

# Anaphora and Cataphora in Narrative Texts of Albanian EFL Students

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**Abstract**—Writing competence is considered one of the most important and difficult skills when studying English as a foreign language. On the other hand, narratives are the most used type of writing. Although it may seem easy to put your thoughts into words, the connectedness and coherence of texts are crucial during the writing process, and their absence can disrupt the intelligibility of the text (Malmkjaer, 2001). Using cohesive devices, such as references, helps writers maintain coherence and cohesion in their texts. Anaphora and cataphora are two important terms of cohesion in Linguistics. Students struggle to comprehend these concepts, leading us to further investigate and research the topic. This study investigates the use of anaphora and cataphora in narrative texts by Albanian students studying English as a foreign language. It focuses on the frequency of these usages, the most common mistakes students make and their causes, and how we can improve the use of these elements. It gives practical conclusions and recommendations about the topic.

**Index Terms**—anaphora, cataphora, narrative essays, common mistakes, causes

## I. INTRODUCTION

Anaphora and cataphora are two essential terms of cohesion in Linguistics. Many researchers have conducted studies on cohesion, and it has recently become an important tool for teaching students how to write a text. In English lessons, educators should facilitate a deeper understanding of cohesive devices for students, highlighting the logical structure that influences reader comprehension.

Coherence and cohesion are considered foundational elements in discourse analysis and are essential topics in reading and writing activities. Text is a means of spoken and written communication that shows the development, organisation, and connection of ideas. In the textual context, the speaker or writer incorporates their sociocultural narratives, personal knowledge, and experiences, encoding such information into a unified communication that extends beyond the sentence, thereby combining cohesion and coherence (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). When we write or utter a statement, we organise our ideas and opinions so that the receiver of the message understands it as clearly as possible. The absence of cohesion or coherence can disrupt the intelligibility of the text (Malmkjaer, 2001). The first scholars to study cohesion were Hasan and Halliday in their 1976 book, *Cohesion in English*. Cohesion is a semantic concept concerned with the meaningful relationships within a text that define it as such, and it occurs where the interpretation of discourse elements is interdependent (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion is expressed partly through grammar and vocabulary (choice of words) and divided into grammatical and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Anaphora and cataphora are terms belonging to grammatical cohesion, and they will be further explained in the following chapter.

Linguists are aware of the importance of cohesion, especially of anaphora and cataphora. However, they acknowledge that students struggle to comprehend these concepts, leading them to investigate and research the topic further. Based on previous studies in Albania, students tend to make mistakes when writing in English, and they struggle to create cohesive and coherent texts. In university, students need to be efficient in various text types, and the text type considered in the study is the narrative one.

### A. Study Purpose

This study aims to investigate anaphora and cataphora in students' written texts and make practical suggestions for improving their use. Since there is very little research on anaphora and cataphora devices in Albania, this study aims to fill this gap by enhancing the writing quality of Albanian students, with a focus on anaphora and cataphora. This research aims to analyse how these devices function in Albanian texts, explore their stylistic significance, and the difficulties students face while using them. This study seeks to contribute to the academic field by providing a comprehensive understanding of anaphora and cataphora, offering insight into their use and importance in Albanian discourse.

### B. Outline of the Paper

This section provides an overview of the remainder of the paper and offers a general introduction to the thesis. The following section presents a theoretical and practical view of the study by evaluating the current literature on anaphora and cataphora as coherent elements. It follows the introduction of the paper, which covers the study's goals, background, and research objectives.

The paper's third section covers the research methods and data analysis techniques employed in the study. It describes the operational procedures, including the participants and where the study took place. Additionally, it details the

instruments used for data collection and the process for selecting data for analysis.

The fourth section provides the results, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected regarding the impact of anaphora and cataphora in students' written texts.

