

Grammatical Cohesion in Teacher Trainees' Argument Essay: A Linguistics Analysis of Argument essay of a Private College of Education in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study examines grammatical cohesion in teacher trainees' argument essay. Twenty scripts of teacher trainees' argument essay were purposely selected from a total of hundred essays which were assessed by two inter-raters and used as data for the study. The study basically applied a qualitative method of analysis to the data. The theoretical framework that underpins the study is Halliday and Hasan's (1976) influential theory of cohesion in English. Three major findings were made. First, teacher trainees frequently use reference and conjunctions to achieve coherence in their argument essay. Second, a good quality essay cannot be judged on the number of cohesive markers present, linguistic features such as grammatical rules of concord and verb tense are equally important. The study further showed that the least used cohesive devices are substitution and ellipsis. The findings of this study have implications for pedagogy and further research.

Key words: *cohesion, coherence, teacher trainees, argument essay, grammatical cohesion*

1.0 Introduction

In recent times, most linguists of non African setting have shown considerable interest in exploring how cohesion is achieved in undergraduate students' essays. The essays produced by teacher trainees who will in no time become professional teachers have received very little attention. For this reason, this study is undertaken to widen the scope of cohesion in African settings by considering how teacher trainees achieve cohesion in their argument essay. Again, this study hopes to find the types of grammatical cohesive devices frequently employed by teacher trainees to achieve cohesion in their essays. It is also interested in finding out whether a high quality essay can be determined by the frequent use of cohesive markers. Most studies on cohesion in students' essays indicated that the frequency of cohesive markers used in an essay is not a reliable indicator of a high quality essay. (Meisuo, 2000; Liu, 2005; Alarcon and Morales, 2011). The present study equally hopes to confirm or rebuff such a finding more especially in a situation where teacher trainees are not undergraduate students. This study will finally look for the least frequent use of grammatical cohesive markers in the teacher trainees' argument essay.

Issues involving texts and meaning are very important because if a text is made up of unrelated sentences it becomes very difficult for a reader/hearer to make meaning from it. A reader will feel very uncomfortable with a text that has no meaning. Making meaning out of a text depends on some linguistic factors one of which is cohesion. Cohesion and coherence are technical issues that contribute to the meaning of a text.

A text is created through spoken or written discourse. This makes spoken and written discourse very crucial more importantly; the written. The written discourse in particular plays a significant role in academia. This is because one has to read what is written to acquire knowledge. Knowledge is further disseminated through writing of journal articles, proposals, term papers, scientific reports, theses and dissertations. In the universities for instance, first year students are taken through a course in writing to equip them with skills of writing after they had been taken through thirteen years of schooling at both the basic and secondary level learning how to put ideas together in writing. At the colleges of

education in Ghana too, teacher trainees are taken through courses in English to help them develop their skills of writing. This shows that the written discourse plays a very significant role in academia.

A study that considers cohesion in students writing is very important. This is because it will bring to bear whether teacher trainees understand the concept of cohesion and know how to achieve it in their essays or not. The study will also help teachers of English at the colleges of education to evaluate or assess the writing quality of their students.

2.0 Research Questions

This paper hopes to find answers to the following questions.

1. Which grammatical cohesive markers are employed in teacher trainees' argument essay?
2. Can the frequent use of grammatical cohesive markers determine a high quality essay and vice versa?
3. What are the least grammatical cohesive markers used in teacher trainees' argument essays?

3.0 Theoretical Background

Various studies have been undertaken on cohesion in undergraduate students' essays. Some of the studies show interest in expository writing of students (Johnson, 1992; Zhang, 2000), others also express interest in comparing cohesive markers identified in good quality essays and poor quality ones. (Meisuo, 2000; Choic, 2005). There are quite a number of studies that have been undertaken on cohesion in undergraduate' essays but before some of these are reviewed there are certain concepts that need to be explained. These concepts are text, cohesion, coherence and cohesive ties.

A text is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976:1) as "any passage, spoken or written of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. A text can also be a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit like a clause or a sentence and it is not defined by its size...

A text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning.” A text is not a grammatical unit like a phrase or a clause or even a sentence. It is a supersentence. A text can even be less than one sentence in the grammatical structure. Such structures may be warnings, titles and inscriptions and advertising slogans yet they constitute a text.

