

Lexical Repetition and Written Text's Unity from Gender Perspective: A Case of Languages and Translation Students at the University of Tabuk

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ABSTRACT : This research aims at investigating lexical repetition and written composition's unity produced by 60 Male and female students studying Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia for the academic year 2018 / 2019. The sample of the study was selected randomly. This study involves two research instruments are; Hoey's (1991) Matrix of Lexical Cohesion and a Semi-structured Interview. The findings indicated that lexical repetition plays a great role in the unity and coherence of the students' written compositions. This research recommends that further research be conducted to investigate other types of dialogues.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most commonly used languages in the world in which learning English as a second or foreign language is very significant. English language is used by about 328 million speakers worldwide (Lewis, 2009). In fact, the significance of learning English language is highly emphasized throughout different cultures and array of people that make up our global speech community. English language, nowadays, is the key for participating in the global communication and creating a sphere for modern life. It has a dominant position in science including technology, medicine and computer. English is the most widely used language in sectors such as business, trade, diplomacy, international organizations and companies, mass media and journalism, sport and youth life, music, education systems and most importantly in foreign language teaching. It is through all the means above that English language has found its way into many cultures (Muggleston, 2006). In this connection, it is obvious that Arabic is the official language in Saudi Arabia where English is used as a foreign language for many purposes. English language in Saudi Arabia is commonly communicated in business, administrative, and political sectors and metropolitan sections of the country. It is sometimes informally spoken by the elite and educated populations throughout the country (Klebanov and Shamir 2006). But with regards to the academic environment in Saudi schools and universities, the significance of English language is limited to the process of enabling students to pass school exams and universities' entrance selection criteria. That is, teaching English as foreign language (EFL, hereafter) in Saudi Arabia has also undergone transformation just like other similar countries that consider the teaching of EFL as an educational and instrumental language that is necessary in all folks of life (Hyland, 2004b, 2004c).

Zheng (1999) demonstrates that learning the writing skill appears to be more protracted and stipulating compared to other language skills. So, the only motive for EFL students in different parts in the world to practice and exercise writing is to pass examination or to get a good grade in the writing class. Thus, this approach of students is to emphasise only on passing the examinations provides them no common sense of writing purpose. This results in the weakness and poor written academic literacy.

Research has shown that English as a foreign language learners face problems not only in learning new vocabulary, words, phrases, syntactic patterns, and phonology, but also in acquiring discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence (Diab, 1996). Consequently, the researcher concurs with different scholars such as Riggensbach (1999) who affirms that English as a foreign language learners should be given the prospect to investigate the systematicity of language at diverse levels including writing, particularly at the discursal level. Therefore, discourse analysis (DA, hereafter) as an approach had been established as more than a random set of utterances and displays interrelatedness (Sanders and Maat, 2001). Due to the relevance of writing skills to discourse analysis, varied models of discourse analysis have been proposed, outlined and evaluated in terms of discovering the connectedness of the text

(Tahaine, 2009). In other words, discourse analysis can be used to confirm word sets that not only concentrate on the target content vocabulary, but that can also be used to show how coherence, cohesion and unity are generated in the written text (Halliday and Hasan, 1989). Essentially, there are proposals that facilitate English language learners to write more successfully and consistently if they are assigned in different activities supported by varied learning writing strategies. Victori (1999) proposes that EFL students should be taught strategies relevant to their writing tasks such as planning, organizing ideas and evaluating the unity of the written. Another significant and successful strategy to develop students writing is revising accompanied by focus on issues such as idea elaboration, coherence and cohesion (Gunning, 2000).

Hoey (1991) criticizes the emphasis of most language learners and teachers on the mastery of sentence structure and grammar. He points out that this emphasis leads to the ignorance of discursive aspects, to little or no transfer to use in actual written composition with the effect that it might develop into an inhibiting rather than enhancing factor in a written text. In this relevance, coherence in English as a foreign language writing is defined as the organization of discourse with all elements presented and fit together logically (Hinkel, 2004). The concept of cohesion is more or less semantic. It associates with the interrelation of meaning that appears in the text, and that classifies it as a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Many researchers have indicated the importance of text cohesion stating that a text reveals as a text by means of unity and cohesion (Hinkel, 2004). Similarly, Cook (1989) notes that writing coherently in another language is a difficult task. It is, thus, essential that a clear description of cohesion at both the semantic and syntactical levels should be given to EFL learners (Morris and Hirst, 1991). In relation to this, the researcher believes that this advances the student's perception of cohesion and coherence and could lead to the enhancement in their written essays.

