COHESION IN NARRATIVE ESSAY WRITING OF EFL SECONDARY STUDENTS IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Cohesion has been in the limelight of many linguists in terms of investigating how texts are related to each other. This study examines what cohesive devices are used in students' narrative essays and which cohesive device is most frequently used in each type among three groups of students. Thirty participants, all of whom were grade 11 students at a public school in Bangkok, were divided into three groups: advanced, intermediate and beginner. The main instrument for data analysis was a sample of 30 finished student's narrative essays in which cohesion was extracted. The findings revealed that four types of cohesion: reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion were found in students' narrative essays, while elliptical cohesion was noticeably absent. The comparison of each sub-category among three target groups showed that 141 personal references 'I' was the most frequently used in the advanced group, followed by 113 additive conjunctions 'and' in the advanced group, 95 collocations in the advanced group and 18 nominal substitutions 'one' in the beginner group respectively. This study could provide useful suggestions for the EFL writing classroom for not only students to improve the use of cohesion in their writings but also for teachers to prepare a practical writing pedagogy for the EFL students.

Keywords: cohesion, narrative essay, reference, substitution, conjunction, lexical cohesion

Introduction

When it comes to writing tasks, especially paragraph or essay writings, students need to produce a logical sequence of comprehensible and coherent text. They need not only to organize and extract their ideas in order to produce a logical sequence of meaningful and cohesive text but also to generate supportive evidence in order to convince the audience of their message. Thus, writers need to compose a series of lengthy and related sentences rather than a single and unrelated sentence (Byrne 1988). If ideas or sentences are simply composed without being related to one another, it will be difficult for the reader to understand the text (Tangkiengsirisin 2010). To enhance the relatedness and connectedness in a text, writers may use cohesion to link their ideas between sentences to create texture (Halliday & Hasan 1976). In consequence, when producing a good paragraph or essay, a writer has to be aware of the characteristics of good writing which include organization, coherence and cohesion, as they are the main considerations in essay writing.

Cohesion has been the focus of many linguists in terms of investigating how texts are related to each other. Halliday and Hasan (1976) point out that cohesion plays a vital role in text analysis in terms of its current appeal in applied linguistics. That is to say, cohesion plays an important role in developing writing skills and in indicating the maturity of a writer. Moreover, Alarcon and Morales (2011) state that cohesive devices can distinguish texts from non-texts and enable the audience to establish correlation between what was said, is being said, and will be said by making use of lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. In other words, explicit cohesive devices in texts can enable not only a writer to express ideas clearly, but also foster a reader to comprehend texts more easily. Additionally, Ahmed (2010) maintains that cohesion plays a vital role in connecting ideas in a text on the macro level whereas on the micro level, it helps bind phrases, sentences or paragraphs in a text.

In Thai educational contexts, writing in English is traditionally taught in schools and colleges. Students are required to write different genres formally and informally including summaries, diaries, term papers, reports and essays. However, writing is a highly complicated process comprising advanced skills that include critical thinking and logical development of ideas (Mawardi 2014). It is believed that in order to facilitate the writing process, students need to be aware of linguistic properties at the whole text level: paragraph, sentence, and word levels. At each level, linguistic tools such as cohesive items or transitional markers are considered as indispensable

devices in assisting, organizing, presenting and linking their thoughts in a logical and cohesive way. However, most Thai students with several experiences in English learning or even advanced learners at a high proficiency of English usually encounter difficulty in text organization and cohesion when writing English (Tangkiengsirisin 2010). Moreover, ESL learners not only have difficulty in putting ideas together in their composition but also often produce unrelated texts with disorganized presentation of the content (Dueraman 2007).

To further investigate students' problems in written discourse at a whole level, cohesion serves as a practical topic to see how linguistic features are connected and organized by the use of transitional and cohesive markers. Meanwhile, narrative genre was selected as a source of data in this study because it involves personal anecdotes which are mostly relevant to real life. In addition, narrative genre generates the existence of cohesive devices in written language (Mawardi 2014). In other words, it describes what a person does relevant to his or her real life; it can facilitate students to compose a narrative story relating to their memorable and unforgettable experiences by making use of cohesive items. This kind of writing is not complicated for students to express their ideas and it is possible to notice how words in the story are linked by the use of cohesive devices.

As elaborated, this present study is therefore conducted to investigate cohesion in students' essay writing in Thai school contexts. Cohesion theory is considered a significant issue relevant to this present study since it looks at how students connect and organize linguistic elements by using transitional and cohesive markers. In addition, a number of previous studies conducted about cohesion reveal some gaps among the studies. That is, there are a few related to Thai secondary school contexts. Moreover, this present study would generate not only a useful method for EFL learners to improve cohesion in their writing but also would illuminate a practical technique for teachers to solve EFL learners' problems in English writing. The topic of this present study therefore allows the researchers to investigate cohesion in students' essay writing so as to provide some guidelines for students to improve their writing skills and for teachers to prepare a practical writing course.