Indeed, a text must have texture. If a text does not have texture it refuses to be regarded as such. A passage which is more than a sentence is perceived to contain linguistic elements that give the text its texture. One of such linguistic elements is cohesion.

Cohesion is “a semantic property.” It occurs when the semantic interpretation of some linguistic element in the discourse depends on another. Connor (1990) defines cohesion as “the use of explicit cohesive devices that signals relations among sentences and parts of text.”

Coherence is another technical term that is used alongside cohesion but coherence has to do with readers’ evaluation of a text. According to Halliday and Hasan (ibid) coherence may be dependent on external factors such as the background of the reader and the context of situation. Coherence is a mental creation of meaning relations during text processing. Mc Cagg (1990) explains coherence as “an aspect of comprehension that is established in the mind of the reader as a result of perception of relatedness among texts propositions and between the text and the knowledge that the reader possesses of the world.” Berman and Slobin (1994) further explain coherence as “a plot motivated by over all structure or plan on the macro level.” Fitzgerald and Spiegel (1990) also view coherence as “an overall discourse level property that makes a text hold together.” According to Abusaeedi (2010), coherence is “a feature of the whole communication process and involves the writer, the subject, the text and the reader.”

Certain linguistics elements in a text provide the texture of the text. These linguistic elements are referred to as cohesive device/ markers. Cohesive devices are explained by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) as “formal elements in a text that function to make links between the components of the text.” Cohesive ties as explained by Halliday and Hasan

(1976:3) may share some common characteristics with cohesive devices. While cohesive devices are the physical elements that hold the text together, cohesive ties go beyond cohesive elements and include that which is presupposed by it. A tie according to Halliday and Hasan (ibid: 328) is best interpreted as “a relational concept. It is also directional.” A tie can be remote or immediate.

Halliday and Hasan (ibid: 303) identified five major divisions of cohesive devices in English. These are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction are the types of grammatical cohesion; while reiteration and collocation are grouped under lexical cohesion. Reiteration has four sub divisions. These are same word (repetition), synonyms (or near synonym), super-ordinate and general word. These various classifications are suggested as a framework. Hence, a text can have texture based on two broad cohesive devices, namely: grammatical and lexical cohesion. The succeeding paragraphs explain the components of grammatical cohesion.

Reference is a grammatical cohesion which normally points specifically at something that is referred to. According to Baker (2007:181), “reference is traditionally used in semantics for the relationship which holds between a word and what it points to in the real world.” He further points out that reference in Halliday and Hasan’s (1976:30) model of cohesion is used in a restricted way. This is because in the ordinary semantic meaning, reference means to point to extra linguistic items in the world. For instance, if ‘a lion’ is mentioned, one will be compelled to look for all those large, strong, flesh- eating animals found in Asia and Africa. Thakur (2007:13-14). But reference, in the model of cohesion, denotes a direct relationship of identity which holds between two linguistic expressions. According to Baker (ibid.), reference “is a device which allows the reader/hearer to trace participants, entities, events, etc. in a text.” He explains further that reference in the textual rather than the semantic sense, occurs when the reader has to retrieve the identity of what is being talked about by referring to another expression in the immediate context and Halliday and Hasan (ibid: 31) add that “the resulting cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time.” The following example will to help clarify the meaning of reference.

Annabel is a doctoral student in the Department of English. She has decided to publish a lot of articles in her research area.

In the above text, the pronouns *she* and *her* refer back to *Annabel* within the text.

Reference is divided into three broad categories. These are personal, demonstrative and comparative reference. Each of these has subcategories. The personal reference for example, has three subcategories. These comprises personal pronouns; *I, me, you, we, us, him, her, he, she, it(s), they, them*; personal determiners and relative pronouns. Demonstrative reference is made up of determiners; *the, this, there, that, those*; and demonstrative adverbs have *here, then, there* as its members. Comparative reference is subcategorized into two. These are comparative adjectives such as *same, identical, equal, other, different, more, better, etc.* and comparative adverbs such as *similarly, differently, more, less, etc.* Halliday and Hasan (ibid: 274-292).

