

**An Investigation of the Use of Grammatical Cohesive
Devices in Grade 11 L2 Learners at a Private School in
RAK, UAE**

دراسة فعالية استخدام الروابط النحوية المختلفة في الكتابات المقالية لطلاب
الصف الحادي عشر في مدرسة خاصة برأس الخيمة – الإمارات العربية
المتحدة

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Writing has always been regarded as the most challenging language skill for the majority of L2 learners. Several studies have found that L2 learners encounter difficulties in implementing cohesive devices in a way that enable them to produce coherent written texts. Research has proved that these difficulties are reflected on the misuse, overuse or underuse of cohesive devices, which maintain cohesion and coherence in a text. This study is an investigation of the use of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 learner's descriptive essays at a private school in RAK, UAE. This study focuses on identifying the frequency of occurrence of four grammatical cohesive devices including reference, conjunction, ellipsis and substitution in L2 students' descriptive essay writing. It also investigates the correlation between the number of used grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of writing. Furthermore, the study identifies the difficulties encountered by L2 learners in respect of using cohesive grammatical devices in writing. In order to achieve the purpose of the study and answer the research questions, a mixed-method approach has been adopted. The quantitative method approach was used to find out the frequency of each grammatical cohesive device in 44 descriptive essays. To examine the correlation between the number of used grammatical devices and the quality of writing, the quantitative descriptive statistics approach using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, was implemented. However, the qualitative descriptive approach was implemented in terms of semi-structured interviews conducted for 4 teachers and 10 students to identify the difficulties that encounter L2 learners regarding using grammatical cohesive devices in writing.

An analysis of the quantitative and qualitative research methods applied in the study demonstrated that reference is the most frequently used cohesive device in students' writing, followed by conjunction. Ellipsis was proved to be the third most frequently used cohesive device. Substitution came the fourth most frequently used cohesive device. A moderate positive association between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices used and L2 learners' marks was proved by Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

The participants faced some hindrances regarding using grammatical cohesive devices such as concentrating on specific types and ignoring other types such as ellipsis and substitution. Students also encountered the difficulty of dealing with grammatical cohesive devices as

grammar and vocabulary items and not including them in contexts to be practiced in the writing procedure. Learners also faced another difficulty represented by the lack of feedback given by teachers on their writing concerning grammatical cohesive devices. As a recommendation of the study, teachers are recommended to include grammatical cohesive devices in the context of reading and writing. Teachers are also recommended to include grammatical cohesive devices in the writing rubric. Furthermore, learners are recommended to raise their awareness regarding interference of L1 through practicing varied language activities such as reading and listening.

الخلاصة

تعتبر الكتابة مهارة اللغة الأكثر تحدياً لغالبية متعلمي اللغة الثانية من غير الناطقين بها. وجدت العديد من الدراسات أن متعلمي اللغة الثانية يواجهون صعوبات في استخدام أدوات الربط بطريقة تمكنهم من إنتاج نصوص مكتوبة متماسكة. أثبتت الأبحاث أن هذه الصعوبات تظهر في إساءة استخدام أدوات الربط أو الإفراط في استخدامها أو الاستخدام غير الكافي لها ، بشكل يؤثر على تماسك النص. هذه الدراسة عبارة عن تحقيق في استخدام أدوات لربط النحوية في المقالات الوصفية للصف 11 في مدرسة خاصة في رأس الخيمة ، الإمارات العربية المتحدة. تركز هذه الدراسة على تحديد تواتر حدوث أربعة أدوات ربط بما في ذلك أدوات الإشارة ، والاقتران ، والحذف ، والاستبدال في كتابة المقالة الوصفية لطلاب اللغة الثانية. كما يبحث في العلاقة بين عدد أدوات الربط المستخدمة وجودة الكتابة. علاوة على ذلك ، تحدد الدراسة الصعوبات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الثانية فيما يتعلق باستخدام أدوات الربط النحوية في الكتابة. من أجل تحقيق الغرض من الدراسة والإجابة على أسئلة البحث ، تم اعتماد نهج الأساليب المختلطة حيث تم استخدام الطريقة الكمية لمعرفة وقوع أدوات الربط اللغوية في كل مقال في 44 مقالة وصفية. لدراسة العلاقة بين عدد أدوات الربط النحوية المستخدمة وجودة الكتابة ، تم تطبيق نهج الإحصاء الوصفي الكمي باستخدام معامل ارتباط بيرسون. في حين ، تم تنفيذ النهج الوصفي النوعي في سياق المقابلات شبه المنظمة التي أجريت لـ 4 معلمين و 10 طلاب لتحديد الصعوبات التي تواجه متعلمي اللغة الثانية فيما يتعلق باستخدام أدوات الربط النحوية في الكتابة. أظهرت نتائج البحث أدوات الإشارة كأكثر أداة ربط نحوية مستخدمة في مقالات الطلاب متبوعة بالاقتران في حين جاء الحذف كثالث أداة ربط نحوية مستخدمة في كتابات الطلاب. و حل الاستبدال كرابع أداة نحوية مستخدمة. كما أظهر معدل الارتباط المستخدم في التحليل الكمي إرتباط ملحوظا بين عدد أدوات الربط المستخدمة في الكتابة و جودة الكتابة.

واجه المشاركون بعض العوائق فيما يتعلق باستخدام أدوات الربط النحوية مثل التركيز على أنواع معينة وتجاهل أنواع أخرى مثل الحذف والاستبدال. واجه الطلاب أيضاً صعوبة في التعامل مع أدوات الربط النحوية مثل العناصر النحوية والمفردات وعدم تضمينها في سياقات يتم ممارستها في الأنشطة الكتابية. كما واجه المتعلمون صعوبة أخرى تتمثل في عدم وجود إعطاء التغذية الراجعة من المعلمين حول كتاباتهم المتعلقة بأدوات الربط النحوية. قدمت الدراسة بعض التوصيات للمعلمي بتضمين أدوات الربط النحوية في سياق القراءة والكتابة. كما وجهت النصح للمعلمين بتضمين أدوات الربط النحوية في دليل تصحيح الكتابة. علاوة على ذلك ، ينصح المتعلمون باثراء ادراكهم اللغوى عن طريق ممارسة مهارات اللغة المختلفة مثل القراءة و الاستماع لنصوص يؤديها ناطقون لغتهم الأم الإنجليزية لتفادي تاثير اللغة الأم على اكتسابهم للغة الإنجليزية بالشكل الصحيح.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my small family; my faithful wife and lovely kids, who have endured the all the tough circumstance I have gone through out the last two years. My wife has always been urging and pushing me forward to achieve the highest quality professional development. I will never forget her encouraging words which gave me the strength and motive to get my master degree. I did my best to make my lovely family proud of me.

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation also to my colleagues in my school and school administration, who were always supporting me.

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While studying at BUID I have faced many challenges and difficult times due to the huge workload and the inability to easily balance between work duties and study requirements. However, the faculty at BUID have made it possible to facilitate the obstacles that I have faced. Hence, I would like to thank Dr. Emad Abu Ayyash for his continuous support and encouragement to push me forward towards finalizing my dissertation and getting the Master of TESOL degree.

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Chapter ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the study

This chapter provides an insight about the topic of this dissertation, “An investigation of the use of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 learners at a private school in RAK”. It also identifies the main research problem and sheds light on the main focus of this research paper. Furthermore, the rationale and significance of the study are included in this chapter. Three research questions have been assigned to keep the study focused at all stages and guide the scope of the study.

Many L2 learners find writing as the most difficult skill to learn if compared to other language skills. According to Blanchard and Root (2010), writing is the most difficult language skill to master. The difficulty in achieving this skill goes back to many reasons. One of these reasons is the lack of good grammar knowledge. Richards (2006:3) identified grammar competence as the ability to produce correct sentences in a language. Writing well-structured and understandable sentences is an indicator of an appropriate grammar knowledge. In addition to grammatical competence, there are other factors that play a great role in writing in an effective way and producing good quality pieces of writing. Cohesion is one of these factors that contribute to producing good quality or well-written pieces of writing. Cohesion is the tool that allows the smooth flow of the sentences through combining them together by tools that contribute to making them understandable and well-structured. These tools are called cohesive devices. (Celce- Murcia, 2001) sees that writing in a coherent and effective way is a major achievement that not all ESL learners can achieve. As Carson (2001) mentions in his study, writing is a process that requires combining different ideas in the form of descriptive, argumentative, explanatory, narrative, informative or analytical form. Braine and Yorozu (1998) clarify the difficulty of writing process for L2 learners as it requires well-planned and smoothly flowing ideas controlled by coherent style. They also describe the process of writing as a difficult process for the native speakers themselves. Richards and Renandya (2002), deal with the difficulty of writing in a similar way as they mention that the reason of difficulty in writing goes back, not only, to the need of generating and organizing ideas, but also interpreting these ideas into meaningful texts. Myles (2002)

describes writing process as an obstacle creator for second language learners when they want to produce well-written texts in English.

1.2 The Research Problem

The focus of this study is to investigate the use of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 learners in descriptive essays at a private school in RAK. There are many reasons that lead me to choose this topic. Writing is a skill that cannot be ignored. learners need to master writing as a productive skill to complete their language competence. Throughout my teaching experience as a teacher and a lead teacher of English, I have seen how much students suffer in achieving the skill of writing and how much teachers also suffer in teaching it. Most of the learners do not face the same difficulty in learning other language skills. They may interact orally in an effective way but they may not put their ideas coherently on a paper. In speaking, students can convey their message to the other party in an easy way. However, in writing there could be a contact problem if the sentences are not cohesive and may lead to a kind of loss of meaning and purpose of writing. In reading and listening also students can handle a text and answer the related questions based on their understanding. The nature of writing as a skill determines other factors that the learner and the teacher need to acquire. In writing, students need to have many aspects such as lexical and grammatical tools to write properly. The outstanding problem with writing with most of our L2 learners imposes a persistent need to carry out effective studies that contribute to a real and remarkable improvement in teaching and learning this skill.

In this study I have chosen the following grammatical cohesive devices as a study focus: Reference, Conjunction, Ellipsis, Substitution. My choice goes back first to the importance of these devices in producing well-structured and understandable sentences. Secondly, for the reason of the remarkable lack and misuse of these devices in student's writings. While teaching and observing teachers It has been clearly noticed that this area in teaching and learning field needs effective concentration and this field of research needs to be more addressed. Previous studies have been made in this area but the impact of these studies has not yet been seen clearly on the performance of the learners. Both of the teachers and the students still suffer. Students still produce poor and bad-structured sentences in most English classes. This research handles the problem that faces L2 learners in an MOE curriculum

school in RAK. The problem of the study has been identified clearly by the researcher. The problem is related to the inappropriate use of grammatical cohesive devices by grade 11 L2 learners. We do not exaggerate if we say that the big majority of L2 learners encounter the problem of the lack of ability to produce a cohesive text because of their inability to use cohesive devices in general and grammatical cohesive devices in particular. Throughout my teaching experience, writing has always remained a skill that require a kind of special work to help the students acquire many basic writing skills. Students always ask for the help of their teachers or any external party to help them form or interpret their ideas. When they are left to write independently, they mainly face a problem of composing meaningful texts. Generating ideas is not the main problem for students. The main problem is connecting these ideas in an appropriate way that produce understandable or meaningful texts.

The problem of inappropriate use of grammatical cohesive devices is represented in the misuse, underuse or overuse these devices. When giving the feedback through correcting students' writings or even analyzing their writings in EOT (End of Term) exams, using the writing rubric, it has been clearly noticed that most of the students mainly use certain grammatical cohesive devices such as reference and conjunctions. Other grammatical cohesive devices such as ellipsis and substitution are almost not used by most of the students. Moreover, even the mostly used devices are misused. Actually, this problem requires a kind of effective remedial work through applying the recommendations of the abundant studies that have been made in that field to help student develop their writing skill so as to prepared to the stage where they are required to produce an academic writing texts.

To make the study more effective, the researcher has collected essays for male and female students to analyze their data concerning the use of grammatical cohesive devices in respect of the number of the used devices and their impact on the quality of writing.

1.3 Significance and Rationale of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its aim of addressing an important area in the field of research that concerns the researchers and contributes to the improvement of a skill that persistently needs to be looked at in a more focused way. The researcher is interested in

conducting this study so as to investigate, analyze and interpret the data that were collected from grade 11 students in relation to grammatical cohesive devices. Consequently, the main and absolute objective of the study is to support those learners overcome any problem that might encounter them and develop their abilities to produce more coherent and understandable writing texts.