The final section presents the study's conclusions and offers recommendations based on the findings. It summarises the key insights and suggests possible courses of action or areas for further research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Cohesion

As previously mentioned, the first researchers to study cohesion and coherence were Hassan and Halliday in their 1976 book *Cohesion in English*. Cohesion plays a crucial role in the system of a language and is often a relation between linguistically realised meanings. It is an inter-prepositional relation that relies on both the textual and real worlds. Like other semantic elements, cohesion is indicated by how language is organised, specifically how sentences are tied together to form coherent text. Language is a multiple coding system with three levels: semantic meanings, lexical-grammatical forms, and phonological and orthographic expressions. Semantic meanings are encoded in lexical-grammatical forms, and lexical-grammatical forms are re-encoded in expressions. Putting it more simply, meaning turns into words and words into sounds or writing.

The semantic unity is expressed partly through the grammatical resources and partly through the vocabulary. That is why cohesion is divided into two main types: grammatical, such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunction, and lexical cohesion, including reiteration and collocation. Reiteration can be signalled by repetition of the lexical item, use of a synonym, use of a superordinate, or a general word.

### B. Reference

Reference is a widely used and important cohesive tool. In English, referential items include pronouns, demonstratives, and comparatives, and they refer to something else for their interpretation instead of being interpreted semantically in their own right (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 31). As Halliday and Hassan (1976) suggest, this category of items indicates how information is to be in other parts of the text. The most characteristic feature of reference as a cohesive device is that it does not prioritise the retrieval process, but rather the specific nature of the information signalled for retrieval. In other words, reference deals with the identity of things or information being referred to (p. 31). After providing this general definition of reference, Halliday and Hasan elaborate on their studies, categorising references into two parts (exophora and endophora) based on their usage in the English language.

Exophora is situational, and endophora is known as textual. The authors explain that exophora, as a reference device, does not simply refer to a synonym. They provide examples, such as lexical items like John, tree, or run have referential meaning because they are names for something specific; they refer to an object, a class of objects, a process, and the like (p. 33). Exophora does not name anything, but it refers to another item aimed to be signalled in the context of the situation. Both types of references are closely related to the context, and they can only be interpreted based on the available information. It is essential to highlight that both referential devices involve presumptions and speculation that must be taken into consideration.

However, the study's most important difference between exophora and endophora is that exophora is not part of cohesive devices.

By creating a bridge and connecting the language to the context in which it occurs, exophora assists in creating text; however, it does not establish connections between different passages. In other words, exophora does not provide or implement cohesion in a text.

On the other hand, endophora is cohesive, as it helps to make connections between different passages in a text, contributing directly to the creation of a text's texture.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) related endophora with structure, and as a result, endophora contributes directly to the texture quality. If the pronoun and its referent are within the same clause, this is already one text based on the structural relationship of texts, and the cohesion merely adds a further dimension to the texture. However, cohesion becomes the only linking device crucial to creating text if there is no structural relationship.

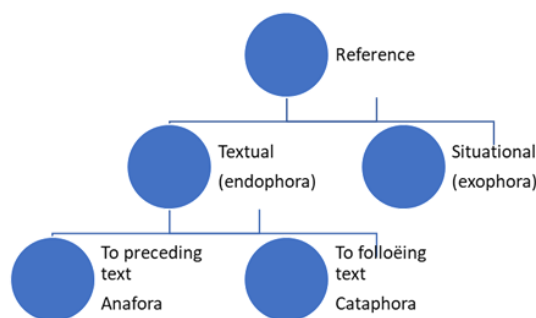


Figure 1. Types of Reference

In the English language, reference is often expressed through the definite article 'the', which specifies the correct meaning of the word. This is why we often see it in texts that have references. On the other hand, in cases where the participle 'the' is not used, the context is used to define the referred word correctly.

It should be emphasised that context is one of the primary and most important factors for referential cohesion.

To further investigate the semantic characteristics of discourse entities (DE) related to referential cohesion, it is essential to highlight and examine the coreferentiality of notions in a discourse, specifically the endophora references, anaphora and cataphora.

