

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG



KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH : NGÔN NGỮ ANH – NHẬT

Sinh viên : NGÔ ĐỨC THUẬN

Giảng viên hướng dẫn: TH.S NGUYỄN THỊ THU HƯƠNG

HẢI PHÒNG – 2024

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**AN ERROR ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF COHESIVE
DEVICES IN SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS'
WRITINGS AT HAI PHONG MANAGEMENT AND
TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY**

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY

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Tên đề tài: An error analysis on the use of cohesive devices in second-year English majors' writings at Hai Phong Management and Technology University

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1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp

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2. Các tài liệu, số liệu cần thiết

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3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp

Công ty TNHH Phúc Thuận

CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

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Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2024

XÁC NHẬN CỦA KHOA

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM

Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIÁNG VIÊN HƯỚNG DẪN TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên giảng viên: **Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương**

Đơn vị công tác: Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quản lý Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Họ và tên sinh viên: **Ngô Đức Thuận** Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh Nhật

Nội dung hướng dẫn: An error analysis on the use of cohesive devices in second-year English majors' writings at Hai Phong Management and Technology University

1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp

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2. Đánh giá chất lượng của đồ án/khóa luận (so với nội dung yêu cầu đã đề ra trong nhiệm vụ Đ.T. T.N trên các mặt lý luận, thực tiễn, tính toán số liệu...)

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên hướng dẫn tốt nghiệp

Được bảo vệ Không được bảo vệ Điểm hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm

Giảng viên hướng dẫn

(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM

Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIÁNG VIÊN CHĂM PHẢN BIỆN

Họ và tên giảng viên:

Đơn vị công tác:

Họ và tên sinh viên: **Ngô Đức Thuận** Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh Nhật

Đề tài tốt nghiệp: An error analysis on the use of cohesive devices in second-year English majors' writings at Hai Phong Management and Technology University

1. Phần nhận xét của giáo viên chăm phản biện

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2. Những mặt còn hạn chế

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên chăm phản biện

Được bảo vệ Không được bảo vệ Điểm hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm

Giảng viên hướng dẫn

(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)

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Student

Ngo Duc Thuan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PART I: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Rationale.....	1
1.2. Aims of the study	2
1.3. Research questions	2
1.4. Scope of the study	2
1.5. Significance of the study	2
1.6. Methods of the study	3
1.7. Design of the study.....	3
PART II: DEVELOPMENT	3
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	3
1.1. Theoretical background of academic writing.....	4
1.1.1. Definition of academic writing	4
1.1.2. The importance of academic writing	4
1.1.3. Common errors in academic writing.....	6
1.2. Theoretical background of academic paragraph	8
1.2.1. Definition of an academic paragraph	8
1.2.2. Key features of a good academic paragraph	9
1.2.3. Academic paragraph organisation.....	10
1.3. Cohesive devices in academic paragraphs	13
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	17
2.1. Sample and sampling	17
2.2. Instruments	17
2.3. Data collection.....	18
2.4. Data analysis	18
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS	20
3.1. Findings and discussion	20
3.1.1. Demographic information	20

3.1.2. Students' opinions on errors on cohesive devices in writing English academic paragraphs	22
3.1.3. Error analysis on the use of cohesive devices in paragraphs	25
3.2. Suggested solutions	29
3.2.1. For teachers	29
3.2.2. For students	30
PART III: CONCLUSION	32
3.1. Summary of findings	32
3.2. Limitations and suggestions for further studies	32
REFERENCES	33
APPENDIX	34

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

English is the common language in the world. Learning English today is very important for all Vietnamese people, more and more people with the desire to approach the world trend are rushing to learn foreign languages, including English. This need to learn languages has brought about many positive changes in language teaching in Vietnam. Literature teachers today want to search and test different methods and techniques in teaching and learning to find effective methods. The effectiveness of a teaching method or skill is shown in the learner's language learning ability, which is the ability to perform four language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Among these skills, two skills, writing and speaking, are considered more difficult than the remaining skills because learners need to use language to convey their messages in an understandable and accurate way in real-life communication. When a message fails to be conveyed, language errors are most likely to be blamed.

It is natural for people who start learning foreign languages to make mistakes, especially when writing in English. How to find the right method and when to give feedback for these errors are very important in language teaching because it can lead to motivation or boredom in language learning. Some teachers' interest is directed towards comparative analysis of Vietnamese and English in the hope of predicting and preventing errors before they occur. This theory has been supported by Lado (1957). Up to now, there has been few researches on the causes of errors in English writing among Vietnamese students in general, not HPU students. Therefore, the researcher has decided to conduct a study on error analysis in English majors' paragraphs at HPU. It is hoped that the research results will be useful for English teachers to identify the types and causes of cohesive errors so as to find the better teaching methods as well as students to minimize their problems.

1.2. Aims of the study

This research is carried out to investigate the paragraphs written by second-year English – majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology.

The aims of this study are set out as follows:

- ✓ To examine the written paragraphs by the second- year English majored students, focusing on cohesive errors in their writing.
- ✓ To suggest solutions to help students minimize their problems.

1.3. Research questions

The study was carried out in order to find the answers to two research questions:

1. What are common cohesive errors in academic paragraphs written by second – year English – majored students?

2. What are suggested solutions to help students avoid their cohesive errors?

1.4. Scope of the study

The study focuses on finding out the most common cohesive errors made by the second-year English majors when they write academic paragraphs and it is limited only to some categories given by Hatch and Evelyn in 1992.

1.5. Significance of the study

So far, there have been many studies on many errors in teaching English. Some famous researchers such as Zamel (1983), Richard (1971) and Corder (1967) have emphasized the importance of errors in the theory and practice of foreign language teaching and learning. According to Corder (1967), tracing the origin of errors is beneficial in many different ways. First, they help the language teacher know to what level the learner has progressed in the language, in what areas of language he needs help, and what kind of help he needs. Second, provide researchers with evidence in the language learning process; therefore, researchers will find out through errors the strategies applied in the acquisition of a language. In addition, errors can be good feedback so learners can know where they went wrong and make adjustments.

The study is significant for the following reasons:

- ✓ The result of the study will be benefit for English teachers to implement suitable strategies in teaching writing academic paragraphs.
- ✓ It will help students avoid common cohesive errors in paragraph writing and improve their language ability.