The rationale behind choosing grade 11 students as the sample of this study is the importance of preparing them to the upcoming year in which they will be required to undertake different language tests, such as IELTS test, to join a well-reputed and accredited university inside or outside the UAE. The students chosen as a sample of the study are from different nationalities and their next step in their learning journey will be a transitional one as they will start a new learning phase which requires dependable language skill. As previously mentioned, those students are from different countries so they may be required to undertake admission language tests when they join universities in different parts of the world. The researcher has noticed that most of students do not give the proper attention to develop their language skills during their learning process. As a result of that, they are required to find a quick solution for their urgently required language competency test to join a university after they finish grade 12. They start trying to join any concentrated language courses or ask the help of a private tutor which in any way meet the requirements they need to have to pass these admission tests. Seeking to assist those students in advance to be prepared for their future educational stage and not leaving them face any difficulties that might create any future hindrances, this study has been conducted to help students overcome any of these difficulties. The in-advance preparation for those students aims at avoiding any difficulties that might hinder passing the required language competency tests by making use of the results and recommendations of the study during the remaining time of the current academic year and the upcoming year.

The findings and recommendations will be shared with other teachers who teach these students to work on them doing their best to promote those students' writing skills. Believing in his responsibility as a teacher and a lead teacher of English in this school for 20 years, the researcher has conducted this study to investigate a serious problem that faces most of the students to provide applicable and valuable solutions and recommendations for other teachers in the school and other schools.

In addition, the importance of this study lies in its focus not only in identifying the types of used grammatical cohesive devices, but also in identifying the overall correlation between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices used and the quality of students' writings and identifying hardships facing learners in this area. Most of the studies focus on only counting the number and types of grammatical cohesive in L2 learner's writings. This study seeks to fill this gap in the field of study by providing practical solutions to teachers and researchers to help students move forward in their learning process.

1.4 Aims and Research Questions

The present study aims at: investigating the frequency of occurrence of each category of grammatical cohesive devices, finding the correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices and grade 11 L2 learners' marks in the EOY (End Of Year) test , and looking at the perspectives of both teachers and students regarding the difficulties that grade 11 L2 learners face while dealing with grammatical cohesive in writing descriptive essays. After reviewing previous studies on grammatical cohesive devices, this study has been conducted to address the following research questions:

- 1-What is the frequency of each type of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 learners' writing a descriptive essay?
- 2-What is the overall correlation between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices used and grade 11 learners' mark in writing a descriptive essay?
- 3-What are the difficulties that grade 11 learners at an MOE school in RAK encounter in dealing with grammatical cohesive device in writing from the perspectives of both teachers and learners?

1.5 The Structure of the study

This study is divided into five parts:

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, the research problem, the significance and rationale of the study, the aims and research questions and the structure of the study. Chapter 2 includes the theoretical framework of the study and the theory that underpins the study. The terms are presented through a detailed discussion of the conceptual framework. Furthermore, a detailed and thematically organized literature review of previous studies made on grammatical cohesive devices is presented. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology and the used framework for data analysis. In this chapter, data collection tools and ethical considerations are highlighted. Chapter 4 includes the findings and discussions of the results of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusion of the research findings, the summary, limitations of the study and recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Part One: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Framework

2.1 Text and Texture

Any written discourse in linguistics is considered a text. A text should have both grammatical and lexical unity. Texture is what gives a text the unity and distinguishes it from non-text. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) defined cohesion as the semantic relation that is achieved between different elements in a text. A text is considered cohesive when all the elements are tied together in a way that enables the reader to understand what is written clearly.

2.2 Ties

A tie is a term that is used to refer to a single instant of cohesion. It links two cohesively related items. The relation between *this* and *table* in the following sentence is a tie:

Clean this table, please!

The segment of any text can be characterized by the number and types of ties it has. Reference, which is going to be discussed later, is one of the ties. Ties in a text enable us to understand a text by analyzing it through its cohesive structure.

2.3 Cohesion

According to (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), cohesion represents a semantic concept; relations of meaning are dealt with within a text. Cohesion happens when interpretation of one element in a text requires the dependence on another element. The understanding of one element helps in relating it to another element. In other word, Cohesion produces well-structured and understandable texts. Cohesion represents a part of the system of the language. The following part of the study discusses the different types of grammatical cohesive devices.

2.4 Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical Cohesion is classified by Halliday and Hassan into four types: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

2.4.1 Reference:

Reference can be identified as the inability to interpret one element semantically in a text unless it is referred to by a different element in the text. Pronouns, articles, comparatives and demonstratives are considered referring devices which refer to elements in the text.

2.4.2 Exophoric and endophoric reference:

Reference can be either exophoric or endophoric (M. Bloor & T. Bloor, 2013).

Exophoric reference is the need to look beyond the text to infer the interpreted referent in a shared text by the writer and the reader. For example, in the following sentence:

This is a good suggestion!

To understand what *this* refers to, the reader should look outside the text or situation.

Unlike exophoric reference, the endophoric reference requires the reader to look inside the text to get the meaning which lies in the text. Endophoric reference is divided into two types: Anaphoric and cataphoric references. Paltridge (2012) defines Anaphoric reference as the back reference of a word or a phrase to another word or a phrase previously mentioned in a text. In the following example:

Ahmad went to the park. He went with his family.

He refers back to Ahmad; therefore, *he* is an anaphoric reference.

Different from anaphoric reference, cataphoric reference requires the reader to look forward to another word or a phrase mentioned later in a text. The following sentence can be considered as an example of cataphoric reference:

Although he was sick, Ahmad went to school.

In the previous sentence, the reader has to read the complete sentence to understand what *he* refers to. *He* is a cataphoric reference that refers forward to Ahmad.

2.5 Substitution

The writer may use substitution to avoid repetition in a text. Substitution is different from reference in the sense that in substitution the relation is between words, whereas, in reference the relation is between meanings.

Nominal, verbal and clausal are three types of substitution.

2.5.1 Nominal substitution

Nominal substitution occurs when a noun or a nominal group is substituted with another noun. *One, ones* and *same* are elements of this type. In the following example *one* substitutes *bag*:

This bag is old. I will buy a new one.

2.5.2 verbal substitution

In verbal substitution, a verb or a verbal group is substituted with another verb. In this type, *do* is the verb element that is used to substitute another verb or verbal group. The following is an example of the verbal substitution:

I will finish my homework before you do!

In this example *do* substitutes *finish homework*.

2.5.3 Clausal substitution

Clausal substitution is used when clauses are substituted with *so* or *not*. The following example is an illustration of the type:

A: Do you think that he will pass the test?

B: No, I don't think so.

In this example *so* substitutes the clause *will pass the test*.

2.6 Ellipsis

Ellipsis occurs when an unnecessary item, which has been previously mentioned in a text, is omitted and replacing it with nothing. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) define it as similar to substitution. According to them, the process of substitution is simply by zero. Ellipsis keeps an anaphoric relation in a text as the omission happens within a text. Despite being omitted from the text; the item can still be understood. Nominal, verbal and clausal are three types of ellipsis.

2.6.1 Nominal ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis is illustrated by the following:

My sisters like sports. In fact, both love basketball.

In the second sentence, the nominal *my sisters* are omitted and replaced by nothing and the meaning can still be understood.

2.6.2 Verbal ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis involves the omission of the verb. In the following sentence the verb *been* is omitted in the second sentence (B) and replaced by nothing:

A: Have you ever been to Italy?

B: yes, I have.

2.6.3 Clausal ellipsis

In this type, the clause is omitted. The following is an example:

A: Who is playing tennis

B: Tom is.

The clause *playing tennis* is omitted in B.

2.7 Conjunction

Conjunction words are words or linking devices used to link sentences and phrases in a text. They are different from other grammatical devices in the sense that they maintain a kind of logical order that makes the text understandable for the reader.

There are four types of conjunctions: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal.

2.7.1 Additive Conjunctions:

These conjunctions are used to express adding information. Examples of this type are: *and, likewise, furthermore, in addition.*

2.7.2 Adversative conjunctions

Adversative conjunctions are used to express contrast. Examples of this type are: *but, however, in contrast, whereas.*

2.7.3 Temporal conjunctions

Temporal conjunctions are used to express time order of events. Examples of this type are: *finally, then, soon, at the same time.*

2.8 Theoretical Framework:

The last decades have witnessed conducting a lot of studies by linguists to explain and examine cohesive devices. Halliday and Hasan model of cohesion has always been the main source of the theoretical part of these studies. I have chosen Halliday and Hasan model of cohesion as a theoretical framework for this study as it supports my research paper and closely related to the purpose of the study. It will be the analytical framework that the study will use to analyze data and answer the research questions. I have chosen this model as it still remains the most important and comprehensive one. Despite modifications, Halliday and Hasan's model remains the most reliable one.

The notion of a cohesive tie elaborated the Halliday and Hasan's interpretation of cohesion. They referred to a cohesive tie as the tool needed to express a kind of link or occurrence of a cohesively connected items. According to (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), in English, cohesive ties are created in two ways: Lexical and grammatical cohesion. To help English learners use English properly, linguistics has examined and explained each of these devices thoroughly. Since the focus of this study is measuring the frequency grammatical cohesive devices in students' writing and their impact on the quality of writing, Halliday and Hasan's model of cohesion is considered as a suitable and reliable theoretical and analytical framework for the study.

While lexical cohesion is considered by Halliday and Hasan (1976:274) as the effect of chosen vocabulary and involves the connection of meanings in the text, grammatical cohesion addresses or involves structural content. Four main cohesive ties categorize grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Halliday and Hasan's contribution to the field of cohesive devices remains the most outstanding and reliable one that helped researchers and linguists to investigate the effectiveness of using cohesive ties. Their work has always triggered investigations on difficulties that face learners in recognizing and using cohesive devices in both first and second language. For example, Chapman and Stokes (1980) in their research on mastering cohesive devices by L1 British children proved that children who are able to read fluently are able to recognize cohesive elements and thus are able to see the text as an integrated semantic unit. One more example is Cohen (1979) who

conducted a study to investigate students' reading in English came up with the conclusion that students have a problem with picking conjunctions, even the basic ones like *however* and *because*.

According to (Bloor, 2004), Halliday and Hasan 's work (1976) still the most comprehensive, reliable work that gives the fullest account of cohesive devices. Modifications: Despite being a comprehensive and reliable one, many scholars exerted efforts to develop Halliday and Hasan's work to deepen the investigation on the field of cohesive ties and discover more their impact on the quality of reading and writing. Hoey (1983, 1991), for example, in his study investigated how cohesive elements or features work unify to form long, understandable and cohesive texts. He dealt with cohesion from the point of view that it is related to some pattern of rhetorical organization. He devoted a considerable attention on his work to the significance of repetition and cohesive chains. Hoey's contribution in his study generated ideas concerning the role of the sentence in the text, which he considered as bearing two roles on both grammatical and textual sides, a view that matches much literature reviews on the topic (Bloor, 2004). Halliday and Hassan's work influenced other scholars such as Mann and Thompson (1992), who collected different analyses on the same text made by different linguists. The analyses resulted in different views in dealing with discourse may give different classifications of text analysis.

Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) conducted further investigation on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work shedding light on some neglected factors in the area of cohesion. They focused on some theoretical perspectives in the area of cohesion. Despite being a role model for several linguists in the field of language cohesion, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) received some criticism from other linguists, who found some shortcuts in their work. Doyle (1982), for example, argues that Halliday and Hassan's work (1976) does not approach the relationship among hypotheses in the text; that relationship which is created by the writer and received then recreated by the reader. Doyle (1982) criticized Halliday and Hassan (1976) for limiting the perspective of their work to the area of discussion of meaning and neglecting other areas such as internal propositions inside the textual world.

Doyle (1982), claims that Halliday and Hassan (1976) imposed restrictions on themselves that prevented any kind of observations that might result in more interesting outcomes to the

study more than those they came up with. Doyle (1982) sees that by sticking to analyzing the surface structure of discourse, Halliday and Hassan (1976) imposed a restriction on the relationships which their model may produce. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work on cohesion seems to form the analytical and coding framework for linguists, scholars, educators to conduct their studies and design materials to enrich the field of language on both semantic and structural levels in English language classrooms.

2.9 Literature Review

There is a huge number of studies that have investigated and examined the use of grammatical cohesive devices in students' writing. This has been evident since the Halliday and Hasan have created the 1976 model of cohesion. This section of the dissertation reviews the previous studies that have examined the use of grammatical cohesive devices in different types of writing. This part is split into two main sections: review of literature regarding the use of grammatical cohesive devices in academic context and review of previous studies dealing with the use of grammatical cohesive devices in non-academic context.

2.9.1 Cohesive devices examined in written academic texts

The current part of the literature review focuses on comparing several studies that have resulted in various conclusions in terms of the use of grammatical cohesive devices in academic essays.

