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***Analysis of Reference Cohesion Errors in Students'  
Compositions: A Case of the Department of English at  
Mouloud Mammeri University***

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# ***Dedication***

*I would like to dedicate this study to all  
my beloved ones.*

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# Abstract

*This study is an attempt to analyze the reference cohesion errors students made in their writings. It seeks to identify the errors, classify them and then identify the causes of these errors. To achieve the aim of this study, it is based on analyzing one hundred argumentative essays written by third year LMD students of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, during the academic year 2013/2014. In doing so reference is made to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of cohesive devices with a particular reference to error analysis approach. The results of the study showed that 185 reference errors were made in the writing pieces, which are divided into four categories, namely, misuse of reference cohesive devices, omission of reference cohesive devices, superfluous use of reference cohesive devices and overuse of reference cohesive devices. The results showed that third year English students at the university of Tizi Ouzou commit reference cohesive errors, which are due to an intralingual factor.*

# List of abbreviations

- CA: Contrastive Analysis
- EA: Error Analysis
- EFL: English Foreign Language
- HP: Hypothesis
- L1: First Language/ Mother Tongue
- L2: Second Language/ Target Language
- SL: Second Language

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## **General Introduction**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Writing is one of the skills that any learner of a second language or even the native speaker need to master. It is also the most useful skill in the learning process. However this latter requires an extensive amount of attention and consideration, since academic writing needs to apply different rules of grammar, lexis, vocabulary, organizing ideas, using formal expressions, and paying attention to every sentence in the text, because getting a cohesive and coherent piece of writing is a complex activity. This makes the writing skill the most difficult skill to acquire when learning any particular language as a second/foreign language. The complexity of the skill, make students face problems and difficulties in writing in English as a foreign language and commit different errors at different levels. It has also paved the way for many researchers to conduct their studies in this field to understand student's errors in one hand and to help them to write effectively in the other, namely, Halliday and Hasan who have devoted their work in 1976 to cohesion and coherence in writing, and provide the reader with explanation and classification of the concept of cohesion as they have explained the relationship between the two concepts which means cohesion and coherence in text. According to Halliday and Hasan's work cohesion is divided into different types, these are: lexical cohesion, conjunction cohesion, substitution cohesion, ellipses, and reference cohesion. These cohesion types contribute to form a text, which is called a unit (T Sandars and H Pander Maat, 2006: 591). Cohesion or cohesive devices on the other hand are defined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) as: *"formal elements in the text that function to make links between components of the text"* (cited in Firooz Sadighi, 2012: 558).

Halliday and Hasan's work is used as a reference by different scholars such as Firouz SADIGHI (2012), in which she investigated the most common cohesive errors made by Iranian undergraduate EFL learners. Abdul Rahman Ahmed (2008) in his work has dealt with the reference concept reference as a cohesive device, as he has classified reference types according to Halliday and Hasan's classification.

The above mentioned works are two examples among a number of works done in the field of the analysis of student's cohesion errors in different context for the aim of understanding student's errors and improve the writing skill. Our study focuses on analyzing the reference cohesion type of errors in the Algerian context, mainly at Tizi Ouzou University.

Dealing with students' errors requires following the error analysis (EA) approach. This latter is an approach which deals with the study of the kind and the quantity of learners' errors. To follow this approach in any research involves passing through steps which are: collecting data, identification of errors, classification into errors type, statement of relative frequency of errors type, identification of the consistency of difficulty in the target language (Katharina Rustipa, 2011: 18-19).

### **Aims and significance of the Study**

This study tries to investigate the reference cohesion errors that are found in students' compositions by analyzing a number of exam papers written by third year students of English at Mouloud Mammeri University. The main reason behind this is to make students aware of their errors and help teachers to know on which type of reference cohesion they should focus while teaching this kind of lessons, and build students competences in the writing module. For the sake of identifying the types of reference cohesion errors students make in their compositions, we rely on error analysis approach

and we make reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of reference cohesive devices.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. Do third year students of English at the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University commit reference cohesion errors in their writings?
2. If yes, what type(s) of reference cohesion errors they commit?
3. What type of reference cohesion errors is more frequent?

In order to answer the above research questions the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hp: Third year students of English at the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University do not commit many reference cohesion errors in their writings, as they have been learning English for ten years and they are at the end of their university course (first graduation), we suppose that they have an important knowledge of the English language.

### **Research Methodology**

To conduct our research, we made a combination between the quantitative method in collecting data to provide the reader with numbers and present the results by using tables, and diagrams and the qualitative method in the analysis of the data. Here we interpret and explain the data by adopting error analysis approach with reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of reference cohesion. Our corpus consists of third year students of English compositions from the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University.

### **Structure of the Research**

As regards the structure of this work, it consists of a general introduction followed by four chapters. Chapter one is called "review of the literature", reviews all the concepts

and approaches that are related to our subject of investigation, which is reference cohesion errors in students' writings. Chapter two called "research design and methodology" presents the research methodology used in this work, which is a mixed method between the quantitative and qualitative approach. Chapter three named "presentation of the findings" presents the reference cohesion errors found in students' compositions using tables and diagrams, according to the four categories of errors namely, misuse of reference cohesion, superfluous use of reference cohesion, omission of reference cohesion devices when they are required, and overuse of reference cohesion devices. Chapter four is devoted to the discussion of the findings. This chapter is related to the previous one. It interprets the results and it is here that we will confirm or refute our hypothesis and provide answers to the research questions.

## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the review of literature, it aims at providing the reader with a theoretical framework of the research, and it is divided into two sections. The first section includes some definitions in relation with writing, including the writing product and its different purposes, errors and their types, and summarizes some causes behind the commitment of these errors add to this, some factors that influences the learning of second language. In addition to other definitions such as cohesion and coherence for the importance they have in the constitution of a piece of writing, and the concept of reference which is the concern of our study and it is defined as follows: reference is what a word refers to in the text, it means, the use of referents to replace a word in the right way and in its right place in the text to avoid redundancy and achieve cohesion. Our aim in providing the reader with the definitions is to give him a clearer idea about our field of study. The second section includes a kind of historical background of error analysis field, by summarizing the theories done in this area. These are: contrastive analysis theory, First language = Second language Acquisition Theory, Interlanguage, and Error Analysis Theory. The latter is a theory that studies students' errors in second language acquisition without relating them with the learner's mother tongue, but relates them to learner's lack of proficiency in this language.

## **Section One**

### **I.1. Writing as a Product**

According to Hyland, Matsuda (2003) and Silva (1990), coherent pieces of text or the writing product must be well structured concerning its language, accurate, grammatical and requires the use of an adequate vocabulary. It also involves the use of syntactic patterns, morphological inflections, and cohesive devices in the right way. (Cited in Maria Pilar Augustin Llach, 2011: 42)

## **I.2. Purposes of Writing**

Students in general write for two main purposes: community purposes and academic purposes.

**a. Community Purposes:** Schools start building students' language and writing from their first experience. But also it starts at home through seeing their family members writing, and then prepares them to write to different audiences such as peers, parent, community members or local government (John aquiline, 1999:12).

**b. Academic Purposes:** at school students write for academic purposes dealing with different subjects being studied. Therefore, students need to be taught about academic texts, their structure, and language features which help to organize the content of a subject (John aquiline, 1999: 12). According to Rowena Murray and Sarah Moore, academic writing starts with incomplete, incorrect and correct ideas. But revising ideas long after your first thought of them, exploring things differently, experimenting, revising, and repeating are all central to the basis of scholarship which you exercise every day in your academic tasks to get a good piece of writing (Rowena Murray and Sarah Moore, 2006: 5).

