



Linguistic Analysis of Grammatical Cohesion of L2 ESL Learners in the Acquisition of English as a Second Language in the Erstwhile FATA, Pakistan

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Abstract: The present research intends to analyze the Grammatical Cohesion of L2 ESL learners in the acquisition of English as a second language in the erstwhile FATA region, KP, Pakistan. The main focus of the study is to highlight the differences in the discourse competence by focusing on the grammatical cohesion between the group of students who are highly motivated (DMCs) and the group of L2 ESL learners who are not highly motivated. Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) i.e. a novel psychological construct in the acquisition of English as second language (ESL) in the context of KP, Pakistan. DMC has recently been introduced in the field of applied linguistics specifically, in L2 motivation. The data has also been collected from students answer books and for this purpose a longitudinal study design was followed. In order to evaluate the students' discourse competence, the researcher has checked and analyzed the written responses of the students in the papers of midterm examination at two distinct times. The first step was to find out the occurrences of the different linguistic items and structure in terms of the components of communicative competence. The second step was to point out the mistakes they have made in this regard and the final step was to analyze and compare these mistakes. The data has been analyzed linguistically. The results show that the highly motivated students are comparatively more competent than the students who are not highly motivated.

Key Words: Discourse Competence, Grammatical Cohesion, Directed Motivational Currents, DMCs and Language Learning.

1. Introduction

English language, as an L2 (second language) or foreign language in the L2 Motivation field (Dörnyei, 2005), has become an integral part of modern life (Seargeant, 2012). Crystal (2003) emphasizes that English is used as the global language for international communication. It holds significance as the language of various domains, making it the gateway to modern knowledge and the modern world. English is the language of choice in media, science, politics, research, trade, technology, education, commerce, and industry across the globe (Graddol, 2010). Proficiency in English language is typically seen as a mark of prestige, educational attainment, and social maturity. There exists a prevalent belief that an English speaker is an educated individual (Shamim, 2011). English is not only a language taught in educational institutions but is also a means of communication, especially among teenagers in Pakistan. English vocabulary is prominently integrated into conversations conducted in Urdu or Pashto.

Given the significance of the English language in both global and Pakistani contexts, it is significant to understand L2 learners' motivation, their communicative competence, and their perceptions of learning English. In Pakistan, English is a compulsory subject from nursery to almost graduate levels. It is acquired for various purposes beyond

passing exams, including job seeking, improving social and economic standards, and engaging with the global community (Coleman, 2010). Motivational orientations of Pakistani students at different educational levels have been explored by Islam et al. (2013), Ali et al. (2015), Pathan (2010), and others. However, a persistent issue remains i.e. many graduates still lack proficiency in English language usage, despite being motivated, as noted by Shamim and Tribble (2005) and Samad (2015). The present study addresses this significant concern by comparing the communicative competence of motivated students with that of their peers who are less motivated to learn English. A new concept in the field of L2 motivation is Directed Motivational Currents, introduced by Dörnyei et al. (2014). DMCs represent the peak phase of learners' motivation to acquire a second or foreign language and is believed to lead to high levels of L2 proficiency. This study incorporates this novel concept to identify instances of DMCs among L2 learners in KP, Pakistan. It approaches issues related to discourse competence through the lens of this newly introduced concept.

1.1 Research Questions

- a) What are issues faced by L2 ESL learners in the use of grammatical cohesion in their writing?
- b) What are the differences in the Discourse competence between the ESL learners who went through DMC periods and those who did not experience such periods in terms of language acquisition?

2. Literature Review

Communicative Competence: Communicative competence is defined as the ability to use language in a grammatically correct way, including in appropriate and different social settings. There are various models presented by different linguist that include; Dell Hymes' (1972) model, M. A. K. Halliday's views in this regard, Munby's (1978) Model, Canale and Swain's (1980) model of Communicative Competence, Canale's (1983) adaptations of the Canale and Swain model, Bachman's (1990) model of Communicative Language Ability (CLA), Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell's (1995) model of Communicative Competence, and Celce-Murcia's (2007) the recent model of Communicative Competence which has been followed in the preset study.