Literature Review

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion refers to the semantic relations within a text. It symbolizes not only the text but also

helps generate the textual component in order to create a text. As a textual component, cohesion plays a vital role in creating a text. Consequently, cohesion is how words and expressions of a text are linked by cohesive devices. It consists of five major groups: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Reference

Reference is considered as a relation between linguistic features mentioned earlier (Yousuk 2004). Reference is classified into three types: personal, demonstrative, and comparative.

Personal reference is a group of pronouns including personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives such as *I, he, she, him, her, my* etc. For example:

(A) Khaohom will be at the amusement park this weekend. *She* will be playing with *her* friends.

(B) My *father* is at home. *He* relaxes and acts in *his* normal manner.

In sentence A, '*She* and *her*' are the pronominal references of 'Khaohom' while '*He and his*' are the pronominal references of '*father*' in sentence B.

Demonstrative reference represents a noun in a sentence and it also refers to distance and time in the text. It includes *this, those, that, these, here, there, then, then and now.*
For example:

As a student, Khaohom needs to consider *this* -- paying attention to the lesson and finishing homework.

The demonstrative reference '*this*' refers to the entire sentence following it.

Comparative reference indicates identity, similarity and difference. It is used to compare two things in terms of likeness and unlikeness in the context (Halliday & Hasan 1976). This category includes the following items: *same, equal, similar, different, many, more, other* etc. For example:

There are *many* topics of English Khaomai learned at school today. Some are the *same* topics she learned yesterday. So, she needs to learn *other* topics which are *more* interesting.

'*Many*', '*more*' and '*other*' represent unlikeness while '*same*' refers to likeness in a text.

Substitution

Substitution refers to the substitution of a linguistic item by another item or phrase functioning as a noun, a verb or a clause (Yousuk 2004). There are three types of substitution: nominal, verbal, and clausal.

Nominal substitution refers to specific linguistic elements replacing nouns or noun phrases in a previous clause. *One, ones* and *same* are in this category. For example:
(A) This *shirt* is too small for you. Please try that *one.*
(B) Tom has his hair cut with a *new and trendy style*. I have the *same.*
'*One*' is a nominal substitution of '*shirt*' in sentence A. '*same*' substitutes '*new and trendy style*' as a noun in sentence B.

Verbal substitution describes a group of particular linguistic items substituting presupposed verbs or verb phrases in a text including *do, be, and have*. Consider this text:
Nobody *got a full score* on the English examination last semester but Khaohom *did.*
'*did*' is a verbal substitution of '*got a full score*'.

Clausal substitution suggests a group of grammatically linguistic elements replacing the entire presupposed clause in a context. Clausal substitution involves '*so and not*'. For example:
Professor Tune thought *his class was very interactive and his students could achieve the learning goals yesterday*, but I didn't think *so.*
The word '*so*' is substituted for '*his class was very interactive and his students could   achieve the learning goals yesterday*'.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to an omission of a noun, verb, and clause in a context which is left unsaid yet understood (Halliday & Hasan 1976). Ellipsis can be divided into nominal, verbal, and clausal types.

Nominal ellipsis, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), refers to a group of modifying linguistic elements functioning as a noun in a context. Consider these texts:
(A) *The men* got back at midnight. *Both* were tired out.
(B) *His sons* went into business. *Neither* succeeded.
From the examples above, '*Both*' in sentence A is elliptical of '*the*

men'. 'Neither' in B refers to the presupposed noun (*His sons*).

Verbal ellipsis refers to one or more words representing a verbal group in the previous clause which is not fully expressed yet still comprehensible. Halliday and Hasan (1976) exemplify as follow:
(A) Have you been swimming? – Yes, I <u>have.</u>
(B) What have you been doing? – <u>Swimming.</u>
'Have' (in Yes, I have) in (A) and *'swimming'* in (B) are both elliptical and they are short for *'have been swimming'.*

Clausal ellipsis describes a group of linguistic features referring to a clausal group that presupposes the previous statements in which the systematic features are not fully represented but are nevertheless understood. Consider this text:
(A) Who is going to study abroad next year?
(B) Khaohom *is.*
The word *'is'* is a clausal ellipsis of the phrase (*going to study abroad next year*) in the verbal group because it is left out.

Conjunction

Conjunctive cohesion is a device which not only binds clauses, sentences or paragraphs, but also signifies the relationship between them (Premsiriampai 2003). Conjunctive cohesion falls into five categories: additive, adversative, causal, temporal and continuative.

