"Writing a Coherent and Cohesive Answer to an Essay Question: What are the Challenges?"

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Abstract

EFL Saudi female students face various challenges in relation to essay writing, especially in the university exams when test questions require them to answer in an essay format. The purpose of this study is to investigate these challenges and propose strategies to help students to overcome such difficulties. Sixty three randomly-selected exam papers of female students from different English courses (level 4, 5,and 6) from the College of Languages and Translation at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) were selected for the analysis using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive devices. Besides, semi-structured interviews with ten EFL students from different levels were designed and implemented for further investigations. The interviewed students were different from those who answered the written samples. Findings revealed that EFL Saudi female students face the following challenges: inaccurate knowledge of coherence and cohesion, lack of awareness in using the various types of cohesive devices (CDs) (e.g. misuse, overuse, and/or ignoring the use of some types of CDs), repetition of words and phrases, and a poor English language competence

Key words: Coherence, Cohesion, Cohesive devices, Essay writing, Wwriting.

Introduction

Writing presents challenges for many learners of English as a foreign language or English as a second language (EFL/ESL). One of the main challenges is producing a cohesive and coherent composition, "which contributes substantially to lower scores in examinations" (Wang, 2007, p. 164). Generally, EFL examinations are designed to evaluate learners' second language (L2) skills and, most importantly, their skill to contextualise information and arguments. However, writing performance of many EFL learners is recognized as incoherent or insufficient; they display an overuse, misuse, absence of cohesive devices (CDs), or lack of coherent conditions. This seems to lead to an unsatisfying, quality score, for students and instructors alike. Nevertheless, the use of CDs in writing is one of the most difficult skills to develop for Arab learners dealing with the English writing in their academic learning (Abdul Rahman, 2013).

The writing skill in a second language in particular is really arduous. It demands students to produce and organize their thoughts in the same moment they compose them into a readable text. Hence, what to write is as crucially important as how to write. Coherence and cohesion are two significant elements that contribute to text organization. They help sentences and paragraphs to be organised in a text, and flow smoothly in a logical order within it. They bond its words and ideas together in an appropriate manner.

They are essential qualities of good writing. These qualities of writing skills can be acquired and developed by learners. However, developing good writing skills takes time and requires building on other basic language skills. This is understandable as "writing skill develops slowly and lags some way behind other skills" (Alidoost , Tabatabaei & Bakhtiarvand, 2014, p. 360). Ghasemi states that "language learners indispensably need to write coherent and cohesive texts if they wish to prove to be qualified English writers" (Ghasemi, 2013, p. 1615). As it is generally acknowledged, the basic goal of teaching English as a second language is that learners could express themselves like a native speaker.

However, coherence and cohesion does not guarantee the readability of a text. But, on the other hand, they are useful categories for the analysis of texts. A series of descriptive studies have tried to statistically compare the proportions of grammatical cohesive devices used in different text types. For example, Seken and Suarnajaya (2013) as cited in (Bagheri & Mahmoudi, 2016) indicated that the students, the samples of their study, used all five types of cohesive devices in their study but there were significant differences in the proportions they used. Reference with 40.84% was the most frequently used cohesive device, with personal references being the most widely used subgroup. Lexical cohesion occupied the second position with 37.99% followed by conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution accounting for 19.60, 1.35%, and 0.29%, respectively (Bagheri & Mahmoudi, 2016).

Reasons of coherence problems with Arab students vary across studies. Surely, those students have passed many academic courses in English. However, it would be safe to agree with the conclusion that "the students experienced problems with coherence strategies partly because of their education system. The tendency at high school is to focus on the language than on the structure of the essay (Cekiso, Tshotsho & Somniso, 2016, p. 245).

Statement of the problem

In spite of the abundant approaches to the teaching of writing, "students still experience some problems in the cohesion and coherence of their English essay writing" (Ahmed, 2010, p 211). Such difficulties are manifested in the unintelligible arranging of words, ideas, and information when composing the answer into a form of an essay.

Many EFL Saudi female students at the university level are likely to face certain difficulties once they are required to write a coherent and a cohesive essay during a test or even an assignment. Coherence and cohesion are usually defined in terms of the use of certain markers or connectors and other writing strategies that make the text understandable by the reader or the listener. However, Vasiljevic states that:

while there has been a growing awareness among the teachers and EFL material writers about the important role that knowledge of marker words plays in comprehension of L2 discourse, there is only a limited number of suitable test designs that allow assessment of learners' understanding of these words. (2013, p. 7)

Many studies have been conducted on coherence and cohesion in EFL essay writing. However, to the knowledge of the researcher, few dealt with the textual deviation and coherent problems in students' essay writing. Ahmed (2010) indicated that producing a coherent piece of writing is a big challenge in one's L2 endeavor.

Writing problems in terms of coherence and cohesion are caused by many factors. Various studies, such as Qaddumi's (1995), Aljarf's (2001), and Ahmed's (2010), indicated that Arab students experienced problems with repetition, parallelism, sentence length, lack of variation and misuse of certain cohesive devices, which were major sources of incoherence and textual deviation. On the other hand, Ahmed (2010) claims that EFL writing is "affected by a number of linguistic and contextual factors; EFL linguistic proficiency, instructional, psychological, socio-cultural, and socio-political issues", and that "if these factors are well-addressed, this will make writing an unforgettable experience" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 212).

1.1 Purpose of the study

This research aims to: (1) pinpoint the major difficulties encountered by EFL Saudi female students when requested to write an essay during a test; in particular, lack of the coherence and cohesion in their essay writing, (2) contribute to understanding the nature of these problems, and (3) suggest solutions to overcome these difficulties.

1.2 Significance of the study

To the best of the knowledge of the researcher, this could be the first study to deal with coherence and cohesion problems Saudi female students might encounter while composing an essay; with special attention to coherence and cohesion features during tests. As has been confirmed by similar studies, analyses of coherence and cohesion may be particularly useful in distinguishing between stages of writing development, and consequently designing appropriate writing materials and teaching strategies. Clearly, coherence and cohesion analyses measure more sophisticated aspects of language development than do error analyses or syntactic analyses. Coherence and cohesion analyses also give us some concrete ways of addressing some of the differences between good and poor writing (Witte & Faigley, 2008).