## **I.3. What is an error?**

Richards Schmidt (2002: 184) describes an error as *“the use of language in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as faulty or incomplete learning”* (cited in Saara Sirkka Mungungu, 2010: 28). Norrish (1987: 7) also defines an error as *“a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong”* ( cited in Saara Sirkka Mungungu, 2010: 28). In other words, the idea expressed in the two definitions above is that an error is a unit which does not contribute in forming a meaningful whole in a piece of writing. It means that, it is independent and differs from the whole.



#### **I.4. Types of Errors Found in the Writing Product**

Different studies have been conducted for the purpose of identifying types of errors found in students' writings. Fungai Mutema and Itayi Mariko (2012) identify some of the common errors in second language speakers' written texts, which are due to differences in grammatical structure between the first (L1) and second (L2) language. That is, the interference of first language in second language learning that results in errors, such as, errors of misinformation. For instance, misuse of articles since they are different in their grammatical structure, the use of incomplete sentences, mainly, when forming complex sentences. Errors of misordering through the use of the personal pronoun "I" at the beginning of the sentence instead of using it at the end. In addition to punctuation errors, the other types of errors are those of vocabulary consistence, which include confusions between homonyms and homophones like "whether" and "weather", and words which appear to have the same meaning but used in different context such as: "avoid" and "prevent", and the use of informal language (Fungai Mutema and Itayi Mariko, 2012:227).

According to Ellis (1997) and Selinker et al (1975) the different types of errors that are found in learners' written texts are: Errors of transference, misinformation, overgeneralizations, misordering, and other miscellaneous type of errors such as punctuation and use of informal language. They claim that these types of errors are the consequence of learners' lack of knowledge of the appropriate forms of the target language. It is a kind of evidence of gaps in knowledge of language instead of first language interference or transference (cited in Fungai Mutema and Itayi, Mariko, 2012:226).

Errors of overgeneralization are better explained by Ellis (1997), she states that second language learners can over generalize some aspects of the language, for example

after learning a rule of grammar, a learner can over generalize it and apply it in some cases where it should not be applied. For instance, the plural marker “s” is used not only to appropriate nouns to indicate plurality but it is also used to nouns like “woman” to become “womans”, “child” to “childs”(cited in Fungai Mutema and Itayi Marico, 2012: 228) .

Gamma (2010) also has observed some of the common errors while teaching writing. Some of them are similar to those identified by Fungai Mutema and Itayi Mariko and others are different. She has listed them as follows: run on sentences: in Arabic producing long sentences with no punctuation marks is something accepted but this is not the case in English. Students also have problems in translating from the mother tongue (Arabic) to the target language (English). Students sometimes use words which cause misunderstanding and confusion. In addition to punctuation problems, since writing in Arabic does not involve the use of commas and periods as writing in English. Thus the semi colon and the exclamation marks are not commonly used in students’ writings. The other problem is the writing organization. In an English essay the topic sentence has the same idea as the conclusion, whereas, in an Arabic essay the conclusion has to bring something new (cited in Dana Adas, Ayda Bakir, 2013: 255).

### **1.5. Causes of Writing Problems**

There are many scholars who dealt with the causes of writing weaknesses, among them, Al-Khasawneh (2010) who indicates that the main causes behind students’ weaknesses in writing in English, as identified by students, are the teaching methods and the learning environment, lack of motivation, or the teacher interests, in addition to the use of the mother tongue (cited in Dana Adas, Ayda Bakir, 2013: 255). The authors add that students suffer from a lack of vocabulary and their written texts are restricted to words which they know. They use only the present tense, ill-structured sentences which make the writing product difficult to understand. When they read or write aloud, students could not

make the distinction whether what they read or write is right or wrong because of their poor linguistic knowledge (Dana Adas, Ayda Bakir, 2013:255).

### **I.6. Factors that Influence the Learning of the Second Language Systems**

According to Jack C. Richards and Gloria P. Sampson (1973), there are seven factors that influence the learning of the second language systems. The most two important ones are Language Transfer, which means that sentences from the mother tongue can influence sentences produced in the target language. This was considered as a major source of difficulty by linguists doing contrastive analysis. George (1971) found that most of the incorrect sentences formed by second language learners are caused by language transfer (cited in Jack C. Richards, 1973:5). The second factor is Intralingual Interference. As termed by Richards (1970), it refers to items produced by learners that show the use of generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. Learners try to apply rules in some cases where they should not be applied, and this can expose a considerable amount of difficulty (cited in Jack C. Richards, 1973:6).

### **I.7. Interlanguage**

Interlanguage is a kind of mixture between languages, mainly between the mother tongue and the target language. S.P Corder points that “*The study of interlanguage is then, the study of language systems of language learners, or simply the study of language learners’ language*” (S. P Corder, 1983: 66). He adds that “*the term interlanguage and Interlingua suggest that the learner’s language will show systematic features both of the target language and of other languages he may know, most obviously of his mother tongue*” (S. P Corder, 1982: 67). In other words, the learner’s language system is formed by all languages that the speaker knows, and the acquisition of a second language is influenced by the mother tongue and other languages that he knows well. Rosa Munoz Luna defines

interlanguage as the learners' use of both language systems which means L1 and L2 system to produce sentences in the target language (cited in Rosa Munoz Luna, 2010, 61).

## **I.8. Cohesion**

Different definitions were given to the term cohesion, Mathews (1997) in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* defines it as “*a syntactic unit (sentence)*”; David Crystal (2006) in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* states that “*cohesion is a grammatical units (words)*”. Bex (1996) claims that cohesion is “*residing in the semantic and grammatical properties of the language*” (cited in Kadriye Dilek Akpinarb, 2012:257). On the other hand, Halliday and Hasan (1976) define it as follows: “*What occurs when the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another*” (cited in Firooz Sadighi, 2012: 558). They also defined it as “*grammatical and lexical possibilities that exist for linking an element of language with what has gone before or what follow in a text*” (cited in Jungok Bae, 2001: 55).

Cohesion is divided into grammatical and lexical cohesions. Grammatical cohesion includes reference, substitution ellipses, and conjunctions. Lexical cohesion includes reiteration such as synonymy, repetition and collocation such as co-occurrence of lexical items. These components become cohesive when they are interpreted in relation with other items in the text, since one element cannot be cohesive by itself (cited in Sanna Kaissa Tanskanen, 2006:15). This leads to the conclusion that cohesion involves the existence of different elements and a cohesive relationship between them to form it.

### **I.8.1. Cohesion and Coherence**

The concept of coherence should not be confused with the concept of cohesion. Cohesion as mentioned above is the combination of both grammatical and lexical items within the text and words which are linked to form sentences. It is also the combination of sentences and the information got from them to form a meaningful text (Sanna Kaissa

Tanskanan, 2006:16-17). In this context Sanna kaissa Tanskanen (2006) explains “*coherence resides not in the text, but is rather the outcome of the dialogue between the text and its listener or reader*” (Sanna Kaissa Tanskanen, 2006:7). And (De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981); Brown and Yule (1983); Hellman (1995); Lundquist (1985); Sanford and Moxey (1995) claim that “ *without coherence a set of sentences would not form a text, no matter how many cohesive links there were between the sentences*” (cited in Sanna Kaissa Tanskanen, 2012:16). From this we can conclude that both concepts (cohesion and coherence) are different but interrelated. Cohesion is about the surface structure of the text and coherence is about the meaning of the text. Thus cohesion contributes in forming and facilitates coherence (Louwerse, M. M. and Graesser, A. C, 2005: 1-2).