### C. Anaphora

The term anaphora (*αναφορά*, from the Greek. *Ανα* "after, turning back" + *φορά* "the act of carrying") is traditionally defined in textual theories as the recovery of a preceding element in a text. Anaphora is used in many contexts and has different meanings in literature and linguistics. Anaphora is not only studied in text linguistics and discourse analysis but is also an object of study for other disciplines, such as generative grammar and semantics, which deal with the realisation of syntactic or semantic conditions.

Anaphora occurs when a previous element mentioned in the text is repeated or recovered later. So, in other words, anaphora is that element in the text mentioned before in the same text, which is called the antecedent. When the anaphor and the antecedent have the same referent in the real world, they are called coreferential. Nevertheless, it should be noted that although coreference and anaphora often co-occur in texts, they are two distinct concepts, except in some cases.

#### (a). Types of Anaphora

In linguistics, anaphora includes recovering a noun phrase, a verb phrase, a part of a sentence, or a whole sentence. There are three types of anaphora: pronominal, verbal, and lexical.

**Pronominal anaphora** is the most used anaphora. In the English language, the group of anaphoric pronouns consists of all the third person personal pronouns – he, him, she, her, it, they, them; possessive pronouns – his, her, hers, its, their, theirs; reflexive pronouns – himself, herself, itself, themselves; the demonstratives – this, that, these, those; and relative – who, whom, which, whose; in singular and plural. First and second-person, singular and plural pronouns are usually used deictically (Mitkov, 2013). First and second-person pronouns can be used very rarely as anaphora. For example, **John** always likes his thoughts. He always says: **I** know this, **I** think that...

**Lexical anaphora** is the recovery of a term using a noun or noun group. In other words, it occurs when text elements are expressed through descriptions or proper names. These expressions are crucial in increasing the text's cohesiveness and conveying additional information about the text. There are different types of lexical anaphora, such as synonymy, generalisation, and specialisation.

**Verbal anaphora** is another type of anaphora. Verbal anaphora is defined using the verb *do*, which resumes a process in the text. In many cases, being associated with an anaphoric pronoun or with other elements that are also anaphoric, the verbal anaphora can also represent a preceding verbal group.

For example, "Many people would never sacrifice so much for that price, but I know you can do it".

Tanaka (1999, p. 221) stated that there are some cases in which an anaphora element may be delayed until another discourse element intervenes to illuminate the anaphoric coreference. He gives an example, "Police officer David Cheshire went to Dillard's home. Putting his ear next to Dillard's head, Cheshire heard the music also".

#### (b). Direct vs. Indirect Anaphoric Referential

Quirk et al. (1985, p. 267) explain that certain expressions, such as those introduced by "the", rely on earlier portions of the text to specify their meaning. Based on this idea, we can distinguish two reference forms: direct and indirect anaphora.

Direct anaphoric arises when a definite noun phrase refers to a previously mentioned noun, establishing a shared reference between the two expressions within the text.

Coreference refers to the relationship between two noun phrases, indicating that they refer to the same entity.

For example, I saw a boy running, but suddenly the boy stopped.

In this example, the anaphoric element is marked by the definite article 'the', which is used when a noun has already been introduced in the text and can be treated as 'contextually known'.

Indirect anaphora occurs when a reference is understood by the listener not through direct mention but rather through inference based on information that has already been provided.

For example, "The little dog barked as noisily as the big one" (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 82).

In this case, when the book's cover and pages are mentioned, there is no need to mention the noun 'book' because it has already been mentioned, and it is contextually understood that the cover and pages refer to it.

#### (c). The Difference Between Anaphora/Deixis

Anaphora versus deixis is one of the most discussed and debated issues among text theorists. Based on this distinction, there are two factors that Halliday and Hasan consider when discussing the referential act, namely the intertwining between "referencing" and "the request for interpretation". These two criteria often overlap when anaphors or deictics appear in a particular part of the text. Corblin (1995) mentions two ways of addressing the anaphora/deixis distinction:

the descriptive and functional approaches. The descriptive approach is made within the theoretical framework of Halliday and Hasan, who talk about anaphora/exophora, where the prefix "ana" is used for internal reference in discourse and "exo" for external connection.

