

## Conclusion And Recommendations

The findings of the present research have implications for teaching and testing composition. Pedagogically speaking, the findings of this study shed some light on the nature and components of LCDs in writing. For the same reason, a writing teacher who is equipped with the knowledge about cohesive devices and their components can be more successful in his/her career. Knowing that weak students in writing tend to overuse the same item and avoid more difficult sub-classes of LCDs, such as synonym, collocation, and superordinate, a teacher can improve students' writing ability.

In evaluating compositions and determining syntactic maturity/complexity of Iranian EFL students' compositions, a teacher can judge their compositions more exactly and easily. Regarding teaching or testing LCDs to Iranian EFL students, The findings of the study suggested that no special strategy is needed for teaching and testing LCDs, as a measure of syntactic maturity/complexity, to male and female Iranian EFL students because both groups showed equal ability in the use of LCDs in their writing tasks.

And finally as a concluding remark it should be added that although the application of LCDs could affect the writing performances of Iranian EFL students, more investigations of other cohesive devices, such as grammatical cohesive devices, are needed in order to arrive at a final conclusion for the definite role of cohesive devices in writing. Only then can one arrive at a firm conclusion about the significant role of cohesive devices in writing compositions.

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## Discussion

The first research question intended to determine whether there was any significant relationship between Iranian EFL students' writing ability and the use of LCDs in their compositions. The findings of the study indicated that those students who were more proficient in writing used more cohesive devices in their compositions; therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected. Consequently; the results of this finding put into question Cohen's position (1986) that ESL/EFL students seem to have serious problems in using cohesive elements in their writing performances. Moreover, the findings of the study were in consistent with Farzanehnejad's (1992) measure of cohesion. This measure was proposed to measure syntactic maturity or complexity of EFL students' writing tasks.

### Data Analysis For the Second Hypothesis

The results of the chi-square test confirmed that sex as a moderate variable had no impact on the use of LCDs in Iranian EFL students' compositions; therefore, the second null hypothesis was accepted. Table 2 and Table 3 show the results for the second hypothesis.

Table 2

The results of Chi-Square test on LCD and sex

Sex			
Level	Male	Female	Row Total
High	13	19	32
Mid	17	12	29
Low	15	14	29
Column Total	45	45	90
Chi- Square	D.F.	Significance	Min E.F.
.06674	2	.9672	14.500

Table 3

The results of Correlation Coefficient Among the study Measures

	Michigan	Rater 1	Rater 2	Composition	LCD	Sex
Michigan	—	.7494	.8196	.8035	.4951	.0625
Rater 1		—	.8080	.9698	.1183	.0502
Rater 2			—	.9730	.2068	.0684
Composition				—	.710	.0584
LCD					—	.1981
Sex						—

## Discussion

The second research question investigated the relationship between the sex of the subjects and the use of LCDs in their compositions. The results of the chi-square test the correlational analysis proved that there was no significant relationship between the sex of the subjects and the use of LCDs in their compositions; therefore the second null hypothesis was accepted.

The findings for the second hypothesis demonstrated that Iranian male and female EFL students' syntactic maturity/complexity in writing can be tested in the same way by the use of cohesive devices. Besides, in terms of teaching cohesive devices as a measure of syntactic complexity/maturity to both male and female subjects indicated no distinct teaching procedure needed for each group, and both groups can be taught in the same way.

## Design

Due to the specific nature of the study, ex post facto design was selected for the study. Since there was no cause-effect relationship between the variables the researchers arbitrarily labelled writing ability as independent variable, and the use of LCSs as dependent variable. Sex was taken as a moderate variable.

## Procedure

In order to carry out the study, the following steps were taken in turn:

**Step 1:** Administration of Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)

At first, MTELP was given to the students to determine their language proficiency in English.

**Step 2:** Composition test administration

Second, the subjects were required to write a composition on the topic: "The reasons you are majoring in English."

**Step 3:** Scoring the compositions

Two independent raters scored the compositions independently based on the composition profile model proposed by Jacobs et al. (1982). This profile consists of five component scales, i.e., content (30 points), organization (20 points) language use (25 points) and mechanics (5 points). The estimated interrater reliability was  $r=.80$  (See Table 3).

**Step 4:** Categorizing the subjects

Based on the composition scores each group of male and female students were divided into three sub-groups, i.e., high, mid, and low. This categorization was based on the mean scores

of male and female.

**Step 5:** Enumerating the LCDs

The researchers, then, enumerated the number of LCDs in each composition based on the analysis of cohesion, a model proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). According to this model, the LCDs have four sub-classes, i.e., the same item, synonym, collocation, and superordinate.