1.3 Questions of the study
This res-earch aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges EFL students face when writing a coherent problem solution essay? How these difficulties can be classified?
2. What strategies can be recommended to help EFL students overcome such difficulties?

1.4 Operational definitions

Cohesive device/s (CD/s): Are grammatical expressions (e.g a reference expressed in the which precedes a pre-mentioned N) or lexical expressions (e.g reiteration expressed in the N tomatoes for instance) used within a written text or a discourse to create a global unity between its thoughts in a cohesive manner (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). They are also called cohesive cues, cohesive ties, linkers, or linking words.

Reference: Reference relates one element of the text to another for its interpretation. It refers to "specific items within a text/discourse which cannot be interpreted semantically in their own right but make reference to something else".

Substitution: "Substitution, as another type of cohesive relation, is the process in which one item within a text or discourse is replaced by another. It is a relation on the lexico-grammatical level between linguistic items, such as words or phrases".

Ellipsis: Ellipsis is the omission of an element that is required by the grammar of language but is not raised because it is understood to be there by the readers or listeners. The process can, therefore, be "interpreted as that form of substitution in which [an] item is replaced by nothing".

Conjunction: Conjunctions connect elements of a text to each other. The connected elements can be words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or even paragraphs (Bagheri & Mahmoudi, 2016).

Lexical Cohesion: Lexical cohesion is the cohesive effect achieved by the reiteration and colocation of vocabulary; particularly the general noun (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

1.5 Limitations of the study
Limitations of the current study fall into the following:

Tests subjected to the analysis were written essay tests. Essay writing will necessarily differ from other types of written materials in term of scope and subject matters.

Interviews were limited to female EFL students. As male and female have different career prospects, they are likely to have different views regarding the mastery of English as a medium of expression and career options. Therefore, other studies are required to cover this gender issue.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature associated with the main areas of interest in this study. These areas are, an overview of ESL/EFL writing, significance of coherence and cohesion in ESL/EFL writing, correlation between coherence, cohesion and the quality of writing, coherence and cohesion challenges in ESL/EFL writing, and cohesive devices as an analytical tool.

2.1 ESL/EFL writing: an overview

Writing in ESL/EFL learning and teaching is an important skill and a demanding one at the same time. It is a requirement for the success in academia and some other occupations and professions. Nevertheless, the written language requires more accuracy, appropriateness, and more explicitness as well as a higher productive language control than spoken discourse (Yunhong, 2011). Elbow (1998) reports that writing involves producing and editing at the same time. One creates words and ideas as well as criticizes them in order to choose the suitable ones for the context. In addition, Zheng (1999) as cited (Cekiso et al., 2016, p. 241) points out that "acquiring a writing skill seems to be more laborious and demanding than acquiring the other language skills". These writing skills require effort and time, which shows the difficulty involved.

Zakaria and Mugaddam (2013) state that writing is a complex cognitive process that requires students to have both linguistic and writing skills. Deane, Odendahl, Quinlan, Fowles, Welsh, and Bivens-Tatum (2008) define such complexity as:

a staggering hierarchy of problems, including how to generate and organize task-relevant ideas; phrase grammatically correct sentences that flow; use correct punctuation and spelling; and tailor ideas, tone, and wording to the desired audience, to name some of the more salient rhetorical and linguistic tasks.(p.3).

Along a similar line of analysis, Moravcsik and Kintsch (2016) indicate that comprehenders can achieve the mental representation of a text through the knowledge domain and the general linguistic cues as well. However, "they can still build adequate mental representations based only upon the general linguistic information" (Moravcsik & Kintsch, 2016, p. 7). The linguistic information can produce a comprehensible text to its readers even if it is out of their knowledge domain. Thus, "good writing helps comprehenders form a coherent text base which enables them to reproduce the text" (Moravcsik & Kintsch, 2016, p. 7).

2.2 Significance of coherence and cohesion in ESL/EFL writing

Although the terms cohesion and coherence are closely related to each other and used together to make sense of a text, each has its own property. According to Qaddumi (1995), the two terms cohesion and coherence were at first treated as the same and were not distinguished from each other. In fact, cohesion was viewed as the real base for the structure and development of a text, and coherence is only established when the later exists. However, in her later work, Hasan (1985) (as cited in Qaddumi, 1995) has distinguished cohesion from coherence. Hasan considers coherence as an essential property of texts, where cohesion is "a complementary process for coherence" and "indicates that coherence cannot be achieved without the presence of lexical and grammatical cohesion as well as the presence of semantic relations between individual messages of the text" (Qaddumi, 1995, p. 30).

Hence, cohesion refers to the grammatical and/or lexical connections between sentences and paragraphs. It was first used before 1962 by early linguists to refer to the degree of connectivity of sentences, words, or morphemes within one grammatical structure (Yunhong, 2011). Whereas, coherence refers to the quality of a text that links the flow of information logically within it and makes it meaningful for readers. In other words, a coherent essay can be achieved without necessarily being cohesive, for example, through the presence of an introduction and a conclusion, or the use of titles, subtitles, formatting, orthography (spelling, punctuation, capitalization) (Dalla-Riva, 2015).

Alidoost et al., (2014) believe that "coherence in written texts is a complex process, involving a multitude of reader and text-based features. In text-based model, coherence is defined as a feature internal to the text" (Alidoost et al., 2014, p. 360). Hodges and Whitten (1972, p.150) as cited in (Alidoost et al., 2014) state that coherence is divided into two constructs: cohesion which is the linking of sentences, and unity which refers to be sticking to the point. Halliday and Hasan (1976) focus almost exclusively on cohesion as a text feature that is achieved through ellipsis, reference, substitution, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion. They describe a coherent text as having two features: cohesion (i.e., cohesive ties between sentences) and register (i.e., coherent unity within the text):

The concept of cohesion can be therefore usefully supplemented by that of REGESTER, since the two together effectively define a TEXT. A text is a passage of discourse which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of situation, and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive. Neither of these two conditions is sufficient without the other, nor does the one by necessity entail the other. Just as one can construct passages which seem to hang together in the situational-semantic sense, but fails as texts because they lack cohesion, so also one can construct passages which are beautifully cohesive but which fail as text because they lack consistency of register- there is no continuity of meaning in relation to the situation. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 23)

In relation to coherence and cohesion, "tie" is an interesting term used and explained excessively by Halliday and Hasan (1976). They have defined it as a term used to refer "to a single instance of cohesion, a term for one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items", and these different occurrences are regarded as the various kinds of cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion (pp. 3-4).