1.6. Methods of the study

In seeking answers to the research questions, survey questionnaire and interviews are chosen to obtain relevant information of the study. All remarks, considerations, and conclusions are made largely, based on the analysis of the statistic data collected though the questionnaire survey. Some interviews are carried out as the supplementary to the survey questionnaire. Moreover, thirty paragpahs written by the second-year English majors are collected for analyzing their cohesive errors.

1.7. Design of the study

My graduation includes four parts as following:

Chapter I: Introduction is the introduction of my study including rationale, aims of the study, research question, scope of the study, methods of study, significance of the study and design of the study.

Chapter II: Literature review supplies the readers with the theoretical background including the theory of academic writing skill, paragraph writing, and cohesive devices in academic paragraphs

Chapter III: This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. It describes subjects, instruments to carry out the research, the way to collect and analyze data.

Chapter IV: The chapter provides analysis of data collected, shows findings and discussion

Chapter V: Conclusion offers the summary of the findings and gives some suggestions for further studies.

PART II: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Theoretical background of academic writing

1.1.1. Definition of academic writing

Academic writing is an in-depth form of writing of a specialized nature, and is often used in academic contexts, scientific research and specialized knowledge exchange. Strategic academic writing aims to arrive at information, opinions, or research results in a precise and logical manner. It is entering into a conversation with others, but the way this conversation is carried out differs from how everyday conversation unfolds. According to (Hussen, 2015) academic writing involves expressing ideas, but those ideas need to be presented as a response to some other person or group; and they also need to be carefully elaborated, well supported, logically sequenced, rigorously reasoned, and tightly stitched together.

There is more than one kind of academic writing. In academic settings, people write for many different purposes. They write reading responses, book reviews, argumentative essays, literature reviews, empirical research articles, grant proposals, conference abstracts, commentaries, memoranda, and many other text types. Each of these types of academic writing has its own purpose, organizational structure, and linguistic features.

Academic writing is also a means of producing, codifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge and ideology in academic disciplines. Being able to write in an academic style is essential to disciplinary learning and critical for academic success.

John Swales (1990) defines academic writing as a specific genre with its own set of conventions, rhetorical structures, and communicative purposes. Academic writing involves scholars engaging in a discourse community, following specific genre expectations, and addressing a defined audience.

1.1.2. The importance of academic writing

Academic writing has long been considered as one of the most important aspects in students' higher education. It plays a vital role in determining students'

competence primarily in mastering specific skills in particular fields of study and contributes significantly to students' success at university. There are various types of academic writing with which students have to deal during completing their study. Some of the common forms are essay, note, report, paper and project (Hinkel, 2004: 4; Bailey, 2011: 3; Gillet, Hammond & Martala, 2009: 7-11).

Ken Hyland (2004) emphasizes the diversity of academic writing across disciplines. He argues that different academic disciplines have distinct discourses and linguistic features, and understanding these disciplinary variations is crucial for effective communication in academic contexts.

Brian Paltridge (2002) highlights the importance of understanding the rhetorical features of academic writing. He focuses on the structure of theses and dissertations, providing insights into how academic writers organize their ideas, use evidence, and develop arguments in a systematic manner.

Swales (1990) emphasizes the importance of academic writing within specific discourse communities and provides insights into its role and characteristics. Discourse communities and genres are key points related to the importance of academic writing. Swales introduces the concept of discourse communities, which are groups of people who share common goals, practices, and communication patterns. Academic writing is seen as a genre specific to these discourse communities, and understanding these genres is crucial for effective communication within academic settings. Also, Swales argues that academic writing is a primary means of communication within scholarly communities. Through the use of specific genres, scholars can effectively convey their ideas, research findings, and arguments to their peers.

1.1.3. Common errors in academic writing

Experts have presented different definitions of errors so far. Errors in diverse forms are essential sources of information about foreign language acquisition, because they express ultimately that writers do not memorize the target language rules and after that reproduce them in their utterances. Basically these definitions have the same meaning while the differences lie only on the ways they formulate them.

To solve with errors, experts in error analysis categorize errors into various types. According to James (1998), errors are categorized into six types: clausal, auxiliary, passive, temporal conjunction, sentential complements and psychological predicates. There are two types of errors: performance errors and competence errors (Corder, 1967). The former is made when learners are stressful or careless, the latter is more serious because they reflect inadequate learning. Errors can be classified as inter-lingual or intra-lingual (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Errors are classified into four main categories, namely grammatical, substance, lexical and syntactic errors. Then, they subcategorized grammatical errors into seven types: articles, relative clauses, possessive case, tenses, adjectives, prepositions, and singular or plural nouns; substance errors into three types: spelling, punctuation, and capitalization; lexical errors into two types: varied words, and idiom choice; syntactic errors into three types: word order, nouns and pronouns, and subject-verb agreement (Hubbard et al.,1996).

Corder (1974) gives the types of errors as: errors of well-formedness; errors of appropriateness which are further classified as referential errors; register errors; social errors and textual errors. Types of errors can be categorized into many kinds such as: spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, verb groups, noun groups, pronouns, adjectives, prepositions, confusion or misuse of words and idioms, contraction, lack of practice and carelessness (Victor, 1973).

In terms of cohesive errors in writing, it relates to the clarity and flow of a text. These errors often involve the failure to establish smooth connections

between sentences, paragraphs, or ideas, leading to a lack of coherence in the overall piece. Common cohesive errors include problems with referencing, pronoun use, conjunctions, and transitional devices.

Language students often make various cohesive errors in their writing, impacting the overall clarity and coherence of their texts. Here are some common cohesive errors that students frequently make.

Pronoun reference errors are a type of grammatical error that students often make when using a pronoun without the noun it refers to or when there are many nouns that the pronoun can refer to, leading to confusion of meaning.

For example :

“ John and Mary went to the park. He enjoyed the sunshine.”

In the example, it is unclear who "he" refers to

Ambiguous reference occur when there is ambiguity or ambiguity about what a word or phrase is referring to in the text. This can mislead the reader about the meaning of the sentence.

For example :

"The teacher handed out assignments, and they were challenging."

