

Grammar for Academic Writing: Making your Writing more Readable

"Every writer wishes to make their points clearly to their readers, with pieces of writing that are easy to read and have logical links between the various points made. This **coherence**, this *clarity of expression*, is created by grammar and vocabulary (lexis) through **cohesion**. This is the "glue" that joins your ideas together to form a cohesive whole."

(Academic English Online)

<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>

1. Reference Words and Phrases
2. Substitution and Ellipsis
3. Conjunctions/Sentence Connectors
4. Lexical Cohesion
 - i. repetition
 - ii. synonyms
 - iii. anaphoric (“shell”) nouns
5. Information Flow
6. Paragraph Transitions

Examples of reference words and phrases

pronouns	he/she/it/they
possessive pronouns	his/her/hers/their/theirs
object pronouns	her/him/them
demonstrative pronouns	this/that/these/those
other phrases	the former/the latter/the first/the second

Jenkins (1987) has researched the life cycle of **new businesses**. **He** found that they have average life of only 4.7 years. This is due to two main reasons: **one economic** and **one social**. **The former** appears to be a lack of capital, **the latter** a failure to carry out sufficient market research. Jenkins considers that together these account for approximately 70% of business failures.

Reference	Reference word/phrase
Jenkins	he
new businesses	
average life of only 4.7 years	
one economic	
one social	
the former..., the latter	

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Reference	Reference word/phrase
Jenkins	he
new businesses	they
average life of only 4.7 years	This
one economic	The former
one social	The latter
the former..., the latter	these

There is little prospect of improvement in the standard of living of the villagers from **their** present low level Without the support of electricity. Presently, the households can enjoy only a limited number of hours of illumination based on kerosene or diesel. **These** are not cheap and so are not affordable by a large majority of the rural masses. **This** restricts the range as well as the intensity of **their** activities severely. But even if supply of power from **these sources** is available more abundantly, there is the problem of adverse effects of **such use**.

Reference	Reference word/phrase
	their
	these
	this
	their
	these sources
	such sources

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Reference	Reference word/phrase
the villagers	their
kerosene or diesel	these
not being affordable by a large majority of the rural masses	this
villagers'	their
kerosene and diesel	these sources
from kerosene and diesel	such use

One group of commentators have little faith in the ability of food availability to improve child nutrition. a)..... arguments are supported by the fact that two-thirds of malnourished children live in countries with food supplies adequate for b)..... population's needs.

c)..... point to problems of poverty and to non food factors, such as children's health and the quality of d)..... care. e)..... belief is that both factors, but especially f)..... (which is increasing in many countries), play a more significant part in malnutrition than is often admitted.

Adapted from Bailey (2003)

One group of commentators have little faith in the ability of food availability to improve child nutrition. a) Their arguments are supported by the fact that two-thirds of malnourished children live in countries with food supplies adequate for b) their population's needs. c) They point to problems of poverty and to non food factors, such as children's health and the quality of d) their care. e) Their belief is that both factors, but especially f) the former (which is increasing in many countries), play a more significant part in malnutrition than is often admitted.

Substitution

1. The scientific study of memory began in the early 1870s when a German philosopher, Hermann Ebbinghaus, **came up with the revolutionary idea that memory could be studied experimentally.** In _____ he broke away from a 2000-year-old tradition that firmly assigned the study of memory to the philosopher rather than to the scientist.
2. I'll get married, before you _____.
3. A: I'll see you in the morning before I go home.
4. B: Well, I hope _____.

How could you improve these two texts?

1. Some of the water which falls as rain flows on the surface as streams. Another part of the water is evaporated. The remainder of the water sinks into the ground and is known as ground water.
2. The younger child was very outgoing; the older child was much more reserved.

Ellipsis

1. Some of the water which falls as rain flows on the surface as streams. Another part is evaporated. The remainder of sinks into the ground and is known as ground water.
2. The younger child was very outgoing; the older much more reserved.

Sentence Connectors

Effective mitigation will not be achieved if individual agents advance their own interests independently. Climate change has the characteristics of a collective action problem at the global scale, because most greenhouse gases (GHGs) accumulate over time and mix globally, and emissions by any agent (e. g., individual, community, company, country) affect other agents. International cooperation is **therefore** required to effectively mitigate GHG emissions and address other climate change issues.

