



## Repetition and Collocation as Cohesive Strategies: A Study of Lexical Cohesion in Student Essays

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### Abstract

*This study examines the function of lexical cohesion in student writing, emphasizing how students employ collocation and repetition strategies to attain coherence. The study examines student essays from an essay-writing competition using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework to find the reiteration (synonyms, repetition, superordinates, generic terms). To find the collocation patterns, the study utilizes Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework and Xu's (2015) syntactic Taxonomy of Collocation. The results shows a heavy reliance on repetition and synonyms, indicating a preference for more straightforward reiteration techniques. Collocation pattern analysis revealed that "noun + verb" and "adjective + noun" structures are more common. The study concludes that although students successfully employ simple lexical cohesion tactics to increase coherence, extra training in more complex techniques may boost writing quality and fluency. The study advances linguistic theory and writing pedagogy by shedding light on how students attain coherence and proposing practical recommendations for writing instruction.*

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received:

May 13, 2025

Accepted:

July 25, 2025

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#### Keywords:

Cohesive Strategies,  
Lexical Cohesion,  
Students' Essay,

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**Cite as:**

Ituralde, R. J. (2025). Repetition and collocation as cohesive strategies: A study of lexical cohesion in student essay, *Journal of Education and Language Studies*, 2 (1), 27-57.  
<https://wmsu.edu.ph/jels/articles.html>



## Introduction

Coherence is a crucial component of written discourse that helps readers understand concepts in a logical and fluid way. Lexical cohesion, or the meaningful connections between words in a text, is one of the main factors that contribute to coherence. By indicating semantic linkages between lexical units, such as through repetition and collocation, lexical cohesion promotes a cohesive textual structure (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Effective use of lexical cohesiveness supports overall communicative efficacy by improving a reader's capacity to understand intended meanings and follow the development of ideas (McNamara et al., 2010).

Reiteration and collocation are two of the most often employed cohesive strategies to preserve lexical continuity. In order to direct reader perception and emphasize important ideas, repetition is the process of using the same word, synonyms, superordinates, or general phrases repeatedly (Hoey, 1991). Collocation, or the regular co-occurrence of words, on the other hand, gives writing flow and predictability and enables authors to convey ideas more idiomatically and organically (Sinclair, 1991). Recent research indicates that reiteration is still a common writing technique among students, especially those who are learning English as a second language (Hidayati & Jaya, 2023; Sidabutar, 2021). However, an over-reliance on repetition without lexical variation might impede language development and limit textual sophistication (Alotaibi, 2015; Zulianti, 2018). It has been demonstrated that one of the biggest obstacles facing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners is collocational competency. When collocations are misused, non-native speakers frequently create uncomfortable constructs that impair textual clarity and fluency (Chen & Baker, 2010; Yaseen & Oda, 2023).

According to studies by Saudin (2019) and Nahampun (2023), students may employ collocations like "noun + verb" or "adjective



+ noun" structures successfully, but they frequently underuse more intricate or idiomatic combinations, indicating a lack of collocational expertise. The overall sense of coherence in narrative and academic writings may be impacted by this underuse. The majority of previous research has concentrated on either native speaker corpora or wide textual genres, despite the fact that extensive research has demonstrated the significance of lexical cohesiveness in boosting coherence. The use of lexical coherent tactics like repetition and collocation by young EFL learners—especially junior high school students—in their real writing has received less attention. Furthermore, even if Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion model is still fundamental, it is necessary to investigate how contemporary syntactic frameworks, like Xu's (2015) taxonomy of collocation kinds, might support semantic approaches in order to produce a more complex analysis.

The importance of lexical cohesion in producing coherent and understandable writings has made it a significant area of study in linguistics and discourse studies. Halliday and Hasan (1976) established the foundation for our current understanding by classifying coherence into grammatical and lexical kinds. They maintained that a text is bound together by cohesive ties, which turn it into a single semantic unit. These ties include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, repetition, and collocation. In particular, reiteration (such as repetition, synonyms, antonyms, and superordinates) and collocation (words that frequently occur together) were used to define lexical cohesion. These strategies help texts maintain their structural and semantic coherence.

