students' ideas in making an “*argument*” in their argumentative essays, for instance, did not respond to the opponents' points, and thus the ideas “*debated*” were irrelevant, which might negatively impact on the logic of the essays. He referred to the students' “*going off topic*” as “*not cohesive*”. Similarly, Amal contended that the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense is “*related*” to unity, but also to cohesion, a situation that might represent again the overlap in the teachers' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence.

To help their students to produce writing that was more logical or that made more sense, the teachers seemed to adopt explicit teaching. Amal stressed that she would always remind her students, “*if it makes sense, then incorporate into your system... if does not make sense, you're better without it*”. She would also “*teach them different types of logical order in the essay*”. She explained in detail how, in her teaching of writing, she approached the teaching of logic and making sense. She said,

usually the examples I give are short and up to the point so they instantly get it. There will be a short paragraph where everything is grammatically correct. All the measures of coherence, all the measures of unity is there. They're all there except for logic. It does not make sense. And then I said what is missing here and they said, Miss, it's funny because it doesn't make sense. I said exactly. That's when you do not follow the steps and the methods and the laws of logic. It has to make sense. It has to be logical. Not just in your little world. You have to think that the people around you are smarter than you. Then it has to be logical to them.

Likewise, Emily narrated two examples of negotiating the notion of logic or making sense with her students, when writing a compare and contrast essay on life in the city and village. She said,

we were discussing the city and village life and some of the students would say, in the city like Muscat, there are different kinds of entertainment. You can do this and that. And in the village you don't do anything. You just watch TV, which I didn't find very logical because all you need to do is to take a trip to Muscat and be exposed to all these entertainment even if you do it once a month. Maybe people in Muscat are more exposed to entrainment, but people in villages do this maybe only once a month or like a lot of examples on technology like people in Muscat may use more advanced technology but in the villages they don't. But I was logically thinking of devices that exist in Carrefour [i.e. a big mall in Muscat] and if you come from a village, you could also obtain what is in there.

Amal posited a major reason behind her students' lacking logic or making sense, which she contributed to "*thinking*" in Arabic. According to her, this led to "*confusion*", as students would "*think in Arabic*", which meant they would "*apply the Arabic logic of thinking into English language structure*" which would "*create*"

“*problems*”. An incident of a student thinking in Arabic when writing, and this leading to problems with logic and making sense, was narrated by Amal:

a student wanted to tell the teacher an example of a person who didn't know how to read and write. He wanted to write a sentence about him, but he is very logical and loved. So he said, the prophet Mohammed was ignorant. He picked the dictionary and looked for the word that does not know how to read. He found the word ignorant. He said the prophet Mohamed was an ignorant man. He was thinking all in Arabic and he didn't have the sense or the logic to investigate the meaning of the difference between ignorant and illiterate. So I always tell them try to think in English and if you can't, give the meaning of the word to your dictionary and look at the different definitions and check all of the themes. So which one makes sense but not makes sense in general but makes sense to the meaning you want to convey. So there is the general idea of common sense and there is the specific sense and logic.

Logic was indeed an important notion that the teachers had to explicitly address in order to help their students write with better coherence.

7.3.2 Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge

It was the consensus between all three teachers that their students' background and subject knowledge was insufficient. Emily proposed that students had “*little*” background and subject knowledge of “*most of the topics*”. Likewise, Amal stated that students' knowledge was “*very limited*”, and Tylor proposed that it was “*lacking*” and “*a bit of a struggle*”.

All three teachers discussed in detail the issue of their students' limited background and subject knowledge. Amal deliberated on factors that could have led to students' limited background knowledge and poor coherence. She assumed that the students at school were “*geared toward how to think and how to write*”, and that their “*awareness of the world*” was limited because they were “*tied to the*

books". The students' writing, to Amal, was "*all duplicates of the same thing*", and the "*explanations for that*", according to her, were that students were

not encouraged to think for themselves. They were never created as independent readers or independent writers. There're always limitations when they write, always limitations when they read.

Their knowledge was "*forced*", as they did not "*have the right to how to gain knowledge*". The "*portfolios*" or the "*projects*" they "*produced*", Amal added further, were "*all copy and paste*", and the students were not "*creative, innovative or authentic*". She stated that they had shared with her that in order to pass school English writing question exams, they just needed to

memorize a set of compositions in English and whatever the question is, whatever they have memorized they write.

Another example of students lacking "*authenticity*", Amal explained, was when she would ask the fifteen, twenty or forty students she would have in a semester to "*compare and contrast between life in the city and life in the village*", she would "*end up*" "*having the same thing*". The only difference, according to her, would be the "*use of vocabulary, use of grammar, cohesion and the academic structure*", while "*the logic or the knowledge or the information*" were all the same. Tylor pointed out that in oral presentations students tended to "*literally memorize lectures or others' presentations*", because they did not want to "*say something wrong*", and they might resort to plagiarism. Amal argued that they "*haven't gained the right to write and they haven't earned the right to read*". Tylor proposed that the students felt "*terrified of their own ideas on paper*", and would "*rely on something more authoritative*". For the argumentative essays, for example, Tylor added that they would not cite a source, but they would write "***statistics have showed or research has proven***". He felt that they seemed to have a "*sort of surface level awareness*" that this would "*validate*" their points. Amal added that the students did not lack these skills because they were "*not capable*", but because of their previous

training at school. According to Tylor, the writing teachers would “*struggle*” with assigning “*debatable topics or even the topics in general*” to their students, as students usually found it hard to delve into “*some point or some exploration*”. Tylor narrated an example where the debatable topic was whether “*Muscat should be more like Dubai*”. The teachers had assumed that the students would have some knowledge on the topic; however, they turned out to have little “*awareness*” of it. In the editing stage of their work, the students, according to Amal, would only be able to “*pick on some spelling and grammar mistakes*”. A similar observation was noted by Tylor, who stated that the students would make “*generic*” or “*vague*” statements with no “*specificity*” or “*elaboration*”.

Emily, Amal and Tylor discussed how they coped with the students’ lack of knowledge. Emily said that she was left with no choice but to adopt brainstorming of the ideas that students might incorporate into their academic essays. According to her, brainstorming helped, as the students would “*learn from each other*”. Emily would also help by sharing her “*input*” to “*widen their horizon of the topic*”. Tylor proposed that what he would do with students was to “*get deeper into certain topics*”. Amal resorted to giving her students readings that addressed the writing topics from different standpoints, and she arranged graded discussions prior to the writing task. According to Amal, the content and logic of their writing improved considerably - “*the difference was miraculous*” - and they did not “*write the same thing*”. She argued further that knowledge “*needs to be acquired in an environment of freedom and innovation and creativity*” in order for them to “*feel that they are free to write and can write*”. Tylor wondered, however, if it was “*feasible*” to “*bring in the knowledge aspect*”, as the writing teachers already had to cover academic writing, and students were also weak on grammar. Emily pointed out that, in response to their insufficient knowledge, students were given areas that they could “*discuss*” in their academic writing when taking their “*high-stakes*” exams (i.e. mid-term and final exams). She asserted that the writing teachers preferred to give them the areas “*of argument*” to be “*on the safe side*”, as they would not want students to “*fail*” their exams because they did “*not have anything to say*”. However, the writing teachers, Emily argued, “*could try and see what happens*” if

they “do not give the areas of argument”, a strategy she had adopted when her students were practising writing, so they could “bring their own perspectives”. Further, Amal thought that “drastic” measures needed to be taken. It would take teachers “two or three years” to “untie” the “rigid rules” and “re-teach” some “basic skills”. Examples of what Amal thought needed re-teaching were “skimming”, “scanning”, “prediction” and reading “between the lines”. However, the current academic writing course that her students had been taking was already “crammed”, but, to her, “for a very good reason”, as the writing teachers needed to prepare them for their next writing course and for their future writing courses in their colleges.

All three teachers saw the students’ background and subject knowledge as seriously lacking, and attributed that to the students’ poor reading culture, which the teachers thought was largely linked to their previous schooling. This negatively impacted on student writing coherence. There seems to be a contention between the writing teachers as to what to prioritize in the teaching of academic writing, considering their students’ setting. Grammar tended to receive a great deal of focus as students normally needed considerable support with their grammar. The students, however, usually struggled with developing their writing and incorporating ideas that were cohesive and coherent, a situation that required work on their writing development, writing content and background and subject knowledge. Non-stop debates, thus, seem to continue among teachers on whether grammar or other areas of writing development, including cohesion, coherence and content, should be given more emphasis in the teaching of academic writing.

7.3.3 Relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

Emily stated that she introduced the relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader “at a very basic level”. She proposed that when students wrote, they tended not to “explain what they have in mind”, and not give “the full picture”. The “connection”, therefore, between the reader and the writer might not be “complete”. Amal talked about reminding her students to “always” build a “bridge” between them and their reader. Tylor discussed helping

his students develop “*awareness*” of their “*audience*” and “*knowledge*” of the reader, so that the reader does not “*lose track of where*” the student is going or “*how*” the essay is “*relevant*” to the “*main purpose*” of writing. The teachers seemed to see the relevance of enhancing their students’ awareness of the reader in helping them to work on the coherence of their writing.

7.4 Teachers’ metalinguistic understanding of whether cohesion or coherence is judged using the other

The writing teachers each seemed to have a different metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between cohesion and coherence, and whether they would use one to judge another. Emily seemed to “*look*” at the two terms “*separately*”, and not make judgement using one or the other. To her, they were “*interrelated*” but “*different*”, in the sense that cohesion “*deals with the logical ordering of words*”, while coherence “*deals more with ideas*”. Language, to Amal, is “*holistic*”, and thus she wondered “*why*” would one “*break it*”? She continued, arguing that, for the purpose of teaching the students “*the parts*”, she would “*break down*” the language, but, for “*production*”, language is dealt with in a “*holistic*” manner. Tylor, however, stated that he was not sure what either of the terms was specifically about, but he emphasized the importance of offering students many “*chances*” to ensure that they are “*cohesive*”. An example of that would be helping one group of his students “*debate*” well, through developing a relevant “*argument*” that would respond to a certain idea developed by another group of students. He seemed to associate the two terms with notions related to unity and connectedness of ideas. Tylor argued that the students needed to be taught cohesion and coherence “*through doing*” rather than through “*explicit instruction of the cohesive devices*”. He also proposed that students needed “*the tools*” that would “*support*” them in writing with cohesion and coherence. In reflecting on his students, he maintained that they would “*rely on*” “*phrases*”, and that was why they would use sentences like “*this is a subject that has been disputed for...*” or “*the opponents assert that...*”. At the same time, he stressed that the use of these tools and phrases should not be “*mechanical*” or it might prove to be “*problematic*”. He stated that students,

look for the models but when they plug it into thoughtlessly, it does not get the best results.

The teachers differed in how they viewed whether one term has an influence over the other, a situation that would perhaps affect the emphasis they would give to cohesion or coherence when they teach writing.

7.5 Teachers' perceptions of students' difficulties with writing with cohesion and coherence

The data analysis below illustrates the teachers' perceptions of the following:

- Students' understanding of cohesion and coherence
- Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing
- Solutions to problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students

7.5.1 Students' understanding of cohesion and coherence

All three teachers touched on a number of areas in their discussion on what they thought of their students' understanding of cohesion and coherence. Students' problems with cohesion and coherence were divided by Amal into two types: one that was "*immediately understood and applied*", and another that was "*tougher*" and "*fossilized*". Amal would get her students' consent to use examples of their cohesion and coherence errors, which she called "*white fish fossil*". She would also encourage her students to look at their essays and find their own "*list*" of fossilized errors. The errors might be, for instance, an "*idea*" that was "*not that clear*" or a common incorrect use of articles, such as "*the life*". Amal maintained that the list is easy to make when it comes to the use of grammar or vocabulary, but it gets harder with "*concepts*". That was "*where*" teachers would "*really need to dig*", she emphasized.

Emily proposed that she would "*start off*" with paragraphs, and she would "*spot right away*" who had "*got it*" and who was "*struggling*". She remarked that students who do the academic writing course already have some experience of writing, whether at school or on the university foundation programme. However, coming up

with details, Emily proposed, was an area of challenge for students. They seemed to have no problems with writing topic sentences and thinking of the main ideas of paragraphs, but they would “*struggle*” in their attempts to develop their ideas when writing their paragraphs. To help them overcome this challenge, Emily recommended a strategy whereby she encouraged her students to “*ask questions like why, when and what*”. After adopting this strategy, Emily “*sensed some development*” among her students in how they would write the details. Tylor was of the opinion that when the teacher “*explains*” the concept of cohesion and coherence to students, they “*get it*”. When he gave them a paragraph where some of the sentences were not “*cohesively connected*”, they would “*understand that*”. He would, for instance, write on the board to his students, “*thanks for stating the obvious*” to make them aware how obvious some of their points were. Tylor also illustrated how “*generic*”, “*superficial*” or “*obvious*” students’ statements in their introduction paragraphs could be, saying,

*when they approach the essay and approach writing the introduction, they want to make it relevant. They want to make it sort of paint the general picture. But they end up saying things that are very generic or obvious. A famous one they begin their essays with ‘**nowadays junk food is an important topic in the world**’ or ‘**nowadays junk food is very unhealthy**’.*

Tylor also analysed a sample introduction paragraph of a student’s writing on children’s development, where he demonstrated how generic their statements in the introduction could be. He had shared with his students an article that argued that parents nowadays are overprotecting their children, and it is actually harmful as children need to experience risk in order to develop important skills like independence and confidence. His student’s first three sentences in the essay introduction were:

As we know childhood is the best experience of life, and everyone needs to experience their life of childhood. Second,

the issue of risky play has been... Many argue that the best place for children to play is at home with their parents.

Tylor argued that the student here did not attempt any “*elaboration*” or “*exploration*” of “*risky play*”, but s/he was merely “*thinking: risky play but I am going to say something about childhood.*” Tylor would warn his students saying, “*if you do that, you cannot make another generic statement*”. He would also advise them to develop the “*idea*” of risky play further and “*not just leave it cold like that*”. The student’s second sentence, according to Tylor, contained a very “*generic*” statement and only “*somewhat related to the issue*”, but did not precisely touch on the essay topic. Also, students “*plug in the thing they memorize*”, as was the case with this student’s third sentence. Tylor remarked that writing a cohesive and coherent introduction was “*a struggle for them*”.

The teachers pinpointed some significant issues about students’ understanding of cohesion and coherence. Students varied in how successful they were in demonstrating cohesion and coherence in their writing. There were some cohesion- and coherence-related issues that students would struggle with but quickly resolve, and other issues that might be more stagnant and which would require some attention from the teacher in order to help the students overcome their problems with cohesion and coherence. Students’ academic essay introductions and conclusions might pose an area of difficulty for them, as they might find it hard to maintain their text cohesion and coherence when they connect between their different sentences.

7.5.2 Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing

All the writing teachers brought up some key problems that students faced in writing cohesive and coherent academic essays. Amal stressed that the students’ vocabulary was “*very limited*” and this constituted “*a big obstacle*”. They could not think in English because they did not have “*enough*” vocabulary to “*substantiate*” that. To Amal, reading in English could be an avenue to “*gain*” the “*vocabulary, the structure, logic, coherence and unity*”. Reading merely for personal purposes (as

opposed to academic purposes) might help students with “*the structure and subject/verb/object/complement*”, but they would still “*keep using the word 'good' repeatedly instead of 'magnificent' or 'extraordinary' or all of the words that mean good*”. Amal would insist on using a thesaurus to help her students use the item most appropriate to the context. According to Tylor, some students were very “*well read*” and “*connected*” to “*social issues*”, but they were not “*encouraged to think openly, freely and critically in public*”. This is why Tylor would “*sympathize*” with their attachment to their phones, as he realized that they did not have the option to “*go to the cafe and talk freely*”, as opposed to debating on social media where they were “*anonymous*”. An example of a “*persisten*” student problem, according to Amal, was writing with fluency and accuracy within a limited time, where students would usually find it hard to develop coherent ideas on a certain topic, and with good cohesion and accurate use of language. Further, Emily emphasized that coming up with details was a major challenge for students. According to her, they might also have difficulty using cohesive devices because they might overuse some cohesive devices but not use others that are “*more formal but more appropriate*” for the kind of writing that they do. They might, for instance, overuse *also*, and that is why she would help them to restrict their use of this cohesive device by asking them not to use it more than once in a paragraph. There were also activities, Emily added, where students were asked to find and underline cohesive devices, and then explain their meanings and usage, and how they were used along with the accurate punctuation. Another challenge expressed by Tylor was that teachers might have “*judgement*” and “*prejudices*”, and that in this area students are “*fixated on memorization*”. Tylor also argued that teachers should challenge their presumptions that it was difficult to teach critical thinking to students. To Tylor, even the Quran, which students are used to memorizing, encourages people to think and probe: “*yatafakkaroon*” (i.e. a verb that frequently occurs in Q’uran and which means to think and investigate). He continued arguing, “*it's not saying blindly follow*”. Tylor also stressed that he would “*always*” learn from his students and remind himself not to “*think they don't know and don't think*”, and then commented that the internet had “*revolutionized things*”.

The teachers alluded to some areas that could have attributed to the challenges that students faced when writing with cohesion and coherence. Students' limited repertoire of English words might lead to resorting to alternatives in Arabic, where students might end up using words that were not accurate or real. Developing their text through constructing ideas that support their statements, and using accurate cohesive devices, were perhaps two more areas of challenge. Students tended not to read in different genres, even though reading could help them with expanding their knowledge and language use, and therefore, result in better cohesion and coherence. Teachers could help students overcome their challenges in writing with cohesion and coherence in writing by devoting time to activities that would target students' specific problems in these areas. They could also reflect on their own presumptions about students' capabilities and cultural practices that might influence cohesion and coherence in their writing.

7.5.3 Solutions to problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students

All three writing teachers came up with solutions to the problems and challenges associated with teaching cohesion and coherence. Emily emphasized that practice is key in helping students become cohesive and coherent in writing: students are usually not well-read, and their “*outside*” “*world*” is “*little*”, Emily proposed, and therefore teachers could help them develop “*a bigger horizon*” of the world through providing them with more literature and content material connected to their writing topics. Emily argued,

because where else you could get these ideas? You have either watch movies, read books or talk to people. You have to get this input. Without that input, where would you take these ideas from? I feel before asking students to write, I should have given them a lot of content.

She advised that teachers help students with their content by assigning them to “*go out there*” and read articles, watch a movie and watch a documentary, and when they have all of this “*activated*”, they could “*come*” and write in class. Tylor argued

that coherence was addressed in the course through the discussion of essay unity, but felt it was not “*meaningful enough*”. All that students needed to do, according to Tylor, was “*memorise*” any “*points*” or “*tools*” that concern how unity is generally achieved in text – such as the repetition of key nouns, substitutes and pronouns. In so doing, they would successfully answer the questions on how coherence in the test paragraphs could be achieved or improved. Emily would warn her students against “*underusing and overusing*” cohesive devices: for example, some of them would use *also* at the beginning of “*every sentence*”. Additionally, reflecting on the interview discussion, Tylor proposed that the academic writing course needed “*a bit of restructuring*”, and writing and content could be prioritised; thus writing feedback could reflect this emphasis on writing development and content, rather than merely grammar. Similarly, Emily suggested that the course needed restructuring, as

there is a lot of grammar. There is a lot of focus on the structure of the essay. So we don't have time for the content. It comes up only in brainstorming.

Tylor further suggested that teachers simplify their language when helping students to be cohesive and coherent in their writing. Therefore, for the argumentative essay, instead of telling students what 'contention' or 'at stake' mean, he would tell them what the two sides were disputing. Tylor would also help his students with their text cohesion by encouraging them to “*transition*” better from one sentence to another, and would remind them that “*there has to be something*” between sentences to make them “*coherent*”. He thought that showing students examples of each type of essay might also “*facilitate*” cohesion and coherence. According to Amal, teachers could enhance students’ “*authenticity*”, where students could “*personalise*” their writing problems and work on their individual specific problems. Tylor reflected on the whole discussion of cohesion and coherence, stating that “*on a deeper level*” every writer “*struggles with cohesion*”- a stand that indicates the complexity of dealing with cohesion and coherence in the academic writing class.

Giving students constant practice on cohesion and coherence, and showing them examples of cohesive and coherent essays, were strategies perceived by the teachers as practical ways of helping their students to resolve their problems with cohesion and coherence. Raising students' awareness of their individual problems with cohesion - such as their overuse and underuse of certain cohesive devices - could also facilitate their writing with cohesion and coherence. Another perceived solution was to simplify the language (i.e. jargons) used by teachers when teaching concepts that relate to cohesion and coherence.

7.6 Teachers' perceptions of teaching cohesion and coherence

Below is how the teachers responded concerning their teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic essays classes:

- Teachers' experience of teaching cohesion and coherence
- Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality
- How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence

7.6.1 Teachers' experience of teaching cohesion and coherence

All the teachers shared their experience of teaching cohesion and coherence. Tylor said that his "*default way*" of teaching cohesion and coherence was through giving a lecture, having a discussion and then "*taking in a stand back*". He further explained that his aim was to show them "*how and why things are cohesive in that lecture*". His purpose of doing a lecture and later analysing it, was to make his students "*aware*" of "*how cohesion is built up*", as, to him, a lecture is "*connected*" to a piece of writing. In his discussion of how he taught cohesion and coherence, he repeatedly referred to cohesion, rather than to cohesion and coherence together, but seemed to refer to concepts that are relevant to both terms. Amal used essay "*modelling*" with her students, and found this to be useful. Emily, on the other hand, would initially evaluate her students and "*find out*" "*how much*" the students "*know*" about "*the idea of*" cohesion and coherence, as they would come to the university with some "*experience*" of writing. However, according to her, they would normally not "*know the terms*", and that is why she would "*start off by giving them examples*" that demonstrate "*problems*" with either cohesion or coherence, so that the students would be "*clear from the beginning*". Emily further explained that she would question her students as to "*what*" they "*mean*" when they talk about

cohesion, and that the students would normally “*come up with*” cohesive devices. She would also “*discuss*” with them, using examples, what coherence “*means*” and “*what happens*” when there is no coherence.

The teachers seemed to address cohesion and coherence with different degrees of emphasis, despite the overlap that might exist in their metalinguistic understanding of the two. Their focus went around connection in the text and the proper use of cohesive devices.

7.6.2 Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality

Below is how the writing teachers perceived the importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality. Emily stressed that if writing is not cohesive, this “*gets*” students low marks, and likewise, if there is not “*much meaning*” in what they write, this will lead to low grades, and will eventually “*affect*” quality. She argued further that cohesion, coherence and writing quality are “*inseparable part of writing*”. For students to communicate their ideas, Amal maintained that their writing “*must*” have all the “*elements*” of cohesion, coherence, unity and logic, and this “*takes a lot of work*”. Tylor emphasized that everyone “*struggles*” with this, and reflected on his own writing, stating that he would sometimes realize that “*what is before and after*” was “*not very cohesive*”. He maintained that it would not “*always*” be “*clear*” to him whether the text was cohesive enough, and, therefore, whether further modification was needed. Despite the overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of the terms, cohesion and coherence seemed to be appreciated by the teachers, as they associated the two with text that is well written.

7.6.3 How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence

All of the teachers suggested a number of points in their discussion on how students could be helped to improve their cohesion and coherence in academic writing. Amal stressed the importance of giving them on-going activities that were targeted to address the cohesion- and coherence-related areas that students have issues with. Teachers could draw up a list of activities that might help students with their cohesion and coherence. Emily stated that the introduction and conclusion paragraphs happened to be “*problems*” for the students. To help her students with their “*incoherent*” introductions and conclusions, Emily would teach coherence

“*explicitly*” by showing the students some examples. Tylor suggested providing students with some content and a “*meaningful*” feedback that they could “*understand*”, and argued that more focus should be given to the content rather than the grammar. To him, teachers should not “*code on*” students’ inclusion of technical terms such as “*incohesive*”, because students might not “*know*” what they mean. “*Scouring*” students’ writing with “*super detailed*” feedback, Tylor added, could be overwhelming for them. Instead they could be marked based on the course objectives or, as Tylor put it, in line with what they are “*responsible for*” in the writing course. Tylor proposed, therefore, that “*one-on-one*” feedback might be “*the most meaningful*” for students, a strategy that Emily would resort to when a “*whole class*” feedback would not help.

Students might feel overwhelmed by feedback that captures every mistake and that predominantly highlights grammatical problems. It would seem that the ability to write well was perhaps associated in this course with writing that had good grammar. Other areas that are involved in writing development, including cohesion and coherence, were somewhat overlooked. One-to-one consultations and short conferences could provide more hands-on dialogues between teachers and students, to help the latter improve their writing in general and writing cohesion and coherence in particular.

7.7 Summary

Overall, based on the teachers’ discussions on how they understood cohesion and coherence, and how they perceived issues related to cohesion and coherence in the context of academic writing, one could draw several conclusions. There seemed to be an overlap in the teachers’ metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence: cohesion was seen as unity of ideas, and as sentence and text connectedness. They appeared to associate coherence with connectedness, which raises a concern about how explicit and deep they could go in their teaching of cohesion and coherence. Despite the overlap in their metalinguistic understanding of the two concepts, the teachers did prioritize some areas of cohesion and coherence in the teaching of academic writing, chiefly essay connection and the

correct use of cohesive devices. They also seemed to link cohesion and coherence with well-written texts.

In the area of how the teachers taught cohesion and coherence, there are some relevant points to be raised. Cohesion and coherence were approached sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly. The teachers did not seem to agree on what to consider a priority in the teaching of cohesion and coherence when teaching academic writing. They found themselves focusing on grammar, due to students' very limited knowledge of English grammar. They may have worked on reminding their student writers to be constantly aware of the reader when writing their academic essays. The teachers' responses were confirmed by those of the students, as they all expressed their understanding of the relationship between the writer and reader in a similar way, which might show that this relationship was perhaps sufficiently addressed in their academic writing class. The teachers' feedback on writing was seen as intimidating and over detailed, and mainly targeting grammatical problems, a perception that was echoed by the students. Other areas that relate to writing development in addition to cohesion and coherence were somewhat overlooked.

The teachers perceived some challenges that hindered their students' writing with cohesion and coherence. Two major challenges were logic and the students' background and subject knowledge: to the teachers, these had an adverse effect on students' writing coherence. More extensive knowledge of subject matter is needed to support their writing cohesion and coherence, and could be achieved by assigning readings prior to writing, or offering bullet points for arguments which students can use when writing their academic essays. More discussion on logic is also essential to help students consider logic when they write. The students' academic essay introductions and conclusions were also seen as problematic because, according to the teachers, students found it hard to maintain the cohesion and coherence of these two paragraphs. Students also struggled with supporting their ideas and with using the correct cohesive devices that would accurately convey the intended meaning. The teachers identified some reasons for

the students' challenges with writing cohesive and coherent essays. They thought that the students' limited store of English vocabulary might have led them to use Arabic alternatives, which then resulted in them using awkward or inaccurate words in their writing. They also attributed this to the students' lack of reading: had they been more widely read, it might have helped improve their abilities to use accurate cohesive devices, elaborate on their ideas and create better unity in their essay paragraphs. Encouraging a culture of reading among students, and incorporating that into the curriculum, could help redress many of the students' problems with writing with cohesion and coherence, such as their insufficient content knowledge, lack of logic, limited English vocabulary, inaccurate use of cohesive devices and their dependence on Arabic lexical and syntactical alternatives.

The teachers put forward some solutions to cope with students' challenges with writing cohesively and coherently. They talked about teachers encouraging students to read different genres of texts, arranging continuous practice on cohesion and coherence, and doing activities in class that target specific areas of cohesion and coherence which students struggle with, such as the overuse, underuse, awkward use and inaccurate use of cohesive devices in their academic essays. They also thought of exposing students to models of academic essays, identifying how cohesion and coherence were specifically achieved in essays, and simplifying the language used in explaining concepts in cohesion and coherence. Teachers could also work on raising their students' awareness of their own individual problems with cohesion and coherence, in order to help them focus their attention and effort on specific problems. They recommended doing this by organizing more one-to-one conferencing for feedback that focuses on students' individual difficulties with writing, and by giving more attention to cohesion and coherence-related concepts. One teacher felt, too, that in their particular teaching context of EFL academic writing, teachers need to challenge and rethink their own presumptions about students' cultural beliefs and practices and what students are capable of doing. This could help them to address students' individual and actual

needs, and not rely on unevidenced generalized assumptions about a whole group of students.

Further, there are some recurrent themes throughout the teacher and student dataset. First, both teachers and students seemed to have a rather limited metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence: a common perception amongst them was that the two concepts were mostly alike, indicating perhaps the complexity of the two terms. Second, they both expressed similar concerns about students' lack of content knowledge, limited vocabulary and insufficient feedback - a situation that indicates that the responses of the two sources of participants validate each other. Students' poor background and subject knowledge was problematic: due to their limited knowledge on the essay-writing topics, students struggled to develop ideas in their academic essays when they were not introduced beforehand to the topics they were expected to write about. Besides, because students did not do much extensive and/or intensive reading, their exposure to language and vocabulary was restricted. They, therefore, could not use such lexical items as they would demonstrate their repertoire of English, and thus ended up being too simplistic and/or repetitive, or resorting to using inaccurate alternatives translated from Arabic. In addition, the feedback needed more clarity and focus on what students should specifically do to improve their writing further. Feedback should also give merit to what students have done well, and should simultaneously suggest areas for further development. Third, the students' prior experiences with writing, represented in the differences in how Arabic writing at school and English writing at the university are approached, had led many of them to view English writing negatively. They associated it with being inflexible, difficult and uncreative - a situation that requires EFL academic writing teachers to address students' concerns, difficulties and resentment in order to help them understand more positively the difference in the approaches of Arabic and English writing. Fourth, teachers need to adopt a more personalized teaching of writing, where the individual student's writing development areas are addressed and negotiated with the student. Fifth, the teacher is still strongly regarded as a source of authority, knowledge and received wisdom, where communication is merely one-way.

Interactive communication between teachers and students is, therefore, a priority, so each can hear what the other has to say about the teaching of academic writing, so as to enhance students' writing abilities, including writing with better cohesion and coherence.