Furthermore, research and development in support of mitigation creates knowledge spillovers. International cooperation can play a constructive role in the development, diffusion and transfer of knowledge and environmentally sound technologies

http://report.mitigation2014.org/spm/ipcc_wg3_ar5_summary-for-policymakers_approved.pdf

Examples of Sentence Connectors

Addition	Contrast	Example	Emphasise	Introduce an effect or result
also in addition furthermore moreover	however in contrast nevertheless despite in spite on the other hand on the contrary	for example for instance	in fact	as a result therefore thus hence consequently

Which of these two texts is more cohesive?

Text A

Attracting customers to buy your products and services needs a great deal of research and planning to ensure the money you invest in gaining customers pays off. This is normally achieved through market research and involves finding more about the people you hope to sell to. Armed with this information you can then formulate an effective plan of action based on your evidence. Once you are aware of the needs of your potential customers you need to examine your product in detail, fix a suitable price which will help your product sell, ensure you choose the correct method of distribution and select an appropriate promotion to attract your audience. This is known as the marketing mix and can help your business to spend money wisely with the best results.

Text B

Attracting customers to buy your products and services needs a great deal of research and planning to ensure the money you invest in gaining customers pays off. Firstly, there is market research and involves finding more about the people you hope to sell to. Secondly, formulate an effective plan of action based on your fix a suitable price which will help your product sell, ensure you choose the correct method of distribution and select an appropriate promotion to attract your audience. So this is known as the marketing mix and in summary it can help your business to spend money wisely with the best results.

Repetition

1. Simple

Patients who repeatedly take overdoses pose considerable management difficulties. The problem-orientated approach is not usually effective with such **patients**. When a **patient** seems to be developing a pattern of chronic repeats, it is recommended that all staff engaged in his or her care meet to reconstruct each attempt in order to determine whether there appears to be a motive common to each act.

2. Complex

In each of these cases the basic problem is the same: a will has been made, and in it a **debtor** is left a legacy of *liberatio* from what he owes the testator. The question is, if he has subsequently borrowed more from the testator, up to what point he has been released from his **debts**. It is best to begin with the second case. Here there is a straightforward legacy to the **debtor** of a sum of money and also of the amount of his **debt** to the testator. This is followed by a clause in which there is a general *damnatio* and also a general trust that the legacies in the will be paid. The **debtor** goes on to borrow more money, and the question is whether that is taken to be included in the legacy too. The response is that since the words relate to the past, later debts are not included.

Match the academic synonyms in each list.

Nouns		Verbs	
benefit	disadvantage	maintain	forecast
results	tendency	predict	assert
option	advantage	concentrate on	cite
drawback	findings	prohibit	focus on
trend	possibility	challenge	reinforce
expansion	increase	quote	question
area	field	strengthen	ban

Adapted from Bailey (2003)

What synonyms are there for the following?

- a) economy
- b) culture
- c) globalisation
- d) theory
- e) clone

What examples of repetition and the use of synonyms do you notice in this text you saw earlier?

Effective mitigation will not be achieved if individual agents advance their own interests independently. Climate change has the characteristics of a collective action problem at the global scale, because most greenhouse gases (GHGs) accumulate over time and mix globally, and emissions by any agent (e. g., individual, community, company, country) affect other agents. International cooperation is therefore required to effectively mitigate GHG emissions and address other climate change issues. Furthermore, research and development in support of mitigation creates knowledge spillovers. International cooperation can play a constructive role in the development, diffusion and transfer of knowledge and environmentally sound technologies

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Anaphoric (“shell”) nouns

Moulds do not usually grow fast, and conditions had to be found in which large quantities of *Penicillium notatum* could be produced as quickly as they were wanted. The solution to this p_____ was helped by N. G. Heatley, a young biochemist also from Hopkins's laboratory in Cambridge, who had been prevented by the outbreak of war from going to work in the Carlsberg laboratories in Copenhagen.

Reports of original work, headed often by the names of many joint authors, became too full of jargon to be understood even by trained scientists who were not working in the particular field. This s_____ persists today, though strong movements towards interdisciplinary research help to avoid total fragmentation of scientific understanding.

This led many later Greek thinkers to regard musical theory as a branch of mathematics (together with geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy it constituted what eventually came to be called the *quadrivium*). This v_____, however, was not universally accepted, the most influential of those who rejected it being Aristoxenus of Tarentum (fourth century BC).