Abdul Rahman (2013) reports this semantic notion of connectedness between items saying "that connectedness is an indispensable element in any written or spoken discourse" (Abdul Rahman, 2013, p. 2). He brought into account a number of factors that any writer must consider when communicating cohesively through writing. These factors include personal knowledge, making sense from available information, and the contextual and cultural elements around which the writer is situated. He further stresses that writing is a mean of communication, and to make it happens it is important to go beyond sentence-level manipulation to present paragraphs and consequently multi-paragraphs. That is when composing two or more sentences, people have to use CDs and coherence to link these sentences together, and they should be able to organize ideas into a unified whole. The proper use of linkers (CDs) makes it possible for listeners and readers to capture the interconnectedness between what precedes and what follows. "This means that the dependency of the linguistic elements on each other in a text constructs a semantic unit" (Abdul Rahman, 2013, p. 2).

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 4) have addressed the semantic notion of cohesion in their work. They indicate that cohesion occurs "where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presuppose the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it", which means that cohesion is a composition of both grammar (semantic concept) and lexical items (tie concept). Zhang (2001), as cited in (Yunhong,

2011), argues that the function of cohesion is to connect different sentences based on something common between them, or on particular context.

In last, CDs mean much more between lines than just within a sentence containing it; it is not just structural conformity, but also echoes in meaning (Yunhong, 2011).

2.5 Importance of cohesive devices as an analytical tool

Researchers have adopted various kinds of research tools for examining and analysing the coherence and cohesion in composition. For instance, some computational analytical tools such as WordSmith (Breeze, 2008, and Mo, 2015) and VocabProfile (Breeze, 2008, and Somniso, 2016) are used to investigate the lexical differences between essays written in English language by EFL Learners. Interviews and questionnaires are also utilized in exploring the CDs and coherence in the writings of EFL learners, or users. However, the taxonomy of cohesive devices by Haliday and Hasan (1976) are used beside these research tools, and recognized as the most common and valuable ones for exploring and analysing the cohesion of any spoken or written text. In other words, the concept of cohesion is systematized by classifying it into distinct categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion; which are types of cohesive relations that provide a practical means for analysing and describing texts.

According to Ghasemi (2013), cohesion has an essential role in signaling the meaning-based relationship between sentences and paragraphs that is set up by lexical and syntactic features, which are known as Cohesive Devises or CDs. Halliday and Hasan (1976) have presented five different types of CDs as a guideline for studying and analyzing the coherence and cohesion of any written text, which are summarized as follows:

a) Reference (i.e., personals, demonstratives, and comparatives),
b) Substitution (i.e., nominal substitution, verbal substitution, or clausal substitution),
c) Ellipsis (i.e., nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, or clausal ellipsis),
d) Conjunction (i.e., additive, adversative, clausal, temporal, and continuative), and finally
e) Lexical cohesion (i.e., repetition/ reiteration, and collocation).

(Wahby, 2014, p. 221)

Ghasemi (2013) confirms that one could evaluate or assess the quality of writing from the perspective of coherence through analyzing the use of CDs. He describe CDs as explicit cues, and their presence in the text "allow readers/listeners to find semantic relations within it as part of linguistic system enhancing the semantic potentials of text" (Ghasemi, 2013, p. 1616). Therefore, the meaningful relation shared between elements in a text is set up through reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction as grammatical and lexical cohesion. These CDs, the grammar and lexicon, used by speakers and writers provide semantic relations for the semantic units in texts or discourses (Ghasemi, 2013).

Cohesion is one of the enormously explored topics of second language writing. Since the publication of Halliday and Hasan's book, many compositions have been analyzed in the term of the model they have provided. Zhang (2010) devised a coding scheme on the basis of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive ties, and Halliday's (1994) further elaboration of the ties in order to represent the cohesive ties in 91 sample compositions of the analysis. The findings revealed that lexical category was the most used category of ties, followed by reference then conjunction, and substitution and ellipsis were seldom used. However, the results show that the non-English Chinese majors "employed a variety of cohesive devices in their English writing" (Zhang, 2010, p.81). Xuefan (2007) adopted the same model, Halliday and Hasan's (1976), to identify lexical cohesion in the writing samples of 30 English majors from Wuyi University in China. Regarding the results, reiteration was the most frequently occurring type than other types of lexical cohesion. Xuefan (2007) found that ESL students depend heavily on exact repetition in their writing to create and link texts.

Tangkiengsirisin (2010) conducted a study on cohesion and coherence in text in which he illustrates several practical studies related to it. Among these interesting studies is McCulley's (1985) investigation that was based as well on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy where he " attempted to resolve the conflicting results obtained by Witte and Faigley's (1981) and those obtained by Tierney and Mosenthal's (1983) and Conner (1984)" (Tangkiengsirisin, 2010, p. 104). Tangkiengsirisin (2010) describes McCulley's (1985) cohesion analysis as "the finest level of analysis" which reveals significant differences between good versus poor essays. McCulley's (1985) result shows that "certain cohesive ties (e.g.

demonstratives, nominal substitution and repetition) contributed to the positive assessment of writing quality, and suggested that lexical cohesive devices primarily made a more important contribution to coherence" (Tangkiengsirisin, 2010, p. 105).

The appropriate use of connectives determines the success or failure of an argumentative essay for they are capable of indicating cause or effect and illustrating the causal relationship (Mo, 2015). As pointed out by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 7), cohesion is one of the linguistic resources for construction.

2.3 Correlation between coherence, cohesion, and the quality of ESL/EFL writing

Halliday and Hassan (1976) have divided cohesion into grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion because it contributes to the wholeness and unity of the text. Therefore, the coherence and completeness of English for academic purposes (EAP) writing is realized mainly by lexical cohesion (Zhao, 2014).