Reference could be homophoric (general knowledge), exophoric (situational) and endophoric (textual). Endophoric reference comprises anaphoric and cataphoric. Anaphoric reference is where we have a backward reference in the text, while cataphoric reference is a forward reference. The following sentences are examples of anaphoric and cataphoric references.

1. Here is Barbie, she likes playing with toys.
2. They have gone to America, the Smiths.

In sentence 1, *she* in the second part of the sentence is making reference back to *Barbie* in the first part. *She* is an anaphoric reference. But in sentence 2, *The Smith* is a forward reference to *they* in the first part of the sentence. This type of reference is cataphoric. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), it is the endophoric reference which creates cohesion, because the endophoric ties provide the internal texture of the text. Homophoric and exophoric reference contribute to the text's situational coherence.

According to Halliday and Hasan, (1976: 88) "substitution and ellipsis can be thought of as processes within the text: substitution is the replacement of one item by another and

ellipsis is the omission of an item.” Substitution and ellipsis involve the same process but the mechanisms involved in the two are different. Baker (2007) points out that there is no clear cut distinction among reference, substitution and ellipsis. Halliday and Hasan (ibid: 90) give a detail explanation to indicate that there are differences among the three. “Reference is basically a non-verbal relation and may point in any direction, and pointing to the preceding text is only one of the possibilities. Substitution on the other hand, is a verbal relation and is essentially confined to the text.” Substitution is a grammatical relation, a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning. Substitution is classified based on the grammatical function of the substitute item. Three types of substitution were identified. These are nominal, verbal and clausal. The following is a short list explaining the various types of substitution. Nominal: *one, ones, same*; Verbal: *do*; Clausal: *so, not*

1. I have been using this laptop for long; I think I need a new one. (*One* replaces *laptop*)
2. Did John write the letter? He might have done. (*Done* replaces *write the letter*).
3. Do you need a lift? If so, wait for me; if not, I’ll see you there. (*So* and *not* can each replace *you need a lift*).
4. Mary chose the roast beef; I chose the same. (*The same* replaces *the roast beef*).

An ellipsis, on the other hand, is explained by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 142) as “substitution by zero. It is something left unsaid.” Again, an elliptical item is one which as it were leaves specific structural slots to be filled from elsewhere. The difference between substitution and ellipsis is that in substitution, there is an ‘explicit counter’ like *one, do, and same* as place-markers for what is presupposed, but in ellipsis, nothing is inserted into the slot, hence, ellipsis is regarded as substitution by zero. The following are examples of ellipted items in some sentences.

1. Mary bought some toffees and Catherine some apples. (ellipted item: *bought* in second clause).
2. Those are the books. Take any. Now give me any three. (ellipted item: *books* after *any* in second clause and *books* after *any three* in third clause).

3. Have you been learning? – Yes, I have. (ellipted item: *been learning* in the second clause).

Ellipsis just like substitution has three main divisions. These are nominal verbal and clausal ellipsis.

Conjunction is the last type of grammatical cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976:226) claim that “conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or the following) but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.” Mc Carthy (1997:46) shares a similar view. To him, “a conjunction does not set off a search backward or forward for its referent but it does presuppose a textual sequence and signals a relationship between segments of the discourse.” Halliday (1985: 302-309) offers a scheme for the classification of conjunctive relations. The main relations are summarized below, with examples of conjunctions which can or typically realize each relation.

a. additive: *and, or, also, in addition, furthermore, besides, similarly, likewise, nor, else, or, or else, etc.*

b. adversative: *yet, though, only, but, however, and, despite this, instead, in any case, while, anyhow, at any rate, in fact, nevertheless, etc.*

c. causal: *so, then, hence, therefore, consequently, because of this, for this reason, as a result, on account of this, in consequence, for this purpose, with this in mind, etc.*

d. temporal: *then, next after that, just then, finally, at last, at first, in the end, at once, thereupon, soon, after a time, next time, on another occasion, in conclusion, hitherto, at this point, to sum up, in short, briefly, to resume, to return to the point, etc.*

It can be observed from the above that some of the examples sometimes appear under different sub categories. *Then* for example, is both a causal and temporal. What it therefore means is that it is not enough to attach these words to a particular category. It will be

equally important to consider the function of such words in the structure. In functional grammar, the form of the word cannot be used as the only criterion to determine usage. There is always the need to consider the function and meaning in addition to the form.

