CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE AND COHESION IN ESSAYS WRITTEN BY BENINESE SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS.

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Résumé

L'expression écrite est une compétence linguistique qui joue un rôle important dans la réussite scolaire et professionnelle des apprenants de l'ALE. Dans les contextes d'enseignement-apprentissage avancés de l'ALE, les apprenants sont soumis à diverses tâches d'expression écrite, notamment la rédaction de dissertations pour développer leurs compétences rédactionnelles. L'objectif général de ce travail de recherche est d'analyser la cohésion et la cohérence dans les productions écrites des élèves de l'enseignement secondaire en ALE au Bénin. Plus précisément, cette étude vise à examiner les éléments de cohésion et de cohérence dans les productions écrites des élèves de l'enseignement secondaire en ALE au Bénin. Une analyse de contenu a été réalisée sur trente textes argumentatifs rédigés par les participants. L'analyse des différentes productions écrites a révélé la présence d'éléments de cohésion dans les productions des élèves. Les principaux éléments de cohésion identifiés dans les productions des élèves comprennent : la réitération, la référence, la conjonction, la collocation et la substitution. Il n'y avait pas d'ellipse dans les rédactions. La réitération constitue l'élément de cohésion le plus utilisé dans les productions des apprenants analysées. En ce qui concerne la cohérence dans les productions écrites des élèves, les résultats ont révélé que les élèves ont de bonnes idées, des idées pertinentes par rapport au sujet qui leur est donné. Toutefois, ils ne savent pas comment exprimer ces idées de manière cohérente. La plupart des productions n'étaient pas conforme à l'organisation générale (introduction-corps du devoir-conclusion) d'une dissertation.

Abstract

Writing is an important language skill that contributes to EFL learners' academic and professional success. In advanced EFL teaching and learning contexts, students are given various writing tasks especially essay writing to develop their writing skill. The general objective of this research work is to analyze cohesion and coherence in Beninese secondary school EFL students' written productions. More specifically, this study aims at examining elements of cohesion and coherence in the written productions by Benin secondary school EFL students. A content analysis was carried out on thirty argumentative essays written by the participants. The analysis of the various written productions revealed the presence of some cohesive devices in the students' productions. The cohesive patterns identified in the students' essays include: reiteration, reference, conjunction, collocation and substitution. There was no ellipsis in the essays. Reiteration patterns were found as the most used cohesive devices in the students' essays analyzed. Concerning coherence in the students' written productions, the findings revealed that the students have good ideas, relevant to the topic given to them, but they do not know how to express such ideas coherently.

Most of the productions did not follow the general organization (introduction-body-conclusion) of an essay writing.

1. Introduction

To be conversant with a language, one has to master all four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In EFL contexts, some learners neglect all the four skills whereas some focus on those that seem to be easier for them. Most of the time, they feel at ease with the reading skill. Writing is considered as the most difficult and complex of the four skills "due to inherent difficulties underlying generating and organizing ideas, and putting these ideas together in a harmonious way" (Kılıç, Genç & Bada, 2016, p. 107). Even if relevant ideas are generated, they are not arranged in the appropriate way, the text produced will not be understandable. In fact, for a text to hold together, cohesion and coherence devices must be used appropriately inasmuch as enable the flow of ideas and establish a link between various parts of a text. Because of the difficulties inherent with the production of written texts, students often copy parts of the reading comprehension texts, especially when the topic of the writing is the same as the one of such reading comprehension texts. As a result, they complete secondary education with shortfalls in writing that is a key public relations skill (Wise, 2005).

This study has been designed and conducted to contribute to the improvement of the teaching of EFL writing at secondary school level in Benin. Teacher educators and supervisors can use its findings to build the capacities of teachers for better instruction. Those teachers will manage their classrooms better and avoid the tensions that might arise from the practice of free writing activities in the classroom (Ahmed, 2023). According to Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017, p. 113), "to write a good English composition seems never very easy." This research work will further sensitize sstudents to their writing errors and mistakes, introducing them to important writing elements which are cohesion and coherence. These elements almost unknown to students will clearly be detailed and evaluate in this study. This will enhance students' performance in writing.

The main objective of this study is to analyze cohesion and coherence in Benin secondary school EFL students' essays writing. In other words,

the study addresses the following question "How do EFL students handle cohesion and coherence in essay writing?".

2. Literature Review

The issue of cohesion and coherence in students' written productions sparked debates and so far, it caught many researchers' attention. This section summarizes and comments on some former research works that are closely related to the issue of writing. It also sheds light on theories related to cohesion and coherence.

