



# Cohesion Difficulties of M.A. Students in the Departments of English at Yemeni Universities

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## Keywords

- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Difficulties | 2. Cohesion |
| 3. Strategies   |             |

## Abstract:

This study is an attempt to investigate cohesion difficulties that M.A. students of the English Departments at Sana'a and Aden Universities in Yemen faced in academic writing and explored instructors' perspectives on overcoming these difficulties. The study employed a mixed-methods design and collected data through questionnaires from 30 students and interviews from 7 instructors. Data were analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics. The results show high difficulties in using cohesive devices, where substitution and ellipsis were the most difficult, and reference and conjunction devices were the least problematic. Instructors highlighted key strategies to overcome cohesion difficulties, including practicing writing regularly, reading, revising, consulting language resources, and having feedback. This study underscores the importance of targeted interventions, including workshops, mentorship programs, and the integration of technology, to address these issues. The results contribute valuable insights into improving academic writing among M.A. students and propose recommendations for future research and practical applications.

## صعوبات التماسك النصي لدى طلاب الماجستير في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات اليمنية

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### الكلمات المفتاحية

الاستراتيجيات

2.

صعوبات

التماسك النصي

1.

3.

### الملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف صعوبات التماسك النصي التي يواجهها طلاب الماجستير في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في كتاباتهم الأكاديمية بجامعتي صنعاء وعدن في اليمن، كما تستعرض وجهات نظر المدرسين حول كيفية التغلب على هذه الصعوبات. اعتمدت الدراسة تصميمًا بمنهجية مختلطة، حيث تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيانات لـ 30 طالبًا ومقابلات مع 7 مدرسين. كما تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية .SPSS أظهرت النتائج وجود صعوبات كبيرة في استخدام وسائل التماسك النصي، حيث كانت أدوات الاستبدال والحذف الأكثر صعوبة، بينما كانت أدوات الإشارة والربط الأقل إشكالية. أبرز المدرسون استراتيجيات رئيسية للتغلب على صعوبات التماسك النصي، تشمل: ممارسة الكتابة بانتظام، والقراءة، والمراجعة، واستشارة مصادر اللغة، والحصول على التغذية الراجعة. تؤكد هذه الدراسة على أهمية التدخلات المستهدفة، بما في ذلك ورش العمل، وبرامج الإرشاد، ودمج التكنولوجيا لمعالجة هذه القضايا. تقدم النتائج رؤى قيمة لتحسين الكتابة الأكاديمية لدى طلاب الماجستير، وتقدم توصيات للأبحاث المستقبلية والتطبيقات العملية.

## **Introduction**

Cohesion plays a crucial role in writing, as it helps readers understand the writer's ideas. According to Ahmed (2010), cohesion can be observed at both the macro level, which involves connecting ideas, and the micro level, which involves connecting sentences and phrases. Cohesion is a crucial aspect of achieving effective writing. Similarly, Salkie (2001) emphasizes that cohesion is a key textual feature necessary for high-quality writing. This cohesion is established through grammatical and lexical features. Together, these features work to link ideas, sentences, and paragraphs, ensuring that the text is cohesive and well-structured. In addition, Kolln (1999) emphasizes the importance of cohesion in writing, highlighting the need for writers to pay attention to the relationships between sentences and paragraphs. By employing cohesive devices writers can create a unified and well-structured piece of writing.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Mastering writing skills is a challenging task for many English students worldwide. Consequently, several studies in the literature have addressed the writing difficulties faced by English students. For example, Bamatraf (2005) found that students struggled with the proper use of cohesive devices, as well as Junina (2022) and

Nasser (2017) identified difficulties related to cohesion devices. These studies highlight the significant difficulties students encounter in English writing. Building on these findings, the present study investigates the cohesion difficulties encountered by M.A. students in their academic writing in the Departments of English at Yemeni universities. The study aims to examine M.A. students' cohesion difficulties through the questionnaire instrument. Furthermore, the study explores strategies introduced by instructors for overcoming these difficulties.

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

The primary aim of the current study is to investigate the cohesion difficulties faced by M.A. students in their academic writing in the English Departments of the selected Yemeni universities.

This study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- Investigating the cohesion difficulties encountered by M.A. students in their academic writing in the Departments of English at the selected Yemeni universities (Sana'a and Aden).
- 2- Exploring instructors' perspectives on overcoming the cohesion difficulties of M.A. students.