## Data Analysis For the First Hypothesis

In order to test the null hypotheses, the researchers conducted statistical procedures of correlational analysis, analysis of variance (Two-way ANOVA), and chi-square test. The results of two-way ANOVA indicated that there is a significant relationship between the use of lexical cohesion and the writing ability of the subjects. Consequently, the first null hypothesis which claimed no significant relationship between the use of LCDs and the writing ability of the students was rejected at the level of  $P<.05$ . Table 1 illustrates the results of ANOVA on LCD numbers and composition scores, for the first hypothesis.

Table 1

The results of ANOVA on LCD numbers and composition scores

By	Two-Way ANOVA				Signif of F
	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	
Level	148.149	3	149.383	3.222	.027
SEX	318.549	2	159.274	3.436	.037
2 Way Interactions	135.124	1	135.124	2.915	.091
Explained	44.152	2	22.076	476	.623
Residual	492.301		98.460	2.123	.70
Total	3849.099	84	46.358		
	4686.400	89	49.286		

to "ascent", of which it is a synonym.

The third sub-division of lexical cohesion is superordinate. Consider the following text:

Henry has bought himself a new **Jaguar**. He practically lives in the **car**.

In the text cited, "car" refers back to Jaguar, and the word "car" is a superordinate of "Jaguar", that is a name for a more general class.

The fourth sub-class of lexical cohesion is collocation which refers to the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur in a text. The following example illustrates the point:

If you **try**, you will **succeed**.

In the above example, the pair of "try" and "succeed" occur in collocation with one another. In general, any two or more lexical items having similar patterns of collocation, i. e., tending to appear in a similar context, will create a cohesive force if they occur in adjacent sentences.

Cohen (1986) believes that ESL/EFL students seem to have serious problems in using cohesive devices in their writings. Moreover, further investigations indicated that most of the compositions written by Iranian EFL students seemed to lack unity and coherence. This deficiency seemed to arise from the students' restricted knowledge of cohesive devices or perhaps the right application of the cohesive devices in their writing performances.

Therefore, due to the afore-mentioned role and significance of cohesion in discourse, the researchers were intended to investigate the

role and significance of lexical cohesive devices (LCDs) in writing compositions of Iranian EFL students.

### Research Hypotheses

The present study was a search for the application of the concept of cohesion to the analysis of texts. The purpose behind this study was two-fold: Firstly, it aims at investigating the role of lexical cohesion in Iranina EFL students' compositions. Secondly, it purports to test whether sex as a moderate variable had any impact on the use of LCDs in Iranian EFL students' compositions.

In order to reach ideal results for the study, two null hypotheses were proposed.

Ho1 There is no significant relationship ( $P < .05$ ) between Iranian EFL students' writing ability and the use of LCDs in their compositions.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship ( $P < .05$ ) between Iranian EFL students' sex and the use of LCDs in their compositions.

### Subject

In order to comply with the ideal results for the study 90 Iranian EFL students majoring in English were randomly selected out of 400 students studying at six universities in Iran, including the universities of Tehran, Kashan, Shahid Beheshti, Azad, Isfahan, and Azahra. The subject were male and female, equal in number, i.e., 45 male and 45 femal. All of the subjects had passed their writing courses.

complexity will also change. For example, the syntactic complexity of a narration may be different from that of a description or explanation.

Both the error approach and the syntactic approach toward composition evaluation ignore the features of text that extend across sentence boundaries, i. e., cohesive devices. Cohesive devices are important properties of writing quality, and, to a great extent, the types and frequencies of cohesive devices reflect the writing ability of the subjects and the organizational properties of the text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) asserted "cohesive devices are important in turning separate clauses, sentences and paragraphs into units of connected prose and they signal a relation between an element in a text and some other elements" (p. 197). "Cohesive ties are semantic relations which make a text cohere" (p. 4). They further added "cohesive devices show logical chaining of elements in a sentence or text" (p. 18)

Zamel (1976) stated "cohesive devices establish the logical relationship between the ideas presented" (p. 42). Halliday and Hasan (1976) maintained "the most important characteristic of cohesion is the fact that it does not constitute a class of items, but rather a set of relations" (p. 19). They also suggested "cohesive devices both in spoken and written language range across sentence boundaries" (p. 12). Halliday and Hasan (1976) maintained, "lexical cohesion is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary" (p. 274). In fact, it is

the predominant means of connecting sentences in discourse. According to them, cohesion is a semantic concept, and it refers to relations of meaning that is present within a text. They further remarked that there are typically two kinds of cohesion: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. The grammatical cohesion, is a set of cohesive ties, which is obtained by the selection of grammatical items such as pronouns, references, and conjunctions. On the other hand, lexical cohesion is largely independent of the grammatical structure, and it is obtained by the very lexical items within a text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) also proposed that lexical cohesion has four sub-classes. These are the repetition of the same item, synonymy or near synonymy, superordinate, and collocation.