Hoey (1991) considers that Halliday and Hasan's (1976) study of cohesion, and other similar works. He argues that these studies "do not supply the whole answer to the question of how cohesion is interpreted" (P: 10-14). He also demonstrates that lexical cohesion is the most essential of all cohesion-creating devices in the area of discourse analysis. Thus, if some textual areas contain no repetition, reiteration or relexicalisation; then a learner is dealing with marginal sentences that should not be involved in written work. Consequently, relexicalisation is assumed to have a great contribution in written language dialogues. Under this perspective, relexicalisation items are characterized by their affinity to co-occur with other lexical items and meaning is concluded from the amalgamation of words (Dayrell, 2011).

their writing habits. Basic writers who deliberately learn to administer written patterns develop to be better writers (Gilbert, 1987). In the writing of students who are unfamiliar with the relexicalized patterns often become unintended sentence fragments (Hinkel, 2004). This research which adopts the discourse analysis perspective is concerned with lexical repetition and patterning at the discourse level unlike other studies which are more concerned with errors and cohesion at sentence level. Discourse analysis is unlike other approaches as it deals with sentences as a unit connected with a particular function within the entire linguistic context and not as a separate unit (Morris, &Hirst, 2004; Ferenz, 2005; Paltridge, 2006). It helps language teachers to understand the processes involved in learning English as a foreign language by providing them with the appropriate teaching techniques. Discourse analysis also considers the EFL students' writing difficulties and problems by proposing that the process of producing a written text is more than joining sentences to each other (Leki, 1995b).

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

English is taught in Saudi Arabia as a foreign language whereby language learners at colleges and universities are expected to learn all the language skills basically reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Paltridge, 2006). But, most of EFL learners face difficulties producing coherent and meaningful sentence when they attempt to produce any piece of writing. One of the major problems is to write cohesively. These students who have undergone many years of studying writing at university level are still incompetent and unable to write coherently and create unified written text. EFL teacher demonstrate that the most common problem that their students complain about the inability to create cohesive written texts. In this regard, the researchers aim to adopt Hoey's (1991) framework to investigate the relationship between writing and speaking skills as a case study of English as a foreign language students at the Department of Languages and Translation at the University Of Tabuk, KSA and put forward some recommendations and suggestions to enable university students in Saudi Arabia to improve their writing quality and speaking skill performance.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main goal of this research study is to acquire data on lexical repetition and written text's unity from gender perspective by 60 male and female students at the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk. In relation to this issue, this study aims to achieve the following objectives.

- i. To investigate the different kinds of lexical repetitions frequently used by male and female students in their written text.
- ii. To analyse how lexical repetition contribute towards the unity of students' written texts.
- iii. To examine the role of gender in using lexical repetition in written texts.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the objectives of this research study, the present study aims at addressing the following research questions:

- i. What are the different kinds of lexical repetitions frequently used by male and female students in their written text?
- ii. How does lexical repetition contribute towards the unity of students' written texts?
- iii. What is the role of gender in using lexical repetition in written texts?

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on linguistic issues at discourse level has developed rapidly over the past two decades. Investigation of cohesion and coherence relations in writing at discourse level is one of the more specific areas that have gained prominence (Wang, 1998; Hyland, 2004b, 2004c). This significance of such studies cannot be denied as linguistic knowledge can be a helpful insight to provide solutions to language based-problems (Mourtaga, 2004).

Bati (2012) conducted a study on relexicalisation that, as he asserted, intricately associated to the Kashmiri culture, and form a major portion of the Kashmiri cultural lexicon with reference to the categories as mentioned below: 1. Kinship terminology. 2. Modes of greetings. 3. Food. 4. Clothing. 5. Furnishing. 6 Structure of Houses. Bati asserted that relexicalisation is the process which signifies the process of language change. He states that there is a large list in the Kashmiri cultural lexicon consisting of new words and concepts that are used in place of the old ones. He found that Relexicalisation is an important process in the cultural lexicon of Kashmiri that helps to meet the challenges and demands of the contemporary times. The renamed (relexicalized) terms, as Bati (2012) mentioned in his study, make it possible to ease the way leading towards successful communication which was acceptable to the majority of people by avoiding obsolete terms and deficiencies. As a result for this study, Bati concluded that the process of relexicalisation had affected different spheres and a whole range of new terms had entered and enriched different spheres of culture. As was evident a good number of new terms had found place in food, clothing, greetings and kinship etc.