When students write an argument essay, they try to express their opinion on an issue that is put on board for discussions. An argument essay has been defined by argument theorists. Wood (2009:5) defines an argument essay as “making a claim (expressing a point of view on an issue that is communicated by the arguer) and supporting it with reasons and evidence to convince an audience to change the way they think about the issue.” Anker (2007: 220-221) also defines an argument essay as “writing that takes a position on an issue and gives supporting evidence to persuade someone else to accept or at least consider, the position.” According to Rottenberg (1988:5), “argumentation is the art of influencing others, through the medium of reasoned discourse, to believe or act as we wish them to believe or act.” These definitions given above indicate that two parties are involved in an argument essay; the writer and the reader. The writer has the responsibility of convincing his readers and the readers equally have to decide whether to agree or disagree with the writer. How the writer selects his words to make the reader convince is very important in this study.

3.1 Review of Some Related Studies

This aspect of the literature discusses some related studies that have been undertaken by some scholars. Studies in cohesion mostly show interest in analyzing expository, narrative, descriptive or argumentative essay of undergraduate students. Field and Oi (1992) in Alarcon and Morale (2011:116) conducted a research which sought to compare conjunctive cohesive devices used in argumentative essays of three groups of Cantonese L2 speakers of English and L1speakers. They also compared the use of internal conjunctive cohesion (ICC) within the text. Their result indicated that the ICC’s were found in initial paragraph position and initial sentence position. The ICC’s were also classified according to Halliday and Hasan’s category of conjunctions. Thus, they grouped the conjunctions based on additive, adversative, causal and temporal. Their result indicated that Cantonese L2 speakers used significantly more cohesive devices than L2 speakers of English.

Johnson (1992) examined cohesion in expository essays written in Malay and in English by native speakers of both languages. Sample essays were evaluated holistically by Malaysian teachers and American teachers of native and non-native speakers of English. It was found that there are no differences between cohesive devices used by good and weak essays.

Palmer (1999) conducted a study on 'Coherence and Cohesion in a Language Classroom.' The purpose of his study was to analyze the way non-native English Language students create coherent texts. One of his findings was that lexical reiteration is often used by non-native speakers of English in order to create coherent texts.

Meisuo (2000) just like Johnson (1992) also conducted a study on cohesion in expository essays of Chinese students. One of the aims was to find whether the qualities of good essays can be judged based on the number of cohesive ties used. He found that there was no significant relationship between the number of cohesive ties used and the quality of writing. The finding seems to suggest that the number of cohesive ties used may not be a reliable indicator of the quality of essays. Indeed several studies have confirmed a similar finding. Alarcon and Morale (2011) outline a number of studies that confirmed such a finding. (Tierney and Mosenthal, 1983;

Connor, 1984; Allard and Ulatowska, 1991 and Karasi, 1994).

There are quite a number of studies which used argument essay as data. Liu (2005) analyzed fifty argument texts to find if the frequency of cohesive devices used by Chinese students in their argument essays tally with the quality of essays. The finding indicated that there was correlation between the frequency of cohesive devices and high quality essays. This means that high quality essays use more cohesive devices and vice versa.

Another study that shows interest in cohesion in undergraduate argumentative essay is Alarcon and Morales' (2011) "Grammatical Cohesion in Students' Argumentative Essay." In their study they set out to find grammatical cohesive devices used by undergraduate students. They also set out to find whether there is a relationship between the number of cohesive devices and the quality of writing. The study indicated that undergraduate

students use certain cohesive types to assist them in the argumentation process. The demonstrative reference and conjunctions were frequently used by undergraduate students in their argument essay.

To sum up, the review of related studies have indicated that Halliday and Hasan's (1976) influential theory of cohesion in English has been extensively used in many studies across the world but in Africa and Ghana in general, there seems to be a little attention drawn to it. In Ghana for instance, it is Afful and Nartey (2014) and a few others who have worked on cohesion in undergraduate dissertations. That notwithstanding, studies which explore cohesion in teacher trainees' essays have been under-researched. For this reason, the current study is undertaken to fill the gap which has been created.