This/These = noun

account	criticism	fall	rejection
advice	description	finding	report
answer	difficulty	idea	rise
argument	discussion	improvement	situation
assertion	distinction	increase	suggestion
assumption	emphasis	observation	view
claim	estimate	proof	warning
comment	example	proposal	
conclusion	explanation	reference	

- 1) This _____ **between high- and low-contact systems** provides a basis for classifying service production systems that can enable the manager to develop a more effective service operation.
- 2) Economic theory **ascribes the primary role** in the provision of public goods **to government**. This _____ on government overlooks the role of the not-for-profit sector in providing collective-type goods.
- 3) **Melanoma cell lines that carried at least one copy of MTS1 frequently carried nonsense, missense, or frameshift mutations in the gene.** These _____ suggest that MTS1 mutations are involved in tumor formation in a wide range of tissues. ...
- 4) Here we show that the annual flux of carbon from deforestation and abandonment of agricultural lands in the Brazilian Amazon was a source of **about 0.2 Pg C yr⁻¹ over the period 1989–1998 (1 Pg is 10¹⁵ g)**. This _____ is based on annual rates of deforestation and spatially detailed estimates of deforestation, regrowing forests and biomass.

1. Many high school students have problems fitting in socially. These _____
2. There has been a growing trend for graduate degrees to take longer. This _____
3. There are three interesting features in the new design. These _____
4. The first stage of the research was to collect data. In this _____



- Leonardo da Vinci 15th century Italian genius
- produced only a handful of finished paintings
- Mona Lisa + Last Supper
- Last Supper > most famous painting in world?
- remembered mainly as an artist
- also innovative engineer, scientist and anatomist

Leonardo da Vinci was a fifteenth-century Italian genius who produced only a handful of finished **works**.

However, they include the **Mona Lisa** and the last Supper, the **former** perhaps the most famous **painting** in the world. Although **he** is remembered mainly as an artist, **he** also was an innovative engineer, scientist and anatomist.

Adapted from Bailey (2011)

What changes could you make to the text below to improve it?

By 1800 the global population had reached one billion. One of the principal reasons for this growth in population was the invention of agriculture. The invention of agriculture enabled us to go from being hunter gatherers to highly organized producers of food, and was crucial in breaking the cycles of famine that had existed for thousands of years and enabled us to expand rapidly.

There were, broadly speaking, four agricultural revolutions. The first agricultural revolution took place 13,000 years ago and this revolution was defined by the domestication of animals. The second agricultural revolution, in the thirteenth century, was defined by the start of the selective breeding of plants and plant types. The third agricultural revolution took place between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was an agricultural revolution in agricultural productivity and, in particular, the mechanization of food production. The fourth revolution happened between the 1950s and now. This fourth revolution is known as the so-called ‘Green Revolution.’

By 1800 the global population had reached one billion. One of the principal reasons for this growth was the invention of agriculture. **This innovation** enabled us to go from being hunter gatherers to highly organized producers of food. **The transition** was crucial in breaking the cycles of famine that had existed for thousands of years and allowed us to expand rapidly.

There were, broadly speaking, four agricultural revolutions **The first** took place 13,000 years ago and was defined by the domestication of animals. **The second revolution**, in the thirteenth century, was defined by the start of the selective breeding of plants and plant types. **The third agricultural revolution** took place between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. **This was a revolution** in agricultural productivity and, in particular, the mechanization of food production. The **fourth** happened between the 1950s and now: the ‘so-called’ Green Revolution.

Adapted from Emmott (2013)

Information Flow

Version 1

Norma has had a terrible five years. Someone stole her car and set it on fire in 2010. Two of her toes had to be amputated the year after that. A road accident killed her husband in 2012. The other driver's carelessness was the cause of the crash. A storm damaged her house earlier this year.

Version 2

Norma has had a terrible five years. In 2010 her car was stolen and set on fire. The year after that she had to have two of her toes amputated. In 2012 her husband was killed in a road accident. The cause of the crash was the other driver's carelessness. Earlier this year her house was damaged by a storm.

A) Version 1

The enthalpy of hydrogen bond formation between the nucleoside bases 2'deoxyguanosine (dG) and 2'deoxycytidine (dC) has been determined by direct measurement. dG and dC were derivatized at the 5' and 3' hydroxyls with triisopropylsilyl groups to obtain solubility of the nucleosides in non-aqueous solvents and to prevent the ribose hydroxyls from forming hydrogen bonds. From isoperibolic titration measurements, the enthalpy of dC:dG base pair formation is -6.65 ± 0.32 kcal/mol.

