

# Coherence of essay through the use of lexical and grammatical devices: An analysis

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## Abstract

This study examined the lexical and grammatical cohesion in the essay compositions of Grade 10 students at Louella Gotladera Alcoba National High School during the 2024-2025 academic year. Using Dadufalza's (1992) framework, the research analyzed 60 essays (30 persuasive and 30 expository) to assess paragraph development and cohesive devices. Findings revealed that expository essays frequently employed process explanations (15%) and description (10%), while persuasive essays relied heavily on cause-effect analysis (28%) and listing (16%). However, 60% of expository and 13% of persuasive paragraphs lacked coherent structure. Lexical cohesion was dominated by repetition (39-42%), with limited use of synonymy (18%) and hyponymy (14%). Grammatical cohesion primarily involved reference (55-59%) and conjunctions (29-36%), ellipsis appeared less frequently (9-12%), while substitution was absent. These results highlight students' overreliance on basic cohesive strategies and underdeveloped rhetorical flexibility. To address these gaps, the study proposes *The Art of Connection: A Handbook for Achieving Cohesion and Coherence in Writing*, a practical handbook designed to enhance writing coherence through targeted exercises on lexical variation and grammatical cohesion. The findings underscore the need for explicit instruction in advanced writing techniques to improve students' essay composition skills in multilingual settings.

**Keywords:** coherence, cohesion, grammatical cohesion, lexical cohesion, paragraph development

## Coherence of essay through the use of lexical and grammatical devices: An analysis

### 1. Introduction

Writing represents one of the most cognitively demanding tasks for students, requiring extensive instruction and practice to achieve proficiency (Ahmed, 2024; Cabrera & Zabala de Asis, 2007). As a critical measure of academic achievement, effective writing demands mastery of key elements including unity, emphasis, cohesion, and coherence - all of which contribute to logical, organized composition (Maheswari, 2024; Garing, 2014). These components ensure focused topics, highlighted key ideas, smooth sentence connections, and unified meaning. However, writing remains particularly challenging in multilingual contexts like the Philippines, where students struggle with grammar, vocabulary, and coherent essay structure (Canseco, 2010; Belarmino, 2023; Urbano et al., 2021). This study specifically examines students' lexical and grammatical cohesion in essay writing, which constitutes the most common academic writing requirement. Essays, derived from the French term meaning "to try," represent carefully organized texts designed to inform readers through clear structure and content (Medvid & Podolkova, 2019). Their effectiveness depends on logical flow and connection between ideas - a quality known as cohesion that encompasses both lexical elements (synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, repetition, collocation) and grammatical components (ellipses, conjunctions, references, substitution) (Tenri Ampa & Muhammad Basri, 2019).

***The Challenges in Writing Proficiency*** - Recent assessments reveal significant declines in writing proficiency among students. The Philippines' PISA scores (2018, 2022) show below-average performance in reading, numeracy, and writing, with studies identifying persistent struggles in grammar, vocabulary, and paragraph structure (Tocalo, 2022; Araujo et al., 2024). Similar challenges have been documented internationally, with Indonesian and Iranian students demonstrating "problematic" coherence in essay writing (Septiwan & Al Hafizh, 2021). These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted writing interventions across multilingual contexts.

***The Role and Importance of Cohesion and Coherence in Writing*** - Cohesion and coherence serve as fundamental pillars of effective writing. Cohesion creates grammatical and lexical connections that ensure smooth, logical progression (Dadulfalza, 1992; Crossley, 2016), encompassing both vocabulary choices (lexical) and structural elements like referencing and conjunctions (grammatical) (Bahaziq, 2016). Research confirms cohesive devices as essential for well-structured texts (Crossley & McNamara, 2014), though L2 learners often struggle with their implementation (Araujo et al., 2024; Baybay, 2022). Coherence, closely related to cohesion, governs overall clarity and flow, enabling readers to follow ideas seamlessly (Garing, 2014; Crossley & McNamara, 2014). Studies demonstrate strong correlations between writing quality and coherent text organization (Tabari & Johnson, 2023; Rijt, Broek, & De Maeyer, 2020), though multilingual learners face particular challenges in achieving it (Berowa, 2017; Dossoumou et al., 2018). Notably, highly proficient L2 writers demonstrate linguistic sophistication through diverse vocabulary rather than increased cohesion, often employing less frequent words while reducing temporal cohesion and word overlap.