In the first case the same item is just repeated in the discourse process to create the cohesive ties within a text. Consider the following example:

There is a **boy** climbing that tree.  
The **boy** is going to fall if he  
doesn't take care.

In the above text the word "boy" is simply repeated to make the two sentences coherent.

The second sub-class of lexical cohesion is the category of synonym or near synonym. Suppose we have:

He took leave, and turned to the  
**ascent** of the peak. The **climb** was  
perfectly easy for him.

In the above utterance "climb" refers back

## Introduction

Writing is the most neglected skill among all language skills. Even in modern language methodologies, little emphasis has been put on writing. Both the Audiolingualist/Structuralist model and the Functional/ Communicative model have consistently underplayed it in different ways.

There is little consensus among researchers to give a clear definition for writing, and this lack of consensus reflects the complexity of the process. Flower and Hayes (1977) defined writing "as a thinking process. It is a straightforward act of saying what the writer can mean, the mental struggle writers go through and the interpretations readers make" (p. 172).

Mckay (1984) believed "writing is so complex that one cannot give simple formula to his/her students for good writing. What one can do is to engender in the students an awareness and to help them better manipulate each component of the writing process in order to meet their writing objective" (p. 258). She further added, "writing is a dynamic process which involves such activities as generating ideas, setting goals, planning, evaluating and revising" (p. 258).

Zamel (1976) maintained that the inherent issue in any discussion of writing is how writers once they have identified their thoughts put them together. She also remarked that teaching writing to ESL/EFL students to acquire writing skill is by no means easy, but learning how to write is a complex process which takes long

practice and experience.

Cooper and Odell (1978) asserted "writing is one of the most authentic and reliable ways of getting thoughts to others. Learning to write is regarded as the acquiring of basic skills on which other, later and probably more important, skills can be built"(p. 52).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) said "writing is learning how to mean. It is negotiable and explanatory act requiring great judgement" (p. 61). Widdowson (1984) stated that writing is a communicative activity; therefore, it is carried out in accordance with certain general principles which underlie the use of language in communication. Linnard (1986) believed "writing is a creative process of give-and-take between content and form" (p. 14).

In practice, there has been two main approaches toward scoring composition at the college level: The first one is the error approach in which systematic errors in the writing performances are taken into account. The second approach is the syntactic approach in which syntactic features of the writing quality are investigated.

The results of many empirical researchers, for example, by Nodin (1976) indicated that the error approach toward students' writing quality is not satisfactory because the sources of many errors in written discourse are often complex and difficult to trace. With regard to syntax, it seems that the syntactic approach is not sufficient either. And it is worth pointing out that syntactic complexity is affected by task variable. If the task varies, the syntactic

# Role Role Role

# The Role of Lexical Cohesion in Iranian EFL Student's Compositions

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تئوری انسجام یکی از بحث انگیزترین نظریات ارائه شده در زمینه زبان و زبان‌شناسی می باشد که در سال ۱۹۷۶ توسط هالیدی مطرح شد. مقاله حاضر به بررسی نقش انسجام در نگارش زبان انگلیسی می پردازد. فرضیات این تحقیق تأثیر و نقش انسجام واژگانی در انشاء‌های دانشجویان ایرانی در رشته زبان انگلیسی را مورد بررسی قرار می دهد. برای تست فرضیه ها عملیات آماری مجذور کای، آزمون ضریب همبستگی و تحلیل واریانس مورد استفاده قرار گرفته است. نتایج بدست آمده از تحقیق حاضر نشان می دهد که بین توانایی نگارش زبان آموزان ایرانی و استفاده از عوامل انسجام رابطه ی قوی وجود دارد ولی بین جنسیت افراد و توانایی آنان در استفاده از عوامل انسجام رابطه ی مثبت وجود ندارد.

## Abstract

The present study is a search for the application of the concept of cohesion to the

analysis of written discourse. The research hypotheses focussed on the role of lexical cohesive devices in Iranian EFL writing compositions. Moreover, the sex of the subjects as a moderate variable was investigated. To test the hypotheses, chi square test, correlational analysis, and analysis of variance were conducted. The final results of the study proved that there is a positive correlation between the writing proficiency of the students and the use of lexical cohesive devices in their writings. Regarding sex, there was no significant correlation between the writing ability of the students and the use of lexical cohesive devices in their writing compositions.