### **I.8.2. Cohesion and text**

Text is a set of meaningful, related and coherent sentences, in this sense text is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976) as “*a text does not consist of sentences; it is realized by, or encoded in sentences*” (Cited in Djamel Yassine, 2010: 22). It is as defined by Djamel Yassine “*By text is meant any passage that consists of meaning as a whole but not just a collection of unrelated sentences*” (Djamel Yassine, 2010: 21). Or as defined by Lyna Rachel Mokrani “*a text can be one or more sentences which are combined in meaning*” (Lyna Rachel Mokrani, 2010: 5). Cohesion also has an important role to play in forming a coherent text. In this context, Halliday and Hassan (1976) say: “*The general meaning of cohesion is embodied in the concept of text. By its role in providing ‘texture’, cohesion helps to create text*” (cited in Djamel Yassine, 2010: 23).

### **I.9. Reference**

Reference is a subcategory of the grammatical cohesion category. It is concerned with what a word refers to in a discourse or a text. It works on avoiding redundancy, and contributes in the coherence of the text. As defined by Kadriye Dilek Akpinar

*“Referencing functions to restate the presupposed information in a text”* (Kadriye Dilek Akpınar, 2012:257). Eggins (1994: 95) also defines the concept of reference as follows: *“In written text, referencing indicates how the writer introduces participants and keeps track of them throughout the text”* (Cited in Hind Tahseen Hameed, 2008: 84). Brown and Yule (1983) provide us with another definition of the concept of reference. They states that *“The traditional semantic view of reference is one in which the relationship of reference is taken to hold between expressions in different parts of a text”* (cited in Abdul Rahman Ahmed, 2008: 44).

### **I.9.1 Types of referencing**

There exist three types of referencing. The first one is Homophoric referencing, which is the reference to other items that have the same cultural context, and are not mentioned in the text. The second is exophoric referencing. The reader gets the information from the immediate situation. The last one is Endophoric referencing. This type of referencing deals with cohesion within a text. The information about the word which refers and the one it refers to are found in the text (Kadriye Dilek Akpınar, 2012: 257).

Endophoric reference, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) is also divided into three main components. Anaphoric reference is the reference that refers to something that has already been mentioned. Cataphoric reference is about something that will be said (Kadriye Dilek Akpınar, 2012: 257). The last one, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) is called Esphoric reference. Here the reference to the presupposed item exists in the same phrase or the nominal clause (Cited in Kadriye Dilek Akpınar, 2012: 257).

Cohesion reference has three functional cohesive reference types: personal, demonstrative and comparative. Halliday and Hasan (1976) explain

In terms of functionality, there are three main types of cohesive references: Personal, demonstrative, and comparative. Personal reference

monitors function through the speech situation using pronouns like “he, him, she, her” etc. And possessive determiners like “mine, yours, his, hers”. Demonstrative reference keeps track of information through location using references like “this, these, that, those, here, there, then, and the”. Comparative reference “keeps track of identity and similarity through indirect references ‘same, equal, different, else, better, more’, etc. and adverbs like ‘so, such, similarly, otherwise, so, more, etc (Cited in Kadriye Dilek Akpınar, 2012: 257).

## **Section 2**

### **I.2.1 Hypothesis Used to Deal with Writing Errors**

#### **a. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CA)**

According to Heidi C. Dulay and Marina K. Burt, Contrastive analysis hypothesis was first introduced by Charles Fries in 1945. It states that learners of a second language (L2) try to use their first language structure in their second language speech/writing. Moreover where structure of the first and second language differ they make errors. This hypothesis contains two levels. The level of process and the level of product, which describes the actual errors and predicts them (cited in Jack C. Richard, 1973: 96). Contrastive analysis is a kind of systematic comparison between two or more languages to show differences and similarities between them (Stig Johanson, 2008: 9).

#### **b. The L2 Acquisition = the L1 Acquisition Theory**

Heidi C. Dulay and Marina K. Burt suggest that, the L2 acquisition hypothesis holds that learners of a second language make errors expected in any particular L2 production, would be similar to those made by children learning the same language as their first language. L2 acquisition =L1 acquisition hypothesis predicts that children will omit functions (cited in Jack C. Richard, 1973: 96).

#### **c. A Non Contrastive or Error Analysis Approach**

Error analysis is a branch of linguistics which reveals that, errors students make are not related only to the mother tongue influence, but focuses on the comparison between the

errors made in the target language and that language itself (Ali Akbar khansir, 2012. 1029). According to Jack C. Richards (1973), a non contrastive approach to error analysis is an analysis of the major types of intralingual and developmental errors. Overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and the building of false application or systems (Jack C. Richard, 1973: 172).

### **I.2.2. The Shift From Contrastive Analysis to Error Analysis**

Writing difficulties among students of English as a second or a foreign language and the analysis of errors in their writings has been the concern of many researchers. According to Fries (1945) and Lado (1957), foreign or second language learners' errors could be predicted on the basis of the differences between the learners' native and second languages (cited in Mohammed Yusuf Salabi, 2011:210). They have also claimed that learning a foreign language will be easy when it is concerned with some aspects which are similar to those of the mother tongue. Otherwise, second language learning will be difficult and learners are expected to make errors (cited in Mohammed Yusuf Salabi, 2011:210). Corder, also as mentioned, in Jack C Richard's work was highly interested in the field of writing, mainly, on how to deal with learners' errors. Thus, he provided this area of investigation with a new hypothesis which is considered as a solution to the theoretical problem of the CA hypothesis. This was the error analysis theory. It suggests to analyze each error according to its type since there are different types of errors. It does not look at all errors as the result of the mother tongue influence (Jack C. Richard, 1973: 99).

Different studies, deal with the problem of errors in second language writing in various contexts aiming to understand and analyze these errors. Our investigation tries to investigate the issue of reference cohesive errors in students' writings at the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University by using error analysis hypothesis and relying on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of reference cohesion.



## **Conclusion**

As it is mentioned above, the chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to the definitions of some concepts that we consider helpful to the understanding of our topic of investigation. We highlighted the concepts of reference and cohesion which include subtitles namely cohesion and coherence, cohesion and text, since they are considered as key terms in our field of study. The second section is devoted to the attempts made in the field for the purpose of understanding and reducing foreign language learners' errors in writing, and reviews the theories that deal with this issue.

This chapter also shows that, different works have been done in the writing field generally and students' errors specifically. However, different researches on learners' errors were conducted and hypotheses were proposed. All this was done for the aim of identifying students' errors and reducing them with a particular consideration of the cohesion type.

## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the methodology to be used in our research. It describes the procedures to be followed to carry out our investigation. It also explains the research techniques we rely to identify third year learner's reference cohesion errors in their writings in the department of English at UMMTO. The chapter consists of two sections. The first describes the procedures followed to collect data and how will the study be carried out, it is divided into four sub-sections. The first subsection is about the place of the investigation. The second deals with the subjects or the participants. It describes the context of the study. The third sub-section, describes the corpus from which we have taken the data, and the last named research method it is concerned with the description of tools of data analysis. The second section is data analysis procedures, describes the steps followed to analyze the data. This includes mainly a presentation of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of reference cohesion.

### **II.1. Procedures of Data Collection**

#### **a. The Setting of the Study**

Our investigation aims at identifying reference cohesion errors in students' writings. To achieve the aim of our study, we have taken samples from the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, where English is taught/ learned as a foreign language to be the place of our investigation.

#### **b. The Subjects**

The subjects of this investigation are third year LMD students from the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, during the academic year 2013/2014. Their ages vary between 21 and 24 years old and their sex was not taken into consideration. The students were asked to write argumentative essays of about thirty lines

in sociolinguistic module in two hours, and our data needed or the reference cohesion errors are taken from these essays.

### **c. The Corpus**

In order to collect data that support our theme of investigation, which is reference cohesion errors, we have taken 100 hundred papers to be analyzed. These papers, as mentioned above are third year student of English exam papers in sociolinguistics module. The papers contents consist of answers to questions in a form of essay. In two-hour, the students were asked to write a thirty- line argumentative essay on one of the three suggested topics.