Dikilitaş (2012) conducted a research in order to analyze a number of grammatical cohesive devices e.g. reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunction in non-native narrative compositions of 26 Turkish students. The study aimed at comparing the relationship between the density of grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of writing in both Turkish and English languages. The results of the study showed that non-native writers had less frequent use of conjunctions compared to other types of grammatical cohesive devices. This is a clear contradiction to the results reached by Hinkel (2008) in which the non-native students' writing texts showed an abundant use of conjunctions, particularly however, therefore, similarly, and then. Moreover, regarding the relationship between the use of grammatical

cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing, the results reached by Dikilitaş (2012) oppose those concluded by Witte & Faigley (1981), in which the former did not identify any sort of relation between the amount of grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of students' written essays.

In a different study conducted by Suningsih (2016), the researcher worked on investigating the frequency of using grammatical and lexical cohesive devices in Indonesian students writing using the 1976 model of cohesion by Halliday and Hasan. The study is important since the researcher compares the frequency of using cohesive devices among three proficiency levels: pre-intermediate, advanced and academic writing courses. The findings of the study showed that reference is quite common among the highest proficiency levels (both the advanced and academic courses) whereas substitution is not related to the level of proficiency. What is considered a surprising finding of the study is that the higher the students' proficiency level is, the less frequent use of conjunctions, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion. Similar to the results of other studies in this regard, Suningsih (2016) found out that some students had frequent errors in the implementation of grammatical cohesive devices in students' writing compositions. In harmony of this study, Hidayanto (2015) investigated the use of cohesive devices in students' expository essays written by students who are studying English Literature in their third semester. The results of this research resemble those reached by Suningsih (2016), in which reference counted among the most frequently used grammatical cohesive device. However, some parts of the results reached contradict those of Suningsih (2016) where students could employ all types of grammatical cohesive devices.

Another study by Abdulrahman (2013) examined the differences between Omani student-teachers and native English speakers in their use of cohesive devices in descriptive writing. The results of the study are harmonious with those concluded by Dikilitaş (2012), in which there has been a great difference between natives and non-natives in the frequency of implementing cohesive devices as well as the type of devices used. Moreover, this goes in line of agreement with the previous studies that non-natives suffer a great deal of difficulty regarding utilizing grammatical and lexical cohesive devices in their essay writing. Another study that is in harmony of both Abdulrahman (2013) and Dikilitaş (2012) is conducted by Liu and Braine (2005). Both researchers examined the use of cohesive devices on 96 Chinese

undergraduate students, and the study findings state that students had an obstacle in terms of implementing cohesive devices in their argumentative essay writing.

In the same context, Yan and Sun (2012) examined the utilization of cohesive devices in argumentative essay writing on Chinese learners of English while varying the learners' level of language proficiency in order to reveal the connection between the density of cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing. The authors stated that the quality of students' writing reflected the appropriate implementation of cohesive devices regardless of their EFL proficiency levels. In a similar research, Al-Jarf (2001) performed a study using 59 participants that are non-native English speakers and who study at King Saud University in KSA. The findings of the study quite resemble those reached by other researchers including Liu and Braine (2005) in which students had problems dealing with and using some grammatical cohesive devices including substitution, reference, and ellipsis. Similar results were reached by Ahmed (2010) who examined Egyptian students' English writing. This context is similar to that of Al-Jarf (2001) as both examined cohesive devices use by Arab learners of English. Therefore, the results are in harmony of those reached by Ahmed (2010). This confirmed that students who had low proficiency levels created non-cohesive texts due to the errors and misunderstanding of employing cohesive devices in their writing.

Bahaziq (2016) investigated the use of cohesive devices in students' written examination of The Michigan English Language Assessment Battery, which is required for studying in an English-speaking country. The researcher analyzed learners' utilization of cohesive devices in written discourse. In this context, the results of the study are the same as those reached by Hinkel (2008) in which learners used both reference and conjunctions more than any other category of cohesive ties. On the contrary, these results represent a clear contradiction of the findings reached by Dikilitaş (2012) where these two categories were the least frequent in Turkish learners of English as a foreign language. In the same context, a similar study was conducted by Hidayat (2016) in order to examine students' usage of grammatical cohesive devices, particularly references. The results are in harmony of those reached by many other researchers including Suningsih (2016), in which students used references the most, especially anaphoric references.

Tahsildar and Yusoff (2018) conducted a study to investigate if teaching cohesive devices to 40 L2 Malaysian learners would affect their written texts accuracy and coherence. The results were positive as students showed increased awareness of the effectiveness of using cohesive devices on their written texts and they provided well written texts in terms of coherence. Also, the findings of the study stated that there is a close relation between the density of cohesive devices used and the overall quality of writing as reflected by students' scores. The study results are valid and reliable since the researcher used descriptive statistics data analysis, paired sample t-test, pre-test, and post-test. Although some researchers reached positive results regarding the use of cohesive devices in written discourse, others believe that it is a contradiction as there is hardly any agreement among all researchers who have investigated cohesive devices (Emad, 2014; Izumi 2011; Mckay, 2007; Aidinlou, 2012 ; Hinkle, 2001).

Regarding the relation between cohesion density and the quality of writing, some researchers did not identify any connection between them such as Castro (2004) who investigated both grammatical and lexical cohesion in 30 EFL Pilipino students whose essays were ranked low, average, and high. The results showed that there is no significance number in the amount of cohesive devices used and the quality of writing. In the same context, Zhang (2000) concluded similar results to Castro (2004) through a study conducted on 107 expository texts written by Chinese learners of English. Both researchers could not identify any significant link between the frequency of cohesive ties and the writing quality. on the contrary, Liu and Braine (2005) reached a different conclusion where they identified a significant link between cohesive ties, especially the high use of reference and conjunctions, and the quality of writing.

Similar studies regarding cohesive devices were conducted on paragraph level rather than full essays or texts such as Othman (2019), who examined 40 paragraphs of Saudi learners of English at Tabuk University. Although the findings of the study are in harmony of previous studies e.g. Hinkel (2008) and others, in which the most frequently used cohesive devices were conjunctions and reference. This is contradictory to the findings reached by

other researchers including Dikilitaş (2012) where these two categories were the least common in students written essays. What is more, the results of the study conducted by Othman (2019) are considered reliable and valid since the researcher used the mixed-methods approach to validate the data. The findings of the study are in harmony with many other studies in which L2 learners of English had more errors in using cohesive ties in their written discourse than native speakers. Alzankawi (2017) conducted a study to examine Kuwaiti learners of English use of cohesive devices in descriptive written texts. In this context, the results are opposite to those identified by authors including Castro (2004) and Zhang (2000). According to Alzankawi (2017), there is a positive correlation between the amount of cohesive devices used and the overall writing quality (score) and reference was the most common grammatical cohesive device in students writing. This result is harmonious with Liu and Braine (2005) and Saud (2015), in which the latter reported that good students used more cohesive devices than weak students.

Another study conducted by Cho (2014) in Korea to investigate the use of cohesive ties in textbooks and Korean college students' written texts. The researcher relied on Halliday and Hasan (1976) model of cohesion as the framework of analysis, just like many other studies in this regard. The study findings resemble those of other researchers in which L2 learners tended to overuse and misuse cohesive devices in written discourse (Suningsih, 2016; Hidayanto, 2015; Othman, 2015). In the same context, Kargozari et al. (2012) conducted a study to examine the implementation of cohesive devices in 180 different compositions of different categories (expository, argumentative, and descriptive). This is dissimilar to most of the previous studies that focus on analyzing one essay category at a time. The study findings are in harmony of other studies in which reference and conjunctions ranked first and second respectively in students' written compositions. Additionally, students showed inability to control cohesive ties in a proper way that imitates native speakers' use of cohesive ties. In a more elaboration, Wahby (2014) conducted a study to examine pre-intermediate level students' use of cohesive devices in their written compositions. The results showed a positive correlation between cohesive density and students' mark (writing quality). Furthermore, students who had better cohesive awareness and knowledge employed well-written and organized cohesive texts.

In a different context, Ahmad, Mahmood, and Siddique (2019) investigated the use of cohesive ties in 50 abstracts of research papers written by Pakistani researchers. In harmony with the previous studies, the researchers identified reference as the most frequently used cohesive device and it aims at achieving a directive rather than referential function. Although the aim of their study was quite different, Crossley and McNamara (2010) found out that cohesive ties are essential to the overall quality of written essays and compositions. In addition, Fareed et al. (2016) focused their research on identifying the obstacles faced by Pakistani undergraduate ESL in their written essays along with identifying possible causes and solutions of these issues in order to improve Pakistani ESL learners' writing quality. This study is more important than many other studies in this aspect since it address the problems faced by ESL learners as well as suggest solutions to overcome them. Issues such as untrained teachers, lack of reading and insufficient linguistic proficiency were the main issues identified by the researcher in this regard. Moreover, the study recommended solutions such as training teachers, increasing students reading skills, and running writing competitions to rise students' awareness about the effectiveness of cohesive ties in written discourse.

2.9.2 Cohesive Devices Examined in Non-Academic Written Texts

However, the focus of this study is investigating grammatical cohesive devices in academic texts, this sub-section of literature review focuses on the studies made to investigate the impact of using appropriate grammatical cohesive devices in non-academic texts.

Muhammad Afzaal, Kaibao Hu, Muhammad Ilyas Chishti² & Muhammad Imran (2019) conducted a study aiming to examine the different patterns of cohesive devices using the cohesion model of Halliday and Hasan in 1976. The study includes both grammatical and lexical cohesion. From grammatical cohesive devices, the study includes the most commonly used devices such as reference and conjunction as well as other less used devices such as substitution and ellipsis. The study uses some weekly published articles as a material of analysis. The study came up with the result that referencing, conjunction, ellipsis and substitution are currently used in non-academic writings. However, from grammatical cohesive devices, reference is the most commonly used as it outnumbers other types of grammatical cohesive devices. One of the drawbacks of the study is that it does not use a

variety of materials to carry out a comprehensive investigation on cohesive devices in non-academic texts; it uses only news articles as a single material. The study does not include any other non-academic materials such as poems or political speeches. If other previously mentioned materials were added, the study would be more enriched and deeper. One more drawback of the study is that it does not refer to any differences between academic and non-academic writing. A comparison could have been done between the use of cohesive in academic and non-academic writing. The occurrence of some devices such as ellipsis and substitution in students' writing is for sure different from that in news articles. One of the strong points of the study is that it highlights the simplicity of introducing information in news article writing. Information could be introduced directly through directness, simplicity or tightness. It could be also introduced indirectly through uncommon details or use of direct statement with sarcastic turn at the end.

Another study conducted by Hoda Neisi¹, Bahman Gorjian (2017) focused on one type of grammatical cohesive devices ; their study focuses on comparing and analyzing reference as cohesive device in written English political articles. They compared articles written by native American writers to articles written by Iranian writers. Similar to the previous study, the study uses one type of materials which is news articles. However, the study is different from the previous study in that it uses only one type of articles, whereas the previous study uses varied types of articles. The study does not address other types of grammatical cohesive devices such as substitution, ellipsis or conjunction which weakens the study and does not give broader and more in-depth results. One good point about the study is that compares articles written by native and non-native writers; that kind of comparison gives the reader a good idea about the nature of L1 interference specially in using demonstrative and personal articles. The occurrence of these devices is for sure different in pieces of writing written by native writers from that written by non-native writers. Although the study is made in 2017, the literature review of it covers studies from 1995 to 2001. Only one study from 2006 is included. There is a gap that could have been filled up to the time of the study. The study could not make use of other recent studies that have been made in this field. The discussion and conclusion of the study provide a detailed description of the findings of the study and answer the research questions raised in the introduction. The big number of articles; 100 articles written by American native writers and 100 articles written by Iranian writers helps

the study to provide reliable results that enable researchers in this field to make use of them. The study positively uses a framework of analysis that suits the focus of the study. It uses a checklist that has three or four types of reference concerned with cohesive devices including comparative, personal and demonstrative references.

Addressing a different type of non-academic type of writing, Kaur (2015) uses the model of Halliday and Hasan (1976) to analyze cohesive devices in one of John Keats's poems (Ode to Autumn). The study's main focus is describing the role of cohesive devices used in the poem in linking its parts together which is considered a logical role of cohesive devices. The study by Kaur (2015) lacked an essential part that gives a study a reason for being contributive in the field of study; the absence of the literature review part makes it difficult to identify any kind of contribution of the study or filling a gap in the field of study.