2.1 Celce-Murcia (2007) Model of Communicative Competence

Celce-Murcia (2007) revised the previous model of communicative Competence presented by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). According to her, there were some discrepancies and gaps which have been rectified in this model. This model has been prepared in the context of language teaching activities. She preferred the term formulaic language to the term language as a system. There are six components in this new model of communicative Competence.

2.2 Socio-Cultural Competence

According to Celce-Murcia (2007), this Competence is related to the pragmatic ability of the speakers. The speakers of a language must be able to understand the social and cultural norms of a language and context. She is also of the view that the lack of socio-cultural Competence is a more serious problem than the linguistic and grammatical Competence in the use of a language. She adds that in most cases, the teachers are familiar with the linguistic terminologies of a language. However, they are unfamiliar with the social and cultural knowledge in this regard. In this connection, she discusses three important critical factors. These are Social-Contextual factors, Stylistic appropriateness and Cultural factors. She states that the one who has experience living in the target language community or has social and cultural knowledge of the target language can easily learn the second language.

2.3 Discourse Competence

Celce is of the view that discourse competence “refers to the selection and arrangements of words and utterances into a unified discourse to achieve intended communicative effect” (2007: 46). She has subdivided the discourse competence into Cohesion, Deixis, Coherence and Generic structures.

2.4 Linguistic Competence

Linguistic Competence in the present model is the understanding and knowledge of syntactic, lexical, phonological, and morphological rules of the second language.

2.5 Formulaic Competence

This Competence is related to the day to day routines, phrases and fixed structures of a language. It includes phrases, collocations, idioms and lexical frames in a day to day language use. In connection to this Competence, she adds that fluent speakers of a language use formulaic language where the speakers use systematic linguistic knowledge appropriately.

2.6 Interactional Competence

For Celce, the primary purpose of the language use is to interact and communicate properly. Thus, second language learners have to understand how to initiate conversation, how to establish a social relation through language and how to apologize etc. in a language. This Competence includes actional Competence, which is to know how to perform different speech acts; Conversational Competence, which is to know how to take turns, open and close conversation, etc. and Non-verbal/paralinguistic Competence which includes the kinesics behavior, proxemics, haptic behavior and non-linguistic utterances with interactional import.

2.7 Strategic Competence

Celce-Murcia has presented three main strategies in connection to strategic Competence. These are Cognitive Strategies, Meta-cognitive Strategies and Memory-related Strategies. The researcher has taken into account the Discourse Competence for the analysis of the communicative Competence of second language learners in KP, Pakistan. Furthermore, the researcher has analyzed the grammatical cohesion in the students' answer books in the present study. The researcher has selected seven students from the BS program at the university level who were learning English as a second language. This selection of the sample went through a rigorous effort on the part of the researcher as the researcher has conducted informal interviews and discussions with these students for six months in order to see their motivational intensity. After it was confirmed that four of these students were partially DMC cases, their 2nd semester papers were checked for communicative Competence, where the researcher found that selected components of the communicative Competence can be analyzed to show the impact of DMCs on the enhancement of communicative Competence.

3. Material and Methods

The researcher has also followed longitudinal research design in the present study. A longitudinal study is a research design that includes collecting data from the same group of individuals over a period of time to analyze and compare changes, developments, or stability in specific variables or characteristics. In this study. The basic concern of the researcher is to analyze and compare the development of students' discourse Competence over time. The research focuses on a specific group of students who are experiencing Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) in the context of language learning. The researcher has collected the data from the students answer books across two distinct time points: The first data collection occurs during the 2nd semester. This initial analysis of the answer books involves the investigation of students' written English during this semester. The second data collection takes place during the 4th semester, which is after a year from the initial data collection and thus the researcher has compared the written English by the students in these two semesters. Longitudinal studies are very helpful in understanding how variables evolve over time and can provide insights into the effects of specific experiences, such as DMCs, on individual development or competence. This research design is particularly suitable for examining the long-term impact of motivation (DMCs) on language learning abilities.