Lexical coherence is crucial in written discourse, supporting these findings and the literature. While repetition and collocation are essential for creating coherence, their improper or insufficient use can detract from a text's perceived quality. Both instructional practices and linguistic theory benefit from the insights gained



from these books, which provide methods for improving students' writing abilities and their capacity to produce coherent and understandable texts.

By looking at collocation, Sinclair (1991) went into additional detail about lexical cohesion. He defined collocation as the regular co-occurrence of words that give written discourse fluidity and naturalness. Collocations improve coherence by making a sentence more predictable, but they can also be difficult for learners, especially non-native speakers, who frequently have trouble with collocational accuracy.

Lexical coherence in IELTS reading passages was examined by Nahampun (2023). According to the study, collocation and repetition were the most employed methods, underscoring their significance in academic and standardized testing settings. The results affect teaching English, especially when preparing pupils for schoolwork.

Rahman (2020) investigates the lexical collocation productivity of Indonesian second-language writers in essay writing via a corpus-based comparison. He finds that L2 Indonesian writers vary in how actively they produce collocations. The study highlights the gap between collocation use and writer proficiency, pointing to the need for explicit training in collocation building. This underscores the importance of collocation as a cohesive strategy in student writing, even though repetition may still dominate in lower-proficiency text.

Hoey (1991) expanded on this basis by emphasizing the value of repetition in tying concepts together throughout a book. He observed that by strengthening linkages, lexical reiteration—whether through the precise repetition of words, synonyms, or related terms—improves textual coherence. However, he warned against over-repetition, which can result in redundancy and lower the text's overall quality.



Hameed, I. A. (2019) examined the frequency and function of lexical cohesion in Iraqi EFL undergraduate learners' argumentative essays. Through a quantitative approach, the study found that repetition was the dominant strategy used, accounting for nearly 70% of all cohesive ties. However, the excessive reliance on repetition resulted in diminished lexical variation, which ultimately compromised writing quality and reader engagement. Hameed emphasized the importance of encouraging students to use synonyms, antonyms, and other cohesive devices to avoid monotony and redundancy.

This study confirms the present findings, where repetition—although effective—was used more frequently than other strategies such as superordinates or general terms. The overlap in results supports the notion that many EFL learners, regardless of locale, gravitate toward simpler cohesive techniques due to familiarity and limited vocabulary resources.

Zulianti (2018) studied students' scientific writing and found that repetition was the most frequently utilized. Students often use repetition as a backup tactic to foster unity in academic settings. A quantitative study examining undergraduate theses at an Indonesian university was carried out by Hidayati and Jaya (2023). The results showed that, in 93% of the cases, repetition was the most common lexical cohesion method. Synonyms, collocations, and superordinate terms came in second and third, respectively, at 4% and 1%. Although repetition is common, using it excessively might restrict academic writing's lexical diversity.

Lee and Shin (2018) investigated how Korean EFL high school students used lexical cohesion in descriptive essays. They found that collocational errors were prevalent and often resulted in awkward or unidiomatic expressions. For instance, learners wrote phrases like “make a happy” or “do a mistake,” reflecting literal translations from L1. The researchers emphasized



the need for collocation-based instruction and the use of authentic corpora to expose learners to natural English combinations.

This finding provides a contrast to the present study, where students exhibited relatively accurate use of “noun + verb” and “adjective + noun” collocations. While this may reflect differences in instructional context or learner exposure to English, it also highlights the variability of collocational competence among EFL learners and the need for tailored instructional interventions.

Nababan and Nurkamto (2019) conducted a qualitative analysis of English essays written by Indonesian university students, focusing specifically on the interaction between lexical cohesion and coherence. They observed that repetition was often used to compensate for a lack of deeper topic development or transitions between ideas. The authors argued that cohesion is not sufficient for coherence; rather, cohesive devices must be employed strategically to contribute to rhetorical unity.

This observation complements the present study’s insight that lexical cohesion influences perceived coherence but does not automatically ensure it. While repetition and collocations like “achieve goals” or “expand understanding” help signal thematic links, coherence also depends on content organization, argument development, and logical sequencing.

Izquierdo and Aguirre-Muñoz (2020) explored the use of lexical cohesion in bilingual students’ expository writing across different grade levels in a longitudinal study conducted in Texas. Their research revealed that while younger students (grades 6–8) predominantly relied on repetition and simplistic collocations (e.g., adjective + noun), older students (grades 9–12) increasingly used more complex and diverse lexical ties, including metaphorical collocations and hyponyms. The authors



concluded that lexical cohesion develops progressively with writing maturity and explicit instruction.