Error: It is unclear what "they" refers to.

Inconsistency error is a type of error in usage that should not be minimal in a paragraph or article. This can create confusion and reduce the quality of the writing.

For example :

"She is reading a novel, and yesterday she finished another one".

Error: Inconsistent use of present and past tense.

Lack of transitional words appears when writing an article without using enough connecting words or transitional words, leading to a lack of flow between ideas and paragraphs in the text. Help words are given to read through the main ideas, keeping the text coherent and easy to follow.

For example :

“First, I will discuss the advantages. Then the disadvantages.”

Error: Lack of clear transitions between ideas.

Recognizing and addressing these cohesive errors can significantly improve the overall quality of students’ writing, enhancing coherence and making the text better. Students can benefit from careful proofreading, peer reviews, and guidance from instructors to identify and correct these common issues.

1.2. Theoretical background of academic paragraph

1.2.1. Definition of an academic paragraph

According to Lien, T.T.N (2009), an academic paragraph is the basic unit of academic writing in English. It has a very specific pattern. When a writer follows the pattern, it is easy for readers to understand it.

According to Fowler, H.R. and Jane E. A. (2007), an academic paragraph is a self-contained unit of a discourse in writing dealing with a particular point or idea. It begins with a topic sentence and develops that point or idea by providing evidence, examples, or explanation. This definition emphasizes that an academic paragraph is a coherent and self-contained unit that focuses on a specific point or idea. The topic sentence serves as a concise statement of the main idea, and the paragraph is then developed through the use of evidence, examples, or explanations to support and expand upon that main point. It highlights the importance of organizing and presenting information effectively within a paragraph.

Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue (1999) defines an academic paragraph as a group of related sentences that support a main idea. It has a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and sometimes a conclusion. This definition emphasizes the key components of an academic paragraph, including a topic sentence that introduces the main idea, supporting sentences that provide evidence and explanation, and a concluding sentence that summarizes the point. The emphasis is on presenting a cohesive and coherent argument or discussion within the paragraph.

1.2.2. Key features of a good academic paragraph

According to Zemach, D. E and Rumisek, L. A. (2005), a good academic paragraph must have a clear topic sentence, describing the main idea that the paragraph will discuss. The ideas and sentences in the paragraph are connected in an integrated and logical way, creating a continuous line of thought. For Al-Khasawneh, F. M. S. (2010) suggests logic and structure: main idea and supporting ideas are organized in a logical sequence, from introduction to central body and conclusion.

Keith S.F., April, M. & Elena, V. (2014) in *Great Writing 2: Great Paragraphs* (3rd Edition) give four features of a good academic paragraph.

1. A paragraph has a topic sentence that states the main idea. The topic sentence is the foundation for the paragraph. It can be at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the paragraph, but it is usually at the beginning. The topic sentence helps the reader understand what the paragraph is about.

2. All of the sentences in a paragraph are about one topic. They are connected to the topic sentence. There are no unrelated or extra sentences. The ideas in the topic sentence are sometimes called the controlling ideas. All of the other information in the paragraph must be connected to one or more of the controlling ideas in the topic sentence.

3. The first line of a paragraph is indented. Indenting is easy to do. Just move the first line to the right about a half of an inch. On a word processor, this is about six spaces or the first tab stop position. This gap, or open space, in the first line is called an indentation.

4. The last sentence, or concluding sentence, brings the paragraph to a logical conclusion. For some writers, this is one of the most difficult features of a good paragraph to accomplish. The concluding sentence usually states the main point again or summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. In addition, it can offer a suggestion, an opinion, or a prediction.

1.2.3. Academic paragraph organisation

An academic paragraph includes three parts as follows:

A *topic sentence* is a sentence in a paragraph whose main function is to set out the main idea or main topic of that paragraph. It often appears at the beginning of the paragraph and helps determine the direction and content of the paragraph. A topic sentence usually:

- Clear and simple: It conveys the main idea clearly and simply.
- Contains main idea: It contains the main idea or an important aspect of the content to be discussed in the paragraph.
- Reader's guide: It helps readers easily understand the topic and purpose of the passage.
- Connection to the paragraph: It connects closely to the following sentences in the paragraph, assisting in developing ideas and arguments.
- Reflects the structure of the whole article: In the case of longer articles, the topic sentence often reflects the structure and goal of the entire article.

A good topic sentence has the following features:

- It controls or guides the whole paragraph. When you read the topic sentence, you know what to expect in the paragraph.
- A good topic sentence is not a general fact that everyone accepts as true. For example, a bad topic sentence would be, "Libraries have books." The information in this sentence is true, but it is a general fact and is not a good choice for a topic sentence.
- A good topic sentence is specific. "Tea is delicious" is not a good topic sentence because the information in the sentence is too general. The reader does not know what to expect in the paragraph. If you want to write a paragraph about tea, make your topic sentence more specific, such as "Green tea has many health benefits."
- A good topic sentence is not too specific
 - A good topic sentence has controlling ideas that help guide the flow of ideas in the paragraph.

Supporting sentences are sentences in a paragraph that provide information, details, examples, or arguments to support and expand the main idea mentioned in the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Supporting sentences have the following characteristics:

- Provide level helping information, examples, data or maybe to prove or explain the main idea of the topic sentence.
- Expand main idea: Supporting sentences that expand the main idea of the paragraph by providing detailed information and adding depth to the topic.
- Logical linking: they help to form a coherently structured paragraph.
- Supporting argument: Supporting sentences are often used to support arguments, making the paragraph more convincing.
- Explicit connections only: each supporting sentence typically specifies how it connects to the topic and provides a piece of supporting evidence.

Good supporting sentences are related to the topic sentence and its controlling ideas. Supporting sentences are like the interior walls of a house. If a house does not have interior support, it will collapse. Likewise, if a paragraph does not have good supporting sentences, its meaning will collapse, and readers will not be able to follow the ideas. The paragraph may be confusing or illogical.

Good supporting sentences give information that supports and explains the topic of the paragraph. They answer questions-who? what? where? when? why? and how?-and give details. Good writers think of these questions when they provide support-that is, write supporting sentences-for the topic sentence.