Anaphora denotes a semantic relationship in which a referring expression, or anaphor, derives its interpretation from a preceding element in the discourse, known as the antecedent. This coreferential linkage may occur intra-causally or across clause boundaries, resulting in complete referential identity or partial overlap between the two expressions.

Deictics represent referential expressions' pointing or directing role, a key component of language use.

Deictics are more fundamental than anaphors: specific terms are purely deictic, while no terms are exclusively used for anaphoric purposes. For example, first- and second-person pronouns are exclusively deictic, with no anaphoric function. In contrast, a typical anaphoric term, such as the third-person singular pronoun, can also be used deictically, through emphasis, or with a pointing gesture, thus taking on deictic characteristics.

Deictic expressions can be classified according to two criteria: their lexical categories, which encompass pronouns, nouns, verbs, and adverbs, and their semantic types, which include person, place, time, manner, social, and discourse deixis.

For example, **Sam** went home because **he** was tired. - anaphora.

**You, you, and you**, come over here.

#### D. Cataphora

As mentioned above, anaphora is a phenomenon that refers to an element that has already been previously mentioned. On the other hand, cataphora is a phenomenon that refers to an element that comes after. Cutting (2002) stated that anaphora and cataphora are similar elements classified based on their position in the text. Cataphora is a relatively rare linguistic device with specific limitations throughout its use and there has been much scepticism about its existence. This has been expressed by several scholars, including Bolinger (1977), Stockwell (1994), Cornish (1996), etc. Carden (1982) notes that cataphora is primarily used in writing and less frequently in speech. Cataphora usually occurs in syntactically subordinate clauses and comes in the form of a pronoun, which is used before the referent enters the sentence. Cataphora has a local and limited character since the latter is seen as "the connection that is established between an indicative expression (or indicative use) and the linguistic context (or a part of it) that follows, and which allows it to identify the referent of this expression" (Kesik, 1989). To understand the element of cataphora more clearly, we must consider the context and background of the allegation.

Examples from Halliday and Hassan (1976):

"Before he arrived, John had already called." (p. 38)

"If you need him, John will be in his office." (p. 39)

#### E. Narrative Texts

Narration is a stylistic and linguistic mode used to tell the story of what has happened in the past. The events are used chronologically, mainly to entertain or inform the reader by presenting a series of events coherently and engagingly. Sometimes, narratives could be used to teach moral lessons or to present historical events. In these cases, the writer arranges the actions based on the precedence in time. The events are narrated based on the time they occurred and do not show cause and effect, classification, or the like. Due to the lack of these writing elements, this writing style is generally among the simplest forms. Students typically demonstrate greater proficiency in composing this kind of essay than others.

According to Percy, as cited in Permana and Zuhri (2013, p. 2), a narrative is a form of essay that recounts a story or a sequence of events as they take place.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the different methodological procedures used to gather information for the study. It outlines the primary methods and strategies for collecting and analysing data, ensuring the study's objectives are achieved. It also provides the reasoning behind the choice of these methods, showing how they support the research aims. By describing the precise actions taken during the study, this part helps readers understand the research process and its implementation.

#### A. Study Questions

1. How often do students use anaphora and cataphora in their written texts?
2. What are some common mistakes that students make?
3. What are some of the causes of these mistakes?
4. How can we improve the usage of anaphora and cataphora?

#### B. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, as the analysis is based on students' written outputs in response to essay prompts. According to Creswell (2009, p. 4), "*Qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.*" The design encompasses data collection, interpretation, and discussion stages in this context. The approach is inherently descriptive, as it seeks to convey the meanings evident in the collected data. As Gay (2010) explains, descriptive research involves systematically gathering

information to address questions concerning the current state of a given phenomenon. In this study, students' essays serve as the primary data source. Participants were asked to choose one of two provided narrative topics and develop it into a written composition.