This developmental perspective aligns with the findings of the present study, in which Grade 7 students showed proficiency in basic collocations (e.g., “books inspire,” “strong argument”) but rarely ventured into more sophisticated structures (e.g., phrasal verb + noun). These findings underscore the value of scaffolding writing instruction across year levels to support growth in cohesion.

Andrade and Evans (2020) explored the use of cohesive devices in academic writing among Latin American postgraduate students in the UK. Their study revealed that while students were aware of lexical cohesion theoretically, they struggled to apply it effectively in practice. Instead of using nuanced repetition or collocation, they relied heavily on mechanical linking phrases like “in addition,” “however,” or “moreover.” The researchers called for instruction that integrates both lexical and logical connectors in a balanced manner.

This study expands the implications of the present research. While it focuses on advanced learners, the gap between theoretical understanding and practical usage resonates with the observed tendencies in Grade 7 learners: a strong reliance on easily accessible strategies like repetition and basic collocation, often at the expense of variety and subtlety.

Sidabutar (2021) examined the lexical coherence of student-written narrative texts. According to the survey, repetition was the most common cohesive device, accounting for 64% of all devices utilized. Nevertheless, the study also pointed out an imbalance in the use of other writing methods that could improve coherence, like synonymy and collocation.



Yaseen and Oda (2023) investigated the writings of University of Basra EFL students. The results showed that repetition of the same word accounted for 60% of the cohesive linkages, with reiteration being substantially more frequent (89%) than collocation (11%). This emphasizes how much EFL learners rely on repetition.

Lexical coherence was investigated by Tanskanen (2006) as a joint endeavor between authors and readers. She underlined that collocation and repetition help readers navigate the text, assisting them in creating meaning and comprehending the author's intention. Saudin (2019) examined explanatory texts from EFL students at two different skill levels. The study found that the most common cohesive device was repetition, which was followed by synonymy and collocation. Additionally, the results showed that excessive repetition could lower writing quality, especially for less skilled students. Excessive repetition had a detrimental effect on writing quality, according to Alotaibi's (2015) investigation on the function of lexical cohesiveness in argumentative essays. The study highlights the significance of variation and balance in cohesive tactics to improve textual coherence and readability.

Sinaga and associates examined the Jakarta Post's instructional articles in 2022. Repetition was shown to be the most popular lexical coherence approach in the study, confirming its use in professional writing as a template for students to improve their writing abilities. The study of Puspitasari and colleagues (2020) looked at students' observation reports, they found that antonyms, synonyms, hyponyms, and repetition were necessary cohesive devices. According to the findings, teachers should prioritize a variety of cohesive teaching techniques to improve students' writing coherence and clarity.

McNamara, Kintsch, Songer, and Kintsch (2010) investigated the relationship between reader comprehension and textual coherence and discovered that texts with a high degree of coherence help beginning readers understand. On the other hand, readers with a



lot of prior information may benefit from less coherent texts since they might stimulate deeper cognitive processing. These results highlight how coherence affects perceived textual quality in a context-dependent manner.

Research investigations have also emphasized students' use of coherent devices in their writing. Biber et al., (1998) used corpus-based techniques to examine lexical coherence across text genres. They discovered that learner texts frequently have less coherence because they lack the density of coherent linkages present in writing by native speakers. Chen and Baker (2010) also examined lexical bundles in L1 and L2 academic writing. They found that although non-native writers often employ formulaic expressions, they frequently misuse collocations, resulting in less coherent and fluid texts. These results were supported by Granger and Bestgen (2014), who found that non-native writers underuse collocations, which reduces the writing's naturalness and overall coherence.

Hyland (2008) studied lexical clusters in academic writing and found that recurrent patterns, like "in terms of" and "it is important to," enhance textual coherence by giving readers familiar organizational cues. Still, novice writers overuse these clusters, resulting in mechanical prose lacking engagement.

Crossley and McNamara (2012) showed that lexical cohesion and linguistic sophistication significantly predict second-language learners' writing proficiency and found that diverse and well-applied cohesive ties were positively correlated with perceived coherence and writing quality.

