



The use of cohesive devices in essay writing by ESL undergraduates of the University of Vavuniya

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Supra-sentential grammar comprises items used to make connections between sentences in writing. Cohesive Devices (CD) provide the consistency of sentences and paragraphs from one to the next. ESL learners must focus on structurally fostering cohesion in academic essay writing to enhance readers' understanding of the ideas. The challenging part of paragraphing is internal paragraph structure, where the various sentences in each paragraph coordinate to achieve concord by employing cohesive devices correctly and effectively. This study signifies how cohesive devices are used by university students in the Sri Lankan context in essay writing to integrate sentences and paragraphs to make sense in writing and the connectivity of the ideas expressed flow smoothly and clearly within a text. This study explores how competent first-year ESL learners are in engaging different cohesive device types, frequency of usage, and the difficulties they encounter. Twenty-five students from first-year Project Management following the degree programme in English medium from the University of Vavuniya were the respondents. The analysis employs qualitative and quantitative research design through a corpus-based analysis. The researcher chose the participants from the population using a simple random sampling method. The cohesive theory of Halliday, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion, was used to analyse the data. The findings reveal that the students can apply a few cohesive devices, and the mainly used ones are the CD of conjunction. However, the respondents have not satisfactorily attempted anaphoric, cataphoric references, ellipsis, lexical cohesion, substitution, and structural parallelism. Therefore, the research recommends specific teaching and learning strategies to improve the application of cohesive devices in essay writing for effective cohesion and coherence in the text. The study concludes that CD in essay writing plays a significant role in supporting learners' writing and integrating cohesion and coherence of sentences. Further, by understanding these cohesive strategies, the students learn how to manipulate and use them appropriately in essay writing effectively and successfully as advanced learners of university education in English medium.

Keywords: Cohesive Devices, Cohesion and Coherence, Essay Writing, Paragraph, Sentence