Good writers use many different kinds of supporting sentences. They are:

- Explain: The family moved from the village to the capital for economic reasons.
- Describe: She lived in a lovely, three-story castle surrounded by a forest.
- Give reasons: Larry finally quit his job because of the stressful working conditions
- Give facts: More than ten percent of the university's student population is international.
- Give examples: Oranges and grapefruits grow in California.
- Define: My grandmother has a samovar, which is a large copper tea urn.

Concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. Its job is to bring the paragraph to a logical conclusion. For some writers, coming up with this last sentence is a very difficult task. One helpful practice is to read many examples of good concluding sentences. There are many different kinds of concluding sentences: restatement, suggestion, opinion, prediction. Perhaps the easiest concluding sentence to write is one that restates the main idea or summarizes the main points of the paragraph.

A concluding statement can offer a suggestion, give an opinion, or make a prediction. Sometimes a concluding statement does a combination of these options.

1.3. Cohesive devices in academic paragraphs

Cohesive device is one of the grammatical relations that are used in paragraph

writing. It is related to the cohesion which deals with the relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text (Halliday, et al., 1976: 4).

According to Gerot and Wignell, (1994:170), stated that: “Cohesion is the resources within language that provide continuity in a text, over and above that provided by clause structures and clause complexes”. Cohesion helps readers or listeners to understand some missing pieces which are not present in the text but necessary to its interpretation.

Cohesive devices are also used to tie pieces of text together in specific ways. While Levinson’s applies to deictic markers of reference, Halliday and Hassan’s (1976) system distinguishes five major types of grammatical cohesive ties: *Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction, and Lexical ties* (Hatch, Evelyn., 1992: 223).

Reference

Reference is one of the parts of the cohesive device which express the specific

nature of the information that is signaled for retrieval. In the case of reference the information to be retrieved is the referential, the identity of the particular thing or class of things that is being referred to; and the cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time (Halliday and Hasan., 1976: 31). To establish reference, we may use lexical items, pronouns, demonstratives, and comparatives for grammatical reference.

Lexical items and pronouns: We may use lexical items. For example, “Mary” can be used to refer to a person named Mary. Once we establish the referent, we can also refer to Mary as “she”, at least for the period of time during which our focus is on Mary. The pronoun “she,” by itself, has no referent. It is a cohesive tie to the noun “Mary”

Demonstratives: are also cohesive ties and either cataphoric or anaphoric.

Comparatives can also provide a tie to a referent. Most comparatives are used for anaphoric reference.

Substitution

It refers not to a specific entity but to a class of items. Substitution can have sub-parts. Those are nominal, verbal, and clausal.

Ellipsis

This refers to “the omission of an item” (Halliday and Hasan: 1976: 88) that is already understood from the antecedent context. The relation between substitution and ellipsis is very close because it is merely that ellipsis is “substitution” by zero (0). What is essential in ellipsis is that some elements are omitted from the surface text, but they are still understood. Thus, omission of these elements can be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text. Halliday and Hasan (1976:146) assert that there are three types of ellipsis including nominal, verbal, and clausal.

Conjunction

Gerot and Wignell (1994:180) argue that conjunction is the semantic system whereby speakers relate clauses in terms of temporal sequence, comparison and addition. Unlike reference, substitution, and ellipsis, the use of conjunction does not instruct the reader to supply missing information either by looking for it elsewhere in the text or by filling structural slots. Instead, conjunction signals the way the writer wants the reader to relate what is about to be said to what has been

said before. Halliday and Hassan describe it as follows: “In describing conjunction as a cohesive device, we are focusing attention not on the semantic relation as such, as realized throughout the grammar of the language, but on one particular aspect of them, namely the function they have of relating to each other linguistic elements that occur in succession but are not related by other, structural means”. (Halliday and Hassan, 1978: 227). Halliday and Hasan (1976:243) state that conjunction can be divided into additive, adversative, causal, temporal and other conjunctive items (continuatives).

Lexical ties

Lexical cohesion refers to relationships between and among words in a text (Gerot and Wignell, 1994:177). It involves the repetition of a noun phrase, or the use of another noun phrase which bears a relation to the antecedent noun phrase. Halliday and Hasan (1976:288) divide lexical cohesion into two main categories: reiteration and collocation.

Reiteration

Reiteration is subdivided into the repetition of a lexical item, the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item, and the use of a synonym, or super ordinate terms as follows:

Repetition restate the same lexical item in a later part of the discourse. For example: *There’s a pen on the table. The pen was put by my friend.* The word *pen* is repeated in the second sentence.

General nouns are used to refer back to a lexical item such as: person, people, man, woman for human nouns; things, object for inanimate, concrete countable nouns; stuff for inanimate, concrete uncountable; place for location ...etc.

Synonymy used to express a similar meaning of an item. For example: *His job is enjoyable. He has never been bored with his work.* The words *job* and *work* are synonymous.

Super ordinations involve the use of general class words. For example: “They went to the Emporium. The shopping mall was large and had a lot of goods. The noun phrase shopping mall is the superordinated term referring to the emporium”.

Collocation deals with the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:284). The authors assert that such patterns occur freely both within the same sentence boundaries since they are independent of the grammatical structure.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sample and sampling

The sample was thirty English major freshmen studying at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. All of the students got used to learning grammar and than any parts of English. That is an advantage for learners when they learn to write because these two things are basic for writing a sentence, a paragraph or an essay.

Their English levels were equivalent to elementary level. Although they had gained some knowledge of English during their schooling, they did not fully understand and were not able to use cohesive devices correctly in writing.

2.2. Instruments

** Instruments 1: Writing tasks*

There were thirty academic paragraphs of various students chosen randomly. There were three different genres of paragraphs chosen including descriptive paragraphs, opinion paragraphs and narrative paragraphs. Each kind has the same paragraph organisation, some same kinds of cohesive devices. However, they are typically differ in transition signals.

** Instrument 2: Survey questionnaire*

The survey questionnaire was another important instrument to get more information about the students themselves and their experience in English. The survey questionnaire has two sections:

- The personal information consisting students' gender, age, experience in learning English at university.
- The students' opinions on cohesive errors in paragraph writing.

**Instrument 3: Interviews*

The participants were interviewed in order to ensure the reliability of the study.