A) Version 2

We have directly measured the enthalpy of hydrogen bond formation between the nucleoside bases 2'deoxyguanosine (dG) and 2'deoxycytidine (dC). dG and dC were derivatized at the 5' and 3' hydroxyls with triisopropylsilyl groups. These groups serve both to solubilize the nucleosides in non-aqueous solvents and to prevent the ribose hydroxyls from forming hydrogen bonds. From isoperibolic titration measurements, the enthalpy of dC:dG base pair formation is -6.65 ± 0.32 kcal/mol.

Task adapted from Gopen and Swann (1990)

The linking pattern

1. The *rheme* of one sentence becomes the *theme* of the next sentence.

Example

The complete electrical behaviour of any valve or transistor can be described by stating the interrelation of the currents and the voltages between all the electrodes. These relationships can conveniently be displayed graphically, and the various curves are known as the 'characteristics' of the device. In principle, all the characteristics should be available to the designer proposing to use the device in a circuit.

(W. P. Jolly, (1972). *Electronics*, p. 61)

Behaviour → Interrelation

Relationships → Characteristics

Characteristics → Available to designer

The repeated theme (topic)

Anthropology is the study of humankind, especially of Homo sapiens, the biological species to which we human beings belong. It is the study of how our species evolved from more primitive organisms; it is also the study of how our species developed a mode of communication known as language and a mode of social life known as culture. It is the study of how culture evolved and diversified. And finally, it is the study of how culture, people, and nature interact wherever human beings are found.

(Marvin Harris, (1975), Culture, people nature, p. 1)

Anthropology → Study of humankind

Anthropology → How species evolved

Anthropology → Development of language and culture

Anthropology → How culture evolved

Anthropology → How they interact

What kind of pattern do you notice here?

Since the advent of communicative language testing in the 1970s, authenticity has been a concern in language testing and it has often been argued that if we wish to predict a candidate's ability to communicate in the real world, then texts and tasks should be as similar to that real world as possible. Bachman (1991) makes a distinction between 'situational authenticity' and 'interactional authenticity'. Situational authenticity, glossed as 'life-likeness', is held to involve some degree of replication, in a test, of actual speech events in language use situations. In contrast, interactional authenticity is 'a function of the extent and type of involvement of test takers' language ability in accomplishing a test task' (*op.cit*: 91). Later, Bachman and Palmer (1996) consider authenticity to be a critical quality of language tests, alongside validity, reliability, consequences, interactiveness and practicality. They separate the notion of authenticity from that of interactiveness and define authenticity as 'the degree language test task to the features of a TLU [target language use] task' (1996:23).

