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Enhancing Coherence through Discourse Awareness: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Academic Essay Writing among ESL Learners in Multan



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Abstract

Academic coherence is a challenge for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. It is a challenge at the undergraduate level where students transition to structured academic writing. This study investigates the relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in academic essay writing among undergraduate students in Multan. The study adopts a mixed-methods explanatory design to examine how students' understanding of discourse features such as, cohesive devices, paragraph unity and sequence affected the coherence of their written material. The study was guided by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion Theory and Canale and Swain's (1980) Discourse Competence Model. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. The sample of the study were 40 ESL learners, who participated in this experimental study. The quantitative data was collected through structured essay writing task and estimated using a rubric based on discourse features. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 2 ESL teachers and thematic analysis of teacher's interviews. The qualitative findings were gathered via semi-structured interviews with two teachers and thematic analysis of teacher's interviews. Correlation analysis showed a statistically significant positive relationship between discourse awareness and writing coherence ($r=.72$, $p<.01$). Thematic findings showed perceptible improvements in topic sentence, clarity, logical flow, and the use of cohesive devices among students who received discourse-based instruction. The study concludes that developing discourse awareness plays a vital role in improving academic writing coherence. It recommends integration of discourse-based pedagogies into writing curricula and training programs. These findings contribute to global understandings of writing instruction by underscoring the value of discourse-level competency in academic writing enhancement.

Keywords: discourse awareness, coherence, academic writing, ESL learners, mixed-methods, discourse-based pedagogies

1. Introduction

Academic writing is a fundamental element of language learning in ESL situations where students are required to express their ideas in a very clear and organized

manner (Hundarenko 2019). In this study, discourse awareness (this is the skill or factor being measured to check its effect) is independent variable and coherence in academic writing (this is the result influenced by discourse awareness) is dependent variable. At the undergraduate level, many students are expected to move beyond basic sentence structure and develop academic essays that reveal coherence and unity in the sentences. Millia (2017) stated that students face problems in achieving coherence due to limited awareness of discourse features, such as cohesion, sentence structure, paragraph organization and logical flow. Discourse awareness refers to a writer's ability to comprehend the idea that are properly structured and linked with a passage. It comprises the active use of cohesive devices, topic sentences and paragraph unity to create meaningful discourse. Maruashvili (2023) stated that coherence is the logical flow of ideas that enables readers to recognize the exact message of a text. Research showed that coherence is not only dependent on grammatical accuracy but also on the writer's ability to shape and attach ideas effectively. In Pakistan, the writing instruction usually emphasizes grammar and vocabulary rather than discourse-level performance, which leads to weak coherence in students' writing. Tlonaen (2020) emphasized that many studies have exposed that students can produce grammatical correct sentences but fail to link them understandably, resulting in fragmented essays.

International research identifies that discourse awareness plays a significant role in educating coherence and writing quality. So, there is an urgent need to explore how discourse-based instruction can enhance coherence in academic writing among students (Setyorini et al., 2026). Academic writing is critical skill in language learning. At undergraduate level students are expected to transition from basic writing to structured academic discourse. Baker (2017) highlighted that discourse awareness is the ability to understand and use components such as cohesion, coherence and organization. Coherence in writing refers to logically sequence ideas that are clearly connected, enabling readers to follow the argument easily. In Pakistan, students struggle with creating coherent texts due to lack of formal instruction on discourse patterns and structures (Haider & Mahmood, (2022). This study investigates that discourse awareness influences coherence in academic essay writing among students in Multan. It aims to deliver insights into pedagogical strategies that may enhance

students' discourse abilities and writing competency. Academic writing focused on discourse features such as, topic sentence, logical progression, cohesive devices, background, justification and thesis sentence at the end. Sadar (2025) argued that academic writing needs more than just grammatical accuracy. It requires the organization of ideas and explicit communication of meaning. One of the main elements of useful academic writing is discourse awareness, which refers to a writer's understanding of how ideas are linked and structured within a text (Canale & Swain, 1980). The use of cohesive devices, topic sentence, and paragraph unity plays a vital role in developing coherence and logical flow of an essay. Riznanda (2021) found that students are mastering and understanding this discourse elements can significantly improve their ability to write essays that are not only grammatically accurate but also meaningfully connected.