Kuciel, Ewa, Czaplak and Elzbieta (2013) conducted a study to investigate the development of relexicalisation as an aspect of discourse competence in advanced second language speech. So the main portion of this study was how relexicalisation, as an aspect of discourse competent of 13 advanced learners of English, developed over a period of three years of their tertiary education and what factors might have affected this process. The study was commenced in October 2004 and was completed in May 2007. The sample of the study was 13 students of English at an English language teacher training c. In this research they presented the results of the study into the development of relexicalisation as a group phenomenon. Relexicalisation increased from a low 0.00027 at the first measurement and reached the level 0.00045 at the final measurement. The analysis of relexicalisation development as observed in all the seven recordings provided interesting results and did indicate progression in the quality of relexicalising each other's content. This study also showed a clear link between L1 and L2 relexicalisation levels, which suggested that L1 relexicalisation, could positively enforce L2 relexicalisation. It had also indicated that interactive contact, preferably with authentic English, was strongly correlated with specific relexicalisation ratios. It could be concluded that individuals with high specific relexicalisation ratios were most likely to seek more interactive contact with authentic English. They asserted that these findings had strong teaching implication, as a proper determination of the relexicalisation ratio that could help teachers give their learners with lower relexicalisation ratios more opportunities for L2 authentic interactive contact. The results had also indicated that the quality of the students' relexicalisation deviated from the natural relexicalisation conventions. In the course of the study the students moved from just repeating their interlocutors' utterances to briefly accepting it and adding a new content element, without reiterating it. Even if attempts were made to replicate natural speaking conventions, classroom discourse often failed to pass the standard in terms of interaction structure, input provided, including the specific instructional language of the teacher. It had also been suggested that the language variation might result from institutional limitations of the classroom and its socio affective constraints.

Yet, it should also be realised that language production in the classroom, although mostly in authentic, would often vary from learner to learner, as it was dependent upon their individual differences, personality traits or adherence to L1 language habits.

Boshrabadi, Biria and Hodaieian (2014) conducted a contrastive analysis of the lexical cohesive devices enlisted in the psychological abstracts written by Persian and English writers. The sample of the study was 40 abstracts from Persian and English articles, 20 in each language, published in clinical psychology journals were randomly selected. The framework that was used in this study for analyzing lexical cohesion markers was derived from Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model. In this study, only five lexical cohesion devices were taken into consideration, i.e., Repetition (R), Synonymy (S), Antonymy (A), Hyponymy (H), and Collocation (C). The general findings drawn from this study were as follow: In English texts, the order of frequency in lexical cohesion devices was R, S, H, C, A, whereas in Persian texts it was R, S, C, H, A with descending percentages of occurrence, respectively. Both texts exhibited a general tendency towards the use of repetition more than the other devices; however, English texts were denser in this respect. Based on Chi-Square test, between lexical cohesion devices in both English and Persian texts, there was a statistically significant difference only in synonymy items, while among other devices no meaningful difference was perceived. In the final analysis, it can be particularized that repetition and synonymy were more frequent in English psychological texts than Persian ones, but the frequency of other lexical cohesion devices was almost the same for both text groups. In conclusion, the researcher agrees with the above discussed studies that cohesion is an important factor in textual organisation and comprehension. In addition, any kind of investigation should always start with lexical items as they contain the basic meaning in a written text (Lee, 1990). The researcher also observes that many research studies (Shakir, 1991; Jin, 1998; Teich and Fankhauser, 2003; Wong, 2004; Yanmin, Wang, and Guan, 2005; Klebanov and Shamir, 2006; Morris, 2007; MacMillan, 2007; Al Natsheh, 2008; Kai, 2008 and Csomay and Cortes, 2009) adopt both Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hoey's (1991) framework in their investigations of lexical cohesion and its contribution to the written text's overall cohesion. Although, there are many studies that investigated cohesion and coherence, no studies have so far examined the use of lexical repetition and patterning by EFL learners, particularly in a Jordanian context. In this regard, the present study adopts Hoey's (1991) framework of lexical cohesion to analyse the difficulties which Saudi EFL students face in producing coherent and meaningful written texts by investigating their use of lexical repetition and patterning. Since their use of lexical repetition and patterning plays a crucial part in establishing an overall coherent written text, the researcher wishes to conduct a detailed investigation on the use of simple lexical repetition, complex lexical repetition, simple lexical paraphrase (simple partial paraphrase and simple mutual paraphrase), superordinate, hyponymy, co-reference repetition, and other types of lexical repetitions (personal pronouns, administrative pronouns, and substitutions).