2.1 Challenges Related to Writing

Kuo (1995), explored cohesion and coherence at three levels of academic text - lexicon, sentence structure, and organization of information. He highlighted two different aspects that make it difficult for a non-native writer to understand the relationship between meaning and form in academic writing. These are vocabulary aspect or structure that varies from one language to another and the word or expression choice aspect.

In a research work conducted by Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) on Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda University EFL students' difficulties in writing English compositions especially essay writing, some problems have been identified. It has been found that students have limited vocabulary; low motivation in making composition; poor basic writing knowledge in terms of sentence structure and grammar, punctuation, spelling; low ability in developing ideas in essay and misunderstanding of the differences between cohesion and coherence. They also lack exercises on how they should make their essay coherent and cohesive. In addition, there are problems due to the difference in cultural backgrounds between the students' mother tongue and English.

Similarly, a study conducted by Abbas (2017) on EFL students in Indonesia showed that the students' achievement in essay writing is influenced by several difficulties and factors namely difficulties in getting the right ideas, applying correct grammar, choosing appropriate words, and complying with punctuation and capitalization rules. Further, they are hardly motivated to write and scarcely practice writing at leisure time.

Other reasons that account for students' poor performance in writing have been revealed through other research works. Dossoumou, Mehouenou and Koukpossi (2018) undertook research on graded writing

composition test papers of Benin Senior Secondary Three (SS3) learners. They found that students have four main problems in writing: vocabulary, cohesion, coherence and weaknesses related to structure. These problems are due to the little time devoted to teaching writing, EFL learners and teachers' perception of writing as a complex activity that requires mental effort, and lack of adequate training. In addition, learners have weak and little experiences in writing.

Moreover, Ahmed (2010) conducted his research work on the organizational problems that Egyptian student teachers of English encounter when they write an English essay. The findings revealed that students are not accustomed to reading for long hours and they are not ready to make that effort. They "frequently read the simplified texts of novels and plays" (p. 216) and above all, they have a hard time expressing opinions on different issues. Additionally, at the psychological level, students faced a number of challenges including lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and writing anxiety.

2.2 Challenges in Achieving Cohesion and Coherence in a Text

In his research work, Kuo (1995, p. 51) found that problems of lexical cohesion lie mainly in two aspects including "distance between cohesive ties, and exophoric sources of cohesion, particularly as prior knowledge is involved." Readers' lack of prior knowledge on a text's topic and the great distance between cohesive devices inside a text cause problem of misunderstanding or misinterpretation and non-perception of cohesion and coherence in a text to them. It has been revealed that non-native writers are not often well equipped with sufficient knowledge of lexical links and variations within a text, and are unaware of the relationship between lexical choice and context, which makes writing difficult for them.

Another source of challenge is coherence break, a problem identified by Wikborg (1990) through his study in Swedish university student essays, quoted in Kuo (1995). Such a situation is related to some factors at the level of text organization namely unspecified topic, unjustified change of topic, misleading paragraph division, misleading disposition (ordering of material), irrelevance and misleading headings that reflect students' incompetence to connect sentences to form a coherent paragraph and to organize paragraphs to form a coherent text.

Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017), have also pinpointed some problems related to coherence and cohesion. According to them, not only students do not understand the differences between cohesion and coherence but they also have problems with coherence is on thesis statement. They misplace the thesis and this compromises the flow of ideas in their writing.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinnings
Here, it is worth delving into the theories underlying cohesion and coherence as they related to writing.

2.3.1 Cohesion
There is cohesion in a text when links exist between words and expressions that facilitate the understanding of the whole text. The link is made in a way that readers are able to refer backward or forward to words or expressions in a text to understand it. Cohesion is defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 8) as "a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it". There are two major categories of cohesion: grammatical and lexical. The former consists of the subcategories of reference, substitution, and ellipsis, while the latter consists of reiteration and collocation. Conjunction is considered as lexico-grammatical for being mainly grammatical but having a lexical component. Before developing these main categories and subcategories, the notions of text, texture, and tie have been explored.

2.3.1.1 Text
A text is a semantic unit that can take either a spoken form or a written form. A written text includes a set of related sentences on paper or a computer screen whereas a spoken text is oral or recorded on a digital device. The form of sentences is not what is important in a text but their meanings. Halliday and Hassan (1976) define a text as "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole" (p. 1).