An *additive* occurs when a speaker or a writer wants to add another point in the context. It conveys the sense of 'there is something more to be said'. Consider the following sense:

This is the first time I have tried Thai spicy food. *And* I like it very much.

The word *'And'* has a sense of additive conjunction.

Adversative represents the contrary relation between two contexts. Consider the following senses:
(A) He is rich. *Yet,* he is not happy.
(B) The first teachers we have in our lives in most cases are our parents. *On the other hand,* they are professional teachers in specific subjects.

From the examples above, *'yet'* in A and *'on the other hand'* in B show the contrastive relation.

Causals, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), express causal relationships by making use of transitional words such as so, thus, hence, therefore, consequently, accordingly, because of and so on (Halliday & Hasan 1976). Note the examples:

(A) Khaohom is the best student in the class. *So,* her teacher always admires her.

(B) Khaomai has worked hard on her project study. *Therefore,* she got a scholarship for continuing her higher education abroad.

From the instances above, the word *'so'* in A and the word *'therefore'* in B represent casual relation.

Temporals help a writer manage linguistic components, sentences and paragraphs chronologically, such as first, second, then, next, after that, finally and so on. Consider the following text:

To withdraw the money from the ATM, *first* insert the card and *then* enter the pin. *After that,* select the amount of money. *Finally,* take the cash from the ATM

The italicized words above bind and relate linguistic elements sequentially and cohesively.

Continuative refers to linguistic components that intensify a communication process smoothly. This includes *now, of course, well, anyway, after all, well* etc. For example:

(A) What did you learn from this examination failure?

(B) *Well,* it taught me a lesson and I, *of course,* will have to study harder next time.

Lexical cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion describes a relation that enhances texture by making use of proper relevant lexis or vocabulary. It falls into two groups: *reiteration* and *collocation.*

Reiteration deals with the same root, synonym, super-ordinate and general items.

Same root occurs when a lexical item is used repetitively with different functions in a context. For example:

Khaomai is very good at *calculation.* She takes only a minute to *calculate* a complicated mathematical formula.

'Calculate' generates the same root with *'calculation'.*

Synonym is a word that conveys similar meaning in a text. For example:

Khaohom wants to be a heroine because she *likes* to help people and *loves* to fight *crime* and *terrorism.*

'Likes' shares similar meaning with *'loves',* whereas *'crime'* has the same meaning as *'terrorism'.*

Super-ordinate refers to a collective item containing several words in its group. For example:

Khaomai has knowledge in different *subjects* such as *science, math, language and technology.*

'Subjects' is superordinate of *'science, math, language and technology'.*

General item describes a word with a broad meaning of things. For example:

Khaohom likes doing *things* with her *birthday gifts* from her uncle.

'*Things'* is a general item referring to '*birthday gifts'.*

Collocation refers to a lexical set which can be found to occur in the same situation or series. For example:

I think a hero is someone who is an *excellent person* and has *good characteristics.*

'*Excellent'* is associated with '*person',* and '*good'* is collocated with '*characteristics'.*

Research Studies about Cohesion in Essay Writing

Since cohesion plays an essential role in binding linguistic elements together, several empirical studies have been conducted on the topic. For example, Mawardi (2014) investigated cohesion and coherence in students' narrative texts composed by 20 students of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram University in Indonesia. The study aimed at identifying the types of cohesive devices used to build cohesive texts and types of topical coherence used to construct coherence in students' narrative essays. The findings showed that reference was greatly prominent with a percentage of 50.22%, followed by 30.02% for lexical cohesion, 16.93% for conjunction, 2.73% for ellipsis and 0.10% for substitution in student's writings, respectively, while students applied parallel progression (53.2%), sequential progression (27.9%) and

extended parallel progression (18.8%) in their writings. Similarly, Anom, Seken, and Surnajaya (2013) analyzed cohesion and coherence in narrative essays written by ninth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar in the academic year 2011/2012. The study aimed to describe and explain the coherence and cohesion created by ninth grade students. The findings revealed that the use of reference was the highest in frequency with a percentage of 74%, followed by 25.37% for conjunction, 0.40% for substitution and .017% for ellipsis in students' writing respectively.

Likewise, Hessamy and Hamedi's (2013) examined the use of cohesive devices in 95 upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners in their independent vs. integrated writing texts. The study attempted to compare and contrast the frequency of the use of cohesive devices in students' writing. The result found that references were most prominently used, with 5868 cases, followed by 4896 cases of lexical cohesion, 3280 items of conjunction, 8 cases of substitution, and 2 items of ellipsis respectively.