***The Frameworks of the Study*** - This research employs three foundational theories to analyze writing challenges comprehensively. Cohesion Theory (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) examines textual connectivity through grammatical (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction) and lexical (reiteration, collocation) devices that bind texts together (Abbas, 2020; Benzoukh, 2017). Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann & Thompson, 1987) complements this by analyzing discourse hierarchy through nucleus-satellite relations, emphasizing how functional clause relationships create persuasive, logical texts. Finally, the Cultural Effect on Writing Theory (Kaplan, 1966; Connor, 1996) highlights how cultural norms and L1 transfer influence writing styles, argumentation patterns, and audience expectations (Robles et al., 2017). Connor's (1966) contrastive rhetoric approach further explores how L1 assumptions about textual organization transfer to L2 writing. Together, these

theories provide a multidimensional framework for understanding how language structure, rhetorical organization, and cultural conventions interact to shape coherent discourse across linguistic and cultural contexts.

**Conceptual Framework** - This study employs the Process Method as its conceptual framework, aligning with the research objectives to analyze patterns of paragraph development in students' expository and persuasive essays. The framework focuses on examining the logical progression of ideas across three key essay components: introductions (serving as hooks and background information), body paragraphs (each advancing distinct topics), and conclusions (summarizing and reaffirming main ideas). Building on Dadufalza's (1992) model of Lexical and Grammatical Cohesion, the study specifically investigates how cohesive devices create coherent connections between paragraphs and ideas. The framework ultimately aims to translate research findings into practical interventions that address identified writing deficiencies, proposing targeted solutions to enhance students' writing proficiency through improved cohesion and paragraph structure. This approach bridges theoretical analysis with pedagogical application, ensuring the study's relevance for both academic research and classroom practice.

**The Present Study** - This study addresses the critical gap in writing proficiency among Filipino Grade 10 students by investigating two essential components of essay writing: paragraph development and cohesive devices, focusing specifically on expository and persuasive compositions. While previous research has documented common challenges such as poor grammar, limited vocabulary, and weak paragraph structure (Almario, 2010; Urbano et al., 2021; Lopres et al., 2023), this study provides a more nuanced examination of how lexical and grammatical cohesion (following Dadufalza's 1992 framework) contribute to overall coherence in multilingual contexts. The research aims to: (1) analyze students' paragraph structure across introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions; (2) evaluate their use of cohesive devices like repetition, reference, and conjunctions; and (3) develop "The Art of Connection: A Handbook for Achieving Cohesion and Coherence in Writing" - a practical resource offering targeted exercises and strategies tailored to Filipino ESL learners' needs. By bridging theoretical knowledge and classroom practice, the study seeks to enhance writing pedagogy while contributing to scholarly discussions on L2 writing development, ultimately aiming to improve students' ability to produce coherent, well-organized academic essays.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine the writing skills of Grade 10 students, focusing specifically on cohesion in their expository and persuasive essays. The methodology centered around two main analytical approaches: Moves Analysis to evaluate paragraph structure and Content Analysis to assess cohesive devices. A corpus of 60 student essays (30 persuasive and 30 expository) was collected from Louella Gotladera Alcoba National High School during the 2024-2025 academic year, with persuasive essays averaging 270 words (1,451 unique words) and expository essays averaging 275 words (1,744 unique words). Data collection followed strict ethical protocols, including institutional review board approval and informed consent from both students and parents, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

The analysis utilized Dadufalza's (1992) framework to systematically examine two key dimensions: paragraph development (introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions) and cohesive devices (lexical features like repetition and collocation, and grammatical elements including reference and conjunction). Moves Analysis involved two independent raters assessing structural components to ensure reliability, while Content Analysis combined manual coding with computational tools (AntConc) for lexical pattern identification. The findings informed the development of "The Art of Connection: A Handbook for Achieving Cohesion and Coherence in Writing," which was refined through expert validation to align pedagogical strategies with the study's theoretical framework. This comprehensive approach ensured robust analysis of student writing while maintaining ethical research standards throughout the process.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Describe paragraph development in the students' essay compositions.

In the same way that sentences are seen as speech acts, paragraphs may also be viewed as rhetorical moves that convey communicative intentions not very different from those expressed by speech acts. We might say that rhetorical moves, in a way, are more fully developed speech acts. Seen in this light, a paragraph is a more adequate realization of a communicative act that is the sentence. The term "rhetorical move", in the communicative sense, is only another way of labelling what has always been known as a "mode" or "pattern" of paragraph development (Dadufalza, 1992). Students' expository compositions comprised of 8,250 tokens (total words), 1,744 types (unique words), with a total of 123 paragraphs. In analyzing the introduction, body, and conclusion of the student essays, the researcher determined that the patterns of paragraph organization/development evident were *explaining a process, describing, listing, illustrating, analyzing cause and effect, and comparing*.