2.3.1.2 Texture
What makes a text meaningful is called texture. It gives a text its property of being a text by adequately linking ideas among themselves through cohesive devices. According to Paltridge (2012, p. 114) "texture results

where there are language items that tie meanings together in the text as well as tie meanings in the text to the social context in which the text occurs.". A text that has texture is a text that includes all the required elements to make it meaningful.

2.3.1.3 Tie

The word tie in this context refers to the semantic and lexical connections that exist between various cohesive devices within a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) call it "a single instance of cohesion… which is a term for one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items" (p. 3). It is a directional concept, "the direction may be anaphoric, with the presupposed element preceding, or cataphoric, with the presupposed element following." (p. 329). For example, in the following sentences:

John had an accident on his way to the office. He has been directly sent for an emergency treatment at the hospital.

The interpretation of the reference of the pronoun he, is dependent on the lexical item John. It is an example of anaphoric cohesion.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) gave the following example of cataphoric cohesion: "This is what worries me: I can't get any reliable information." Here, the cataphoric demonstrative 'this' means "What I'm just going to say" (p. 70).

2.3.1.4 Grammatical Subcategories of Cohesion

Reference has been defined by Halliday and Hassan (1976) as ". . . the relation between an element of the text and something else by reference to which it is interpreted" (p. 308). In English, items which have the property of reference are personals, demonstratives, and comparatives. They may be exophoric (looks outside the text to its situational context) or endophoric i.e., anaphoric (the presupposed element preceding in a text) or cataphoric (the presupposed element following in a text).

Substitution is when one word is substituted for another word, phrase or clause. There are three types of substitution: normal (e.g. one, some, etc.), verbal (e.g. do), and clausal (e.g. so). In the following exchange, the normal one replaces the lexical item car: Why don't you buy this blue car? I want a red one.

Ellipsis is "substitution by zero". The second sentence in the following exchange is an example of ellipsis: What have you been doing? Writing a letter.

2.3.1.5 Lexico-Grammatical Subcategory

Conjunction expresses specific meanings "which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse" (Haliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 226). The main categories of conjunction are additive (adding more information: in addition, besides, also etc.), adversative (makes a qualification about the information being given, e.g.: I'd like to go to the party, but I'm going on holiday.), causal (introduces a reason for something happening, e.g.: Roberts felt nervous because he didn't know anyone in the room.), temporal (shows one thing that happens for another, e.g.: I got up and made my breakfast.), and continuative (e.g.: They met for two hours. After that, they had lunch).

2.3.1.6 Lexical Subcategories

Reiteration is the repetition of a lexical item in the context of reference. A reiterated item is usually preceded by the reference item 'the' or a demonstrative. It may be a repetition, a synonym or near-synonym, a superordinate or a general noun. In the following sentence, the lexical item book refers back to the first instance of book: John bought a new book at the bookstore. The book is about animals. In the following sentence, the lexical item plane is a superordinate of Boeing 747: 'E.T. has bought a Boeing 747. He actually lives in the plane'.

Collocation refers to the "association of lexical items that regularly co-occur" (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, p. 284). These lexical items perform a cohesive function when they occur in "adjacent sentences". In the following sentences, the pair of lexical items inside and outside generate collocational cohesion: 'You can't smoke inside the class. You can smoke outside'.

It is important to mention that "while reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion are common in written expressions, ellipsis and substitution are used in oral expressions" (de Beaugrande & Dressier, 1981; Witte & Faigley, 1981 as cited in Karadeniz ,2017, p. 94)

2.3.2 Coherence

Coherence is a text quality of being logical, consistent and able to be understood by people. It refers to the contextual fitness of ideas in a text and it is something that in ingrained in people because they are the ones to make sense of what they read or hear. Kuo (1995, p. 48) defined coherence as "the kind of relationships, among elements of a text, which are not based on surface links, but links derived from thematic development, organization of information, or communicative purpose of the particular discourse". It also refers to "relationships of thought, feeling, and perception" (Kane, 2000 as cited in Kılıç, Genç & Bada ,2016, p. 108).

Coherence is created through cohesion and also through the relationship between the text and listener/reader. Factors that contribute to a text's coherence are cohesion, inference (when we draw on our existing knowledge of the world to make sense of what we read, filling in the gaps based on our knowledge), logical ordering, formatting (Numbering, headlines, Glossary, subdivisions), consistency (in type of lexis, syntax) and conventions. In an essay for example, coherence can be created and evaluated through the organization of the writing production. This includes an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The topic sentence, the supporting sentences and the concluding sentences should clearly be identified in each paragraph.