2.3. Data collection

The data was collected during 5- week period (from late October to November 2023). Information regarding data collection was provided for the teacher where the samples were chosen. Agreement and discussion with the teacher involved were made earlier to ensure that the data collection was carried out smoothly.

First, Instrument 1 – the writing tasks were collected in the two writing classes.

Second, Instrument 2 - the survey questionnaire was administered on one day in November 2023.

Finally, Instrument 3 – interviews. The researcher interviewed some students to get the reliable information.

2.4. Data analysis

After the administration of the instruments, the data were collected and analyzed according to the purpose of the study to elicit answers for the proposed research questions. Each set of data consisted of the academic results of academic paragraphs, and the information from the answer to the given questions in the survey questionnaire. All the data were analyzed by the researcher of this study to avoid inconsistency and possible biases.

** Data obtained by instrument 1 – the writing tasks*

Thirty paragraphs were collected randomly and the error analysis was based on cohesive errors. All errors were highlighted and underlined. They were counted and classified into types . The errors, which occurred frequently, were classified as common errors.

** Data obtained by instrument 2 – Survey questionnaire*

Each survey questionnaire was analyzed by the researcher to avoid any mistake. The frequency of the responses given by students was in the form of charts.

** Data obtained by instrument 3 – Interviews*

The researcher randomly interviewed some 1st year students to find out their opinions on cohesive errors in English paragraph writing.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

3.1. Findings and discussion

3.1.1. Demographic information

HPU English – majored freshmen were participants in the study. They were at the age of 19 to 22. The number of male and female students were not equal. The number of female students accounted for nearly 90% of the student population while the opposite sex occupied only 10%. All of the population had learnt English for at least 4 years.

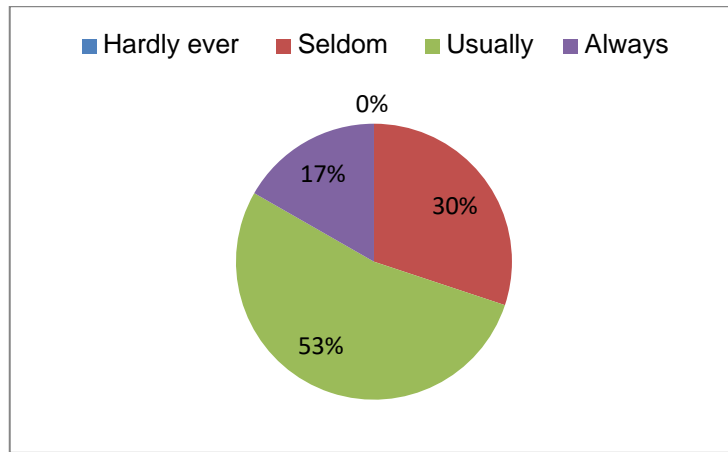
When asked about the importance of English, they responded in the following table.

The importance of cohesive devices	Number of students	Percentage
Very important	3	10%
Important	25	83.3%
Not important	2	6.7%

Table 1: Students' opinions on the importance of cohesive devices in academic paragraph writing

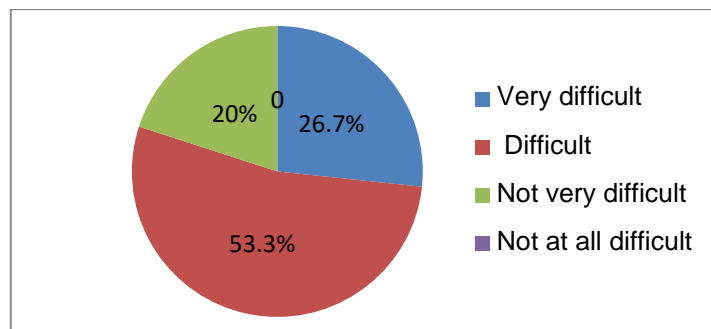
It is clear from the table that students found paragraph writing vital. 93.3% of the population admitted that cohesive devices were important or very important while the remaining (6.7%) had the opposite idea.

Besides, the pie chart below shows obviously the frequency of using cohesive devices when writing academic paragraphs.



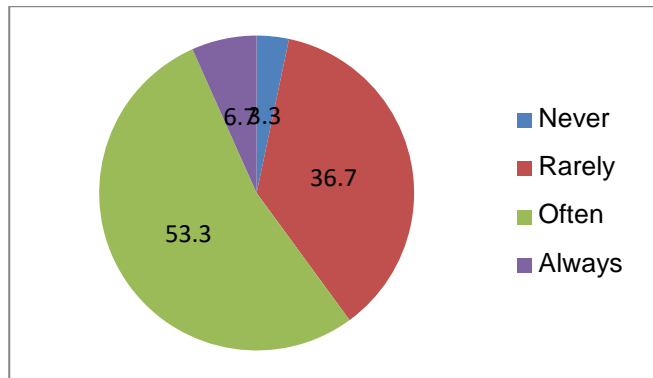
Pie chart 1: Students' frequency of using cohesive devices when writing academic paragraphs.

The pie chart indicates that participants used to make mistakes in cohesion while writing academic paragraphs. There was the highest percentage of “usually”. “Seldom”, “always” were 30% and 17% respectively. Noticably, no one hardly ever used cohesive devices.