**Table 1.**  
*Moves or Patterns of Development Analysis in Expository Essays*

Paragraph Moves	f (No. of Moves)	p (%)	Examples from Texts
Explaining a Process	18	15%	"First heat the pan... second pour the oil..." (Student No. 21, Paragraph No. 2 [body] – <i>How to Cook Fried Rice</i> )
Describing	12	10%	"Muron is a kind of Filipino cuisine..." (Student No. 9, Paragraph No. 1 [introduction] – <i>How to Make Muron</i> )
Listing	10	8%	"Ingredients: pork belly, coconut milk, chili peppers..." (Student No. 10, Paragraph No. 2 [body] – <i>How to Make Bicol Express</i> )
Illustrating	5	4%	"Like when you made a mistake, your fabric will have a hole..." (Student No. 17; Paragraph No. 3 [body] – <i>How to Make a Clothe</i> )
Analyzing Cause/Effect	3	2%	"Junk food can cause UTI and ruin healthy lifestyles..." (Student No. 29, Paragraph No. 1 [introduction] – <i>How Junk Food Affects Health</i> )
Comparing	1	1%	"Filipino adobo vs. Spanish adobar..." (Student No. 2, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>How to Cook Adobo: Step-by-Step</i> )
Lack of Structure	74	60%	
Total	123	100%	

Table 1 showed that the dominant moves in student expository essays were explaining a process which appeared eighteen times (18) or 15% as most essays were instructional, describing appeared twelve times (12) or 10%, and listing appeared ten times (10) or 8% commonly enumerating ingredients/materials; while the underused patterns were illustrating which appeared five times (5) or 4%, analyzing cause and effect appeared three times (3) or 2%, and comparing appeared once (1) or 1%. Additionally, the most striking result was that 74 or 60% out of 123 paragraphs lack a coherent structure.

In different circumstances, students' persuasive compositions comprised of 8,103 tokens (total words), 1,451 types (unique words), with a total of 115 paragraphs. In analyzing the introduction, body, and conclusion of the student essays, the researcher determined that the patterns of paragraph organization/development evident were *analyzing cause and effect, listing, describing, contrasting, illustrating, narrating, defining, comparing*,

*classifying, and making an analogy***Table 2.***Moves or Patterns of Development Analysis in Persuasive Essays*

Paragraph Move	f (No. of Moves)	p (%)	Examples from Texts
Analyzing Cause & Effect	32	28%	"Interfering in the animal's habitat is also the reason..." (Student No. 8, Paragraph 3 [body] – <i>Should More be Done to Protect and Preserve Endangered Animals?</i> )
Listing	18	16%	"Based on research, infectious and dangerous diseases... African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza..." (Student No. 1, Paragraph 3 [body] – <i>More Species Become Extinct as the Clock Tick Tocks</i> )
Describing	12	10%	"The student need to wear their uniform in school... they look like a discipline person... they look clean." (Student No. 20, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>Wearing Uniform, You Look More Presentable</i> )
Contrasting	10	9%	"Some argue that single-used plastics offer convenience... but we need to consider the long-term environmental impact." (Student No. 3, Paragraph 5 [body] – <i>Why Do We Must reduce Single Use Plastic?</i> )
Illustrating	8	7%	"Nowadays, people don't care about their true identity... Man loves man and women loves women..." (Student No. 7, paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>Acceptance is Equal to Unity</i> )
Narrating	6	5%	"We buy plastic bag at the stores, sip from disposable water bottles, and throw takeout containers..." (Student No. 3, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>Why Do We Must reduce Single Use Plastic?</i> )
Defining	5	4%	"Vices, defined as bad habits..." (Student No. 5, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>Should Student be Allowed to Keep Vices</i> )
Comparing	4	3%	"Western vs. Asian parents on gadget use..." (Student No. 9, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>Does Early Access on Mobile Gadget Bad for Kids?</i> )
Classifying	3	3%	"Three main reasons for extinction..." (Student No. 1, Paragraph 1 [introduction] – <i>More Species Become Extinct as the Clock Tick Tocks</i> )
Making an Analogy	2	2%	"Time is gold." (Student No. 12, Paragraph 2 [body] – <i>Technology Is the New Generation</i> )
Lacks Structure	15	13%	
TOTAL	115	100%	

The analysis of student persuasive essay paragraph structures as shown in Table 2 reveals that cause-and-effect pattern appeared most frequently comprising thirty-two (32) instances or 28%, followed by listing which has eighteen (18) occurrences or at 16%, describing with twelve (12) or at 10%, and contrasting with ten (10) or at 9%. Less common moves included illustrating with only eight (8) occurrences or at 7%, narrating with only six (6) or 5%, defining with five (5) or 4%, comparing with four (4) or 3%, classifying with three (3) or 3%, and making analogies with two (2) or 2%. Meanwhile, fifteen or 13% of paragraphs lack coherent structure, exhibited issues such as repetition, unclear arguments, and grammatical errors. The findings indicate a predominant use of analytical and organizational patterns, with limited employment of higher-order moves (analogies and comparisons), along with a notable portion of paragraphs requiring improvement in structural coherence.