Following these previous studies, this present research aims to investigate cohesive devices used in students' essays and to compare which subtypes of cohesive devices are the most prominent among three groups of students. In consequence, cohesion is a significant common issue in written language and pedagogy. It is an indispensable tool for not only writers to improve their writing skill and guarantee their writing maturity but also for language teachers to prepare practical writing courses and to provide some useful guidelines when responding to students' written work.

Research Methodology

Participants

In this study, the participants were 30 students of grade 11 at Bangpakok Wittayakom School in Bangkok, Thailand, all of whom studied in the Language-Math program and were of mixed English ability. They were divided into three groups; ten for each, according to their English GPA: advanced, intermediate and beginner. Those with GPAs higher than 3.5 were considered as the advanced group, and those with GPAs between 2.6 – 3.5 and lower than 2.5 were considered as intermediate and beginner groups, respectively. Other criteria to select the participants in this study included: 1) they had the same proportion and background of English learning experience—around 10 years; 2) they had taken a course in English writing in a previous semester; 3) they had had experience in L2 composition related

to the English writing course.

Research Instrument

The instrument of this study was a collection of students' 30 finished narrative essays. Each essay was at least 250 words in length on the assigned topic "My Hero". The essays included introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs as traditional components of essay writing. Conventions of narrative essays, such as plot, character, setting, climax and ending, were also incorporated in each composition.

Data Collection

Data were collected two times; each took an hour. Procedures in data collection were as follows. Firstly, participants were introduced to an overview of essay writing and narrative essays. They were trained in order to have clear concepts about the components and conventions of a narrative essay. In doing so, the researchers provided them a brief workshop on the components and conventions of a narrative essay. They were presented to each part of the essay's components step by step and also to what should be involved in each part (Introduction: how to grab the audience's attention, general statements, thesis statements; Body: topic sentence, supporting details, concluding sentence; Conclusion: restatements, add final comments). Next, they were asked to identify and clarify the components and subcomponents of an essay (which one was the introduction, body, and conclusion) and conventions of a narrative essay (which one was the plot, character, setting, climax and ending) by the given examples. After that, they negotiated possible topics in composing a narrative essay and voted for the topic "My Hero". Lastly, the informants were asked to write a narrative essay with a length of at least 250 words within a one-hour time limit.

Data Analysis

A number of researchers such as Mawardi (2014), Petchprasert (2012), Tangkiengsirisin (2010), Dureman (2007) and Preamsiriampai (2003) have examined cohesive devices occurring in students' essay writing by using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework. In doing so, they categorized cohesive items into five major groups: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

This present study, similarly, adapted this framework to analyze the data. Each type of cohesive device was counted by making use of the **AntConc** program: a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and

text analysis developed by Laurence Anthony (2004). It is a freeware, multi-platform, multi-purpose corpus analysis toolkit designed specifically for use in the classroom. It includes a powerful concordancer, word and keyword frequency generators, tools for cluster and lexical bundle analysis, and a word distribution plot. Its basic main features involve 1) A concordance tool which allows a user to search for any key words, phrases, or expressions by simply entering the key term in the search box then clicking the 'start' button. The results appear as a list with those key words in context (KWIC) as a whole corpus; 2) a concordance plot tool which helps a user to look at the number of key words appearing in each text; 3) a file view tool which allows a user to see full text in each file; 4) a cluster tool, if a user wants to see more details about how key terms are associated with other linguistic features; 5) a collocate tab which assists users in seeing the key terms closely collocating with other words by their rank, frequency and statistics; 6) A word list tool which provides a word list of the most frequent words along with their ranks occurring in the corpus and 7) a keyword list tab which generates a list of the most frequent key words appearing in the corpus.

To identify and clarify how cohesive items are extracted, first the researchers converted the corpus from students' finished narrative essays into plain text format before loading it into the AntConc program. When loading the corpus, the researchers entered the 'key terms' (to identify personal reference, all pronouns such as *I, you, we,* and *they* were considered as key terms) into the box provided and then ran the program. Those key terms were apparently generated and highlighted as the list of key words in context (KWIC), and the program also showed the total number of concordance hits in the corpus. For example, when the researchers wanted to look at the frequency of personal reference 'I' in the corpus, they must first open the program and load the corpus into the program. Then, the researchers entered the personal reference 'I' and ran the program. The personal reference 'I' then was generated and highlighted as a list of key words in context (KWIC). The program also showed a total number of concordance hit of 'I' in the corpus (see the appendix). However, lexical cohesion could not be analyzed by this program, thus the data analysis had to be done manually.