8 Chapter eight: Analysis of tutors' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

The previous two chapters looked into the findings of ten students' and three teachers' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence. This chapter illustrates the analysis of three tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence, and their perspectives on issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in the context of EFL academic writing (see section 3.16). The interviewed tutors were also given an elicitation task, where they were invited to talk about cohesion and coherence-related concepts, and discuss how they might use them with students in writing tutorial sessions. They were then asked to talk about their perceptions of issues related to the tutoring and teaching of cohesion and coherence.

8.1 Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion

Below is the tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion types:

- Grammatical cohesion
- Lexical cohesion
- Substitution
- Conjunction
- Reference
- Ellipsis
- Collocation
- Reiteration

8.1.1 Grammatical and lexical cohesion

All three tutors talked about grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion was defined by John as

the way in which the grammar is constructing the meaning of the sentence through the actual grammar and the syntax of.

He indicated that he would restrict his explicit discussion of grammatical cohesion to the “*particular grammatical structure*” that is often found in writing, such as “*the rhetorical devices, linking words, using ‘on one hand’, ‘on the other hand’*”.

Concerning lexical cohesion, John proposed that students encountered a “*metalanguage*” challenge, because they would often “*conceptually*” struggle with “*forming an actual conception of what*” the term is about. With the exception of John, the tutors did not go in detail in their reference of what the two terms were about. Emma merely indicated that students sometimes would not “*know*” what she meant by grammatical and lexical cohesion. Kate seemed to agree with Emma as she indicated that she would only “*try to define*” the two terms to students who were “*further along there in their study*”. Kate added that she would talk about cohesion (i.e. grammatical and lexical) explicitly only if “*there was no another way to approach it*”.

8.1.2 Substitution, conjunction and reference

All three tutors explained substitution, conjunction and reference. John referred to substitution, conjunction and reference saying,

how we take apart different ideas and put them in different words. It can be at the lexical level. It can be at the grammar level. There are a lot of different ways to do this: the way we're combining different ideas.

Substitution, according to Kate, is equivalent to paraphrasing, which she considered important in writing as students were required to paraphrase, and she found that it was one of the ways that students would “*cling to*”, as they would use their phone dictionaries to apply substitution. Kate considered substitution as “*a block*” to understanding and would therefore “*discourage*” her students from substituting, which she thought of as paraphrasing. She argued,

I discourage students from using substitution in any way because when the students are substituting, they don't actually understand the

whole of the sentence in a paragraph. They haven't learned that as a complete understanding.

Kate regarded conjunction as “*missing*” in students' writing, and she stated that this could be addressed by “*doing*” “*small easily achievable bits*” through making students aware of the “*relationship*” between their “*previous*”, current and “*future*” texts. Just as with grammatical and lexical cohesion, Kate held that reference was only to be explicitly introduced with higher level students, and only when there was a genuine need for it. Emma did not specifically articulate what these terms meant, but rather associated them with grammar, and then added that students did “*know*” about reference because they had to do “*referencing*”, an indication to associating reference with referencing citations in other sources.

8.1.3 Ellipsis and collocation

Only one of the tutors, John, chose to define ellipsis and collocation. He associated ellipsis with crafting argument in one's writing and, without stating in clear terms what it is about, he proposed,

we take source materials and then we define it in a certain way. We situate it within a larger argument, taking apart information and leaving out non required information and just putting essential information.

John also verbalized collocation as “*words*” that “*naturally go together*” in a way that is considered “*normal sounding*” or “*correct sounding*”, and added that he would sometimes “*work*” with his students on some of the collocations.

8.1.4 Reiteration

All three tutors, however, talked about what reiteration meant. Emma proposed that students did not “*reiterate*” or “*say the same thing in a different way*” as they were not “*comfortable with that*”, but they would instead use “*repetition*”, which is reusing “*the same thing*”; a perspective that was also shared by Kate, who confirmed that reiteration and repetition are not the same, but students would “*think*” they were. Kate affirmed further that reiteration is

a way of reframing what the student is saying that it confirms a very deep state of understanding.

John indicated that there are “*particular academic phrases*”, such as “*in other words*”, that happen to be very useful when helping students with their academic writing or helping them “*construct something*” to express a certain meaning “*differently*”.

Based on what the tutors reported about grammatical and lexical cohesion and their sub types, one can conclude the following. The tutors avoided addressing grammatical and lexical cohesion explicitly, as they thought students would find it hard to manage cohesion-related concepts. There was, however, a general impression that the sub types would only be explicitly addressed with students if this was going to directly help them with their writing, and therefore the tutors would only focus on them during individual writing tutorial sessions in order to meet students' immediate needs. Emma and Kate, for instance, chose not to elaborate on grammatical and lexical cohesion and their sub types: substitution, conjunction, reference, ellipsis and substitution. They referred instead, and in a general sense, to issues relevant to how they would approach them with students. This perhaps indicates that Emma and Kate did not have a comprehensive metalinguistic understanding of exactly what these terms mean. Ellipsis and substitution are generally not common in writing, and that is possibly why these tutors might not have seen their relevance to the context of the academic writing they worked on. Emma and Kate did not discuss collocation either, perhaps because they felt that it was not an area that they needed to address with their students, and were they to do so, it would only be if students had problems using it properly in their writing. All three tutors, however, had a reasonably good metalinguistic understanding of the term 'reiteration', which possibly indicates the emphasis placed on this notion when helping students with their academic essays.

8.2 Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of coherence in the different parts of the essay

Below the tutors' findings concerning their metalinguistic understanding of the following:

- Coherence between sentences in a text
- Coherence between and within paragraphs
- Coherence in the essay as a whole
- Role of cohesion on coherence

8.2.1 Coherence between sentences in a text

Two of the tutors, John and Emma, talked about coherence between sentences in a text. John proposed that he would discuss with his students

what the connection between these ideas? Are they connected and in what way?

He seemed to explicitly approach coherence between sentences in a text, as he clearly indicated “*different tools*” that he would use with his students to “*improve the connections between sentence*”. He would ask them,

have you heard of any of them? Then we might go through a list of them and then usually in a session we try to say why does this make the sentence more clear. These two ideas more clear? What about this? This helps? Then we help them understand the actual aspect of what we are doing so they could apply it in some other situations.

Emma, on the other hand, indicated that some students might not be “*familiar*” with some of the terms. She gave the example of “*concise*” that tutors might “*introduce*” to students in tutorial sessions. She also advised that tutors had to be “*careful*” with using “*a different kind of format in teaching*” that students were not used to. Emma proposed,

it could be confusing for the students. So I say something and I say what your teacher told you about this.

8.2.2 Coherence between and within paragraphs

Two of the tutors, John and Emma, talked about the concept of coherence between and within paragraphs. John articulated a succinct definition of how he understood coherence between and within paragraphs stating,

a lot of that would be are you moving topically from what your introduction said it would. If you're providing three ideas, are you actually going from one idea to the next and transitioning well from one idea to the next and from paragraph to paragraph?

Emma proposed that in coherence “*everything has to link. There has to be that within a section of an essay*”, and added that she worked on making that “*obvious*” to the students who came for writing consultations. Emma seems to be referring more to concepts of cohesion rather than coherence as she made no mention of ideas.

8.2.3 Coherence in the essay as a whole

All three tutors talked about coherence in the essay as a whole. John discussed whether there was a “*logical progression*” from the introduction with a “*clear topic statement*”. He emphasised the progression in the thesis statement to topic sentences and supporting details (i.e. reasons and examples) and the movement to their conclusions. He remarked,

I'm thinking about: is there a logical progression from the introduction with clear topic statement, thesis statement to topic sentences and supporting details, reasons and examples? And then do they move to their conclusions?

John asked further questions saying,

and then does it have a natural progression within that? And if it does have that, it tends to help the readers.

In indicating coherence in students' writing as a whole, he pointed out the importance of "*markers*" within a sentence, a paragraph or a piece of paper, as these markers could "*direct*" the reader (i.e. tutor) in his/her writing tutorials with students. John remarked,

we expect certain things and we are looking for markers within a sentence or within a paragraph or within a piece of paper that kind of direct us.

Coherence in the essay as a whole, therefore, as seen by John, would help in the whole "*process*" of interacting with students and their writing. Similarly, Kate stated that when she would look at a complete piece of academic writing, she would start with "*the overall structure*", and then look at the sentences to check if they were "*structured properly*" and did not "*jump around*", and then she would see whether the paragraphs were not going to "*either end*". A decision would then be made on the "*clarity*" and the making "*sense*" of the whole text. Kate then remarked saying,

it is really hard because you're leading your reader by the hand through your essay. And if it's all one beautifully structured essay, then it's going to make sense.

Emma, however, merely commented that there has to be an "*overall picture*". John proposed further, in his discussion of coherence and students' writing, that often students were taught by professors who had no background in ESL/EFL training, so these professors were expecting a certain level of proficiency and awareness of rhetorical functions, both of which the students might not always have. The students, therefore, might not know how to interpret the professors' comments on their writing, such as the "*ideas*" did not "*match*" - a concern that should be addressed by the university to help teachers communicate written feedback on students' academic writing more effectively.

8.2.4 Role of cohesion on coherence

Two of the tutors, John and Kate, discussed the role of cohesion on coherence. John elaborated on his understanding of this notion in depth, pointing out that when explaining this to students, he would think of cohesion as,

a way of the entire text flow together from a rhetorical stand point, moving from argument to argument or comment on an argument.

However, he argued that one could sometimes have “*really good cohesion and terrible coherence*”, or the other way around, but they are often “*kind of mixed together*”. A “*good*” cohesion, John emphasized, tends to “*lend to*” a more coherent piece of writing, unless the student is “*just lexically totally off*”. He demonstrated his perspective by drawing an example of “*situations*” that tutors might encounter saying,

you could have something like I love strawberries. This is my best movies where I go on the weekend.

Additionally, Kate proposed that the role of cohesion on coherence is about “*informing*”, and that she emphasized “*telling stories*” in academic writing. She commented,

I speak a lot in terms of telling stories in academic writing because this is what we do. We tell stories. And I guess that's the type of coherence...informing.

Overall, these results indicate that the tutors appeared to have a reasonable awareness of sentence, paragraph and essay coherence. They seemed to approach concepts of coherence explicitly, but also keep vigilant about what students do in their writing classes so that they do not end up confusing them. This perhaps reflects the vital significance of these concepts and their direct relevance to writing. Kate and John, for instance, elaborated on the potential role of cohesion on coherence and touched on some contextual or situational elements of students’

writing that did not necessarily relate to linguistic or textual factors. They referred to some writing mechanics and, more importantly, brought up the English native culture of the academic writing, and tutors and teachers' expectations of what an EFL piece of academic writing, its layout, representation of argument and structure should look like. They also expressed concerns about the lack of clarity of some teachers' written feedback, which hinders students from responding effectively to comments on their text coherence.

8.3 Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of the relationship between coherence and certain coherence-related concepts

The tutors' findings regarding the relationship between coherence and the following coherence-related concepts:

- Relationship between coherence and logic or making sense
- Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge
- Relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

8.3.1 Relationship between coherence and logic or making sense

Emma and John talked about their understanding of the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense. Emma referred to students' awareness of logic-making in their writing, and that sometimes their writing lacked coherence because it was illogical. Emma also stated that she would discuss logic with her students, but they would often come with assignments that were due "*the next day*", so it would be hard to elaborate on coherence-related concepts including logic. John remarked that the relationship between coherence and logic or making sense was the topic of some writing sessions that he had recently held with students. One of these sessions was on traffic accidents and part of the student's argument was that the population in Oman was so high as the traffic fatality was so high. To the student, that made "*perfect sense*", but, to John, it was "*completely illogical*" that,

because people often have a lot of children because they have more chance that one of them would die in a traffic accident. I was talking to him about it. I quite understand why you are saying, but it was also completely illogical.

John also talked about another area of the student's argument which weakened its strength in terms of logic. The student used data showing car accidents of recent times, but at the same time used birth rates from the 1970s and 80s. John commented,

and so sometimes what we will do with the students we may say, OK I understand exactly what you're saying here. It's perfectly clear to me but the problem is that it does not make sense. It's clear what you're saying, but the argument is illogical. And so walking through that process sometimes is challenging because the students have it in their head all that process. And if they're actually pulled out every step and if they are able to transfer from their mind down into a piece of paper, they're probably very successful with it.

Another area of challenge that students might have with logic making, according to John, was to do with issues of "transference". He explained,

because of issues of transference, they're having it up here. They're translating it. They're trying to write on paper and steps get lost. They are missing pieces which creates logic gaps, not from their point of view but from us. So we don't have the ability to understand them as they would like.

According to John, "walking through" that "process" is not easy for the tutors. Logic was seen as a crucial concept but also as an area that requires some attention from tutors, as logic gaps need to be negotiated with students.

8.3.2 Relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge

All three tutors expressed their understanding of relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge. If the background and subject knowledge is "missing", Kate argued, it is very "difficult" for the text to be coherent. What Emma considered a "big problem" was that the students were "suffering" because

they would not “*know*” the subject and not “*understand*” what they “*got*” in their texts. However, students might sometimes “*understand*” what they were “*trying to say*”, but be unable to “*get it across*”, a situation that impeded their text coherence. Some of students who came from small villages were, Kate added, still “*sheltered*”, and therefore had so much to learn about just living in Muscat, such as being aware of topics like junk food. Tutors and teachers would still need to bear this in mind when interacting with students’ writing, Kate commented, although, she added, thanks to social media, the “*gap*” is “*closing*”. John indicated that students at the Writing Centre were made aware of their responsibility for explaining to the reader “*in a very simplified way*” what they would write about, as, according to him, this is what is expected from “*Western*” writing. Additionally, John mentioned that tutors would sometimes get “*highly technical*” writing from the medical students, and would have a hard time being “*successful*” in writing tutorials as they knew little about the “*content*” (i.e. background and subject knowledge) and therefore could not give students “*meaningful*” feedback. All they could do, according to John, was to look at the “*basic grammar mistakes*” and “*identify*” the subject and the verb, and therefore they could only work with the students on “*mechanics and formatting*”. The relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge was, therefore, a “*kind of nuanced*” area where students had to know their audience and know “*what information*” that audience would already have as background and subject knowledge. They had to know “*what information*” they would actually need to include within that piece of writing, and then “*balance*” that as “*appropriate*” as possible. Further, Emma attributed students’ absence of background and subject knowledge to a lack of understanding and interest in their readings, which would negatively affect the coherence of their writing. She elaborated on that saying,

when students know about the subject and they are interested, then it's much easier for me to help them. Sometimes they don't understand what they are reading. So that's lack of understanding is coming across in the cohesion and the coherence. Cohesion: because they must get things linked and they are aware of how to structure an essay, but the coherence is stemming from: they don't

really understand and they don't understand that somebody is supposed to be reading it.

8.3.3 Relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

All three tutors elaborated on their understanding of this concept. To Kate, this concept is often not “*thought about*” until quite late on in the post graduate level. She argued that it is “*really*” important to think about “*who*” the reader is going to be, “*how*” the student is making it “*easy*”, and “*how*” the particular reader is going to understand it if s/he does not have the background and subject knowledge. She further explained,

as a writer work your way through that. And it's quite good here because we are all expert in different things so we need to understand the relationship we create with the students. So we readers are not expert so you need to make sure you are clear.

John proposed that this was an area that tutors really “*worked on*”. He explained further that this area seemed to be “*a bit of a cultural difference*” between Western expectations and the expectations “*at the region*”, particularly with regards to “*storytelling*” and “*who*” has the “*honest responsibility*” in terms of “*comprehension*” in English and Arabic. Emma mentioned that students would constantly say to her “*Oh, I mean*”, and she would respond, “*yeah, but it's not coming across to me*”. She considered this to be an area with which students were not “*familiar*”, and to her that was partly because their writing was something they had been “*assigned*”, and they were not “*necessarily interested in*”, and therefore they did not always “*understand*” it. John had the “*impression*” that “*in this part of the world*”, including the SQU context, the responsibility is on the reader to “*understand the message and ask proper questions and get the meaning that way*”, whereas in most Western writing the responsibility is “*on the writer to make clear enough that it's successful for a lot of audiences*”. They would “*just write it*” because they had to, and therefore were not “*thinking*” of their audience. Additionally, tutors, according to John, tried to carry out what he referred to as “*socio cultural pragmatic conversations*” with

students, in order to raise their awareness of “*what*” was expected from them and “*what*” students expected. He explained this approach in detail saying,

we'll talk to them at the beginning of the session about: here's what we need from you out of this piece of paper. I don't understand as a reader what you're trying to tell me or how they are connected. And so what are some ways that you connect them for me. So I always try to put the responsibility on them to make it more clear for us and it's also practical for us that makes the interaction less negative. It's not wrong what they are doing. It's unclear for us.

Emma wondered to what extent “*who are you writing for*”, and “*the fact*” that people write because they “*want somebody to read it*”, would come across in their writing classes. She commented further,

I think here students tend to write because they have to, which is a shame really.

Kate and John raised further points concerning the relationship between coherence and the concepts above. Kate stated that all of these concepts contribute to coherence, as they help with “*a clear understanding of who and what you're writing about*”. John stated that these concepts were “*indicative*” of what tutors would do at the Writing Centre, but also “*connected*” to the theory that students at SQU were “*challenged*” in “*a few different*” ways. Their reading level, according to John, was not necessarily up to the level of the texts that they were “*required to process*”. Academic writing would therefore be demanding, as students would have to understand the “*source materials*” in order to be able to paraphrase “*successfully*”, or put the paraphrased information coherently into their piece of writing. John explained this challenge saying,

they are trying to at the same time understand this information but also reprocess it, re-categorize it and paraphrase it and summarize it and situate it within a larger text they are writing.

John argued that students were good at skimming and scanning to get “*a bit of information*”, but not as good at understanding why that particular piece of information was “*relevant*” to the author’s argument, and, “*more importantly*”, why that information was or was not relevant to the argument the student was making. Another challenge brought up by John, was the student’s lack of ability to remain coherent within his/her text when retrieving a piece of information from another source text, as it might not “*flow*” with the idea that the student is trying to make. He/she might not be able to situate the retrieved piece of text within his/her own argument. John explained,

but they're not as good understanding why that particular bit of information is relevant for the author argument and more importantly why is that information or why is it not to my argument that I am making and so when you take out and put it into your context, is that from that piece of reading the most important piece of information. Then their ability to be coherent within a text because that piece of information doesn't have to flow from the idea that you're trying to make because it's important to the other argument but not necessarily important to your argument.

Therefore, working with students on how to put together those “*little bits and pieces*” was, according to John, one of the biggest challenges, because they did not understand “*well*” enough to be able to “*reapply*” it. Resolving problems with their writing coherence would require multiple tutorials, however students tended to come “*last minute*”, and many students would not come for more than one session in a semester.

Taken together, these results suggest that the tutors had a reasonable metalinguistic understanding of coherence-related concepts in general. They reflected on the relevance of connectedness through cohesive devices to establish coherence, and discussed maintaining connectedness through inserting the argument retrieved from source materials into the flow of the student's argument. Additionally, logic was seen not only as a crucial concept but also as an area that required some attention from tutors, as potential logic gaps needed to be negotiated with students. The relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge was considered an area that could directly impact on the coherence of students' writing; this was discussed with reference to the clarity of students' writing, the complexity of conveying the message in the writing, and students' awareness of audience knowledge and of the responsibility of the writer. The relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader was thought of as a priority in helping students with their writing through being aware of audience knowledge and needs. Further, the difference between the writing expectations of the English and the Arabic worlds was discussed and worked on by the tutors, and approached in a way that highlighted the difference between the two styles, rather than considering the Arabic approach as wrong. The data also indicated that there was a need for tutors and teachers to raise their own awareness of the students' cultural expectations and previous training with Arabic and English writing, in order to communicate effectively about students' individual needs regarding their writing development, including how they could write with better cohesion and coherence.

8.4 Tutors' metalinguistic understanding of whether cohesion or coherence is judged using the other

All three tutors expressed their understanding of the relationship between cohesion and coherence and whether one influences the other. Kate emphasized that "*one without the other does not work so much*", and argued that cohesion influences coherence because if something is cohesive, it is "*easier to understand*", and the writer "*knows*" the reader is "*understanding*" the text. Cohesion, to her, "*shows*" and "*aids*" "*comprehension*". Emma, on the other hand, stressed that coherence "*comes first*", because without it one could not "*make sense of*" the text. She stated

that if a text is incoherent, one is “*lost really*” and does not “*know what*” the writer is “*saying*”, and therefore it might be “*difficult to see where*” the writer is “*going*”. She argued further that, although one might see that there is “*a logical progression*” - such as having the thesis statement, body paragraphs and so forth - if within those paragraphs there is “*lack of coherence*”, then there is “*a serious problem*”. John mentioned that negotiating the relationship between cohesion and coherence in their writing was sometimes discussed with students in the Writing Centre sessions. When tutors were reading a text with students, they would stop at a point where the meaning broke down, and if this was because of cohesion or coherence, then that would become “*a starting point*” for “*the conversation*”, and it tended to “*grow from there*”. He explained that process saying,

so if it's a cohesion problem that they're having, we'll stop and talk about what that is, why they are having that problem with that and we encourage them to go through and solve and identify that and find the small errors they made on their papers. Once they do that, we talk to them why they made these changes and then we move on and it's often very interconnected. We don't necessarily see a piece of writing and say OK this is a coherence issue. Usually it comes out of the paper naturally as we're going through it.

The interconnectedness that exists between cohesion and coherence was prominent in how the tutors verbalized the role of one on another.

8.5 Tutors' experience of helping students to improve their cohesion and coherence in their writing

All three tutors reflected on their experiences of helping students to improve their writing cohesion and coherence. Kate emphasized the importance of “*structure*” in helping students with this. According to her, students could work within that structure by trying first to write “*a lot*” and then putting that writing into a structure, because one could then see his/her “*pathway to comprehension*”. Concerning paraphrasing, she indicated that finding new words to “*slot in*” was her “*least favourite*” strategy, and recommended giving students ways of paraphrasing texts

and showing them “*how*” paraphrasing could be done. She added that, if students resorted to translating words into Arabic, they should translate the words back into English using a “*proper*” English dictionary, to check whether the use of the translated English words is accurate.

Similarly, Emma stated that she would help students to establish the “*format*” they were taught in their writing class (i.e. introduction, thesis, body paragraphs and conclusion). She would check that the thesis statement clearly identified the points within the whole essay. Then she would look at a paragraph or a point, but if it was an extensive piece of writing, she would focus on a part bigger than a paragraph. She would get them sometimes to read their text out loud and would ask questions like:

does this sound alright? What you mean here? Can you explain it in any different way? Is there anything to follow on? Can you make sense of that? Does this sound ok to you? Is there anything missing here? Try to discuss. We love discussions. And I often encourage them to say that out loud because I've noticed by saying it out loud, we can hear, and if their level of English is high, they could hear it sounds strange.

John stated that he would approach cohesion and coherence through “*mini lessons*”. He would focus on specific areas - for instance, “*looking for*” two ideas and “*where to connect*” them, discussing what the student had used and asking questions like, “*so does this work?*” John also highlighted how tutoring was done with students and indicated that tutors would attempt to consider students’ errors rather than their mistakes. Mistakes are “*fossilized to some degree*” and do not impede “*meaning*” or “*comprehension*”, John argued. Tutors, therefore, would not focus on the incorrect use of “*in addition*” and subject-verb agreement as these would be mistakes, and students would know how to use them. Tutors would instead work on improving students’ knowledge of certain errors. John added that tutors were trained in “*how to identify*” errors versus mistakes, and how talk to

students about the difference between the two. John also mentioned that in their focus on cohesion and coherence, tutors would give students “a skill set” of “what” they “need” not only to be “successful” in that piece of writing, but also in “subsequent” pieces of writing. So when students would come for multiple sessions, there would be some continuation of what they had experienced with writing, and they would be asked questions like,

what did the tutor do with you last session and what did you work on and what piece of language did you work on? Then we'll say, did you then apply any of those for this piece of writing that you did here that you brought me.

He added that tutors struggled to provide materials for students who would come to ask for something that could help them with cohesion and coherence, as there was nothing that had been used at university level that tutors could “reinforce”.

Students’ inability to paraphrase and the techniques of proper paraphrasing were linked by the tutors to how well students could write cohesively and coherently. Asking students to respond to specific questions about their texts, and reading their texts aloud, might help them detect problems with cohesion and coherence in their writing. Continuing to work on developing students’ cohesion and coherence might help students to transfer what they learn to their future essays.

8.6 Tutors’ perceptions of students’ difficulties in writing with cohesion and coherence

The following is the tutors’ perceptions concerning students’ challenges with cohesion and coherence:

- Students’ understanding of cohesion and coherence
- Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing
- Solutions to problems/challenges that arise when teaching cohesion and coherence to students

8.6.1 Students' understanding of cohesion and coherence

The three tutors reflected on students' understanding of cohesion and coherence in different ways. Kate stated that if teachers were to talk in the sense of "*storytelling*", go from "*a beginning to an end*" and tell students "*exactly*" what they want them to "*know*", students would "*understand and they would like to have it*". Similarly, Emma thought that students understood what cohesion and coherence are because they knew that there has to be a "*logical sequence*", and they were taught introductions, body paragraphs and conclusions; however, they did not have "*enough vocabulary*" to "*do it*" well. Likewise, Kate added that the problem was that students did not have "*enough skills to do it*" because "*often*" they were at a level where their language "*particularly*" was "*nuanced*" and they might not be aware of the words that have negative and positive "*connotations*" for "*native speakers*". Emma attributed some reasons to that saying,

they don't always know the little things like 'although' and 'but'. They don't use them appropriately. But that's because maybe they are not thinking or they have forgotten the words. They haven't memorized. They are not reading enough. They haven't used them enough. Variety of reasons.

Concerning coherence, Emma indicated that students were "*not always able*" to link their writing, and "*in their mind*" they perhaps thought it was coherent, but it was not until "*sometimes*" it was "*pointed out to*" them that it was "*not such*" that they would realise. According to her, this could be due to students "*not thinking*" about who their reader was. They thought of writing as only something they had to do without "*getting deep*" into it and thinking of whether the reader would be "*interested*". Many students had to "*do*" English and it was not "*always a basic interest*" in what they were doing. Emma continued arguing,

if you're not interested yourself, you tend not to go deeply into something because you tend to only get it done.

John commented that it is difficult for teachers to “assess” what cohesion and coherence are because they are entirely “*linguistic*”. However, what could “*influence*” students’ cohesion and coherence, John proposed, was their use of pronouns. For instance, a personal pronoun might be used at the end of the sentence that did not “*need to be there*”. To John, it was “*something*” that he was not “*expecting at all*” as a reader, but it did not affect the “*meaning*” or “*the coherence*” of the sentence. John brought up an example of that: “*my test is very hard. It’s not something that I enjoyed it*”. He added that students might think that their use of the pronouns was “*all right*”, as “*in Arabic that is something that can be there*”. Kate further stated that students need to “*understand*” and “*explain*” their “*sources*” to help them comprehend “*what*” paraphrase “*means*”. She also proposed that students may use more cohesion and coherence when they speak than when they write. She stated,

many of the students don’t think of what they say is as important as what they write while in fact it’s often the same. They talk about something more fluently and with a great deal of understanding and comprehension and cohesiveness than when they write because they think it has to be somehow special on page.

John stressed that as a teacher he was “*constantly*” trying to “*situate*” himself “*within*” the context that he was in and “*understand*” that those mistakes were made. On the surface, these “*errors*” might affect coherence, because “*suddenly*” one is “*thrown out of this piece of writing*”, but when one looks at it and becomes “*more culturally aware*”, one would recognize that it did not actually “*affect meaning in any way*”. John referred to that as “*an echo from the rhetorical style*” that students had learned prior to writing at the university. He acknowledged, though, that this was a challenging “*orientation*” that teachers and tutors have to be doing. John commented that teachers need to focus on that, in order to determine whether they needed to address it with students. He remarked that he found it “*incredibly*” challenging to figure out at what point he should be providing them with “*what piece of advice*”, and what would make their writing “*more meaningful*” to

them and “*more acceptable*” to him, and he would try to find “*that natural space*”. Kate pointed out that tutors could see the cohesion and coherence developing in their students' writing, when the students came “*regularly*” to the Writing Centre - an indication of how important it is to keep discussing the concepts of cohesion and coherence.

To John, students seemed to “*always think*” that the way teachers would teach English writing was “*extremely formulaic*” and “*prescriptive*”, in that it

has to move from this idea, topic sentence, main idea one, support for main idea one, main idea two, support for main idea two, put two transitions in there and then move to your next idea in the next paragraph and if you do that four or five sentences, you get at least five... eight sentences, then you get at least an 80% in your organization in your structure.

He added that students would struggle with that, but once they had learnt “*the actual mathematical kind of formula of it*”, they seemed to “*do quite well*”. However, when they would write to him “*in other ways*” - through email, text message or WhatsApp - they tended to “*talk around issues instead of directly at issues*”. He stated that this

maybe is a formality thing or maybe the way that is information is conveyed in Arabic, but there is much more room for interpretation in a lot of the writing, whereas we focus really hard on making things as explicit as possible so there is no interpretation.

To John, Arabic writing still has “*an underlined organizational structure*”, but it is not as “*descriptive as everyone will follow as in the Western style*”. Additionally, he argued that many teachers who do not “*enjoy teaching the structures the way they are*” would agree with that. Teachers, to him, are “*the arbitrary of what is good and bad*” and they like to “*do things*” in a certain way. But most educators, he stressed,

have moved beyond that and would love to see “*more open ways of teaching writing*” and “*more ways of accepting writing*”. Once one hits a “*certain*” level of proficiency, John suggested, English could be “*freeing*” and many of the “*rules*” would not “*apply*” to the writer. There are many research papers that do not follow the “*typical structures*”, a situation that constantly leads to “*rethinking what it means to be a coherent writer at a certain level*”. John felt that at SQU, however, teachers and tutors find it “*quite restricting*” for students. He wondered whether less “*stressed*” and “*confined*” students, or those who were “*more at ease*”, and who could “*take more risk*”, were more likely to develop faster. He proposed that, in the context of the CPS, as the writing programmes had become so big, and as “*standardisation*” is important, there had become one way to teach it, and teachers, therefore, had “*pushed out*” other ways - a situation that might represent a “*more amoral kind of approach*” to writing. Kate proposed that, on the other hand, “*communication*” between tutors and teachers could maintain some “*clarity*” about what is done in the Writing Centre and in class to help students with their writing cohesion and coherence.