### 3.2 Analyze the coherence of the essay through lexical and grammatical cohesion.

In this paper cohesive devices were analyzed in two categories based on Dadufalza's (1992) Framework on Cohesion – the Lexical and Grammatical. The lexical cohesion evident in students' persuasive and expository compositions were *repetition of the same word*, *synonymy or near-synonym*, *subordination/ hyponymy*, *opposites*, and *collocation*. They were illustrated as follow:

**Table 3.**  
*Lexical Cohesion Analysis of Students' Expository Essays*

Lexical Markers	f (No. of Lexical Markers)	p (%)	Examples from Texts
Repetition	412	39%	"fried rice" (repeated 9x), "adobo" (12x), "ingredients" (27x)
Synonymy/Near-Synonymy	187	18%	"cook" / "prepare" / "make"; "delicious" / "tasty" / "flavorful"
Subordination/ Hyponymy	153	14%	"spices: garlic, onion, pepper"; "tools: pan, knife, spatula"
Opposites	62	6%	"hot" vs "cold", "clean" vs "dirty", "positive" vs "negative"
Collocation	248	23%	"heat the pan", "mix well", "golden brown", "serve hot"
Total	1062	100%	

Key findings in students' expository essays as exhibited in Table 3 suggest that repetition dominated with the total of 412 (39%), synonymy/near-synonymy appeared 182 times (18%), subordination/hyponymy with 153 (14%), collocation with 248 (23%), while opposites are rare with only 62 (6%).

**Table 4.**  
*Grammatical Cohesion Analysis of Students' Expository Essays*

Grammatical Markers	f (No. of Grammatical Markers)	p (%)	Examples from Texts
Reference	602	55%	Pronouns: "Mix it well" (fried rice), "They must be fresh" (vegetables). Demonstratives: "This process takes 20 minutes" (ice cream-making).
Conjunction	397	36%	Sequential: "First, heat the pan. Next, add oil." Logical: "Because it prevents sticking".
Ellipsis	103	9%	"[You] Cut the chicken", "[You must] Prepare the ingredients"
Substitution	0	0%	N/A
Total	1,102	100%	

The analysis of grammatical cohesion in the student texts as shown in Table 4 reveal a clear dominance of reference with six hundred two (602) occurrences or 55% and conjunction with three hundred ninety-seven (397) or 36%, which together account for 91% of all grammatical markers. Ellipsis appeared one hundred three (103) times in 9% of cases, mainly omitting recoverable subjects like "you" in imperative sentences (e.g., "[You] Cut the chicken"). In contrast, substitution is not observed.

**Table 5.**  
*Lexical Cohesion Analysis of Students' Persuasive Essays*

Lexical Markers	f (No. of Markers)	%	Examples from Texts
Repetition	487	42%	"uniform" (15x), "students" (22x), "divorce" (12x)
Synonymy/Near-Synonymy	203	18%	"prohibit" / "ban", "harmful" / "damaging"
Subordination/ Hyponymy	156	14%	"vices → smoking, drinking", "animals → birds, mammals"
Opposites	78	7%	"legal" vs "illegal", "presentable" vs "casual"
Collocation	221	19%	"pay tuition fees," "mental health," "follow rules"
Total	1145	100%	

The analysis of lexical cohesion markers in students' persuasive essays as showcased in Table 5 (total occurrences: 1,145) reveal distinct patterns in their linguistic choices. Repetition emerged as the most dominant strategy, accounting for 487 instances (42%), suggesting a reliance on lexical reiteration for emphasis. Synonymy and near-synonymy appeared 203 times (18%), demonstrating students' ability to vary vocabulary while maintaining thematic consistency. Subordination and hyponymy (156 occurrences, 14%) reflected hierarchical word relationships, indicating some awareness of semantic fields. Opposites were less frequent (78 instances, 7%), primarily in antithetical pairs like *"legal/illegal"* and *"presentable/casual,"* which were used to strengthen argumentative contrasts. Collocations, appearing 221 times (19%), included conventional phrases like *"pay tuition fees"* and *"mental health,"* showing students' grasp of natural word combinations.