Upon investigating coherence facilitation across qualitative research papers, four editors of The Qualitative Report have examined the challenges for authors and editors alike in bringing the different elements of qualitative research papers into coherent textual patterns. They agreed that lacking unity or consistency among the various parts of the paper or work can crucially affects the value and quality of it. Therefore, focusing on the logical interconnection of the various elements of the paper facilitates "greater alignment of these elements to create a cohesive and logically constructed account" (Chenail, 2011, p. 263). On the other hand, many studies have examined how syntactic and lexical constructions used in writing change the text clarity, contextual and social acceptability, and communicative effectiveness. Dobbs (2014) did a correlational survey between the differences in organizational and stance markers use and writing quality in 664 persuasive essays written by sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Though the presence of these markers does not necessarily means a high writing quality, Dobbs (2014) found that organizational markers such as evidentials and code glosses, or explicit markers of examples or paraphrases, have significant negative relationships to quality. Whereas the variety of stance markers, such as hedges and boosters, is a positive predictor of quality and they were used more frequently and more easily than organizational markers. However, their positive effect on an essay can be affected or even dampened as essays get longer.

Wahby (2014) confirms the validity of the hypothesis that there is a strong positive correlation between having a good knowledge about cohesive ties and the quality of English writing. Moreover, the composition of Saudi prep-year students showed that less cohesive knowledge the EFL student has, the lower the quality of composition is. Whereas those students whose writings displayed an appropriate use of CDs, have scored higher and produced more cohesive texts.

Other studies have provided a comparative investigation on the writings of native and non-native English speakers. Particularly, Zhao (2014) compared and contrasted the lexical cohesion employed by both English native speakers and Chinese EFL learners, from different levels, in their EAP writings. The results revealed that both groups tended to use more complicated cohesion and less simple repetition with the improving of English language proficiency while the frequency of lexical cohesion used by Chinese EFL learners was less than native speakers. This indicates that the simplified and less varied lexical cohesion in English writing is more likely a characteristic of low English proficient writers . This concept correlates with findings of other studies such as Abdul Rahman (2013), Xuefan (2007), Mo (2015), and Dobbs (2014).

Abdul Rahman (2013) has analyzed the use of CDs in descriptive writings of native English speakers and Omani students-teachers of EL. The study showed that there was a notable distinction in the use of CDs between the two categories in terms of frequency, variety, and control. The writing of the native English speakers (NES) revealed a balance between the use and frequency of various types of CDs, while Omani students neglected certain types of CDs and overused others as repetition and reference, which certainly affects their writing causing them to produce noncohesive texts (Abdul Rahman, 2013).

Yonhung (2011) confirms, "frequency of the utilization of cohesive devices does not indicate the quality of the writing, because overuse underuse and misuse of cohesive devices may also disturb the textual coherence and thus bring obstacle to the understanding of a text" (p. 42). From investigating the use of CDs on the basis of the theories related to cohesion and Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy of cohesive devices, he concluded that students' little knowledge about cohesion and coherence and the negative transfer of L1 are major reasons for students' cohesive errors. These errors include an overuse and misuse of personal reference and the frequent shift of pronouns, misuse of conjunctives and collocation, overuse of

simple repetition, and restricted choice of lexical items.

Such findings seem to agree with Witte and Faigley's (2008) arguement that the quality or success of a text depends heavily on factors outside the text itself. These external factors were not mentioned in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory, or rather have been intentionally excluded. A text might not be coherent enough regardless of the number of cohesive ties employed in it to bind it together. Therefore, it can be misleading to distinguish between texts rated high and low in quality based only on cohesion. The quality of writing, as Witte and Faigley (2008) define it, is in part "the "fit" of a particular text to its context, which includes such factors as the writer's purpose, the discourse medium, and the audience's knowledge of an interest in the subject" (Witte and Faigley, 2008, p. 199). These conditions are called coherence conditions and are more likely to be found outside the text itself. They allow a text to be understood in a real-world setting. Witte and Faigley (2008) illustrate these conditions as the following:

a) The writer must provide only information relevant to the topic.
b) The reader must confront a real-world scene from the text; that is, the text must have a real purpose and meet the needs of any given audience.
c) Written texts must have a pragmatic unity, a unity of a text and the world of the reader.

(Witte and Faigley, 2008, p. 201)

2.4 Coherence and cohesion challenges in EFL/ESL writing

In view of the current studies, several reasons for EFL students' incoherent writing have been explored in different contexts. This issue has been regarded to the impact of external and internal factors alike. For example, Ahmad (2010) found that Egyptian students of English major do encounter difficulties with coherence in writing essays in EL. Such difficulties are manifested in writing the introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, or writing concluding sentences. Cekiso et al., (2016) found that South African EFL students encounter problems with writing an introduction, developing coherent paragraphs and writing a conclusion, and a thesis statement. The cause of such issue among EFL learners can be linked to the education system in South Africa in the sense that these coherence errors can be due to the students' writing experiences at high school. Teachers tend to focus more on the language than on the structure of the essay. Therefore, students find it difficult to face the demands of academic writing.

On the other hand, Ahmad (2010) contributes such issues to the students' weak background knowledge about the topic, low English proficiency, L1 influence which resulted in some negative transfer of certain techniques as overused coordinate sentences, misused topic sentences, and including a broad statement in the beginning before introducing the topic sentence. He further claims that some psychological factors can also affect the quality of learner's writing like his/her lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and writing anxiety. Moreover, large classes and traditional teaching methods are possible environmental contributors to the problem (Ahmad, 2010).

Students' overuse and misuse of certain cohesive devices definitely causes redundancy in their writing and render their written texts incomprehensible to the reader (Abdul Rahman, 2013). Through comparing the writings of Omani students and that of L1 English users, Abdul Rahman (2013) describes the Omani students' writing as difficult to decipher. The clear absence of connectedness between words and sentences makes the flow of thoughts unclear and not meaningful. They overused certain CDs as repetition and reference, and neglected to use other. Abdul Rahman (2013) believes such deficiency in their writing is "caused by lack of competence in their use of cohesive devices and their limited repertoire of vocabulary" (p. 9). The students tend to focus mainly on the word level and ignore the semantic relationships within the text that gives it its coherent texture. Moreover, he presumes that teacher's encouragement of students to utilize as many CDs as possible to create cohesive whole texts can result, in turn, in more redundancy and incomprehension (Abdul Rahman, 2013).