To clarify methods of analyzing an occurrence of lexical cohesion, the researchers paired up lexical items relating to reiteration and collocation. Consequently, the paired lexical terms are justified as one item. Consider the following extracts:

(A) *The* <u>reason</u> *why I like him is he is* <u>reasonable</u>. *He is punctual and he is my best father.*

(B) My hero will <u>teach</u> and <u>remind</u> me, if I do anything bad.

  (C) When people talk about <u>hero</u>. Other's opinion means <u>Spiderman, superman, Ironman</u> etc.

  (D) When my hero gets home she has many <u>things</u> to do such as <u>cooking, cleaning up and washing dishes.</u>

  (E) My hero is Spiderman because he <u>helps people</u> and <u>fights devil and monster.</u>

Extracts A-D represent ways of analyzing each sub-category of reiteration while Extract E represents how to analyze collocation. In A, *'reason'* and *'reasonable'* have the same root but different functions while *'teach'* and *'remind'* represent synonyms in B. In C, the word *'hero'* is the super-ordinate of *Spiderman, Superman,* and *Ironman'* since these lexical items are in the same collectives. In D, '*things*' are general words of *cooking, cleaning up, and washing dishes'*. In E, *'help people'* and *'fight devil and monster'* represent collocation for these two words that are found in the same situation.

It should be noted that analyzed data of lexical cohesions were crossed check by another linguistics expert. There were only a few minor changes in frequency results after double checking. Consequently, the overall picture of the cohesive devices used was presented and each sub-category was compared among the three target groups.

Results and Discussion

  Research question 1: What cohesive devices are used in students' narrative writing? To answer this question, data about the frequencies and percentages of each sub-category are presented below:

Table 1: Overall Frequencies of Cohesive Devices Used in Students' 30 Finished Narrative Essays

Reference	Personal	Demonstrative	Comparative	Total
No. of Frequency	1,861 (66.87%)	775 (27.85%)	147 5.28%)	2,783 (76.02%)
Substitution	Nominal	Verbal	Clausal	Total
No. of Frequency	37 (94.87%)	2 (5.13%)	-	39 (1.06%)
Ellipsis	Nominal	Verbal	Clausal	Total

No. of Frequency	-		-		-	-
Conjunction	Additive	Adversative	Causal	Temporal	Continuative	Total
No. of Frequency	366 (62.24%)	110 (18.72%)	71 (12.07%)	41 (6.97%)	-	588 (16.06%)
Lexical cohesion	Reiteration			Collocation		Total
No. of Frequency	55 (21.91%)			196 (78.09%)		251 (6.86%)
Total Frequency of Cohesive Devices in Students' 30 Finished Narrative Essays						3,661 100%

Table 1 presents the overall frequencies of cohesive devices of each category and each sub-category. As shown in the table, reference (2,738 items as 76.02%) is the most prominent cohesive device type used in the students' 30 narrative essays, followed by conjunction (588 items as 16.06%), lexical cohesion (251 items as 6.86%) and substitution (39 items as 1.06%), respectively. However, there was no use of ellipsis.

Regarding the use of reference, which was the most frequently occurring cohesive device, the findings showed that every reference group subtype was found in the students' narrative writings. This can be explained as being a consequence of the nature of narrative writing, which required students to compose their personal. The conventions of narrative writing, namely, plot, character, setting, climax, and ending, allowed for frequent use of reference in narrating their personal stories and experiences. In other words, such convention facilitated the students to refer to a person (either himself or someone else), thing or event in the story by particularly utilizing personal reference: *I, me, my, he, she, his, her, they, and their.* It is worth noting that personal narrative enhanced the use of reference groups in order to introduce and specify referential meaning to people, things, or events. This result was in line with Mawadi's (2004) study in which the frequency of reference cohesion was greatly prominent with a percentage of 50.22% in Indonesian students' narrative essays. Similarly, Anom, Seken, and Suarnajaya (2013) found that reference cohesion was the highest in frequency with a percentage of 74 in the ninth grade students' narrative essays. When

comparing the frequency of reference cohesions used among the three studies, it was found that Thai students utilized greater use of reference cohesions with a percentage of 76.02%.

As for conjunction, the second most frequent cohesive device used, there were 366 items (62.24%) of additive conjunction, 110 items (18.72%) of adversative conjunction, 71 items (12.07%) of causal conjunction and 41 items (6.97%) of temporal conjunction. However, the students did not employ any continuative conjunctions in their writings. This could possibly be explained on account of the narrative text being organized and arranged by the chronological use of time,   influences the participants' use of additive type in order to prioritize and link the events in their narrative writings. The use of additive conjunction could function to bind clauses, sentences and paragraphs as well as to signify the relationship between them, as Premsiriampai (2003) has suggested. Furthermore, the result of the present study is in agreement with a study of Anom et al. (2013) which revealed that a group of ninth grade students' narrative writings involved high frequency of additive conjunction with a total of 328 items (41%). Similarly, Hung and Thu (2014) found the highest occurrence of additive type, with 509 items (60.31%), in 50 student essays. This suggested that additive conjunction might be the least complex type of connecting devices for students to employ in their writings.