Super-theme → sub-themes

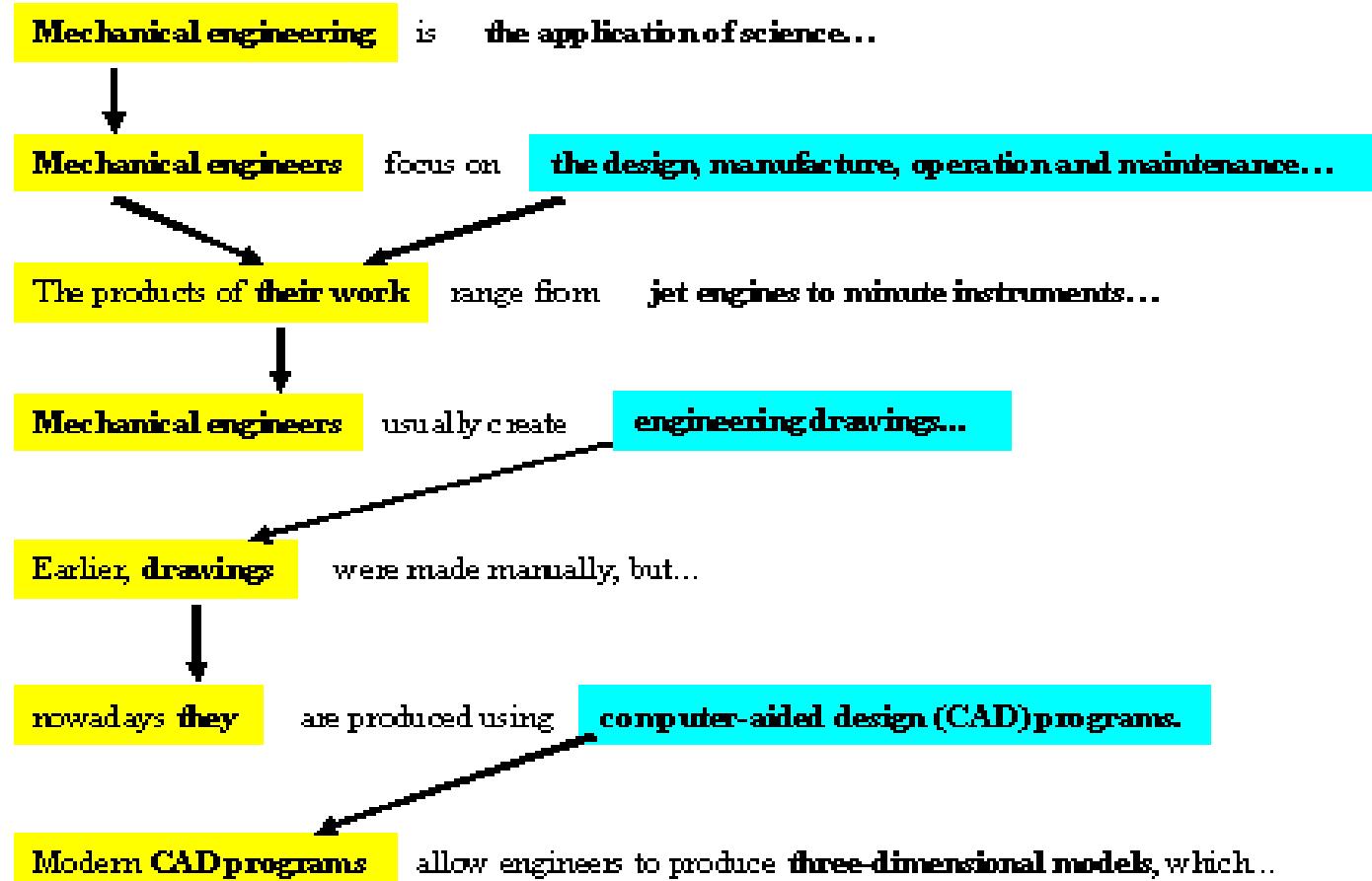
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Alderson, J., & Banerjee, J. (2002). Language testing and assessment (Part 2). *Language Teaching*, 35(2), 79-113.

Theme preview pattern

The literature offers **four explanations for this puzzling phenomenon**. **The first explanation** is that good jobs come in bundles. Managers who know how to design one part of a job well are also likely to design other parts well, and are likely to work in organisations that treat employees well. **The second explanation** is that job satisfaction creates a halo effect. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they are attitudinally biased to evaluate many of their aspects of the jobs favourably. **The third explanation** is common method bias. This explanation has been largely refuted, as several have shown that the common method variance does not lead to the overprediction of self-reports. **The fourth explanation** is common source bias. Some scholars have argued that common source biases are responsible for inflated correlations between satisfaction and self-report variables.

A blended pattern



Source: <http://sana.tkk.fi/awe/cohesion/infostrux/given/index.html>

- a) It also encourages readers to consider the problems that learners experience when trying to use cohesive devices and suggests some methods and techniques that can be employed to help them overcome these problems.
- b) Cohesion refers to the creation of “surface links” between clauses and sentences within texts, and is the quality that distinguishes discourse from isolated sentences (McCarthy, 1991).
- c) This article aims to raise readers’ awareness of lexical cohesion devices and the important role they play in academic writing.
- d) Lexical cohesion, in particular, plays a vital role in academic writing because it affects the “readability of a text” and “comprehensibility and clarity” of an argument (Mahlberg, 2006).
- e) It is essential, therefore, that learners are not only aware of lexical cohesion devices, but they are also able to employ them themselves.

Cohesion refers to the creation of “surface links” between clauses and sentences within texts, and is the quality that distinguishes discourse from isolated sentences (McCarthy, 1991). Lexical cohesion, in particular, plays a vital role in academic writing because it affects the “readability of a text” and “comprehensibility and clarity” of an argument (Mahlberg, 2006). It is essential, therefore, that learners are not only aware of lexical cohesion devices, but they are also able to employ them themselves.