However, not all types of CDs are difficult to employ by EFL students. Conjunction, for instance, are easier to use than substitution as shown in Al-Jarf 's (2001) analysis of EFL students' written performance. Her study was to shed the light on the difficulties that EFL college students from King Saud University in Saudi Arabia had in processing certain types of cohesive devices such as substitution, ellipses, conjunction, and reference. The students' cohesion test results reflected a deviation in utilizing the forth-mentioned cohesion ties. Conjunction was the easiest to be resolved, whereas substitution was the most difficult one followed by ellipsis that was closely followed by reference. Accordingly, the students had

syntactic, semantic and morphological problems in processing the cohesive ties. They were unable to create a mental representation of the ideas presented in the text, thus unable to maintain the global unity of the text. Al-Jarf (2001) stresses the role of students' poor syntactic and poor semantic awareness in resolving cohesion relationships within the text. In other words, the inadequate linguistic competence of the students in EFL, their poor reading comprehension skills, and poor knowledge of cohesion rules are the main causes of cohesive deviation.

Taking language competence into account, Breeze (2008) indicates that though lexically varied texts are not necessarily good ones, but simplicity and lack of variety in the vocabulary of the Spanish students makes their English writing "repetitive and lexically unadventurous". In the university of Mercia, she noticed that L2 writers prefer to stick to the tried and tested vocabulary and avoid using collocation which resulted in their writing being incoherent and informal. Besides, the learners' tendency to transfer some habits from speech to writing can probably be a reason for this problem. The complexity of a writing task can lead to what Breeze referred to as "cognitive overload", which makes it challenging for students to call up as wide and varied vocabulary as possible all at the right time. Suggesting from the listed interpretations "the limited lexicon is perhaps more a matter of habit or choice than of actual linguistic impoverishment" (Breeze, 2008, p. 64).

Bagheri and Mahmoudi (2016) investigated the effect of explicit, implicit, and incidental teaching methods and their interaction with time on grammatical cohesive devices (GCD). Similarly to previous findings, they found that the lack of knowledge among EFL learners in using certain CDs (e.g. ellipsis and substitution) affects the quality of their writing. Hence, this certainly draws the attention to the role and effect of teaching methods on acquiring the skill and knowledge of CDs. They found out that many factors such as the level of students' prior knowledge, the nature of the materials taught, and learners' age can impact the outcomes of the instructions. They believe that when students already know about some types of GCDs, the amount of progress will be limited. In other words, if the use of any GCDs is learned, the effect of teaching method would not be significant. Bagheri and Mahmoudi (2016) believe that "when we speak about methods, we must apply it for the most part to skills not to elements of language that are learned once and almost forever" (p. 429).

2.5 Conclusion

Coherence and cohesion are both essential elements in any written or spoken language. A meaningful communication is guaranteed only through the employment of these two important qualities of writing and discourse. The CDs are explicit cues and important text features that provide a practical means of analysis and describing oral or written texts.

The researcher hopes that this modest review of literature would set this study in the right focus, and would be useful to readers who are interested to revisit their language skills. Reviewing these four areas of interest have helped the researcher to select a methodology that should serve the purpose of this study: in particular, selecting the type of corpora, utilizing Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of CDs as an analytical tool for analyzing the collected corpora, and designing a semi-structured interviews as part of data collection process.

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approach adopted in the study. It illustrates the methodology, participants, and instruments being used. It also illustrates the validity and reliability of the research instruments, the procedures followed by the researcher to collect data, and the statistical means applied in this study.

3.1 Methodological approach

This paper utilized a qualitative research methodology to focus on the problem in its natural social settings. Data of the study were generated numerically and converted into a useable statistics to understand the coherence and cohesion difficulties in EFL writing from the participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.2 Data collection procedure

A. Participants

The samples of the study are made up from a random collection of pre-corrected exam papers, which are answered by Saudi EFL female students from IMSIU in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Altogether, there were 63 exam papers collected from different EFL university professors in IMSIU, and different English courses (e.g. prose, and essay). The university EFL students were from level 4 to level 6 and were all English major, whose native language is Arabic. For the interview, ten participants were selected randomly and were from different academic levels too. This study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 1437/1438 (2016-2017).

B. Instruments

The instruments utilized by the researcher to collect the obtained data were: Halliday and Hasa's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive devices to analyze the comprehensibility of students' English writing along with their knowledge of using these CDs, and a semi-structured interview to confirm the results gained from the corpora analysis.

Table (1)

Cohesive Devices

Cohesive Devices	
1. Reference (grammatical level)	a. Exophora: situational reference b. Endophora: textual reference 1. Anaphora: reference from a preceding text 2. Cataphora: reference from a following text
2. Substitution (grammatical level)	a. Nominal: one, ones; same b. Verbal: do c. Clausal: so, not
3. Ellipsis (grammatical level)	It can be considered as substitution by zero which leaving out a word or phrase rather than repeating it or replacing it with an equivalent.
4. Connectives (grammatical level)	a. Additive b. Adversative c. Causal d. Temporal
5. Lexical Cohesion (lexical level)	a. General nouns b. Reiteration: repetition, synonyms, near synonyms, superordinate c. Collocation

C. Instruments validity

Validity was achieved through two procedures: first face validly where a couple of university professors were consulted on the interview questions. Few changes were suggested and interview questions were modified to reflect their feedback. The original version of the interview questions was as follows:

1. Which type of questions do you prefer in your test: multiple choice or essay questions? Why?
2. Do you agree that tests should not include essay questions? Why?
3. Do you think essay questions measure accurately student's language skills? Why or why not?
4. Do you think that your English courses in the university are helpful to teach you writing skills? Why or why not?
5. How can you tell if a certain essay is good enough to be readable?

The final version of the interview questions was as follows:

1. Which type of questions do you prefer in your tests: multiple choice or essay questions? Why?
2. How do you answer an essay question? Do you use certain strategy as brainstorming or outlining?
3. What matters to you most: how to write (the language), or what to write (the ideas)? Why?
4. Do you proofread your essay before final submission? Why or why not?
5. Do you think essay questions measure accurately student's language skills? Why or why not?
6. Could you tell me about the steps you usually follow in answering the essay questions?
7. Do you think that your English course in the university is helpful to teach you writing skills? Why or why not?
8. How can you tell if a certain essay is good enough to be readable?
9. Are you familiar with the two terms coherence and cohesion? What do you know about them?
10. How often do you read English other than for academic purposes?
11. While studying before the exams or tests, how do you usually prepare for the essay questions?