4.0 Research Design

This study employs purely a qualitative approach to the analysis of teacher trainees' argument essay. Qualitative method of analysis was used because the research questions are tilted towards more of a qualitative study than a quantitative. It does not call for a frequency count or a statistical analysis to identify the types of cohesive markers employed in an essay. Again, in looking for features of a high quality essay, one has to consider the structure of the language used. Thus, a systematic, disciplined and transparent approach was used. Punch (2003:200).

Out of a hundred teacher trainees' argument essay, twenty were purposely selected after the scripts had been assessed by two inter-raters. The reason for using purposive sampling technique was to ensure that the scripts which were rated high quality and poor quality could be used as corpus for the study. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of grammatical cohesion was used for the analysis of the data.

4.1 Data Collection

Two classes, each made up fifty teacher trainees were assigned to write argument essay on any of the three topics below. The teacher trainees were asked to turn in their scripts within a period of two weeks which they did.

1. Write an argument for/against the motion that government bursary (allowances) given to teacher trainees should be reintroduced.
2. Teachers are to blame for the poor performance of pupils in basic school level in Ghana. Write your argument in favour or against the motion.
3. There has been recent increase in tariffs on utilities (electricity, water, petroleum products etc. in Ghana.) Are you in favour of this issue? Write an argument essay explaining why you are in agreement or not.

4.2 Data Analysis

After the hundred scripts had been rated by the inter-raters, twenty scripts, which consisted of ten high quality and 10 poor ones were purposely sampled and coded. The purpose of the coding was to help distinguish each of the essays from the other and to index the data (Punch 2003:206). Sentences in each script were sequentially assigned numerical values. The number of cohesive markers identified in each sentence was identified and noted and grouped under reference (personal, demonstrative and comparative), substitution, ellipsis and conjunction (additive, adversative, temporal and clausal)

I present the analysis of the data in the succeeding paragraphs. The scripts analyzed have not been edited. The analysis is done based on the research questions. The first research question was to find the types of cohesive markers used by teacher trainees in their argument essay. The analysis indicated that most of them used the following cohesive markers.

A. Reference

Teacher trainees preferred to use the demonstrative reference to achieve cohesion in their argument essay. Most of them make use of the definite article, *the*. It is sometimes used to point at a referent fully specified by the context. At other times too, it is used to refer to something the writer thinks everybody knows and as such does not have any linkage or physical manifestation in the text. In such cases the item in question is just

specific and identifiable. The following are examples of how the demonstrative reference was used in their argument essay.

Example1: Mr. Chairman, I will stand for **the** motion why it is important for government bursary to be reintroduced. (Script A, sentence1).

Example2: To begin with, I think **the** government bursary should be reintroduced. (Script A, sentence3).

In example1, the definite article has no referent in the text. It is used to point at something the teacher trainee/ writer thinks readers have a prior knowledge or general knowledge. Halliday and Hasan refer to this type of reference as exophoric. In example 2, **the**, is used to point at a referent in the text. The writer had earlier on mentioned *government* as a referent in the preceding sentence. The succeeding sentence is introduced by the definite article to specify *government*. The type of reference used in this structure is what Halliday and Hasan refer to as endophoric. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 51, 83), "It is only the anaphoric type of reference that is relevant to cohesion since it provides a link with the preceding portion of the text." It therefore presupposes that a text which makes frequent use of exophoric reference is not coherent. The analysis indicated that the majority of the teacher trainees used the demonstrative reference, *the* in the anaphoric sense.

Apart from the recurrent use of the demonstrative reference, teacher trainees equally made use of personal reference. The following are the personal pronouns that were used; *it, we, you, they, them, etc.* These items were used anaphorically. The following are examples of how personal pronouns were used in their essays.

Example 3: To begin with, some parents surprisingly neglect or just leave **their** children to do

whatever **they** like.(Script I, Sentence8).

Example 4: In an examination for instance, when **a student** is prepared, **he** or **she** does not find any difficulty in answering questions. (Script J, sentence 14).

In example 3, the possessive determiner, *their*, makes reference back to *parents*, while the third person plural, *they*, refers back to *children*. In example 4, the personal pronouns, *he* and *she* refer back to *a student* previously mentioned in the text. It can be observed that the use of the personal pronouns by the teacher trainee is to avoid repetition of the same item. If the referent *children* had been repeated, it would have made the structure redundant but as the pronoun, *they*, was used, it made meaning simple. It can also be observed that hardly do teacher trainees make forward reference. This is in tandem with Afful and Nartey's (2014:100) study on "cohesion in undergraduates' abstracts" even though the content of an abstract is quite different from that of argument essay.