For the analysis of the discourse competence of the students, the linguistic analysis method was followed. Linguistic analysis adopted by Widdowson (2014) is a kind of systematic analysis of a written or spoken discourse or language use to highlight the various linguistic features, structures and functions. The main purpose of linguistic analysis is to understand how language is used to convey meaning. There are many ways through which language is analyzed linguistically i.e. stylistic analysis, discourse analysis, text corpora. It can also be conducted at parts of speech level, syntactic, semantic level, pragmatic level as well as phonological level. The aim of the present study is not to go deep into the structure of the language use by the students and to embark on the discourse or stylistic analysis as it is normally carried out to analyze complex text. The present study approaches the language use of the students in terms of Discourse Competence and the researcher has analyzed the number of occurrences of different linguistic items and phrases in connection Grammatical Cohesion taking the model of Celce (2007).

3.1 Population and Sample

The selection of the sample went through a rigorous effort on the part of the researcher as the researcher has

conducted informal interviews and discussions with these students for six months in order to see their motivational intensity. After it was confirmed that four of these students were partially DMC cases, their 2nd semester papers were checked for discourse competence, where the researcher found that selected components of the grammatical cohesion can be analyzed to show the impact of DMCs on the enhancement of L2 competence. These were the direct students of the researcher at BS level in the University. These participants were four in number but the researcher has selected three other students for the sake of comparison as it was necessary to compare the discourse competence of the DMC students with that of the non DMC cases. These seven students were all class fellows and they were all L1 Pashto speakers having the similar social and cultural backgrounds. The data from these students' answer books were taken in the 2nd semester in the first phase and when the same students reached the 4th semester, the data was taken once again from the students answer books for the purpose of analyzing improvement in their communicative competence. The reason for the selection of seven students was not only because they shared the similar L1, social and cultural backgrounds but also due to their CGPA in their studies.

4. Analysis of Cohesion

The findings below describe the students' competence in terms of cohesion in their writings. The researcher has collected the data from the written answer books of the students in 2nd and 4th semesters. The purpose of collecting the data from the papers of the same students with one-year gap is to find out whether any improvement has been occurred in their discourse competence for the last one year or not. Furthermore, the following table shows of number of mistake in connection to cohesion. Halliday & Hasan (1976) has classified cohesion into two categories, the grammatical cohesion and the lexical cohesion. The grammatical cohesion includes reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction while the lexical cohesion includes reiteration and collocation. The following table presents the number of mistakes/occurrences made by students in terms of grammatical cohesion.

Table 1: Occurrences of Grammatical Cohesion in Students' Papers

Students	Semester 2, Mid Term				Semester 4, Mid Term			
	Reference	Substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction	Reference	Substitution	Ellipsis	Conjunction
1	22	2	0	12	7	4	0	11
2	13	0	0	7	7	0	0	11
3	7	0	0	4	14	1	0	12
4	14	0	0	6	14	3	0	16
5	13	0	0	4	16	1	0	13
6	16	0	0	2	5	0	0	10
7	16	0	0	6	13	0	0	16

4.1 Reference

Reference is a type of cohesion in which one item in the text points out to the other element in the text or the world (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). It can be both anaphoric and anaphoric. The selected students have used different types of references in their papers. The researcher has pointed out the occurrences and mistakes of reference in the papers and correct forms are given for the mistakes

only.

Student 1

In the papers of student 1, 22 occurrences in connection to reference have been observed in the 2nd semester while 7 occurrences were observed in the 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

This is the last factor for writing an essay. Purpose may be of three types to persuade, to entertain and to inform.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

The critical thinkers evaluate information from and every possible angle. *They* cannot judge something from one side. They must be broad minded so that to solve the problem easily.