### C. Participants

The research participants are first-year students studying English as a foreign language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana. A total of 67 students participated in the study, representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds and varying English proficiency levels.

### D. Data Collection

As it is essential to acknowledge that making errors is a natural part of the foreign language learning process and can contribute positively to language development and acquisition, the primary instrument employed for data collection was a written task in the form of an essay assignment. Students were given a narrative topic to write down, which consisted of narrating a personal event that they would never forget or that taught them a valuable lesson. The data was collected during an Academic Writing lesson.

### E. Instrument

The primary instrument utilised in this research involves quantifying the occurrences of anaphoric and cataphoric references in students' essays, specifically by measuring the frequency of these cohesive devices and conducting a comparative analysis of their usage. The study also analysed the number of mistakes that students made.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, this study is qualitative and employs a qualitative content analysis approach that is grounded in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion model. The participants completed a writing task to collect data for the study.

Considering students' essays, they tended to use more anaphora compared to cataphora. Cataphora, a phenomenon that refers to an element that comes after, makes it harder for students and makes them feel less confident using it. However, out of 161 uses of endophora elements, there are precisely 27 uses, which shows that Albanian students are not entirely unaware of using them in their essays.

From the results, it can be understood that the use of anaphora is easier and more convenient in narrative essays when narrating stories from personal lives and explaining events in detail. Out of 161 uses of endophora elements, students have used 134 anaphora elements, a relatively high number compared to cataphora.

### A. The Use of Cataphora

As analysed in students' essays, cataphora is rarely used. There are only 27 uses of it in total. For example:

*This is the biggest dream of every law student, the criminology department.*

*This field offers you many options. Being an advocate...*

*This is the perfect dream job for me since I was a kid. I am talking about having my own translation office.*

*Before he went abroad, my dad gave me his favourite book.*

*She was a very ambitious person. My sister is my heroine.*

### B. The Frequency of Anaphoric Use

Considering the three main types of anaphora, some important results have been taken out. Based on the results, the most used type is the pronominal anaphora.

Specifically, students tended to use the pronoun *it*. Out of 112 uses of pronominal anaphora, students used the pronoun *'it'* 37 times to refer to previous information, mostly noun phrases. In their essays, students told personal stories and explained their life stories by repeating the information using the pronoun. Some sentences where students used the pronoun *it* as anaphora are:

*This has always been my dream and if it becomes true....*

*It sounds like voluntary work but it's not.*

*I love helping others. It's very exciting.*

*My dad bought me a book. It talked about...*

Then, the most used pronouns were *this*, *that* and *these*, and less used *which*, *who*, *when* and *he* or *she*, *they* and *them*. For example:

*At that moment, my father was sleeping, and this made him angry.*

*In addition to that, ...*

*This is my biggest dream...*

*These situations in my family....*

*Being part of this ....*

*.... Every day, made me think more about this...*

*In this business....*

*.... but this changed that day....*

*That day I decided to visit the old lake near the edge of the woods.*

*Other examples are:*

*My sister and I were playing in the garden when she heard a weird noise.*

*I will not forget that person who taught me such a valuable life lesson.*

*I always trusted them.*

*At first, they did not believe in me.*

*After I read the book, I wanted to tell my father, but he is not here anymore.*

One specific use of anaphora that students often employ is the determiner 'the'. Students tended to refer to previously mentioned information by using the word again with the determiner, implying that the thing being discussed is familiar to the reader because it has already been mentioned in the text. Some examples of this are:

*I always remember the day that my father came back from Italy.*

*The job is exciting and .....*

*The way she talked was what made me realise that...*

*The book was called ....*

*The challenge was so big that....*

*..... the old lake near the edge of the woods.*

Students also used lexical anaphora 35 time. This type of anaphora is characterised chiefly by using synonyms. For example:

*The dog was running toward me. Suddenly, the furious animal stopped running.*

*Once Ricky Martin was on stage the crowd started screaming. The singer thanked everyone...*

*I was sick and tired of letting my parents down all the time.*

*As their daughter and as an only child...*

*Valuable and significant lesson...*

*My best friend...like a sister*

*..... a boy around 15 was struggling.... The kid seemed very frightened. I will never forget the young man's face.*

Another anaphoric element that students used was the nominal anaphora.