In order to close this gap, the current study looks at how junior high school students use collocation and repetition to make their essays lexically cohesive. This study aims to identify common cohesive methods, collocation kinds based on Xu's syntactic taxonomy, and how these patterns affect students' perceived



coherence of written discourse by examining texts created during an academic writing competition. By identifying problematic and successful lexical patterns in learner writing, this study – which is based on Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion – aims to inform second language teaching as well as writing training.

The concept of cohesion was initially presented in Halliday and Hasan (1976) and has drawn interest from scholars concentrating on writing. Considering these, according to two academics, a text is a semantic unit, the components of which have clear, coherent linkages connecting them. As a result, cohesiveness makes a text what it is. In 1976, Halliday and Hasan classified cohesiveness into "lexical coherence" and "grammatical cohesion." Grammatical coherence is categorized into four categories: ellipsis, reference, substitution, and combination. Meanwhile, lexical coherence was classified into two types: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration covers repetition- the lexical recurrence of an item (the same word, a synonym/near synonym, a superordinate, a general word).

Conversely, collocation is determined by associating the lexical items that regularly co-occur within and across sentence boundaries.

The following collocation types are based on Xu's (2015) syntactic patterns of lexical collocations: adjective + noun, adverb + adjective, adverb + verb, noun + noun, noun + of + noun, noun + verb, verb + noun, phrasal verb + adverb, noun + phrasal verb, and phrasal verb + noun.

Xu's (2015) taxonomy provides a syntactic-level extension to the semantic and functional cohesion model of Halliday and Hasan (1976). While Halliday and Hasan categorize lexical cohesion into two major types – reiteration and collocation – their approach is largely semantic, focusing on the meaning relationships among words. In contrast, Xu classifies collocation patterns based on syntactic structures, such as "adjective + noun," "verb + noun," or



“noun + verb,” which allows for a more fine-grained identification and analysis of collocations in student writing.

This study integrates both frameworks to provide a holistic analysis of lexical cohesion: Halliday and Hasan’s model guides the identification of semantic cohesive relationships, while Xu’s taxonomy supports the categorization and pattern analysis of collocations in syntactic terms. This complementarity enriches the analytical process by capturing both the function and structure of cohesive ties in learner texts.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do learners use repetition in their writing?
2. What common collocation patterns are observed in the learner’s written discourse?
3. How does lexical cohesion influence the perceived coherence of the text?

### **Method**

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach, guided by the theoretical lens of Halliday and Hasan’s model of cohesion. Within this design, Xu’s syntactic taxonomy is employed as an analytical tool to categorize and interpret specific collocational patterns used in student essays.

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically using textual analysis. The focus was analyzing student essays collected from an essay-writing contest to identify coherence-related linguistic features. The study was guided by Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) theory of cohesion, which emphasizes the role of reiteration and collocation in creating textual coherence. Within this design, Xu’s syntactic taxonomy is employed as an analytical tool to categorize and interpret specific collocational patterns used in student essays. These patterns, such as “noun + verb” or



“adjective + noun,” are not just counted but analyzed in relation to their cohesive function, thus aligning with the qualitative nature of the study.

By integrating Xu’s syntactic taxonomy, the design ensures that analysis of collocation goes beyond surface-level identification and allows for in-depth understanding of structural preferences and proficiency indicators in student writing.

The data comprised essays written by students who participated in an essay-writing contest. A total of five essays were collected for analysis. Purposive sampling was used to gather the essays, as the selection was based on the grade seven students who participated in the essay writing contest.

The five essays were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria:

- (1) Completeness and coherence of the content,
- (2) Clarity of language use, and
- (3) Representation across the student population of Grade 7 participants in the essay-writing contest.

### **The Participants**

All selected participants were Grade 7 junior high school students aged between 12 and 13 years old. They were enrolled in a private school in the Philippines with English as the primary medium of instruction.

Participants were purposively sampled based on the following criteria:

1. Enrollment in Grade 7 during the school year 2024–2025.
2. Willingness to participate in the school-organized writing contest.
3. Basic writing proficiency in English as demonstrated in prior class performance.

A total of five (5) student essays were selected for analysis. These essays were chosen to ensure diversity in writing style while keeping consistency in age, grade level, and writing conditions.



### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Each participant was allotted one and a half hours (90 minutes) to complete their essay during the competition. The session was held in a controlled classroom environment with standard writing conditions:

1. Students were provided with the essay prompt at the beginning of the session.
2. No dictionaries, mobile devices, or online tools were allowed.
3. All essays were handwritten on standard ruled paper.
4. Proctors ensured academic honesty and monitored the time strictly.

The prompt was open-ended and thematically designed to encourage personal reflection and elaboration, such as exploring the impact of books, reading, or personal development. The instructions emphasized coherence, clarity, and originality. No pre-writing consultation or drafting was permitted outside of the allocated writing period.

Upon conclusion of the writing period, all essays were collected and reviewed for:

1. Completeness of content (introduction, body, conclusion),
2. Clarity of expression, and
3. Overall coherence.

Only essays that showed these minimum criteria were retained for inclusion in the final analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis adopted a qualitative textual approach grounded in the frameworks of Halliday and Hasan (1976) for lexical cohesion and Xu (2015) for syntactic collocational structures. The steps followed in the analysis are detailed below:

All five essays were read in full at least twice to gain a holistic understanding of content, writing style, and overall coherence. This step ensured that the researchers could interpret the use of lexical devices in the context of the essay's central ideas.



The essays were systematically reviewed using manual highlighting and coding techniques to identify:

1. Reiteration: This included repetition of the same word, use of synonyms or near-synonyms, superordinate terms, and general words.
2. Collocation: Instances where words often co-occur in recognizable patterns were identified.

Identified cohesive devices were classified according to the following:

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) categories for reiteration, including:

1. Repetition (exact word recurrence),
2. Synonymy (semantic equivalents),
3. Superordinates (hierarchical categories),
4. General terms (broad referents).

Xu's (2015) syntactic taxonomy for collocation, which includes:

5. Adjective + Noun (e.g., strong argument),
6. Noun + Verb (e.g., books inspire),
7. Verb + Noun (e.g., achieve goals),
8. Noun + Noun, Noun + of + Noun, and other syntactic patterns.

Each identified cohesive item was tallied to determine frequency. Patterns were then analyzed across the dataset to find recurring strategies or structural preferences.

Beyond surface-level counting, each instance of lexical cohesion was examined within the sentence or paragraph in which it appeared. This was to determine its contribution to textual coherence, such as whether it reinforced the central theme, helped with paragraph transitions, and avoided redundancy while enhancing clarity.



The essays were then compared to determine the variations in lexical cohesion strategies between students, common tendencies (e.g., overuse of repetition vs. diversity of collocations), and relationship between lexical cohesion and the perceived clarity or fluidity of the essay.

Findings were cross-referenced with insights from relevant literature (e.g., Hameed, 2019; Sidabutar, 2021; Xu, 2015) to validate observed trends and situate them within broader discourse studies on ESL writing.

The essays were analyzed using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of lexical cohesion, supported by Xu's (2015) syntactic taxonomy of collocations. Each research question was addressed as follows:

RQ1: How do learners use repetition in their writing?

Reiteration types were identified (synonyms, repetition, superordinates, and general words) and quantified using Halliday and Hasan's categories.

RQ2: What common collocation patterns are observed?

Instances of collocations were categorized based on Xu's syntactic taxonomy (e.g., noun + verb, adjective + noun). Frequencies and examples were tabulated and interpreted.

RQ3: How does lexical cohesion influence perceived coherence?

The relationship between the use of cohesive devices (from RQ1 and RQ2) and textual coherence was analyzed. Sample sentences were examined to show how lexical cohesion contributes to theme development and reader understanding.



## Results and Discussion

### Learners' Use of Reiteration

The frequency of various reiteration approaches employed by learners is elicited in this study. *Synonyms* (36 instances), *repetition* (23 cases), *superordinate* (8 cases), and *general words* (8 instances) are used to accomplish repetition. Although superordinate and generic phrases are employed less frequently, the data indicates that learners most frequently utilize synonyms and repetition to restate topics in their writing. This suggests that lexical variety and straightforward repetition are preferred over more complex reiteration techniques.

According to Hyland (2007), learners most frequently employ synonyms and repetition to strengthen coherence in their writing. This is especially true for ESL students, whose use of synonyms often permits lexical variation while preserving coherence. Students favor simpler methods, like direct repetition and synonyms, to more intricate language tactics, such as superordinate sentences or generic words, according to Witte and Faigley (1981). Cognitive constraints and an emphasis on lucidity and ease of communication are the causes of this trend.