Pie chart 2: Difficulties in using cohesive devices in academic writing paragraphs

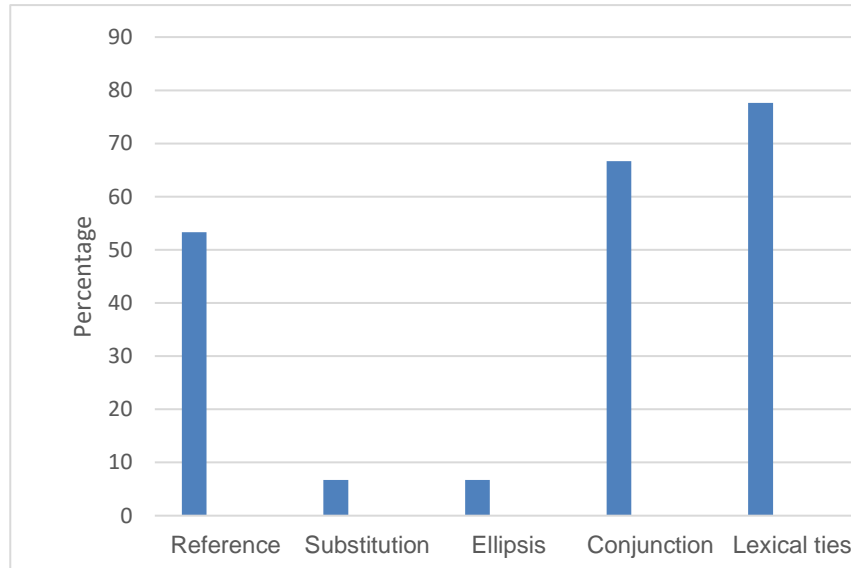
According to the pie chart above, learners struggled to use cohesive devices in their writings. The percentage of “difficult” was the highest at 53.3%, followed by “very difficult” 26.7%. One fifth was in “not very difficult” choice. Supprisingly, easiness in cohesive usages was not chosen.



Pie chart 3: Frequency of making errors on cohesive devices in writing academic paragraphs

As can be seen from the chart that the majority of participants encountered problems in academic writing in a regular basis. The highest percentage (more than a half) was in the third option “often”, followed by “rarely”, at around 36%. “ Always” occupied appropriately 7% while “ never” made up 3.3%.

3.1.2. Students’ opinions on errors on cohesive devices in writing English academic paragraphs



Bar chart 1: Common cohesive errors in academic paragraphs

The data above clearly indicates that students struggled with reference, conjunction and lexical ties in paragraph writing much; in contrast, substitution and ellipsis were found little. Lexical ties was the biggest challenge, at 77.6%,

followed by conjunction and reference, at nearly 70% and around 50% respectively. Noticably, the remaining errors had the same figure, at 7%. This result shows that both students and teachers should focus on reducing the three first errors more than the rest so that learning and teaching processes of writing become better.

Reference errors	Number of students	Percentage
Lexical items and pronouns	10	33.3%
Demonstratives	12	40%
Comparatives	8	26.7%

Table 2: Most common mistakes in academic writing when using references

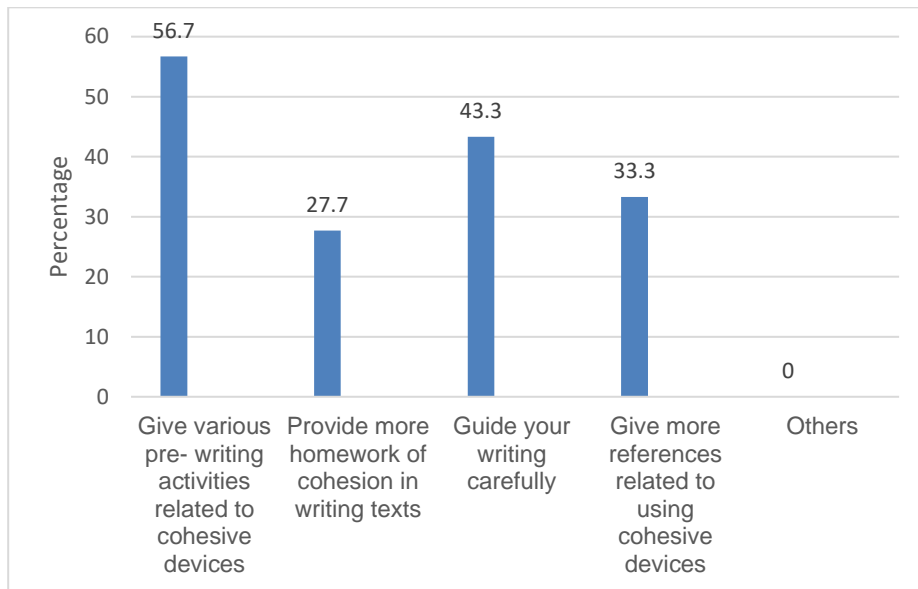
Regarding reference errors, demonstratives such as this, that, these, those were seen as the major barrier, at exactly 40%. Two other ones were lexical items and pronouns, comparatives, at around 30%. Obviously, paying much attention to the use of reference errors is one of the best ways to improve writers' learning outcomes.

Lexical errors	Number of students	Percentage
Reiteration	16	53.3%
Collocation	20	66.7%

Table 3: Common errors on lexical cohesion

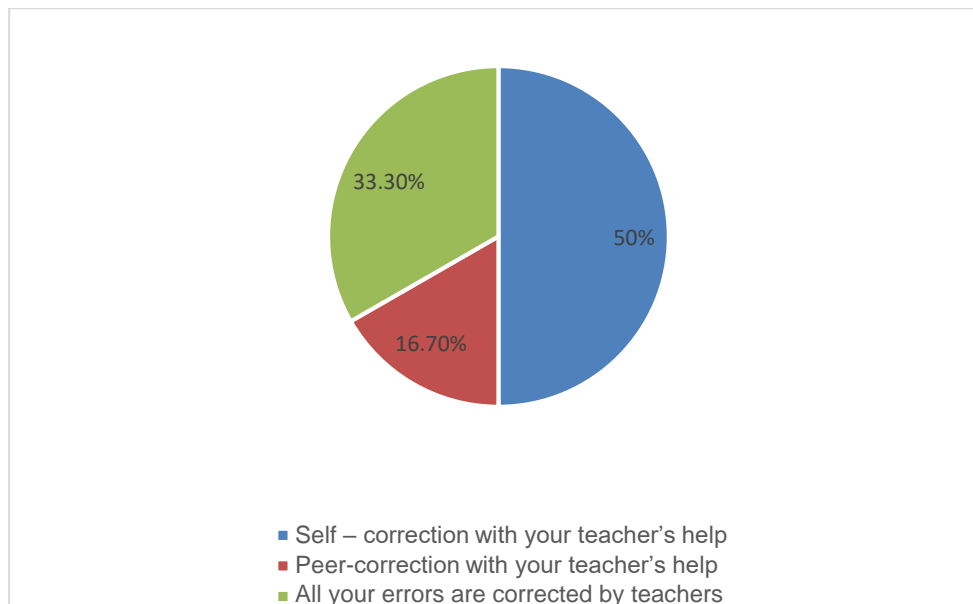
The table above indicates that learners experienced a great problem in using lexical items. In addition, the figure for collocation was a bit more than that for

reiteration. The result presents wrong collocation and ineffective repetition of words or lack of innovation in vocabulary choice. Thus, there may be a need for teaching on how to use words in a natural and contextual way.