Coherence in a written material can also be evaluated based on Grice's four maxims as cited in Khalil (1989, pp. 361-362) which characterize the effective use of language. These maxims are as follows.

(1) Quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required.

(2) Quality: don't say what you believe to be false.

(3) Relation: be relevant.

(4) Manner: be brief, clear and orderly.

3. Methodology of the Study

This study uses the mixed methods approach insofar as it combines both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to gain comprehensive understanding of the use of cohesion and coherence in essays written by Beninese secondary school learners.

Benin secondary school students were the target of this research work. The study was carried out in a private school. The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of three hundred and fifty-five (355) senior secondary school students. From this population, a sample of thirty (30) senior secondary school 2 (SSS2) students has been taken.

To have data about how EFL students handle cohesion and coherence in their written productions, 30 EFL students have been submitted to an essay writing test. It was a 45 minutes' test consisting in writing an argumentative essay. The writing topic was suggested and monitored by the teacher in charge of the grade level targeted himself. At the end of the test, the papers were collected from the students by the teacher on the spot.

The selected students' examination papers were minutely read to find out how cohesion and coherence are handled in the essays. To facilitate the identification of the cohesive devices during the students' essays analysis, some codes have been used: **Ref** for reference, **S** for substitution, **E** for ellipsis, **Conj** for conjunction, **Rei** for reiteration, **Col** for collocation. The occurrence of each cohesive device was counted in all the students' essays. The analysis has been done taking into account the total number of each cohesive device in all the thirty students' essays. To interpret the data obtained after the essays' analysis, percentages were of great importance. Tables have been used for each cohesive device found in the students' writings. The devices were expressed in terms of frequencies and percentages. The analysis of coherence has been done by considering two main variables, the general organization of an essay and fitness of ideas.

4. Findings of the study

This part presents the various findings through the analysis of the gathered data. It also discusses the various findings.

4.1. Presentation of the Findings
4.1.1. Analysis of Cohesion and coherence in the Students' Writings
As stated earlier, 30 EFL students in senior secondary school 2 (SSS2), have been tested to write an argumentative essay. The topic and the task

of the writing were: Is success a matter of physical features? Give convincing arguments to illustrate the topic.

4.1.1.1 Analysis of Cohesive Devices in Students' Essays
Table 1:Presentation of Reference Patterns in Students' Writing Productions

Cohesive device		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Reference	Well-used	76	83.52%
	Wrongly used	15	16.48%
Total		**91**	**100%**

On the whole, the reference patterns encountered in the productions are not appropriately used. 16.48% of the reference items have been wrongly employed. We can read in some productions:

- ➢ The success for me is a thing what *us* […].
- ➢ If they have the determination and positive issue, *he* can […].
- ➢ But the *man* who has a physical cannot succeed because *her* physic is *her* first occupation.
- ➢ We can say that success a matter of physical features but by *ours* talents.
- ➢ Because when *a person* decide [sic] to success [sic] in *our* life […].

On the other hand, 83.52% of the reference items identified were found to be well used. Here are some examples:

- • *A blind man* or a matter of physical features can succeed because *he* has determination […].
- • In fact, to success [sic] *you* have to believe in *you*, *you* have to be *yourself* and do what you know […].
- • Also, *we* would have a model person in life.
- • Awareness of *our* skills, talents and aptitudes.

The most used reference items were the pronouns: we, he, your, our, you, it, my, yourself, them, your, her, their, they

**Table 2: Presentation of Elements of Substitution in Students'
Writing Productions**

Cohesive device		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Substitution	Well-used	6	100%
	Wrongly used	0	0%
Total		**6**	**100%**

All the substitution items found in students' productions have been well
employed. Only six cases of substitution have been found in the thirty
writing productions. In most cases, the words "that" and "it" have been
used for substitution and reference simultaneously. The following
sentences reflect this.

  ➢ The people as Bill Gates who are [sic] a *business* man and woman
     are good for *that*.
  ➢ To succeed we must to use our *ability* and to use *it* [...]

**Table 3:Presentation of Conjunctions in Students' Writing
Productions**

Cohesive device		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Conjunction	Well-used	51	86.44%
	Wrongly used	8	13.56%
Total		59	**100%**

In the students writing productions, 13.55% of the conjunction items
identified have been misused. As it can be seen in the examples below,
either students put two conjunctions together in their writing
productions or they start a sentence with a conjunction.