Moreover, according to Johns (1986), reiteration and synonyms are examples of lexical repetition, a crucial learning aid. In addition to giving academic writing coherence, it strengthens language acquisition.

Further, the analysis revealed that students heavily relied on synonyms (36 instances) and direct repetition (23 instances) as their primary strategies for reiteration—supporting studies such as Yaseen & Oda (2023) and Sidabutar (2021) which found reiteration to be the dominant cohesive device among EFL learners.



In relation to Xu's taxonomy, students most frequently employed collocations in forms like "adjective + noun" (42 instances) and "noun + verb" (38 instances). These align with Xu's identified syntactic patterns, affirming their relevance in analyzing actual student writing. However, the rarity of more advanced structures (e.g., "phrasal verb + adverb," with only 1 instance) also reflects what Laufer and Waldman (2011) observed: that more complex collocational patterns are less frequently used by learners with limited lexical proficiency.

With this result, teachers should provide explicit instruction on varied reiteration strategies, particularly superordinates, antonyms, and general terms, to enrich learners' lexical repertoire. Classroom activities such as lexical chains, paraphrasing drills, and synonym-sorting tasks can raise awareness of semantic relationships. Writing assessments can include criteria on effective reiteration use to encourage lexical variety and penalize redundancy.

#### *Example 1*

##### *Synonyms*

*Dream big/Dream large: Both phrases denote ambitious goals.*

*Achievements/Accomplishments: Both refer to successful outcomes.*

*Lessons/Learnings: Both indicate knowledge gained from experience.*

*Engaging/Aspiring: Both describe something captivating and motivating.*

*Goals/Aspirations: Both refer to desired outcomes.*

*Crucial/Important: Both highlight significance.*

*Help/Aid: Both suggest assistance.*

*Celebrate/Acknowledge: Both indicate recognition of success.*

##### *Repetition of Words:*

*Books: Repeated frequently as the central theme.*

*Inspire: Repeated to emphasize the core effect.*

*Dream big: Repeated to highlight the ambition.*

*Achievements: Repeated to emphasize positive outcomes.*



*Generations: Repeated to highlight the lasting impact.*

*Superordinate and General Words:*

*Superordinate: "Literature" could be a superordinate term encompassing all the specific types of textual content mentioned (books, lessons, learnings, aspirations, etc.).*

*General: "Reading" is the overarching activity discussed*

*Example 2*

*Synonym Words:*

*Acquire/Obtain: Both mean to gain possession of something.*

*Improve/Enhance: Both suggest making something better.*

*Common/Usual: Both describe something frequent or typical.*

*Reading material/Books: Both refer to texts used for reading.*

*Fascinating/Engrossing: Both describe something captivating.*

*Ambitious/Aspiring: Both describe someone with high goals.*

*Help/Aid: Both suggest assistance.*

*Important/Crucial: Both highlight significance.*

*Understand/Grasp: Both mean to comprehend.*

*Expand/Increase: Both suggest growth or enlargement.*

*Repetition of Words:*

*Reading: Repeated to emphasize the central theme.*

*Books: Frequently repeated as the key tool.*

*Understand/Understanding: Repeated to highlight the importance of comprehension.*

*Achieve/Achievement: Repeated to emphasize the positive outcomes of reading.*

*Superordinate and General Words:*

*Superordinate: "Literacy" could be a superordinate term, encompassing reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and the ability to understand different texts.*

*General: "Reading" is the overall activity discussed*



### **Common Collocation Patterns**

The specific collocation patterns predominate in the learner's written speech, with the most common pairings being "noun + verb" (38) and "adjective + noun" (42). These results imply that students frequently use particular collocation types, which may be explained by their fundamental function in providing clear meaning in written language. For example, "noun + verb" patterns, like "students participate," highlight action and agency, while "adjective + noun" combinations, like "strong argument," offer nuanced descriptions.

The reduced frequency of more complicated structures, such as "phrasal verb + adverb" (1), indicates less employment of idiomatic expressions, which may reflect the learners' growing proficiency or preference for simpler constructs.