### **d. Research Method**

This research is concerned with providing those who are interested in this field of study with statistical and clearer results, for this reason, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is required. The principle aim for choosing both the quantitative and qualitative method is that quantitative method provides readers with quantitative data and makes the results easy to understand. Hence the results are presented in numbers and percentages, and displayed on table or graphs, whereas, the explanation and description of the reference cohesive devices errors involves the use of the qualitative method.

## **II.2. Data Analysis Procedure**

### **a. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesive Reference Devices**

In order to identify the reference cohesion errors in students' exam papers, the essays were segmented into different sentences that are identified by linguists as orthographic sentences, which is identified by Djamel Yassine as "*by orthographic sentences is meant the series of words which represent a complete thought*" (Djamel Yassine, 2010: 36). David Cristal (1994) defined the orthographic sentences as "*The largest structural unit in terms of which the grammar of language is organized. It is an*

*independent unit which can be given both a formal and a functional classification*” (cited in Djamel Yassine, 2010: 36).

The second step to be followed is classification of errors of reference cohesion according to Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) reference cohesion classification which includes three main types. It is presented in the following table:

Reference cohesion	Personal reference	Personal pronouns: I, me, you, we, us, him, her, they, them, it.
		Personal determiners (the possessives): my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, its.
		Relative pronouns: who, which
	Demonstrative reference	Determiners: this, that, these, those.
		Demonstrative adverbs: here, there, then.
	Comparative reference	Comparative adjectives: same, identical, equal, other, different, more, better. etc
		Comparative adverbs: similarly, differently, more, less.

Table 1: Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) reference cohesive devices classification. (cited in Firooz, 2012: 559).

The third step we will follow in our investigation of reference cohesion errors is the description of the errors, namely, the overuse of reference cohesion errors, misuse of reference cohesion errors, the use of reference cohesion errors where it is not necessary and their omission where they should be put.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the methodology to be used in our research; it starts by explaining the procedures of data collection, containing the setting of our study, the subjects, the corpus and the research methods used to describe the data, by using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the presentation and explanation of the reference cohesion errors; this section aims at presenting our procedures in order to investigate the reference cohesion errors in students' compositions. The second section shows that our research focuses on error analysis theory; by collecting data, here we have segmented student's essays into orthographic sentences and identified the errors; then we have described the errors according to four categories, these are misuse of reference cohesive devices, overuse of reference cohesive devices, omission and the use of reference cohesive devices when they are not required; and then we have classified the errors found in the essays with a particular reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of reference cohesion.

## Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation of the findings. Unlike the two previous chapters, this one is empirical it aims at presenting the results of reference cohesion errors obtained from our corpus of third year student's essays through numbers and percentages, and describing them by using graphs and tables. After the analysis of the papers and with reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion taxonomy, we came to the conclusion that students made four types of cohesive reference errors. The first is misuse of reference cohesion. This type is the most committed one. The second is the superfluous use of reference cohesion errors. The third category is the omission of reference cohesive devices when they are needed. The last category is the overuse of reference cohesion.

### III.1 Types of Reference Cohesive Errors made by Students

Types of errors	The number of reference cohesion errors	Errors' percentage
Misuse of reference cohesive devices	123	66.84%
Over use of reference cohesive devices	7	3.80%
Use of reference cohesive devices when it is not necessary	33	17.93%
The omission of reference cohesive devices when they are needed	21	11.41%
Total	184	100%

**Table 2: Reference Cohesion Errors made by Students**

The table above gives us an overview of all the reference cohesive errors that are found in students' essays. They are classified into four categories and presented in numbers and percentages. The first category, misuse of reference cohesion, is the most common, with a

number of 123 out of 100 essays and a percentage of 66.84%. Then the use of cohesive devices when it is not necessary with a number of 33 errors and a percentage of 17.93%. In addition to 21 errors of omission, this means the omission of reference cohesive devices when they are required. It represents 11.44%. The last category is the overuse of reference cohesive devices with 7 errors and 3.80%.

As it is presented in the table 1, the occurrence of errors is different from one category to another and even in the types of each category. In other words, they are different in the type of cohesion, whether personal reference which is divided into personal pronouns, personal determiners, and relative pronouns; or demonstrative reference that includes demonstrative determiners and demonstrative adverbs; or comparative reference which is also divided into comparative adjectives and comparative adverbs. Thus the results are more detailed in the following with an illustrating table for each category.

### **III.1.1 Misuse of Reference Cohesion**

This category is highly found in our corpus. We have classified it according to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion taxonomy which includes personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. They are all summarized in the following table:

<b>Types of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>The number of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>Errors' percentage</b>
<b>personal reference</b>	78	63.41%
<b>Demonstrative reference</b>	41	33.33%
<b>Comparative reference</b>	4	3.25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3: The Classification of the Misuse of Reference Cohesion Devices Category**

Table 3 shows the classification of the different types of misuse reference cohesion errors. As it is shown through it, over 78 errors of personal reference were found in our corpus. A number that corresponds to 63.41%. In addition to 41 errors which corresponds to 33.33% of demonstrative reference cohesion errors that were also found. The third type is comparative reference with 4 errors and a percentage of 3.25% in the use of comparative adjectives and comparative adverbs.

### III.1.2 Superfluous use of Reference Cohesion

In some copies we have found that students use reference cohesive devices where they should not be put, or where it is not necessary to put them. This type of errors is also summarized in table 3.

<b>Type of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>The number of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>Errors' percentage</b>
<b>Personal reference</b>	25	75.75%
<b>Demonstrative reference</b>	8	24.24%
<b>Comparative reference</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Superfluous use of Reference Cohesion Devices**

It appears from table 4 that 25 personal reference errors were found in students' writings. A number which correspond to 75.75%. Demonstrative reference errors were presented with a number of 8 errors and 24.24% whereas comparative reference errors, as marked in table 3 were absent.



### III.1.3 Omission of Reference Cohesion Devices

This category named omission of reference cohesion devices deals with the omission of reference cohesion devices when they are required. Always by reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion classification, we have presented them in the table below:

Type of reference Cohesion errors	The number of reference Cohesion errors	Errors' percentage
Personal reference	18	85.71 %
Demonstrative reference	3	14.28%
Comparative reference	0	0 %
Total	21	100%

**Table 5: Omission of Reference Cohesion Devices**

From table 5, it seems that in the omission category, like in the previous ones, the personal reference errors are the most committed (18 errors and 85.71%). Then demonstrative reference errors (3errors and 14, 28%). Finally comparative reference with 0 error.

### III.1.4 Overuse of Reference Cohesion

The fourth and the last type of reference cohesion errors that are found in student's exam papers, is the overuse of reference cohesion devices. This is a result of the use of reference cohesion more than necessary. Sometimes we found more than two or three reference cohesion devices in one sentence. Unlike the misuse category, this one is not highly found. It was marked by a total of 7 errors. They are classified in table 5.

<b>Type of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>The number of reference cohesion errors</b>	<b>Errors' percentage</b>
<b>Personal reference</b>	07	100%
<b>Demonstrative reference</b>	0	0%
<b>Comparative reference</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 6: Overuse of Reference Cohesion Devices**

As it appears from the table 6, seven errors of overuse of personal reference are identified. They represent the totality of this type of errors and correspond to 100%. In addition to 0 error or 0% for demonstrative reference and comparative reference.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided statistics about the findings of our investigation, and summarized the frequency of occurrence of reference cohesion errors in students' exam papers. Then classified them into different categories which are misuse of reference cohesion devices, superfluous use of reference cohesion devices, omission of reference cohesion devices, and overuse of reference cohesion devices. Each category is classified according to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion taxonomy into three types, namely, personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. As it is observed through this chapter, the misuse of reference cohesion errors are the most common errors mainly those related to personal reference, which led us to the conclusion that third year students of English at the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University have difficulties in using reference cohesion devices in their writings. The coming chapter will discuss all these findings.

## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the discussion of the results obtained from the analysis of our corpus and the explanation of the high accuracy of errors in students compositions. In doing so, the four categories of errors mentioned in chapter 3, each with its different types will be taken. Therefore, this chapter discusses the misuse of reference cohesion, superfluous use of reference cohesion, omission of reference cohesion, and overuse of reference cohesion, each with its types which are personal, demonstrative, and comparative reference cohesion. Readers will notice that the samples of sentences that contain errors, and that will be used in this discussion, include other types of grammatical, lexical, sentence structure errors...etc but they are not going to be dealt with here.

### **IV.1 Misuse of Reference Cohesion**

High frequencies of errors that are found in our corpus are classified in misuse of reference cohesion. As they are presented in chapter 3, they are divided into personal reference cohesion, demonstrative reference cohesion and comparative reference cohesion. Examples of these different types of errors are taken from our corpus for discussion.

#### **IV.1.1 Misuse of Personal Reference**

Errors that are found in this subcategory are due to student's confusion between the use of personal pronouns and personal determiners (possessives) on one hand, or between the singular and plural form of the personal reference devices, on the other hand. And most of the times between the third person singular pronoun that refers to objects or things "it" and personal pronoun that refer to person "he/she", or putting personal determiner instead of personal pronoun. The use of the form "it's" which means the personal pronoun "it" plus the present tense of the verb "to be" instead of the personal determiner "its". Add to this, the confusions in the use of relative pronouns in which students do not make the distinction between the relative pronouns "who" and "which" or between them and the

personal pronoun “it”. To confirm this, examples from different categories are taken from our corpus.

#### **a. Personal Pronouns**

1) *“for example you maintain you mother tongue, and you will learn another language outside home”.*

The error identified in this sentence is the confusion between personal pronouns and personal determiners. The learner has used the personal pronoun “you” where he should use the personal determiner (possessive) “your”. Hence, the sentences should be written like this *“for example you maintain your mother tongue, and you will learn another language outside home”.*

2) *“in society where they exist three or four languages”.*

The error committed in this sentence is the use of the personal pronoun “they” where the student should use the demonstrative determiner “there”. The sentence should be written as: *“in society where there exist three or four languages”.*

3) *“building information about him/her social background”.*

The third sentence is an example of the confusion between the use of personal pronouns that function as objects “him/her” instead of using the personal determiners “his/her”. The right form of the sentence is *“building information about his/her social background”.*

4) *“we can deduce a lot of information about him such as is it a native speaker or not, the region he comes from”*

The student in this sentence has used the singular personal pronoun that refers to objects “it” instead of using the singular personal pronoun that refers to a person “he/she”. Thus the correct form of the sentence is as follows:

*“we can deduce a lot of information about him, such as, is he/she a native speaker or not, the region he/she comes from” .*

5) *“The second point is that macro sociolinguistics deals with the study of what societies do with their languages. For him to understand the language we should study the society”.*

The kind of error found in this sentence is the use of personal pronoun “him” where the student should put the personal pronoun “it” to refer to the word “sociolinguistics”. So, the student should say: *“the second point is that macro sociolinguistics deals with the study of what societies do with their languages. According to it to understand the language we should study the society”*

6) *“all this political steps or activities are made just to provide better communication in a given country, even it does not present a complete truth, it stills the best way to give an identity to this country”*

In this sentence two kinds of errors has been identified. The first was a sort of confusion at the level of the use of singular form instead of the plural one. In other words, the use the singular personal pronoun “it” instead of the plural personal pronoun “they”. In addition to the use of the singular demonstrative determiner “this” instead of the plural one. The sentence should be written as follows:

*“all these political steps or activities are made just to provide better communication in a given country, even though they do not present a complete truth or realization, they are still the best way to give an identity to this country” .*

7) *“it exists a lot of languages in the world”.*

In this example also the student confused between the use of personal pronoun “it” and the plural determiner “there”. The sentence should be written like this *“there exist a lot of languages in the world”*

8) *“the group of doctors understand the other group such him”.*

The error identified here is the use of the personal pronoun “him” instead of “them”. The sentence should be written as *“the group of doctors understand the other group like them”*.

9) *“for instance, when you meet someone for the first time, you will try to work out what the other person is like in order to know how to respond to them”*

Unlike sentence number eight, this one shows student’s confusion in the use of plural form where the singular is required since it refers to the antecedent “someone”. Thus the sentence should be rewritten like this: *“for instance when you meet someone for the first time, you will try to work out what the other person is like in order to know how to respond to him”*.

10) *“there are people even they know two languages, but they used to speak one language because he feel a shame when he speak it”*.

Student in the above example has used the third person singular pronoun “he” to refer to a plural nouns that involve the use of the plural personal pronoun “they”. Thus the correct form of the sentence is:

*“there are people even they know two languages but they used to speak one language because they feel a shame when they speak the other”*.

11) *“...while Arabic and Kabyle, we have a negative attitudes towards this languages itself and also toward the people spoken it”*. In this sentence the student has made three errors always at the level of the use of the plural form instead of the singular form because the reference cohesive devices in this sentence refer to both Arabic and Kabyle languages. So the sentence should be written as follows: *“while we have negative attitudes towards Arabic and Kabyle themselves and the people who speak them”*.

12) *“for this reason we should take into consideration some mementoes criteria such as: pronunciation, choice of words and other stylistic features in order to associate it to a suitable kind of people”.*

As the previous examples this also shows confusion in the use of plural form. The student has used the personal pronoun “it” instead of “them”. The correct form of the sentence is *“for this reason we should take into consideration some mementoes criteria such as: pronunciation, choice of words and other stylistic features in order to associate them to a suitable kind of people”.*

13) *“In case that a government takes a decision on the status of a language this means that they made...”* . In this sentence the personal pronoun “it” should be used to refer to the word “government”. *“in case that a government takes a decision on the status of a language this means that it made...”*

14) *“linguists made theirs studies to reform it”*

In this example the student has confused in the use of the personal plural possessive pronoun “theirs” where he should use the personal plural possessive determiner “their”. The student should write *“linguists made their studies to reform it”.*

15) *“ for example Arabic in Algiers is not the same as Arabic in Oran, it means that we have differences in grammar, pronunciation, also they studied language as social phenomenon, according to them the way of speaking we can distinguish between native and non native speaker”.*

16) *“ first status planning is deciding how language to be used in society and which language to be standard in order that sociolinguistics attend which language becomes standard they try to study varieties according to four steps, other they codificate it by adding new words ”*

17) “for instance Algerian society has more than one language, but they choose the Arabic one as official”.

In the sentences above, students have used the personal plural pronoun “they” without mentioning the word it refers to. For example, in sentence 15 the student should refer or replace it by the word “linguists” by saying: “ for example Arabic in Algiers is not the same as Arabic in Oran, it means that we have differences in grammar, pronunciation, also linguists studied language as social phenomenon, according to them the way of speaking we can distinguish between native and non native speaker”.

Same thing can be done to sentence 16) “ first status planning is deciding how language to be used in society and which language to be standard in order that sociolinguistics attend which language becomes standard linguists/sociolinguists try to study varieties according to four steps, other they codificate it by adding new words ” .

The right form of the sentence 17 is: “for instance the Algerian society has more than one language, but the government chooses Arabic as the official one”.

18) “what are it main purposes”.

19) “modernize it vocabulary”.

20) “language is crucial part of the heritage of community that shapes build’s it identity”.