#### **4. Questions of the Study**

Based on the earlier discussion regarding the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study, this study aims to investigate and provide answers to the following research questions:

1- What are the cohesion difficulties encountered by M.A. students in their academic writing in the departments of English at the selected Yemeni universities (Sana'a and Aden)?

2- What are instructors' perspectives on overcoming the cohesion difficulties of M.A. students?

#### **5. Limitations of the Study**

The current study has several limitations that should be considered. First, it specifically focuses on the investigation of cohesion difficulties encountered by M.A. students in their academic writing. This means that the findings and conclusions of this study may not apply to other areas of study or academic writing. Additionally, the study is limited to M.A. students and instructors in the Departments of English at the University of Aden and the University of Sana'a in the academic year (2024–2025). Students were purposively selected from the faculties of Arts, Languages & Translation at the University of Aden and the faculties of Arts and Languages at Sana'a University, with the aim of identifying the cohesion difficulties M.A.

students faced in their academic writing. Furthermore, instructors from the English departments at both universities were chosen to explore their perspectives on how to overcome these students' cohesion difficulties. Furthermore, the study is limited to M.A. students in the Departments of English at the University of Aden and the University of Sana'a. These findings may not be representative of other disciplines or universities in Yemen.

#### **6. Significance of the Study**

The present study is significant as it aims to investigate the cohesion difficulties of M.A. students in their academic writing in the Departments of English at Yemeni universities. It provides insights into the cohesion difficulties encountered by these students. Furthermore, the study aims to provide recommendations for overcoming cohesion difficulties.

The methodology employed in this study used various methods to analyze and identify cohesion difficulties and instructors' perspectives in detail. The researcher used two instruments: questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful data for specialized officials in the field of writing in Yemen to make informed decisions.

The questionnaire was used to address the first research question. Data were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, percentages, rank, and average grade for each dimension of the cohesion difficulties faced by the M.A. students in English departments at the selected Yemeni universities. The items associated with each dimension were also examined, and the overall score for the tool was calculated based on the assessments of the study sample. The results are presented in a table, which includes the overall scores for the five dimensions and provides comprehensive and accurate details related to the overall estimates of the study sample.

## 7. Definitions of Terms

1. The term “difficulties” refers to problems that require great effort and determination to solve (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009). In this study, it refers to the obstacles encountered by Yemeni M.A. students' academic writing, particularly in relation to cohesion. These difficulties have a negative impact on the overall quality of writing by these students.

2. According to the Macmillan English Dictionary (2007), the term “Cohesion” refers to the way in which the different parts of a piece of writing, a speech, etc., are connected to form a unified whole.

3. The term “strategies” refers to plans or methods for achieving something (Macmillan English Dictionary 2007). In this study, strategies are used to overcome cohesion difficulties.

## 8. Literature Review

The main focus of this section is on the discussion of the literature related to the cohesion difficulties faced by M.A. students.

### 8.1. Concept of Cohesion

Cohesion refers to how different parts of a text are linked together to create a unified and meaningful whole. Furthermore, Halliday and Hasan, (1976) stated that "The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text". These linguistic tools facilitate the integration of all components of a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion is related to the “non-structural text-forming relations” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.7). Enkvist (1990, p. 11) defined cohesion as "overt links on the textual surface that help the reader perceive the semantic integrity of a text". Cohesion, from a linguistic standpoint, encompasses the connections between different meanings present in a text. Cohesion is achieved through cohesive elements. In their publication, *Cohesion in English*, Halliday & Hasan (1976) categorized cohesive elements into two categories:

grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes the use of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, whereas lexical cohesion involves reiteration and collocation.

Regarding the significance of text cohesion in academic writing, numerous researchers have recognized its importance as a mechanism that facilitates the smooth flow of discourse. Ting (2003) argued that "cohesion as an indispensable text-forming element plays a critical role in composing a text" (p.1). Similarly, Hinkel (2004) stated that cohesion refers to the linking of ideas in discourse and connecting sentences in a text to convey unified information.

In order to gain a comprehensive grasp of cohesion, it is essential to engage in a theoretical discussion on the concepts of text, texture, and devices which are closely related to the creation of cohesion.