Another observation that was made is that teacher trainees regularly made use of the demonstrative reference *this*, *that*, *those* and *these*. Indeed, these were recurrent in teacher trainees' argument essays. The following are examples of how the teacher trainees used the demonstrative reference to achieve coherence in their argument essay.

Example1: That money that will be given to the teacher trainees as allowance could be used to reduce persistent increase in the utility of tariff. (Script D, sentence12).

Example 2: Most teachers go to the class with the aim of teaching to the understanding of some particular **students**. **These** students are considered as brilliant.... (Script J, sentence17).

Example 3: To my opposers how can **this** school compete with other schools in B.E.C. E.? (Script G, sentence18).

In example1, the teacher trainee made use of the demonstrative reference *that* as a qualifier to refer to an entity that is not near to him but had earlier on been mentioned. *These*, in example 2, is the plural of a referent that is near to the writer. In example 3 on the other hand, the demonstrative reference *this* is used to point back at an entity that had already been mentioned and is near to the writer. There were cases where teacher trainees wrongly used the demonstrative reference *this* and *these*. The analysis showed that some of the teacher trainees seem to have least knowledge in the uses of the demonstratives and will need a remediation class to help them learn.

B. Conjunctions

Another cohesive device that was persistently used was the additive conjunctions. The commonly used are *and, furthermore, in addition to, or, also, moreover, etc.* In the case of Alarcon and Morales' (2011:124) study, only a few of the additive conjunctions were used by their respondents but in the current study, there were several varieties used. Conjunctions, according to Halliday and Hasan (ibid;226) are different in nature from reference, substitution

and ellipsis. "Conjunctions are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly by virtue of their specific meaning." They act as signpost. For instance, the presence of the additive conjunctions shows that new information is added. On the other hand, the presence of the adversative is an indication of a counter idea expressed in the essay. In most cases, it was observed that the use of the temporal conjunctions was preferable to additive conjunctions. This means that some of the temporal conjunctions can perform the function of the additive conjunctions. Temporal conjunctions such as *to begin with* and *first* were preferred by teacher trainees' as their point of departure. They proceeded with, *second(ly), another reason is, in addition to the above, apart from that* to indicate they were adding new information to the stated one. The temporal conjunctions were also used to conclude their essays. The following were used to indicate that they were ending their essays; *in conclusion, in sum, to sum up, all in all, finally, etc.* The following are some examples to illustrate how additive and temporal conjunctions were used in teacher trainees' argument essay.

Example 1: In addition, the fact remains that the allowance assists trainees in college. (Script C, sentence 6).

Example 2: Furthermore, when it is re-introduced, it will enhance bribery and corruption since more people will prefer it to the universities. (Script D, sentence7).

Example 3: To begin with, most teachers show up lazy attitude towards work. (Script T, sentence 6).

Example 4: Apart from that low investment will result due to persistent increase in tariffs. (Script F, sentence 8).

It can be observed that the teacher trainees seem to have an in depth knowledge in the use of the additive and temporal conjunctions. In examples 1 and 2, the additive conjunctions are used to show that the teacher trainees are adding new points to the stated ones while in example 3, the temporal conjunction *to begin with* is initiating a point and in example 4, *apart from that* is also a temporal conjunction used to indicate that a new idea is going to be added.

C. Substitution and Ellipsis

Substitution and ellipsis were barely used in teacher trainees' argument essays. It was just on one occasion that a teacher trainee made use of an elliptical structure. The example below illustrates the use of substitution as a cohesive device in teacher trainees' argument essay.

Example 1: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the introduction of allowances to teacher trainees did contribute in meeting the academic material needs of a lot of students and will continue to contribute to their needs, if re-introduced. (Script C, sentence8).