These trends are consistent with research on the acquisition of second languages. Nation (2001) highlighted the value of collocations in improving accuracy and fluency, advising students to prioritize frequently used structures to guarantee good communication. Similarly, Hill (2000) contended that common patterns such as "adjective + noun" are essential in academic writing, making collocations the building blocks of language proficiency. Furthermore, Laufer and Waldman (2011) observed that advanced collocation usage correlates with higher language proficiency, consistent with the limited use of complicated collocations. This implies that the study's participants might still be learning and internalizing increasingly complex collocational structures.

Thus, instruction should move beyond isolated vocabulary learning to include structured collocation practice using Xu's syntactic patterns. Use of corpus tools, collocation dictionaries, and text modeling can expose students to a wider range of natural



word combinations. Activities like collocation matching, sentence-building, and contextual gap-fills using advanced collocations will foster fluency. Teachers can scaffold collocation use in writing by tasks.

*Example 1*

*Adjective + Noun:*

*several purposes*

*academic purposes*

*captivating content*

*knowledgeable quotes*

*specific item*

*fictional character*

*real-life*

*descriptive and knowledgeable content*

*Adverb + Adjective:*

*wanted*

*truly make*

*Adverb + Verb:*

*have an impact*

*truly make*

*somehow inspires*

*wanted*

*Noun + Noun:*

*Book week*

*essay writing contest*

*Information Services Month*

*National Library*

*Noun + of + Noun:*

*impact on how*

*summary of everything*

*scene where*

*part of the story*



*Noun + Verb:*

*Books inspire*

*books contain*

*books make*

*books have*

*readers dream*

*readers celebrate*

*character acquire*

*The character was able*

*events make*

*images make*

*messages teach*

*messages inspire*

*messages give*

*Verb + Noun:*

*make us dream*

*make us think*

*make us celebrate*

*make us want*

*achieve dreams*

*acquire an item*

*implement that*

*Phrasal Verb + Adverb:*

*come across*

*Noun + Phrasal Verb:*

*readers who find books*

*The character was able to do*

*We can refer to*

*Phrasal Verb + Noun:*

*come across them*

*Example 2*



*Adjective + Noun:*

*common skill*

*specific topic*

*reading material*

*fascinating stories*

*an ambitious person*

*growing minds*

*own goals*

*important things*

*key because*

*proper structure*

*own materials*

*different authors*

*important skill*

*Adverb + Adjective:*

*sure*

*very important*

*Adverb + Verb:*

*be able*

*always share*

*even created*

*always line*

*Noun + Noun:*

*reading material*

*storybooks*

*own coherent writing ability*

*reading styles*

*Noun + of + Noun:*

*reason for this*

*gateway to creativity*

*understanding of the world*

*Noun + Verb:*

*people acquire*

*Reading improves*



*books were*

*books convey*

*books help*

*books inspire*

*books are*

*books bring*

*authors going*

*skill obtain*

*Verb + Noun:*

*acquire skill*

*improve a person's*

*convey a message*

*help and inspire*

*expand their*

*share the knowledge*

*obtain and maintain*

### **Lexical Cohesion: Its Influence on the Coherence of the Text**

Lexical cohesion significantly influenced the perceived coherence of student texts. This was particularly evident in how certain lexical items were repeated or varied through synonyms to maintain thematic consistency. For example, in one essay, the phrase “dream big” appeared multiple times alongside its synonymous variant “dream large.” This repetition, while simple, effectively emphasized the essay’s central theme of ambition and served to unify its paragraphs. Another essay frequently used “books,” “reading materials,” and “literature” as lexical chains, guiding the reader through various aspects of reading without disrupting topic continuity.

In terms of collocation, the repeated use of combinations such as “strong argument,” “books inspire,” and “achieve goals” lent a natural flow and semantic predictability to the writing. These combinations helped structure the arguments more fluently and



gave readers familiar anchor points to follow the progression of ideas. For instance, the phrase “books inspire” was followed by supporting details about specific inspirational characters, effectively linking the lexical item “books” to its function within the essay’s message.

These examples show that even basic lexical cohesion strategies, when used consistently and purposefully, play a vital role in improving the text’s coherence. However, the limited use of more nuanced collocations (e.g., “gateway to creativity” or “expand understanding”) suggests areas for pedagogical growth in helping students explore richer vocabulary choices that enhance both semantic depth and fluency.