Background of the Study

Academic writing plays an important role in language learning, particularly ESL for undergraduate students, who are expected to express complex ideas in a reasonable and structured form (Ramzan, et al., 2023). Discourse awareness and coherence are the two main critical elements of effective academic writing. It refers to a writer's understanding of how texts are organized and how meaning is constructed through structural and rhetorical elements. This involves the ability to manage textual coherence, cohesion, paragraph unity, sequencing and transitions (Manan & Raslee, 2018).

In Pakistan, research has shown that many undergraduate ESL learners struggle with academic writing because they are not exposed to discourse-based writing strategies in their curriculum. Shah (2025) stated that traditional teaching approach emphasizes on grammar and sentence structure rather than on larger textual components such as coherence and organization. As a result, students commonly produce fragmented and incoherent essays. Tso (2024) argued that International study explores the view that emerging discourse awareness leads to perfect coherence in writing. Bublitz (2011) emphasized that coherence is the extent to which ideas are understandably connected and easy for the reader to follow. It is often judge subjectively and remains one of the most important indicators of writing performance and quality. In writing instruction, coherence is often underdeveloped due to lack of

explicit training in discourse structure. Students may have a good command of grammar and vocabulary but still produce essays that lack sequence, flow, clarity and arrangement due to weak discourse competence (Tenri Ampa & Muhammad Basri, 2019). Regional research on this topic in Pakistan remain limited at the undergraduate level so, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in academic essay writing among learners in Multan. The study investigates whether a higher level of discourse awareness contributes to more coherent writing. Therefore, this study is offering practical implications for language teaching and curriculum development in the area.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of discourse awareness on the coherence of academic essay writing among ESL learners.
2. To explore ESL learners' perceptions and challenges in applying discourse awareness to enhance coherence in their academic essays.

Research Questions

1. How does discourse awareness influence the coherence of academic essays among ESL learners in Multan?
2. What are the perceptions and challenges of ESL learners regarding the use of discourse awareness in improving essay coherence?

Statement of the Problem

Although students are learning language for several years, but even though they are facing difficulties in producing coherent academic writing to limit discourse awareness and ineffective use of organizational and cohesive strategies. Despite years of language instruction, ESL learners at undergraduate level in Pakistan linger to struggle with constructing coherent academic essays. This problem arises due to inadequate emphasis on discourse-level components such as cohesion, organization, and logical flow in traditional teaching practices. Students may reveal suitable grammar and vocabulary; their writing sometime lacks unity and clarity. Hence, there is a need to inspect whether enhancing discourse awareness can improve coherence in academic writing and address discourse-level issues.

Research Gap

Previous studies have focused on writing challenges among ESL learners. However, limited research has investigated the relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in Pakistani educational instructions. Yet, few studies have used an intervention-based approach to judge how discourse instruction influences writing act. This study fills this gap by merging quantitative and qualitative methods to discover both the relationship and instructional impact.

Table 1: *Previous Research Gaps Filled*

Previous Gap	How This Study Fills It
Lack of local empirical data on discourse-coherence link in ESL writing	Provides evidence from intermediate-level learners in Multan
Few studies combine both qualitative and quantitative data for this phenomenon	Uses both teacher feedback and essay performance to analyze relationship
Limited classroom intervention studies	Includes structured training with observation and post-analysis

Need of the Study

This study is needed to highlight the gap between theoretical understanding and classroom training in ESL writing instruction. This study also aims to offer practical evidence on how discourse awareness can improve coherence, which is an important part for academic success. The findings helped teachers shift from grammar-based teaching to discourse-based instruction. This study aims to fill a research gap by discovering the direct relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in essay writing. It will support teachers, facilitators, curriculum designers to categorize effective discourse-based strategies for improving academic writing.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for teachers, students and curriculum designers. It offers applied strategies for improving writing coherence through discourse awareness. It contributes to ESL teaching by identifying the position of teaching discourse features and it also offers significant data that may support curriculum development in Pakistani academic institutions. It provides practical strategies for teaching academic

writing. The findings supported teachers designed effective instructional approaches that go beyond grammar-focused teaching.