According to Baker (1978), the anaphoric use of *one* cannot refer to a solitary noun; instead, its antecedent must be a phrasal constituent belonging to the category he designates as **Nom** (Nominal).

For example:

*The redhead girl was taller than the other one.*

*That day was the worst one in my life.*

*Arguments with my mom are always louder than the ones with my dad.*

*The boy's scream was the scariest one I have ever heard.*

*He was the one I cared most.*

The other type is verbal anaphora. Out of 161 uses, 14 were verbal anaphora. Students mostly used the verb *do*. For example:

*In the end, we went home. And so did he.*

*No one believed in me, but my father did.*

### C. The Use of Deixis

The use of deixis was rare in students' essays. Since the essay was narrative, students used anaphora in their sentences rather than deixis. As seen from the results, there were only a few examples of students mixing anaphora with deixis and using it instead. For example:

*The boy in blood is here- said the man.*

*We arrived here last night but there was no snow as we expected.*

*May I offer you something? – said the woman in front of me.*

### D. The Most Common Mistakes

Although students frequently used anaphoric devices in their essays, many of them made some mistakes while doing so.

A common mistake that was made was the overuse of the pronoun 'it', which made the essay less interesting and coherent and too repetitive. For example:

*it made my day more interesting. It also made me think more about what happened. It changed my life because...*

This also led to a misunderstanding of the noun that the pronoun 'it' referred to, resulting in grammatical mistakes. They confused 'it's' with the possessive pronoun 'its'. For example:

*It's importance was obvious.*

*I found myself more in criminal law and it's cases than...*

Speaking of repetitiveness, many students used the same word instead of finding other ways of expressing it. For example:

*I saw a boy who had fallen off the bike. The boy's face was full of blood. The boy seemed scared. A man took the boy to the hospital.*

This indicates that the absence of referential elements has a direct impact on the text's coherence. The essay was dull and repetitive because of the constant use of the same noun. This could have been avoided if the student could have used different nouns for the same boy.

Another mistake made by only six students was the confusion of the pronoun 'they'. For example:

*When I heard they coming...*

Students also confused other pronouns when using them as anaphoric elements. For example:

*I considered she like my sister.*

Regarding verbal anaphora, some students used the main verb instead of the verb to be. For instance:

*No one heard me yelling, only my mother heard me.*

Another mistake noticed was the absence of the subject in students' sentences. For example:

*My dad is my hero. Gave me an important life lesson.*

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Conclusions

Endophora references are vital in maintaining textual cohesion, particularly in anaphora and cataphora. Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasise that the anaphoric function is fundamental in establishing cohesive ties between sentences, thereby enhancing the overall coherence of a text. A written text cannot be considered real and meaningful without cohesive devices and endophora references, as they contribute directly to the quality of texture. Anaphora and cataphora avoid repetition, plain texture, and ambiguity and are closely related to the context. Words are much more than only conventions that pick things from the real world; they should be used correctly so that the reader understands the meaning that being conveyed.

Based on the study results, some conclusions are drawn after analysing students' narrative essays. First, it is essential to highlight that the researcher explained cohesive devices, specifically anaphora and cataphora elements, before the essay assignment.