These sentences are examples of confusion between personal pronouns and personal determiners. Students have used the personal pronoun “it” where the personal determiner “its” should be put. And the correct forms are respectively as follows:

18) “what are its main purposes”.

19) “modernize its vocabulary”.

20) “language is crucial part of the heritage of community that shapes and builds its identity”.



21) “It’s study the social aspects”. In this sentence the error identified is the use of the singular personal pronoun “it” plus “the verb to be in the present” instead of using the third person singular possessive determiner “its”, its correct form is: “*it studies the social aspects*”

#### **b. Personal Determiners**

1) “*stereotypical ideas that state that your are...*”

The error in this sentence is the use of personal determiner “your” instead of the use of the personal pronoun “you”. Thus, the sentence should be rewritten as: “*stereotypical ideas that state that you are...*” .

2) “*each one has its own style which is specific to him or her*”

3) “*when someone ..., its language*”

4) “*unlike the native speaker who do not find easily or not at all words to express its taught*”

In these sentences students have confused between the use of the third person singular possessive determiner “its” where the possessive determiner that refer to a person “his/her” is required. The correction of the sentences is respectively as follows: “*each one has his/her own style which is specific to him or her*” for sentence 2.

“*when someone ..., his/her language*” for sentence 3.

“*unlike the native speaker who do not find easily or do not find at all words to express his/her taught*” for sentence 4.

5) “*Cameron declared French and English as their official language*”

In this sentence the error identified is a kind of confusion between the singular and the plural form. The personal determiner “their” has been used instead of using the personal determiner “its”. The correct form of the sentence is: “*Cameron declared French and English as its official languages*”.

6) *“in which the users are his place, his accent, and his social class”*

In this sentences the student has used the singular personal determiner “his” instead of using the plural personal determiner “their”. Hence the student should write *“the situation in which the users are in their social class, their place, and their accent”*.

7) *“then to ask sociolinguists to codify this language by fixing it’s grammar and it’s spelling system”*.

8) *“ the part of study linguistics is micro sociolinguistics, it’s study the social aspects of language”*.

9) *“regional variation causes language differences in pronunciation, structure and it’s status”*.

In these sentences the students have used the third singular personal pronoun “it” plus the verb to be in the present instead of using the third singular possessive pronoun “its”. the correction of the sentences is as follows: 7) *“then to ask sociolinguists to codify this language by fixing its grammar and it’s spelling system”* ;8) *“ the part of study linguistic is micro sociolinguistic it study the social aspects of language”*.9) *“regional variation causes language differences in pronunciation, structure and its status”*.

10) *“language planning is considered as deliberate effort to influence language function, structure and vocabulary and it’s plan which language to be standard”*

In this sentence we see a kind of confusion between the personal determiner “its” and the personal pronoun “it” plus the verb “to be” in the present in addition to fact that the personal determiner “its” is not the right pronoun to be put in this sentence . The sentence should be written like this: *“language planning is considered as a deliberate effort to influence language function, structure and vocabulary and it plans which language to be standard”*.

11) *“but if one factory wont to advertise their product it uses a peasant to do this job”.*

The error identified in this sentence is that to refer to factory’s products the third singular personal pronoun “it” should be used. The sentence should be written like this *“but if one factory wants to advertise its product, it uses a peasant to do this job”.*

12) *“micro and macro sociolinguistics based its studies on the relation between the two”.*

The third person singular possessive determiner “its” in this sentence refers to both micro and macro sociolinguistics. For this reason the third person plural possessive determiner “their” should be used. The sentence should be rewritten like this: *“micro and macro sociolinguistics based their studies on the relation between the two”.*

### **c. Relative Pronouns**

1) *“sociolinguistics study is divided into micro socio linguistics who investigates how social structure influences the way people talk”.*

The error identified here is at the level of relative pronouns. The student has used the relative pronoun “who” instead of the relative pronoun “which” to refer to microsociolinguistics. *“sociolinguistics study is divided into micro sociolinguistics which investigates how social structure influences the way people talk”.*

2) *“the last one is the acquisition planning in where we find linguistics deciding which language will be used at school”*

Since the student in this sentence is referring to an idea (language acquisition planning) and not to a place, he should use the relative pronoun “which” and not “where”, and writes: *“the last one is the acquisition planning in which we find linguistics deciding which language will be used at school”*

3) *“differentiation between the language of young people that use expression and words that old people use”.* “young people” should be referred to by using the relative pronoun “who” not the demonstrative determiner “that”. The sentence should be written like this:

*“differentiation between the language of young people who use expression and words that old people use”.*

4) *“according to the place when we use ...”.* We refer to a place by using “where”, when is used to refer to time. *“according to the place where we use ...”.*

5) *“and the others, which uses a vernacular language”.* The relative pronoun “which” should be replaced by the relative pronoun “who” since it refers to a group who uses language, which means it refers to human beings. The correct form of the sentence is *“and the others who use a vernacular language”.*

6) *“it can tell us to each region the person who is speaking belongs to”.* The correct form of this sentence is *“it can tell us to which region the person who is speaking belongs to”.* We have replaced the pronoun “each” by the relative pronoun “which” since referring to “region” in this context involves the use of which.

#### **IV.1.2 Misuse of Demonstrative Reference**

This type of errors comprises confusions in using singular and plural form of the demonstrative reference or the opposite mainly in using the personal determiner “this” and its plural “these”. In addition to confusion in the use of the determiner “the” and the demonstrative adverb “there”. And sometimes we find confusions in using the demonstrative adverbs “then” used to indicate time and “than” for comparison.

##### **a. Demonstrative Determiners**

Demonstrative determiner errors found in our corpus are almost the same. Students generally confuse the use of the plural or the singular form of the determiners.

1) *“this activities are realized by language planning”,* 2) *“language planning helps people to attend this things”,* 3) *“language planning is also a part of these investigation”.*

The sentences above show students’ confusion in the use of the demonstrative determiner “this” and its plural form “these”. In the last sentence the student has used the

demonstrative determiner “these” where he should use determiner “this”. The correction of the above sentences is as follows:

1) “these activities are realized by language planning”, 2) “language planning helps people to attend these things”, 3) “language planning is also a part of this investigation”.

4) “the are three types of language” here the confusion is in the use of the determiner “the” where the student should use the demonstrative adverb “there”. The student should write: “there are three types of languages”.

5) “that is mean how people determine...”. The error in this sentence is in the use of the demonstrative determiner “that” where the relative pronoun “which” should be put. The sentence should be written as: “which means how people determine...”.

6) “...low variety and inferior that RP that spoken in England”. In comparison the preposition conjunction “than” is used instead of the determiner “that”. The right form of the sentence is: “...low variety than RP that is spoken in England”.

7) “use of that language”

8) “in which domain that language is going to be used either used as...”

To refer to the word “language” the demonstrative determiner “that” should be replaced by the determiner “this”. The correction of the sentences is respectively as follows: 7) “use of this language”. 8) “in which domain this language is going to be used either used as...”

9) “age also determined they way adults speak”.

10) “also they age of people”

The confusion here is in the use of the personal pronoun “they” instead of the determiner “the”. Their correction is like the following: 9) “age also determined the way adults speak”.

10) “also the age of people”.

11) “to know how it is a complex process”. “how” in this sentence should be replaced by the determiner “that” to refer to the idea that language is a complex process. The correction of the sentence is as follows: “to know that it is a complex process”

12) “for the function, scholars have to decide on the official or the national language of a given country” the error committed in this sentence is in the use of the demonstrative determiner “the” instead of “this”. The correction of the sentence is as follows: “for this function, scholars have to decide on the official or the national language of a given country”.

#### **b. Demonstrative Adverbs**

1) “and than” in this sentence the demonstrative adverb “then” to indicate time should be used and not “than” of comparison. The sentence should be written as “and then”.