If cohesive devices and the sequencing of ideas were to be introduced satisfactorily to students, and then revisited, students might experience less difficulty with writing cohesively and coherently. Students’ cohesion and coherence could also be enhanced through helping them to consider the reader, improve their use of pronouns, paraphrase their source materials well and then situate their paraphrased work within the argument of their writing. The students’ limited repertoire of lexical words, however, posed a challenge for them when trying to write cohesively and coherently. Further, the organizational structure of writing adopted by the CPS teachers was perhaps due to the writing standardization which led to a more unified way of approaching academic writing. Students should be made aware that English is freer and less formulaic at higher levels in the real world. Tutors and teachers should perhaps have a more cultural awareness of the underlying Arabic writing organisational structure, and of how argument and sentences are constructed in Arabic, as this might help them to manage their students’ difficulties with writing cohesion and coherence.

8.6.2 Challenges encountered by students in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing

The three tutors indicated key challenges to students being able to write cohesively and coherently. Many students would come to the university, Kate remarked, with “*virtually*” no English and then get to a point where they do a degree in English. John thought that students’ challenges were “*absolutely*” “*linguistic*”, as students had to read information, “*process*” it and “*reformulate*” it. Emma identified a combination of challenges saying,

they don't read in English very much. Variety of reasons: lack of interest, lack of ability, skill. And so they are not exposed to much variety of topics so lack of vocabulary. So if they don't have that exposure, they don't have that experience, they haven't got the vocabulary. All of these combined make it: what shall I write? Tell me teacher: what can I put?

According to John, students’ mistakes with cohesion and coherence went around their use of “*on one hand*” and “*on another hand*”, and how they are used “*appropriately and academically*”. He added that students tended to “*overuse*” them or use them “*incorrectly*”. He felt that many students do not have strong “*transference skills*” because they “*forget*” that what they learn about an essay is applicable to the next piece of writing. They also forget that it is “*perfectly appropriate*” to use a comparative structure in a larger piece of writing that is not a compare and contrast essay, if the rhetorical function needed is a compare and contrast device.

Further, John proposed that after students had completed their English language programmes, they did not have enough “*structured*” support, and therefore, by the time they were working on their final year projects, they would have “*lost a lot of their ability*” to write with cohesion and coherence. Similarly, Kate mentioned that she had students who were finishing their degrees and doing their final reports, and it was “*like no one showed them how to structure*”. She explained that

the language skills are good and sentence structures are great, but actually having the structure to move through.

Students stopped reading in English, and their content teachers did not have “adequate training” in ESL/EFL needs in order to be as “successful” as they could be, John stressed, and therefore students would not have the “linguistic” or “rhetorical” background and the “systematic kind of the cyclical” support they needed in order to be successful at a college level of academic writing.

The tutors also referred to certain cultural practices that hindered the students when trying to write with cohesion and coherence. Emma proposed that students would “go to the library because they have to”, and when they would write about a topic like health and diseases, she explained, they would repeatedly use “stock phrases” like “good and bad”, “doing it the right way” and “doing it the wrong way”. Emma argued that this lack of understanding was “coming across” in students’ cohesion and coherence. For cohesion, they were “aware of how to structure” an essay, but they would, she maintained, need to “get things linked”. However, poor coherence was stemming, she contended, from the assumption that they did not “really understand” and were not aware that somebody was “supposed to be reading” their writing. Additionally, students did not do “extensive” reading, or reading “media” or “casual” English, which, according to John, could help them develop linguistically, because they would be able to see collocations, “a wide structure of grammar”, vocabulary and “word forms”. They therefore would struggle with text “comprehension”, and this, to John, would be “very inhibiting” for them at this stage: where they “should be expanding their knowledge, they’re actually constricting it”. Emma also indicated that the SQU teaching context was “teacher in control”, whereas in the West the teachers and students would “have more freedom to explore and ask”. She also stated that students wanted her to choose for them what they should write about, and would continuously ask, “what shall I write? Tell me teacher what can I put?” To understand why students would do that, she commented, one would have to “go back to how” they were taught at school. Further, Kate proposed that their teachers in bachelor perhaps did not have the

time to “teach” them to write, but also added that this was “pretty universal”. What was “peculiar” to the SQU setting though, she argued, was the “big cultural divide between the West and the East”. She maintained that there is a basic difference in the way Arabs “structure their thinking”, and explained her presumption through the structure of Arabic sentences and Arabic “attention span” saying,

so it comes through in sentence structures. It's the way we use words and in the way Arabic moves. It has a structural integrity and development that English does not have because English is like put everything in a pot and what you put around. And in many ways English speakers and the English language have a short attention span. Sentences in English are short, whereas in Arabic readers can keep hold of an idea for quite a long time. So the writing can reflect. So to be cohesive and comprehensible in English, you sort of have to break down your thoughts into smaller sections into chunks so the reader doesn't get lost.

Additionally, based on his interaction with professors who teach different courses on introduction to academic writing, John indicated that students were given excerpts from published articles to paraphrase, a situation that posed a challenge for students as it was hard for them to understand the source materials, but they were still expected to be able to paraphrase them. They would come to the Writing Centre with their paraphrases and would say, “My teacher thinks that doesn't make any sense”. In order for tutors to determine whether the “poor” paraphrasing was on account of students not knowing how to paraphrase or not understanding the reading, students would be asked to paraphrase a low level text.

Students' difficulties seemed to stem from their lack of extensive reading, limited repertoire of English words, lack of ability to paraphrase, inadequate awareness of the reader, limited understanding of cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, and their reluctance to use a variety of rhetorical functions in their writing. Reading is crucial when it comes to helping students to widen their exposure to a variety of

language and topics, so that they can write with better cohesion and coherence. Understanding students' reading practices can help tutors and teachers when trying to encourage their students to develop better reading habits, which would in turn help those students to familiarize themselves with the topics they would be expected to base their writing on. Students also seemed to be influenced by how Arabic writing is structured, and how it was introduced to them at school. The attention span in Arabic writing seems to be much greater than that of English, as Arabic sentences tend to be much lengthier compared to English sentences. When writing in English, students may, thus, experience difficulty through having to divide their ideas into shorter units. Exploring students' prior experiences with Arabic writing could help tutors to understand where students are coming from when they write English essays. Another factor that adds to students' difficulty with English writing, is the lack of English writing support available to them when they have completed their first or second year at the university, when, despite this, they are expected to successfully write their final year projects.

8.6.3 Solutions to problems/challenges that arise when teaching cohesion and coherence to students

The three tutors talked about some techniques that could be used to help students overcome their challenges with cohesion and coherence. John mentioned asking students to find some areas in the text that are missing "*elements*" of cohesion and coherence, and then work out "*what other ways*" there might be of creating cohesion and coherence. Students could be asked, John clarified, to go through their texts and find areas in a paragraph, for example, where a connector to connect ideas is needed. John also advised that tutors discuss cohesive devices within an academic text, give students "*a reference list*" and ask them, "*what's this referring to?*", and introduce them to noun clauses by looking at the "*rhetorical tools*". He referred to this approach as an attempt to "*reverse engineer*" the text, so students could "*find meaning from it*". He also emphasised that students would need time to "*process and think about*" areas in cohesion and coherence - then the tutor could perhaps "*identify the right places*" and ask them how they would "*connect*" two ideas that are "*really connected*". The tutor could also ask students to determine what "*connectors work really well*", and why "*relationally*" a certain

connector works “*better*”. To John, an “*immediate*” feedback is crucial, so that students would be informed about their progress. Then, the rest of the text could be assigned to students as an “*independent*” task where they would work on improving its cohesion and coherence, and bring it back for upcoming sessions. This, according to John, would serve as a “*scaffold*”, where students would be introduced to an area of cohesion and coherence and then given “*guided practice*”, where tutors would try to keep “*a large part of agency*” with students to help them develop the skills necessary to be successful with their own work.

Kate stated that she discouraged her students from reading local English newspapers because they are written by authors who were non-native English speakers; neither did she encourage English social media, because there “*the language is breaking down in a way that’s not positive*” for academic writing. She would instead ask her students to look at journals and literature, both “*English and American*”, as they

come from a time where written language was very important and it shows better how to use the language in a fluent and a cohesive way.

Students would then have “*a feel for how*” standard English “*flows*” which is “*particularly useful*” for academic writing. During the academic writing course, Kate said, teachers could “*enforce*” much reading and writing homework. Emma commented that the Writing Centre was doing a great job in giving individual attention to students, as they often came from large classes where it was hard to have time for the individual. Students at the Writing Centre could talk to peer-tutors or tutors in a “*non-threatening*” way. She added that if students had written an essay, or had an essay topic, and came to the Writing Centre with questions to ask, this might help them with their writing. John remarked that he had adopted a technique to help students with their paraphrasing. He would first talk about the readings they had brought to the Writing Centre, in order to determine whether they had understood the materials. This would give him a “*clear indication*” of whether they had understood what they had read. The next step would be to

discuss how they had situated it within the academic writing texts they were working on, by asking them about “*what*” “*the connection*” was between their writing and the research they had done.

Based on the tutors’ responses above, students need to receive individual attention, and in a non-threatening atmosphere where text cohesion and coherence are discussed. Discussions could be, for example, on why cohesion and coherence are lacking, how cohesive devices are used, whether cohesive devices are needed and how reference and noun phrases function in texts. Encouraging students to read sources of Standard English, and working with the students on developing their abilities to paraphrase, can also lead to improving their cohesion and coherence. However, students may need time and independence to be able to analyse texts and process concepts in cohesion and coherence, and the feedback on students’ cohesion and coherence can be effective when it is immediate and thereby keeps them constantly updated about their development. Furthermore, discussions between tutors, teachers and students about the students’ areas of struggle with cohesion and coherence can improve students’ awareness of writing with cohesion and coherence, and their ability to do so.

8.7 Tutor’s perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence

The following is the tutor’s perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence:

- Teachers’ teaching of cohesion and coherence
- Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality
- How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence

8.7.1 Teachers’ teaching of cohesion and coherence

All three tutors reflected on the teaching of cohesion and coherence. John felt that cohesion and coherence are “*there as a component*”, but from what he had seen they were not explicitly taught “*at any level*” at the CPS or SQU. There were some writing programmes that would address cohesion and coherence under a section called “*unity*”, where “*how to combine these things*” would be discussed. However, there was “*very little*” happening in terms of “*direct instruction*” - therefore, according to John, students were not given the “*tools*” that they would “*need*” in order to be “*successful*” writers. He also stressed that the writing teachers were

often “*very concerned with the accuracy*” of the connectors used in students’ writing, and would always focus on *in addition, moreover, also, however, but* and *nevertheless*, “*like all the basic kind of connectors*”. John proposed that these connectors are “*the lower levels*”, and that often there were some “*elements*” that were used for cohesion and coherence and were more often used in academic writing, but were “*completely ignored*” by teachers. To him, this was because, once students get to the “*higher level*” writing, linking sentences “*happens to be noun phrases*” that “*refer back*” to something else, and that is the way cohesion and coherence were built.

Emma thought that the writing teachers at the CPS were experienced and qualified, but also stressed the challenging nature of teaching writing. She explained that teachers could not “*do everything within a class*” that generally had a large number of students, a perspective that was shared by Kate. Emma also argued that, even though the teacher might “*think*” s/he is teaching students something, “*are they learning it?*” John wondered whether teachers would teach what he referred to as the higher-level connectors, such as noun clauses and noun phrases, adverbials and complex and compound sentences, because it was just “*easier*” to focus on “*the basics*”. He explained,

Once you get to the higher level writing, a lot of it happens to be noun phrases that refer back to something else. That’s the way we build cohesion and coherence. When we write something, a lot of time it’s something like this and that explains why and I never see any focus on that at all unless it’s in a reading text and they’ll ask what this reference means. So that in reference means they’ll go back to. But they never teach in writing classes how to use that. I wonder if it’s because in order to do that, you’d have to teach complex compound sentences, noun clauses and noun phrases and adverbials and the type of language teaching that we don’t have time to do or is it because it is just easier to focus on the kind of the basics?

There are in writing, John stressed, so many “*opportunities*” in which to talk to students about “*larger*” “*concepts*” and work with them on those concepts, to give them more “*variety*” and help them “*move out of their box*”, so that they would not have to be limited to certain basic connectors and be unable to use others. Kate proposed that there was no emphasis on students reading their own work “*out loud*” so that they could see how they had got “*a sentence*” that was “*just not working*”, and perhaps “*feel*” “*where*” the “*problems*” were and find out “*why*” it was “*not working*”. However, she added, students were not trained to “*read fluidly*” in English, even though they were at a bachelor level and they were “*perfectly able*” to do so.

Sometimes, according to Emma, when issues of cohesion and coherence were discussed with students who had come from science colleges and were at a higher level, the students would indicate that their professors had been “*just*” after “*the content*”. These students, she felt, had forgotten certain skills, and there was a lack of critical thinking about “*what*” they “*want*” to write, but tutors would want them to “*say why something is such*”. She added that tutors would also want students to come to sessions with “*something specific*”, so that they could ask them how they could help them with their writing, but there was not “*much of that*”. Few students would come and ask for clarification on what a thesis statement meant, for example, or what is meant by “*linking*”. They would just need somebody, Emma proposed, to “*check*” their work, or help them “*fix*” their first drafts, based on their teachers’ written comments, and therefore if tutors were not “*careful*”, it would become “*an editing service*”. Emma thought that teachers could encourage those students whom they felt needed extra support to meet with writing tutors to help them, for instance, with their thesis statements. One-to-one interaction, to Kate, could help with “*hard concepts*” like cohesions and coherence. Emma also proposed that more able writers might come to discuss an area in writing where tutors could prepare worksheets that could be used to respond to those students’ questions.

In his discussion of the teaching of cohesion and coherence, John brought up the teacher feedback. He pointed out that students would get feedback from their teacher that said “*this*” was “*not meaningful, fix it*”; however, the challenge for students was “*what*” they would “*do*” with that feedback. If they could not do it the first place, John argued, and did not know how to “*make meaning*” out of it, what “*makes*” the teacher think they could do it the second time, just because s/he had highlighted it? Students, John maintained, might not know the “*tools*” to do it, otherwise they would have done it the first time. He added that students would therefore come to the Writing Centre to ask, “*What does my teacher mean here?*”, and tutors would “*comment the best*” they could, because they had made it “*a policy*” not to “*get into*” the teacher’s “*mind*” - tutors might say, for example, “*let’s see if we can understand what she meant here*”, and then they would try to “*walk*” students “*through*” some of their challenges.

The tutors acknowledged the challenging nature of teaching academic writing to students. With the exception of introducing the notion of unity, cohesion and coherence were not taught explicitly or addressed by the curriculum at the SQUCPS. Basic cohesive devices only were introduced to students, while more advanced and common devices, that are more frequently used in authentic academic writing, were ignored - such as the use of noun phrases that refer back to something in previous sentences. The accuracy of students’ writing, though, seemed to be a more prioritized area in the teaching of writing. However, writing can offer an avenue to talk to students about more advanced cohesion and coherence-related concepts. Furthermore, teaching students a variety of cohesive devices, including higher level connectors, can help students with their writing cohesion and coherence, as they may become be less restricted to certain basic cohesive devices and more able to use a variety of them. Feedback should also be a channel to communicate clearly students’ individual writing development needs.

8.7.2 Importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality

All three tutors discussed their perceptions of the importance of cohesion and coherence to writing quality as the following. To Kate, writing quality is “*very*

important”, and success in academic writing is “*a mark of education*”, as it is a sign that students have background and subject knowledge. She explained:

It’s a mark of a well-rounded person who has all of these things: has a background, knowledge of the subject, has all of these things. You have to work a lot harder to have people take you seriously. And I think everyone needs to understand that that is more important than some other things. If you could have someone who is writing smoothly and coherently, then that’s going to develop much further.

Emma remarked that both are significant for writing quality, as cohesion means that the writing would “*stick together*” and therefore “*in the surface*” would “*look alright*”, and the reader could “*follow the argument in theory*”; but if there was “*lack of coherence*”, it would not be “*overall a very good piece of writing*”. Writing quality is, however, “*difficult*” and hard to be “*taught*”, Kate proposed, as there are many factors involved in making the writing cohesive and coherent:

There are so many things. Students need to read a lot. Students have to write a lot before cohesion becomes a second nature.

John echoed Kate’s perspective, and added that cohesion and coherence, specifically at SQU, are two of the areas that students “*struggle*” “*the most*” in, and “*unfortunately*” are two of the areas that are most important for a high quality piece of writing. John further explained the relationship between cohesion and coherence and writing quality saying,

if they don’t have a piece of writing that logically flows from an idea to the next and if they don’t have the connectedness they need in order to make that piece of writing meaningful, it ends up being just a desperate piece of language. And there is no meaning there and the student hasn’t conveyed any meaning. The professor hasn’t understood anything from what’s being told.

Cohesion and coherence were strongly linked to writing quality. Working on enhancing students' writing quality, however, is not a straightforward process. It involves working on their cohesion and coherence and other areas that are at the same time a source of struggle - such as students' knowledge and reading abilities, constant writing practice activities and perseverance in improving writing. Tutors and teachers need to be aware of what can help students with their writing quality, including cohesion and coherence, so as to help them produce better writing.

8.7.3 How teachers can help students to improve their cohesion and coherence

The three tutors indicated ways to help teachers with how they could help their students to write cohesively and coherently. John thought that dialogue-based teaching could be effective in helping students to improve their cohesion and coherence, and this could be done by

just asking them, making them aware of these things. Like how are these ideas connected? What is the connection between these two things? How can we show that?

Kate recommended a more informal teaching approach, instead of “*the sort of received wisdom*” where the teacher was at the front and students at the back. Even though the tutors at the Writing Centre were, to Kate, still considered “*the expert*” and students would come for help, the context was still less formal than in a classroom, as there was more mutual discussion in tutorials and students were of a higher English proficiency and in their own “*areas of expertise*”. Emma suggested that students could be helped with their cohesion and coherence depending on the course syllabi, the time and source materials available, and the extent to which students needed particular help. Teachers could decide on what sort of writing activities they would want to use, give some focus on cohesion and coherence and perhaps share their worksheets with their colleagues. Further, John stressed that teachers could use a “*model*” text to help students “*figure out*” how the author had used cohesion and coherence, how s/he had used certain devices and what “*effects*” they had on the reader. He suggested that teachers could also “*challenge*”

their students to use three to five devices from that text and write something else where students would take some information and resituate it within their own writing context, and see if they could accurately use the discussed cohesive devices. Teachers could do that, John added, at the sentence, paragraph or whole text level. Kate advised that tutors and teachers should be “*careful*” with the “*words*” and “*language*” they use. For instance, for the conclusion paragraph, instead of telling students to “*repeat*” what they have said, teachers should use terms such as “*revisit*” or “*explain*”. She clarified: “*so you look back from your conclusion and see what you have done*”. In the teaching of cohesion and coherence, especially in academic writing, these concepts should be, Kate argued, aimed for “*right from the beginning*”, so that cohesion and coherence become “*a second nature*”. Students need to be guided through “*the complexity of getting things organized, getting the building blocks in place*”. She also maintained that cohesive and coherent academic writing could only be achieved through addressing it to students, and reasoned that

it does not happen naturally to native English speakers, so there is absolutely no reason why it should happen naturally to people who are non-native English speakers.

Initiating dialogues was seen as important in identifying students’ actual writing development needs, including in the cohesion- and coherence-related areas. Less formal settings, model writing and constant practice of cohesion and coherence might help students to write more cohesively and with better coherence.

8.8 Summary

Together these results provide important insights into the tutors’ metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence; also their perceptions concerning the tutoring of cohesion and coherence, the students’ difficulty with writing cohesively and coherently, and concerning the teaching of cohesion and coherence.

One interesting finding is that, except for John, the tutors did not seem to have a comprehensive metalinguistic understanding of what grammatical and lexical

cohesion, substitution, conjunction and reference are about. This raises a question about the tutors' abilities as to how much depth they can offer when they address cohesion in academic writing, and how they can help students to manage their writing cohesion problems in writing tutorials. The concept of cohesion does not seem to be an area of writing that is frequently discussed with students, and therefore students' issues with cohesion may not be attended to effectively by tutors.

Further, their metalinguistic understanding of ellipsis was limited too - whether this might be due to its irrelevance to writing, or its complexity, was hard for them to elaborate on clearly. They did not discuss collocation either: maybe this is a concept that was associated more with reading rather than writing. They mostly felt that cohesion sub-types could only be explicitly addressed if there was an actual need to help students with this aspect of their academic writing as, to them, students were not aware of the terms. They did, however, express a fairly good metalinguistic understanding of reiteration, possibly because of its direct relevance to academic writing, where students are encouraged to think of lexical reiteration when demonstrating variety in expressing what they are conveying in their writing.

On the other hand, the tutors seemed to have a fairly good metalinguistic understanding of text coherence. This may indicate the importance and immediate relevance of coherence to what they do with students in writing tutorials. However, a major coherence-related concern emerging from the data analysis is the connectedness of the flow of students' writing when retrieving arguments from other sources, and then situating the source arguments in their own arguments in their writing. This area is a source of difficulty for many students, who consequently need a lot of support to help them bring in arguments from other sources and develop them in a way that fits into their arguments, without compromising their text coherence. Additionally, cohesion and coherence were seen by the tutors as vital, but also challenging, for maintaining writing quality - a situation that indicates the importance of enhancing students' writing cohesion and coherence.

Another finding to emerge from the analysis is the tutors' concerns about teachers and tutors not communicating their cultural expectations of EFL academic writing to students. The significance of discussing the writing expectations in the English and Arabic cultures in helping students to write with more cohesion and coherence cannot be underestimated. Raising students' awareness of the English and Arabic writing expectations can help them know their roles as writers in the EFL context, in terms of their responsibility for conveying the message to the reader - a situation that implies more coherence. Arabic writing is less prescriptive and has more room for interpretation, and the reader, thus, has more choice and freedom in interpreting the text s/he is reading. The differences between how ideas and arguments are structured and developed in Arabic and English writing need to be an area of discussion between tutors, teachers and students. Concerning cohesion, redundancy, for instance, in the use of reference (i.e. personal pronouns) in students' writing is very common. An example of that is ***Muscat is a city that many tourists come to visit it every year.*** Communication between tutors, teachers and students on how sentences are structured in English, on types of cohesive devices that are used in English writing, and on how different or similar these can be from how sentences and cohesive devices are used in Arabic, can help students have a better picture of their own cohesion.

The students' key challenges, as perceived by the tutors, were their limited extensive reading, lack of English vocabulary, insufficient background and subject knowledge, limited metalinguistic understanding of cohesive devices and their uses, and inadequate awareness of the reader. Other challenges were their lack of ability to paraphrase the arguments of the source materials and situate that within their texts, their reluctance to use different rhetorical functions in their writing, and their tendency to use pronouns incorrectly. The teaching of cohesion and coherence was perceived by the tutors to be challenging, as teachers had a great number of students to attend to. Tutors and teachers need to be aware of the challenges that students encounter, if they are to effectively help them with cohesion and coherence in their writing. Another contributing factor to some students' challenges with cohesion and coherence was that their English writing

support came to an end once they had completed their English courses. In their final year at university, students are asked to write graduation research projects, where they find themselves challenged in many ways, including writing cohesively and coherently. Students perhaps need continuous support with their writing projects in order to maintain the sustainability of writing well, including writing with cohesion and coherence.

The attention given to the teaching of cohesion and coherence, however, was scarce, as the only direct teaching of cohesion- and coherence-related areas was on unity. There was no evidence of explicit teaching of cohesion and coherence, and only the basic cohesive devices were normally introduced to students. This is while more advanced and authentic cohesive devices (e.g. noun phrases that refer back to preceding parts of previous sentences) were neglected by teachers.

Some of the solutions perceived by the tutors to help students overcome their difficulties with cohesion and coherence were: discussing text cohesion and coherence, cohesive devices, referencing and noun phrases, and reading formal English. Writing can indeed offer a great opportunity for teachers and students to discuss advanced cohesion- and coherence-related concepts. Additionally, a strategy that teachers could adopt to help their students improve their writing cohesion and coherence is informal dialogue-based teaching that employs more mutual interaction between teachers and students. Teachers could make use of model writing too, where students are exposed to a variety of authentic writing samples on similar rhetorical functions that students normally study in academic writing class. Students can do well with cohesion and coherence when they are properly and repeatedly exposed to cohesive devices and their uses, and regularly taught about coherence and development of ideas. By continuing to address cohesion and coherence in students' writing, teachers can help students move forward with better cohesion and coherence in their future essays. In addition, giving students time and autonomy when analysing and processing texts was also seen significant in improving their future writing cohesion and coherence.

Finally, some broad themes emerged from the tutor and teacher analysis. First, in a general sense, the tutors and teachers' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence seemed to be rather lacking, and the two terms were as a rule regarded as similar. Second, shared concerns expressed by the tutors and teachers were: the students' lack of background and subject knowledge, their limited vocabulary, a poor student reading culture, and a lack of logic in the students' writing. Other reported concerns were students' limited knowledge and use of cohesive devices where they tended to overuse/underuse/inaccurately use or just use some cohesive devices and neglect others. Another concern was the students' reliance on Arabic alternatives, which resulted in inaccurate or awkward use of English, indicating a need to address the students' native language as, besides being the students' mother tongue, it represents their prior experience with writing. Third, the tutors and teachers thought of model essays as an avenue that could offer students some exposure to how cohesion and coherence function in texts similar to the essays they are required to write. Fourth, feedback that offers guidance on what students need to do with their writing was seen as a tool that can help students with their writing development, including cohesion and coherence. Fifth, working on the teaching of cohesion and coherence to individual students can help focus on and deal with each individual's particular needs and challenges with writing cohesion and coherence.

9 Chapter nine: Discussion

Introduction

The study researched three main areas. It explored the students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in the context of university EFL academic writing (see section 3.16). It also examined the cohesion and coherence features evident in students' academic texts. Students', teachers' and tutors' perceptions of issues pertinent to the teaching of writing cohesion and coherence were also investigated.

This chapter offers a deep insight into the study findings concerning its context and the existing body of research in the area. It synthesizes the study main findings of the students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in the context of university EFL academic writing. First, how students lack metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence, and the difficulty of getting them involved in deep reflection on their writing, are two crucial points that were looked at. The chapter also draws on the limitations in teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence, and the matches and mismatches in their perceptions of EFL-related issues. It deliberates on how students echo their teachers' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of writing-related areas, including cohesion and coherence, and how students' metalinguistic understanding is socially constructed by the writing communities in their setting. Second, the cohesion and coherence characteristics evident in students' texts, and the problems they had related to the two concepts, are discussed. Third, there is a discussion on how Arabic negatively impacts on students' writing with cohesion and coherence regarding their sentence structure and linguistic choices. The chapter then discusses how Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy does not address some points particular to the context of Arabic language speakers, which influenced how cohesion and coherence were explored and how students' texts were analysed, and therefore the kind of data generated due to the adopted taxonomy. The fifth theme of this chapter is on the teaching of cohesion and coherence, represented in approaches to teaching writing cohesion

and coherence, and the transition that students go through when moving from the school stage to university level. Below is a detailed discussion on the findings.

9.1 Metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence

9.1.1 Metalinguistic understanding in writing

The students' responses to the different cohesion- and coherence-related concepts indicated that it was not easy for them to get involved in deep metalinguistic reflections. The students probably were not used to reflecting at a deeper level on their own writing development as it relates to cohesion and coherence. They might have had the understanding of some aspects of cohesion and coherence but not the metalanguage to articulate what they thought. Further, in the context of the metalinguistic activities (i.e. metamorphological development, metasyntactic development, metasemantic and metalexical development, metapragmatic development and metatextual development) proposed by Gombert (1992), Myhill (2011) argued that students' metalinguistic thinking (students discussing high-level concepts relevant to their writing) is of vital importance. She argued, however, that students do not have the metalanguage to verbally talk about their understanding in clear terms.

In this respect, Myhill, Jones and Wilson (2015) propose that teachers' subject knowledge is crucial in developing metalinguistic conversations with students. Linguists distinguish between two types of metalanguage, "*lay*" and "*professional*", and state that it is essential to realize that "*a two-tier system of metalanguage appears to have developed*" (Robinson, 2005, p. 41). In the context of this study, the students used 'lay' terminology (e.g. words, nouns, verbs, phrases and sentences), but also referred to more specialized terms (e.g. clauses, subordinators, coordinators, compound and complex sentences). Similarly, the teachers and tutors used 'lay' terms, but also professional ones (e.g. scaffolding transition, conjunction, fossilized grammar, logical progression, reinforcement and prescriptive writing). Teachers and tutors who have sufficient subject knowledge can help students to become more confident in verbally articulating what they know about concepts related to their language learning, including cohesion and

coherence. Helping students to develop their metalanguage is crucial because students can be supported in developing the skill to articulate concepts in clear terms when, for instance, they discuss the challenges they encounter in writing well.

Metalanguage development in writing is normally blended in research with merely grammatical metalanguage, and they are often looked at as one. Metalanguage is, however, not merely linguistic but multidimensional, and involves other categorizations of understanding (Myhill & Jones, 2015). It includes genre theory, where writing such as compare and contrast essays and argumentative essays is viewed as a social practice. It also comprises cognitive theory: the cognitive understanding of writing is regarded as process writing. Students' metalanguage can give the teacher and researcher a clear idea about different areas of students' writing (Robinson, 2005). Students can articulate their understanding of how they write and how they feel about how successful their writing is.

9.1.2 Investigating students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

There was a great overlap in the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. Cohesion and coherence are independent but intertwined, but the students regarded cohesion and coherence as similar and tended to define cohesion mostly as coherence. Their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence was often fragile or partial: this was especially true of cohesion. For example, they talked about conjunction and its role in establishing cohesion in their writing, but they also kept using cohesion and coherence interchangeably. Their struggle with cohesion and coherence might have been due to a lack of understanding of these concepts. They could not, for instance, discuss what the terms 'reiteration', 'substitution' and 'ellipsis' are. If the students were not fully metalinguistically aware of cohesion and coherence, this might have had negative implications on their capacity to write well.