Similarly, Yeibo (2012) tries to investigate the role of particular grammatical cohesive devices, ellipsis, conjunction and reference in the poems of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo. Yeibo in his study does not go far from Kaur (2015) goes; he limits his study to the contribution of grammatical cohesive devices in linking the sentences of the texts together. The concentration is on the value of the devices as text-binding. Paramartha (2013), focuses on substitution as a cohesive device in analyzing Bernard Shaw's play Pygmalion. He includes a list of quotes where this device has been used as a means to internally link the sentences in the text. His contribution in this study does not provide different results from the previous studies as it still revolves around the same focus, which is the role of cohesive devices in strongly binding the parts of a text.

Addressing the world of media, Yin (2015), examines the types of conjunctions in broadcast news and written news. He carries his investigation using patterns at three levels, which are form, meaning and position. A clear and easy seen strength of the study is that it provides a thorough coverage of previous studies made on conjunction and the concepts related to it in a profound number of studies. Concluding that previous studies have not deeply investigated and discussed the three levels of form, meaning and position, Yin (2015) in his study contributed remarkably to the field of study by filling this gap in his paper. The qualitative method of analysis used in this study may justify the use of small corpus of the study. The

study concludes that conjunction can serve a total of 14 meanings which are present in the model produced by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) if we exclude listing.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methods

This part of the study will be dealing with the following points:

1-What methods of research will be followed?

2-What methods and data collection will be used?

In this study, a mixed –method approach will be used. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used in this paper to address knowledge claims made in the study. Quantitative and qualitative data will be converged to provide a kind of comprehensive study.

3.1.1 Quantitative Research Method

The goal of a quantitative research method is to describe the relationship between a dependent and independent variables. A quantitative research method can be either a descriptive, in which subjects are measured once, or experimental, which measure subjects before and after a treatment. A descriptive study formulates a kind of association between variables whereas, experimental study formulates causality.

A quantitative research study is a numeric one which deals in numbers, logic in an objective attitude. The kind of data which quantitative research studies deal with is numeric and unchanging. It uses convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning. Creswell (2009) states that a researcher in a quantitative method uses certain tools of inquiry such as questionnaires and experiments in order to produce numerical data.

Main characteristics of a quantitative method:

- _ Structured research tools are used to collect data.
- _ It uses large sample sizes, that represent the population, to build results.
- _ The research study can be reproduced or repeated to gain its highest reliability.
- _ It has clear and defined research questions which the researcher seeks to find objective answers.
- _ All study aspects are properly designed before gathering data.

- _ Data are designed in the form of numbers and statistics and arranged in the form of tables, figures, charts or in other non-textual form.
- _ It can use a project to generalize perspectives, anticipate future results, or investigate occasional relationships.
- _ The tools of the researcher are questionnaires or computer software to collect numerical data.

A qualitative study classifies features, count them, the designs a model of statistics to explain the relationship between all counted features.

3.1.2 Qualitative Research Method:

According to Taylor, Bogdan and De Vault (2015), The term qualitative implies a focus on the quality of the aspects of the study. It also implies an emphasis on the meanings of the procedures that a quantitative method examines such as frequency, quantity or amount. Danzin and Lincoln (2000) agree that qualitative research methods are significant in the sense that they help the researchers to see things in their natural environment while trying to investigate a phenomenon.

Qualitative studies seek to explain the relationship between what is studied and the researcher. Qualitative studies do not concentrate on numerical figures for the sake of numbers, they concentrate on the social or natural indicators these numbers express. Qualitative researchers' concern is investigating the impact of a certain quantitative procedure on the performance of a targeted category or sample. Qualitative methods are considered by many social scientists as a view to apply a value-focused type of research.

3.1.2.1 Characteristics of the Qualitative Method:

3.1.2.1.1 The design

The qualitative method of research is a naturalistic one which does not imply predetermined restrictions or limitations on the findings of the study. The researcher here is prepared or expects results that may emerge; he studies real-life situations.

_ The researcher in this kind of method avoids stiff or unyielding designs that may restrict the acceptance of new emerging concepts or results.

_ Qualitative methods are purposeful in the sense that they take people, organizations, communities or cultures as cases or samples for their studies. These categories are chosen as cases or samples of the study for the reason that they are true indicators of the purpose of the study and they truly express the aimed insight of the phenomenon of the study, rather than numerical or empirical consideration.

3.1.2.1.2 Data Collection

Qualitative methods use certain tools that help achieve the purpose of the studies such as observations that provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and help the researcher measures closely what he seeks to investigate. Interviews also is another tool that qualitative methods use to capture direct quotations about the views of the people subject of the study concerning a certain topic.

3.1.2.1.3 Personal experience

The researcher is involved in direct contact with people and situations that represent the focus of the study. The researcher's personal experiences play a great role in the inquiry of the topic of research.

3.1.2.1.4 Companionate neutrality

Compassionate neutrality and bias are characteristics of data collection procedure. This companionate or emphatic neutrality requires the researcher work with openness and without any previous judgements.

3.1.2.1.5 Dynamic systems

The researcher is always attentive and mindful to changes of system or situational dynamics. The researcher is attentive to any kind of change in all cases such in case the sample is a community or individuals.

3.1.2.2 Characteristics of analysis in a qualitative method:

3.1.2.2.1 Unique Case Orientation:

_ Each case is considered a special and unique case in a qualitative study. An individual case is the first level of the research to collect details of the cases of the study. Then a cross-case study follows that based on the captured responses taken from individual.

3.1.2.2.2 Inductive Analysis

Findings are confirmed after immersion in details and specific data of the study. Inter-relationships are discovered guided by analysis rather than predetermined rules.

3.1.2.2.3 Comprehensive perspective:

The phenomenon or topic of the study is handled as comprehensive and integrated system rather than as the sum of its parts. The focus is on the system dynamics that is not restricted to cause and effect relationship or a variable that may assume only a countable, and usually finite, number of values.

3.1.2.2.4 Context sensitive:

Qualitative methods have their own temporal and spatial considerations. The researcher is careful about the time and place where his tools applied. Generalizations can be made concerning time and place. Changing the time and place of an observation could influence the response of individuals or communities; for example, if a class is observed in the begging of a school day, it will give different observations from those taken at the end of school day.

3.1.2.2.5 Voice, perspective, and reflexivity:

The researcher in this type of research adopts a balanced attitude that combines both objectivity and subjectivity. A complete objectivity is a far-fetched aim and pure subjectivity undermines credibility. Qualitative researchers are reflective about their own voice. They convey a credible voice and authenticity.

According to Creswell (2009), through applying a quantitative research approach, the researcher uses some statistical tools such as questionnaires and experiments to collect

numerical data. Additionally, qualitative research method examines the relationship between variables.

To achieve the purpose of the current study and answer the three research questions a mixed-approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, has been applied. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), a researcher may use both quantitative and qualitative methods in one study while collecting and analyzing data so as to achieve a deeper investigation of the research problem. Moreover, using a mixed method approach gives the researcher the option of coming up with a better interpretation of the topic of investigation than using one of the approaches alone (Creswell, 2008). Meanwhile, “mixed methods research is necessary to address both the “what” (numerical and qualitative data) and “how or why” (qualitative) sorts of research questions” (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 25).

To answer research questions one and two, the study has applied the quantitative research method. To answer the first research question of the study, the researcher has implemented the quantitative descriptive statistics to measure the frequency of each grammatical cohesive device involved in the study. To the second research question, the researcher has applied the quantitative correlational statistics approach to investigate the overall correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices used by grade 11 L2 learners in their descriptive essays and quality of their writing. According to Apuke (2017), a correlational study investigate the different features and variables of two entities.

To answer the third research question, a descriptive qualitative method has been used. The third research questions investigates the difficulties that grade 11 learners at an MOE school in RAK encounter in dealing with grammatical cohesive devices in writing from the perspectives of both teachers and learners. Therefore, semi-structured interviews have been utilized to conduct this qualitative method trying to answer the third research question. Four grade 11 teachers were chosen to be interviewed about the difficulties encountered by the students they teach and also investigate the impact of this on the quality of writing. Teachers were also interviewed about the way they teach grammatical cohesive devices and how often they include them in their teaching of grammar. The teachers’ semi-structured interviews

also included their views on the feedback they give their students concerning grammatical cohesive devices after marking their essays. In the same context, ten students were chosen to be interviewed. These students were selected according to their academic level. They were chosen according to their academic attainment in the end of term exam. Students were divided into three levels. Those who got below 8 out of 16 were regarded as low, students who got between 8 and 13 were regarded as average, while those who got above 13 were categorized as above level.

The nature of semi-structured interviews allows the interviewees to express their own view freely in their own words. Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions that do not have specific or set of answers. For this reason, the data that semi-structured interviews provide is reliable and comparable. (Glesne, 2015) assumes that semi-structured interviews support the researcher's deep investigation of the complexity of the topic under investigation.

The below table includes a summary of research methods and instruments used in the current study:

Research Questions	Approach	Participants	Instrument
What is the frequency of each type of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 learners' writing a descriptive essay?	Quantitative descriptive statistics approach	44-grade 11 students in an MOE School in RAK , UAE	Manual annotation + Coh-Metrix.
2_ What is the overall correlation between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices used and grade 11 learners' mark in writing a descriptive essay?	Quantitative correlational statistics approach	44-Grade 11 students in an MOE Private School in RAK , UAE	Pearson correlation coefficient.
3_ What are the difficulties that grade 11 learners at an MOE school in RAK encounter in dealing with grammatical cohesive device in writing from the perspectives of both teachers and learners.	Qualitative descriptive approach	4 English teachers and 10 Grade 11 students in an MOE Private School in RAK, UAE.	Semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions).

Table 1: a summary of research methods

3.3 Framework of Analysis

Being the most popular model of cohesion and due to reliability and popularity in almost all of studies that investigate cohesive devices, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion was selected as the framework of analysis in this study.

3.3.1 Data Collection and Corpus

The corpus used in this study is 45 descriptive essays (n= 45) written by grade 11 students in an MOE Private school in RAK, but one student was absent. Therefore, the final sample data were collected from 44 (n=44) grade 11 students; 19 female students and 25 male students. All the students are no-natives; they come from different Arab nationalities. Qualitative data are collected from 4 teachers and 10 students through semi-structured interviews.

3.3.2 Writing Prompt:

Students were asked to write a four-paragraph descriptive essay of at least 180 words in a 90- minute exam session. Students were asked to write about the use of internet and social media. They were asked to include the following information:

- _ What people use in the internet and social media for
- _ the advantages of using the internet and social media
- _ how people stay safe

3.3.3 The writing Rubric

The written essays were graded a 16 –mark comprehensive writing rubric generated by the MOE assessment department. The rubric is used by teachers while marking students' written exams.

The rubric contained the following evaluation elements:

Task Completion (4 marks)

Vocabulary (4 marks)

Grammar (4 marks)

Organization (4 marks)

The sample essays were marked by five English teachers who taught grade 11 and 12 and have the sufficient experience in dealing with writing skill. The SPSS was used to calculate inter-rates consistency. All writing samples of the study were collected and a manual annotation was made by the researcher to measure the frequency of four targeted grammatical cohesive devices types.

Then the Coh-Metrix was used to confirm the reliability of the frequency of occurrence of each grammatical cohesive device found in the corpus. Furthermore, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to identify the link between the total number of cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing as reflected by the scores given by the graders.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Before carrying out the study, an informed consent forms were obtained of all the participants from the researcher. The researcher told the participants that their names would not be mentioned in the study or published anywhere. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. A written consent form was obtained from the school principal of upon informing him of the rationale and significance of the present study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and discussions of the results generated from research approaches and instruments used in the study to answer the research questions. This chapter is divided into two sections; the first section illustrates and discusses the qualitative findings, whereas the second section (4.2) mainly addresses the qualitative findings and discussions.

4.1 Quantitative findings and discussion

This part will provide the data results that constitute the answer to the quantitative research questions 1 and 2. The first research question examines the frequency of occurrence of each type of grammatical cohesive device identified in a descriptive essay written by grade 11 L2 learners, who represent the sample of the current research paper. Therefore, Table 2 presents the overall frequency of grammatical cohesive devices.

	Reference	substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction	total
total	1013	56	104	645	1818
percentage	55.72	3.08	5.72	35.48	%100

Table 2: The overall frequency of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 L2 students' essay writing

From the above table, it can be clearly noticed that reference was the most frequently used grammatical cohesive device among all four categories at 55.72 %. Conjunction was the second frequently used grammatical cohesive device at 35.48 %. The difference between the use of reference and conjunction was 20.24. Reference and conjunction constituted 91.25 of the total use of the four included categories. Ellipsis came as the third frequently used category among the four categories at 5.725%, whereas substitution ranked as the least frequently used category among the four categories at 3.08 %. Substitution and ellipsis constitute a very low percentage of 8.8 % of the total percentage. These findings were similar to those of Hinkel (2008) and Suningsih (2016), in which the most frequently used cohesive devices were conjunctions and reference.