Considering the data collected, anaphoric referencing is more frequent than cataphoric referencing. This leads us to the conclusion that students considered anaphora easier and simpler to use, preferring to introduce the element they are discussing and then use anaphoric devices to make the text more coherent and avoid plain textures. The difference between the two is easily seen; in total, students used 134 anaphoric references and only 27 cataphoric ones. This can be explained by the fact that students tend to introduce an element in the sentence and then explain it using other words. Anaphora can be considered a fundamental category for the realisation of anaphoric cohesion in the text, and through this feature, it provides essential information for text coherence as well. Nominal anaphora realises referential continuity and can form indispensable links in thematic progressions.

As to the types of anaphora used, the most common anaphora device was pronominal anaphora, followed by lexical anaphora, while the least frequent anaphora was the verbal one. Students tended to use simple sentences in their essays and did not use too many complex anaphoric elements. However, the overuse of certain anaphora elements, such as the pronoun 'it', instead of making the sentence clear, had the opposite effect. These errors can affect the clarity, coherence, and flow of essays.

Considering the division of anaphora types based on the contextual meaning in the text and the data gathered, it was concluded that students used more direct anaphora than indirect ones. Students mostly used simple sentences rather than complex ones, so they mainly used direct anaphora to refer to the antecedent element.

Looking at the second research question, the most common mistakes students made were grammatical ones. They mostly tended to misuse the pronouns 'it' and 'they' or the verbal anaphoric element 'do', using the main verb instead. A few students lacked the use of a subject in their sentences.

As for the third question, which focused on identifying the causes of these mistakes, it found that the causes were multifaceted. Considering the study's results, the limited grammatical proficiency of Albanian students was a significant factor contributing to the errors, especially concerning more complex sentence structures and the nuanced use of anaphora. Students tended to use simple but repetitive sentences, which they may have defaulted to because they believe it adds style or importance to their writing. Students could not use more complex anaphora elements, and they tended to overuse or misuse these elements without understanding how they could help develop the narrative. Their tendency to rely on simple, repetitive sentence patterns may have been an attempt to simplify their writing; however, it ultimately led to more mistakes. While easier to construct, this repetitive use of simple sentences may have resulted from students defaulting to familiar structures without understanding the full potential of more sophisticated anaphoric constructions. Their overuse or misuse of certain anaphoric elements further exacerbated the issue.

Another cause of the mistakes was the students' struggle with vocabulary and creativity. Limited vocabulary prevented them from effectively varying their sentence structures and using more precise or diverse anaphoric references. This lack of lexical variety led to an over-reliance on certain words or phrases, which compromised the fluidity and clarity of their writing.

Furthermore, an observed issue is the intervention of the mother tongue. The influence of students' native language (Albanian) on their English writing proved to be a significant factor. Many students unconsciously transferred syntactic structures from their mother tongue, such as omitting subjects in sentences, a common practice in Albanian. However,

this does not apply to English, where subject pronouns are typically required for sentence clarity. This language transfer led to errors in sentence construction and hindered their ability to use English grammar correctly, especially in the context of anaphora. This suggests that students' errors resulted from grammatical limitations and the interference of their first language, which influenced their understanding and application of English cohesive devices. For example:

*My dad is my hero. Gave me an important life lesson.*

Additionally, another conclusion pertains to the use of deixis. Students use significantly fewer examples of deixis than anaphora in their writing. This may be due to the more complex and context-dependent nature of deictic expressions, which require the speaker or writer to rely on shared knowledge with the audience regarding time, place, or person. In contrast, anaphoric expressions are often easier to manage, as they refer to previously mentioned elements within the text, making them more straightforward for students to incorporate. The limited use of deixis also reflects a lack of awareness or understanding of its essential role in communication, where context and the speaker's perspective are crucial for interpreting meaning. Thus, further attention to deixis in language instruction could help students become more proficient in using both deictic and anaphoric expressions effectively.