For lexical cohesion, there were 55 reiterations (21.91%) and 196 collocations (78.09%) found in students' 30 narrative essays. This might be because the narrative writing on a particular topic triggered the use of certain collocations. Students could have looked for lexical sets which are suitable for their narrative topic and employed the use of synonym to avoid repetition of using same words. This is consistent with Hessamy and Hamedi's (2013) study which found that 1,238 items (60.13%) and 1,687 items (59.46%) of collocation as the highest frequency of lexical cohesion played a vital role in both Iranian upper-intermediate learners' independent and integrated writings respectively, and 436 items (21.18%) and 678 items (23.89%) of synonym; a sub-type of reiterations, in students' independent and integrated writings. This suggested that the informants might be more familiar with collocation type: the use of word choice occurring in the same group or series and synonym type: the use of word choice conveying the same or closest meaning.

In regard to substitution as the least frequency (1.06%) of cohesion used in narrative writing in this study, nominal substitution is somehow used in students' 30 narrative essays with a number of 37 items and followed by 2

items of verbal substitution. Unfortunately, there was no case of clausal substitution in students' writings. The results revealed that there were only a small number of nominal substitutions (*one*) and quite a few of verbal substitution (*do, have*) prominent in this type of cohesion. This was mainly because it related to a given topic of the essay 'My hero', facilitating the informants to refer to a person, a thing or an event in their writings. In addition, the informants would like to make their writing clear so they did not attempt to substitute any linguistic items with other items. This study is in agreement with Petchprasert's (2012) study which showed that there were only five occurrences of nominal substitution *'one'* in low-intermediate students' essay writings. Moreover, Hessamy and Hamedi's (2013) findings showed that there were six verbal and two nominal substitutions in upper-intermediate student's integrated writings. Such scarce occurrence of substitution attributes to the fact that substitution and ellipsis more commonly occur in spoken language than in that of written language as suggested by Halliday and Hasan, (1976).

The use of ellipsis was noticeably absent in the students' writings. This could be explained in at least two ways. One interpretation is that the absence could simply be due to the students having limited knowledge of the uses of said cohesive device—i.e. they might not know how to use it, when to use it, or where to use it in their writings. Such an interpretation was also posited in a study by Anon, et al. (2013), which revealed that there, too, was no case of ellipsis occurring in the participants' narratives.   Another explanation to the non-existence of ellipsis cases might be due to the fact that substitution and ellipsis more commonly occur in spoken language than in written language as suggested by Halliday and Hasan (1976). In other words, narrative composition employs more use of written language in which ellipsis were rarely found. If possible, more research would be needed to verify the cause of the absence.

Research question 2: Which types of cohesive devices are most prominently used among three groups of students?

To answer this question, data about frequencies of each sub-category among three target groups: beginner, intermediate and advanced students are presented below.   In addition, in order to limit a potentially tremendous amount of data, only the first three prominent ranks of each cohesive category (excluding ellipsis) as well as its example words are illustrated below.

Table 2: Comparison of Frequencies of Reference Used among Three Target

Groups

Groups of	Personal			Demonstrative			Comparative		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Beginner (10)	my (137)	I (124)	me (108)	the *(114)*	that (52)	this (24)	many *(15)*	same (9)	other (6)
Intermediate (10)	I, my (118)	me (96)	he (90)	the (105)	that (36)	this (10)	as (12)	more (10)	other (8)
Advanced (10)	I *(141)*	he (128)	my (122)	the (92)	that (40)	now (9)	many (12)	more (8)	other (7)

Table 2 illustrates a comparison of frequencies of reference used among the three groups. The findings show that advanced students took the largest proportion of personal reference '*I*' with 141 items. This was followed by beginner students implementing the cohesive device '*my*' with 137 items, and intermediate students employing 118 items of '*I, my*', respectively. Regarding demonstrative reference, the cohesive devices most prominently used among three groups was '*the*', but with different proportions of use: beginner students employed 114 items, intermediate students used 105 items, and advanced students applied 92 items in their writings, respectively. For comparative reference, the beginner group used the cohesive device '*many*' with 15 items, the advanced group applied 12 items of '*many*' and the intermediate group implemented 12 items of '*as*' respectively.