  ➢ No, success is not a matter of physical features. *Because when* a
     person decide [sic] to success [sic] in our life […].
  ➢ The success is very important in the life. *But* …

A significant percentage (86.44%) of the conjunctions have been well
used.

Examples:

- Many persons think nowadays *that* for success we must go to school or to have a physical capacity.
- A blind man can succeed *because* he developed many sens [sic].
- For to succeed we must to use our abilities *and* to use it in the area where we are good.

The most used conjunctions were: and, when, that, because, but.

Table 4: Presentation of Elements of Reiteration in Students' Writing Productions

Cohesive device		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Reiteration	Well used	375	97.40%
	Wrongly-used	10	2.60%
Total		**385**	**100%**

Only 2.60% of the reiterated words were wrongly reiterated. In most cases, students mixed up the grammatical category of words. For example, they wrote the noun instead of the verb and this happened mostly with the words *success* (the noun) and *succeed* (the verb) as it is in the sentences below.

➢ Nowadays, a lot of people search to *success*.
➢ Anyone can *succed* [sic] because to success […].

The most reiterated words or expressions were: success, physical features, in life, a matter of, can, and we.

In addition, some phrases have been repeated the same way in some productions. It can be read,

➢ in height (8) students' productions the phrase: *organization in all*,
➢ in ten (10) students' writings: *[…] a matter of 98% of mental issue and 2% of physical feature*,
➢ and in five (5) students' productions: *no regard to one's mental or physical issue*.

Table 5: Presentation of Collocation patterns in Students' Writing Productions

Cohesive device		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Collocation	Well-used	44	100%
	Wrongly-used	0	0%
Total		**44**	**100%**

Collocation patterns encountered in students' productions were well employed even if there were some mistakes. In most cases, the collocations are related to "success". Words such as success- passion-determination have been used in most of the students' productions and this increased the number of collocations. Other collocations, i.e. a matter of, a lot of, there are, such as, and in spite of, were contained in the productions.

Examples:

- Is success *a matter of* physical feature?
- For *success* we should have the: *determination, courage*
- Somebody who want to success [sic] is that person who dream big and have *a lot of* idea […].
- The famous African athlete Oscar who *in spite of* his handicap have won…

In conclusion, reiteration is the most used (385) cohesive device in the thirty writing productions that have been analyzed. It ranks first and it is used in a very large proportion compared to the five remaining devices. Reference is the second most used (91) cohesive device irrespective of its meager proportion with regard to reiteration. Conjunction (59) and collocation (44) had also been used in the students' writing productions and they are the third most used devices. Substitution had scarcely been used, which means that it had been used 6 times in all the 30 written productions. In the thirty essays, nowhere has ellipsis been used.

4.1.1.2 Analysis of Coherence in the Written Productions

Coherence has been analyzed in the students' essays taking into account two main variables: the general organization of the essay (introduction-body-conclusion) and the fitness of ideas. The analysis focused on

different components of the introduction (topic sentence and thesis statement) and the body (paragraph structuring including topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence).

4.1.1.2.1 General Organization of the Essay

Only ten (10) students out of the thirty (30) respected the general organization of an essay including introduction, body and conclusion. Twenty (20) students then, did not follow the general organization. Moreover, among the ten (10) productions that complied with the general organization, only four (4) presented the outlines of their writings in the introduction. The remaining six (6) just start the body with a topic sentence, without a thesis statement at the end of the introduction.

Four (4) productions, out of the twenty (20) that did not follow the general organization of an essay, had only bodies and conclusions. One (1) of the essays contains just an introduction and a one-sentence body. The fifteen remaining productions had only bodies.

Regarding the paragraph structure in the body, half of the essays, that is fifteen (15) written productions, do not have concluding sentences in their bodies. Most of the essays' bodies (29) include topic sentences and supporting sentences.

4.1.1.2.2 Fitness of Ideas

Twenty-three (23) students out of the thirty (30) developed ideas related to the topic even if there were some errors in their essays. Nine (9) essays out of the twenty-three (23) were hardly understandable because of either grammatical mistakes (he will learnt, a person decide, he need can successed, after to toll, certain personne need to assistance, scoole…) and bad sentence structuring, sentences written with no verb but with a series of noun phrases (e.g.: Success a matter of 98% mental issue, respect, organization in all, determination of success, humility, responsible of action, honnête, intelligente, honorable, sérieuse, patient, passion of success) or code mixing, i.e. some French words had been inserted in the writing (honnête, intelligente, sérieuse, personne, détermination, forcement, consciencieux, evolution, admise, facteurs, primordial, importante, aptitudes). Seven (7) of the essays severely lack logic. The ideas scarcely fit together in their development.