After comparing both the papers, it has been observed that the student has developed understanding towards the usage of reference in his writing and has showed improvement. Though the number of reference usage has been reduced but it seems that the student has learnt to use them more appropriately rather than abundantly.

Student 2

The analysis of the papers of student 2 shows that the student has produced 20 occurrences in his paper of 2nd and 4th semesters in which 13 occurrences were found in the 2nd semester while 7 in the 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

A writer should keep that who is *his* Audiens and for what porpuse *he* saying.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinkers look at the writing and after that *they* judge that what type of statement is.

The comparison of the both the papers highlights that the students has developed an understanding in the use of correct references in the text in his 4th semester.

Student 3

In the case of third student, 7 occurrences of reference have been observed in second semester while in fourth semester the number has increased to 14.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

“*you* are writing for daily news, then *your* audiance is all people *you* should to write that ideas which is suitable for all.”

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

“Part of critical thinking is the ability to carefully examine something whether *it* is a problem, a set of data or texts. People with analytical skills can examine information and then understand what *it* means and what *it* represents.”

As the examples quoted above suggest from the papers of the same student, a remarkable improvement can be seen in the text regarding usage of reference.

Student 4

After observing the paper of student 4, 14 cases of reference were observed in the paper of second semester while 15 cases in fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

If *we* assigned a topic of terrorism in Pakistan first *we* select and use good words. And *we* do not use emotionall words. *We* should to understand the people about terrorism in Pakistan.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

You might need to see or notice patterns in the information *you* are looking for and come up with the solution. All of *this* involves a critical eye.

By comparing both the example quoted from the paper of the fourth student, it can be seen that a student has shown remarkable improvement in usage of reference in the fourth semester while in second semester he was slightly weak in this regard.

Student 5

In the case of fifth student, reference has occurred 13 times in the second semester while 16 times in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

The audience is important for *you* Because the audience read *your* essay and that *they* get intrest then *you* success in *your* openion.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

If critical thinking skills is a key phrase in job listing *you* are applying for, be sure to give special attention to *your* critical thinking skills throughout *your* job search.

Although this time the student is not a DMC case but has shown improvement in the usage of the references in his papers with the passage of time.

Student 6

In the papers of sixth student, references have been found 16 times in the second semester while 6 times in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

If a writer has been assigned a topic on terrorism in Pakistan, so the topic is very serious one, then tone should reflect *that*.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Analytical skills refer to the ability to collect and analyze the information, whether *it* is problem, a set of data or text.

The analysis of both the papers presents that the students has reduced the use of references in his writing from 2nd to 4th semester but the student has not developed the understanding of using the references correctly in the text.

Student 7

In papers of seventh student reference has occurred 16 times in the second semester while 13 times in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

It is very important to know your audience because you will craft your topic for specific *them*.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

People with analytical skill can examine the information and then understand what *they* means and what *they* represents.

The progress seen in the papers of student 7 is almost similar to that of student 5 and 6, despite a little change in number of occurrences, no remarkable improvement can be seen in the usage of references.

4.2 Substitution

Halliday & Hasan (1976) states, "Substitution is a replacement of an item by a general word to avoid repetition" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:88). This means that substitution is the replacement of one element by another. After the analysis of the papers of students, the researcher has observed the following cases of substitution. These occurrences of substitutions have been highlighted in bold letters.

Student 1

Unlike reference in the paper of student 1, the occurrence of substitution is very few in the papers of student 1. Only 2 cases of substitution were observed in the second semester while 4 in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

For example if we write an essay on *world war II* so the tone of the essay will be serious because we don't make any fun so the *topic* is serious.