This result revealed that there was a possible factor contributing to the highest frequency of first-personal pronoun '*I*' in the advanced group. To clarify, the nature of narrative writing and the given topic 'My hero' required students to compose their personal experiences, or another's experience, in their own writings. Such topical writing promotes the use of the first-person pronoun '*I*' because the pronoun allows the writers to link to and refer to their own stories. This finding is in accordance with Petchprasert's (2012) investigation which found that ten low intermediate graduate students employed the highest frequency of personal reference with 366 items (72.76%) in their essays, with the most prominent one being the first-personal '*I*'. Similarly, Mawadi's (2014) study revealed that twenty students attending a Writing III course in the academic year 2010/2011 took the largest proportion of personal reference with 1,047 items (50.22%) in their narrative essays involving the most prominent item '*I*'. This implied that narrative discourse compelled the students to take the highest use of first-personal pronoun '*I*'.

Table 3: Comparison of Frequencies of Substitution Used among Three Target Groups

Groups of	Nominal			Verbal			Clausal		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Beginner (10)	one *(18)*	ones (2)	the same (1)	have (1)	-	-	-	-	-
Intermediate (10)	one (5)	the same (1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Advanced (10)	one (10)	-	-	do (1)	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3 shows a comparison of frequencies of the substitution used among three groups. It was found that the students employed a small proportion of this type of cohesion. To clarify, beginner learners used nominal substitution *'one'* with 18 items, advanced learners implemented 10 items of *'one'* and intermediate learners applied 5 items of *'one'* respectively. As for verbal substitution, there were only two occurrences—*'have'* was employed once in the beginner group, and *'do'* was employed once in the advanced group.

The comparison shows that the beginner group tended to use the most nominal type *'one'* with 18 items among other groups. This might be due to a given topic of the narrative essay 'My hero', which itself may have motivated the students to use nominal type *'one'* in their narrative essays in order to substitute to the term *'hero'* since it related to the best person they admired. Another factor that contributed to the highest use of nominal substitution *'one'* in the beginner group was that the students tended to use various forms of *'one'* in their writings, such as nominal substitution, personal pronoun, cardinal numeral, determiner with indefinite article and general noun (Halliday & Hasan 1976:106). To justify and clarify the occurrence of the highest frequency of this sub-type, consider the following extracts:

(A) *When I am depressed he is the <u>one</u> who helps me and makes me feel better.*
(B) *My mom is <u>one</u> of my heroes because she is a teacher of my life.*
(C) *My father is the best man, he is punctual and reasonable. No <u>one</u> can replace my father.*
(D) *My mom is my hero. She treats me to be a good <u>one</u>.*

In A, *'one'* has the sense of indefinite article function while in B it has the sense of cardinal numeral. In C, *'one'* relates to personal pronoun while in D it involves nominal substitution.

Table 4: Comparison of Frequencies of Conjunction Used among Three Target Groups

Groups of		Beginner (10)	Intermediate (10)	Advanced (10)
Additive	1st	and (105)	and (82)	and (113)
	2nd	or (9)	or (11)	or (20)
	3rd	such as (4)	moreover (4)	such as (7)
Adversative	1st	but (16)	but (25)	but (30)
	2nd	although (6)	even though (4)	even though (3)
	3rd	though (1)	although (3)	however even if (2)
Causal	1st	because (19)	because (16)	because (17)
	2nd	so (6)	therefore (2)	so (3)
	3rd	there-fore/ because of (2)	for (1)	for (2)
Temporal	1st	then (4)	first (3)	first (5)
	2nd	first (3)	second (2)	second (4)
	3rd	after that (2)	next then (1)	until (3)
Continuative	-	-	-	-

As shown in Table 4, most subcategories of conjunction were found in student's writings except for the continuative subtype. 113 items of Additive conjunction *'and'* were most prominently used by advanced learners; 105 items of *'and* were moderately used by beginner learners, and 82 items of *'and* were least used by intermediate learners. For adversative conjunction:

There was a high use of 30 items of *'but'* by advanced learners, a medium use of 25 items of *'but'* by intermediate learners, and a low use of 16 items of *'but'* by the beginner learners. For causal conjunction, 19 items of *'because'* were used by the beginner learners, who came first, 17 items were used by the advanced learners, who came second, and 16 items were used by the intermediate learners, who came last. As for temporal conjunction, 5 items of *'first'* were used by the advanced group, followed by 4 items of *'then'* by the beginner group and 3 items of *'first'* by the intermediate group, respectively.