D. Instruments reliability

A sample of five students essays were selected at random and analyzed for the five variables: references, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions, and cohesion. Results of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis are shown in the following table:

Table (2)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.609	5

E. Procedures

1. The researcher collected randomly 63 copies of pre-corrected exam papers of EFL students from different levels (4 to 6), and different courses as prose, novel, and essay.
2. The coherence and cohesion analysis of the pilot samples was based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of the various types of CDs.
3. for testing the reliability of this research tool, five papers were selected at random and analyzed for the five variables: references, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions, and cohesion. Then, they were further analyzed statistically using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).
4. After that, the researcher analyzed qualitatively the coherence and cohesion of the pilot samples by identifying and classifying the variety and number of CDs employed in each text.
5. The data collected from the analysis were further analyzed statistically using the SPSS program.
6. Then, the researcher prepared English semi-structured interview questions.

7. A panel of four university professors from the English department validated the interview questions.
8. The researcher conducted the interview in English and audio-recorded it with only 10 EFL students after their permission. Those students were different from those in the written samples.
9. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively which includes identifying and classifying the content of the interviews.

3.3 Statistical analysis

The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha formula to analyze the data of the pilot study. In addition, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze the data of the study employing the SPSS program.

Data Analysis

This chapter aims to present in details the findings of the investigation of the coherence and cohesion challenges that EFL students may encounter during English tests. These findings will be revealed from the qualitative results drawn from the data collected through the analysis of the coherence and cohesion of 63 written samples (exam papers), and the semi-structured interviews with EFL female undergraduate students from level 4, 5,and 6 in IMSIU during the first semester of the academic year 1437/1438 (2016-2017).

The study questions were as follows:

1. What are the challenges EFL students face when writing a coherent problem solution essay? How these difficulties can be classified?
2. What strategies can be recommended to help EFL students overcome such difficulties?

1.1 Results of the sample analysis

The findings drawn from analyzing the coherence and cohesion of 63 undergraduate students of EFL students' exam papers revealed a resemblance between students' writing performance, though, the 63 undergraduates are from three different academic levels (4, 5, and 6). The writings of (32%) of the students from the three levels included a lot of repetition of ideas, phrases, and words along with an excessive use of reference (55%). For instance, in the novel test, the main idea was repeated all through the students' answers, without a legible development, and hence sounded more like repetition than it was an elaboration of the idea, or an addition of new related information. The following extract is presented for further illustration:

Test question: What does Gulliver thinks about the Lilliputians?

Student's Answer: Lilliputians are very tiny people but they have a complete amazing society. Gulliver see many different special customs. They have a lot of respected of customs and traditions. Gulliver was so admire to their life.
At the end Gulliver like their custom and he respected it also he was so admire to them and he get a new things in his life because Gulliver love to life in useful way and see a new customs, so he was so happy to got this in his life.

Both paragraphs were written by an EFL student from level 4 while the following was written by an EFL 6th level student:

Test question: Who is Tom in your perspective? Provide two of his features in two different situations to support your answer.

Student's Answer: He's a showing off person. He is old money person. He want everything (power-money-women) he didn't care about anything. He is American dreamer because he want everything but he failed morally. He is person with no values and religion.

Negative repetition of words and ideas in the above paragraphs, which is a major part in the students' essays, affects and weakens the structure and language alike. The ideas were not developed and expanded sufficiently, nor supported with examples that would formulate the answer in an informative way.

On the other hand, the use of lexical cohesion (specifically collocations, synonyms, and near synonyms) is in some degree acceptable, but the use of substitution and ellipsis was absent in most test papers. This indicates a poor knowledge of the use of cohesive devices and of the CDs themselves. Students could have improved their writing through employing substitution or ellipsis instead of repeating words or phrases. For example, the following sentence is extracted from a prose test written by a 6th level student "Tom is someone who sees him self better and higher than anyone else, careless and does not think that anyone can hurt him." The word anyone could have been omitted or substituted to indicate some proficiency in writing. Using variety of CDs can improve the students writing and brings it to a higher level, allowing more vocabulary to be used instead of repeating the same.

However, students performed better in essay tests than those in prose or novel tests; the latter group was from the 4th and 6th level while the former one was from level 5. The writings of those from level 4 and 6 lack the form of an essay. Some answers were written without conclusion, others without introduction and conclusion, and, in some, the text was not even divided into paragraphs. Moreover, the ideas were not linked with each other comprehensibly by connectives. That is, one interrupted another in an incoherent manner, or was not developed enough to prepare the reader for another different idea. The unrelated content in students' answers was about (32%) of their writings.

Nevertheless, the following tables bellow are presented to show the direction of the differences between the three groups (level 4, 5, and 6). In ANOVA analysis, there was no difference with "reference" between the 5th and 6th levels, whereas the 4th level rated higher than the students from level 5 and 6. In ellipsis, students from level 5 have employed ellipsis more than those from level 4 and 6, but there was no difference between the 4th and 6th levels. The same trend was repeated with substitution except in conjunction and cohesion where there was a difference in these two CDs between all the three levels (see also appendix A).

Table (3)

Multiple Comparison of the use of CDs	Reference	Substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion
Level 4	1124	6	1	400	864
Level 5	438	7	6	163	57
Level 6	356	6	0	99	171

Table (4)

ANOVA Tests Results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reference	Between Groups	1093.796	2	546.898	3.605	.034
Substitution	Between Groups	1.556	2	.778	1.572	.217
Ellipsis	Between Groups	2.186	2	1.093	7.545	.001
Conjunction	Between Groups	358.224	2	179.112	7.397	.001
Cohesion	Between Groups	4415.660	2	2207.830	23.715	.000

1.2 Results of the interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out on 10 randomly selected EFL female students from different groups and levels (4,5,and 6) . Each student was asked eleven questions (mentioned in chapter 3). The results of these interviews revealed the students' poor knowledge of coherence and cohesion, and inadequate use of the various types of CDs. They also revealed the students' inability to define an appropriate form of an essay, which must be divided into paragraphs connected with each other by a main idea mentioned in the introductory paragraph and developed through the body till it comes to an end in the concluding paragraph. None of the students have provided an appropriate description of how an essay can be readable.