**Table 6.**  
*Grammatical Cohesion Analysis of Students' Persuasive Essays*

Grammatical Markers	f (No. of Grammatical Markers)	%	Examples from Texts
Reference	632	59%	Pronouns: <i>"they"</i> , <i>"this"</i> ("This policy..."). Demonstratives: <i>"these reasons"</i>
Conjunction	312	29%	<i>"because"</i> (cause), <i>"however"</i> (contrast), <i>"first/second"</i> (sequence)
Ellipsis	124	12%	<i>"[You] must wear uniforms"</i> , <i>"[It] causes addiction"</i>
Substitution	0	0%	N/A
Total	1068	100%	

The analysis of grammatical markers in students' persuasive texts as seen in Table 6 revealed that reference was the most dominant category, accounting for 632 or 59% of all markers. This high frequency indicated that the texts rely heavily on pronouns (e.g., *"they"*, *"this"*) and demonstratives (e.g., *"these reasons"*) to maintain cohesion by referring back to previously mentioned ideas. The second most common category is conjunction, making up with 312 or 29% of the markers. In contrast, ellipsis appeared much less frequently, at just 124 or 12%, with examples like *"[You] must wear uniforms"* and *"[It] causes addiction"*, where omitted words are implied. Notably, substitution is entirely absent (0%), meaning no instances of words

like "do" or "one" replacing previously mentioned nouns or verbs were found.

#### 4. Discussion

This study examined paragraph development and cohesive devices in students' expository and persuasive essays through Dadufalza's (1992) framework. The results reveal significant patterns in rhetorical moves, lexical cohesion, and grammatical cohesion, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in student writing. Below, we discuss these findings in relation to existing literature and their pedagogical implications.

##### 4.1. Dominance of Basic Rhetorical Moves

The analysis revealed that **60% of expository paragraphs lacked coherent structure which can be attributed** particularly in crafting problematic introductions, supporting details, and conclusions. In terms of introductions, many student paragraphs either lack explicit topic sentences or begin with overly broad statements. Supporting details in student writing often rely heavily on enumeration rather than developed analysis. The prevalence of simple lists (e.g., "First... Second...") demonstrates the strong cultural preference for the Filipino rhetorical strategy of *paglilista* (enumeration), which identifies as a common knowledge-transfer method in Philippine communication (Enriquez, 1992 as cited in Pe-Pua, 2000). Limited exposure to academic English models in local classrooms means students often replicate oral L1 patterns in their writing, and vocabulary constraints make paraphrasing and synthesis particularly challenging. These factors result in underdeveloped arguments that lack sufficient evidence, examples, or critical analysis. Conclusions in Filipino L2 writing frequently exhibit two main characteristics: abrupt endings or moralistic pronouncements. The educational tradition of emphasizing aral (moral lessons) over summary or synthesis, as observed by Rustipa (2016), explains the common tendency to conclude with value judgments rather than recapitulating arguments. Additionally, the influence of Tagalog narrative conventions, where endings are often implied rather than explicitly stated, contributes to this pattern (Javier, et. al., 2022).

Meanwhile, **15% of the moves followed process explanations** (e.g., recipes) and **10% used description**. Persuasive essays relied heavily on **cause-effect analysis (28%)** and **listing (16%)**, with only **2% employing analogies**. This aligns with studies by Crossley (2020) and Rustipa (2016), who found that L2 writers often default to linear, enumerative structures due to limited exposure to complex rhetorical patterns. The scarcity of higher-order moves (e.g., analogy, classification) suggests students struggle with abstract reasoning or lack explicit instruction in these strategies.

##### 4.2. Lexical Cohesion: Repetition Over Variation

Lexical cohesion in expository essays was dominated by **repetition (39%)** and **collocation (23%)**, while **synonymy (18%)** and **hyponymy (14%)** were underutilized. Persuasive essays mirrored this trend, with **42% repetition**, 19% collocation, 14% hyponymy, and only **7% opposites**. This echoes Sidabutar's (2021) observation that EFL writers over-rely on repetition for clarity, potentially due to limited vocabulary or fear of ambiguity. The rare use of antonyms, at only 6-7% (e.g., "legal" vs. "illegal") further indicates missed opportunities for contrastive argumentation.