Moreover, it is never too much to raise students' awareness of the importance of anaphoric procedures in understanding and drafting, particularly the general category of textual elements. In fact, from a pedagogical perspective, it is crucial to teach the functioning of linguistic elements of anaphoric cohesion in the text, to emphasise the importance of interpreting/reinterpreting statements, which in principle serve to build coherence and to show how the signs of textual cohesion function to simplify the interpretation and calculation of coherence, sometimes making it possible to determine incoherence or unacceptability of the text.

After all the readings and research, references in Albania have only been studied within the framework of text and generative grammar. This work presents a didactic approach to anaphora and cataphora, which is currently one of the very few in Albania. This fact makes it doubly interesting to explore other criteria of cohesion and coherence to see how they affect foreign language teaching.

#### *B. Recommendations*

The study aimed to provide insight into the frequency of use of anaphora and cataphora devices and to understand the mistakes students make when using referential elements, as well as the causes of these mistakes.

The fourth research question concerns improving the usage of anaphora and cataphora. Based on the research, some recommendations have been made.

The first recommendation addresses teachers. Teachers are advised to give more importance to writing competence and, more specifically, to the reference device. They should organise extra lesson hours focusing on writing, cohesive devices, and how to write coherent texts. They should also give students more writing-related exercises. From a narrow viewpoint, teachers should encourage students to use anaphora and cataphora purposefully and sparingly, ensuring that each repetition enhances the meaning or rhythm of the text. Teachers should help students vary sentence structure during their classes to avoid monotony and create a more dynamic flow in the narrative. Moreover, they should encourage their students to review and revise their work carefully to ensure clarity and coherence in their use of anaphora and cataphora and learn from their mistakes.

Special attention should be paid to reading strategies and the place of textual elements in them. The teacher must know how to effectively communicate the most appropriate strategies and the most fruitful reading itinerary for students. Constructing the meaning of the text and working with the coherence of the text requires the presence of a demanding and persistent mediator. A teacher must be able to identify their students' learning difficulties and propose help, adjustments, and corrections that adapt to their needs. By understanding the complexity of the reading activity, they will lead students toward the pluridisciplinarity that this activity requires and the independence of the multi-meaning that reading makes possible. Although the dictionary is an essential tool for understanding texts, didactic efforts that lead to the activation of high-level processes for better understanding the text should not be underestimated.

On the other hand, students are encouraged to exercise greater attention to developing their writing skills and processes to enhance their overall language proficiency. Engaging in extensive reading and regularly practicing essay writing during their free time can significantly improve their academic writing competence. Students should focus on cohesive devices and adapt each of them to the type and tone of the essay. Focusing on anaphora and cataphora, students are advised to avoid using anaphora too much in a row, as it can sound repetitive. Instead, they should use it strategically to highlight key moments, ensuring the sentences have clear meaning and are easy for the reader to understand. Students are advised to combine anaphora and cataphora to make their writing more dynamic, creating different effects in their narratives or essays.

Students can have more reliable methods of analysis and text drafting at their disposal. When reading, they can initially discover and verify the meaning themselves, then perform a verification according to the guiding tables and remarks provided by the teacher, and later focus on textual elements that, at this stage, are no longer problematic in breaking down the meaning. In writing, the student must first respect and reproduce a specific chain of anaphoric links and will write according to the given model, because although this may seem lacking in originality, it initially allows them to master some tools for textual coherence. Then, they will practice with self-correction exercises or rewriting. In the final stage, they will attempt to enrich their style by expanding their range of anaphoric devices and, as a result, the information included in the text. In this case, it is futile to hope that the entire group will reach the highest level of mastery of style.

However, acquiring textual coherence criteria and self-correction techniques is an undeniable advantage.

A final recommendation is directed toward future researchers: it is suggested that they conduct further investigations into academic writing, with particular attention to the challenges students encounter in developing and enhancing their writing skills, giving extra importance to cohesive devices. This advice is specifically directed at Albanian researchers, as few studies have been conducted concerning cohesive devices in general and anaphora and cataphora in particular. In other words, the more research is conducted, the greater the improvement we might achieve.

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