In terms of which type of questions is preferred, seven students preferred the multiple choice on essay questions (EQs). These students believe multiple choice questions (MCQs) are more manageable and easier to attempt, cover a large content area, and require less time. According to those students, essay questions could require more efforts to formulate satisfactory answers and are usually likely to be more demanding. Students feel more confident of their answers to MCQs as these questions usually limit students' speculations. However, three students did not agree that MCQ is better in the assessment of students' skills than EQs, because the latter allows them more freedom to express their understanding and does not limit their speculation.

On the other hand, all 10 students follow the same strategy in studying before writing tests. They choose to practice writing immediately before the exam believing that language structures are more important than the ideas they express. Therefore, this would help them to improve their written language and to memorize as well. All interviewed students confirmed the importance of memorization. Students believe that memorization helps them to acquire more vocabs, improve spelling and grammar, and most importantly prevent loss of ideas and /or information. Interviewers were further asked if they modify or not what they have already learned by heart according to the demand of question in hand. Most of them insist on keeping the texts they learn by heart as they are without any modification to avoid unnecessary writing errors. These results confirm and explain those obtained from the samples analysis that revealed an occurrence of unrelated content in students' answers and repetition in thoughts and words, which result in tediousness in their written work.

Moreover, some students think that using strategies as brainstorming or outlining are not useful and a waste of time. Proofreading is considered useless as well. Other students believe that using these strategies are helpful in organizing ideas and overcoming mistakes.

Finally, students were asked if the English courses had helped them improve their writing skills. Six students recommended that teaching techniques have to be modified so as to help them be more creative, critical, and confidant to express themselves in any topic or subject, and to improve their performance in general. The majority of the students asserted that independent learning could possibly benefit EFL students to overcome their writing problems.

1.3 Response to research questions

Through the analysis of the number and variety of CDs implemented in the students' exam papers and the semi-structured interviews, the challenges that faced the EFL students when writing a coherent problem solution essay can be classified as follows:

1. The English language proficiency is significantly low. There are no variety in vocabulary and their writing included structure errors, grammatical and spelling mistakes in their writings.
2. There is no balance in students' use of CDs. They overuse particular types of CDs, such as reference, and repetition, while ignore the use of other types, e.g. substitution, and ellipsis. This misuse of CDs makes their written work tedious and full of redundancy.
3. Students are not familiar with all kinds of CDs, therefore, they use a lot of reference, repetition, and some types of connectives, because they are familiar to them and hence easier to be implemented.
4. There is a lot of repetition in ideas, words, and phrases which affects the quality of the essay and weakens the structure of its paragraphs.
5. Memorization seems to be affecting and limiting the students' scopes of writing their answers. Memorization causes students to mention the same idea repeatedly all through. It also leads students to produce unrelated ideas to their answers, which results in over abundance in their written work.
6. There is an inappropriate use of the various types of CDs in students' writing. That is, students utilize a certain linker where it is not needed, while missing the use of the CD where it is needed.

Through the analysis of the number and variety of CDs implemented in the students' exam papers and the semi-structured interviews, the following five strategies are presented as an answer to the second research question: First and foremost, students must enhance their English vocabulary through reading. Reading is key to knowledge. Therefore, instructors are advised to encourage students to read through establishing a reading club, for instance. Gaining the ability to discuss, negotiate, and read about anything they find interesting or entertaining will improve their spoken and written language and be confident in using their own language.

Students are recommended to practice free writing more frequently during the writing courses over the first three academic levels to enhance students' creative and critical speculation. This would enable students to express their prior knowledge and experiences into composition, and turns composition into an interesting experience than just a memorizing activity of predetermined topics in the teaching syllabus.

Students' awareness about coherence and cohesion must be raised. Most students are not familiar with the types of cohesive devices that can be utilized in writing, nor with how a text can be coherent. Therefore, it is important to familiarize students with CDs and how these CDs are used. This can be achieved through exposing students to authentic texts where these CDs are utilized (e.g. Halliday & Hassan's (1976)), and through designing well writing assignments.

Memorizing must be discouraged through asserting the importance and sufficiency of comprehending the material rather than memorizing it. Students should be encouraged to rely on their own words to express ideas and elaborate on them. This can be achieved through familiarizing students with the study skills that can help them understand the materials and experience how comprehension is more likely to be helpful in recalling the needed information than

memorizing. For example, teaching paraphrasing and question formation could prompt students to be creative, critical, and most importantly confident about their ability to understand and modify written texts. Providing students with the main theme of a lecture could help them to focus and understand the content more.

Students should be encouraged to practice the important writing strategies (e.g. note taking, outlining, brain-storming, etc.) that can help them to organize their ideas and thoughts more properly before or when composing them into an essay. This can be achieved through well designed writing activities where these techniques are adequately utilized.

4.5 Summary of the results

The findings of the study revealed that EFL female students do encounter coherence and cohesion challenges in their writings. These challenges are classified as follows: a poor knowledge of coherence and cohesion, difficulties in utilizing the different types of CDs which could result in overuse of some kinds and ignoring the use of others or/and inappropriately implementing them in texts, and, finally, a repetition of words, thoughts, and ideas in students' writings.

Students' low language proficiency, wrong studying habits, and weak training of writing skills, and overlooking the use of some helpful strategies in writing organization are likely to be the causes of such problems. Findings provide some solutions that may help students to overcome these problems, such as: raising student's awareness of coherence and cohesion, using different innovative methods in teaching English writing courses, encourage students to enrich their English vocabulary and improve their writing through reading, practicing free writing to enhance critical and creative thinking, learning and applying writing strategies that are helpful in organizing ideas during the composition process, prompt students to focus on comprehension in studying and learning, and to use their own words in composing their answers.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the findings of this study with reference to the research questions, and provides a detailed analysis of key results in relation to literature on the subject. The conclusion is presented with a brief summary of research results, followed by recommendations.