Further, cohesion and coherence are two concepts that were not easy for the students to reflect on. There is the added complexity of verbally articulating

concepts in English for learners who are not native speakers of the language. Giving the students in this study the option of doing that in Arabic in the student interviews did not work, as none of them opted to respond to the interview questions in Arabic. This is probably because discussing concepts and notions related to writing development (including cohesion and coherence) is not normally done in Arabic writing classes. The students trying to articulate their understanding of writing cohesion and coherence in Arabic would have only found their task harder because it would have been difficult for them to come up with equivalent Arabic translations for concepts like brainstorming, reference, conjunction, thesis statements, collocations and connotation. Even thinking of an accurate and a common equivalent translation of the terms 'cohesion' and 'coherence' in Arabic was not easy.

9.1.3 Teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions: Matches and Mismatches

Based on the interviews with the teachers and tutors, there seem to be some synergies between them. Despite them regarding cohesion and coherence as rather similar, the teachers and tutors acknowledged the significance of both concepts in the development of EFL academic writing. Both groups also stressed the difficulty of teaching cohesion and coherence, and acknowledged the problems students face in writing with cohesion and coherence.

There are, however, some inconsistencies between the teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions. On the whole, compared with the teachers, the tutors seemed to be more metalinguistically aware of cohesion- and coherence-relevant concepts. Furthermore, in their discussion of coherence, the tutors, unlike the teachers, specifically emphasized the students' struggle with crafting their arguments with respect to the arguments of the sources they consult. The tutors also stressed establishing channels of communication among teachers, and between teachers and students, to discuss differences between the English and Arabic writing styles: how sentences and paragraphs are formed, expectations of how arguments are developed and whether it is the responsibility of the writer or the reader to ensure the clarity of an argument- notions that the teachers (except

for Tylor) hardly brought up in their reflections. The tutors also accentuated the significance of individualized feedback, and emphasized dialogues with students. They stressed the importance of teachers addressing in their feedback students' immediate and genuine needs and further areas for development, instead of making feedback and comments that target grammar only, or addressing generic writing problems that may not be related to the individual student writer. The tutors also thought that they did not see evidence of explicit teaching of cohesion, except for the basic conjunctions- the more advanced and authentic cohesive devices being somewhat ignored- as the students they saw hardly referred, for instance, to noun phrases that reference back to preceding elements. The tutors were metalinguistically aware of cohesion and coherence and the problems the students face. In contrast, the teachers seemed far less aware of these issues. They did not reflect in depth on the cohesion- and coherence-related issues that the tutors thought were significant for helping students with their cohesion and coherence. The tutors probably had gained their comprehensive views of students' understanding of cohesion and coherence, and their challenges with establishing cohesion and coherence, through their interaction with a wider range of students and with a greater variety of writing tasks/types. In addition, the tutors' attention to writing-related issues was not distracted by teaching duties such as covering course materials in a specific time, and assessment and administrative duties.

9.1.4 Echoing teachers

There was a tendency among the students to echo what their teachers said and did in class about writing. All of the interviewee students articulated similar concepts about cohesion and coherence, and generally expressed similar understandings about how cohesion and coherence can be taught. Echoing what their teachers emphasized in writing was confirmed again in their reflections of how they had made their essays cohesive and coherent. They specifically talked about grammar, conjunctives, coordinators, subordinators, paragraphing, thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting details, not going off-topic, signposting, and simple, compound and complex sentences. A similar finding was noted by Myhill and Jones (2015), who also concluded that students tend to repeat what their teachers talk about in class, even if they do not have a full understanding of

the concepts they refer to. The students in my study seemed to lack the depth of knowledge of what cohesion and coherence are, and how to create cohesive and coherent texts. They seemed to be able to recall and repeat what they had been taught in class about cohesion- and coherence-related concepts, but without a deep metalinguistic understanding of the two terms. They lacked a depth of knowledge of how to create cohesive and coherent texts, as was obvious from analysing their essays.

9.1.5 Students' socially constructed metalinguistic understanding

Students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence might be shaped by their interaction with their writing and writing communities. In the context of this study, the students' metalinguistic understanding seemed to have been developed by their encounters with communities of writers: teachers, tutors, examiners and peers. Other teachers who did not teach writing might also have contributed to the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion- and coherence-related concepts, as these concepts might have been discussed in non-writing lessons. Cohesion-related concepts (e.g. collocation, synonymy, antonymy, key words signifying topics and arguments, connotations, specific-general and part-whole relationships between lexical items, conjunction and reference) might have been discussed in reading and vocabulary classes. Similarly, coherence-related concepts (e.g. text organization, argument structure, text unity, meaning and logic) might also have been dealt with further by non-writing teachers. Therefore, besides what was emphasized in writing classes, students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence might have been formed, at least partially, in other classes.

In my study context, EFL academic writing is introduced in a limited way, where the focus is normally on very particular genres (sometimes referred to as rhetorical functions)- such as compare and contrast, argumentative and/or opinion essays- unlike academic writing in the English context, which is more comprehensive and less rigid. Writing is also introduced in a formulaic way where there is more focus on form rather than meaning. Students end up being restricted by the limitations

set for them in terms of their writing development and the linguistic choices they can experiment with.

9.1.6 Triangulation of sources in exploring students' metalinguistic understanding

The students' lack of metalinguistic understanding was corroborated by different questions asked in the student interviews. It was confirmed through the students' articulation of cohesion and coherence and other cohesion- and coherence-related concepts, and was also confirmed when the students reflected on how they had made their essays cohesive and coherent. Further to this, their limited metalinguistic understanding went in line with how cohesive and coherent their essays were, as their difficulties with cohesion and coherence influenced how well they wrote.

Another finding that was triangulated was the students' absence of metalinguistic understanding of two types of grammatical cohesion: substitution and ellipsis. This probably has to do with the irrelevance of the two concepts to academic writing: according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), substitution and ellipsis are not normally used in writing, but often occur in dialogues and spoken texts. This was also validated by many studies that investigated cohesion, such as Hu, Brown and Brown (1982), Khalil (1989) and Zoltán (2013).

In addition, most of the teachers and tutors did not demonstrate a reasonable metalinguistic understanding of grammatical substitution and ellipsis, probably again due to issues of relevance and/or practicality in EFL writing. They possibly were not oriented to these concepts in their pre- and in-service training. Another factor might be practicality, as teachers might not see the merit of focusing on grammatical substitution and ellipsis, while allocating less time and effort to what they see is of more value for writing development. Teachers are usually under pressure to finish their teaching loads within the time specified by the institution, and very little time may be left for teaching substitution and ellipsis in the writing classroom.

It is also worth noting here that interviewing students about their own writing might have revealed to the students themselves some useful insight into their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. With this possibility in mind, it is uncertain whether their articulation of the two concepts existed when the students composed their texts. The students' limited metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence might also have been a reflection of their teachers' similarly limited subject knowledge- of cohesion, in particular.

9.2 Characteristics of cohesion and coherence evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing

Mastering cohesion and coherence is important in EFL academic writing. In the context of the study, being able to write well (including writing with good cohesion and coherence) is important when successfully managing university courses, which are mostly run in English.

9.2.1 Text analysis

The text analysis indicated that the students struggled with their grammatical and lexical cohesion and had difficulty writing with coherence. My target behind using different methods was to enhance validity, and to obtain further insight into the constituents of cohesion and coherence. The text analysis provided me, as a researcher, with a means of triangulation; it assisted me in establishing trustworthiness and unveiling more about their understanding of cohesion and coherence. Cohesion creates surface links between sentences and impacts on text units (e.g. paragraphs) and essay progression. Cohesive devices serve as “*a thread*” for “*sewing up*” “*a dress*” (Malki 2010, p. 30), and it is not easy to comprehend a text that is more than two sentences long without cohesive devices. Text cohesion is about “*listing and/or counting*” cohesive ties (Irwin, 1980, p. 326). In contrast, coherence in a text represents the implicit link, and the background knowledge that helps the reader realize the implicit conceptual link in the written text (Lautamatti, 1990).

9.2.2 Students' poor use of cohesive devices and lack of coherence

The students did not use grammatical cohesive devices effectively. They made mistakes with their cohesive devices, which affected their writing cohesion and coherence. They overused conjunction phrases and made mistakes with the form

and sometimes the meaning of conjunction (fixed phrases/words indicating conjunction such as *on the other hand*, *in other words*, *although*, *as* and *despite*). The students' use of reference was quite reasonable, being university-level students. However, they encountered difficulties with the use of the definite article *the*, and what was not so surprising was their rare use of grammatical substitution and ellipsis as they, as proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and constantly confirmed by studies on cohesion, occur more often in spoken rather than written language.

As to lexical cohesion, the lexical choices of the students in my study tended to be limited and overly repetitive, which meant limited diversity. There was an over-reliance on same word repetition and a scarcity of the use of synonyms/near synonyms/hyponyms. Lexical cohesion is essential as it “regularly” creates “multiple relationships”, and is the primary factor behind text texture, and investigating lexical cohesion is of primary importance (Hoey 1991, p. 10). Besides, lexical diversity indicates “less word overlap” (Crossley & McNamara, 2010, p. 117).

The students' texts showed a limited use of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. This matches the findings in the students' interviews about their metalinguistic understanding, as they did not seem to have an implicit knowledge of cohesion. Developing a greater metalinguistic knowledge and students' effective use of grammatical and lexical cohesion are crucial, but also pose areas of challenge for EFL learners. The students' use of lexical cohesion still needed rigorous attention from teachers.

Some studies have looked into university students' use of cohesion, and have focused on different areas of EFL learning and teaching. The limited use of lexical cohesive devices identified was similar to the findings by Liu and Braine (2005). Arab students tend to overuse lexical cohesive devices in writing (Khalil, 1989), and similarly Turkish students (Kafes, 2012) and Filipino students (Mojica, 2006). Chinese 1st year university students did not use cohesive devices properly in

argumentative writing (Liu & Braine, 2005), and writing quality was a factor in how well Chinese 2nd and 3rd year university students used cohesion (Yang & Sun, 2012). The limited language proficiency of Egyptian university students led to problems with cohesion (Ahmed, 2010). However, students not making mistakes with the use of some cohesive devices does not necessarily indicate a mastery of these devices: it may just mean that they are difficult to use, and therefore the students were avoiding using them (Brown, 2007).

In contrast, and unlike cohesion, there is no consensus among researchers on how coherence is classified (Morris & Hirst, 1991). This has its implications on how coherence can be defined and/or researched. Concepts often associated with coherence are: text connection and unity, meaning, content, world knowledge, logic, and relationships between the writer and reader. In the context of my study, the students found it hard to maintain coherence in their writing. Their writing lacked logic and sense, and their content and background and subject knowledge were limited. They had trouble developing ideas based on the writing topics prescribed by their teachers, a situation that hindered them from developing well-connected ideas and arguments for their writing.

9.2.3 Coherence-related areas: Issues of content, subject and background knowledge and relationships with the reader

The students wrote texts where they employed cohesive ties extensively (overuse of many cohesive devices). These texts, though, were hard to interpret: the content was vague, the subject and background knowledge was lacking and the interaction with the reader was disturbed. They specifically fabricated facts in their essays, which impacted negatively on their coherence, as these facts clashed with the essay content, meaning and logic, and distorted the relationship with the reader. They occasionally wrote irrelevant sentences that did not match the arguments presented in their essays, and therefore negatively influenced the meaning, unity, logic and the relationship with the reader: coherence-related concepts (Hinkel, 2009; Irwin, 1980; Tanskanen & Benjamins, 2006; Johns, 1986). The context of EFL writing is often complex (Gordon, 2008; Kroll, 2003): there are translations that take place at different levels at the same time. There is a translation of ideas into

text, a translation of language, and a translation of subject in the sense that a writer should sound like someone who is well aware of the topic of writing.

The teachers in the study context reacted to the students' lacking knowledge of the potential writing topics by providing them with lists of ideas that they could employ to develop their writing for high-stake writing exams (the mid-term and final exams). This actually did help to reduce the students' struggle with thinking of points they could use for developing their arguments, but it also led to students over-dependence on teachers and not thinking for themselves. They duplicated ideas and arguments in their writing and missed out on opportunities to represent themselves through developing what they think and are capable of. This also does not go in line with the students' sense of ownership and originality, as the ideas they used for their writing were not theirs. In addition, it interfered with the natural relationship between the writer and reader, which is expected to be genuine, dynamic and interactive (notions discussed by researchers such as Givón (1995), Johns (1986) and Yule (2006)), not largely prescribed by the teacher (reader). The students' interaction with the potential reader (their peers, teachers, tutors or examiners) was, therefore, disturbed.

In contrast, what seemed a bit absurd was the teachers' observations in their interviews on what they thought was the students' lacking world knowledge, their over-dependence on the teacher, and their expectations of receiving knowledge from the teacher (the teacher as a source of knowledge). While the teachers perceived over-reliance on the teacher as an obstacle towards writing with better cohesion and coherence, they had actually contributed to students relying even more on their teachers' help by inviting them to use the teachers' ideas in developing their own writing.

In low-stake exam writing (continuous assessment), however, the students were given the opportunity to develop their own ideas (text content) using their own world knowledge, and were not offered help with the content of their writing (no lists of ideas were given). Though they still resorted to using their teachers'

language phrases peculiar to compare and contrast essays and argumentative essays, their essays were still more original and not identical to their peers, and relationships with the reader were more authentic as the ideas were their own.

Furthermore, teachers introduced ready-made phrases that were peculiar to the genre/rhetorical function of the writing students do. Students' over-reliance on the phrases given by their teachers limits both their exploration of their language and the choices they make about the language they want to use in expressing their ideas when developing their writing. This could also restrict students' creativity and freedom, which probably has contributed to their resentments and negative attitude towards EFL writing compared with the Arabic writing they did at school. These phrases should perhaps serve as scaffolding to help students initially with their language development and language choices, suggestions offered by Byrnes, 2009; Cheng and Chiu, 2018 and Harman, 2013, but then they should be encouraged to make their own linguistic choices in expressing their ideas and arguments.

9.3 Influence of Arabic on students' writing cohesion and coherence

The influence of Arabic on the cohesion and coherence of students' essays was an unanticipated finding. This influence was brought up by all of the student, teacher and tutor interviewees. It is worth noting here that all of the teachers and tutors referred to the Arabic influence on students' writing with cohesion and coherence, irrespective of their educational and cultural backgrounds and their diverse teaching experiences, and without being directly asked in the interviews about the influence of Arabic on their students' writing. The students seemed to be influenced by the Arabic style in writing, represented in its manifestation of the expected role of the writer versus the reader; they also drew on Arabic sentence structures and lexical items, and replicated them in English texts where they did not work, resulting in less cohesive and coherent writing. The impact of Arabic on students' writing with cohesion and coherence can be discussed in light of the following.

9.3.1 Arabic versus English writing

The students thought that they had more freedom when they wrote in Arabic. Demonstrating a good level of grammar use and word choice was also considered

sufficient to regard their writing as good writing, the students perceived. In Arabic writing there is more of a responsibility on the reader to understand the text and get the meaning/message conveyed by the writer (Sultan, 2011), while in English writing the writer is responsible for making the text clear for the target audience (Hyland, 2014). There is more scope for the interpretation of text in Arabic, while there is more emphasis on as much clarity as possible in English to eliminate interpretation. These perspectives were also expressed by some of the teachers and tutors. Students bring their understandings of Arabic writing, being their previous experience with writing, to their EFL academic writing, and encounter difficulty with making their essays clear enough for their potential reader. They may not pay the necessary attention to leading their reader through their texts, as they may assume that their reader will manage to navigate through their writing using his/her interpretation skills.

9.3.2 Arabic influence on students' writing cohesion and coherence

Where the students had utilized the Arabic sentence structure and lexical choices, they did not succeed in conveying the intended meaning in English. They made mistakes with their use of the definite article '*the*' (reference cohesive device), extensively using it with indefinite English plural and abstract nouns- a practice that is acceptable in Arabic, where the expression of definite/indefinite meanings is much more elastic than English. 'Life' (abstract noun) and 'children' (plural noun) are mostly definite in Arabic. The students seemed to bring this understanding of definiteness into their English writing, and consequently this incorrect use of the two types of nouns impacted on their English writing cohesion and coherence. Similarly, students' writing seemed to be influenced by Arabic in terms of their sentence structure, which seemed to follow the Arabic flexible sentence patterns. The patterns were represented by sentences with double nouns/pronouns as part of the subject or predicate, sentences with a word order that does not follow the English SVO, sentences with no verbs and sentences that are run-on sentences. This also had a negative influence on the students' English sentences when it came to their cohesion (link between sentences) and their coherence (flow of ideas). Furthermore, some redundancy (tautology) appeared in the students' writing, probably resulting from the rhetoric of spoken Arabic that is common in

formal settings. The students combined two English lexical items that have a similar meaning, with 'and' or 'or' (e.g. 'remedy and treatment', 'tough and difficult' and 'reasons or goals'), resulting in an inaccurate or awkward meaning carried by the words combined.

Concerning the influence of Arabic on students' writing cohesion and coherence, there are two points worth mentioning here. First, since Arabic is their native language and the medium of instruction throughout their school time, Arabic writing represents the students' previous experience with writing and their first encounter with how writing is done. The teachers and tutors both talked about the influence of students' previous experience with Arabic writing on students' EFL academic writing without being asked about the influence of Arabic. Second, the students' mistakes with cohesive devices may be intra- or inter-lingual. Some of their mistakes seemed to be due to their limited L2 proficiency, and others were probably because of their L1 interference, as the type of grammatical cohesive devices and/or grammatical/lexical choices (e.g. definite article *the*, synonyms and collocations) were typical of Arabic.

9.4 Investigating cohesion and coherence: Context of EFL academic writing

The models designed to investigate cohesion and coherence seem to consider cohesion and coherence as "*simultaneously independent and intertwined*": "*separate*" but "*not mutually exclusive*" (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 21; 7). Cohesion and coherence are, therefore, "*independent*", as cohesive sentences may not be coherent, as argued by Morris and Hirst (1991, p. 2), who propose further that cohesion is "*a surface relationship*", while coherence is "*a semantic relationship and needs computationally expensive processing for identification*", and therefore cohesion is "*more accessible*".

There is no scarcity of text analysis models that aim to show how cohesion or coherence is evident in writing, nor of suggestions as to how these models can be applied (Tanskanen, 2006). However, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model did not take into account some specific issues that may be more applicable to the EFL

context, a situation that created issues with using this model for investigating writing cohesion and coherence in my study context (university EFL academic writing). These issues relate to the use of tense and aspect of Arabic learners, accommodating inter- and intra-sentential cohesive relations in analysing cohesion in students' texts, and diversity in counting collocations.

9.4.1 Tense and aspect

The students in the study struggled with tense and aspect, and this was particularly obvious when they were referring to the past in their compare and contrast essays. In their comparison and contrast of childhood or travelling in the past and present, some of the students could not refer to notions in the past and present accurately, which negatively impacted on their writing cohesion and coherence. Based on what they wrote, the students seemed to have difficulty with their linguistic choices of tense and aspect, shifting from the past to the present and vice versa, which influenced the connectedness between and within sentences (cohesion) and the ideas/meanings they intended to convey to the reader (coherence). The intricate details incorporated in English tense and aspect constitute an area of great challenge for Arabic EFL learners. Tense and aspect contribute to maintaining the text cohesion and coherence in English writing. Even though Arabic expresses meanings of tense (the past, present and future tense), it indicates the aspect (simple, perfect or progressiveness) mainly through context, which might have led, at least partially, to the students' struggle with accurately expressing tense and aspect, and consequently negatively influencing their writing cohesion and coherence.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy, however, did not refer directly to tense and aspect as grammatical and/or semantic elements that may directly link to establishing cohesion and coherence. This is probably due to their focus on the context of English as a mother tongue, where tense in particular may not be a real concern that can impact on the cohesion and/or coherence of written or spoken texts, as the writers/speakers and readers/listeners are potentially native speakers of English. In the EFL context (the context of my study), the cohesion and coherence of learners' writing may be influenced by the tense and aspect that

students employ in their writing, and what they write can be nuanced by the tense and aspect that they choose to use. Therefore, the issues arising from the interaction between, for example, the writer and reader, which may influence cohesion and coherence, may relate to mistakes with tense and aspect. Halliday and Hasan did not acknowledge tense and aspect, which are significant for EFL learners and especially for Arabic learners.

9.4.2 Intra-sentential versus inter-sentential cohesive relations

The students had difficulty using cohesive devices between and within sentences (inter- and intra-sentential). For the purpose of my study, contrary to what Halliday and Hasan proposed about considering only inter-sentential, I incorporated inter- and intra-sentential cohesive relations. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesion focuses only on cohesive ties between sentences (not within sentences) because, according to them, cohesion is stronger and more obvious between sentences as opposed to within sentences. To me, despite their smaller effect on cohesion, cohesive devices within sentences can still contribute to establishing a certain level of text cohesion, despite being located within sentences (as opposed to between sentences). Combining both types of relations, therefore, helped me to get a good picture of the wide range of cohesion types that the students used effectively in their writing. It also helped to demonstrate the kind of cohesive devices (whether used between or within sentences) that the students in my study struggled with. Intra-sentential and inter-sentential relations were acknowledged in the model adopted by my study, and therefore both relations were included when analysing the students' essays in my study text analysis- an approach that was also followed by other researchers such as Tanskanen (2006) and Zoltán (2013) in their investigation of the cohesion and coherence of oral and written texts respectively. To them, even if the cohesive relations within sentences are less clear, they can still contribute to the sentence unity.

9.4.3 Collocation

The students seemed to have a reasonable metalinguistic understanding of collocation, as six of the ten students were able to define it in clear terms; however only one of them was able to refer to an example where she had used a collocation in her writing. Based on the students' texts, their use of collocation was restricted,

perhaps mainly due to their limited repertoire of English words and particularly words that go together. The teachers and tutors did not elaborate in precise words on their understanding of the term, or on how they would help their students with their use of collocation in writing.

Collocation has been investigated differently by researchers, depending on the models adopted for their analysis of written or oral texts. Lexical items that collocate are actually connected to the texts analysed, and therefore vary accordingly (Halliday, 1984). In my study, counting the words that collocate was not restricted to the nearby words only (i.e. words that co-occurred in the stretch of a small number of words), but exceeded that to include all the words (i.e. words that usually go together) that were in the student's essay. Counting the occurrences of certain words as collocations relied, therefore, on the text. For instance, the collocations used in an essay that was comparing and contrasting childhood in the past and present are: 'family', 'parents', 'babysitting', 'responsibilities', 'home', 'education', 'entertainment', 'care', 'love', 'toys' and 'meals'. It is worth noting here that differences in how collocation-related relations are defined mean that the research findings are actually about slightly different lexical cohesion concepts, which also mean that the findings read differently.

Researchers have criticized Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy of collocation, and have therefore included in or omitted from their categorizations of lexical cohesion concepts that come under the classification of collocation. Hoey (1991, p. 7) even described collocation as "*a ragbag of lexical relations*". Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 288), however, acknowledged that their definition needed further development "*in the light of a general semantic description of the English language*". They both worked on developing their classification of collocation further in their later work: Halliday (1984) and Hasan (1984). Hasan (1984), for instance, proposed not to include collocation in text analysis due to its subjectivity. Counting lexical items and classifying them as instances of collocation was a highly subjective task, as many

of the items can fit into the classification of 'words that co-occur'. Hasan (1984, p. 195) argues,

[w]hile I firmly believe that behind the notion of collocation is an intuitive reality, I have come to accept the fact that unless we can unpack the details of the relations involved in collocation in the sense, it is best to avoid the category in research. The problems of inter-subjective reliability cannot be ignored.

Collocation, however, was kept in the model I adopted for my study, as this could still give an idea about the words (used by the students) that appeared in similar environments. It also gave an indication of the diversity the students were able to use. Another modification as to how lexical cohesion is researched is the classification of antonymy. It was grouped by Halliday and Hasan (1976) as collocation rather than lexical reiteration, but attached later by Hasan (1984) and Brown and Yule (1983) to lexical reiteration. Also, excluding collocation from my study would mean that a significant part of lexical cohesion would be “*unacknowledged*”, as also argued by Tanskanen (2006, p. 95), especially that lexical cohesion is more prominent and obvious in longer passages (Halliday, 1984). Students’ texts, academic papers and written dialogues usually come under the category of extended passages, which are normally the focus of research on cohesion and coherence. Despite the inter-subjectivity of detecting collocational relations in particular, the adopted text analysis model by Halliday and Hasan (1976) was still reasonably effective in capturing the prominent lexical cohesion-related relations, including collocations, that the students had in their writing. Besides, working on analysing lexical cohesion involves meaning, and therefore inter-subjectivity is potentially there with any model that targets meaning-related categories and sub categories.

9.4.4 Subjectivity of some of the study findings

Despite researchers’ consensus that cohesion and coherence are two different concepts, they disagree on what makes them different (Tanskanen, 2006). To them, cohesion is “*a process*”, and text is “*something that happens*”, and therefore

analysing texts is actually analysing “*the product of this process*” (Halliday, 1984, p. 290). Coherence, on the other hand, is not as direct, and not as accessible for investigation- a situation that elicits varying opinions among researchers about how cohesion and coherence differ. However, the study findings on lexical cohesion (participants’ metalinguistic understanding of lexical cohesion and the features of lexical cohesion evident in students’ writing) may be subjective. Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) taxonomy has inspired research on writing cohesion and coherence, where the models adopted are ‘similar to’ but also ‘different from’ Halliday and Hasan’s. Each model of text analysis, however, has its own “*problems and questions*” and “*a need for modifications of existing models*” (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, the findings of this study are as they are due to adopting Halliday and Hasan’s taxonomy: they might have been different had another classification for analysing students’ texts been embraced. Lexical cohesion-related findings in particular would have been different if I had chosen another classification as a basis for my text analysis.

9.5 Teaching cohesion and coherence

9.5.1 Teachers’ approaches to teaching cohesion and coherence

The teachers in the study viewed students’ perceptions of English writing as an obstacle to students writing with cohesion and coherence. The tutors perceived writing with cohesion and coherence to be an area that teachers and tutors have to be aware of in their approaches to helping students with their writing. Writing cohesion and coherence were approached by the teachers in an integrative manner and mostly implicitly, except for conjunction and (less often) reference. There may, however, be an over-teaching of conjunction, as the students constantly referred to conjunction cohesive devices and tended to over-use them in their two types of essays. There seemed to be less focus on lexical cohesion and how writing could have more diversity in terms of the lexical choices (i.e. lexical cohesion) the students could make.

Teaching and learning writing coherence and cohesion are difficult (Enkvist, 1990). Helping student writers, for example, to sustain a relationship with the potential reader is difficult, as the student may think that s/he is communicating clearly but is

actually not communicating as clearly as they think. Students need training on how to maintain this relationship with the reader: they must constantly keep the reader in mind when they write the text, and the reader continuously attempts to make sense of the text s/he interacts with. This may necessitate changes in the content, sense making, background information, lexical/semantic and syntactical choices, and the text structure or text organization (cohesion- and coherence-related concepts).

Teachers in this study were challenged with the choice of whether or not there was a practical need for the explicit teaching of cohesion and coherence. It was when considering the students' contexts and their varied other challenges, that the teachers and tutors discussed students' writing development and overall language development- such as students' lacking general language abilities- not just writing cohesion and coherence. There is a need to introduce a more meaning-based approach, where cohesion and coherence are taught to students in a less formulaic way.

Furthermore, incorporating reading into writing is important when helping students to increase their awareness of cohesion and coherence. Acquiring cohesive devices involves meaning and language use, and this requires depth and understanding of English through a good exposure to the language. The students' writing classes scarcely focus on reading in English, and their outside class interaction is mostly in Arabic. Their writing classes are limited to introducing English structure and common phrases used with the particular type of writing (genre) students do (i.e. opinion, compare and contrast or argumentative writing). Integrating reading is more effective than separately teaching cohesive devices (Heller, 1995; Hirvela, 2004): readers with high-knowledge can decipher conceptual dilemmas created by poorly cohesive texts (Crossley & McNamara, 2010), which emphasizes the power of reading to enhance students' content and background knowledge on coherence. Cohesion is also crucial for the reader as it helps with comprehending texts (Cox, Shanahan & Sulzby, 1990). Corpora (i.e. concordances), for instance, were found to develop students' awareness of lexical

and grammatical cohesion use in texts (Thurston & Candlin, 1998; Yoon, 2008). Reading can also enhance students' background and subject knowledge of the topics they will potentially be asked to write about.

9.5.2 School/university transition

There is a gap created by the school/university transition. However they may have viewed Arabic writing at school, the students considered English writing at the university to be a struggle, and felt that their ideas in English writing were less important than how they wrote. They were overwhelmed by the demands of the writing courses at the university, and were pressurized for time to show a noticeable improvement in their abilities to write well. They also expressed resentment about being judged on their world knowledge of the writing topics they were expected to write about. School and university represent different focus, purpose and learning opportunities (i.e. being two different stages of schooling) (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004; Al-Issa, 2005). This can influence how students perceive what good writing is, how ideas in writing should be developed and how writing should be approached. The students in my study were inhibited by the differences between school and university expectations in terms of the type of writing and the level of difficulty. The difficulty of writing at university level is a notion noted by researchers such as Leki and Carson (1994) and Light (2001). The students were under pressure to quickly demonstrate improvement in their abilities in different language skills, which included being able to produce better writing- including sentence structure, grammatical accuracy, choice of words and text development (concepts that incorporate cohesion and coherence). They were expected to show a genuine improvement in their writing because it would help them manage effectively the requirements of their university courses- a situation that is applicable to college and university education in Oman (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Husseini, 2004; Al-Issa, 2005). However, the duration of the academic writing course (i.e. three months) was most likely not long enough to prepare them for this big shift from school to university.

Another transition involved the students' previous training and experience with Arabic and English writing at school, which seemed to have influenced their writing.