## **8.2. Types of Cohesion**

In their framework (1976), Halliday and Hasan proposed that cohesion is divided into two types: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical cohesion involves four forms: reference, conjunction, substitution, and ellipsis. Reference links elements using pronouns, demonstratives, or comparatives to refer to something mentioned earlier or understood from context. Conjunctions

(e.g., *and*, *but*, *so*) connect sentences or clauses through logical relationships like addition, contrast, cause, or time. Substitution replaces a word or phrase with another to avoid repetition (e.g., *I need a pen. Do you have one?* Here, *one* substitutes for *pen* to avoid repeating the same word), while ellipsis omits elements that are understood from context, reducing redundancy (e.g., *"She likes cats; I [like cats], too"*). These four forms form the foundation of grammatical cohesion as defined in their framework.

Lexical cohesion implies reiteration and collocation. Moreover, lexical cohesion involves reiteration and collocation. Reiteration refers to the repetition of a lexical item or the use of its synonyms, near-synonyms, or more general terms, which help link ideas within a text (e.g., using *"car"* and *"vehicle"*). Collocation involves the habitual combination of words that are often found together (e.g., *"strong coffee"* or *"make a decision"*), contributing to cohesion by reinforcing relationships between words. The relationship that exists between any lexical item and a previously occurring lexical item in the text, through either reiteration or collocation, plays a crucial role in maintaining cohesion and continuity throughout the text.

## **8.3. Cohesion Difficulties in Writing**

Writing cohesive texts, as outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in their seminal work on

cohesion, presents various difficulties across different levels of writing: sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Cohesion is essential for creating seamless, comprehensible texts that allow readers to follow the writer's ideas effortlessly. However, students often face numerous challenges when trying to use cohesive devices effectively. These difficulties can be categorized according to their occurrence at the sentence level, paragraph level, and essay level. Ahmed (2010) clarified that cohesion has been extensively researched, revealing difficulties faced by students in this area. Consequently, scholars in the field have investigated the specific elements of cohesion that students commonly struggle with.

## **9. Previous Studies**

This section provides a detailed analysis of previous studies related to the primary aim of the current study: examining the cohesion difficulties faced by students.

Junina (2022) examined the challenges faced by non-native English-speaking students in writing cohesive essays, focusing on grammatical cohesion in argumentative essays written by international English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learners in New Zealand. The study analyzed a sample of 37 essays using AntConc software to identify instances of reference and conjunctions, while frequencies of ellipsis and

substitution were analyzed manually. The findings revealed that while learners employed a variety of grammatical cohesive devices, references, and conjunctions were used most prominently. However, the study highlighted a significant underuse of substitution and ellipsis, indicating a gap in learners' knowledge and application of these cohesive devices. This suggests that EAP learners may require further training to enhance their understanding and effective use of substitution and ellipsis in written discourse.

Nasser (2018) explored various discourse errors, including challenges related to cohesion. The findings revealed that conjunction and reference devices were the most challenging cohesive devices for learners. In addition, ellipsis and substitution were rarely used by students, as they tended to rely on an avoidance strategy to prevent making mistakes. This underuse of ellipsis and substitution was attributed to their complexity and the potential for ambiguity in written discourse. Nasser emphasized the importance of explicit instruction and increased practice to help students overcome these cohesion difficulties.

Mansoor (2024) explored the general difficulties postgraduate students face in writing MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations at Yemeni universities. While the study primarily addressed challenges in academic writing as a whole, it also



identified cohesion-related issues, such as difficulties in linking the introduction to the conclusion of paragraphs, and difficulties in using cohesive devices like substitutions and ellipses. These findings highlight the relevance of cohesion difficulties as a significant subset of broader academic writing challenges, providing a basis for more focused research, such as the present study, which delves exclusively into cohesion difficulties.

Ebadallah (2021) investigated the challenges EFL students face in using cohesive devices in written discourse. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, data were collected through questionnaires administered to 30 English teachers and diagnostic tests for 82 second-year English students in Sudan. The findings revealed significant difficulties with lexical cohesion, particularly in using lexical repetition and synonyms effectively. Additionally, students faced challenges in maintaining clarity in their writing. The study recommended explicit instruction on cohesive devices, teacher training, and addressing mother tongue interference to enhance students' writing skills. While this study focuses primarily on lexical cohesion, its findings underscore the broader challenges EFL learners face in mastering cohesive devices, which complements the present study's focus on ellipsis and substitution.