Bar chart 2: Students' preference for teachers' activities in error correction

From the table above, it is clear that students liked pre-writing activities and references provided by teachers, at 56.7% and 33.3% respectively. There was also an high percentage of careful writing guidance, occupying 43.3%. However, homework related to cohesion was known as the least favored one.



Pie chart 4: Students’ preference for error correction

According to the table, participants preferred error corrections with teachers’ help. Apart from the highest percentage of the combination of self correction and lecturers’ correction, accounting for a half, all mistakes corrected by teachers were the second highest, at 33.3%. The lowest remaining proportion was peer-correction. It is therefore concluded that teachers need to correct students’ writing more.

3.1.3. Error analysis on the use of cohesive devices in paragraphs

When looking at the students’ academic writings, a number of cohesive errors found.

- **Reference** is the popular errors in learners’ writings.

In terms of lexical items, in one student’s narrative paragraph, she wrote:

“My clock used to wake me up. When the clack rang, I felt very alert...”

The term "clack" appears to be a potential error because it is unclear what it refers to in context. It could be a writing error or incorrect word choice. A more appropriate word might be "clock" or another term related to the sound of time.

"Last year, I had an unforgettable birthday party. The birth took place for several hours,"

"Birth" is typically associated with the process of giving life or coming into existence, and it does not align with the context of the sentence. If the intended meaning is a celebration or event related to a birthday, the correct term should be "the birthday party" or "it" instead of "the birth."

Some errors in some writings as follows:

Regarding *pronoun reference*, writers sometimes introduce pronouns without a clear antecedent, leaving readers puzzled about the identity of the referenced entity. There are easily seen in two examples. Firstly, *"Everyone sat together in a circle, the cake with ten bright candles was ready. You all sang the song 'happy birthday,' then I made a wish, blew out the candles, and cut a cake."*

You all sang the song "happy birthday" - The use of "you all" is wrong when you doesn't refer to "everyone". The next example is that *"Mom gave me a birthday cake, I lit the candles and started wishing my thoughts, it is a large chocolate cake beautiful"*. There is a pronoun reference "it" which is ambiguous and does not have a clear antecedent.

In terms of demonstratives, the use of demonstratives such as "this," "that," "these," and "those" without clear reference is a common problem. For example, *"I heard the bad news from my mother. They made me shocked"*. "They" in the second sentence does not replace for "the bad news". "they" must be "it" there. More illustration is that *"The event in my life that I remember the most was 4th birthday party... Those day everyone was crowded."* In fact, "this" in the second sentence is correct one.

With comparison, students encounters fewer problems than demonstratives. In one student's writing : *"They felt more happy when they came home."* The comparative form of the adjective "happy" is "happier." Using "more happy" is redundant, as "happier" already implies a comparison. Another illustration is *"they became more good with working."* The error lies in the use of "more good." The comparative form of the adjective "good" is "better," so the correct expression should be "become better at working."

- **Substitution** is not popular errors in students' paragraph writing. Learners rarely struggle with substitution in nominal, verbal and clausal substitutions. The reason is that they use this kind of cohesive devices in an irregular basis. There are only two mistakes found. " *We prepared food and drink for the party....We enjoyed one.*" One is correct word, not "one" because it substitutes for food and drink. " *My girlfriend wished me good luck and happiness. Not, I would be sad.*" In this case, clausal substitution is error, "not" must be "If not".

- **Ellipsis** is seen with the same frequency as substitution. The reason is also from the habit of writing when most students admit that they get used to writing style using all words and structures to express their ideas. " *I found three nice cars. I would like to buy best.*" "The best" is correct in the sentence above. "The best" means "the best car." An example is that " *I could swim, and she could do too.*" The correct form would be, "I could swim, and she could too." The use of "do" after "could" is unnecessary in this context.

- **When it comes to conjunction**, some of the most common mistakes students make arise when using cohesive conjunctions, hindering the clarity and impact of their writing. One prevalent error is the misuse of coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet). Some examples are " *my mother was good-looking and strict*", " *Online classes bring a lot of advantages, but disadvantages*", " *for he was sick, he refused to come to my party*". The correct usages are " *good-looking but strict*", " *... bring both advantages and disadvantages*", " *he refused to come to my party, for he was sick.*" Moreover, some common pairs of correlative conjunctions such as "either...or," "neither...nor," "not only...but also" are errors in students' writings. " *She can both sing well but also dance gracefully.*" In this case, "both" and "but also" can express similar meanings. That sentence could be changed to " *She both sings well and dances gracefully*". One student wrote : " *Students can either choose between uniforms or the fashionable clothes*". The conjunction "either...or" is used wrongly. The correct sentence must be " *Students can choose either uniforms or the fashionable clothes.*" Finally, mistakes on using

conjunctive adverbs. “ *My sister decided to go out with her friends because it was raining* ”. The word “ because” replaced with “ although” is correct.

- **Lexical ties** consisting of collocationa and reiteration is undeniably the most common errors in paragraph writing made by HPU students.

Collocation is considered as the common obstacles for writers. A lot of wrong usage were found. “ *I was so happy when I went into HPU.*” “Went into” have be replaced by another suitable word like “enter” to ensure that the reader understands that the writer was glas to be a new student in that school. “ *I felt comfortable as I was at my home*” should be expressed “ The party made me at home”. Such a collocation is better when the meaning is the same and naturally like native’s writing styles. “ *The trip - two days to Yen Trung lake was wonderful. I have never forgot it.* ” is one example. “ Two days” have to be placed in front of noun as “trip”. It must be “ two-day trip”.

Reiteration also become a factor that takes away from the quality of the text. Here are some pieces of writings having the mistakes.

"The importance of regular exercise cannot be overstated. Exercise is crucial for maintaining good health. Engaging in regular physical activity is essential for overall well-being. The significance of incorporating exercise into your daily routine should not be overlooked."