They expressed resentment towards EFL academic writing. To them, English writing does not encourage creativity, while Arabic writing is not as prescriptive and allows more freedom in developing their ideas. Arabic writing focused on how well they made linguistic and grammatical choices to express their ideas and feelings, and there were fewer limitations in terms of outlining, paragraphing, text organisation and word choice. Students' previous experience with Arabic writing at school had probably contributed to shaping how they felt English writing should be done. Even though they had done some English writing at school, there was more emphasis there on their word choice and grammar than on writing development. Learners' previous training, experiences and native language are factors that can shape teachers' understanding of their students' writing (Ahmed, 2011; Kamil, 2011; Kroll, 2003; Myles, 2002). One of the teachers, Tylor, referred to a free writing course that he taught, where students were given the opportunity to develop their writing more freely and develop their ideas in a less rigid structure. He thought that, based on the novels they read, students successfully critiqued literature and interacted with different questions and themes, were able to produce their own content and made autonomous linguistic choices.

Part of the transition is the way that writing is evaluated at school and university, a perspective raised by most of the students. They perceived that their Arabic writing at school normally received high evaluation from the Arabic writing teachers, and that their English writing was overvalued by the English writing teachers at school, compared with how it was marked at the university. Students came to the university with the understanding that their writing deserved high marks- as marking at school seems to be more lenient compared with how writing is assessed at the university. This has contributed to their sense of how much was expected of them to do well at the university, which increased their awareness of the difference between the two phases of schooling (school and university), and perhaps even their resentment towards EFL academic writing at the university. That students feel overwhelmed with the demands of university/college writing is noted by Ahmed (2011), Al-Badwawi (2011), Al-Husseini (2004), Al-Issa (2005), Kamil (2011) and Starkey (2004). In addition, teachers' feedback at the university,

the students perceived, focused on weakness and lacked clarity concerning what needed to be done to improve their writing- a notion also discussed by Ahmed (2011) and Al-Badwawi (2011).

The role of reading and using the library is a part of university study which the students were not used to doing at school, as raised by some of the teachers and tutors. Schools scarcely have libraries, and when students join the university, they are faced with the reality of having to use the library, conduct small research projects and do extensive reading (Ahmed, 2011; Al-Badwawi, 2011; Kamil, 2011). University students in the study context, the tutors and teachers perceived, were not keen to go to the library often, consult books and/or do extensive reading. The teachers and tutors problematized students' lack of reading and their resistance to using the library resources, which they thought was key in the challenges the students encountered in writing with cohesion and coherence. Due to their poor reading habits and lacking reading skills, students' world knowledge was limited, which resulted in less coherent texts. Omani university students tended to resist doing casual/informal/extensive reading which, as proposed by Amir Abdul (2013), would provide students with more exposure to English. Reading can eventually lead to more effective use of cohesive devices (Amir Abdul, 2013; Ahmed, 2011; Al-Badwawi, 2011; Kamil, 2011). However, it is generally associated among students with only preparing for lessons and exams, and is not promoted by school, nor is it heavily adopted by university, the teachers and tutors perceived. Students feel uncertain and experience anxiety about assignments that involve reading and research (Ahmed, 2011; Al-Badwawi, 2011). They are also possibly not used to having tasks that are open-ended and entail multiple answers (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Issa, 2005).

Another challenge that students might encounter at the university level is dealing with information extracted from other sources- a notion raised by some of the students, teachers and tutors. In some of their writing assignments, they had to summarize, paraphrase, quote and acknowledge systematically various sources and situate them well within the arguments of their writing. Some of the tutors and

teachers proposed that this was a real challenge for university students. It could be that, due to issues related to their lack of effective reading habits, as discussed above, students may fall victim to plagiarism when writing involves research (Kim, 2015; Ha, 2006; Sowden, 2005). Some students would resort to copy-and-paste techniques from the internet and other sources without acknowledging the sources they have used, some of the teachers and tutors noted. This could also be a reaction to their procrastination and failing to meet deadlines, or lacking awareness of what plagiarism is and what can be considered as misconduct in citation or referencing.

Furthermore, the university students appeared to be influenced by the expected teacher versus student role, which seemed to impact on their EFL writing development, including their writing cohesion and coherence. The level of support expected from teachers and tutors with writing, including cohesion and coherence, was still high, as brought up by the teachers and tutors. According to them, the teacher/tutor was viewed among the students as a source of authority and a knowledge provider, as opposed to a facilitator. The teachers and tutors brought up the notion that Omani university students seemed to hold the assumption that the teacher has the 'ultimate' and 'definite' answer. Students in the ESL context still wait for the teacher to provide them with the 'right' answer, and teaching is still seen as a representation of knowledge provision rather than exploration and discussion (Allen, 2015; Tayjasant & Suraratdecha, 2016). Students, therefore, may ask the teacher to give his/her answer/opinion/response on what is normally open for discussion, debate or exploration.

There was also the implication of the seating patterns in class at school and university- a notion raised by some of the teachers and tutors. At school it is usually the teacher in front of class and students seated at the back. What is often expected is a one-way rather than an interactive communication between the teacher and students, where the mode of discussion is controlled by the teacher: the teacher initiates, students respond and the teacher evaluates. Even though at the university level the seating pattern is sometimes challenged by teachers

through involving students in group work, mini projects, research teams and presentation work, there are classes that still adopt the teacher-front, student-back mode (as raised by one of the tutors, Kate), and where the teacher is still considered as a source of wisdom- as perceived by one of the teachers, Tylor. Writing cohesion and coherence can perhaps be enhanced by a more informal dialogue-based teaching with more mutual interaction and more discourse between students and teachers.

However, the university EFL classroom setting is constantly changing, and students are relying less on teachers and more on technology. They use smartphones to access the internet and social media, and to watch educational and entertainment programmes that can help them with their language and subject and world knowledge. In this way, these sources can provide students with opportunities to improve their casual and formal English, their background knowledge, their logic, and consequently their writing cohesion and coherence.

9.6 Conclusion

Based on the interviews, the students, teachers and tutors had issues with their metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence. The students did not have the sufficient metalinguistic understanding of concepts related to cohesion and coherence, how cohesion should be taught and how they made their essays cohesive and coherent. The complexity of students verbally articulating their understanding is dual, as the metalinguistic reflection they were asked to be involved in was done on two intricate concepts- cohesion and coherence- and in a language that was foreign to them. The students might not have had the metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence to be able to express their understanding in clear terms. Their ability to articulate their understanding was hindered further by the fact that English is not their first language. Furthermore, the teachers showed less metalinguistic awareness of cohesion and coherence than the tutors, and the tutors seemed to focus more on writing development as opposed to the development of students' language accuracy. What teachers may be doing is teaching features that students should use in their texts, but students are not developing their metalinguistic understanding of why these linguistic

features are useful. Metalinguistic understanding is particularly important, and cohesion and coherence are a significant part of writing development that teachers and tutors should be aware of.

Based on their writings, the students in this study had issues with their use of grammatical and lexical cohesive ties and coherence-related concepts. They over-used conjunction and same word repetition, but had a limited use of synonyms/near synonyms/hyponyms. This had a negative impact on the coherence of their writing (natural progression of their ideas). Their limited diversity of lexical cohesive devices indicated that signposting was not effectively managed, as the students resorted to over-repetition. This was probably due to their limited repertoire of English words, which restricted their diverse use of lexical items. This could also be because of their insufficient understanding of the content subject (lacking subject and background knowledge) and relationships with the reader. Sometimes the students were lacking logic, and their content, subject and background knowledge were limited.

Based on the teacher and tutor interviews, the teachers and tutors were unanimous in their recognition of students' challenges when writing with cohesion and coherence. The tutors verbally expressed a higher awareness of cohesion and coherence. Additionally, their perceptions covered areas around students crafting their arguments more effectively- initiating more communication to promote awareness among students about the Arabic and the English writing styles, and establishing writing conversations that address students' individual needs.

Furthermore, in my context and many similar EFL classroom contexts, academic writing is actually for teachers, tutors, examiners and sometimes for peer students, whereas in an authentic sense, academic writing is often by academics and for the academic community. That the writing teachers provide content for the students to help them with their writing development, does not build students' independence and ownership of their writing. Teachers introducing lists of language chunks

associated with the two types of essays (compare and contrast and argumentative), and encouraging students to use these fixed language phrases, may restrict students' experimentation with their own linguistic choices. It also limits their freedom and autonomous linguistic choices. Besides, teachers' help with content and language of the actual writing students do can distort the relationship between the writer and reader, as the assumed reader actually intervenes with the content and language of the written text.

Finally, this study is significant due to some important factors. There are very few studies which explore both coherence and cohesion in academic writing, and in the area of EFL academic writing. In this study there is a triangulation in the level of sources of participants and methods. The students', writing teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understandings and perceptions of cohesion and coherence were looked into, in order to explore synergies and/or discrepancies among the participants. Another level of triangulation is that of research methods, as interviews and text analysis examined the students' writing cohesion and coherence to explore whether the students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence was in agreement with how cohesive and coherent their writing is. The study has also employed qualitative and quantitative research methods to research cohesion and coherence, through conducting semi-structured interviews to qualitatively explore the participants' metalinguistic understandings and perspectives, and text analysis to quantitatively investigate students' scripts. Furthermore, the generalisability of the study findings may be questioned as it is an interpretive case study; however, it is still important to see how to draw on guidelines and implications from the study findings that could be applicable to other similar settings of EFL academic writing. The study has significant implications for future research in the field of applied linguistics that can inform practitioners, decision makers and research. Focusing comprehensively on the metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of the three participant groups (students, teachers and tutors) of two concepts- cohesion and coherence- and then exploring how these concepts were manifested in the students' EFL academic essays, were two

difficult tasks to accomplish. This is especially true bearing in mind the limitations in time and resources available for the PhD project.

10 Chapter ten: Implications

This chapter deliberates the study implications through suggesting and recommending future research in the area of cohesion and coherence of EFL academic writing, in order to inform practice, decision making and relevant research. This is done through reference to teaching practice relating to students' texts and metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of students, teachers and tutors; decision making in the area of teaching cohesion and coherence in the EFL academic writing context; and to research into cohesion and coherence and metalinguistic understanding.

10.1 Implications for practitioners

10.1.1 Students' texts

Students have learned a set of cohesive devices and have also learned to put them into their texts. However, in their desire to produce cohesive writing, they have simply inserted these devices into their texts, sometimes regardless of meaning. They have tended to overuse them and seem to have stuck to the more formulaic repetitive way of doing it. Authentic texts, on the other hand, have more diversity. When looking at the typical features of genres in authentic texts, one sees a variety of ways of doing the same things. For example, to organize a text one can use 'firstly', 'secondly' and 'finally', but a text can also be organized by saying 'firstly', 'another reason' and 'some people say that'. As a consequence of this over-reliance on formulaic use of cohesive devices, students are not developing confidence in making their texts cohesive. In a way, they are restrained by the heavy scaffolding provided for them by their teachers, where there is no scope for independence, creativity and autonomous choice. In addition, they sometimes do not maintain the cohesion and coherence of their writing because they use connective adverbials without attention to their semantic role. For example, a writer may use 'on the other hand', signalling contrast, when the argument being made is not in contrast to what has gone before.

In the context of scaffolding in pedagogy, teachers' predetermined language phrases can be used as initial scaffolding for developing students' language and their confidence with language. However, this can result in students using the

same language phrases in in their texts, as it was the case with the students in this study. Students should rather be encouraged to move on and make independent choices about the language they want to use in their writing, as this would help them experiment with their language and work out how they want to express their ideas in a freer and more creative manner. Students can still have some help from teachers before they are left to do their own writing. Teachers could give them phrases that they can use as an earlier strategy: a scaffolding strategy. Students could then, for instance, be asked to think of their own phrases that have similar meanings to the ones given by their teachers. Teachers could remove this strategy later to encourage independence in their students' lexical choices. This may result in students making more mistakes with cohesive devices and language in general, but they would be more likely to learn eventually from their mistakes and experiences with writing, have a sense of ownership of how they craft their arguments and perhaps develop a more positive attitude toward EFL academic writing. The students in this study expressed resentment towards EFL academic writing, as they felt it was rigid and limited their creativity and their freedom to express what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it.

Further, instead of giving students lists of ideas to develop in writing essays, teachers could help students enhance their background and subject knowledge of their future writing tasks. They could arrange comprehension readings or discussions prior to writing, to orient students to the potential writing topics in order to help them improve their knowledge of their writing topics. Reading can help with students' lacking world knowledge and typicality in developing ideas and arguments. This could also help expose students to some authentic and topic-related language use, including variety in word choice, word form, sentence structure and argument development. Additionally, teachers could prepare bullet point facts for candidates on their writing topics, to boost their knowledge before they start writing. Students' coherence can also be improved when teachers work with students on how to continuously consider the reader when they make their linguistic choices and when they develop their ideas, logic and unity in the process of writing.

With regards to students' using the language phrases and content offered by teachers, there are two problematic issues to watch for. Unfortunately, teachers have unwittingly contributed to students thinking that they could only use argument language/phrases in argumentative essays, and compare and contrast phrases in compare and contrast essays. So they cannot argue when they compare and contrast, and cannot compare and contrast when they argue for/against a certain topic. It is also worth noting that teachers who are helping students with language phrases and content may link to context-specific cultural issues. Teachers bring their experiences, backgrounds and perceptions to the context of teaching cohesion and coherence. However, the power of context and teachers' conformity in the study context (teachers adopting similar teaching approaches) seemed to be prominent despite the teachers' diverse cultural backgrounds (more than thirty countries). Second, the teachers probably generated a myth (through the frequent repetition of assumptions) in relation to what students know or do not know and are capable or incapable of. When students were given the opportunity to use their own language and develop their own ideas, their writing had more sense, unity and diversity (as was clear from the students' argumentative essays), and their writing experience could be more rewarding, as was also pointed out by Tylor, one of the teachers. Students can learn how to be more independent in making their own language choices and idea development, and are consequently more likely to view EFL academic writing more positively. If students communicate with better coherence when they speak than they do when they write, as pointed out by Kate, one of the tutors, this means that they need more training on improving clarity, unity and sense making when they write their arguments (coherence-related concepts).

Furthermore, the students' writings had the rhythms and patterns of Arabic. The findings coming from the students' texts indicated the influence of Arabic on students' writing cohesion and coherence, and the data were significant and relevant. Writing teachers can get an idea of the main issues that may appear in Omani students' writing, and perhaps in other Arab students' writing, and thereby

can address similar issues with students' writing to help them deal with writing mistakes associated with inter-language influence. There is also a need to raise students' awareness of both Arabic and English styles, and also that the expectation of how cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing is achieved is based on an English view of argument. Students then could adhere to the conventions of EFL academic writing in a more informed manner.

10.1.2 Students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions

One cannot be cohesive if one cannot find something to cohere, or 'glue together'. There is an overlap between cohesion and coherence, and this is problematic- as was the case with the students in the study (the teachers and tutors too) who found it hard to distinguish between cohesion and coherence. The students might have been taught about cohesion and coherence and how to be cohesive and coherent in their writing, but they did not have the sufficient metalinguistic understanding of what it is to be cohesive and coherent. Their metalinguistic understanding was limited and sometimes lacking altogether when they were talking about cohesion- and coherence-related concepts and reflecting on the cohesion and coherence of their texts. In addition, the students did not have the metalinguistic understanding that there are alternative ways to accomplish cohesion and therefore coherence. They sometimes did not get the lexical meaning right: for example, 'moreover' is different from 'in contrast'. Further, the students' challenges with cohesion and coherence resonate with challenges faced by students in other contexts of EFL teaching of writing. This may imply that the current teaching practices of EFL writing cohesion and coherence are not effective enough to help students write with better cohesion and coherence.

One major implication based on the findings of the students' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions is that teachers and tutors need to work on raising students' awareness of issues related to their writing development, particularly their writing cohesion and coherence. Increasing students' awareness of cohesive devices and their role in text development can help with students' development of their writing cohesion and coherence. Students need to be made aware of what is

expected of them in terms of the nature of their text content. Students' awareness of text content involves whether they can develop their ideas based on untruthful data, and therefore claim statistics and invent experts in their development of their arguments. Students therefore should receive training on what they are required to do in their writing. Teachers and tutors should also bear in mind that it is not easy for students to make up convincing arguments that go against their world knowledge, logic and sense of truth, and that the choices they give to the students have implications on their students' relationship with the reader, logic and sense of truth. Students' awareness of the reader has to be constantly addressed so they keep working on maintaining the relationship with the reader throughout their writing. It is also crucial to help students become clear about the topic of each paragraph, and thinking about tops and tails of paragraphs and how the linking to what comes earlier or later functions in the text. Further, attention can also be given to the cognitive aspect of writing where students think about their writing process and production. Students should be made aware of areas related to writing development such as paraphrasing, summarizing, referencing sources, drafting, revising, meeting deadlines, receiving feedback and handling frustration, all of which can influence their writing cohesion and coherence. Finally, students need to be oriented to the rationale of the type of writing they do beyond the course syllabi, and they need to seek out opportunities where they can connect to the real world of writing, where there are possibilities of different texts and different writing approaches.

Students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence is socially constructed by their interaction and experiences. It is shaped by their writing communities throughout their teaching and learning experiences of English and Arabic writing at school and university. Students interact with writing teachers, tutors, fellow students and other non-writing teachers. Teachers can make their students' writing experiences more meaningful and rewarding by arranging individualized/personalized sessions. Meaning is then negotiated and specific issues about the student's own particular pieces of writing are discussed. Areas of positive development in their writing are also acknowledged and suggestions for

improvement are addressed. Further, when students are not able to detect problems with cohesion and coherence in their academic essays on their own, teachers can ask them relevant questions to draw their attention to certain cohesion- and coherence-related concepts.

10.1.3 Teaching of metalinguistic understanding of writing cohesion and coherence

Cohesion and coherence often interrelate. Cohesive devices are referred to as 'cohesive' because they help to stick elements together, but they also make sentences coherent. Coherence can be viewed as targeting the macro level of the text, while cohesion is concerned with the relationships between words and sentences (i.e. the micro level of the text). However, cohesion also operates at text and paragraph levels, and thus there is a macro and micro level of cohesion. Due to their interrelatedness, cohesion and coherence can be approached in a complementary way but with more focus on meaning. Explicit teaching of cohesive devices and discussing them with students could be more effective if teachers were to think differently about how they could teach them. Then teachers would not see the teaching of cohesive devices as formulaic, stilted, routinized and form-oriented, and students would not merely be deploying in a learned pattern the cohesive devices they are taught. There is also a need to help students see how the choices they make work in the texts they write and for the readers they write for, whereas what happens in EFL academic writing teaching is too decontextualized (introducing content and language phrases that students use in their texts). Halliday (1984) suggests a functional linguistics versus form-based approach: it is not about using adverbial clauses as 'form', rather the pedagogic emphasis is the functional meaning of the adverbial in the sentence, and how it helps the reader to understand the writer's argument.

Students need to be introduced to cohesion types and cohesive devices, and the role of cohesion in establishing text coherence, in a more meaningful way. This can be done through an explicit orientation of cohesion and coherence with a focus on meaning and how language functions to achieve certain communicative goals. This approach is meaning-based and functionally oriented, which also means it is less formulaic and non-form based. It is, therefore, not about using an adverbial as a

cohesive device: it is looking at what works well in the particular context of language. Students also need extensive practice to help them use cohesive devices accurately and in a more informed way. Further, a greater exposure to English lexical choices and a variety of English sentence structures can contribute to a student's accuracy with their lexical and syntactical use (i.e. lexical and grammatical cohesion). Increasing students' exposure to English through reading activities can also expand their repertoire of English words, and therefore their use of a variety of words, instead of resorting to, for example, same word repetition, limited synonyms/near synonyms/hyponyms or mistranslation of word meanings from Arabic to English resulting in the use of awkward or inaccurate words.

One major recommendation is that cohesion and coherence are brought together. Teachers could address cohesion and coherence simultaneously in their regular interaction with students in the writing classroom. They could ask students to underline cohesive devices, discuss their role in texts and think of other cohesive devices that serve similar purposes. Teachers could also consider the ways in which the writer connects sentences other than by using pronouns and conjunctions, and whether there are, for example, any repeated words, synonyms or collocations that establish cohesion and coherence. When looking at texts, teachers could discuss the problems that the students think are relevant to coherence; and if students cannot detect issues with text coherence or identify problematic sentences, teachers could ask them to explain how certain sentences are incoherent or carry irrelevant ideas. Class activities could also highlight how coherence can affect writing, and could generate talk specifically about text content, unity, sense making, organization and development of ideas. Training students to think of thesis statements and topic sentences that can help them to make their writing more coherent, could strengthen their abilities to write with better cohesion and coherence. Further, teachers should be open to discuss and present options available in the real world about approaches to academic writing, and be ready to respond to students' questions about writing practices in academic English beyond the classroom context.

10.2 Implications for decision makers

There are relevant and significant issues that have to be addressed by decision makers when it comes to students writing with cohesion and coherence, and their metalinguistic understanding of the two constructs. Students write similar ideas and language phrases to each other and with poor cohesion and coherence, and do not seem to be getting much out of their writing experience. More effective communication between teachers, tutors and students would help with addressing students' individual challenges and needs related to their writing development. Innovative approaches to introducing cohesion and coherence, where cohesive devices are taught to students in a more meaningful way, are necessary in order to help students to improve the development of their writing. Furthermore, work is needed to help students avoid plagiarism with writing tasks that involve research-which they might end up falling into whether intentionally or unintentionally. Some students may not be aware of the concept of plagiarism, others may feel pressurized for time and then resort to using materials and ideas without acknowledging the original sources they have consulted. Decision makers need to address this issue through their policies that target raising students' awareness of the institution's regulations of misconduct in writing. They also need to introduce software programmes that help students detect issues with plagiarism, to help produce writing that is properly referenced where sources are correctly cited.

In teacher preparation courses and in-service training, decision makers could introduce programmes that address:

- 1 organizing planned and focused bottom-up professional development events that target specific EFL teaching areas, especially the areas proven to be problematic or challenging for both students and teachers;
- 2 constant in-service training on enhancing teachers' subject knowledge and their teaching of writing skills such as concepts of cohesion and coherence and writing development;
- 3 how much teachers and tutors are aware of students' previous experience and the training in writing that they might have received, which may influence how they see and perform writing;

- 4 how much teachers and tutors are aware of the challenges that students face when writing with cohesion and coherence;
- 5 how much teachers and tutors are aware of students' cultural perceptions and practices related to teaching and learning- the teaching of writing in particular;
- 6 how teachers and tutors can help students with skills directly linked to EFL academic writing such as paraphrasing, summarizing and referencing sources;
- 7 how student peer feedback can be tailored to develop cohesion and coherence in students' EFL academic writing;
- 8 how students can receive training on good conduct and misconduct in writing.

10.3 Implications for future research

Students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence is a topic that is not easy to research. Its complexity does not only come from the intricacy of the field of metalinguistic understanding and of a complex topic (cohesion and coherence), but also from the fact that students verbalize their metalinguistic understanding in a language that is not their first language. Researching cohesive devices, for instance, was recognized by researchers as difficult. As Zoltán (2013, p. 1) argues: *"how much we pretend to know about cohesive devices but in effect how little we really know about their meaning and use"*.

Research on metalinguistic understanding is also diverse and developing, but mostly in limited areas of language development. There is more research on speech production, spelling, bilingual learners and reading (Watson & Newman, 2017), but very little is related to writing (Myhill & Jones, 2015). Also, in the area of writing, research on metalinguistic development has mainly focused on younger learners, and the context of older learners is still under-researched. My study has addressed a gap by looking into an aspect of metatextual development (part of Gombert's, 1992, framework that includes cohesion and coherence). Compared to metalinguistic understanding, the concepts of cohesion and coherence have more of a theoretical framework, as they have been theorized in depth by many researchers.

The conceptual framework of my study is based on Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy (1976). My research is interdisciplinary as it blends approaches: it investigated cohesion and coherence (i.e. has a linguistic focus), but also involved talking to students, teachers and tutors in order to find out about their metalinguistic understandings and perceptions. The study also examined the community of practice that exists in the context of EFL academic writing (sociocultural approach) and the participants' cognitive processes in producing texts.

A number of relevant and significant areas of EFL writing still require further research. There is a particular need for future research on the cohesion and coherence of different genres and fields of writing (Tanskanen, 2006). Examples of writing genres are: EFL persuasive, opinion, descriptive and narrative writing. Another significant field of research that will add to the teaching of EFL writing is on how teachers/tutors can help students manage more effectively their cohesive devices in different writing genres. Research is also needed to look into different aspects of EFL writing development, especially metatextual (e.g. cohesion, coherence, inference and the textual structure of texts). Research on metalinguistic thinking (focusing on students' understanding of high-level concepts) is still lacking (Myhill, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that native speakers have a great repertoire of formulaic sequence and that second speakers with high language proficiency are normally capable of using variety of formulaic language (Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sanchez, 2019). Most studies on collocation are on written texts (mostly argumentative essays), and most research conducted on speech is focused on informal interviews (Granger, 2019). Studies on collocation in the area of writing are based mainly on higher proficiency of L2 learners (intermediate, higher intermediate and above) (Granger, 2019). Future research is therefore needed on the collocations and lexical bundles used by students with lower proficiency levels and on different genres of writing. Research can also focus on formulaic sequence in the stretch of a specific number of words/lexical bundles. Future studies can also look at how learners can make use of collocation-based materials in different L2 contexts, how learner corpora can be used to find out

patterns of collocation use and what processes and practices learners adopt to develop their knowledge and use of collocation (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009).

Future studies can give more focus on Arabic writing. They can look into the extent to which cohesion and coherence evident in students' L2 (English) are influenced by the way they are developed in L1 (Arabic) writing. Exploring the interference of the first language can shed light on how much students rely on their Arabic/native language to create cohesion and coherence in English writing. Research can also focus on cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing, how the Arabic language achieves cohesion and coherence, and what the function is of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices in different genres of Arabic writing. In addition, a future research in the Omani context can also look at the students' ethnic backgrounds and whether their native languages (e.g. Urdu, Balochi, Persian, Swahili or Arabic) have an influence on their EFL writing with cohesion and coherence in particular, and on other areas of language development.

In addition, despite the significance of talk for learning (Britton 1983), there is a lack of research on how it could enhance learners' understanding of writing (Myhill, Jones & Wilson, 2016; Watson & Newman, 2017). Apart from Britton's (1983) established research on the importance of talk in enhancing reading and speaking, there is still little research on how talk can improve learners' writing and understanding of writing (Myhill, Jones & Wilson, 2016).

Indeed, my experience of researching metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence has taught me to appreciate the complexity of writing and reflecting on one's written texts. The writing experience can be even more complex when students are writing and verbalizing their understanding in a foreign language. They come with a previous experience of writing in their first language, which can only add another dimension to the complexity of writing in English. For example, they have to deal with the organization and then the presentation of ideas, while taking into account their potential audience. They have to consider text unity, meaning and logic. As I see it, attempting to understand this cognitive process, and

the sociocultural interaction associated with writing and discussing writing, can help writing teachers, tutors, writing materials writers, raters, decision makers and researchers to appreciate the task faced by EFL students when composing their texts in English.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at some implications for practitioners, decision makers and researchers in the area of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing, and students', teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of teaching- and learning-related issues. My study has extended the understanding of metalinguistic development in the area of writing of older learners (university level) in the field of EFL. It has, therefore, contributed to Gombert's (1992) conceptual framework of metalinguistic understanding (metatextual development), through exploring students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in the context of EFL academic writing.

As a PhD student, I am constrained by opportunity, time and resources, but I am also constrained by the fact that I am learning how to be a researcher by doing this research study, and inevitably now that I have finished the research, I can think of better ways I could have undertaken it. I could consider myself to have been able to incorporate qualitative and quantitative data into pursuing my enquiry, but I have learned and evolved as I was going through the different stages of my research project. The experience of researching the metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of three groups of participants, and looking at students' texts to investigate how they write with cohesion and coherence, has taught me the complexity and intricacy of researching as well as teaching this area.

Throughout my research, I had to constantly remind myself that the students' struggle with cohesion and coherence might not be due to their lacking the sufficient metalanguage to articulate their understanding: they might have had the metalinguistic understanding of certain cohesion-and coherence-related concepts, but not the metalanguage to discuss their understanding of the concepts in clear terms. Besides, the students' texts might indicate their attempts to demonstrate

cohesion and coherence based on how they had understood cohesion and coherence, how they perceived EFL academic writing, how they socially constructed their understanding of writing and how they cognitively processed writing. The next stage can be looking at how they metalinguistically understand cohesion and coherence in English and Arabic, how they write with cohesion and coherence in both languages, whether there are inconsistencies and synergies in their metalinguistic understanding and perceptions, and the characteristics of cohesion and coherence evident in their English and Arabic writing.

11 Chapter eleven: Conclusion

The study investigated EFL university students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing, their perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence, and their reflections on how they write with cohesion and coherence. It also looked into the writing teachers' and tutors' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion- and coherence-related concepts, and their perceptions of issues pertinent to the teaching/tutoring of cohesion and coherence in the context of the study. The research method used to probe the participants' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions was the semi-structured interview. The study also looked at how cohesive and coherent students' texts were, by conducting text analysis of their texts. Students' essays were analysed in terms of the diversity, density and accuracy of using cohesive devices; also how coherent the essays were as to coherence-related concepts: text unity, content, students' subject and background knowledge, logic and sense making and relationships with the reader.

My interpretive study is mostly qualitative, where the situated realities of the participants are explored for the purpose of comprehending their metalinguistic understanding and perceptions. The study is partially quantitative, as it investigates features of cohesion and coherence evident in students' writing. There was a triangulation of sources (i.e. study participants: students, teachers and tutors) to investigate the participants' metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence. There was also a triangulation of research methods (i.e. semi-structured interviews and text analysis), where exploring interviewed students' metalinguistic understanding went in line with how well they wrote with cohesion and coherence.

The study findings echo EFL research, and resonate with EFL research on writing. How the students defined the constituents/constructs of cohesion and coherence, how they discussed cohesion- and coherence-related concepts, and how they saw the two terms as similar, indicate the degree to which they lacked metalinguistic knowledge of cohesion and coherence. However, a learner may have grasped the

language elements but cannot verbalise them in clear words. Students and teachers seemed to mirror each other in their metalinguistic understanding and perceptions; there was also the gap shaped by the school/university transition, which mostly related to expectations and teacher versus student roles. Another significant finding is the influence of Arabic on students writing with cohesion and coherence, regarding writer versus reader roles and the interlanguage influence of Arabic on English writing.