VI. THE RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study used both qualitative and quantitative designs to investigate the use of lexical repetition and patterning in written compositions produced by 60 male and female students at the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk for the academic year 2018/2019. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009:426) a case study research "is a qualitative research approach in which researchers focus on a unity of study known as a bounded system (e.g., individual teachers, a classroom, or a school)". In other words, it is an investigation of a phenomenon that occurs within a specific context that is bounded, identifiable and appropriately studied. The corpus was generated by the 4th year languages and translation students at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. Each student was required to write an essay between 200 to 250 words on "*English the Language of the Universe*". The selection of the 4th year students was motivated by the fact that they have completed their English language compulsory writing course. The total population of this study constituted one group comprising 60 (30 females and 30 males). All the students selected for the study are bilingual students (English and Arabic speakers). When this research study was conducted, the students had successfully completed their basic writing programme of EFL for three years as a compulsory subject as part of their B.A degree syllabus requirements. This study used a random sampling process to select the students. According to Gay and Airasian (2003:117) "all the individuals in the defined population have equal and independent chance of being selected". In order to achieve the objectives of the present research study, it was essential to employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The researcher used two instruments are Hoey's (1991) Matrix of lexical cohesion and the semi-structured interview methods.

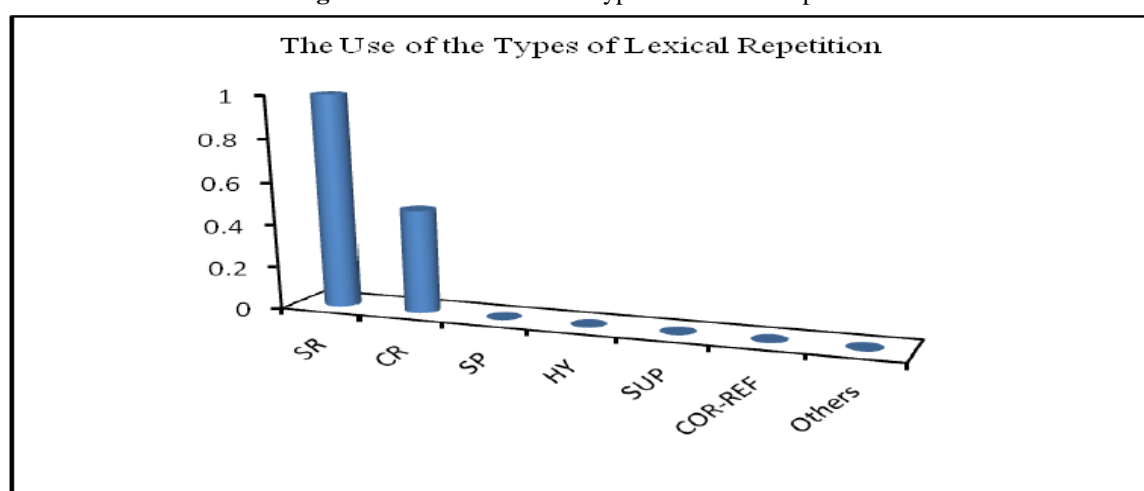
VII. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This study investigated 60 written texts produced by a group of Saudi EFL students at the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk. The data was analysed based on Hoey's (1991) framework of lexical repetition and patterning as used in the pilot study. The written compositions were labelled and word processed using simple quantitative description as T1 (Text1) until T60 (Text 60) as discussed in the

next section. The analysed data were converted into repetition matrices so that the lexical connections and links between sentences in the written text could be shown. The matrices are labelled as RMT1 until RMT60 (Repetition Matrix 1 until Repetition Matrix 60). These repetition matrices present the different kinds of lexical repetitions utilized by student writers throughout the written texts. They help to provide simple quantitative description of the lexical cohesive links found between sentences in the written texts. The findings and results of the analysis of the use of the different kinds of lexical repetitions in students' written texts showed that The study indicated that the 60 Jordanian English Language Literature students at Mu'tah University were able to use only two different types of lexical repetition in their written compositions. The most frequently used type of lexical repetitions is simple lexical repetition (**SR**). The percentage of the occurrence of this type of lexical repetition per written composition varied from the lowest 48.3 % as noted in written text 54 (T54) and 100% as observed in written compositions T17, T18,T25,T26,T29,T30,T36 and T37.