### **IV.1.3 Misuse of Comparative Reference**

The misuse of comparative reference type includes some sentences that contain mainly confusions in the use of the determiner pronoun “more”.

#### **a. Comparative Adjectives**

1) “more of them”. “more” in this sentence is used incorrectly, since “most” is required.

2) “More than in Algeria usually when we hear someone speak French we make judgments about his education” “more” in this sentence is useless. Thus it should be replaced by “in addition or furthermore”. The two above sentences should be written like this:

1) “Most of them”. 2) “Furthermore, in Algeria usually when we hear someone speak French we make judgments about his education”.

### **IV.2 The Use of Reference Cohesion when not Necessary**

It has been found that students’ compositions include some errors in the use of reference cohesion when they are not required, which makes the sentence ill formed. This

category is marked by the high percentage of errors that is noticed in personal reference errors, then demonstrative errors, and no error in comparative reference type.

#### IV.2.1 Personal Reference

Personal reference errors in this category (use of reference cohesion when not necessary) is marked by the use of the third singular personal pronoun “it”. As the following examples shows, students use the personal pronoun “it” after mentioning the antecedent which makes the reader feels a kind of redundancy while reading.

1) “*but kabyle it was selected...*”. “it” in this sentence refers to the word “kabyle” which is written in the same sentence with the personal pronoun thus it is not necessary to put it. It was sufficient to write “*but kabyle was selected...*”. And the same remark for the following sentences: (the correction for each sentence is presented just after the student’s sentence).

2) “*first language planning it is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure and language acquisition*”. “*first language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure and language acquisition*” .

3) “*This process it is the first step of language planning*”. “*This process is the first step of language planning*”.

In the sentences bellow also the use of the personal pronoun “they” should be omitted.

4) “*macro sociolinguistics, they try to study what do society do with their languages*”

5) “*people belonging to the high class, they speak...*”

So the sentences will be written like this:

4) “*macro sociolinguistics tries to study what do society do with their language*”,

5) “*people belonging to the high class speak...*”.

#### 4.2.2 Demonstrative Reference

The use of the determiners “that” and “the” when they are not required are the most common errors in demonstrative reference type.

- 1) “to conclude that ...”
- 2) “in fact that sociolinguists claim that...”
- 3) “since that it reveals”

The demonstrative determiner “that” in these sentences is not necessary. The right form of the sentences is as follows: “to conclude ...”, “in fact sociolinguists claim that...” and “since it reveals”

- 4) “sociolinguistics is the study of language with the relation to....”
- 5) “in order to understand and study the language within the society”
- 6) “when we came to language varieties we find differences in the pronunciation, grammar”.
- 7) “for example, we give the name “waiter” both to man and woman because the man is more powerful than women”

The personal determiner “the” in these sentences should be replaced by the preposition “in” for sentence number 4. Omit the determiner “the” in sentences 5, 6, 7. Hence the sentences should be written like this: 4) “sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to...” .

- 5) “in order to understand and study language within the society”.
- 6) “when we came to language varieties we find differences in pronunciation, grammar”
- 7) “for example we give the name of “waiter” to both man and women because man is more powerful than woman”
- 8) “the government choose the dialects those that are prestigious because it is the language of royal family”. In this sentence, the plural demonstrative determiner “those” is



not needed, it was sufficient to write *“the government choose the dialect that is prestigious because it are the language of the royal family”*

### **IV.3 Omission of Reference Cohesion when They are Required**

Among the errors found in our corpus is the omission of reference cohesive devices when they are required. This category is classified the third category concerning the number of errors, always as the previous categories a high percentage of errors is classified in the personal reference type of errors then the demonstrative reference.

#### **IV.3.1 Personal Reference**

The omission of personal reference cohesive devices when they are needed to form a cohesive piece of writing includes mainly the omission of the personal pronoun “it”, “he/she” and “they” in addition to the relative pronouns “which” and “who” .

1) *“enable to communicate”*. In this sentence the student has missed to use the personal determiner “us” (for instance), which is required because the learner is speaking about the language that enables us as human beings to communicate. *“enable us to communicate”*

2) *“status planning: is to change the function of the language, we can declare as an official one”*

3) *“each society has the language that use and present it’s identity”*

The cohesive device which is omitted in sentences 2 and 3 is the singular personal pronoun “it”. The personal pronoun “it” should be added to the sentences respectively as follows:

*“statue planning: is to change the function of the language, we can declare it as an official one”*

*“each society has the language that it uses and present its identity” .*

4) *“the first is called selective, is to select...”*,

5) *“same as English spoken by Americans , is lower”*

6) *“ we need the process of standardization process of language include four steps”*

In these sentences, the student did not use the relative pronoun “which”. The sentences should be written as follows: 4) “*the first is called selection, which is to select...*”, 5) “*same as English spoken by Americans , which is lower*”, 6) “*we need the process of standardization of language, which include four steps*”.

Whereas, in sentence number 7, the student did not use the plural personal pronoun “they”.

7) “*Janenile groups have specific slangs that use between them*”. The correction of the sentences is: “*Janenile groups have a specific slang that they use among them*”

8) “*and language can determine the situation of society, even the people belong to that society...*”. The item omitted in this sentence is the relative pronoun “who”. The student should write “*and language can determine the situation of society, even the people who belong to that society...*”

The personal pronoun “he/she” is missing in sentence number nine, and the personal determiner “their” for sentence number ten.

9) “*wether is from high status which use a particular way of speaking*”

10) “*they try to understand what societies do with languages*” . So, the sentences 9 and 10 should be rewritten respectively as follows: “*whether he/she is from high status which use a particular way of speaking*”, “*they try to understand what societies do with their languages*”

#### **IV.3.2 Demonstrative Reference**

The demonstrative reference devices that are omitted or forgotten in these sentences are: the personal determiner “the” in the first and second sentence, and the demonstrative determiner “that” in the third and fourth sentence.

1) “*unity of country*”

2) “*what is language is going to be taught in school*”

3) “as statue planning which consists of what are the languages is going to be the language instruction”.

The correction of the sentences is as follows:

- 1) “unity of the country”
- 2) “what is the language that is going to be taught in school”
- 3) “as statue planning which consists of what are the languages that are going to be the language instruction”
- 4) “in the world, exist a great number of languages” . The element which is omitted in this sentence is the demonstrative determiner “there”. The student should say “in the world there exist a great number of languages” .
- 5) “for example in USA the oldest people say they buy a potatoes in bag” the element omitted in this sentence is the demonstrative determiner “that”. The correct form of this sentence is as follows: “for example in USA oldest people say that they buy potatoes in bag”

#### **IV.4 Over use of Reference Cohesion**

Unlike the above three categories, this category is not highly found, we have found only a small number that is classified in the personal reference type of errors.

##### **IV.4.1 Personal Reference**

- 1) “and this may be by his language , if he uses his own one”. In this sentence the student has referred to the user of language several times by using the personal pronoun “he” and the personal determiner “his”, but he can avoid this by just saying “and this may be by using his own language”.
- 2) “the social account which led people, which is the changes of language”. In this sentence the student has used the relative pronoun “which” twice where he/she can use it

only one time to avoid repetition, and write *“the social account which is the changes of language, led people...”* .

3) *“It have also relation with language variation which is the difference in language at the level of grammar, pronunciation which is related to regional dialects”*. Here also the student can avoid the repetition of the relative pronoun “which” by saying *“it has relation with language variation which is the difference in language at the level of grammar, pronunciation, and related to regional dialects”*

4) *“which is related to the social information which give up more social details which is different social dialects”*. The same thing as the sentences two and three the repetition of the relative pronoun “which” should be avoided by writing for example, *“which is related to the social information and gives more social details such as different social dialects”*.