Further, the text analysis of students' essays corroborated their struggle with verbalizing and reflecting on their writing cohesion (grammatical and lexical) and coherence. They overused cohesive devices and sometimes wrote with poor cohesion and coherence. For instance, students often started their sentences with cohesive devices such as 'moreover', 'furthermore', 'in addition' and 'therefore'. What students normally did was a simple deployment of cohesive devices where they overused or even wrongly used them. They were also clearly repetitive; their lack of synonyms/near synonyms/hyponyms indicating limited diversity in lexical choices. This also raises a question about the relationship between teaching and learning. Further, the students had difficulty with writing coherence when related to sense making, text content, students' world knowledge and relationships with the reader.

The teachers and tutors showed more discrepancies than synergies in their metalinguistic understanding and perceptions of cohesion- and coherence-related areas. Both groups seemed to understand cohesion and coherence as similar, and defined cohesion more as coherence. They also expressed in a similar way the challenges students face with writing cohesion and coherence. The tutors, however, showed more metalinguistic awareness of cohesion and coherence and perceived related issues in a deeper sense. They gave more emphasis to students crafting arguments, engagement with arguments in other sources and variations between Arabic and English writing styles. They also discussed writing conversations and proposed more communication channels between students, teachers and tutors.

The study findings of the interviews and text analysis were discussed in line with the existing literature on metalinguistic understanding and cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing and beyond. The findings may be applicable to other similar settings. This study informs research, practice and decision making. It offers a good conceptual and theoretical contribution to the field of applied linguistics and the area of EFL context. It has looked at the metalinguistic understanding of EFL university students of cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing. For pedagogy, teachers can help students write with better cohesion and coherence. First, instead of offering students language phrases peculiar to developing ideas for compare and contrast and/or argumentative essays, teachers can use these language chunks as initial scaffolding. Students can then refer to these scaffolds to come up with their own language phrases that carry similar meanings, in order to gain confidence and independence in making their own linguistic choices. Second, teachers can also make use of reading texts or bullet point facts to enhance the students' background knowledge of the reading topics, instead of giving them lists of ideas to use in writing their texts. Decision making policies should be in line with students' autonomous linguistic choice and enhancing teachers' subject knowledge of writing development-related concepts, including cohesion and coherence.

The study is significant as it has researched and investigated the metalinguistic understanding of writing cohesion and coherence of students at university level. Very few studies have looked at cohesion and coherence together in EFL academic writing, and there has not been much research into older learners' metalinguistic understanding, as most studies have focused on children. Similarly, metalinguistic understanding in the area of writing is under-researched because the majority of research is focused on other areas of language development, such as children's speaking, spelling and reading. This study, therefore, contributes to knowledge in the field of applied linguistics as it explores older learners' metalinguistic understanding of their writing cohesion and coherence in the context of EFL. Also, the study juxtaposes what students write and what they understand through using two data sets (interview and text) and investigates the relationship

between the data sets and the link to pedagogy through focusing on teaching from the student, tutor and teacher perspectives.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Data collection instruments

Appendix 1.1: Student semi-structured interview schedule

Student Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Student/Essay	
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Research questions:

1. What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL Academic Writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)
2. What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing? (i.e. through text analysis)
3. How do students, teachers and tutors from the writing centre perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)

Semi-structured interview explores:

- students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing
- students' perceptions of issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

Background information:

- A. You are at your *first/second/third* year at the university
- B. Type of school before joining the university: *Public school* *Private*
school
- C. Gender: *Male* *Female*

Interview questions:

A. Students' perceptions of issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

1. How do your teachers teach you to write with cohesion and coherence?
Prompts: *teaching strategies used; terminology used; how often it is addressed?*
2. Are cohesion and coherence important in the marking of your English academic essays?
Prompts: *reflected in marking criteria; referred to in teacher feedback; affect final grade?*
3. In peer editing exercises, do you discuss cohesion and coherence?
Prompts: *invited by teacher to discuss; if yes, what aspects do you discuss?*
4. How important do you think cohesion is to writing quality?
5. Do you face any challenges in making your academic essays cohesive and coherent?
6. Tell me about:
 - a. how you were taught writing at school and how similar/different it was from how you are taught writing at the university
 - b. how you were taught Arabic writing at school
 - c. whether you discussed cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing class

B. Students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence

B.1. Students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion

1. What can you tell me about cohesion?
2. If you were teaching cohesion to someone else, what would you teach them?
3. How about the terms on these cards? Have you heard about them before? Could you take out all those you have not heard of? Looking at the cards that are left, can you explain what each one means?

Card labels: *grammatical cohesion; lexical cohesion; reference; substitution; ellipsis; conjunction; reiteration; collocation*

B.2. Students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of coherence

1. How about coherence? What can you tell me about this term?
2. If you were teaching coherence to someone else, what would you teach them?
3. How important do you think coherence is to writing quality?
4. Have a look at the following cards that have some terms related to coherence. Have you heard about them before? Could you take out all those you have not heard of? Looking at the cards that are left, can you explain what each one means?

Card labels: *coherence between sentences in text; coherence between and within paragraphs; coherence in the essay as a whole; role of cohesion on coherence; role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence*

5. Have you heard about the relationship between coherence and the following terms?

Card labels: *relationship between coherence and essay connectedness; relationship between coherence and logic or making sense; relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge; relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader*

C. Verbalised metalinguistic understanding of how they have created cohesion and coherence in their own writing

C.1. Verbalised metalinguistic understanding of how they have created cohesion in their own writing

1. Tell me how you have created cohesion in this piece of writing.
2. How did you connect your introduction sentences? Could you give examples from your essay that show how you linked your sentences in the introduction paragraph?
3. How did you connect your body paragraph sentences? Could you give examples from your essay that show how linked your body paragraph sentences? Choose the paragraph you like to demonstrate what you did.
4. How did you connect your conclusion sentences? Could you give examples from your essay that show how linked your sentences in the conclusion paragraph?

Grammatical cohesion

5. Did you use **reference** in your essay? (*Follow-up question: Can you give examples of the references you used in your essay? How about this paragraph/sentence...any references? Can you talk about why you used this reference?*)
6. Did you use **substitution**? (*Follow-up question: Can you give examples of substitution you used in your essay?*)
7. Any **ellipsis**? (*Follow-up question: Can you give examples of ellipsis you used in your essay?*)
8. Can you give examples of the **conjunctions** you used in your essay? (*Follow-up question: How about this paragraph/sentence...any conjunctions such as additive, adversative, causal, temporal? More specific follow up questions will be asked in case the student interviewee does not specify a conjunction that s/he used in their texts such as 'why did you use also, however, therefore or in the end?'*)

Lexical cohesion

9. Did you use **lexical reiteration or repetition** in your essay? (*Follow up question: Did you use **synonyms**? If yes, why did you do so? How about this word? Why did you use it in this place? Prompt: The same question can be asked about other types of lexical cohesion as repeating the **same word** and using **general words, hyponym or superordinate**.*)
10. Did you use any **collocations** in your essay? (*Follow-up question: How about this paragraph/sentence? Can you remember why you used these two lexical words together? Prompt: Collocations are phrases that tend to co-occur in similar environment and create cohesive relations between sentences).*)
11. Could discuss in general how you used cohesion types to connect your sentences, paragraphs and the text?
12. Can you discuss how you might improve the cohesion in this essay, if needed?

C.2. Verbalised metalinguistic understanding of how they have created coherence in their own writing

1. Tell me how you have made this essay coherent.
2. **Content connectivity:** Can you discuss how you tried to demonstrate that the content of your essay is connected?
 - a. How did you make your sentences in your essay, connected with each other? (*Follow-up question: How did you make your sentences make sense and flow with each other?*)
 - b. How did you make your paragraphs connected with each other? (*Follow-up question: How did you make your paragraphs make sense and flow with each other? How did you make your paragraphs have a unified theme/topic?*)
 - c. How did you make your whole essay connected/coherent? (*Follow-up question: How did you make your essay make sense/logical and have a unified theme/topic?*)
 - d. How did you show coherence in the following parts of the essay?
 - d.1 Introduction paragraph
 - d.2 Body paragraphs
 - d.3 Conclusion paragraph
 - d.4 The whole essay (i.e. between paragraphs)
 - d.5 Thesis statement
 - d.6 The topic sentence of each body paragraph
 - d.7 The concluding sentence of each body paragraph
 - e. Can you discuss how you might improve the coherence in this essay, if needed?
3. **Writer's background and subject knowledge:**
 - a. Do you think your background and subject knowledge as a writer helped in making your text connected/meaningful/coherent? (*Follow-up question: How about this paragraph? Do you think your background and subject knowledge helped in making your paragraph and essay connected/meaningful? Explain your response please*)

4. **The needs of the reader:** Did you consider the reader of your essay? Could you elaborate?
5. **The role of cohesion on coherence:** Do you think that the different types of cohesion you used in your sentences, paragraphs and essay helped in making your essay coherent/connected? (*Follow-up question: How about this sentence/paragraph? How did you use cohesion to create coherence/connectedness? How does this cohesive tie in this paragraph help make your sentences connected?*)
6. Could you talk in general about how you tried to make your essay coherent?
7. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience of being taught cohesion and coherence at the university?

Appendix 1.2: Writing teacher semi-structured interview schedule

Writing Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Research questions:

4. What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL Academic Writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)
5. What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing? (i.e. through text analysis)
6. How do students, teachers and tutors from the writing centre perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)

Semi-structured interview explores:

- teachers' understanding of notions relevant to cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing
- teachers' perceptions of issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

Background information:

- A. Years of teaching experience in general: ...
- B. Years of teaching EFL university students: ...
- C. Years of Teaching writing to EFL university students: ...
- D. Gender: *Male* *Female*

Interview questions:

Teachers' perceptions about issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

1. Teacher's understanding of notions relevant to cohesion and coherence EFL academic writing

- a. Based on your training and teaching experience, how would you define the following constructs in the area of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?
 - a.1. Cohesion types?
Card labels: *grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion*
 - a.2. Types of grammatical cohesion?
Card labels: *reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction*
 - a.3. Types of lexical cohesion?
Card labels: *reiteration and collocation*

- b. How about the following terms? Based on your training and teaching experience, how would you define them in line with how you perceive coherence is in the context of EFL academic writing?
Card labels:
 - b.1 coherence between sentences in text
 - b.2 coherence between and within paragraphs
 - b.3 coherence in the essay as a whole
 - b.4 role of cohesion on coherence
 - b.5 role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence

- c. How do you see the relationship between coherence and the following terms?
Card labels:
 - c.1 relationship between coherence and essay connectedness
 - c.2 relationship between coherence and logic or making sense
 - c.3 relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge
 - c.4 relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

- d. How do you think cohesion and coherence are related to EFL writing quality?
(*Prompt: in terms of teaching and marking*)

- e. Do you use cohesion or coherence to make judgment about the other? (*Follow-up question: Do you look for cohesive ties that may indicate coherence or do you look for the text coherence first to see if it is supported by proper cohesive ties?*) Could you discuss your response?

2. How the teacher teaches cohesion and coherence

- a. Could you share your experience of teaching cohesion and coherence to students in EFL academic essays classes?
- b. How do you see the role of cohesion and coherence in the marking criteria of students' EFL academic essays? (*Follow up questions: What do you think of the value given to cohesion and coherence in the marking scheme? What do you*

think of how teachers in your context evaluate cohesion and coherence in students' writing?)

- c. What do you think teachers should do with their students to help them improve their cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?

3. The teacher's perceptions of students' difficulties

- a. What do you think of your students' understanding of cohesion and coherence? *(Follow-up question: Do they easily acquire the skills of being cohesive and coherent? Please explain your response)*
- b. What do you think the key challenges are that students encounter in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing? *(Follow-up question: Do you think there are areas of cohesion and coherence that are particularly problematic for students? Please explain your response)*
- c. What do you think the solutions are to deal with problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students?

Appendix 1.3: Writing Centre tutor semi-structured interview schedule

Writing Centre Tutor Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Research questions:

7. What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL Academic Writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)
8. What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing? (i.e. through text analysis)
9. How do students, teachers and tutors from the writing centre perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)

Semi-structured interview explores:

- Writing Centre* tutor's understanding of notions relevant to cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing
- tutor's perceptions of issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

Background information:

- A. Years of teaching experience in general: ...
- B. Years of teaching EFL university students: ...
- C. Years of Teaching writing to EFL university students: ...
- D. Years of working at the Writing Centre:
- E. Gender: *Male* *Female*

Interview questions:

Tutors' perceptions about issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing

1. The tutor's understanding of notions relevant to cohesion and coherence EFL academic writing

- f. Based on your training and teaching and tutoring experience, how would you define the following constructs in the area of cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?
- a.1. Cohesion types?
Card labels: *grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion*
 - a.2. Types of grammatical cohesion?
Card labels: *reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction*
 - a.3. Types of lexical cohesion?
Card labels: *reiteration and collocation*
- g. How about the following terms? Based on your training and teaching and tutoring experience, how would you define them in line with how you perceive coherence is in the context of EFL academic writing?
- Card labels:
- b.1 coherence between sentences in text
 - b.2 coherence between and within paragraphs
 - b.3 coherence in the essay as a whole
 - b.4 role of cohesion on coherence
 - b.5 role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence
- h. How do you see the relationship between coherence and the following terms?
- Card labels:
- c.1 relationship between coherence and essay connectedness
 - c.2 relationship between coherence and logic or making sense
 - c.3 relationship between coherence and background and subject knowledge
 - c.4 relationship between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader
- i. How do you think cohesion and coherence are related to EFL writing quality?
(*Prompt: in terms of teaching and marking*)
- j. Do you use cohesion or coherence to make judgment about the other? (*Follow-up question: Do you look for cohesive ties that may indicate coherence or do you look for the text coherence first to see if it is supported by proper cohesive ties?*) Could you discuss your response?
- #### 2. How the tutor tutors cohesion and coherence
- a. Could you share your experience as a tutor at the Writing Centre of helping students improve their cohesion and coherence in their academic essays?
 - b. How do you see the role of cohesion/coherence in the marking criteria of students' EFL academic essays? (*Follow up question: What do you think of the value given to cohesion and coherence in the marking scheme? What do*

you think of how teachers evaluate cohesion and coherence in students' writing?)

3. The tutor's perceptions of students' difficulties

- a. What do you think of students' understanding of cohesion and coherence?
(Follow-up question: Do the students you see for tutoring easily acquire the skills of being cohesive and coherent?)
- b. What do you think the key challenges are that students encounter in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing? (*Follow-up question: Do you think there are areas of cohesion and coherence that are particularly problematic for students?)*
- c. What do you think the solutions are to deal with problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students?

4. The tutor's perceptions of the teaching of cohesion and coherence

- a. How do you see the teachers' teaching of cohesion and coherence to students? (*Follow-up question: Do you think that their teaching is effective? Why/why not?)*
- b. What do you think teachers should do with their students to help them improve their cohesion and coherence in academic writing?

Appendix 1.4: Text analysis

Essay Code		
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Text Analysis (Linguistic analysis) of students' Academic Essays

Purpose: Coding for the presence/absence of linguistic features

Research questions:

10. What is the nature of EFL undergraduate students' verbalised metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in EFL Academic Writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)
11. What characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing? (i.e. through text analysis)
12. How do students, teachers and tutors from the writing centre perceive issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing? (i.e. through semi-structured interviews)

Through text analysis the study aims to explore *what characteristics of cohesion and coherence are evident in EFL undergraduate students' academic writing (i.e. Research Question 2)*

N o. A	Grammatical cohesion types		Number of occurrences		Total number within the group type (Density)		Others/comments
			Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect	
1.	Reference	a. personal pronouns	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
		b. demonstratives	.....	.....			.....
		c. the definite article <i>the</i>	.....	.....			.....
		d. comparatives	.....	.....			.....
2.	Conjunction	a. additive (e.g. and, also)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
		b. adversative (e.g. yet, however)	.....	.....			.....
		c. causal (e.g. therefore, then)	.....	.....			.....
		d. temporal (e.g. then, in the end)	.....	.....			.....
		e. continuatives (e.g. now, of course, anyway, surely, after all, well)	.....	.....			.....
3.	Substitution	a. Nominal	.....	.....	.....	.....	rare in English formal writing
		b. Verbal	.....	.....	
		c. Clause	.....	.....	
4.	Ellipsis	d. Nominal	.....	.....	.....	.....	rare in English formal writing
		e. Verbal	.....	.....	
		f. clause	.....	.....	
General comments:							

Lexical cohesion types		Number of occurrences	Total number within the group type (Density)	Others/comments
1	same word repetition		
2	synonym or near synonym			
3	hyponym (i.e. general-specific relations)			
4	general word (e.g. using thing to refer to a noun)			
5	superordinate (hypernyms) (i.e. part-whole relations)			
6	Collocation			

Appendix 2: Raw data

Appendix 2.1: Sample of text analysis of student script (argumentative essay)

Essay Code	21	A
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Smokers Should Not Have the Right to Smoke

Worldwide, smoking is becoming number one issue. Its growth came along with people supporting **smoking** and others **who not**. Smokers should not have **the right to smoke because** **they** cause health problems to **themselves** and to passive smokers, they create more economic crisis with their expensive treatments, and they effect the environment with toxic gases.

One opponent claims that smoking comfort smokers by giving them such as a soothing feeling that makes them forget about their problems; **however**, **that** soothing feeling will fade away within few moments. **Moreover**, smoking causes many others problems such as health problems to the smoker **itself** and the passive smoker as well. Furthermore, these health problems can be permanent such as lung and **skin cancer**.

Another opponent claims that smokers in fact help the government ending the economic crisis by buying **more** cigarettes. However, when smokers continue smoking they will get **lung cancer** and **other health problems**. **Then the** smokers will receive treatment from the government that **cause** a lot of money. Moreover if the money in the first place was used to make new projects that would truly help the government to end the crisis.

It has been argued that smoking has no bad **impact** on the environment. Further, they claim that the gases that are produced during smoking will get mixed with other gases and fade away. However, **smoking actually** has many bad impacts to the environment. One impact is global warming, and another is **imact** is that gases effects the natural habits of different kinds of animals whether it was because of the toxic gases or **the waste**.

In conclusion, causing health problems, creating more economic crisis, and effecting the environment are the biggest highlights of why smoking should not be allowed. All in all smokers should not have the right to smoke. (21/A)

Comment [I1]: Same word repetition

Comment [I2]: Verbal ellipsis: wrong

Comment [I3]: Reference/definite article: correct

Comment [I4]: Causative conjunction: correct

Comment [I5]: Reference/personal pronoun: correct

Comment [I6]: Reference/personal pronoun: wrong form

Comment [I7]: Adversative Conjunction: correct

Comment [I8]: Reference/demonstrative pronoun: correct

Comment [I9]: Additive conjunction: correct

Comment [I10]: Reference/personal pronoun: wrong meaning

Comment [I11]: Collocation

Comment [I12]: Reference/comparative: correct

Comment [I13]: Reference/comparative: correct

Comment [I14]: Hyponym (specific-general relations)

Comment [I15]: Reference/definite article: wrong (Arabic influence)

Comment [I16]: Synonym for effect

Comment [I17]: Continuative conjunction: correct

Comment [I18]: Arabic influence: awkward use of lexical word

Comment [I19]: Temporal conjunction: correct

N o. A	Grammatical Cohesion Types		Number of occurrences		Total Number within the group type (Density)	
			Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect
1.	Reference	a. personal pronouns	9	3	30	7
		b. demonstratives	1	0		
		c. the definite article <i>the</i>	14	4		
		d. comparatives	6	0		
2.	Conjunction	a. additive (e.g. and, also)	7	0	16	0
		b. adversative (e.g. yet, however)	3	0		
		c. causal (e.g. therefore, then)	1	0		
		d. temporal (e.g. then, in the end)	4	0		
		e. continuatives (e.g. now, of course, anyway, surely, after all, well)	1	0		
3.	Substitution	Nominal	0	0	0	0
		Verbal	0	0		
		Clause	0	0		
4.	Ellipsis	Nominal	0	0	0	1
		Verbal	0	1		
		Clause	0	0		

Lexical Cohesion Types		Number of occurrences
1	same word repetition	56
2	synonym or near synonym	1
3	general word (e.g. using thing to refer to a noun)	0
4	Hyponym (general-specific relations)	1
5	Superordinate (part-whole)	0
6	Collocation	20

No.	Coherence			Others/comments
	Coherence dimensions	Strengths	Weaknesses	
1.	Coherence (i.e. connectedness) within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Sentences j. Introduction paragraph k. Body paragraphs l. Conclusion paragraph m. Whole essay (i.e. between paragraphs) n. Thesis statement o. Topic sentence of each paragraph p. Concluding sentence of each paragraph 	Thesis statement: <i>Smokers should not have the right to smoke because they cause health problems to themselves and to passive smokers, they create more economic crisis with their expensive treatments, and they effect the environment with toxic gases.</i>	Statement with no evidence <i>Worldwide, smoking is becoming number one issue.</i>	..... ..... .....
2.	Coherence-related concepts (background and subject knowledge, content, unit, meaning, logic/sense making and relationship between the writer/text and the reader)	The content of the essay is developed by the students without teacher's help	..... .....	not high-stake exams
3.	The role of cohesive types in establishing coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Grammatical cohesion d. Lexical cohesion 	Ellipsis: <i>Its growth came along with people supporting smoking and others who not.</i>		(Do density and accuracy of grammatical or lexical cohesion mean better coherence?)
General comments:				

Appendix 2.2: Student semi-structured interview script

Q: How do your teachers teach you to write with cohesion and coherence?

A: He tells about their mistakes and how to avoid these mistakes, but the problem is that we need a long time to avoid these mistakes because we cannot avoid them from the first time. If there is anything related to the topic we are talking about, he told us. We always have tests, but he always reminds us about cohesion and coherence before tests. When we have an exam, we have a revision before the test, he gives papers where we have to find the mistakes and then we discuss that together.

Q: Are cohesion and coherence important in the marking of your English academic essays?

A: Yes. We should be good at writing as much as possible. The feedback includes comments about especially the coherence. Sometimes the mistakes are not because we didn't understand or we didn't know the information about this, but sometimes because a short time in tests and exams so we don't have time to do revision and read again what we have written.

Q: In peer editing exercises, do you discuss cohesion and coherence?

A: We don't discuss writing... but only the outline.

Q: Do you face any challenges in making your academic essays cohesive and coherent?

A: Time is a challenge as if we have more time, we could avoid mistakes. Some tasks are not difficult, we just need to focus and concentrate so we could avoid it. There are little mistakes that are difficult and need.

Q: How you were taught writing at school and how similar/different it was from how you are taught writing at the university?

A: Actually this is one of the challenges I faced when I started studying LANCs in general. This is because the level of English that we studied in school completely like... I can't say it's different. But it's like low. The level of English at school there seems to be a big jump.

Q: How you were taught Arabic writing at school?

A: Actually in the last two years, I think we didn't take any Arabic writing lessons. We are not taught this like about writing. We have exams... just exam. And you do it. We have some grammar. As we are native speakers...not in writing. In some other classes, but we have to utilize what we learn in these classes in Arabic.

Q: Whether you discussed cohesion and coherence in Arabic writing class

A: Actually this depends on the teacher and what she thinks is important for the students. But I think that most of the teachers didn't like zero on this part.

Q: What can you tell me about cohesion?

A: It is to make your writing as perfect as possible as you can like from all sides.

Q: If you were teaching cohesion to someone else, what would you teach them?

A: I will advise them to utilize or use everything they have learned. In other way, it's like it's not enough just study you have to utilize and use what you learn especially in this part.

Q: How important do you think cohesion is to writing quality?

A: No idea

Q: What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: grammatical cohesion

Q: lexical cohesion

Q: reference:

A: the resource or the books that we use in writing

Q: substitution

Q: ellipsis

A: I heard of it but not sure

Q: conjunction

Q: reiteration

Q: collocation

A: words that come together

Q: How about coherence? What can you tell me about this term?

A: Grammar. And grammar is maybe like the stand or like some rules that we have to follow when we write.

Q: If you were teaching coherence to someone else, what would you teach them?

A: maybe I will make them write an essay and then catch the mistakes from their essay like correct it.

Q: How important do you think coherence is to writing quality?

A: Very important actually. Because if there is no grammar in writing the essays or in the writing, there is no. I think the writing will miss its value or something like this value or something like this

Q: What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: coherence between sentences in text

A: the seem to be similar...

Q: coherence between and within paragraphs

Q: coherence in the essay as a whole

A: here we are talking, for example, grammar rules the tense and how the writer uses the tenses maybe models like the parts of speech like gerund and infinitive

Q: role of cohesion on coherence

Q: role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence

Q: What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: relation between coherence and essay connectedness

Q: relation between coherence and logic or making sense

Q: relation between coherence and subject and background knowledge

A: make it easier for the writer to show his/her knowledge in a good way. Because if you have a background knowledge or information or background of the topic that you writing about so that will not be enough if you don't have the coherence because the coherence helps the writer to clarify his information about the topic of the essay so coherence is very important to show your knowledge or background

Q: relation between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

A: Discuss how you have created cohesion in this piece of writing.

Q: when we write in exam, I don't know. How can I say this...the type of routine... something we have taught. Now we try to do it. But we didn't think how we do this or how we do this...

Q: How you connected the introduction sentences?

Q: How you connected the paragraph sentences?

Grammatical Cohesion

reference
substitution
ellipsis
conjunctions
Lexical Cohesion
Q: reiteration
Q: collocations

Q: Discuss how you used cohesion types to connect your sentences, paragraphs and the text
A: Maybe using the passive and active... Like it is claimed that...it is argued that...

Q: Discuss how you might improve the cohesion in this essay, if needed
A: if I make my sentences cohesive, they will be coherent... like gram LANC where we studied a lot of grammar, I just try to memorize and remember what I have learned...so I'm trying to utilize this.
Q: Discuss how you have made this essay coherent

Q: Content connectivity: Discuss how you tried to demonstrate that the content of your essay is connected
Content connectivity:
Q: Discuss how you tried to demonstrate that the content of your essay is connected
Q: How you made your sentences in your essay, connected with each other
Q: How you made your paragraphs connected with each other
Q: How you made your whole essay connected

How you showed connectedness in the following parts of the essay:

Q: Introduction paragraph
A: I have tried to make all the paragraphs coherent. In the introduction first I need to know what I will say... or trying to catch an idea which is related to the topic and in general...so coherence hear maybe most of the time I think sentences at the beginning of the introduction we didn't use need to use the tense v. well but here I use are compelled which means it is passive.
Q: Body paragraphs
Q: Conclusion paragraph
Q: Thesis statement
A: in the thesis statement we need to use the tense that show that we are talking in general and at the same time we try to make the idea clear for the reader the same like what we want to say
Q: The topic sentence of each body paragraph
Q: How you made your sentences in your essay, connected with each other
Q: The concluding sentence of each body paragraph

Q: Your knowledge of the subject area of the essay topic helped make your essay coherent/connected?
A: sometimes, for example, we have a topic and we have write like 3 reasons that make use agree or against ...for or against ... But sometimes we didn't... We couldn't find like three arguments or three reasons maybe because like the lack of information or maybe because we are...we didn't have a background... so we have two reasons or maybe one... so we

have to find like...or extend or... I don't know... but we have to... like we are in exams... we are like geared about our grades... sometimes when we are not interested about a topic, we couldn't think about a lot.

Q: The needs of the reader: Did you consider the reader of your essay?

A: now no... but maybe we I graduate and I have my job as a translator... I will think of course and I will be responsible ...more responsible more than now. Responding to me question... she is aware that the only reader of her essay is the teacher... but she discussed in the interview the importance of reader in essay writing

Q: The role of cohesion on coherence: Do you think that the different types of cohesion you used in your sentences, paragraphs and essay helped in making your essay coherent/connected?

A: Both maybe... each one is important for the other.

Q: Could you talk in general about how you tried to make your essay coherent/connected?

Q: Is there anything you would like to add about your experience of being taught cohesion and coherence at the university?

A: maybe because we are English students... and maybe... I'll tell you something...I hate writing...I hate writing... even at school .. when the teacher said that I have to write an essay...I feel that...there is a mountain in my heart when I write... maybe because I studied English level 6 in the foundation programme. And I feel that writing is very complicated and that it need a big effort and a long time... so of this... I remember that i spend four hours, for example,, to write an essay we need to use resources and find like the correct information and make sure of everything... maybe because of this thing or may there are other reasons that I feel that I am not really good in writing ... or this is the most reasons...or as English students.. I feel like... the teacher... for example...Mr (...) make it easy for me this course... like more easy...yeh.. but I still hate writing but less than before...

Appendix 2.3: Teacher semi-structured interview script

Q: What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: grammatical cohesion

Q: lexical cohesion

A: that is not exactly that something I that I read about or heard about.

Q: reference

A: What come to my mind with reference and that is what I thought of with referential relations is that to me in order to write well, you need to be referencing either sources or referencing some sort of experiences and incorporate into your writing. I don't know if students really have that in their mind as that the purpose of academic writing. Because what I often see that, for example, a simple example is that students seem to think that they just pile on points one after another and that's why I think they often misuse transition signals. They have a very I don't know whether you could call it a generic idea of what transition signals are or they are just vague or perhaps misunderstood because what I have seen recently when I was marking their papers that just misuse it...they'll misuse however... they'll misuse further. They think they those transition signals the key to making cohesion regardless of what comes after the transition signals. You see what I mean. So in their mind like I used furthermore here so good...the last sentence and this sentence are connected. but when you look at the last sentences and when you look at the sentence coming after furthermore, there is nor relation. As I said there is no reference to what is proceeding...or of maybe in their mind... they thought they are building blocks and they think they are building them but the pieces that are holding them together are transitions but then the main part of the building is missing. So it is sort of the transition signals keeping the building straight but it is not really like solid. Because we teach transition signals in the course. They need a lot more experience not only with the meaning of those transition signals but appropriately using them. Like I said they often use also and furthermore. They view that if use also and furthermore and moreover, it does not matter what you are saying. It just that is the connection which I think something that they need to work on.