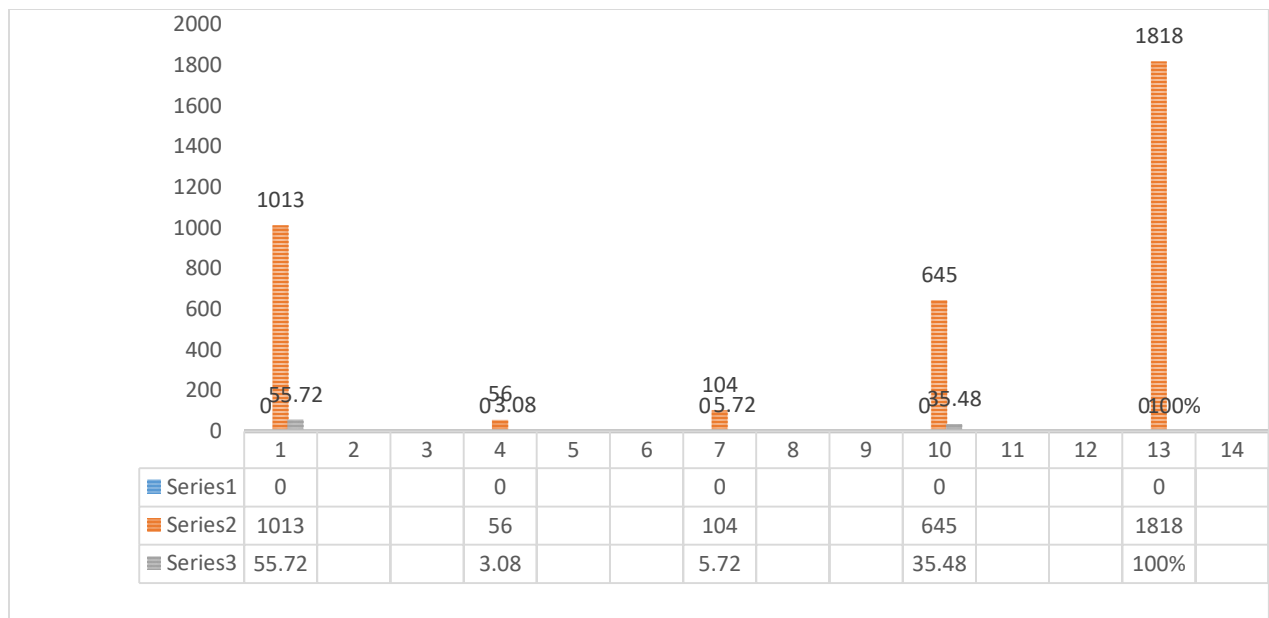


Chart 1 shows the overall distribution of the frequency of grammatical cohesive devices identified in L2 learners' writing.

Table 2 and chart 1 are significant indicators of that grade 11 L2 learners used a number of 1818 grammatical cohesive devices in 44 descriptive essays, which cannot be considered an immense number. Table 2 and chart 1 show the awareness of students to use grammatical cohesive devices to produce high quality writing but they also clearly highlight the students' inability to include all other grammatical cohesive devices in their essays. The high rate of reference and conjunction significantly indicated the dominance of these two types in students' essay, which showed students' inability to use the four involved categories.

The remarkably low percentage of ellipsis and substitution, 8.8 % in total, indicated the difficulties students face with using these types of grammatical cohesive devices. These two types were almost absent in students' writing. The emergence of these difficulties according to the numerical results was behind conducting the qualitative approach of the study through semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to investigate in-depth these difficulties. Qualitative method in the study provided the researcher with an in-depth view of the nature of difficulties that encounter learners in writing, in particular in using all categories of grammatical cohesive devices.

The following subsections give a detailed analysis of the four categories of grammatical cohesive devices targeted in this study, and how they were identified in the participants' essay writing:

4.1.1 Reference

Statistics		
reference		
total		
N	Valid	45
	Missing	1
Mean		45.022
Median		24.000
Mode		17.0 ^a
Std. Deviation		148.0463
Range		1012.0
Minimum		1.0
Maximum		1013.0
Sum		2026.0

Table 3: The frequency of reference in students' essays

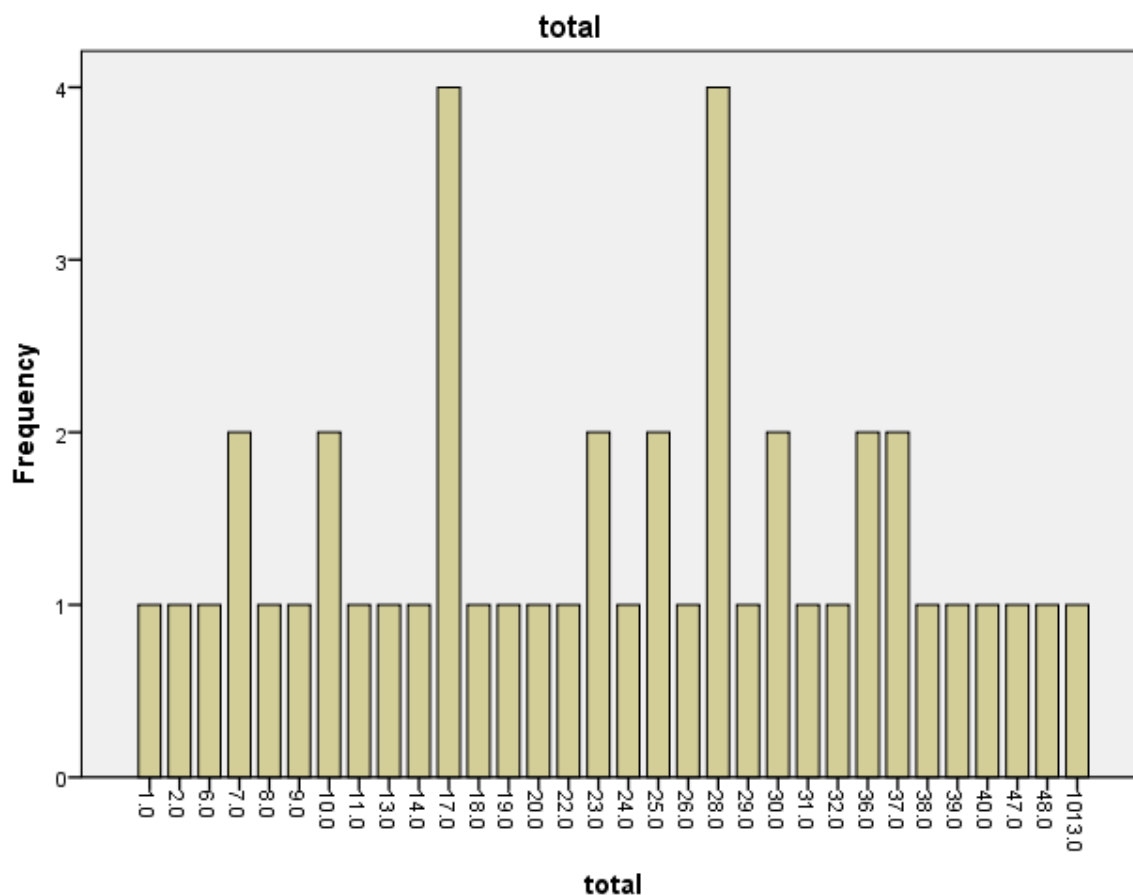


Chart 2: Frequency of reference in students' writing

According to the data in table 3 reference is the most frequently used grammatical cohesive devices types in students' writing. The minimum number of reference devices used was 1.0 and the maximum number was 1013.0. Students of grade 11 used 1013 reference devices in their essays distributed as follows:806 cataphoric devices, 104 exophoric devices and 103 endophoric devices. Example 1 shows the use of different reference types:

*On the other hand, of course **it** has some drawbacks which can be bad for us . firstly, **it** can waste a lot of our time for example, people like using it just for having fun and playing games and **this** we can call **it** a waste of time . Secondly, **it** leads to back problems because we spend a lot of time using **it** without sitting in proper way. A lot of people think that **it** has no problems. Finally, **it** leads to eye problems **it** can easily harm or effect our eyes if we use **it** for long hours.*

Within the above paragraph the student used this as an exophoric device; the reader has to look behind the text to know exactly what *this* refers to. “*It*” was used 9 times as an anaphoric device; *it* has the function of back reference, which is defined as the back reference of a word or a phrase to another word or a phrase previously mentioned in a text. The repletion of *it* in the paragraph shows the inability of the student to use it in a proper way without the need of repeating it many times.

In this context, the results of the study are the same as those reached by Hinkel (2008) in which learners used both reference and conjunctions more than any other category of cohesive ties. In the same context, a similar study was conducted by Hidayat (2016) in order to examine students’ usage of grammatical cohesive devices, particularly references. The results are in harmony of those reached by many other researchers including Suningsih (2016), in which students used references the most, especially anaphoric references. On the contrary, these results represent a clear contradiction of the findings reached by Dikilitaş (2012) where these two categories were the least frequent in Turkish learners of English as a foreign language.

4.1.2 Conjunctions

Statistics		
total		
N	Valid	45
	Missing	1
Mean		28.667
Median		15.000
Mode		11.0
Std. Deviation		94.3022
Range		645.0
Minimum		.0
Maximum		645.0
Sum		1290.0

Table 4: The frequency of conjunction in students’ essays

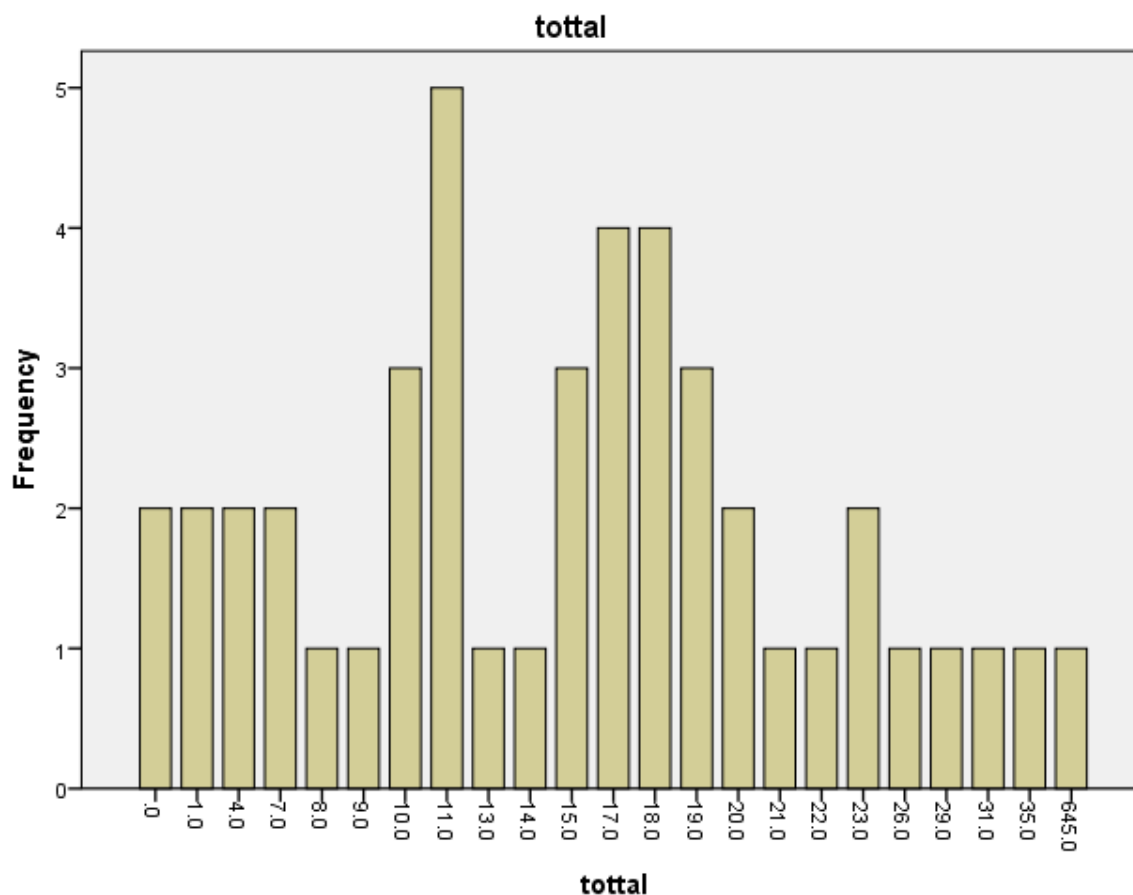


Chart 3 : the frequency of conjunction in students' writing

Conjunction was the second most frequently used grammatical cohesive device of students' writing with the total percentage of 35.48 %. The minimum number of conjunction was .0 and maximum number was 645.0. The mean was 28.677 and the mode was 11 .0. Students in their essays used 443 additives, 154 temporal conjunctions and 48 adversatives with the total number of 645 conjunctions. The dominance of additives in students' writing is an indicator of the interference of L1; Arabs in their spoken discourse use additives regularly, which represent a characteristic of spoken and written Arabic discourse. Example 1 illustrates the students' use of temporal conjunctions in their essays:

Firstly, never for ever deal with unknown accounts or websites, they can be hackers and they can steal your information. Secondly, don't use social media for bad reasons specially kids and teenagers. Thirdly, using the internet for long time has bad effects on your health. Finally, don't communicate with strangers.