## **10. Methodology and Procedures of the Study**

The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The section provides a detailed description of the population, sample, and instruments used in collecting the data. Additionally, it discusses the development of study instruments, focusing on their validity and reliability as well as describing data analysis. Moreover, it explains the statistical techniques that were employed to analyze the data obtained from these instruments. To investigate the cohesion difficulties faced by M.A. students in their academic writing, a questionnaire was used to identify the cohesion difficulties while an interview was utilized to explore the strategies that can be used to overcome these difficulties.

### **10.1. Population of the Study**

The population of the study involved the M.A. students in the academic year (2024–2025) in the two English specializations (e.g., literature, and translation) from the Departments of English at Sana'a University and Aden University. This population also included the instructors of academic writing in these departments, whose perspectives are valuable in exploring effective strategies to overcome cohesion difficulties.

#### **10.1.1 Sample of the Study**

The study sample included a total of 30 students from Sana'a University and Aden University. The



participants were selected using purposive sampling procedures. It is important to note that the selection process was nonrandom, as the participants were an existing and accessible sample.

## **10.2 Instruments of the Study**

To answer the study questions, a close-ended questionnaire was distributed to the 30 M.A. students. The purpose was to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the cohesion difficulties faced by these students. In addition, the semi-structured interview was employed to elicit instructors' strategies for overcoming these difficulties.

### **10.2.1. Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is widely recognized as a major tool in research, valued for its efficiency in data collection. As Johnson and Turner (2003) indicated, researchers do not need to be physically present when participants complete questionnaires, allowing for rapid data acquisition and saving time and resources. In this study, the final version of the questionnaire consisted of five dimensions. The first dimension specifically dealt with the reference cohesion difficulties. The second dimension covered substitution cohesion difficulties. The third dimension addressed ellipsis cohesion difficulties. The fourth dimension focused on conjunction cohesion difficulties. Lastly, the fifth

dimension explored lexical cohesion difficulties. The collected data was analyzed using numerical values and percentages, and the findings were presented in well-organized tables.

#### **10.2.1.1. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire**

The initial version of the questionnaire was validated by eight experts (validators) to determine the items' relevance and suitability concerning the research topic and questions. Based on the feedback received from the experts, certain items were modified.

The reliability of the questionnaire items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The internal reliability of the "writing difficulties" questionnaire items showed an overall alpha coefficient of 0.850, which is considered adequate. Therefore, the participant responses were deemed acceptable, indicating high reliability for all 16 statements.

### **10.2.2 Interview**

To achieve the objectives of the study, five instructors were interviewed as part of the study. The interviews consisted of seven questions that focused on cohesion difficulties and strategies to overcome these difficulties. The results were then presented in the form of a table. Before the interview, the researcher submitted the interview questions to the same experts (validators) on the

questionnaire to be validated. The researcher then modified the questions based on their feedback and suggestions. Following this, the researcher interviewed instructors.

### 10.2.3. Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires and interviews were analyzed. By employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the researcher aimed to gain participants' responses regarding their cohesion difficulties. The questionnaire which had closed-ended response choices, was analyzed using numerical methods.

The statistical software SPSS was utilized to process the data, employing techniques such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and means. The present study also aimed to explore practical strategies to overcome these difficulties collected through seven instructors as interviewees.

## 11. Findings and Discussion

The researcher analyzed the perspectives of the M.A. students on their cohesion difficulties. The results of the questionnaire are presented in terms of frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and means as follows:

**Table (1) illustrates the overall assessment of cohesion difficulties among M.A. students in English departments at Yemeni universities.**

	Dimensions	M	Std.	%	Average Grade	Rank
16 Items	First: Reference Cohesion Difficulties	2.98	1.30	59.56	Moderate	5
	Second: Substitution Cohesion Difficulties	4.12	0.76	82.44	High	1
	Third: Ellipsis Cohesion Difficulties	4.01	0.70	80.22	High	2
	Fourth: Conjunction Cohesion Difficulties	3.01	1.02	60.22	Moderate	4
	Fifth: Lexical Cohesion Difficulties	3.18	0.83	63.67	Moderate	3
Overall average for all dimensions		3.44	0.67	68.88	High	

Note: M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage

It is evident from **Table (1)** above that master's students in the English departments at Yemeni

universities faced difficulties in achieving cohesion in writing. The results showed that the

overall score for the cohesion difficulties through the instrument of the questionnaire was high, with a mean of 3.44, a standard deviation of 0.67, and a percentage of 68.88%. This result reflects that writing cohesion difficulties are apparent, particularly in the substitution and ellipsis dimensions, which achieved the highest percentages (82.44% and 80.22%, respectively). On the other hand, the difficulties were less severe in the reference cohesion and use of conjunction devices dimensions.