4.2. Discussion of the Findings

After the analysis of students' written productions, it has been found that they only made use of some cohesive devices. Reiteration ranks first. Reiteration as defined earlier, refers to the use of the same words many times in a writing. A high number of students repeatedly used the same words. This shows their lack of vocabulary. Even though, they have good ideas (23 students out of 30 developed their ideas in accordance with the topic), their poor vocabulary in English prevents them from expressing all their ideas adequately. The only alternative for them is to make use of their limited vocabulary, i.e., words drawn from the writing topic and words often used by their teachers. In fact, in the written productions analyzed, there are words used by almost all the students in their writings that have been picked from the writing topic. This is the case of: *success, physical features, and a matter of.* The presence of the same argument worded similarly across the productions is another evidence. The following phrases, underlined above in the analysis, are good examples of this: *organization in all, 98% of mental issue and 2% of physical issue,* and *no regard to one's mental and physical issue.* Obviously, Benin secondary school EFL students do not have the necessary background in terms of vocabulary to freely express their ideas in English. They are obliged to use the few words learnt in class or drawn from the topics on which they have to write. According to Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017), students' lack of vocabulary and their "low ability in developing ideas in essay" (p. 119) are at the heart of students' difficulties in writing. There is no doubt that the poverty of the students' vocabulary is due to lack of reading. Good writers are always good readers even though the opposite may not always be true.

Despite the fact that students used cohesive devices, most of those devices were not used appropriately. This has been noticed not only in the case of reference but also for conjunction and reiteration. The inappropriate use of the cohesive devices followed by grammatical mistakes and errors jeopardizes logic and understanding of some written productions although the ideas are relevant. At this level, it is appropriate to question the teaching of writing. With so many defaults in the written productions of the learners, it can be inferred that teachers do not teach writing as they should. This can be due to the fact that the teachers had not received adequate training in the teaching of writing or they can hardly write cohesive and coherent texts themselves.

Furthermore, the findings showed that there was no ellipsis in the students' writing and the number of substitutions is very limited. As mentioned in chapter two, ellipsis and substitution are mostly used in oral conversations. Therefore, the absence of ellipsis and low use of substitution in students' writings is a proof that they make a distinction between writing and speaking.

Besides, the findings indicated that only ten (10) students, out of thirty (30) assessed in essay writing, respected the general organization (introduction, body, conclusion) of an essay. Moreover, not all the ten students outlined their body in the introduction. First, it is worth pointing out that students are not accustomed to writing. They could at least respect the general organization of an essay if they were used to writing and if they had been appropriately educated on this. In fact, readers are guided through writings when ideas are well stated and outlined in the introduction. This contributes to the flow of ideas (coherence) in the body of the writing. It is difficult to understand a piece of writing that has no thesis statement and is full of poorly structured paragraphs. Dossoumou, Mehouenou and Koukpossi (2018) acknowledged that writing a topic sentence is a requirement to understand an essay and students' failure to write logical introductions makes it difficult to understand their writing.

In view of the shortfalls identified in the students' written productions, teachers' capacity-building not only in the teaching of writing but also in the mechanic of writing itself becomes an imperative to education policymakers. Further, students need to be sensitized on the importance of writing in communication, especially with the growing importance of English in business, science, and technology. Further investigations should also be conducted in order to unveil other causes of the students' weaknesses in writing so that the problem can be addressed more comprehensively.

Conclusion

This research work has been conducted to examine cohesion and coherence in essays written by Benin secondary school EFL students. To reach the objective of this study, qualitative and quantitative research methods were combined to collect and analyze data. The sample of this work consisted of 30 senior secondary school 2 (SSS2) students. The

analysis of the students' essays showed that reiteration patterns are the most frequent cohesive devices used in the essays. This stems from students' lack of English vocabulary. The findings also revealed the presence of instances of reference, substitution and collocation. There was no ellipsis in the students' written productions. With regards to coherence, it has been discovered that students have very good ideas but do not know how to organize them into a coherent production. A significant number of students are not cognizant of the layout of an essay. That is the reason why recommendations were made to build teachers' capacities and conduct additional investigations for better understanding of the problem.

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