##### 4.3. Grammatical Cohesion: Reference vs. Substitution

Grammatical cohesion in both genres prioritized **reference (55–59%)** (e.g., pronouns, demonstratives) and **conjunction (29–36%)** (e.g., "because," "however"). **Ellipsis appeared in 9–12%** of cases, primarily omitting recoverable subjects ("[You] mix well"). Strikingly, **substitution was absent (0%)**, contrasting with Halliday and Hasan's (1976) emphasis on substitution (e.g., "do," "one") as a key cohesive device. This suggests students either lack awareness of substitution or default to repetition for clarity.

The following are examples of these markers found in both expository and persuasive essays of students. **LEXICAL COHESION.** A cohesive category that refers to the relationship between or among words in a text.



It is concerned with the content words and primarily related to that field (Sidabutar, 2021). ***Repetition of The Same Word.*** It is the act or process instance of repeating or being repeated. This linguistic phenomenon occurs when the same word is used multiple times in close proximity within a sentence, paragraph, or even a larger piece of writing (Horn & Ward [n.d.]).

Another example was taken from the second paragraph of the persuasive composition of Student 8 titled “Should More Be Done to Protect and Preserve Endangered Animals”.

#### **Extract**

*Interfering in the animal's habitat is also the reason why there are endangered species and that is because some animals that migrate in other places actually can't truly migrate because they have their own place that truly belong to them like if some animals are familiar in a cold weather but the place, they try to migrate is not cold weather but warm. If you're wondering why we're talking about migration that is because if people interfere in the animals' species it become the reason why animals leave their habitat because people build structure and make it some tourist attraction.*

In this extract, the words repeated were *animals, species, migrate, and habitat*. It's important to note that the repetition of certain words, particularly those related to the main topic, is often a natural part of writing. In this case, the student's essay focuses on protecting endangered species, so the repetition of words like "animals," "species," and "habitat" is expected. However, excessive repetition, as seen in Extract 2, can detract from the overall clarity and effectiveness of the writing.

***Synonymy or Near-Synonymy.*** This linguistic phenomenon involves the use of words with identical or shared meanings or references. Synonymy occurs when two words have the same meaning in all contexts (e.g., "couch" and "sofa"). Near-synonymy, on the other hand, occurs when two words have similar meanings but are not interchangeable in all contexts (e.g., "big" and "large") (Nagy, 2017).

The following excerpt was pulled out from the fourth paragraph of the persuasive essay of Student 5 titled “Should Students Be Allowed to Keep Vices”. Synonymous words used were underlined for better illustration.

#### **Extract**

*Moreover, vices can perpetuate a cycle of dependency that can be difficult to break. Students who are allowed to keep vices may develop a reliance on these habits as a way to cope stress or peer pressure over time. These vices can become ingrained in their daily routines. Making it challenging to break free from unhealthy habits.*

In the above extract, the synonyms or near-synonyms were “vices and unhealthy habits”, “dependency and reliance”, “difficult to break, ingrained, and challenging to break free from”. The use of near-synonyms adds variety to the writing and helps to emphasize the negative aspects of vices and related negative behaviors. It also contributes to clarity by providing different perspectives on the same concept.

***Subordination/ Hyponymy*** – This semantic relationship describes the hierarchical inclusion of a more specific term (hyponym) under a more general term (superordinate). A hyponym is a word whose meaning is included within the meaning of another word (superordinate). For example, "dog" is a hyponym of "animal," "car" is a hyponym of "vehicle," and "rose" is a hyponym of "flower" (Cao, 2022).

The following excerpt was pulled out from the second paragraph of the persuasive essay of Student 3 titled “Why Must We Reduce Single-Used Plastic”. Hyponyms and superordinate were underlined for better illustration.

### Extract

*In addition, every year, around 300 million tons of plastics are produced, much of which ends up in our landfills and oceans. This impacts wildlife like sea turtles mistaking plastic bags for jelly fish or birds getting entangled in six pack rings. But by choosing reusable bags, containers, bottles, and plastics we can help to reduce plastic waste and protect our ecosystems.*

In the example above, the relationship of inclusions mentioned were as follows: the superordinate is “wildlife” and the hyponyms are sea “turtles and birds”. Giving the specific category or example of wildlife makes the idea more tangible to the readers.

**Opposites.** This refers to the relationship between words that express opposite meanings. While seemingly straightforward, antonymy encompasses various types of semantic opposition, each with distinct characteristics: **Complements:** These are antonyms that represent two opposing ends of a single scale or concept. **Antonyms:** These are antonyms that express opposite meanings within a particular dimension or attribute. **Converses:** These are antonyms that describe a reciprocal relationship, where one term implies the other (Geeraerts, 2017).

This passage was extracted from the third paragraph of the persuasive essay of Student 9 titled “Does Early Access to Mobile Gadgets Bad for Kids”.