These results are consistent with previous studies on the connection between text coherence and lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesiveness, which is attained by repetition and collocations, establishes semantic connections that bind a text together, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) noted. According to Nation (2001), mastering collocations enhances correctness and fluency, two essential qualities for creating texts that make sense. Laufer and Waldman (2011) also pointed out that increased coherence and writing proficiency are linked to sophisticated vocabulary patterns, including complex collocations. Consequently, the learners' dependence on basic lexical cohesion techniques highlights the crucial role that lexical cohesion plays in improving the coherence of their writing, even though it also shows their increasing skill.

Further, writing instruction should emphasize how cohesion and coherence interact—not just at sentence level but across paragraphs. Students should be trained to revise for cohesion, evaluating their use of cohesive ties and understanding their impact on reader clarity. Teachers can use student samples and peer review protocols to highlight well-cohesive writing and discuss revisions for improvement. Rubrics can include a



coherence criterion linked to lexical cohesion, helping students understand and aim for better cohesion in their drafts.

### **Conclusion**

This study addressed three core research questions concerning the use of lexical cohesion in student writing. First, students primarily employed repetition and synonyms to achieve coherence, showing a preference for simpler reiteration strategies while underutilizing superordinates and general terms.

Second, the most frequently observed collocation patterns were "adjective + noun" and "noun + verb," reflecting learners' reliance on basic syntactic combinations. Complex collocational forms were rare, indicating limited proficiency in advanced lexical constructions.

Lastly, analysis of contextualized examples revealed that lexical cohesion—particularly through repetition and familiar collocations—contributed to the perceived coherence of the texts by reinforcing themes and ensuring clarity. These findings highlight both the strengths and limitations in learners' cohesive strategies and underscore the importance of targeted instruction in varied and advanced lexical cohesion techniques.

### **Recommendations**

Integrate explicit instruction on lexical cohesion into the English language curriculum at all levels. It is recommended that schools, particularly in junior high levels, embed systematic lessons on lexical cohesion—focusing on both repetition and collocation—into the English language curriculum. This recommendation benefits not only students, who will improve their writing fluency



and coherence, but also English teachers, who will be provided with structured content for cohesive instruction. Teaching materials should include examples of lexical reiteration and collocation across various genres of writing. Curriculum planners are encouraged to collaborate with linguists or writing specialists to design modules that expose students to rich, varied, and purposeful language use, ensuring students internalize cohesive strategies early on.

Incorporate assessment criteria that specifically evaluate the use of lexical cohesion in student writing. To enhance writing proficiency, it is advised that educational institutions and teachers adopt rubrics that include specific criteria for evaluating lexical cohesion. Assessing students on their effective use of cohesive devices—such as synonyms, collocations, and lexical chains—promotes mindful writing and encourages revision for clarity. This recommendation primarily benefits student writers, who will gain awareness of how cohesion shapes coherence, as well as language assessors, who can more accurately gauge writing development. By explicitly including cohesion as a measurable skill, students will begin to see writing as a process that demands linguistic control, not just content delivery.

Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of lexical cohesion and its role in effective writing. It is imperative that teachers, particularly those teaching English and writing, receive continuous training on lexical cohesion—both in theory and in practical application. Workshops or in-service training should focus on how cohesion affects coherence, how to identify and teach collocational patterns, and how to guide students in revising for cohesion. This not only benefits educators by expanding their pedagogical knowledge but also indirectly supports students, who will receive better instruction. Training must include real student samples, diagnostic activities, and applied strategies that teachers can easily integrate



into daily lessons across different writing genres and proficiency levels.

Conduct ongoing research to monitor the effectiveness of implemented instructional strategies and to identify areas for further improvement. Future studies should be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of cohesive instruction on student writing development. These should include action research by classroom teachers, larger-scale school-based studies, or regional assessments. This recommendation serves education researchers, school administrators, and curriculum developers who need empirical data to refine language programs. By gathering data on how students respond to interventions targeting lexical cohesion, schools can adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Furthermore, these studies can highlight persistent areas of weakness—such as overreliance on repetition—and inform teacher training, curriculum revisions, and policy planning at the institutional level.

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#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the completion of this research paper.



Ituralde (2025). Repetition and collocation as cohesive strategies: A study of lexical cohesion in student essay.

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