In the example above, the conditional clause *if re-introduced*, has some parts ellipted. Halliday and Hasan refer to this kind of ellipsis as nominal ellipsis. The part of the sentence that is omitted in the conditional clause is *the allowance* which is a noun phrase, hence, referred to as a nominal ellipsis. A probable interpretation why the use of substitution and ellipsis is barely used is that according to Halliday and Hasan, substitution and ellipsis are mostly used in spoken discourse and in dialogues. This makes this finding unsurprising because it corroborates with what the propunders had earlier on observed.

Another question which the current study hopes to find answers is whether the number of cohesive markers present in an essay can be used as a criterion to determine a high/ good quality essay. The analysis conspicuously points out that other linguistic determinants must be considered. The linguistic determinants that were noticed as crucial are grammatical and verb tense rules of the language. The rules of grammar range from

observing concord/ subject-verb agreement rules and selecting the appropriate punctuation marks. The application of cohesive markers in an essay is the one and most important of the characteristics of a good quality essay.

The analysis showed that in most cases both good and poor quality essays frequently employ cohesive devices. In both good and poor quality essays, teacher trainees misused some of the demonstrative reference (*this, these*). The following examples show how some of teacher trainees used *this* and *these*.

Example 1: Mr. Chairman, I believe with **this reasons**, I think the government bursary should be re-introduced. (Script A, sentence11).

Example 2: When **this things** happen there will be a lot... (Script M, sentence 9).

Example 3: In addition to **these** is unemployment... (Script F, sentence 9).

In examples 1and2, the demonstrative determiner *this* has been wrongly used with plural nouns *reasons* and *things* respectively. In example 3 on the other hand, *these* is wrongly used because the teacher trainee had earlier on stated just a point and was adding a second. Here, the misuse of the demonstrative reference *this* has concurrently resulted in concord problem. The singular determiner *this* has selected plural nouns *reasons* and *things* in each of the sentences. The singular determiner *this* in examples 1 and 2 should have selected the singular nouns *reason and thing* in each case. The following examples further add to cases where concord rules were flouted by some of the teacher trainees.

Example 1: The **student** in this case **do** not get the real facts needed. (Script J, sentence 16).

Example 2: When a teacher trainee reports to school late, **the classes hours begins** without a teacher.... (Script J, sentence9).

In example1, the singular subject *student* should have selected a singular verb *does* but the plural verb *do* is opted for, hence, there is no application of the rule of concord. In example 2, the plural subject that introduces the second part of the sentence, *classes hours*, is expected to select a plural verb *begin* but the singular verb *begins* was chosen.

There were quite a number of sentences that were structurally ambiguous. The following are some ambiguous sentences that were used by the teacher trainees in their argument essay.

Example 1: Also when re-introduced, the teachers will benefit from the allowance greatly. (Script T, sentence 10).

Example 2: There are many schools in Accra whereby the children are sitting four on one desk in a class. (Script G, sentence13).

In example 1, the subject is missing in the first part of the sentence. The subject in the second part is not the appropriate subject and it makes the sentence ridiculous. The sentence has two interpretations. First, *the teachers are going to re-introduce the allowance*. Second, *the teachers are going to benefit greatly*. The ambiguity in the structure is caused by the choice of a wrong subject by the writer. In example 2, the modifier *in a class* has been misplaced, making the structure ambiguous. Readers can make two interpretations out of such construction. The first interpretation is that *in some schools in Accra, there is only one desk in a class and four children sit on it*. The second interpretation is that *in some schools in Accra, each class has several desks but four children sit on one*. The teacher trainees might have not received enough tuition on ambiguity thus, leading to such constructions. A remediation class on ambiguity for them will be very useful.

The analysis once again indicated that some of the teacher trainees have problems with verb tense. By verb tense, we are referring to the various forms the verb takes. Normally, English has two tense forms of the verb; the present and the past. It was found that sometimes it becomes difficult for teacher trainees to identify when to use the present and the past tense. The following are some of the sentences they constructed to show that they seem to lack understanding in the choice of the present and past tense markers.

Example 1: When the allowance is re-introduce... (Script G,sentence 9).

Example 2: But if they are allow to..... (Script O, sentence8).

Example 3: I will be very happy if you get the chance to watched TV3 news last Monday. (Script I, sentence14).