The results also revealed a variation among students, indicating a significant disparity in their writing skill levels. These difficulties are likely

attributed to weak academic training and a lack of directed writing practices that could enhance their skills. Based on this, the results for each dimension of the questionnaire will be presented as follows:

The results for reference cohesion difficulties among students were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, and percentages, along with reviewing the students' responses to the items in this dimension. These results are presented in detail in the below table, which illustrates various aspects related to reference cohesion difficulties.

**Table (2) presents the responses and the percentage for the items under the first dimension: reference cohesion difficulties.**

First Dimension: Reference Cohesion Difficulties		Responses					M	Std.	%	Average Grade	R
		Ne	Ra	Oc	Of	Al					
1	I have faced difficulty to use the definite article (the) appropriately.	10	4	4	5	7	2,83	1,62	56.67	Moderate	3
2	I have faced difficulty to use comparative reference to show similarities between elements in a text.	7	3	3	11	6	3,20	1,49	64.00	Moderate	1
3	I have faced difficulty to employ demonstratives effectively in my sentences.	9	5	2	8	6	2,90	1,58	58.00	Moderate	2

Overall Average	2,98	1.30	59,56	Moderate	
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Note: Al = always; Of = Often; Oc = Occasionally; Ra = Rarely; Ne = Never; M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage; R = Rank

The findings from **Table (2)** revealed difficulties in reference cohesion in writing among the students, as all item estimates for this dimension fell at the "moderate" level. The mean for this dimension was 2.98, with a standard deviation of 1.30 and a percentage of 59.56%, reflecting a noticeable variation in the sample responses.

The items of these dimensions can be systematically ranked and analyzed in accordance with the students' responses, ordered from the most to the least difficult, as outlined below:

The second item, which states, *"I have faced difficulty to use comparative reference to show similarities between elements in a text,"* was ranked first in the students' responses, with a mean of 3.20, a standard deviation of 1.49, and a percentage of 64.00%. Following this, the third

item, which states, *"I have faced difficulty to employ demonstratives effectively in my sentences,"* was ranked second in the students' responses, with a mean of 2.90, a standard deviation of 1.58, and a percentage of 58.00%. Meanwhile, the first item, which states, *"I have faced difficulty to use the definite article (the) appropriately,"* was ranked third in the students' responses, with a mean of 2.83, a standard deviation of 1.62, and a percentage of 56.67%.

Similarly, the results for the difficulties in cohesion through substitution among students were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, and percentages, along with reviewing the students' responses to the items in this dimension. These results are presented in detail in Table (3).

**Table (3) shows the responses and the percentage for the items under the second dimension:  
Cohesion Substitution Difficulties.**

Second Substitution Difficulties	Dimension: Cohesion	Responses					M	Std.	%	Average Grade	R
		Ne	Ra	Oc	Of	Al					
1	I have faced difficulty to replace nouns with appropriate substitutes.	2	1	5	10	12	3.97	1.16	79.33	High	3

2	I have faced difficulty to use verbal substitutes.	1	2	4	8	15	4.13	1.11	82.67	High	2
3	I have faced difficulty to use clausal substitutes.	1	2	2	8	17	4.27	1.08	85.33	Very High	1
Overall Average							4.12	0.76	82.44	High	

Note: Al = always; Of = Often; Oc = Occasionally; Ra = Rarely; Ne = Never; M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage; R = Rank

It is evident from **Table (3)** that the students faced difficulties ranging from 'high' to 'very high' in achieving cohesion through the effective use of substitution. The overall mean score of the second dimension was (3), with a percentage of 82.44% and a standard deviation of 0.76. Based on the students' responses, the items of the second dimension were ranked and interpreted in order of difficulty, starting from the most difficult to the least, as follows:

The students' responses to this dimension reveal notable difficulties in achieving cohesion through substitution, as reflected in the rankings of the items. Firstly, the third item, which states, "*I have faced difficulty to use clausal substitutes,*" was ranked highest, with a mean of 4.27, a standard deviation of 1.08, and a percentage of 85.33%. This indicates that clausal substitution represents the most significant difficulty among the students. Secondly, the second item, "*I have faced difficulty to use verbal substitutes,*" was ranked as the next most challenging, with a mean of 4.13, a standard deviation of 1.11, and a percentage of 82.67%. This suggests that verbal substitution poses a slightly lesser but still substantial difficulty. Finally, the first item, "*I have faced difficulty to replace nouns with appropriate substitutes,*" was ranked third, with a mean of 3.97, a standard deviation of 1.16, and a percentage of 79.33%. While this difficulty is less pronounced than the others, it remains a significant issue for students. Together, these rankings highlight a range of cohesion difficulties, with clausal substitution being the most difficult, followed by verbal and noun substitution.