Q: substitution

Q: ellipsis

Q: conjunction

A: Conjunction brings to mind the grammar and the using certain words in the right way...grammar. Clauses, for example, conjunctives, that enable them, for example, to make complex sentences so that is grammar related Substitution as well

Q: reiteration

A: In writing the first thing I think of it is to make writing more cohesive and make unity. You need, for example, in our book it says to repeat key nouns as part of English language way of. When you are writing, you are basically putting a relation between two things you are referring to and when I think of that I do think of the students in this class and students in general. They do have a difficulty with doing that. And part of it is that I guess they don't have... they don't really refer to it as reference as we know of them that as in sources because they don't have that base of being well read or knowledgeable. But that is in one point, but on another point in their writing I also know that they really have this idea to refer to points in the same paragraph or in the same writing building cohesion. Reiteration to me is that aspect of it. There are other ones.

Q: collocation

I am thinking collocation with vocabulary. We don't really get into that, not with.

What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: coherence between sentences in text

A: I guess this also something that students struggle with because in an essay they seem to once you explain the organization of an essay they seem to be more comfortable with the body paragraphs. They seem to understand the mechanics of the organization but the thing that they always repeatedly asking about is the introduction and the conclusion. They just seem, especially in the conclusion, they seem a bit confused about what to do. But something I stress in the intro for the argumentative essay. I tell them that before they pose the issues that they are debating, because in the argumentative essay I told them that you need before they pose the issue that they are debating because in the argumentative essay, you have to show a contentious issue and I even tell them that they need to look up the word in the dictionary. Because I basically say there is no point of writing this essay if it's not contentious. It has to be two sides and I actually this particular issue they have to not only present their own views but present the opponent's view. So basically in the book, the way they organize it, there is one sentence in the introduction usually that comes at the middle part of the introduction which students memorize and also use. The sentence is this subject has been in dispute for some time. So students see that as a way of making the purpose of the essay to the fore. But the problem is that and I tell them that. Before that statement you have to of course say that which is the issue? Before saying that this issue has been continuous for a long time, you have to basically introduce the reader to the topic and the issue. So for example if they are going to be talking about attendance whether they should be taking it her at SQU or not. What I tell them to do is that in the introduction there has to be a building of a background which means that what is the background of this issue. You could talk about the role of attendance... you could talk about how some universities are changing their policies on it. But the idea is that between that background and then the statement showing it's contentious and then finally the thesis statement, there has to be some sort of cohesion in the sense that at first you are approaching it from a very ..like form the stance of trying to just introduce it to the reader ...then you are trying to say this is the issue and it's been debated and finally the thesis statement they have to push in the idea that where they stand. But often times the way the write the introduction, those three parts are not cohesively built. They struggle with that. They struggle with this idea. I mean I wish I had an example. Actually, I do have an example. For example, to them with junk food...they structure it a little too much because the focus was whether there should be a Burger king at SQU but at the beginning Ok. What I am goanna say junk food is really unhealthy for you. It is too general and too generic in a way. But even beside that-that is another point- within those I would say three parts of the introduction lacks cohesion.

Q: coherence between and within paragraphs

Q: coherence in the essay as a whole

A: I wonder sometimes as I said they approach this essay very formulaic way because they emphasize the organization of it. And I am wondering if it's appropriate for this course to actually push a lot more content because I sort of have this presumption that a lot of them don't have...they're not very well read and they're not very knowledgeable. So that's why they don't have a pool of information to pull when they're writing their essays. So I sometimes feel like there may be a connection between making it a more coherent essay if they are just exposed more to coherent writing and coherent even like discussing and lecturing like rather than just telling them this is what you need in this paragraph ...put this point in and out that point in. I almost I could say show by examples rather than

explanation and breaking up apart of points. Because overall I don't think they necessarily see that there should be some kind of connection between paragraphs.

Q: role of cohesion on coherence

Q: role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence

What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: relation between coherence and essay connectedness

Q: relation between coherence and logic or making sense

Q: relation between coherence and subject and background knowledge

A: I feel like it's a bit of a struggle especially in this class so many topics to cover. You are not only covering academic writing, but you are also doing grammar which a lot of them are weak on and also taking a complementary course on grammar as well. So there is so much going on and so as a teacher I wonder even feasible if official to bring in the knowledge aspect. I think of knowledge as basically the content requires to like something meaning rather than about a topic. But for better or worse in my classes I do that a lot. I actually get deeper into certain topics so that they have this understanding when they write their essays, they just can't say a lot of generic statements because I think this is one of the main issues. if you read their writing actually even when its formed grammatically correct, a lot of the points they make are very generic...generic or vague as in the sense they are saying very generic statement without specificity without detail without elaboration. I mean I guess to be honest that is more fundamental than the cohesion, because if you are...I mean the depth of the idea is also kind of a facilitator in cohesion. Because when you are delving in some point or some exploration, you are picking at the same parts so it's gonna be cohesive. I think even the teachers and course coordinators may struggle with even choosing the debatable topics or even the topic in general because I mean I do remember one of the argumentative essay a couple of years ago. It says the debatable topic was Muscat should be more like Dubai. So the assumption is like they are Omanis they have been in Oman they know Oman they know Muscat and they've probably been to Dubai and there's a general sense among people that Dubai is lively fun and entertaining and so I guess that was the implying presumption in that statement that students will have a sort of a background and they could either say no I am going to be periotic and love the historical quality of Muscat and what Muscat is and it shouldn't be like Dubai or yes we should make giant malls and tall buildings and make it more fun. Even for us it's a bit of a... It's not an easy task to choose a topic for the students because we struggle to with how to do that. And I am not sure I mean in general even if you say to the students this is really a poor way of putting it. But just give your opinion and talk about your personal experience. I don't know how reliable students even find that I will give you another example I've had. I think some students with less awareness they feel sometimes even terrified of their own ideas on paper. The classic example is not only for plagiarism. This semester some of my students did presentations and they literally memorize like lectures or other presentations but in their view I don't out of being terrified. I'm going to say something wrong so they rely on something more authoritative but the same issue is the same here too. Even in the argumentative essay here too they won't cite a source but they will say something like statistics have showed or research has proven ...you don't know what's they are talking about but they do have so of surface level awareness that's ok if I say statistics show that's going to validate my points. So they do that sometimes in the argumentative essay. This is again I don't know if it is related to cohesion necessarily, but I just wanted to make that point

Q: relation between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

Q: How do you think cohesion and coherence are related to EFL writing quality?

A: I even experience this with my own writing. I sort of sometimes do some writing and I try to figure out what genre it's best placed in but what I also sometimes do I lazily assume that something that I have written before could be plugged in my writing. But when I plugged it in, I realize what is before and after is not very cohesive. So cohesion is actually really very important. It's not always clear to me when and if I should modify something. If it is cohesive enough. So everyone struggles with it. But it's actually something that requires also a little bit knowledge of the reader. You have to have an awareness of your audience to know so OK because when you are writing, you are writing like deep within sometimes views of your experience. you're not really picking up on how another reader picking up on this. That's why we ask others to read it. It does not matter what kind of writing you're doing. It has to be or fundamental part of it. if the reader started to lose track of where you're going or how this is all sort of relevant to your main purpose. Does the reader even know what I am trying to do here? So it's really tricky but it's essential too because if you are not reaching to the reader earlier on, they are going to feel disinterest. It's essential. The main barrier to it actually is the realization that to make something more cohesive, it takes work because when I put something together sometimes I sort of feel I want to rush because I want to put it on my blog but I have a blog where I like to share my thoughts on different topics. Sometimes I say... Yes I could rush to put in there but is it cohesive enough. To make it more cohesive I realize oh my Goodness I have to sit here a lot longer and think it through. Do I really? Maybe that is the biggest challenge to making things cohesive. I guess going back to ... the knowledge and the research that u do is just sort of add to the topic so much that you kind of facilitate to cohesion in itself. And I sometime is wonder when I am reading something how related does it if you only draw on your own experience or u actually have to step away from writing and do some research. I'll give you a simple example, I am reading a really fascinating book now about construction of the Berlin Wall in the 1960s and the writer seems to have so much knowledge that places in Berlin. And I am always wondering if he's just talking of the location of them and how they look. I always wonder if he do this just from his own mind from the background knowledge or did he have to go back and research it and really study it. But the whole point I am trying to make is that then you have knowledge or when you do that research its just keeps building on its cohesiveness itself. You're just elaborating further and further.

Q: Do you use cohesion or coherence to make judgment about the other?

A: They r both nouns but I don't know what the difference between them is. I think my presumption which I have to challenge it myself. I have to reflect on is. Just don't worry about... just give your students a lot of chances to see whether they are cohesive or not. The simplest example when they are debating. I give one student a chance to make an argument and the other group to rebuttal. But the rebuttal is not related to what the other group has said. They r going off to another point in the sense it's not cohesive and this is the same thing in their essays because sometimes they write what they...they just off to another point. And I guess my own presumption as I said is teach that to them through doing rather than explicit instruction of the cohesive devices but... I do to remember that as a language learner that do need the content but they do need for the tools because they search for the tools. Like in the in-house book they are using it has a set of phrases that they could use and they really on them and that is the reason why they are using sentences like this is a subject that has been disputed for the opponents assert that so it not fair for me to say that this is only content... I have to remember that they do need some sort of support. At the same time I have to emphasize that it's not only mechanical because it does become

problematic because students look in this book and see the example essays and they think like I could just look at these example. They look for the models but when they plug it into thoughtlessly, it does not get the best results. To me it's a bit of a mixture.

How the teacher teaches cohesion and coherence

Q: Could you share your experience of teaching cohesion and coherence to students in EFL academic essays classes?

A: My own default way of doing is, for example, by giving a lecture and then having a discussion and while that lecture and discussion is going on, taking in a stand back and showing them how and why things are cohesive in that lecture. I give that example to them so often. I want them to be aware in a lecture how cohesion is built up because I really feel this is all connected. A lecture is alike a piece of writing. They read what they wrote, right? So showing that interconnectedness between a piece they read... a piece they write something they would listen to. I try to give it to them as a content part but then take a stand back and then analyze it. So it's like this is it was said or what it was written. So let's stand back now and see how the writer made this cohesive... so a combination of the two.

Q: How do you see the role of cohesion and coherence in the marking criteria of students' EFL academic essays?

I think in this case the place where it resides is ...I believe in content and organization. Because content, for example, says ideas are relevant to the question or there is sufficient example. Cohesive devices are used. It is both in these two. Even in the grammar part too. Yeh, it has to be part of it... because if you are missing that aspect of it. I guess yeh. Students are very oriented to grade, so they know grammar is the most percentage. I'm presuming when they write and they edit their work, they're probably looking at their grammar mostly.

Q: What do you think teachers should do with their students to help them improve their cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing?

A: Like what I said it has to be a mixture of the content and the feedback you give to the students. I mean the thing is when you're reading an essay and you're trying to think of how you could give a meaningful feedback that they can understand. If my colleague, Richard, he was showing me that there is a lot of websites where you could make a screenshot of their writing and then give some video feedback so that they could listen to it on their phone at home. But I guess that's really one of the points to stress because you cannot sort of code on the paragraph OK...this is incohesive. Students won't know what to do with most of it. I even went through phases where I wanted to be super detailed in how I give them feedback in their writing. I didn't even underline the grammar mistakes. I also like the kind of grammar mistake it was...like t was a verb tense. I wouldn't correct it for them, but I would... I don't know. But I would go back and forth on that. But if they get back a paper full of red marks. If they have a paper full of these marks, that's a bit overwhelming. Even if you write a sentence describing why something is incohesive, I still think it has to be... I mean writing. That's why we have the writing centre. Writing has to be one-on-one feedback. That's what's the most meaningful feedback is for writing. I don't know how much successful some teachers are finding these feedback sessions. But I think I've come to a point even, for example, with grammar, I used to be on the past showing every single mistake they make. But then a student made a very good point. She said you should be only marking the things in our grammar that are wrong that we are responsible

for in this course. So if its subject verb agreement we're studying in this course, then you can show it. But she said articles are still very difficult for us that we haven't learned very well at school. And she made a very fair point. I think she's made me to be a bit more mindful of the fact that we could be scouring the paper for every little mistake but...

Q: What do you think of your students' understanding of cohesion and coherence?

When you're explaining it to them, I mean they get it. I'll give you a simple example going back to the introduction. I used to say something to my students to make them aware how obvious some of their points are. I used to write on the board, "thanks for stating the obvious". Because when they approach the essay and approach writing the introduction, they want to make it relevant...they want to make it sort of paint the general picture. But they end up saying things that are very generic or obvious. A famous one they begin their essays with...nowadays junk food is an important topic in the world or nowadays junk food is very unhealthy...something very generic and superficial and at some point even obvious. When I point that out to them, they understand that that is what it is. It is the same thing with cohesion. If I give them a paragraph where a lot of the sentences are not cohesively connected, they understand that. I could give you an example. Because I actually made an example for the student. I have to give a little of a background about it. This was an essay on children's development and I basically said that...because there was a research that was done few years ago saying children should be encouraged to do some risky play because it builds their sense of independence. The idea of the writer was that parents nowadays are overprotecting their children and it's actually harmful. So, I gave them a sort of a lecture about that... I gave a background. But the issue is children need to experience risk in order to develop important skills like independence and confidence. This is a sample introduction... As we know childhood is the best experience of life, and everyone needs to experience their life of child hood. I think the students here are thinking... risky play but I am going to say something about childhood. I tell them if you do that, you cannot make another generic statement. I say either develop that idea... get more detail but do not just leave it cold like that. Because look at what happens. Second, sentence two, the issue of risky play has been... See this is what I meant at the beginning they make a very generic statement that is somewhat related to the issue but not... not you know... And then they plug in the thing they memorize. And as you can see in sentence three...Many argue that the best place for children to play is at home with their parents. So there is...look when you talk about cohesion and coherence, this is a struggle for them. This is an actual student sample. So there is no elaboration of risky play there is no exploration of risky play. There was just...Their idea is OK children in the statement... I'll write something. Out of the whole things in the interview, this is the main thing. This is really the issue. They struggle with that so much.

Q: What do you think the key challenges are that students encounter in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing?

Responding to whether the challenges are universal or particular. It's hard to say because I have always been surprised by and excited about what I learn from my students...the experience they have, and I always remind myself don't think they don't know and don't think. Because especially these days...I know it a cliché but the internet has revolutionized things. My students always ...three or four of them really surprise me with how well read they are and how connected they are to social issues. One of them told me in high school she was addicted to twitter and she was following these debates and discussions mainly from Saudi Arabia. The people there were having really rich lively discussions because they cannot do it in public. I am sorry to say it but this is one of the sad things about this region is that they are not encouraged to think openly freely and critically in public but that is why they love... and that is why I sympathize. Sometimes I tell them hey guys...you're addicted to these silly phones but then I realize. No here they cannot go to the cafe and talk freely. So they do it here because they are anonymous. So I feel like we have judgment. We have a lot of prejudices. I even hear some teachers say...they feel that they cannot critically think. They shouldn't engage in issues and talk about them. I even heard an Egyptian teacher in a professional development on critical thinking say...what critical thinking...in Egypt nobody teach you have to think critically. They are, especially from Westerners, these Arabs or maybe these Westerners are fixated on memorization, but I think we shouldn't always make that presumption because even from my own experience...my parents are from Turkey. One of the things they did in their village was they were encouraged to memorize the Quran, but my grandfather said one time is like do you even know what you are reading? It's just like this community awareness that you may not know what you are reading but our ancestors and our people who are important say this is important so just do it. But when you read the Quran it says like "yatafakkaroon". It says that Ok you're memorizing it, but think about it. So I think it's a little dangerous when you presume too much because maybe there are students who just memorize but if they're really reading the Quran and really reading what is saying, it's not saying blindly follow, right. But it's tricky. They are a lot of judgments even in terms of politics. People do presume but they are very scared to talk about it, but they do presume that there is something limiting students or what teachers can say because of that atmosphere.

Q: What do you think the solutions are to deal with problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students?

I think this is one way. I mean just basically show them...show them what's going on. What I tell them to do ...develop ideas of sentence one, especially to transition better to sentence two. Because you can keep these two sentences but there has to be something between them to make them coherent. And that is exactly what I tell them to do. Or say release ideas based on three questions. What I tell them to do in the introduction...this is an argumentative essay...I tell them tell me who are the two sides fighting. I tell them what is the contention. You know...if you and I are arguing, there has to be a point of why we're arguing about this. You feel the children should be protected always, I feel they are going to be held back if they are. So I tell the students if tell the sides of the arguments if you tell

why they are arguing and if you tell what is at stake. They ask me what is at stake. I tell them it means what do you have to win and lose and why do I have to win and lose. I say to them if you talk about these three things, you are going to make it coherent. So there are actually models for each type of essay that facilitate cohesion. Because if I tell you there are these two people fighting, this is why they are fighting...this is what they are going to win or lose, it is already cohesive. And a lot of this I can understand that the students don't get because they repeatedly ask...they repeatedly ask. So I say maybe it's the vocabulary I chose. So instead of at stake and contention, I should say why they are fighting and why they are fighting and whether they are going to win. Even I simplify it, I think, for them. It's something they should revisit and think. But I guess this makes me think that on a deeper level every writer struggles with cohesion, but we have to go back to it. But in another way there are tasks or questions or criteria that you can include in an essay that facilitate cohesion and like what I said by giving these points. If you just take the time to think of all of this this, then your cohesion will be facilitated.

Appendix 2.4: Tutor semi-structured interview script

What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q: grammatical cohesion

A: There some that I'd try to define to students...it depends on the students but if we say, for instance, credit students or bachelor students who r supposedly further. Along there in their study these ones are grammatical cohesion reference and substitution. I'd discuss with them. Often I'd... I'd only do that if there was no another way to approach it. But substitution

Q. lexical cohesion

Q. reference

Q. substitution

A. But substitution is a big thing here in paraphrasing and I actually find it one of those things that students sort of cling to ...easy. I have a dictionary...I have a phone...I could do that... substitute. So substitution... I find it... I discourage students from using substitution in any way because when the students are substituting, they don't actually understand the whole of the sentence in a paragraph. They haven't learned that as a complete understanding of. So I find it as a block to understanding.

Q. ellipsis

Q. conjunction

A. This is one of the things missing in students' work here and I think that's to do with everything in small but everything they think they're doing in small easily achievable but... and these things like cohesion and conjunction any relationship between previous texts and the text they are doing now and future texts within it is located so.

Q. reiteration

A. Instead of reiteration you get repetition, where I feel that reiteration is not a repetition which is students think it is. But a way of reframing what the student is saying that it confirms a very deep state of understanding.

Q. Collocation

What terms you have heard of? (Cards)

Q. coherence between sentences in text

Q. coherence between and within paragraphs

Q. coherence in the essay as a whole

Q. role of cohesion on coherence

A. I speak a lot in terms of telling stories in academic writing because this is what we do... we tell stories. And I guess that's the type of coherence...informing

Q. role of non-linguistic or non-textual factors on coherence

A. I think sometimes its write neatly... may sure it looks nice...have a good structure that you put things on because many things could be forgiven can help people understand if you have a topic sentence and then pick... I think that is the sort of coherence that we look for is starting a paragraph with a topic sentence and picking that inside the paragraph and having a structure which is a clear structure... clear paragraph clear writing... not in strange fonts not in pink that creates a harmony with your reader... so if they could see the text flow or the flow of the story, then all of this comes clear. So you need to start. This is actually how I'd actually approach. If someone came with a complete piece, then this is how id approach it...start with the overall structure and then look at how the sentences... work with the students about if your sentences jump around if your sentences are structured properly and lead your reader through, then your paragraphs r not going to either end and your essay is really hard to... because you're leading your reader by the hand through your essay. And if at all one beautifully structured mess, then it's going to make sense

What terms you have heard of? (elicitation task using cards)

Q. relation between coherence and essay connectedness

A. I think with all of these, if you don't have them, you don't have coherence. All these things. Understanding a clear understanding of who and what you're writing about. It makes so much easier to be coherent. And if any of these things are missing, particularly your knowledge of the subject and some degree of background knowledge. If that is missing, it makes it very difficult to be coherent.

Q. relation between coherence and logic or making sense

Q. relation between coherence and subject and background knowledge

Some of the students here come from small villages are still very sheltered and they don't know about junk. They have so much... not to overcome but to learn about just living in Muscat... perhaps with the social media the gap is closing but we still need to think of that.

Q. relation between coherence and interaction between the writer and the reader

A: This is the concept of interaction between the writer and the reader is often something that is not thought about until its quite late...post graduate. It's really important to think about who your reader is going to be whether it teacher whoever. And what you are, how you're making it easy...how is that person is going to understand it, if they don't have the knowledge of the subject and the background knowledge... so you are as a writer work

your way through that. And it's quite good here because we are all expert in different things, so we need to understand the relationship we create with the students. So we readers are not expert so you need to make sure you're clear.

Q: How do you think cohesion and coherence are related to EFL writing quality?

A: I think it's very important, but I guess it's difficult and I don't think that it's something that can be taught. If you do this and do this, your writing will be cohesive, and everyone will understand it. There are so many things. Students need to read a lot. students have to write a lot before cohesion becomes a second nature and even in native speakers it's the same.

Q: Do you use cohesion or coherence to make judgment about the other?

A: I think cohesion influences coherence because without cohesion... one without the other does not work so much. But I think with cohesion... if something is cohesive it is easier to understand and you know the writer is understanding it. It shows comprehension and it aids comprehension.

Q: Could you share your experience as a tutor at the Writing Centre of helping students improve their cohesion and coherence in their academic essays?

Structure... structure and more structure. By creating a physical that you are working within and always working within that and doing that first trying to write a lot of things and then putting it into a structure but starting with a structure because you could see your pathway to comprehension. And by careful with words we use ... instead of saying you write your introduction and your body paragraphs and when you come to the end, your conclusion repeats what you're saying but not using repeat what you're saying...you're using like you revisit...or explain so you look back from your conclusion and see what you have done.. see what in your conclusion. So being careful of the language and giving students... when I was talking about paraphrasing... just finding new words to slot in is my least favourite. And giving them ways...If that is the easiest way that they have. If there is a lot of reading that they have to do sometimes... just to show them the way. So Ok you've translated this word into Arabic and then you have an Arabic word. So you have looked that Arabic word and translated it back to English. Fine now go and use the English dictionary. Sometimes I teach them how to use a physical dictionary, not the phone because the phone is full of pitfall. And giving them those tools in words too to show how the words interrelate and how they cannot mean things. This is a sort of innocence in the belief that if we think the word means the same thing and.... And helping them to understand their sources and getting them to explain things to you. There is a way of comprehending what it means and the whole concept if you could talk about it... write about it. And I think many of the students don't think of what they say is as important as what they write while in fact it's often the same. They talk about somethings more fluently and with a great deal of

understanding and comprehension and cohesiveness that when they write because they think it has to be somehow special on page so...

Q: How do you see the role of cohesion and coherence in the marking criteria of students' EFL academic essays?

A: I am not sure if I could talk about it. The students have a marking scheme but it's difficult to see sometimes how... some teachers get very bogged down on certain details in the marking and others don't. It's very subjective. So I don't know. That's the problem with language. I think...I watched my sister, she is a math teacher, and I watched her mark in math. And I think if only we could do that with language and in essays and things like that. There are certain things that irritate and this what my PhD supervisor said to me, you don't want to irritate your markers by doing anything that is irritating. Anything that tricks up the reader irritates them. I could be completely wrong here but I'm not having the marking rubric. There is too little emphasis on the things that impact on cohesion and comprehensiveness. Things like spelling. They become unfashionable in English speaking countries. It's not fashionable to spell right or even close. And that makes a difference to the reception of work. The assumptions that are made by someone reading something but the spelling is bad. That's a difficulty and there used to be no emphasis on reading your own work out loud so you could see how if you got a sentence that is just working. Why not working? Reading it out loud you could feel where the problems are. Some of that because they don't have the English...the ability to read fluidly in English. But a lot of them are actually at a bachelor and credit level where they are perfectly able to do that. None mentioned it to them as a way of testing cohesion.

Q: What do you think of students' understanding of cohesion and coherence?

A: If you're talking in the sense of storytelling, and going from a beginning to an end and telling people exactly what you want them to know, they understand and they would like to have it. The problem is having enough skills to do it in terms of nuanced language because often they are in a level where their language particularly is nuanced. And talking about words where words for native speakers have negative and positive connotations. That's sort of things. But if you say it to them coherence, many of the students will look at you and say you have got two heads. It's really lovely when we see students coming back regularly and to see the cohesion and coherence developing in their writing in one pace as if they've understood things as they have good things in good order. I've come in terms with the paraphrasing they need to do and actually understood and sat and thought about telling somebody else. There more of it happening (students bringing their paper again to the tutor). One or two of the teachers have started sending students straight to us and they were clear about they get to see our feedback and what we tell students to do and then they make sure they get to see what we have said which makes every one's life much easier. But if you are seeing the same student regularly you maintain a cohesive line of instruction. It would be lovely to be able to do that with every student.

Q: What do you think the key challenges are that students encounter in achieving cohesion and coherence in their EFL academic writing?

A: I think of the structure all the time (meaning of that indicated above) in terms of what I see in bachelor students for the last couple of years I've had a number of students finishing their degrees doing their final reports and it's like no one showed them how to structure... how to move someone through something. The language skills are good and sentence structures are great but actually having the structure to move through. It seems often that what we think that little structure because everyone focused on the writing, these sentences and the paragraphs of that larger structure. Or often if the students are tested out of the foundation, they miss so much in the foundation programme about writing and structuring. They don't have that. Their teachers in bachelor don't have the time to teach them to write. So yeh...I think its structure. But I think this pretty universal. There are certain things. What is peculiar to the setting here. I think certainly there is a big cultural divide between the west and the east. So it seems to me that Arabs very generally speaking. Very generally speaking are very logical and think... I don't whether. There is a basic difference in the way they structure their thinking...I think. And so it comes through in sentence structures as well...It's the way we use words and in the way Arabic moves...it's a beautiful language, and it has a structural integrity and development that English does not have...because English is like put everything in a pot and what you put around... And I think in many ways English speakers and the English language have a short attention span. Sentences in English are short whereas in Arabic and in German readers can keep hold of an idea for quite a long time. So the writing can reflect. So o be cohesive and comprehensible in English you sort of have break down your thoughts into smaller sections... into chunks...so the reader doesn't get sort of lost. It's becoming more and more...I think.

Q: What do you think the solutions are to deal with problems/challenges that arise with teaching cohesion and coherence to students?

A: I think to acknowledge that this is very important. That's actually...if those things are not present. That success in academic writing and studying is hard to come by because it's a mark of education...it's a mark of cleverness. I won't say intelligence because that's not... it's a mark of a well-rounded person who has all of these things... has a background...has knowledge of the subject... has all of these things. And if you don't have them, then you are ...you have to work a lot harder to have people take you seriously. I think... and I think everyone needs to understand that that is more important than some other things. So if you could have someone who is writing smoothly and coherently, and peaking coherently, then that's going to develop much further. And all of those things for their personal development. I suggest to students not to read newspapers because the newspapers... the local ones because often the people who are writing them are not English speakers and in social media the language is breaking down in a way that's not positive for academic writing. But I know this library has beautiful old fashioned journal books or young people books which are beautifully written and more students...things like classic English and

American literature. It comes from a time where written language was very very important and it shows better how to use the language in a fluent and a cohesive way. The more students read those, the more they have a feel for how English flows in English in a standard English...not American or British or Australian English. This partially useful for academic writing because if it was a course on academic writing in a period of two months. You could enforce a lot of homework reading and writing. Lots of reading and writing. Just more and more of it. And I know students who have to me having done foundation but then gone to do their master degrees in Arabic because its easier and ...then faced with a subject that they have to do in English and write in English. They find that much much more difficult and the cohesion and the coherence is certainly. So you need to practice. I mean I cant doing what they've done...coming here with virtually no English entirely and getting to a point where they do a degree.

Q: How do you see the teachers' teaching of cohesion and coherence to students?

A: I can't... I've noticed it. Really because I have got so much to do. I think they get lost in the day-to-day classroom because there are so many students sitting there and it's often till four. If the students is unsure, it's something they can live to because it's a hard concept to get whereas if they have one to one...discussion time or tutorials. I don't know whether they do tutorials here where you just talk about it. Whether it's there or I haven't noticed it.

Q: What do you think teachers should do with their students to help them improve their cohesion and coherence in academic writing?

A: I guess I could talk about some of the things that we have been talking about. More informal sort of way...because most of the teaching here is done with the teacher at the front and the students. The boys there and the girls. And that is the sort of received wisdom. To a certain degree here it's a received wisdom too...they come to us...because we r the expert. We try to have a less formal relationship with the students. To try to explain things in a way that we don't remember. I think part of the problem too...doing things in a way that they might remember. So that is in a small group discussion that can help. I think it would be useful at the credit level where their English is quite good and they are in their own areas of expertise. Because for some reason I think that's in a more informal setting you become more comprehensive...safer... What I see was of Arabic writing when it was put through Google. I have learned Arabic for a couple of years so I have got a minor grasp of on sentence structure and things like that which has made a big difference to my tutoring here because sometimes it's just that simple to say...there are always surprised when you say wrote this in Arabic and put it in Google? They say yeh...How did you know? Because it's not the way we say it in English. Often it's enough for them ...Aaaah. The teaching of cohesion and coherence should be something that is aimed for especially in academic writing right from the beginning so that it becomes a second nature and when you guide through the complex of getting things organized... getting the building blocks in place... I think... to just happen naturally and it does happen naturally to native English speakers so

there is absolutely no reason why it should happen naturally to people who are non-native English speakers as well. It's always frightening. I think the most frightening essays I marked I marked were first year university in Australia and the level of writing was appalling and most of the students were native English speakers. We knew what they were supposed to have learned in secondary because some of us were secondary school teachers...some of us have taught it...and that lack of cohesion and comprehension is enormous at that level and suddenly you have back battle and start teaching them how to write an essay and that is very difficult at that level. So it's confined to EFL students.

Appendix 3: Research ethics documents

Appendix 3.1: University of Exeter ethical consent



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Havitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students, Teachers and Tutors' Perspectives

Researcher(s) name: Jamila Abdullah Al Siyabi

Supervisor(s): Debra Myhill
Susan Jones

This project has been approved for the period

From: 19/12/2016
To: 30/09/2019

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/16/17/18

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Durrant'.