Example 2 illustrates the students' use of additive conjunctions in their essays:

Furthermore, and after talking the good things, internet made in our lifestyle, we shouldn't forget that there might be some problems we are facing while using the internet and we should be careful while using the internet.

Example 3 illustrates the students' use of adversative conjunctions in their essays:

Of course social media has some disadvantages but on the other hand we should avoid them. However, the bright side of the internet and social media is that people became open to the world around them.

In example 2 , uses *and* twice in a run-on sentence; one of them preceded by one more additive , which is *furthermore*. The repeated appearance of *and* in the students' writings goes back to the interference of L1. All the participants in the study are Arabs which justifies the repeated usage of the additive *and*. The alternative Arabic word for *and* is frequently used by Arabs in their oral or written discourse. When investigating this problem in- depth through brainstorming activities that precede the writing procedure, it was discovered that students think in Arabic then write down their ideas in English. The result of that is the misuse of some additives such as *and* . This is a significant indicator that non-native students suffer a great deal of difficulty regarding utilizing grammatical cohesive devices in their essay writing.

In example 3 two adversatives were presented, *but* and *however*, as examples of adversative conjunction. In the first sentence the student used *but* in its right place to represent a contrast. However, she followed it by *on the other hand*, which represents the interference of L1. The influence of L1 in Arabic oral discourse clearly appears in this example. The use of *however* in the second example seemed to be less influenced by L 1 since the student used it in a proper way.

Dikilita (2012) and Hinkel (2008) have two contradicting results conducted by their studies on grammatical cohesive devices. Hinkel (2008) sees that the most frequently used cohesive devices were conjunctions and reference, which goes in parallel with the current study results, whereas Dikilitaş (2012) sees these two categories as the least common in students written essays, which clearly contradicts with the findings of the recent study. The recent

study findings spots some problems such as the overuse and misuse of some types of grammatical cohesive devices in written discourse such as *and*, which emerges mainly from interference of L1.

4.1.3 Ellipsis

Statistics		
total		
N	Valid	45
	Missing	1
Mean		4.622
Median		3.000
Mode		3.0
Std. Deviation		15.2767
Range		104.0
Minimum		.0
Maximum		104.0
Sum		208.0

Table 5: The frequency of ellipsis in students' essays

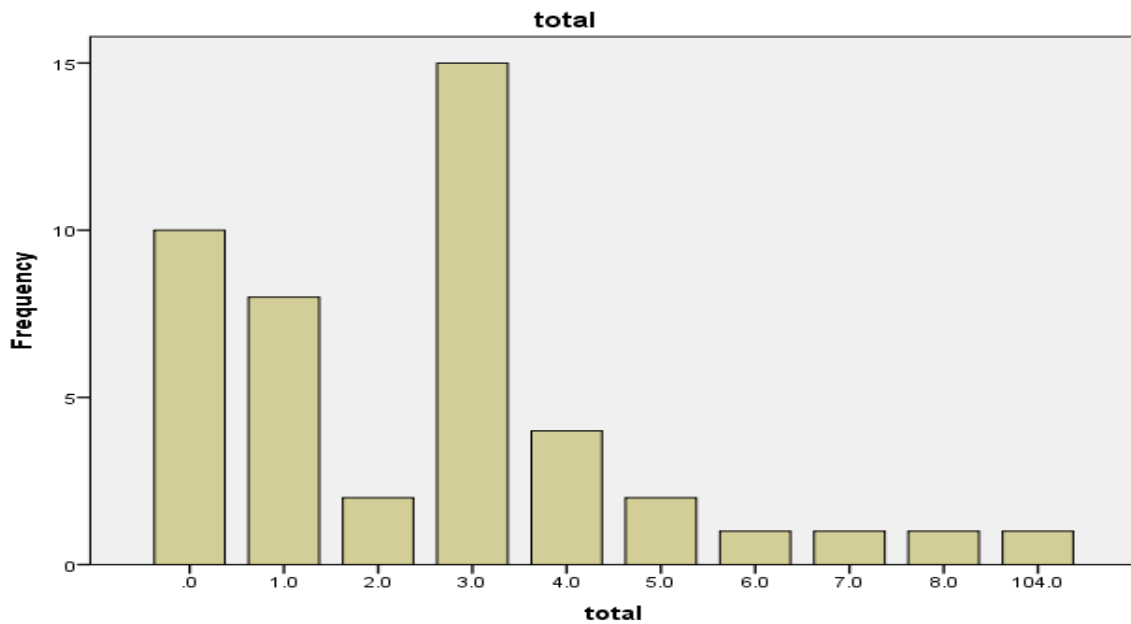


Chart 4 Frequency of ellipsis in students' writing.

According to table 4 and chart 4, ellipsis was the third most frequently used grammatical cohesive device in students' writing at a total number of 104 in all essays. In their essays, Students used 54 nominal devices, 26 clausal devices and 24 verbal devices. The minimum number of ellipsis used was (.0) , whereas the maximum number used was (104) .

Example 4

*Sentence 1 -There are websites that sell different goods at good prices , **some** are international.*

*Sentence 2 _Social media has many advantages, **one** of the most important is communication.*

*Sentence 3 -Nowadays we live in a world of technology that means everything has developed, but not all countries in the world **have**.*

*Sentence 4 _ In dealing with social media you have to take the risk so, parents should observe their kids so as they **won't**.*

Sentences 1 and 2 are examples of nominal ellipsis, the student in example sentence 1 omitted the word *websites* and referred to it by the word *some*.

Sentence 2 is another example of nominal ellipsis; the noun *advantages* is omitted and referred to by the word *one*.

Sentence 3 represents an example of verbal ellipsis, which is rare in students' writings. The verb developed was omitted.

Sentence 4 provides an example of a different type of ellipsis, which is clausal. Clausal ellipsis also appears rarely in students' essays. The clause *take the risk* is omitted.

The number of used ellipsis with all its types in students' writings and the way they used them., indicated a significant difficulty in using this type of grammatical cohesive devices. Participants showed a limited ability to implement ellipsis in their writing, they seemed to be unable to use the three types of the ellipsis, and when tried to use them in places of the writing, the outcome was an indicator of misuse. The reason behind this difficulty was

investigated in the findings of the qualitative part of the study. The findings of the recent study are in harmony with the study conducted by Suningsih (2016), who sees that the higher students' proficiency level is, the less frequent use of ellipsis. Al-Jarf (2001), Liu and Braine (2005), Ahmed (2010) in their studies conclude that students had problems dealing with using some grammatical cohesive devices including substitution, reference, and ellipsis.

4.1.4 Substitution

Statistics		
total		
N	Valid	45
	Missing	1
Mean		2.489
Median		1.000
Mode		.0
Std. Deviation		8.2507
Range		56.0
Minimum		.0
Maximum		56.0
Sum		112.0

Table 6: The frequency of substitution in students' essays

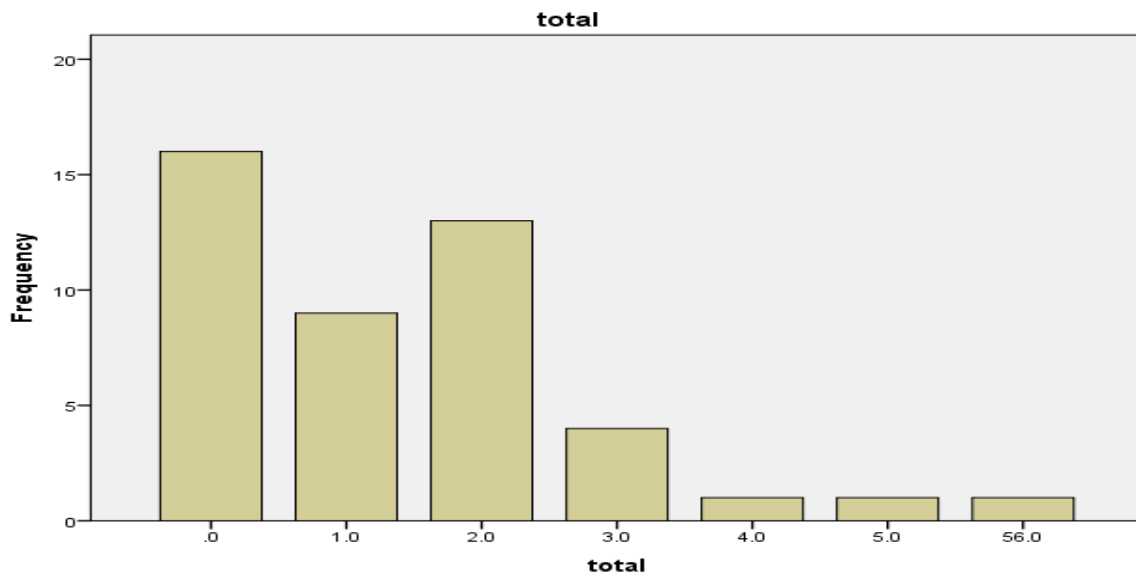


Chart 5 Frequency of substitution in students' writing.

Substitution was the fourth most frequently used grammatical cohesive device among all four categories at 56 devices in total. The minimum number of substitution was (.0) whereas the maximum number was 56. Students in their essays included 13 nominal substitutions, 40 verbal substitutions and only 3 clausal substitutions. The mean was 2.489 whereas the mode was .0.

Example 5

Sentence 1: Internet has changed our life to a better **one**.

Sentence 2 :

To begin with, there are many uses of internet that can have advantages, people use internet daily. Students and teachers use internet, parents and employees in banks also **do**.

Sentence 1 represents an example of nominal substitution; the word *one* helped the student to avoid repeating the word *life*.

Sentence 2 provides another example of substitution, which is the verbal one. The student used the *do* to avoid repeating the verb *use*.

The findings of this part of the study show a clear difficulty with using substitution as a type of grammatical cohesive devices; students showed inability to implement substitution. This inability was represented in small number of substitution used in 44 essays written by the participants.

The findings of the recent study are in harmony with the study done by Liu and Braine (2005) in which students had problems dealing with and using some grammatical cohesive devices including substitution. Similar results were reached by Ahmed (2010) who examined Egyptian students' English writing. In the same context, Bahaziq (2016) and Hinkel (2008) had similar results that substitution is less frequently used in students' writing. The almost similar findings of big number of studies show that no-native students face difficulties in using grammatical cohesive devices in general. Furthermore, specific types of grammatical cohesive devices such as ellipsis and substitution represent the biggest difficulty students encounter with implementing grammatical cohesive devices.

4.2 Correlation

Correlations		Total	student's mark
total	Pearson Correlation	1	.727**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	45	44
student's mark	Pearson Correlation	.727**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	44	44

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7: the correlation between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices and Students' mark

It is noticed that Pearson Correlation Coefficient was $r = 0.727$, which showed a positive association between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices used and L2 learners' marks. Moreover, the degree of correlation between these two variables was significantly moderate since it fell between 0.5 and 0.8 as per Pearson Correlation Coefficient criteria. furthermore, the data demonstrated that the number of grammatical cohesive devices used affected positively the writing quality as represented by students' marks, for example, the students who used more grammatical devices got quiet high marks in their essay marks. On the other hand, those who used less grammatical cohesive devices in their essay writing obtained remarkable low marks. Table 9 provides some examples of how the writing quality of grade 11 L2 learners correlated positively with the total number of grammatical cohesive devices

Participant ID	Total number of GCDS	Students' mark
35	65	16
3	50	16
4	32	13
5	28	12
20	18	10

Table 8.: the positive correlation between the total number of grammatical cohesive devices and students' marks

Moreover, the 2-tailed significance value was $p = 0.015$, which meant that correlation was highly significant since the standard alpha value is 0.05. This maintained the validity and credibility of the obtained findings rather than being out of random or unintentional coincidences. Table 9 shows clearly the correlation between the number of used cohesive devices and the students' mark; those who used a bigger number of devices got high, whereas those who used less devices got lower marks.