In examples 1 and 2, the copula verbs *is* and *are* are preceded by lexical verbs which are in the present tense. The lexical verbs *re-introduce* and *allow* should have been in the past (*re-introduced* and *allowed*) instead of the present form thus, making the sentence faulty. In example 3, the infinitive *to*, always takes a present verb whether the structure is in the present or past form but here, the verb following the infinitive is in the past and this makes the sentence faulty. A probable cause of this problem might be a transfer of knowledge from mother tongue (L1) to English (L2). This is because the L1 of Ghanaians especially, Akan (Niger-Kongo, Kwa branch) , when one is reporting what has happened in the past, the past verb is used and vice versa but English does not follow such a rule. The teacher trainees might have transferred their knowledge in L1 to L2.

A common observation that was recurrent in the scripts was the use of long sentences that lack meaning. There were cases where some sentences ranged from forty to sixty. The following are examples of long sentences used by teacher trainees in their argument essays.

Example 1: Mr. Chairman, what my opponent have spelled out above, I disagree because in the situation where students are not ready to learn/undertake any classroom activities such as class exercises and tests which give almost fifty percent of the total score will result in poor academic performance. (Script H, sentence 6).

Example 2: What can you expect such a student to do, definitely the person in question wouldn't be able to perform or do well in school, because instead of learning, reading note or studying, he'll be watching unproductive programmes till late and would even be sleeping in class which of course would result in poor academic performance, which doesn't come from the teacher. (Script I, sentence 13).

In example 1, the sentence is made up of 47 words. The nature of the sentences was such some modifiers which should be closed to their heads were misplaced. Other times, some parts of the sentences have no headwords and are dangling. These made their long

sentences meaningless. In example 1, the teacher trainee has put three ideas in one but these are not well communicated in the sentence. In example 2, the sentence is made up of 60 words. The ideas are compressed thus, making it difficult for a reader to comprehend. The attitude of developing long sentences that are not meaningful should be discouraged because it does not help readers.

There were several cases where many simple words were wrongly spelt. Some of the words are, whiles (while), agains (against), blaim (blame), deside (decide), increasement (increment), found (fond), rivise (revise), praiz (praise), etc. It becomes difficult to understand why such blunders should be committed. There is the need for the teacher trainees to take their lessons in English seriously. Teachers of English can spend the few minutes of the instruction hours to conduct dictation for the teacher trainees to improve on their spellings. Even though this study is not an error analysis, the misspellings were very prominent that the analyst could not just gloss over them.

From the forgoing discussions, it is obvious that a good quality essay does not depend on the large number of cohesive markers used. This is evident from the fact that there were both good and poor quality essays that made preponderance use of cohesive markers. This finding confirms what Halliday and Hasan (1976:298) had earlier on established; “cohesion is a necessary

condition though not a sufficient condition for the creation of text.” The study has clearly pointed out that a good quality essay should not singlehandedly be judged on the number of cohesive markers used. Other linguistic features such as grammatical rules of concord and verb tense figured prominently in the analysis.

5.0 Conclusions and Implications

This study sought to find the types of grammatical cohesive markers used in teacher trainees’ argument essay. The study has clearly pointed out that teacher trainees make extensive use of reference and conjunctions to achieve cohesion in their argument essay. It also tried to find if the number of grammatical cohesive markers used in argument essay of teacher trainees determines a high quality essay. The analysis once again has proved that

the use of cohesive markers is just one of the indicators of the qualities of a good essay. High quality essays depend on observing the rules of grammar of the language as well as applying the appropriate tense forms of the verb in construction of sentences. A common problem that ran through most of the scripts was the use of long sentences which are not meaningful and such created comprehension problems.

One significant thing that this study has pointed out is that both undergraduate students and teacher trainees use varieties of cohesive markers to achieve cohesion in their argument essay but in the case of the teacher trainees certain linguistic features figured out prominently that made some of their essays incomprehensible.

This study has implications for teachers of English at the colleges of education and future research. Teacher trainees must be taught the appropriate uses of punctuation marks, how to observe the rules of concord and how to avoid ambiguity. Because of limited time I had at my disposal, lexical cohesion could not be explored. A study which can investigate both grammatical and lexical cohesion is highly recommendable. Again, how teacher trainees achieve cohesion in their expository or narrative writing can also be researched. The use of cohesive devices in spoken discourse can also be explored since cohesion can be identified in both written and spoken discourse.

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