Signature: Date: 19/12/2016
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)

Appendix 3.2: Study site ethical (CPS) clearance

Sultan Qaboos University
Centre for Preparatory Studies



جامعة السلطان قابوس
مركز الدراسات التحضيرية

الرقم:
التاريخ:
الموافق:

Ref:
Date:

20 December, 2016

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that the Research Committee at Centre for Preparatory Studies of Sultan Qaboos University has reviewed the research project entitled:

"Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students, Teachers and Tutors' Perspectives"

presented by **Mrs. Jamila Al-Siyabi**, and were found to meet the ethical and practical requirements of the Committee. Please accept this letter as a notification of final permission to conduct the proposed research at the Centre for Preparatory Studies. We would like to wish Mrs. Jamila all the very best in her research project.

Pooja Sancheti
Deputy Director for Professional Development
Research and Community Service



Dr. Hashil Al-Saadi
Head of the Research Committee

Pooja Sancheti
20/12/2016

Hashil Al-Saadi
20/12/2016

صندوق البريد: ٤٣ الخوض ١٢٢ منطقة أمان - هاتف: ٢٤٤٤٤٤٠ - فاكس: ٢٤٤٤٤٤١١ البريد الإلكتروني: cps@sq.edu.om الموقع: <http://www.squ.edu.om/> 1an
P.O. Box 434 Khodh, Postal Code 123, Sultanate of Oman - Tel.: 2444440 Fax: 24444411 - Email: cps@sq.edu.om Website: <http://www.squ.edu.om/1an>

Appendix 3.3: Student invitation for interview participation

Invitation to Participate in an interview about Cohesion and coherence in academic writing

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in an interview to discuss various issues that relate to the cohesion and coherence of the essays that you write.

Please see below more information about the project and your role in the interview

N.B. Your participation in the interview will be rewarded.

If you would like to be interviewed, please get in touch with me at jamilas@squ.edu.om or jaka201@exeter.ac.uk to agree on the interview time and place.

Regards,

Jamila Al Siyabi

Assistant language lecturer at the SQU CPS

and PhD Student at the University of Exeter, UK

Appendix 3.4: Student information sheet

Research Information Sheet for Students

Title of the Research Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students', Teachers' and Tutors' Perspectives

Researcher

Jamila Abdullah Al-Siyabi

jamilas@squ.edu.om or jaka201@exeter.ac.uk

Research Project Supervisor

Professor Debra Myhill

d.a.myhill@exeter.ac.uk

Nature of research

I have always been interested in student writing. I enjoy teaching writing to students and doing discussions about what they think about the writing they do, the challenges they face and how they interact with different writing tasks. I am now researching two important areas that relate to the quality of writing which are cohesion and coherence. I aim from my study to explore how you understand cohesion and coherence in the context of the academic writing you do. You will discuss how you have tried to demonstrate cohesion and coherence in two types of essays; argumentative essays and compare and contrast essays. I also aim to get your perspectives about cohesion and coherence and issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. I am hoping that my research will enable me to reach some important understanding about the cohesion and coherence of your academic writing that can be relevant and useful for teachers, future research and decision makers. Your participation in my research is of vital significance for the success of my research project.

Purpose of research

Through interviews, my study specifically attempts to explore your understanding of cohesion and coherence in academic writing and your perceptions about issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. My study also investigates how you demonstrate cohesion and coherence in your writing through analysing your academic essays.

What is involved

The research will involve the text analysis of students' academic writing; and interviews with students, writing teachers and tutors.

Voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality

You as a research participant take part in the study willingly and are free to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research project. Your details and data are going to be dealt with in a confidential and an anonymous manner and will be used for research purposes only.

Jamila Al Siyabi
(Signature of the researcher)

Appendix 3.5: Student consent form for semi-structured interview

Student Consent Form

Participation in a semi-structured interview

Title of Research Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students', Teachers' and Tutors' Perspectives

Details of Project

This research project is part of my PhD programme at the University of Exeter, UK. Your participation involves being interviewed to discuss your understanding of cohesion and coherence of academic writing and your views about some issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. The information you will be sharing in the interview about yourself, your understanding and perceptions of the research area indicated above is going to be used for research purposes only. Your interview is going to be audiotaped.

Your interview data will be reserved for five years and the academic essays for seven years.

Contact Details

If you have further questions or you would like to contact me about any matter that concerns your withdrawal from the research or the research project, please contact me on any of the following:

Researcher: Jamila Abdullah Al-Siyabi

The Centre for Preparatory Studies P. O. Box 43 Sultan Qaboos University Al-Khod, PC: 123

Telephone: 00968 2414 1640 Fax: 00968 24441 3411 Email: jamilas@squ.edu.om

Research Project Supervisor: Professor Debra Myhill Email: d.a.myhill@exeter.ac.uk

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research project.

I understand that:

there is no obligation for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations

all information I give will be treated as confidential .

.....
.....

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)
researcher)

Jamila Al Siyabi

(Signature of the

Appendix 3.6: Student consent form: including two essays in research

Student Consent Form Including two of your essays in Research

Title of Research Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students', Teachers' and Tutors' Perspectives

Details of Project

This project is part of my PhD programme at the University of Exeter, UK. Your participation involves including two of your essays as part of a research project on university students' understanding and perceptions of cohesion and coherence in their English academic writing essays. The two essays (i.e. argumentative essay and compare and contrast essay that are part of the course assessment) are going to be used for the purpose of researching how students write cohesive and coherent English academic writing essays. The two essays are going to be used for research purposes only. You as a research participant take part in the study willingly and are free to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research project. Your academic essays are going to be reserved for seven years.

Contact Details

If you have further questions or you would like to contact the researcher about any matter that concerns your withdrawal from the research or the research project, please contact her on any of the following:

Researcher: Jamila Abdullah Al-Siyabi

The Centre for Preparatory Studies P. O. Box 43 Sultan Qaboos University Al-Khod, PC: 123

Telephone: 00968 2414 1640 Fax: 00968 24441 3411 Email: jamilas@squ.edu.om

Research Project Supervisor: Professor Debra Myhill Email: d.a.myhill@exeter.ac.uk

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research project.

I understand that:

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

samples of my writing may be used in publications

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations

all information I give will be treated as confidential .

.....
.....
(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....
(Printed name of participant)

Jamila Al Siyabi
(Signature of the researcher)

Appendix 3.7: Teacher and tutor information sheet

Research Information Sheet for Teachers and Tutors

Title of the Research Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students', Teachers' and Tutors' Perspectives

Researcher

Jamila Abdullah Al-Siyabi
jaka201@exeter.ac.uk

jamilas@squ.edu.om or

Research Project Supervisor

Professor Debra Myhill

d.a.myhill@exeter.ac.uk

Nature of research

The area of student writing has always fascinated me. There is so much that needs to be explored, reflected upon and researched further when it comes to the teaching of writing. I have been keen to explore a significant aspect of student writing that relates to writing quality which after doing some elaborate research has turned out to be the cohesion and coherence of student academic writing. My study investigates the cohesion and coherence of student writing at the CPS (Centre for Preparatory Studies) through examining their verbalised understanding of cohesion and coherence. I also aim to get the perspectives of three types of participants who are directly involved in the context of writing at the CPS; the students, writing teachers and tutors from the Writing Centre about cohesion and coherence and issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence. I am hoping that my research will enable me to reach some crucial understanding about the cohesion and coherence of student academic writing that can inform research. I also seek to come up with some implications for policy makers and practitioners. Your participation in my research is of vital significance to ensure its success.

Purpose of research

My study specifically attempts to explore undergraduate students' metalinguistic understanding of cohesion and coherence in academic writing in the field of English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) at the CPS through semi-structured interviews. The study also looks into how students, academic writing teachers and writing tutors at the CPS Writing Centre perceive issues related to the teaching of cohesion and coherence to students through semi-structured interviews. My study also investigates students' written academic texts to find out the characteristics of cohesion and coherence that are evident in their academic writing through text analysis of students' texts.

What is involved

The research will involve the text analysis of students' academic writing; and interviews with students, writing teachers and tutors.

Voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality

You as a research participant take part in the study willingly and are free to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research project. Your details and data are going to be dealt with in a confidential and an anonymous manner and will be used for research purposes only.

Jamila Al Siyabi
(Signature of the researcher)

Appendix 3.8: Teacher and tutor consent form

Writing Teacher and Writing Centre Tutor Consent Form

Participation in a semi-structured interview

Title of Research Project: Omani Undergraduate Students' Metalinguistic Understanding of Cohesion and Coherence in EFL Academic Writing and Students', Teachers' and Tutors' Perspectives

Details of Project

This project is part of my PhD programme at the University of Exeter, UK. Your participation involves participating in a semi-structured interview on the Writing Centre tutors' understanding and perceptions about issues relevant to the teaching of cohesion and coherence in academic writing. The information you will be sharing in this interview about yourself, your understanding and perceptions on the research area indicated above are going to be used for research purposes only.

Your interview data will be retained for five years.

Contact Details

If you have further questions or you would like to contact the researcher about any matter that concerns your withdrawal from the research or the research project, please contact her on any of the following:

Researcher: Jamila Abdullah Al-Siyabi

The Centre for Preparatory Studies P. O. Box 43 Sultan Qaboos University Al-Khod, PC: 123

Telephone: 00968 2414 1640

Fax: 00968 24441 3411

Email:

jamilas@squ.edu.om

Research Project Supervisor: Professor Debra Myhill Email: d.a.myhill@exeter.ac.uk

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations

all information I give will be treated as confidential .

.....
.....
(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....
(Printed name of participant)
researcher)

Jamila Al Siyabi
(Signature of the

Appendix 4: Text analysis data

Appendix 4.1: Showing the results of the analysis of students' use of collocations

Essay	Total of collocations	Essay	Total of collocations	Essay	Total of collocations	Essay	Total of collocations
1/C	24	19/C	12	1/A	12	19/A	14
2/C	22	20/C	10	2/A	17	20/A	8
3/C	19	21/C	9	3/A	7	21/A	20
4/C	8	22/C	19	4/A	11	22/A	6
5/C	7	23/C	14	5/A	20	23/A	15
6/C	6	24/C	5	6/A	4	24/A	12
7/C	10	25/C	3	7/A	12	25/A	19
8/C	13	26/C	17	8/A	23	26/A	13
9/C	11	27/C	24	9/A	16	27/A	26
10/C	6	28/C	17	10/A	6	28/A	17
11/C	7	29/C	9	11/A	12	29/A	13
12/C	14	30/C	18	12/A	12	30/A	16
13/C	8	31/C	22	13/A	7	31/A	22
14/C	16	32/C	12	14/A	21	32/A	14
15/C	16	33/C	16	15/A	41	33/A	11
16/C	16	34/C	28	16/A	22	34/A	18
17/C	15	35/C	26	17/A	20	35/A	15
18/C	11	36/C	11	18/A	39	36/A	22

Appendix 4.2: Showing the results of the analysis of students' collocations

Essay	Collocations	Essay	Collocations	Essay	Collocations	Essay	Collocations
1/C	travelling-transport	19/C	current time	1/A	strict rule	19/A	real life
2/C	human habits	20/C	trading-goods	2/A	lost money	20/A	educational level
3/C	past-present	21/C	boys-girls	3/A	weak body	21/A	economic crisis
4/C	life style	22/C	read-write	4/A	healthy habit	22/A	life –death
5/C	spend time	23/C	play-games	5/A	real world	23/A	advantages-disadvantages
6/C	cultures-religions	24/C	discover-new	6/A	solve problem	24/A	strong personality
7/C	enrich knowledge	25/C	survive-food	7/A	reduce stress	25/A	measure performance
8/C	difference-similarity	26/C	ride- a camel	8/A	happy life	26/A	grades-quizzes
9/C	free time	27/C	video games	9/A	negative effect	27/A	students-subjects
10/C	travelling-enjoying	28/C	money-buy	10/A	perils smoking	28/A	accidents-high speed
11/C	history-cultures	29/C	travelling-holiday	11/A	tobacco industry	29/A	global phenomena
12/C	brothers-cousins	30/C	food-water	12/A	respiratory diseases	30/A	arrive late
13/C	cultures-customs	31/C	daily routine	13/A	heart disease	31/A	achieve goals
14/C	travelling-pleasure	32/C	travelling-risks	14/A	university students	32/A	drive-fast
15/C	returned home	33/C	medical purposes	15/A	smoking cigarette	33/A	positives and negatives
16/C	travelling-treatment	34/C	restaurants-coffee shops	16/A	students-teachers	34/A	road safety
17/C	children-parents	35/C	love-support	17/A	smoking health	35/A	studying - progress
18/C	reach-destinations	36/C	habits-behaviours	18/A	Conscious mind	36/A	tests-assessments

Appendix 4.3: Showing the results of the analysis of students distorting ‘coherence-related concepts: text content, meaning, logic and relations with the reader’

Essay extracts	Essay
According to research negative smokers who do not smoke but they sit beside smokers and breath the smoke of cigarette are in danger more than smokers themselves.	5/A
Smokers should not have the right to smoke because the smokers’ lives are shorter than the normal person’ life, ...	6/A
Many doctors show that the smell of smoking can affect on people who smell it many times.	7/A
Second, the opponents argue that that there are many smokers who live long; therefore, smoking doesn’t cause health problems. However, most smokers suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes and in lots of cases even cancer, such as lung cancer, and mouth cancer.	11/A
Many studies show that the number of the accidents in Oman has increased completely, and one reason of that was because of low speed as well.	14/A
Predictions in the future say that quizzes and grades will stay in schools but in a more advanced way in terms of technology.	33/A
According to the majority perspectives, childhood is the most wonderful life stage lived by each one because this period of time has great memories while a child is learning and being active.	17/C
Opponent claim that so many exams and tests cause so much stress and anxiety to students and it does not help them to think effectively; however, many case studies have proved that the slight feeling of anxiety is extremely helpful to students because it makes them aware of the material and the subject that they are studying.	35/A
Million of people were suffered by the tough road but now it became the easiest things which many people enjoy travelling around the world.	25/C
Childhood is the most essential stage in our life.	31/C

Appendix 4.4: Irrelevant sentences that did not match students' essay ideas/arguments

Topic	Essay extracts	Essay
comparing and contrasting travelling or childhood in the past and	<p>This attitude will never change if the parents didn't deal with it and taught them the right attitude.</p> <p>Both of them love appearing their abilities, so this is noticed in their behaviors; for example, they make noise to show that they are strong.</p> <p>I think travelling in the past was something so important for people and they cannot do it every time.</p>	<p>22/C</p> <p>24/C</p> <p>28/C</p>
Comparing and contrasting travelling or childhood now and then	<p>Travelling is easier now, but we need to have a good reasons for it.</p> <p>Moreover, childhood ages still beautiful because of children's hearts and never change by the life way.</p> <p>Each time has its own lifestyle that fits people requirements.</p> <p>People should be thankful that travelling made easy now days, and take the chance to go and see the world.</p> <p>I am sure that travelling in the future will be easier and faster than now.</p> <p>About me, I am grateful to be one of the people of the modern generation.</p> <p>Children the most important person in our life who need more care.</p> <p>People now also appreciate the old ways and they try to use it to show how our history is rich.</p> <p>It is thought that travelling now is much better and easier than travelling in the past according to the reasons mentioned above.</p> <p>Both travelling send message to us which is successful life not come only without struggling.</p> <p>In my point of view, fifty years ago childhood was better because of the lack of modern tech which waste our time.</p> <p>It is crucial to say that the rule of parenting has also changed and progressed, this is why more differences between both children are obtained.</p>	<p>4/C</p> <p>5/C</p> <p>6/C</p> <p>11/C</p> <p>19/C</p> <p>20/C</p> <p>24/C</p> <p>25/C</p> <p>26/C</p> <p>30/C</p> <p>34/C</p> <p>35/C</p>
arguing for or against universities having quizzes and tests, speed limit being less than 100 km/h or smokers having the right to smoke	<p>If Oman roads are wider most of this arguments will be accepted. It is agreed that the age of getting a driving licence is affecting on road organization and the number of accidents.</p> <p>Therefore, people will have good lifes if they respect driving rules.</p> <p>If there are grades or not, every student should take his study seriously.</p> <p>In the future, the roads will develop. It is thought that cars will be develop and can be drove in high speed without any problems.</p> <p>Hopefully, there will be more improvement in the future.</p> <p>It could be inspiring if the people drive in a good way which will help them to go on trips without any sense of fear of being hit in a bad way.</p>	<p>1/A</p> <p>14/A</p> <p>23/A</p> <p>28/A</p> <p>30/A</p> <p>34/A</p>

Appendix 4.5: Scan of mid-term writing exam with lists of ideas offered by teachers

MID-SEMESTER EXAM
PART 2: 1 hour 30 minutes

Write a 6-paragraph compare/contrast essay of at least 350 words on ONE of the topics below. You should include a title, an introduction with a clear thesis statement, 3 body paragraphs, a transition paragraph, and a concluding paragraph with a summary.

Make sure you spend some time planning your essay before you begin, and that you leave time to check your work. Your essay will be marked on both accuracy and content.

1

Compare and contrast travelling in the past and now. You may write about reasons for travelling, kinds of transport, and the benefits gained from travel.

2

Compare and contrast childhood as lived by children today and as lived by children fifty years ago. Some of the ideas you can include are children's lifestyles, their responsibilities, and the kinds of games played by them.

Use the back of this page to write an outline of your essay. You must write the outline BEFORE you start your essay.

Appendix 4.6: Showing the results of the analysis of students' thesis statements with teachers' guided list of ideas

Topic	Thesis statements extracts	Essay
Comparing and contrasting travelling in the past and present	In spite of travelling, travelling now is similar to travelling at the past in reasons of travelling, but they are different in kinds of transport they use and the period of travelling.	1/C
	Travelling in the past and now is similar when it comes to the reason of travel and different in the kinds of transport and the amount of time to travel.	2/C
	This essay will explain the similarities between travelling in the past and now which are reasons for travelling and learning of ridding or driving and the differences which are kinds of transport and time of travelling.	3/C
	Travelling in the past and now are similar in terms of their benefits gained from travel, and differ in their kinds of transport and reasons for travelling.	6/C
	There is one difference between travelling in the past and travelling now in the kinds of transport and two similarities in terms of the reasons for travelling and the benefits gained from travelling.	7/C
	Although transport and time are the differences between travelling in the past and now, similarity can be found in purpose.	13/C
	Travelling in the past and now have significant similarities which are the reason of travelling and the benefits, but also have important differences which are kind of transport, the duration and the safety.	14/C
	There is a similarity between travelling in the past and now which is reasons for travelling, but there are two differences which are kinds of transport and the consuming time in travelling.	16/C
	There are two main differences between travelling in the past and now in terms of kinds of transport and the cost of travelling, but there is one similarity in benefits gained from travel.	18/C
	Despite the fact that travelling in the past is similar to travelling in the present in terms of reasons or goals of travelling, there are still several differences between them in the kind of transports and period of time that people spend on their trips.	19/C
	Travelling in the past and now differ obviously in the kinds of transport although the share the same reasons for travelling and the share benefits too.	20/C
	There is a significant similarity between travelling now and travelling in the past in terms of the benefits of travelling, but also there are distinct differences in the kind of transport and the reasons of travelling.	25/C
	This essay will compare and contrast the similarity which is the benefit of travelling, and the differences which are the transformation of the transport kinds and the travelling reasons between travelling in the past and now.	26/C
	In the past and now travelling has a lot of thing in common such as: things they take with them and the money they spend; however, they have some important differences in the kind of transport, the period of travelling and the reasons of travelling.	28/C
	As it is clear, traveling in the past and now have many differences, but they have similarity. They differ in kind of transportation and the reasons for travelling; also they share similarity in the aim of life.	30/C
However, travelling between now and then is some how the same in a one phenomenon like the reasons for travelling. There are of course considerable differences between them, such as, kinds of transport, time which is spent and the money which I will discuss now.	32/C	
Travelling then is similar to travelling now in who usually travels, and it's the males of course. It also has almost the same reasons for travelling now. However, it differs in what people have used and what they are using now, and the amount of time it took the people in the past compared to people now to get to their destinations.	33/C	

Comparing and contrasting childhood in the past and present	But when one thinks about childhood nowadays and childhood years ago, he or she can see that they are not quite the same. For example, They are different in many ways like in children's lifestyles and the games that they play. but that doesn't mean that they are completely different. They can be similar in one way and that is the child responsibilities.	9/C
	Both are alike in tatling and there are different in learning and health.	22/C
	Although the childhood now and in the past is similar in having families and the same thoughts, they it differs in having the responsibility and the kind of games played by them.	23/C
	Due to their differences in time, they are dissimilar in terms of responsibilities and the games played by them. However, they are alike in terms of education.	27/C
	In fact, today's children do share some similarities with the children from fifty years ago but not as much children now and then are similar in terms of obtaining different lifestyles and responsibilities and way of thinking.	35/C
	In the following essay I will compare and constant two things: childhood now and fifty years ago in these three terms: lifestyle and the kinds of games played where are different at and how they are similar in responsibilities.	34/C
	Children in the past may share children of today in the feelings and pleasure of childhood, but they are different in life style and responsibilities.	36/C

Appendix 4.7: Showing the results of the analysis of students' thesis statements without teacher's help

Topic	Thesis statements extracts	Essay
Arguing for/against road speed limits	It is thought that speed limits on Omani roads should not be lower than 100km/h because it makes the roads crowded, causes accidents and stops work.	14/A
	Many believe that having a speed limit than 100km/h is good; however, having a speed limit over 100km/h is better in many different ways (will help solving the traffic problem, will save lives, the speed limits are good for the new drivers).	29/A
	However, they should not be lower than 100km.per hour due to many reasons like destination, vehicle and boring which will be discussed in this essay.	32/A
	Limiting the speed to 100 km. per hour it makes the system more functional and more car accidents and offer better thinking for the drivers.	34/A
Arguing for/against universities having tests and quizzes	The opponents think that having no exams and grades will be affirmative for university students, but they ignore the advantages of having grades and exams; such as making students care about their studying, understand the lessons and memorize them properly.	19/A
	University should decide to give more quizzes and grades to students that will make students care about their studying, they will spend their time in a particular way, and they will achieve.	20/A
	Many people determine quizzes and tests are not useful, while it has been thought that quizzes and tests are very helpful and useful for students in improving the student's performance, make them responsible, and make them estimate themselves and know what the wrong with their performance also believe in their ability.	25/A
	This essay will argue three reasons why universities should give grades, which are fading of students' motivation, it will not fair for some students, and the need of the country to well-educated students.	26/A
	Despite the disagreement, giving out tests will help students academically, test their knowledge and prepare them for their future job.	27/A
	This essay is going to discuss how students already have enough work to do, students have more than one course and that affects the amount of work they wold have to do and finally how the amount of quizzes, grades and tests is helpful for the students when they want to review.	33/A
	Giving students more tests and quizzes will make them have a better understanding of the subject, it will boost their averages to higher numbers as well as keeping them right on track of the learning process; therefore the advantages of giving students more tests outweigh the disadvantages.	35/A
Although it is argued by a group of people that universities should not give quizzes and tests to students, it is believed that those quizzes and tests help review the given information, sorting students and test their knowledge.	36/A	

Arguing for/against smoking	Smoking causes countless diseases to the smoker and the people around him. It is a waste of money, and it reduces the smoker's IQ.	2/A
	As a result smokers are not allowed to smoke because smoking is bad for smokers' health, it effects non smokers' health and it effects countries' economy negatively.	5/A
	Smokers should not have the right to smoke because the smokers' lives are shorter than the normal person's life, smoking has an adverse impact on other people more than the effect on the smoker himself, and smoking is the main reason of lung cancer.	6/A
	Smokers should not have the right to smoke because it causes health problems, it is a silence murderer and it pollutes the environment.	8/A
	However, you can not ignore the fact that smoking has many negative effects not only on smokers but the other people. Moreover, it increases the chance of death and change the smoker personality.	9/A
	Smokers should stop smoking because smoking affects one's body and others, it allows them to do a bad moral and it leads them to be careless toward the family.	10/A
	However, smoking should be illegal because it has a bad effect on society, it harms the smoker and the people round him, and it affects the economy in a bad way.	11/A
	So, no, smokers do not have the right to smoke because of: smokers children will get a lot of diseases, smoking will be similar to the society's feeling toward public spitting and smokers have an ugly faces and they caused "negative smoke".	12/A
	Smoking has produced a great controversy in society as generate bad effects for other people, destroy the environment and devastate the state economy.	15/A
	However, this problem should vanish from the societies and smokers must not have the right to smoke because young smokers are not aware of the wrong way they are in, the number of smokers must be reduced and we must avoid the societies destruction which is a result of the smoking problem.	17/A
	People should have a conscious mind that smoking is a harmful habit because smokers have been uncontrolled and confused all the time. In addition smoking affect the income of person who always smoke due to the fact that buying more cigarette will decrease the income by the time. Also, smoking causes many problems for the environment, because the tobacco, which comes outside of cigarette, pollute the air, so polluted air affect too much on creatures.	18/A
	Smokers do not have the right to smoke because they are encouraging other people to smoke especially the kids, smoking decres the percentage of youth and increase the percentage of death and the smokers affect people health who are sitting to them.	22/A
Smoking is extremely bad for people because the person who smokes does not have strong personality, smoking is not good approach to solve problems, and smoking causes many healthy problems.	24/A	

Appendix 4.8: Showing the results of the analysis of students' inaccurate use of tense and aspect

Essay extracts	Essay
People in the past have the same reasons as we do	29/C
Because of the development the transportation became easier than in the past.	28/C
This attitude will never change if the parents didn't deal with it and ...	22/C
People in the past they travel faraway to get what they want, and now too.	30/C
..., for example, in the past they used donkeys and camel to travel for long distance; therefore, It takes a long time to reach the place which they want; on the other hand, travelling now is more easy...	30/C

Appendix 4.9: Showing the results of the analysis of students' inaccurate use of the definite article 'the' before abstract and plural nouns

Topic	Essay extracts	Essay
Abstract nouns	After they finish <i>the school</i> , they return home and start to play with their phones and watch TV.	31/C
	In contrast, nowadays the life became easier because they use cars, houses and planes.	6/C
	... of course the childhood now seem to be easier than the past.	12/C
	Nonetheless, it is the widespread belief that quizzes and tests teach students different phenomena, for example, ways of revising and memorizing <i>the information</i> .	16/A
	What is more, some people travel for treatment when a person didn't find <i>the suitable treatment</i> in his country he travels to other country to get the <i>appropriate treatment</i> .	20/C
Plural nouns	It could be inspiring if <i>the people</i> drive in a good way which will help them to go on trips.	34/A
	In the past, people move from place to another to protect them selves from <i>the wild animals</i> .	8/C
	For example, <i>the parents</i> today teach their children how to cope with this.	30/C
	... that lower speed can make <i>the drivers</i> follow the same rules so that decreases the accidents.	3/A
	Just because they set around <i>the smokers</i> .	6/A
	However, all the countries should not allow anything that can harm the health of people.	7/A
	Smoking habit has become so prevalent in most societies because <i>the smokers</i> think that smoking makes them perfect.	13/A
	Moreover, people are attracted to the person who has the morals and stay away from <i>the bad habits</i> .	13/A
	Smokers do not have the right to smoke because they are encouraging other people to smoke especially <i>the kids</i> .	22/A
	Parents who are smoking, they are rolemodel for their kids, and <i>the kids</i> think that what their parents do is the right thing	22/A
	Moreover, the smokers don't know that they are affecting <i>the people</i> who are sitting next to them ...	22/A
	... and <i>the smokers</i> affect people health who are sitting to them.	22/A
All universities should give more quizzes to <i>the students</i> because that makes the students do more practices....	31/A	

Appendix 4.10: Showing the results of the analysis of students' run-on sentences

Topic	Essay extracts	Essay
Prolonged/lengthy (run-one) sentences	Childhood fifty years ago was too simple, it was fine to everyone to live in a house made out of clay or to stay and grow up the same place you were born in; however childhood nowadays is affected by the environment, children always want more and they always dream of travelling and going to disney land or lego land, also they seem open minded to everything and everyone different.	21/C
	Many people argue that smokers should have the right to smoke, because it's a personal choice, it has no bad effect on the smoker as what the media shows and says, and some claim that many celebrities and successful people are smokers and it didn't stop them from being successful.	9/A
	In the past, people were spending much time because they were travelling by animals, yet people now spend less time to travel than before since they use modern tybes of transport, however people now travel for distances they do not spend much time.	3/C
	Whereas, children nowadays have all kinds of devices that they can use to play like smart phones, I pods, computers and many others even if they have free time they still prefer to spent it inside the house because of that they don't go outside a lot and try different kind of games like any sport.	9/C
	Fifty years ago childhood was tougher than childhood now; children used to work hard at their families farm and help home with the cleaning and cooking; in the other hand, children nowadays do not work at home, they only get to play and enjoy their life.	21/C
	The aim of life is an evident similarity between travelling in the past and now, so both traveling the people have an aim which in both travelling people wish to have a successful and perfect life that is why they travel from country to another.	30/C
	First of all, it is claimed that speed limits on Omani roads should be lower than 100 because the roads organized; in contrast, if the speed should be lower than 100 km. per hour, the roads will be full of crowds and this leads to road congestion.	3/A
	So people who want to go to far places cannot drive higher than 100 km. per hour even though the road is empty, so they will need much time.	3/A
	Furthermore, it is not helping them to bel less stress because they are smoking to forget or to escape for their real life, actually smoking is short way to their doom.	22/A
	Opponent claim that so many exams and tests cause so much stress and anxiety to students and it does not help them to think effectively; however, many case studies have proved that the slight feeling of anxiety is extremely helpful to students because it makes them aware of the material and the subject that they are studying.	35/A

Appendix 4.11: Showing the results of the analysis of students' redundancy

Essay extracts	Essay
Nowadays people do likewise, they travel for the same reasons and goals.	19/C
... in both travelling people wish to have a <i>successful and perfect</i> life that is why they travel from country to another.	30/C
If we could do that, we will protect the <i>communities and families</i> from the collapse.	17/A
... , while it has been thought that <i>quizzes and tests</i> are very helpful and useful for student in improving that student's performance, ...	25/A
...; therefore, that makes drivers feel <i>comfortable and relax</i> while they are driving.	30/A
Opponent claim that so many <i>exams and tests</i> cause so much stress and anxiety to students and it does not help them to think effectively ...	35/A