The second frequently used type of lexical repetition is complex lexical repetition (**CR**). An interesting point to note was the marked difference in terms of frequency of the use of complex lexical repetition in comparison to simple lexical repetition. Some compositions did not have even a single complex lexical repetition, thus, recording a 0% in its usage as observed in written compositions T18,T25,T26,T27,T29, T30,T36,T37,T47,T48,T49,T51,T56,T57, and T59. The highest percentage that was recorded for CR is 51.7% in text 54 (T54). Simple paraphrases (simple mutual paraphrase and simple partial paraphrase) were not used in any of the compositions. Their use recorded zero percent (0%) in all the 60 written compositions. Likewise, the findings showed that there was no occurrence (0%) of the other types of lexical repetitions such as simple paraphrase (**SMP, SPP**), hyponymy (**HY**), co-reference (**CO-REF**) and superordinate (**SUP**). To conclude, the use of the different kinds of lexical repetitions (SR and CR) that recorded presence in the students' written compositions varies from one student to another. The most frequently used type of lexical repetition (i.e. lexical repetition) that occurred in all the 60 written compositions is simple lexical repetition (SR). Although, the use of lexical repetition was somewhat limited, the researcher found out that whenever lexical repetition was used, the overall cohesion of the written compositions was much better. In other words, written compositions which contained a higher density of the lexical repetitions were more coherent and presented meaning more clearly than those which had a lower density of such repetitions. This finding is compatible with Zhu (2001), Miao (2002), Wong (2004) and Kai's (2008) claim that the frequency of simple lexical repetition is often more than complex lexical repetition or other types of lexical repetitions (SMP,SPP,HY,SUP,CO-REF) in written English texts created by ESL/EFL students. This suggests that students in this study tend to use simple lexical repetitions to compensate for their inadequate vocabulary and mastery of English. This was clear in their repetition of simple words that characterised their written products.

Figure 4.1: The Use of the Types of Lexical Repetition



In discussing the role of gender in using lexical repetitions, the findings of the study showed that 83% of the female students have an awareness about the significance of the use of lexical repetition and written texts that showed a high density of lexicality were produced by female students compared to 17% of the male student writers. The study concluded that there were different patterns of textual organization found in students' written texts. These patterns of textual organizations were the result of the lexical bondage brought about by the use of the different kinds of lexical repetition in the written texts produced by Saudi students at the University of Ttabuk.

The findings revealed that the presence and absence of any of the lexical repetitions or patterns of textual organization affected the overall unity of the written texts. Also, the findings revealed that a written text that possesses many marginal sentences did not provide a meaningful summary to the readers while a written text that had a high density of lexical bondage and central sentences provides its readers with a coherent and meaningful summary. For example, written texts such as T17 and T18 contained only marginal sentences became meaningless and incoherent to their readers because their sentences are lexically not connected with one another.

On the other hand, a written text which contained only one central sentence along with other lexically bonded sentences (Topic-opening and Topic-closing sentences) was able to provide the readers with a brief summary about the central theme of the topic. In other words, topic-opening and topic-closing sentences assisted in making a written text more coherent and meaningful particularly when the written text did not contain many central sentences. In addition, the findings of the study showed that the emergence of topic-opening and topic-closing sentences was associated with the emergence of central sentences in the written text. This suggests that topic-opening and topic-closing sentences did not appear in the written text if it did not have central sentences. For instance, T17 and T18 did not have central sentences in which it contained neither topic-opening nor topic-closing sentences. In brief, if a written text contained many central sentences, topic-opening and topic-closing sentences, it was deemed to have a higher density of overall cohesion. This was because the sentences and clauses across the written text were highly connected and bonded lexically with each other.

This makes a written text more coherent and meaningful to the reader. Based on the analysis, it could be summed up that the different kinds of lexical patterning (central, marginal, topic-opening and topic-closing) generated from students' use of lexical repetition were able to provide a coherent summary to the written compositions created by Saudi EFL students at the University of Tabuk.