### Extract

*Most of the parents already know the consequences but they still let their child use mobile phones, because of the good things it may cause. According to researchers most of the child who had early access to mobile gadgets has a better academic performance than most of the non-early access one.*

The opposite words in the above example were “early” and “non-early”. Although it was correct, it created a bit of a jarring effect and doesn't flow as smoothly as it could. The choice of word as in “non-early” suggested a literal way of using antonym indicating poor vocabulary.

**Collocation.** This refers to the tendency of words to co-occur in particular contexts or share a common lexical environment. These word pairings are not arbitrary; rather, they reflect established patterns of language use. Collocations can be classified into two main types: Same Ordered Series: These collocations involve words that consistently appear in a specific order. Unordered Lexical Sets: These collocations involve words that belong to the same semantic field and frequently appear together, but their order is not fixed (Dadufalza, 1992).

The following example was pulled out from the fourth paragraph of the persuasive essay of Student 3 titled “Why Must We Reduce Single-Used Plastics”.

### Extract

*The growing use of single-used plastic is a serious threat to our mother nature. These items, meant for one time use, create large waste that pollutes our land and oceans. Wildlife often suffers, as animals can ingest or death. Additionally, as plastic, breakdown into microplastics, they contaminate our food putting our health at risk.*

In the above passage, the evident collocations were “single-used plastics”, “mother nature”, “large waste” which fall under unordered sets; while, “land and oceans”, “wildlife”, “breakdown into microplastics”, and “contaminate” which are subject-related words or collocations – meaning, they are likely to appear when talking about plastic use and its impacts.

**GRAMMATICAL COHESION.** Grammatical ties refer to the way sentences and clauses are linked

together grammatically, creating a smooth and coherent flow of ideas. It involves using various grammatical structures and signals to establish relationships between different parts of a text. These devices contribute to the overall understanding and readability of the text. Here are some key elements of grammatical cohesion: Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, and Conjunction.

**Reference.** It is achieved with the use of substitute words which refer to something else in the text for their significance. These reference signals include personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, determiners, adjectives and adverbs of comparison. Moreover, textual reference is usually of two kinds: 1) backward reference or *anaphora* which points to preceding text, and 2) forward reference or *cataphora* which points to the text that follows.

The example that follows has been drawn out from the second paragraph of the persuasive essay of Student 2 “Why Divorce Should Be Legal”.

**Extract**

*According to research, only two countries in the world still has divorce banned- the Vatican and the Philippines. These countries believe that divorce is illegal because of the beliefs of the Catholic Church and the rules of the Vatican. For this reason, many individuals who are experiencing an unhealthy relationship are prone to anxiety and depression. In fact, 28% of people age 40 and up experiences depression because of law that divorce is illegal. Additionally, according to some studies, divorce, being illegal, affects a person's health, physically and mentally.*

In the above passage, the pronoun “these” referred to “Vatican and Philippines”. This reference was an example of anaphora as it referred back to the preceding noun. These reference signals were also backward reference or anaphora.

**Ellipsis.** Ellipsis is a phenomenon in which what is conveyed, in some sense to be explained, doesn't need to be fully verbally articulated, as in the second clause but still understood (Kempson, et.al., 2015). There are three kinds of ellipsis: nominal, verbal, and clausal.

This succeeding text was taken from the expository essay of Student No. 9, Paragraph No. 5, titled “How to Make Muron”.

**Extract**

*In the third step, we will need banana leaves; cut them into square shapes. To wrap the mixture, we cook. For each muron, use a tablespoon for measurement, [use] one tablespoon for mixtures one and two, then wrap them together in the banana leaves.*

The phrase “one tablespoon for mixtures one and two” implied but omitted the verb “use” from the previous clause. This is an example of verbal ellipsis.

**Conjunction.** It involves connecting sentences expressing a particular semantic relationship between them by means of the connectives (or connectors) that signal that relationship. Some of these logical relationships are those of addition, concession, result, reformulation, and inference. Conjunctions may be categorized into two nuances: inter-sentence and intra-sentence.

The example below was taken from the second paragraph of the expository essay of Student 10 “How to Make Bicol Express”.