The comparison showed that the advanced group used more additive type *'and'* with 113 items than that of the intermediate and beginner groups. A plausible justification of its occurrence could be that the conventions of narrative text helped the informants utilize additive type *'and'* in order to relate and link their essays coherently and cohesively. Moreover, the nature of narrative texts dictated the use of prioritizing or linking linguistic devices to establish chronological events in their writings. Additionally, students used additives to link and relate a person, thing or event in their essays. This result is in agreement with a study of Anom, et al. (2013) who revealed that ninth grade students employed additive conjunction with 328 items (41%) in their narrative writings involving the most prominent item *'and'*. Such a narrative promoted the use of adequate cohesive items in order to make their texts cohesive and coherent (Dueraman 2007 cited in Nicholas and Nicholl 2002). This indicated that additive type might be profitable in binding linguistic features and enhancing cohesive texts.

However, there were some misuses of this kind of cohesion group. To elaborate this point, the students employed adversative types instead of additive types. For example, "*I know that he is a millionaire but he is kind and positive thinking*". This misuse supported Mawardi's (2014) result which found that the students used conjunctive items in a confused and incorrect way. Consequently, this might be due to the fact that the students had little practice in using these cohesive devices in their classrooms, or they might have had problems in grammatical usage relating to conjunctive elements.

Table 5: Comparison of Frequencies of Lexical Cohesion Used among Three Target Groups

Group	Reiteration	Collocation
Beginner (10)	(27)	(49)
Intermediate (10)	(16)	(52)

Advanced (10)	(12)	(95)
Total	55 (21.91%)	196 (78.09%)

Note: On account of the varieties of lexical cohesion found in this study, all four sub-categories of reiteration; same root, synonym, super-ordinate and general item, were then summed up for each target group and presented in the same column.

As shown in Table 5, showing the overall result between two sub-types, the collocation type (196 items as 78.09%) was more dominant than reiteration: (55 items as 21.91%). When looking at each sub-type, 27 reiterations were the most commonly used in the beginner group, followed by 16 items in the intermediate group, and 12 items in the advanced group, respectively. While 95 collocations occurring in the advanced group came first, 52 items in the intermediate group came second and 49 items in the beginner group came last.

When compared amongst each other, the advanced group used the most collocations (95 items), whereas, 27 items of reiteration were most prominent in the beginner group. This might due to the given topic 'My hero' facilitating the students to describe their heroes' characteristics and capabilities by using a chunk of lexical items relating to collocation (words appearing in a same situation or associating in some way to each other) and reiteration (synonym, same root, superordinate, general word). This result is in agreement with Hessamy and Hamedi's (2013) study which found that 1,238 items (60.13%) and 1,687 items (59.46%) of collocation played a vital role in both students' independent and integrated writings respectively. This data suggests that the informants might have employed more lexical sets to describe their heroes' characteristics and capabilities—i.e. collocation type: the use of word choice occurring in the same group or series.

Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implication of this study will benefit the EFL writing classroom, especially process writing, in terms of cohesion for not only students to improve the use of cohesion in their writings but also for teachers to prepare a practical writing pedagogy for their EFL students.

Based on the findings, EFL teachers should provide not only an explicit instruction of each cohesive device but also specific explanation and

exemplifications for EFL learners. In addition, gradually intensive practice should be catered for the learners in order to allow them to have adequate exposure of how to connect ideas and organize their ideas in order to produce a logical sequence of meaningful and cohesive text. At the same time, the teacher should provide students' feedback on a given task since it is important that both experienced and new teachers reflect upon their learners' performances (Petchprasert 2012). Additionally, the scarcity of substitution and the non-existence of ellipsis types suggest that both of them should be intensively taught in the writing classroom. However, another implication derived from this empirical study is that the density of cohesive devices does not represent a connected and cohesive text because the learners misuse some cohesive items, especially conjunctions. Consequently, teachers should promote accuracy and appropriateness of employing cohesive devices for the students and should provide ample time for them to practice when conducting a writing course.

In regard to EFL learners, based on the findings, they need more practice in how to connect and organize linguistic elements on a whole level: word, sentence, and paragraph levels when they deal with writing tasks. Furthermore, EFL learners should practice different types of writing to implement diverse cohesive devices in their compositions. With such practice, EFL learners can implement the correct and appropriate use of cohesive devices, and develop and master their writing skills.

Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the use of cohesive devices in students' narrative essays and to find out which types of cohesive devices were most dominantly used among three groups of students who varied in terms of English proficiency. The results revealed that every category of cohesion was found in students' narrative essays with the exception of the ellipsis category. The reference group was the most frequently used in students' narrative essays followed by the conjunction group, lexical cohesion group and substitution group, respectively. When comparing the use of cohesive devices among three groups, advanced students took the largest proportion of personal reference. The Beginner learners employed nominal substitution the most; however, in a small proportion. Additive conjunction was most prominently used by advanced learners. Lastly, collocation was the most frequent type of lexical cohesion used by advanced learners.

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