The results for the difficulties in the third dimension of cohesion through ellipsis among students were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, and percentages, along with reviewing the students' responses to the items in this dimension. These results are presented in detail in Table (4).

**Table (4) presents the responses and the percentage for the items under the third dimension:  
difficulties in cohesion through ellipsis.**

Third Dimension: Ellipsis Cohesion Difficulties		Responses					M	Std.	%	Average Grade	R
		Ne	Ra	Oc	Of	Al					
1	I have faced difficulties to identify which words can be omitted when they are implied.	1	2	3	10	14	4.13	1.07	82,67	High	2
2	I have faced difficulty deciding when ellipsis is the best choice compared to other cohesive devices.	1	2	1	9	17	4.30	1.06	86.00	Very High	1
3	I have faced difficulty of ensuring grammatical correctness when employing ellipsis.	2	4	7	8	9	3.60	1.25	72.00	High	3
Overall Average							4,01	0.70	80,22	High	

**Note:** Al = always; Of = Often; Oc = Occasionally; Ra = Rarely; Ne = Never; M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage; R = Rank

The results from Table (4) indicate that students faced significant difficulties relating to this dimension, ranging from high to very high, in using ellipsis as a device to achieve textual cohesion. The overall mean of 4.01 and a percentage of 80.22% reflect a general lack of proficiency in using ellipsis effectively, which negatively impacts the quality of their writing. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.70 highlights the varying levels of difficulty faced in mastering this essential cohesive device. The items of the third dimension were analyzed and

ranked according to the students' responses, ordered from the most difficult to the least, as follows:

The students' responses indicate varying levels of difficulty in using ellipsis effectively as a cohesive device. To begin with, the second item, *"I have faced difficulty deciding when ellipsis is the best choice compared to other cohesive devices,"* was ranked the first in the students' responses, with a mean of 4.30, a standard deviation of 1.06, and a percentage of 86.00%. Furthermore, the first item, *"I have faced*

difficulties to identify which words can be omitted when they are implied," was ranked the second, with a mean of 4.13, a standard deviation of 1.07, and a percentage of 82.67%. Finally, the third item, "I have faced difficulty of ensuring grammatical correctness when employing ellipsis," was ranked the third, with a mean of 3.60, a standard deviation of 1.25, and a percentage of 72.00%.

The results for the fourth dimension of the conjunctions cohesion difficulties among students were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, and percentages, along with reviewing the students' responses to the items in this dimension. These results are presented in detail in Table (5).

**Table (5) shows the responses and the percentage for the items under the fourth dimension: cohesion difficulties in using conjunctions.**

Fourth Conjunction Difficulties	Dimension: Cohesion	Responses					M	Std.	%	Average Grade	R
		Ne	Ra	Oc	Of	Al					
1	I have faced difficulties to use additive conjunctions correctly.	6	6	4	8	6	3,07	1,46	61.33	Moderate	2
2	I have faced difficulties to use adversative conjunctions appropriately.	7	8	4	6	5	2.80	1,45	56.00	Moderate	3
3	I have faced difficulties to use causal conjunctions effectively in my writing.	7	5	3	6	9	3.17	1,60	63,33	Moderate	1
Overall Average							3.01	1,02	60.22	Moderate	

**Note:** Al = always; Of = Often; Oc = Occasionally; Ra = Rarely; Ne = Never; M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage; R = Rank

It is clear from **Table (5)** that the participants faced moderate difficulties in using conjunction devices to achieve cohesion, with the estimates ranging around 'moderate' across all items. The

overall mean was 3.01, with a percentage of 60.22% and a standard deviation of 1.02. The items of the fourth dimension were carefully organized and analyzed based on the students'



responses, ranked from the most difficult to the least, as outlined below:

The students' responses reveal varying levels of difficulty in using conjunctions effectively in their writing. To begin with, the third item, *"I have faced difficulties to use causal conjunctions effectively in my writing."* was ranked first, with a mean of 3.17, a standard deviation of 1.60, and a percentage of 63.33%. Furthermore, the first item, *"I have faced difficulties to use additive conjunctions correctly"* was ranked second, with a mean of 3.07, a standard deviation of 1.46, and

a percentage of 61.33%. Finally, the second item, *"I have faced difficulties to use adversative conjunctions appropriately"* was ranked third, with a mean of 2.80, a standard deviation of 1.45, and a percentage of 56.00%.