#### **IV.4.2 Demonstrative Reference**

Demonstrative reference errors have not been found in our corpus.

The different categories of errors with their main types are marked by high accuracy of personal reference errors especially the use of personal pronouns and personal determiners (possessives) which means that students use them frequently and they face problems in their use.

**NB:** Comparative reference errors were not found in students' essays in the three last categories, as it was presented in chapter 3. The percentage of comparative reference errors in the omission of reference cohesion, superfluous use of reference cohesion and overuse of reference cohesion category was 0% and we believe that it is due to the fact that the subjects of the exam ask students to argue but not to compare.

#### **IV.5 The Factor behind Students of UMMTO' Errors in using reference cohesion devices**

As it is shown through the above examples students of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou make different types of errors in their writings, mainly, the reference cohesion errors.

In many studies that are similar to this in which scholars try to study learners' errors and the causes behind them, most of them come to the conclusion that errors are either the result of interlingual factor. That is the influence of the first language on second/foreign language acquisition or even other languages that the learners know well, or the result of the lack of language proficiency of the learners, namely intralingual factor.

It is well known that the majority of students of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou are kabyle. This means that they use kabyle language in their daily communication since it is their mother tongue, with some use of both French and Arabic (languages that most of students master) and they study English as a foreign language. A comparison of the three languages with the errors found in the corpus show that, they do not involve the use of the same cohesive devices as English language. So here we notice a difference in the grammatical structure of the languages which led us to the conclusion that errors that are found in the compositions do not seem to be the result of interlanguage factor. To make our statement clear, examples from different categories mentioned at the beginning of this chapter are given in the following:

*"it is nor a native speaker"*. If we rewrite this sentence in French (a language that almost all the students master) keeping its meaning, we write "il n'est pas un locuteur natif". Through this sentence we notice that the pronoun "il" in French can be used to refer to both thing and object, as it is used to refer to a person, whereas, in English there is a difference in using "he" and "it". In other words, if the error is a result of language

interference, the student will use the personal pronoun “he”. The second example is “*but kabyle it was selected*” the translation of this sentence in French is “*mais la longue kabyle elle était choisi*” in which the use of the personal pronoun “elle” is useless. The fact that the form of the sentence in French also is wrong confirms that the error is not an interlingual one. “*Enable to communicate*” in French we say “... permettre de communiquer”. The two sentences in both languages are incomplete without the use of the personal pronoun “you/us”, which led us to the conclusion that the omission of this personal pronoun is a result of the lack of language proficiency and not language interference. The last example we took is from the overuse of reference cohesion devices category. As it demonstrates, there is no need to repeat the reference cohesive device several times in both languages, which also confirm our statement. The sentence is: “*and this may be by his language, if he uses his own one*” which involves saying “*and this may be by using his own language*”, or in French “ça peut être en utilisant sa propre langue”.

Concerning the type of endophoric reference errors students commit are different, it means that we have found errors in the three types. Starting with anaphoric reference errors such as: “*as we have a positive attitude towards English and French. So we consider it as languages of developed countries, and it is important to learn it*”. We named the error committed in this example anaphoric because the personal pronoun “it” refers to something already mentioned, or more exactly the words “English and French”. The second type is cataphoric, here the cohesive device used refers to something that comes after its use. Let consider the following example: “*these process is called language planning*” in this phrase the word referred to is placed after the cohesive device “these”. The next example includes an esphoric reference error. The example is: “*the others which uses a vernacular language*”, by esphoric reference we mean the reference cohesive devices that are situated in the same clause with the word it refers to.

The samples that are taken from our corpus show that students have difficulties in English language itself. This means that, they have a lack in English language proficiency. More specifically they face difficulties in using reference cohesion devices. This is supported by the fact that students' errors are divided into four categories: misuse of reference cohesion, overuse of reference cohesion, omission of reference cohesion, and superfluous use of reference cohesive devices. If we look at the examples given above, we notice that the errors are the result of the lack of language proficiency and most of them present confusions in using singular or plural forms, or in the use of the third singular personal pronoun "it". In addition to the definite article "the" and other almost similar confusions that show students' lack of proficiency in using reference cohesive devices.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed the results of the study and presented examples of reference cohesion errors that are found in our corpus. As it is shown, third year students of English in Tizi-Ouzou University confuse in the use of reference cohesion in their writings. It is also concluded that most of the errors students make are in the use of personal reference cohesion, mainly, in the misuse of reference cohesion category. Then, demonstrative reference, and in a lower position comparative reference, since the subjects that are given in the exam do not involve the use of comparison. This chapter also shows that cohesive reference errors are anaphoric, cataphoric and esphoric and are a result of intralingual factor.

## **General Conclusion**

This study aims at investigating the issue of reference cohesion errors in third year students of English compositions at the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. Our research is carried out by reference to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of reference cohesion devices, and by adopting error analysis theory (EA) which involves the collection of data, identification of errors, and classification into errors types, and these are steps followed in the present work. The corpus of our study consists of 100 essays in which students have answered to questions in socio linguistics module during two hours time.

The analysis of students' compositions indicated at least one error to each composition, in other words the average of one hundred eighty four (184) error were found in a number of one hundred (100) compositions, but some compositions contain more errors than others.

The errors found in the compositions are divided into four categories. The first category is the misuse of reference cohesion devices. In this category we have classified the reference cohesive devices that are used incorrectly, such as, the use of personal pronoun instead of personal determiners or demonstrative determiners. The second category is superfluous use of reference cohesive devices, in which we have classified sentences where students have used cohesive devices where they are not required. The third category is omission of reference cohesive devices. Here we have classified sentences where students should use cohesive devices but they did not. The last category is the overuse of reference cohesive devices, which means the use of cohesive devices more than necessary.

Each of the categories of errors mentioned above is divided into three types of reference cohesion as mentioned in the work of Halliday and hasan's (1976) classification of



reference cohesion, namely, personal reference cohesion, demonstrative reference cohesion, and comparative reference cohesion.

To carry out our investigation we have adopted a mixed method. We combined between quantitative method to collect and present the statistical data, and the qualitative method to describe and analyze them.

The findings show that third year students in the Department of English at Tizi-Ouzou University face difficulties in the use of reference cohesion in their writings, something which has a negative effect on the coherence and cohesion of their essays.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The results obtained from this study show that students confuse in the use of reference cohesive devices. They use them incorrectly, where they are not required, omit them when they are required or use them more than necessary. Thus a special attention should be given to this kind of cohesive devices for the role they play in the cohesion of the text.

To make students more aware of their mistakes, teachers of writing and grammar should devote more time to teach them how to use reference cohesive devices appropriately. That is, where to use singular or plural form of the reference cohesive devices, the reference cohesive devices that refer to things and those which refer to person, where they should use personal determiners or personal pronouns, demonstrative determiner or demonstrative adverbs, to make a distinction between the possessive determiner “its” and the form “it’s” which is the singular personal pronoun “it” plus the verb to be in present. This may help students understand how cohesion occurs in a text and push them to look to other cohesion elements such as conjunctions, ellipses etc. Although it is necessary to pay attention to students’ errors, we believe that they are part of language acquisition process. As stated by (Selinker 1992 in Ho, 2003) “*Errors are indispensable to*

*learners since the making of errors can be regarded as a device a learner uses in order to learn*". (cited in Katharina Rustipa, 2011: 17)

At the end, we hope that this study of reference cohesion errors in the use of English at Mouloud Mammeri University has provided the reader at least with an idea about the reference cohesion errors students make in their compositions. We also hope that it paves the way for further researches in the field of learners' difficulties in academic writing, such as, ellipses, substitution, lexical errors...etc. For the aim of identifying cohesion errors, find solutions and help students to become good writers, since writing skill is important in the process of foreign language learning.

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