1.1 Discussion of research questions

The first research question was concerned with defining the challenges EFL female students face when writing a coherent problem solution essay. These difficulties were identified according to the research findings. Results indicated that EFL Saudi female university students do encounter certain coherent difficulties in writing in general and essay writing in particular. The most apparent ones are: difficulties in organizing ideas and elaborating them, misuse or/and unawareness of the various types of cohesive devices usage, repetition of words, phrases, and ideas, and their essay writings lack the academic form of an essay. This explains why Saudi EFL female students writing performance is noncohesive. These results agree with similar studies such as: (Cekiso, Tshotsho, Somniso, 2016; Wahby, 2014; Abdul Rahman, 2013; Ahmed, 2010; and Zhang, 2010).

Challenges facing Saudi females students in writing might be attributed to internal as well external factors. Internal factors include students' lack of knowledge in utilizing the different CDs, low language proficiency, inability to use helpful strategies in writing and studying, low practice of English writings, too much dependence on memorizing text and including them in their writing without any modifications. External factors include inappropriate teaching styles, particularly in teaching writing, minimal attention given to coherence and cohesion in teaching techniques. In this regard, Adas (2012) recommends instructors to train students on how to use cohesion, because this will positively affect their writing skills.

1.2 Discussion of question two

Regarding the second research question which is "What strategies can be recommended to help EFL students overcome such difficulties?", few strategies that could be helpful were presented according to the research results. To improve writing skills, EFL students should be encouraged to acquire the habit of reading as much as they could. Reading is found to be the suitable approach for acquiring the writing skills as it provide the chance to be exposed to more vocabulary and more varied language structures. According to Krashen (1984) reading passages will somehow function as primary models which writing skills can be learned. In addition, it is recommended that EFL students should be aware of the concept of CDs and how they are used to achieve coherence and cohesion in written texts. Instructors are advised to pay

more attention to cohesion theory in teaching writing through the provision of rich texts where CDs are clearly outlined. The more students are aware of CDs and their usage, the higher their English writing performance is and "the closer they are from writing texture rather than texts" (Wahby, 2014). Along the same lines, Adas (2012) asserts that teaching students the way cohesion should be utilized positively affects the quality of writing.

On the other hand, teachers are advised to encourage students to practice writing on a regular basis, and not only right before a test. Students should receive enough practice on how to learn and apply certain writing strategies that could help them to organize their ideas before composing them. In this respect, Collins and Collins (1996) listed the strategic writing instructions for helping struggler writers to overcome writing difficulties. These include identifying a strategy worth teaching, introducing it by modeling, then helping learners to try it out with guidance and work-shop styles, and helping them to master it through repeated practices and reinforcement (Collins & Collins, 1996). Teachers of English are advised to encourage students to focus on comprehending the content of the material rather than memorizing it, and to insist on using the target language to compose their essays and other writing assignments. Instructors, on the other hand, should design their lecturing plans so as to allow students free writing activities, where students practice their writing skills in topics of their own selection. This writing training could enhance learners' self-esteem, self-regularity, creativity, critical thinking among many other abilities. This agrees with Li (2007) who confirms that when free writing becomes "a regular and integral part of the teaching and learning process, students will be empowered to think through problems, make discoveries, gain insights, and express themselves with confidence through spontaneous writing focusing on a specific topic"(Li, 2007 p.51).

1.3 Conclusion

The findings indicate that EFL Saudi female students face coherence and cohesion challenges in their essay writing. Therefore, EFL instructors should employ innovative techniques in teaching coherence and cohesion. Besides, they should concentrate on prompting students to practice writing and reading skills on a regular and more purposive effort. Furthermore, instructors should educate students to utilize more helpful strategies in writing and studying.

1.4 Recommendations for further studies

The following recommendations can be drawn from the present study:
1. Conducting the same study on male students and compare the results with those obtained from the female students.
2. Conducting an experimental study to the recommended strategies proposed in this study.
3. Conducting an experimental study to one of the recommended strategies proposed in this study.
4. Involving both teachers and students in future studies may lead to more comprehensive reliable results.
5. Conducting an experimental study to the recommended strategies or strategy proposed in this study on specific samples of EFL students.
6. Conducting an experimental study to the recommended strategies or strategy proposed in this study on specific samples of EFL instructors.

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الملخص:

تواجه طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية السعوديات تحديات مختلفة فيما يتعلق بالكتابة المقالية، خاصة أثناء الامتحانات الجامعية عندما يطلب منهن الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة بشكل مقالي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على هذه التحديات و اقتراح بعض الحلول للتغلب عليها. أختير عشوائيا من كلية اللغات و الترجمة في جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية ثلاث و ستون ورقة امتحان لطالبات اللغة الإنجليزية من مستويات مختلفة ومقررات إنجليزية مختلفة أيضا، و تم تحليلها بإستخدام تصنيف مايكل هوليداي و رقية حسن (١٩٧٦) لوسائل الربط. كما عقدت مقابلات شخصية مع عشرة من طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية من مستويات مختلفة أعدت أسئلتها مسبقاً لمعرفة المزيد عن هذه التحديات من الدراسات. أظهرت النتائج أن الطالبات السعوديات اللاتي يدرسن اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهن التحديات التالية: معرفة غير دقيقة عن مفهوم ترابط النص وتماسكه ، قلة الوعي في استخدام أنواع وسائل الربط المتعددة (مثل الاستخدام الخاطئ، أو المفرط، و/أو تجاهل استخدام بعض أنواع وسائل الربط)، تكرار الكلمات و العبارات، و ضعف في كفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية. وبناء عليه، أوصت الدراسة برفع وعي الطالبات عن فكرة الترابط و التماسك اللغوي من خلال اللجوء لإستراتيجيات مبتكرة في تعليم طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على التماسك و الترابط. بالإضافة إلى تعليم طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كيفية استخدام وسائل الربط من خلال اطلاعهن على نظريات تماسك النص. وأخيرا تصميم واجبات جيدة لمقرر الكتابة، و حث الطالبات على القراءة و الكتابة و إستخدام إستراتيجيات كتابية قد تحسن من مهاراتهن الكتابية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الترابط، التماسك، أدوات الربط، الكتابة المقالية، الكتابة.