The results of the fifth dimension of lexical cohesion difficulties among M.A. students were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, and percentages, along with reviewing the students' responses to the items in this axis. These results are presented in detail in Table (6).

**Table (6) shows the students' responses and the percentages for the items in the fifth dimension regarding lexical cohesion difficulties.**

Fifth Dimension: Lexical Cohesion Difficulties		Responses					M	Std.	%	Average Grade	R
		Ne	Ra	Oc	Of	Al					
1	I have faced difficulties to use accurate synonyms to avoid redundancy in my writing.	5	5	5	7	8	3.27	1.46	65.33	Moderate	3
2	I have faced difficulties to utilize accurate antonyms to create cohesion.	1	8	4	7	10	3.57	1.30	71.33	High	2
3	I have faced difficulties to use collocations effectively.	2	3	6	8	11	3.77	1.25	75.33	High	1
4	I have faced difficulties to utilize general words to refer to a specific item.	14	6	4	4	2	2.13	1.33	42.67	Weak	4

	Overall Average	3.18	0,83	63.67	Moderate	
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**Note:** Al = always; Of = Often; Oc = Occasionally; Ra = Rarely; Ne = Never; M = Mean; Std. = Std deviation; % = Percentage; R = Rank

It is evident from Table (6) that the students faced noticeable difficulties in achieving lexical cohesion in texts, with these difficulties ranging from moderate to high. The general mean (3.18) and percentage 63.67% of this dimension reflect significant difficulties in using various lexical cohesive devices effectively, which negatively impacts the quality of textual cohesion in writing. The standard deviation (0.83) also indicates considerable variation among individuals in the level of difficulty, suggesting that some participants face significant difficulties in using lexical cohesive devices, while others are able to employ them more effectively. The items of the fifth dimension were assessed and ranked based on the students' responses, ranging from the most difficult to the least, as detailed below:

The students' responses highlight notable difficulties in using lexical devices in their writing. Leading the list, the third item, *"I have faced difficulties to use collocations effectively,"*

was ranked first, with a mean of 3.77, a standard deviation of 1.25, and a percentage of 75.33%. Closely following, the second item, *"I have faced difficulties to utilize accurate antonyms to create cohesion,"* was ranked second, reflecting a mean of 3.57, a standard deviation of 1.30, and a percentage of 71.33%. In third place, the first item, *"I have faced difficulties to use accurate synonyms to avoid redundancy in my writing,"* revealed a mean of 3.27, a standard deviation of 1.46, and a percentage of 65.33%. Lastly, the fourth item, *"I have faced difficulties to utilize general words to refer to a specific item,"* was ranked lowest, with a mean of 2.13, a standard deviation of 1.33, and a percentage of 42.67%.

The following table and its description address the second research question: *"What are instructors' perspectives on overcoming cohesion difficulties for M.A. students?"* To answer this question, data were collected and analyzed using a semi-structured interview instrument.

**Table (7): Descriptive Statistics of Instructors' Perspectives on Overcoming Cohesion Difficulties**

Main Theme	Sub-theme/Strategy	N	%
<b>Practical Strategies for Overcoming Cohesion Difficulties</b>	- Practicing Writing Regularly Strategy	7	100%
	- Peer Academic Sessions Strategy	2	29%
	- Familiarizing with Cohesion Devices Strategy	1	14%
	- Having feedback Strategy	3	43%
	- Reading Strategy	4	57%
	- Consulting language resources Strategy	3	43%
	- Participating in Workshops Strategy	2	29%
	- Revising Strategy	4	57%
	- Utilizing Cohesion Software Tools Strategy	1	14%

The semi-structured interviews with the 7 instructors revealed a number of effective strategies for overcoming writing cohesion difficulties. These strategies are categorized by the frequency of responses (N) and the corresponding percentages (%). To overcome these difficulties, instructors suggested various strategies. The most

commonly suggested strategy with 100% of participants (7), was “Practicing Writing Regularly Strategy”. The second most recommended strategy was the “Reading Strategy” with 57% of participants (4). The third strategy was the “Revising Strategy” which was recommended by 57% of participants (4).