The findings of the current study are similar to a number of studies done in this area by researchers such as (Abdulrahman, 2013; Liu & Braine, 2005; Mohamed & Mudawi, 2015; Yan & Sun, 2012) investigating the correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices used in writing and the quality of writing. A positive relation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices used in writing and the quality of writing was proved in these studies. On the other hand, Dikilitaş (2012) opposed these findings in his study, not identify any sort of relation between the amount of grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of students' written essays.

Yan and Sun (2012), in their study conclude that the quality of students' writing reflected the appropriate implementation of cohesive devices regardless of their EFL proficiency levels. The findings of these studies confirm the fact that This confirmed that students who had low proficiency levels created non-cohesive texts due to the errors and misunderstanding of employing cohesive devices in their writing; in other words, quality of writing has been influenced by the number of cohesive devices and the way they were used.

4.3 Qualitative findings and discussion

The third research question addresses the difficulties that grade 11 L2 learners encounter while dealing with grammatical cohesive devices in writing from the perspective of teachers and students. To answer the third research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four teachers who taught grade 11 and 10 participants that represented different proficiency levels. The following section provides the findings and discussion of students' interviews.

4.3.1 Students' Interviews

Participant students were asked 8 open-ended questions to investigate their knowledge about cohesive devices in general and grammatical cohesive devices in particular. These questions were formed in a way that would contribute to purpose of the study. Questions were formed to investigate how much students know about cohesive devices, when teachers teach them, difficulties that students face when using them, most commonly used devices, the impact of using cohesive devices on students' writings, the feedback students get from the teachers concerning using cohesive devices and finally how students think of improving their knowledge about cohesive devices and the way they use them. The interview findings were divided into five themes.

4.3.1.1 Students' knowledge of Grammatical cohesive devices.

A direct question was asked to students about their knowledge of CDs in general. Most of the participants said that they have never heard this term. 4 students only could tell what cohesive devices are. 7 students were able to identify cohesive devices after being given examples by the researcher. One of the students said *"I have never heard this term, when teachers explained them teachers used other terms like linking words or say the type of device such as conjunction"*. Students' knowledge here emerges from being familiar with the term itself. When asked about grammatical cohesive devices in particular, 6 students could name two types of them, which are reference and conjunction and gave examples on them. One of the students said *"we use reference when we use pronouns to refer to somebody or something."* When students were asked about types of referencing such as anaphoric and cataphoric referencing, they showed no knowledge of the terms but when explained, students said they know them.

One of the high-achievers said *"Conjunctions are words used to link sentences in a text such as and, because and so."* Ellipsis and substitution were only identified by 2 students, who were not familiar with the term but could identify when given examples. One of the distinguished students said *"I do not know what they are."* After being examples, he could illicit what they are. *"yes, I know what they mean now, sometimes I use them in my essays."*

4.3.1.2 Students' learning experience with grammatical cohesive devices.

Participants were asked about how teachers teach them grammatical cohesive devices and how does this relate to the writing skill. 8 participants said that they study them as part of grammar. *"When we started learning grammar our teachers taught us how to use pronouns like and she."* Another student said *"we studied conjunctions last year in grammar and we used them in writing essays"* One more participant said *"our teacher told us that they are important to use in writing because they help you to write in a good way."* 2 students said that teachers teach them when they vocabulary. *"Some teachers taught us these words as vocabulary, teachers told us that they are necessary words to enrich your vocabulary and improve your writing."*

4.3.1.3 Difficulties students encounter with using grammatical cohesive devices

Participants were then asked about difficulties they face when they use grammatical cohesive devices. The big majority of the participants (n= 7) said that they do not practice them regularly in studying grammar or while practicing writing essays; the amount of teaching dedicated to them is not enough to be mastered. One participant said *"Our teachers do not teach us cohesive devices regularly, they may teach them once or twice a year"* Most of the participants referred to the fact that teachers concentrate on teaching just two types of grammatical cohesive devices which are referencing and conjunction while the other two types are almost neglected while teaching or marking essays. *"Ellipsis and substitution have never been mentioned by a teacher as types of grammatical cohesive devices."*, one of the participants said. Another problem that faces students while using grammatical cohesive devices is that teachers do not consider them as part of the marking rubric, so they may evaluate the students highly although not using proper cohesive devices in their writing. So, students do not feel the importance of them while writing to get high marks. *"Most of the time I do not use a lot of them in my writing but I get high marks."*, Another student said.

When students were asked about the feedback they get in their writing concerning cohesive devices, most of them said that teachers rarely write any feedback concerning them. *"I only get remarks about using pronouns or some conjunctions."*, one participant said.

4.3.1.4 How using grammatical cohesive devices influence the quality of writing

Participants were asked about their opinion of the impact of using grammatical cohesive devices and how they influence the quality of their writing. 3 of the most distinguished students said that they try to include as much cohesive devices as they can in their writing to make their essay stronger and more coherent. *“I always try to include grammatical cohesive devices in my essays because they strengthen my essay, I know that using them improves the quality of my writing.”*, one participant was quoted.

The rest of the participants, (=7) said that they were told by some of their teachers that using grammatical cohesive device has a good impact on the quality of their writing but they do not know how and when to use the. The following is a quote of one of the participants while answering the question: *“I know that using grammatical cohesive devices is a good thing in writing and it helps me improve my writing quality and get high marks but most of the time I do not know how and where to use them properly, so sometime I depend on myself to learn more about them.”*

4.3.1.5 Students’ needs to learn better how to use grammatical cohesive devices.

When students were asked about what they need to improve their knowledge about grammatical cohesive devices and how to use them properly, all of them said that they recommend more teaching time dedicated to teaching these devices. They also said that they need to practice them in many contexts so as to be able to use them properly. Participants also mentioned the importance of practicing using all cohesive devices and not concentrating on only certain types of them. Most of the participants (=8) stressed the fact that teachers should give the proper feedback while marking the students’ writings.

Below are some quotes:

“We actually need our teachers to assign more time to teach these devices and practice them with us in class.”

“I need to know about other cohesive devices such as ellipsis and substitution.”

“I do not get any feedback in my writing from the teacher, giving the feedback helps me improve.”

4.3.2 Teachers' Interviews

Four teachers were asked to answer seven questions that contribute to the overall purpose of the study. The questions focused on five themes which are: if teachers teach grammatical cohesive devices at school and how they teach them, the most and least commonly used devices by students, giving feedback while marking and marking criteria.

4.3.2.1-Teaching grammatical cohesive devices at school

The teachers were asked if they taught their students grammatical cohesive devices and how they did so. All participant teachers said that they teach grammatical cohesive devices while teaching grammar or when they teach writing skills. One participant said "I teach cohesive devices in the academic writing when I teach students how to write descriptive, narrative or argumentative essays." Another participant said "I teach them in grammar as part of grammar". One participants was quoted as saying "*I teach them separately as part of grammar and I ask students to answer questions on them.*"

4.3.2.2 Teaching grammatical cohesive devices in a context

Participants were asked if they prefer to teach grammatical cohesive devices in a context or separately. All of them answered that it is more effective to teach cohesive devices in context. One participant said "it is more effective to teach them in a context so as to enable the students to apply them in their writing."

4.3.2.3 Most and least commonly used grammatical cohesive devices:

When participants were asked about the most and least commonly used devices by students, all of them answered that most of students use referencing and conjunctions when they write their essays. Ellipsis and substitution are rarely used by the students. On participant said, "*Most of the students use referencing and conjunctions in their essays.*"

Another participant said " *Ellipsis and substitution are almost missing in students' essays, they mainly use referencing and conjunctions.*"

4.3.2.4 Feedback giving in marking students' essays

Participants were asked if they give any feedback when they mark students' essays concerning grammatical cohesive devices, they all answered that they give feedback on what students write only but they do not give any instructions concerning using varied grammatical cohesive devices that students rarely use in their essays. One participant

said’’ *I only give feedback on what students’ write, if they have any mistakes I correct them.*’’ Another participant said “I do not write any feedback concerning the types of cohesive devices that students lack, I just mark what they write.”

4.3.2.5 Marking criteria

Participants were asked about the need to include grammatical cohesive devices in marking students’ writing. All the participants thought that grammatical cohesive devices must be included in the rubric of essay writing marking. One participant said ‘’ *We already have a marking rubric but grammatical cohesive devices are not part of it.*’’ Another participant said ‘’ *We consider them as part of grammar when we correct students’ essays but if we do not find them, we do not count them as mistakes.*’’ A third participant said “*We must include them in the marking rubric but we also must give students the proper teaching concerning them.*”

4.4 Discussion of the qualitative findings

The findings of the qualitative method for both students and teachers confirmed the difficulties that grade 11 students face in respect of grammatical cohesive devices. The interviews with the students and the teachers highlighted the quality and number of difficulties students of grade 11 encounter. One of the most prominent problems is restricting to using certain types of grammatical cohesive devices such as referencing and conjunctions and almost the absence of other grammatical cohesive devices such as ellipsis and substitution. The qualitative findings also showed that the absence of some grammatical cohesive devices goes back to many factors. One of these factors is the low quality teaching presented in this area; teachers do not address these types in their teaching, they address them only while teaching grammar.

Grammatical cohesive devices are not taught in contexts in a way that enables students to implement them properly in their writing. Because of the previously mentioned reason students are dominated by the amount of teaching presented to them in this field. One more factor is that students do not get the proper feedback on their writings from the teachers, so they keep making the same mistakes and using the same types they are familiar with and they do not add any new information to their knowledge concerning

this part. Moreover, the absence of grammatical cohesive devices in the marking rubric gives the students the impression that it is not an important part of the language to concentrate on; students keep getting high marks despite the deficiency they have in their writing skill. Students' awareness of the grammatical cohesive devices is confirmed to be inappropriate. From the answers to the questions directed to students, we could elicit that teachers have a great part of the responsibility of enabling students to have a good knowledge about grammatical cohesive devices and how to use them properly. Teachers can carry out this mission properly if they check their students' needs and work on them. Giving the feedback is of great importance to put students' writings in the right direction.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the paper and key findings

This research paper presented an investigation of the use of grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 learners' descriptive essays with a focus on each grammatical cohesive device, the correlation between the number of used grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of writing and finally an identification of the difficulties encountered by the participants in terms of using grammatical cohesive devices. The significance of this study came from the need to identify difficulties that may challenge L2 learners while using grammatical cohesive devices in writing so as to find an applicable solution that might help L2 learners overcome these difficulties. The need to address this field of research emerged from the form the researcher's responsibility to prepare non-native L2 learners in general and Arab learners in particular for their upcoming university life which requires a specific standard of English language mastery. Students need to get a certain score in IELETS and EMSAT tests, which require a high-level of writing proficiency.

Writing skill is an important language skill that needs to be improved to enable our L2 learners pass these international tests with a high score that qualifies them to join a good university and be able to deal with any kinds of written assignments properly. A mixed-method approach was applied in this study which resulted in maintaining the validity and credibility of the findings. The quantitative descriptive statistics approach was used to measure the frequency of grammatical cohesive devices in students' writing. Quantitative correlational statistics approach was also implemented to find out the frequency of grammatical cohesive devices in the essays. to examine the correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices and the writing quality, .the quantitative correlational statistics approach was adopted. The quantitative descriptive approach was adopted to identify challenges that L2 learners face in using grammatical cohesive devices; semi-structured interviews were made with participant teachers and students.

According to the findings of the study, reference is most frequently used grammatical cohesive device, followed by conjunction, which is the second mostly used grammatical cohesive device. Ellipsis came as the third most frequently used cohesive device, whereas, substitution ranked as the fourth most frequently used grammatical cohesive device in all four categories included in the study. The study also found that there was a moderate positive correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices and the writing quality. This finding goes in parallel with the findings of many other studies conducted in this field showing a moderate correlation between the number of grammatical cohesive devices and the quality of writing. However, a small number of studies did not identify that correlation between the number of devices and the quality of writing; they did not see any relation between the density of cohesive devices and the proficiency of writing.

The quantitative statistics approach adopted in the study produced a significant finding concerning the difficulties students encounter in using grammatical cohesive devices in writing; the interference of L1 was reflected in the overuse of additives. One significant finding resulted from the qualitative approach adopted in the study was the persistent need to improve the quality of teaching presented in consideration of cohesive devices. During semi-structured interviews, students expressed their need to know more about cohesive devices and practice them in contexts that enable them implement different types of grammatical cohesive devices in writing. One more significant finding of the qualitative approach was the lack of addressing all types of cohesive devices, which justifies the reason behind the less use of ellipsis and substitution in students' writing. Students expressed their need to get the feedback from the teachers in consideration of using grammatical cohesive devices. While being interviewed, teachers expressed the need to include a writing rubric that illustrate the criteria in which coherence was graded.