In the original example, the word "exercise" and related words are repeated many times, creating unnecessary repetition and losing the interesting nature of the text. In improved writing, "reiteration" is reduced by combining ideas and using words more flexibly, helping to keep content clearer and more varied without losing communication.

“ Students should wear uniforms to school because of some reasons. Firstly, students spend little time to choose clothes before going to school. It is good for students just to put on this kind of clothes.... ”

The word "students" are repeated many times, creating unnecessary repetition in the text. In improved writing, "repetition" is reduced by using synonyms such as “ undergraduates, learners..” and combining more coherently. This helps reduce boredom and maintain the quality of the text.

In conclusion, it is clear that HPU English – majored sophomores have difficulty in various cohesive devices in paragraph writing. It is thus necessary to improve knowledge of that by doing a lot of homework related to cohesion, checking cohesive devices carefully before submitting the paper to the teacher.

3.2. Suggested solutions

3.2.1. For teachers

To minimize students’ errors on cohesion, there are some following suggestions.

- ✓ Having more interesting, flexible and various methods in teaching writing paragraphs.
- ✓ Varying writing activities in the classroom for three writing steps including pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing.
- ✓ Dividing students into pairs or groups to learn writing paragraphs and encouraging students to have peer-correction before checking and correct errors so that learners can learn from each other.
- ✓ Guiding undergraduates carefully before writing so that they can understand requirements and write better.
- ✓ Giving more writing exercises related to cohesive devices to students. For example, students should be provided with exercises such as recognizing the cohesive devices, identifying cohesive errors and gap-filling with cohesive words given. This can be a good way to help students know how to use cohesive devices in their paragraph writings effectively.

Regarding the increase in using right cohesive words, in order to help students to form a habit of using references in their writings, teachers should offer

students many exercises involving looking back in texts to find the reference with different techniques, .This may enable students to enhance their ability to use cohesion and overcome problems in using them wrongly.

In terms of conjunctions, tables of connectors ought to be given for students to learn by heart. In the tables, examples given are clear and accurate. Additionally, supplementary exercises had better to be divided according to subtypes consisting coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

When it comes to lexical ties, it is vital for learners to have their own collocation dictionaries, by doing that they can check suitable collocations in writings. Moreover, avoiding repetition is important so, writers need to be given more exercises related to it.

3.2.2. For students

To have reduction of cohesive errors in paragraph writing, some recommendations for students are:

- ✓ Well aware of basic cohesive devices, trying to know what functions they are and how they are used in different contexts.
- ✓ Actively taking part in various writing activities in their classroom
- ✓ Actively working in pairs and groups more to learn from each other and check together with teachers better.
- ✓ Revising compositions carefully before submitting them.
- ✓ Practicing different types of exercise on cohesive devices and try to make a habit of using cohesion naturally in real situations
- ✓ Being advised to be exposed to models of written texts. By examining these models, students' awareness can be raised with regard to the way how to use words and structures of cohesive devices contribute to writing skill. At the result, the students realize the role and how to use of these cohesive

devices in writing, they prefer to apply numerous the devices in their writing.

PART III: CONCLUSION

3.1. Summary of findings

Out of 30 paragraph writings collected, the researcher finds out HPU English sophomores have experienced in various problems in using cohesive devices in writing an academic paragraph. Out of five cohesive errors, lexical ties, reference and conjunction are the most popular. The least errors made are substitution and ellipsis. In reference errors, the most common error students encounter is demonstratives, followed by lexical items and pronouns. Undoubtedly, second-year students own their bad ability to choose the right word to refer to an object or idea. In terms of lexical ties, students often repeat words too much in their writing. Moreover, they have many wrong collocations. The reason for this is from limited vocabulary ranges including poor synonyms or antonyms, less knowledge of word usage. Hence, it is hoped that both teachers and students will improve teaching and learning methods in paragraph writing so as to reduce errors in academic paragraphs.

3.2. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

Although the research has been completed, limitations are inevitable. The limitation is due to not being able to conduct practical research in the classroom. It is also limited to errors in the use of cohesive devices only made by HPU Vietnamese students at elementary level.

It is hoped that the results of the study could give an informative input about cohesive error analysis or other topics related to errors. The researcher recommends that there be still many phenomena revealed in the research. It is thus expected that the results of study can inspire other researchers to conduct researches to enrich the existing study.

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APPENDIX
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
(for students)

This survey is designed to collect data about errors on the use of cohesive devices in first-year English majors' writings at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. Your assistance in completing the following items is highly appreciated. All the information provided by you is of great use and solely for the study purpose.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

I. Personal information

* Your gender:

Male

Female

* Your age:.....

* How long have you been learning English

Less than 4 years

4 years or more

II. Your opinion on errors on cohesive devices in writing English academic paragraphs

1. What do you think of cohesive devices in academic paragraph writing?

Very important

Important

Not important

2. How often do you use cohesive devices when writing academic paragraphs ?

Hardly ever

Seldom

Usually

Always

3. How difficult do you find the usage of cohesive devices in academic writing paragraphs?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Not very difficult
- Not at all difficult

4. How often do you have errors on cohesive devices in writing academic paragraphs?

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

5. Which cohesive errors do you think are the most common in paragraph writing?

(Tick (v) as many as you find)

- Reference
- Substitution
- Ellipsis
- Conjunction
- Lexical ties (repetition, collocation)

6. Which references are the most common errors in your academic paragraphs?

- Lexical items and pronouns
- Demonstratives
- Comparatives

7. Which types of lexical cohesion do you often make errors on?

(Tick (v) as many as you find)

- Reiteration (repetition of a lexical item, synonyms)
- Collocation

8. What would you like your English teacher to do to help you reduce cohesive errors in paragraph writing? (*Tick (v) as many as it may apply*)

- Give various pre- writing activities related to cohesive devices
- Provide more homework of cohesion in writing texts
- Guide your writing carefully
- Give more references related to using cohesive devices
- Others:

9. How would you like to correct your cohesive errors?

- Self – correction with your teacher’s help
- Peer-correction with your teacher’s help
- All your errors are corrected by teachers
- Others (please specify)