## 12. Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions

This study aims to investigate the cohesion difficulties faced by the M.A. students in the English Departments at Sana'a University and Aden University. It also aims to find out the effective strategies to overcome these difficulties. This section presents a summary and discussion of the results in relation to the two research questions, as well as recommendations for future research.

### 12.1. Conclusions

This study investigated the cohesion difficulties faced by the M.A. students in the departments of English at Sana'a University and Aden University. Furthermore, it provided practical strategies to overcome these difficulties. A careful analysis of the results, along with a comprehensive discussion, allowed the researcher to draw several key conclusions:

1. The study identified various cohesion difficulties faced by Yemeni M.A. students. These difficulties included the grammatical cohesion of reference, conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution as well as lexical cohesion of reiteration and collocation.
2. The study revealed that ellipsis and substitution were the most difficult cohesive devices.

3. The study suggested that practicing writing regularly, reading strategy, having feedback, consulting language resources, peer academic sessions, utilizing cohesion software tools, peer academic sessions, and implementing an effective revising strategy can help M.A. students overcome cohesion difficulties.

### 12.2 Recommendations

The study suggests the following recommendations based on its results:

1. Implementing Writing Support Centers or Workshops: Set up specialized centers or workshops around helping M.A. students with cohesion difficulties. These centers can offer student-specific advice, in-application exercises, and responsive feedback that help students hone their writing.
2. Improving M.A. Mentorship Programs: Connect M.A. students with experienced mentors or faculty members who will help them work through cohesion devices correctly.
3. Conducting Specialized Writing Sessions: Conduct sessions that will focus on improving the students' understanding of cohesive devices. Each of these courses should also have a hands-on component that could be reading some academic pieces being written by students, looking at the cohesion in their writing, and practicing academic writing.

4. Fostering Collaborative Learning: Develop opportunities for M.A. students to engage in peer feedback sessions, research forums, or similar writing groups. Such collaborative spaces promote peer interaction, where students share their experiences, learn from their peers, and receive constructive criticism on their workload.
5. Using of Technology in Writing: Encourage the use of online tools that assist writing, including tools that lead to overcoming cohesion difficulties.
6. Attending Workshops on using cohesion effectively allowing students to participate in workshops that focus on cohesion devices. These types of workshops help M.A. students be mindful of improving the cohesion of their text as they write.
7. Encouraging Consistent Writing Practice: Stress the importance of writing regularly to develop cohesive writing habits. Frequent practice allows students to internalize the principles of cohesion over time.
8. Providing Feedback on Writing: Ensure that students receive constructive feedback on their writing, focusing on their use of cohesion. Feedback should guide students in identifying and addressing their weaknesses.
9. Incorporating Guided Writing Exercises: Design structured writing exercises that focus on improving cohesion, such as practicing the use of cohesion devices.

10. Emphasizing the need to investigate the impact of technology on cohesion devices used by Yemeni M.A. students.

### **12.3. Suggestions for Future Researches**

The Study investigated cohesion difficulties of M.A. students in the departments of English in the Yemeni universities. Thus, in future studies, new studies on cohesion difficulties can be concentrated on. The researcher proposed the following suggestions for further research:

1. Exploring the impact of linguistic features and cultural components on the cohesion difficulties of Yemeni M.A. students.
2. Investigating the effectiveness of cohesive devices for academic Writing using specific intervention programs or pedagogical Interventions.
3. Examining the effectiveness of digital tools in enhancing cohesion amongst Yemeni M.A. students.
4. Examining the impact of reflective activities, including writing journals and self-evaluation checklists, in ameliorating cohesion in M.A. students' academic writing.
5. Examining the difference in cohesion difficulties between M.A. students at other Yemeni universities or regions.
6. Using online tools and digital libraries to support M.A. students in enhancing their writing

in cohesion, giving them convenient access to a wide range of resources and references.

7. Study how high-achieving M.A. students might respond to difficulties of cohesion.

8. Explore the contributions of writing centers or support programs on the development of cohesion devices among Yemeni M.A. students.

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