5.2 Limitations

Like most of the studies, designing the current study has gone through some limitations. The first limitation was that the findings of the study cannot be reliably generalized due to small number of participants, who wrote only 44 descriptive essays. Thus, this sample of

participants might not be sufficient to issue a judgement and generalize the findings. One more limitation to be mentioned is that a lot of students refrained from participating in interviews, which resulted in a few number of participants in this qualitative part of the study. Additionally, the current study did not include all cohesive devices; only grammatical cohesive devices were included, whereas, lexical cohesive devices were not part of the study. One more limitation to be mentioned is the small number of teacher participants (4 teachers), who were involved in the semi-structured interviews and the category they belong to. Teachers in the current study taught only grade 11 and 12; including other participants that teach different stages could have enriched the study and made the findings more reliable and generalized. One more limitation was the procedure of manual counting and classifying the different types of cohesive devices in the students' essays. The big number of grammatical cohesive devices with all their types could result in missing some of them or classifying them in the wrong place. Because of the last limitation, an automated analysis tool (Coh-Matrix) followed the manual counting. One more limitation concerning the literature review of the study is that some of the studies, which were part of the literature review did not adopt or correlate to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion, which was the only model adopted as the framework of analysis of the current paper.

The length of essays provided by the students repressed another limitation. Students were supposed to write a descriptive essay of at least 180 words. Many students did not abide by the word count. Some students wrote much less than required whereas, some others wrote more. Consequently, the researcher could not spot all the targeted grammatical cohesive devices in some of essays due the short length of them.

5.3 Recommendations

As clearly appeared in the findings of the current study and other previously conducted studies, cohesion in writing is a skill that most of L2 learners lack. The problem of lack of cohesion in L 2 learners' writing deserves the efforts of teachers and everyone concerned in the teaching and learning process of English language.

The study suggests the following implications for both teachers and L2 learners. Firstly, teachers should include all types of grammatical cohesive devices in their teaching through varied activities. Types that were less frequently used in students' writing such as ellipsis and conjunction need be more focused on and given more attention by teachers. secondly, the quality of teaching or the way cohesive devices are taught has to be reconsidered; teaching cohesive separately as part of grammar or vocabulary sections does not provide the learners with the sufficient learning needed to implement cohesive devices properly in their writing. Teaching cohesive devices separately keeps these words as bricks that need to be unified to build a strong wall.

Therefore, cohesive devices in general and grammatical cohesive devices in particular are recommended to be taught in the context of writing as part of the writing skill so as to give the students the opportunity to practice them in a practical way.

Thirdly, as for giving the feedback on students' writing, teachers are recommended to give the proper when they mark students' written works. Teachers are recommended to give an effective feedback that leads the students to improve their writing quality. The feedback given to students on their writing should not be only writing encouraging remarks or smiling faces. The feedback given on cohesive devices in particular should address the number of cohesive devices used and how they were used. The feedback should be of an instructive nature that enables the students to improve their writing and overcome any difficulties that might face them in using grammatical cohesive devices. Moreover, teachers are recommended to keep an efficient follow up on students' writing level through the given feedback; they have to check regularly that students respond positively to their remarks on their writing. Teachers are recommended to trace or follow up the impact of their feedback on the students' writing level. This kind of follow up procedure enables the teacher to build remedial plans if some of the students do not respond positively to the teaching process. Additionally, this kind of follow up could be as a significant indicator for his level of teaching as he might need to change the way he teaches to fit a multi-level class.

Fourthly, since grammatical cohesive devices has an impact on the quality of writing, the writing rubric used to assess students' written essays should be modified to include these

devices as part of the evaluation. Teachers are also recommended to stick to this rubric throughout the academic year while applying formative or summative assessment so as to direct students' attention to their importance and the necessity to use them produce a high-quality piece of writing and consequently get high marks.

Based on the findings of current study, an interference of L1 was identified on students' writing, which appeared clearly in the overuse of additives in general and some adversatives such as *but* and *however*. Learners are recommended to enrich their knowledge of cohesive devices by practicing different types of reading, such as intensive and extensive reading so as to be able to practice language through authentic materials written by native speakers. Listening activities are highly recommended for L2 learners as a means to acquire the skill of understanding how native speakers form their sentences cohesively. Moreover, students are recommended to practice extra-curricular writing and keep checking with their teachers and asking for positive feedback.

5.4 Implications for future studies

According to the findings of the current study, there are some implication to be taken in consideration for future research papers. The first implication is to apply the research on a bigger corpse through quantitative and qualitative methods so as to make the findings more generalized and reliable. A comparison could be held between students who study in international schools and those who study in an MOE curriculum school to identify the impact of teaching two different curricula and on students' performance and investigate the impact of being taught in an environment that provides the students with the opportunity to practice English language in different subjects.

One more implication is that studies should be dedicated to investigating the feedback given by the teachers on students' writing and how they negatively or positively affect the performance of the students in the writing process. A future study can also consider some other variables such as participants' age and sex. Investigating the difference between male and female participants deserves to be addressed; female participants write considerably different from male ones. The reason behind that could be the purpose of future studies. Since

the current way of teaching cohesive devices has been proved ineffective in empowering the students to produce coherent essays and do not enhance students' skill in writing different kinds of essays, the need to conduct studies to investigate the impact of applying specific teaching strategies is persistent. One class can be taken as a sample and then compared to another class that get traditional teaching. During this study, the written activities of the students will be checked throughout the year to investigate the impact of applying these strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Sample Questions from students' Semi-Structured Interview

Sample questions from students' semi-structured interviews

- 1_ What do you know about grammatical cohesive devices? Where from? Why?
- 2_ Which language skill teachers use to teach you grammatical cohesive devices?
- 3 Which grammatical cohesive do you mostly use in writing?
- 4_ What kind of difficulties do you face in using grammatical cohesive devices?
- 5_ Does using a number of different cohesive devices have any impact on your writing?
- 6_ Can you use all types of cohesive devices you know in writing? How?
- 7_ What kind of feedback do get from your teacher concerning grammatical cohesive devices?
- 8_ What do you think is the best way to improve your performance in regard of using grammatical cohesive devices?

Acti

Appendix B:

Sample Questions from Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview

Sample Questions from teachers' Semi-Structured Interview

- 1_ Do you include all grammatical cohesive devices in teaching grade 11 learners?
What resources are available for them to get the knowledge?
- 2_ what do you think is the best way to teach grammatical cohesive devices? Which method do you think is the best to teach them ?, separately or in a context? Why?
- 3_ What are the most frequently used grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 learners' writing?
- 4_ What are the least frequently used grammatical cohesive devices in grade 11 learners' writing?
- 5_ Do you give any kind of feedback regarding the use of grammatical cohesive devices in students' writing? What kind?
- 6_ Do you think that it is needed to include grammatical cohesive devices in the writing rubric? why?
- 7_ Dou you think that you need to develop your professional skill regarding using different teaching skills in presenting grammatical cohesive devices? How do you plan to do so ?

Appendix C:

Holistic Writing Rubric

de 11 Advanced Writing Rubric

Band	Task completion	Vocabulary	Grammar	Organisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing requirements Appropriacy of content Style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range Accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of content Linking Punctuation
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has completed all requirements of the task effectively. Appropriate content and style for the task throughout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a good range of vocabulary appropriately, including many words from this grade or above. Shows an ability to use precise topic-specific vocabulary. Spelling is accurate throughout, with only occasional spelling errors in more complex vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows good control of grammar throughout. Consistently uses complex sentences and verb forms with accuracy, with possibly just 1 or 2 minor errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is clearly organised into paragraphs as required for the text. Uses a good range of links and signposts for different ideas / information accurately throughout. Punctuation is appropriate throughout, even in very complex sentences (with maybe only 1 or 2 minor errors).
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has completed most of the requirements of the task, but 1 or 2 minor aspects have been missed (e.g. a bullet point may be just implicitly or minimally covered). Most content is appropriate, only occasional ideas may be off-topic. Some evidence of choosing an appropriate style for the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a range of vocabulary – including new words from this grade to avoid repetition and which is clearly sufficient for the task. Uses 1 or 2 examples of precise topic-specific vocabulary. Spelling is accurate but with some errors in more difficult words, or 1 or 2 persistent errors in basic words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text contains several examples of complex sentences and / or verb forms. All basic structures are accurate throughout, more complex structures may contain minor errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content shows some organisation, but a paragraph may be too short / long or spacing between paragraphs may be unclear. Uses suitable links and signposts throughout. May be some repetition or errors. Punctuation is largely accurate throughout, but there may be slightly more consistent errors in complex sentences.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has completed some of the requirements of the task, but significant aspects have been missed (e.g. whole bullet point aspects). Some content is inappropriate or irrelevant to the task. No evidence of choosing the appropriate style for the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses adequate vocabulary for the task, but mainly makes use of simpler words from previous grades. Use of vocabulary may be repetitive. Most sentences contain at least a minor spelling mistake, and a few words are difficult to decipher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly relies on simple structures with only isolated examples of more complex sentences / verb forms. Occasional errors in both simple and complex structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has attempted to organise the text into paragraphs but doesn't meet the expected requirements of the task. Uses linking words which may be repetitive or rely on simple words. Punctuation generally doesn't affect the flow of sentences but there may be a few noticeable errors / lack of punctuation even in simple sentences.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not complete task. Either far too little text or not relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary is basic and/or repetitive throughout the response. Frequent errors in spelling, which causes some difficulty for the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of being able to use anything but basic structures. Frequent grammatical errors throughout the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of organisation in terms of paragraphing and linking words makes the text difficult to read. Seemingly struggles with punctuation, frequent errors or lack of adequate punctuation.
Non-assessed: Student absent, evidence of cheating or nothing of meaning communicated.				

Appendix D:

The writing task

Write an essay about the use of the internet and social media.

You should include information on:

- what people use the internet and social media for
- the advantages of using the internet and social media
- how people can stay safe

Write at least 180 words.

Appendix E:

Writing sample

On the other hand of course it has some drawbacks which can be unuseful for us. Firstly, it can waste a lot of our time. For example, people like using it just for having fun and playing game and this we can call it a waste of time. Secondly it leads to back problems because we waste a lot of time using it without sitting in a proper way. A lot of people think that it has no problems. Finally, it leads to eye problems. It can easily harm or effect our eyes. If we used it for a long hours.

Finally, we should take care of ourselves and our health of course. It has some advantages but on the other hand we ~~should~~ should take care and avoid the problems. ^{For example} ~~Specifically~~ we can make a ~~small~~ ^{specific} time only for social media. This will help us to avoid the problems and drawbacks.

Marker 2

Writing Sample

Nowadays people use internet daily. Some people think that it is useful and others think it's not useful. Today I'll be talking about some advantages and ^{some} ~~some~~ disadvantages.

First of all the best advantage for using internet is getting information and some facts which is useful and helpful. Secondly ^{some} people like using it for fun and chatting. You can spend time chatting with your friends ^{which are near} ~~in and out~~ to you and people in different countries. The last advantage I'll talk about is online courses that can really help you in studying and improving your knowledge and gaining some ~~extra~~ information. Online courses is used by a lot of people because they feel it's more comfortable and cheaper.

Writing Samples

people from other country or far distances. it helps people alot nowadays. more over, this thing help the students alot with there homework or project, student use the internet for studing, searching for information or even for wasting time on it rather than studying. Finally, shopping online, most of the people prefere like to use shopping websites to buy different things that they could not found it out-side.

Furthermore, there are alot of advantages for Internet and serial media. Firstly, communication. One of the most important thing because you can communicate with othe people from different places. For example, students who are studing far from there family can talk face to face with any app, such as, botim and skype. Secondly, find a job. You can easily find a job by searching on the internet. For example you are searching for a job and you found one you going to read there roles and you can send for them your CV by the email. last but not least searching for information. Now adays peap don't have to go to library for reading books or searching information. you can easily search on the internet. For example, if you want to buy a book you can buy it from the internet or ~~can~~ download it, it more cheaper and faster to find it. and sometimes you can find it free download

Marker 2

Writing Samples

In this age, people use the internet all around the world. Nowadays the Internet and social media are one of the most important thing on the daily usage. It has been discovered the world. people nowadays use it in different ^{ways} and many thing to make life more easy. In my essay I am going to talk about the usage of the internet and the advantages of it.

To begin with, days are changing everyday, and alot of thing had changed when the Internet and social media arrived to this world.

It had changed alot of things from different meaning and usage. For example nowadays alot of companies or most of them are using the internet in many different section and for many different usage, such as emails. For example, rather than making confinsies they can send the work on the email and they can send it back when they done by the email to. Furthermore, people are using social media in crazy way, but the main reason for it is for communicat with other