**Extract 1**

*Here are the ingredients for Bicol Express: pork belly, coconut milk, cream, chili peppers, garlic,*

*onion, ginger, shrimp paste, salt, pepper, and oil. Here are the steps on how to make a delicious Bicol Express. First put the cooking oil to a hot pan and sauté the aromatics, second add the pork belly and wait until it starts to brown. Third add the shrimp paste and sauté for another minute. The fourth step pour the coconut milk to the pan for at least 10-15 minutes. Fifth step add the chopped chili peppers. Lastly season it with salt and pepper.*

In this passage, the conjunctions evident were “and”, “first”, “second”, “third”, “fourth”, and “lastly”. The conjunction “and” functioned as an additive joining verb phrases such as “put the cooking oil to a hot pan” and “sauté the aromatics”. In addition, “first”, “second”, “third”, “fourth”, and “lastly” were enumerative conjunctions that outlined the order in which things are to be said. This distinction is considerably an intra-sentence connection; however, they were improperly connected and punctuated resulting to inconsistent and ambiguous sentence structure.

**Substitution.** It is the replacement of one grammatical item by another and there are three types: Nominal (one, ones, same), Verbal (*do* and all its form), and Clausal (the words *so* and *not* are used to stand for omitted entire clauses).

The analysis revealed a complete absence of substitution markers (e.g., "one," "do so") in student essays, with only near-examples like lexical rephrasing ("the dish" for "Bicol Express"). This pattern stems from three interconnected factors: (1) **linguistic**—Tagalog's structure lacks English-style substitution devices, prioritizing verb-framed syntax and noun repetition (Gonzalez, 1985; Shibatani, 1988); (2) **educational**—Philippine pedagogy emphasizes vocabulary repetition over referential cohesion, reinforced by teaching materials (Martin, 2014); and (3) **cultural**—Filipino discourse values clarity through repetition, influenced by oral traditions. Cognitive preferences for "safe" noun repetition over potential pronoun ambiguity further solidify this tendency, creating a distinct L2 writing style where repetition functions as a deliberate rhetorical strategy rather than a deficiency.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study's analysis of Filipino L2 students' essays yields three critical findings that bridge a significant research gap in ESL pedagogy while offering actionable solutions for classroom practice. Through Dadufalza's Framework grounded in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion Theory, the researcher identified students' overreliance on lexical repetition (39-42%) and referential markers (55-59%), coupled with a complete absence of substitution—patterns that revealed fundamental deficiencies in cohesive device usage. These findings are contextualized by Mann and Thompson's (1987) Rhetorical Structure Theory, which demonstrates that only 28% of paragraphs employed effective hierarchical organization, with most defaulting to basic listing patterns that lack argumentative depth. Most crucially, Kaplan's (1966) Cultural Effect Theory illuminated how indigenous Filipino rhetorical traditions—particularly paglilista (enumeration) and aral (moral conclusions)—create unique discursive tensions when students compose academic English texts. Together, these findings address a critical gap in contrastive rhetoric research by empirically demonstrating how culturally-embedded writing practices specifically influence L2 development in postcolonial educational contexts.

The pedagogical implications of this study are both immediate and far-reaching. For classroom implementation, we recommend a three-tiered intervention framework: First, teachers should conduct weekly "cohesion labs" that systematically train students in substitution techniques (e.g., replacing noun repetition with "one/do so") and lexical sophistication strategies. Second, writing instruction must incorporate RST-based visual organizers that explicitly teach nucleus-satellite relationships, transforming students' linear lists into coherent hierarchies. Third, culturally-sustaining pedagogies should employ contrastive analysis exercises where students compare and bridge Filipino oral narrative structures with English academic conventions. For students, we propose metacognitive routines like annotated revision logs that track cohesive device usage and dual-language reflection journals that raise awareness of L1-L2 rhetorical transfers. The "Art of Connection"

handbook—currently being validated—embodies these principles through its diagnostic-assessment-to-mastery curriculum, featuring culturally-grounded writing samples and competency-based progress trackers.

These evidence-based interventions promise to revolutionize writing instruction in three key ways: (1) by replacing generic Western composition models with linguistically-responsive pedagogies that honor Filipino discourse traditions; (2) by providing measurable techniques to enhance both micro-level cohesion (through our Cohesion Metrics Toolkit) and macro-level coherence (via the RST Curriculum Framework); and (3) by fostering biliterate writing identities through contrastive rhetoric portfolios that validate students' multicultural communicative repertoires. Looking ahead, we identify four vital research directions: longitudinal studies tracking the retention of cohesion skills across grade levels; comparative analyses of rhetorical transfer patterns among different Philippine language groups (e.g., Tagalog vs. Bicolano L1 writers); development of AI-assisted writing tutors customized for Filipino syntactic patterns; and large-scale efficacy trials of our intervention model across ASEAN educational contexts. While these future studies will further refine our approach, the current findings already provide teachers with a robust, culturally-grounded framework for transforming L2 writing instruction—one that neither dismisses students' linguistic heritage nor compromises academic writing standards, but rather builds transformative bridges between them.

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