This article aims to raise readers’ awareness of lexical cohesion devices and the important role they play in academic writing. It also encourages readers to consider the problems that learners experience when trying to use cohesive devices and suggests some methods and techniques that can be employed to help them overcome these problems.

Nicholas (2014: 59)

Paragraph Transitions

A) Master's Dissertation in East Asian Relations	B) Mathematics journal article
Interestingly/More precisely/Initially/Additionally/Similarly It should therefore be clear that.../It is therefore important/Therefore... The first/second/third school of thought... While there was tremendous effort in,... The reasons for the X Another aspect/example/incident Further proof... These changes/actions/statements/developments... This is not the only example.. This statement/failure This is a clear X It is clear that the X	The significance of x is... More significantly, Despite x,.. We therefore... As noted earlier Recall that... We have already seen... As in section... Next suppose that The next result shows... Another proof of x is.... This suggests... This is not an/an...

Of the four commonly tested foreign language skills (**listening**, speaking, reading and writing), it could be argued that **listening** is the one of most importance. Not only do we spend up to almost half of our daily lives **listening** (Feyten, 1991), it is also the skill that people are most interested in when enquiring about general English language proficiency (Buck, 2001).

Yet **listening** is also probably the most **difficult** of the language **skills** to **assess**. **Listening** involves a highly **complex** interplay of neurological, linguistic, semantic and pragmatic processes (Brunfaut, 2017; Rost, 2002); none of which, unfortunately for the **assessor**, can be directly observed. The **complexity** and ‘invisibility’ of **listening** has not, however, prevented researchers from developing either theoretical (e.g. Richards, 1983) or empirically-based (e.g. Buck et al, 1997) lists or ‘taxonomies’ of **listening sub-skills**. In more recent years, these have come to include the use of the **listening** criteria incorporated within the **Common European Framework (CEF)** (Council of Europe, 2001). Although not without its critics (e.g. Fulcher, 2017; Weir, 2005), the **CEF** is now increasingly used as a basis for the **assessment** of foreign **language skills**, not only within private institutions across Europe, but also in several national secondary school education systems, including in **Austria**.

Indeed **Austria** was one of the very first countries in Europe to fully implement the **CEFR** across a school **language** education system. This has resulted in a complete paradigm shift in the secondary education system, including for the first time the introduction for of standardised EFL tests in which **assessment** procedures are based on the communicative **CEFR** criteria (Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2015). In the final year of secondary school students in **Austria** may take the '*Matura*' English language test which covers the **skills** of reading, **listening** and language in use (speaking is optional) (Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2015). This is a very much a high stakes **test** because students are graded according to their test results and achieving the equivalent of a B2 level is a pre-requisite for entry on to many undergraduate degree programmes abroad, including in the UK, and possibly within **Austria** itself.

Conclusions

- Use reference words and phrases, substitution and ellipsis to make your writing more cohesive.
- The use of linking words is only one aspect of cohesion. Be careful not to overuse linkers and when you use them do so appropriately.
- The overuse of simple repetition can make your writing monotonous, so work on developing more complex repetition by using different word forms.
- While synonyms can add variety to your writing, they may not always have the same meaning in particular contexts. Remember that certain key words may not have synonyms!
- **This/These + anaphoric /shell nouns** are commonly used as cohesive devices in academic writing. Notice examples and try an incorporate into your own writing.
- Think carefully about how best to order information within sentences to make your writing more fluent.
- Use transitional language to make the connections between paragraphs explicit to the reader.

Further Practice

Cohesion

http://www.uefap.com/writing/parag/par_coh.htm

<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>

Cohesion and Coherence

<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>

<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion.html>

Coherence

<http://awelu.srv.lu.se/grammar-and-words/coherence/>

Cohesion

<http://sana.aalto.fi/awe/cohesion/index.html>

Transitional Words and Phrases

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Transitions.html>

ELE Academic Writing Courses

1. Grammar For Academic Writing

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/students/current-students/elsis/elsis-courses/grammar-for-academic-writing>

2. Academic Writing for International Students

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/students/current-students/elsis/elsis-courses/academic-writing-international-students>

3. PhD Writing Courses

+ Independent Study Materials

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<http://www.uefap.com/>