If you write an essay you should to know the *audience* that *whom* will read your essay.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Employers refers to focus on critical thinking because *the(y)* judge experience of someone on the basis of the given skill.

critical thinkers evaluate information from and every possible angle. *The(y)* can-not judge something from one side. *They* must be broad minded so that to solve the problem easily.

Solving problem is another important skill which are fruitful *one*.

From the above examples given above, it can be seen that student has shown improvement in usage of substitution during fourth semester as compared to his second semester.

Student 2

After the analysis of the papers of student 2, the researcher has found out that the student has not used any substitution case in both the papers.

Student 3

Only 1 instance of substitution was found in the papers of third student. There was no occurrence of substitution in the paper of second semester while only one example is found in the fourth semester.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Often you will need to share your conclusion with your *employes* or with a group of *collegues*. You need to be able

to communicate with *others* to share your ideas effectively.

Though in the above mentioned example, substitution is used vaguely with a lot of spelling and structural mistakes yet it can be considered a step towards improvement as in the paper of 2nd semester, the student has not used any substitution.

Student 4

The case of the fourth student resembles with that of the third student. The paper of second semester has no occurrences of substitution while in the paper of fourth semester the student used three cases.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Someone with critical thinking skill can be trusted to make decision *his or her* own.

People with analytical skill can examine *information* and *they* understand what *it* means and represent.

It can be seen that despite that the student did not have any sense of using substitution in second semester, he has developed a very good understanding of substitution during the fourth semester and has shown remarkable improvement.

Student 5

The case of the fifth student was very much similar to that of the third student. Only 1 instance of substitution was found in the papers. Likewise, there was no occurrence of substitution in the paper of second semester while in fourth semester only one example has been used.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Part of critical thinking is the ability to carefully examine *something* whether *it* is a problem, a set of data, or a text. It can be seen that though there is only one example, but at least the student has shown some improvement as compared to his second semester and developed sense of understanding of substitution.

Student 6 and 7

After analyzing the papers of both the semesters of student 6 and 7, no evident occurrences of substitution were found in their papers, thus no improvement has been observed.

4.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a deletion of a word, phrase, or clause from a sentence or text that can be generally understood. It is the omission of parts of a sentence when they can be presumed from what has already taken place in the text. Ellipsis consists of nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). No instances of ellipsis were found in the papers of the selected students.

4.4 Conjunction

Conjunction is semantic cohesive relation with an order of the way in which what is followed is systematically connected to what has gone before. If conjunctive elements are not in themselves cohesive, they do express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. It helps to connect the idea within and between sentences. As compared to other grammatical cohesion elements, conjunction has occurred more frequently by the students. The conjunction has been highlighted in the papers of the students in bold letters.

Student 1

Student 1 has used conjunctions both in the second semester and fourth semester number of times. In second semester the student has used 12 conjunctions while the count is reduced to 11 in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

To write an essay we should know the tone. Tone is the attitude of writer *or* viewpoint of author's on subject matter. Tone of an essay is directly related to the audience *and* purpose. Tone of an essay may be solemn, sarcastic *and* humorous.

For example if we write an essay on world war II *so* the tone of the essay will be serious *because* we don't make any fun *so* the topic is serious."

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Some time we have the above skills *but* still we cannot solve the problem.

Solving problem is another important skill *which* are fruitful.

Due to the lack of above skill a critical thinker will not be able to draw a reasonable judgment *or* to solve a problem."

By comparing the above two examples, it can be said that despite the fact that conjunctions are used in both the papers and to some extent in appropriate manner but in the paper of 4th semester it can be seen that the usage is

more appropriate though the number of conjunctions has reduced as compared to 2nd semester.

Student 2

Unlike student 1, the number of occurrences of conjunctions in the paper of student 2 has increased in semester 4. In the second semester, the student has used 7 conjunctions while this number has increased to 11 in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

Tune is the attitude of the auther mean what is a subject matter. A writer should keep that who is his Audiens *and* for what porpuse he saying. If he discussing terriresm his written *and* attitude should be series.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinking refers to the ability to analyze the statement *and* draw a reasonable judgment. Critical thinkers looks the writing *and* after that they judges that what type of statement is that.