In this regard, the findings of this study concur with Zhu (2001), Miao (2002), Wong (2004), Kai (2008) and Csomay's (2009) findings. The findings of their research showed that the presence and absence of the patterns of textual organisation affects the overall cohesion of the written text. They proposed that a written text is deemed coherent when it contains a high number of central sentences and incoherent when it has a high number of marginal sentences. They state that the presence of central, marginal, topic-opening and topic-closing sentences determines the unity and overall cohesion of a written text.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The sample size which includes 60 Saudi EFL students at the University of Tabuk and its selective nature may limit the generalizability of the results; therefore, the findings should be confirmed with a larger sample of participants. Also, it is important to confirm the results with different groups of students such as those with middle or lower language proficiency levels. In particular, the study would need to be extended to further validate its findings. Despite the limitations of this study, the findings suggest several directions to both applied linguists and education researchers. Firstly, the relation between the use of lexical repetition and patterning and the generic analysis of the EFL written compositions need further investigation and should be conducted on a larger-scale and in greater depth. Secondly, the findings shed more light on the nature of Saudi English Language and Literature students' writing and contribute to the ongoing study of EFL students' expository and academic writing as a whole. Thirdly, this study provides an alternative research area for lexical cohesion and lexis teaching and learning through using Hoey's (1991) discourse analysis approach in teaching writing to help EFL learners enhance their writing quality and skills. Fourthly, expository writing is one of the different types of writing that EFL students do that is prescribed as part of their English Language learning programmes. If lexical repetition and patterning was to be extended to EFL students at the universities, research is needed to determine if Hoey's (1991) model of lexical cohesion will be equally beneficial for other types of writing like descriptive, narrative, argumentative, reports and speeches. Further research will be helpful so that appropriate teaching writing strategies may be developed for different types of writing and incorporated into EFL students' learning programmes at university stage. This research provides informed guidelines to support EFL learners' learning process at university level in terms of their awareness of the importance of lexical repetition and patterning in the teaching and learning of writing. In addition, this study makes links between the writing curriculum and workplace writing demands (i.e., expression of idea, thoughts, values and opinions). This study reorganizes EFL learners' writing difficulties especially in the Saudi context. Formally incorporating lexical repetition and patterning into the syllabus, curriculum specifications and textbooks will help EFL teachers and learners to cope with the much needed paradigm shift in teaching writing in an EFL context and to initiate the desired changes in classroom practices. Based on this, curriculum specifications should include specific learning output, which emphasise the use of lexical repetition and patterning for better writing quality that need to be achieved by EFL students. The writing syllabus at university level should adopt Hoey's (1991) model as an alternative method for teaching writing. Also, shifts in the teaching of writing in an EFL context must take place and change should start with language teachers where observations should be conducted in the classroom setting. In other words, Saudi EFL teachers and students need to involve teaching lexical repetition and patterning in their classes.

IX. CONCLUSION

This research has documented the findings of this study and proposed that Hoey's (1991) model of lexical repetition and patterning can be an alternative method of teaching writing to EFL learners. This means, EFL teachers and learners can benefit and adopt Hoey's (1991) model in teaching writing within a classroom setting. Implementing Hoey's (1991) method of lexical cohesion in an EFL context can provide teachers and learners with knowledge and awareness of how lexical repetition and patterning work as cohesive devices by lexically connecting and bonding sentences and clauses together across a written text. In addition, it is another method to enhance and develop vocabulary and lexis teaching through the use of forms or complexity of vocabulary instead of using traditional methods of teaching lexis. Hoey's (1991) model of lexical cohesion can be a helpful method in teaching EFL learners on how to the different kinds of lexical repetition to bring about textual organization that results in the overall cohesion of the written text.

Also, language teachers and instructors will be able to provide their constructive comments as whether their students' writing quality is high or low by evaluating the use of the lexical patterns and bondage. Using Hoey's (1991) model helps EFL teachers judge whether their students' writings are coherent or incoherent by marking the use of lexical links among sentences across a written text. Thus, language learners and teachers should provide enough attention to the use of lexical cohesion (lexical repetition and patterning) especially in teaching writing in an EFL context. To sum up, this research study also provided recommendations to EFL material writers and textbook designers to include lexical repetition and patterning in teaching writing in an EFL context.

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