It has been found in the above two examples that unlike student 1, with the increase in the use of conjunctions in the paper of 4th semester, improvement can also be seen.

Student 3

In the papers of student 3, 4 instances of conjunctions were found in the paper of second semester while 12 in fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

You are writing about the education, *then* the perpose is to spread education *and* motivated peoples.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Part of critical thinking is the ability to carefully examine something whether it is a problem, a set of data *or* a text. People with analytcal skills can examine information *and* then understand what it means *and* what it represents.

The comparison of both the papers of student 3 shows that in the 4th semester conjunctions are used more correctly then that of the second semester and thus the student has enhanced his writing skills.

Student 4

After analyzing the papers of student 4, 6 occurrences of conjunctions were found in the paper of 2nd semester while 16 in the paper of 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

You should to use good *and* best words to impress the audiance *and* understand.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Employer want a job candidate who can judge a situation using logical thought *and* come up with the best solution. Someone with critical thinking skill can be trusted to make decision his *or* her own *and* does not need.

In the papers of student four, the researcher observed an increase in the number of conjunctions in the fourth semester as compared to the second semester. The researcher also found out that by developing the understanding of the usage of conjunctions, the student has shown remarkable improvement in this connection.

Student 5

The ratio of the use of conjunctions in the papers of student 5 is almost similar to that of student 4. The student has used 4 conjunctions in the second semester while 13 in the fourth semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

The audience is important for you *Because* the audience read your essay *and* that thay get intrest then you success in your openion. How you writing *and* how you learned *or* Tomes is the attitud of writer.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information objectively *and* make a reason judgement. Critical thinking involves to judge the sources, such as data, facts *and* research findings. Good critical thinker can draw the fair *and* sensible conclusions from a set of information *and* differentiate between useful *and* less useful make a decision.

Student 6

The number of conjunctions in the paper of student 6 during 2nd semester is 2 while 10 in 4th semester and both the times the student has used conjunctions correctly.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

Tone of any topic is directly related to audience *and* purpose.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

It is the most important *and* crucial skill that involves to find out the solution by generating *and* implementation.

From the above examples it is evident that the student has used conjunctions more appropriately in both the semesters and thus it is hard to say that any improvement has been made in this connection as the students use of

conjunction is the same.

Student 7

The number of conjunctions in the paper of student 7 in the paper of 2nd semester is 6 while 16 in the 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

There are a wide variety of tones including sarcastic, solemn, critical *and* humorous.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

Good critical thinkers can draw fair *and* sensible conclusion from a set of information *and* differentiate between useful *and* less usefull details to make a decision *or* to solve a problem.

Student 7 papers are very much similar to that of student 5 and 6, i.e. regarding the use of conjunctions. No remarkable improvement can be seen after the comparison of both the papers.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the first four students have developed their grammatical cohesion during the course of one year. Though, the improvement shown does not have perfection, yet a reasonable improvement can be seen in their papers which shows that these students have experienced DMCs with different frequencies during this one year. On the other hand, student 5, 6 and 7 who are the students of the same semester do not show any remarkable improvement during the course of one year. This implies that DMCs has a positive impact on the language proficiency of the student.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the analysis of discourse competence of the learners show that the learners who are highly motivated have developed the grammatical and discourse competence to a great extent than those who are not motivated. Hence it has been proved that the periods of intense motivation increase the capacity of learning and learners can easily and significantly develop their communicative competence during their DMC periods. These findings confirm the statements documented by (Henry et al., 2015; Muir & Dörnyei, 2013 and Dörnyei et al., 2014) where they stated that the individuals who are motivated and caught up in DMCs perform exceptionally better and learn more successfully than those who are less motivated or not motivated.

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