2. Literature Review

Research in writing highlights the importance of discourse awareness in emerging coherent texts. Coherence is achieved through cohesive devices such as conjunctions, references, and lexical components. Wang and Xie (2022) stated that effective academic writing requires understanding and discourse conventions and this discourse awareness enables students to shape ideas logically and communicate excellently. Coherence depends on the logical sequence between ideas rather than isolated sentence-level accuracy. Studies conducted by Do and Khanh (2025) highlighted that discourse-based teaching significantly improves coherence in writing skills. In Pakistan, ESL learners lack exposure to discourse-level teaching, resulting in weak writing performance and traditional methods fail to improve coherence ability among students. Haider and Mahmood (2022) stated that discourse awareness plays an important part in academic writing as it enables students to manage ideas stepwise. A comprehensive writing depends on understanding discourse conventions and perfect structures (Kaplan & Grabe, 2002). Coherence refers to the proper link of ideas within a text and it is achieved through cohesive devices such as conjunctions, references and lexical elements. Research demonstrates a healthy relationship between discourse awareness and coherence. The students with developed discourse awareness produce better coherent text so it can be said that discourse-based instruction improves writing quality (Zaheer, et al., 2024).

In Pakistani context, ESL learners regularly struggle with academic writing due to traditional teaching methods that commonly focus on grammar rather than discourse (Nazar & Nordin, 2024). Research on writing reliably highlights coherence as a dominant challenge, particularly in contexts where students have limited exposure to dependable academic discourse. Halliday and Hasan argued that coherence is achieved through organization and the effective application of cohesive devices. John Sweller in his Cognitive Load Theory proposed that students frequently struggle to manage several writing demands simultaneously. Gaii (2018) stated that directed that discourse awareness, understanding how ideas are structured, connected and developed in texts are playing a vital role in developing writing quality among

Theoretical Explanation

Halliday & Hasan provide the basis to analyze how students use language to build cohesion and achieve coherence. Canale & Swain provide the broader communicative framework, emphasizing discourse competence as a core part of language proficiency. It directly addresses both variables of the study and it helps operationalize both variable in measurable terms. It is used and accepted in ESL writing research and it also links theory with practical teaching and assessment tools, like rubrics and writing tasks.

Limitation of the Study

The study was limited to undergraduate ESL students in Multan, which, may affect generalizability. The sample size was minor and the study intervention duration was limited. Coherence evaluation may contain some level of subjectivity despite using a rubric. The results should not be generalizable to all ESL contexts. Moreover, coherence assessment may include some degree of subjectivity. The study focused mainly on written discourse, including spoken discourse and listening tasks. This research was cross-sectional, capturing only a snapshot.

Delimitation

The study focused only on academic essay writing and did not involve other writing categories. It was limited to undergraduate ESL students in selected colleges of Multan. Only discourse awareness and coherence were investigated as the main variable, excluding other writing variables.

Table 2 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on **Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion Theory**. The study is focused on **Canale and Swain's (1980) Discourse Competence Model**. Cohesion Theory interprets how linguistic features link ideas within a text. Discourse Competence Model emphasizes the skill to produce meaningful and organized communication. These two frameworks offer a groundwork for investigating how discourse awareness contributes to coherence in writing.

Table: *Theoretical Framework*

Framework/Model	Proponents	Key Concepts	Relevance to Study
Cohesion & Coherence Theory	Halliday & Hasan (1976)	Focuses on grammatical and lexical cohesion (e.g., reference, conjunction, substitution) that create coherence in text	Helps identify how students use cohesive devices to build logical connections in their writing
Discourse Competence (Part of Communicative Competence Model)	Canale & Swain (1980)	Emphasizes the learner's ability to produce coherent, structured, and connected discourse	Provides a broader understanding of learners' writing abilities beyond grammar and vocabulary
Genre-based Approach to Writing	Hyland (2004)	Emphasizes the structure of writing genres and rhetorical patterns used in academic texts	Supports teaching and assessing discourse through the awareness of structured genre-based essay writing

3. Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design. This research is empirical, explanatory research. The quantitative phase investigated the relationship between discourse awareness and coherence, while qualitative phase discovered teachers' experiences. The research paradigm was pragmatic, including quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problems.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test essays were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, including paired sample-tests and Pearson correlation, to determine the statistical significance of upgrading in writing coherence and relationship between discourse awareness and coherence.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data from 2 teachers were analyzed through thematic analysis. This process depends on transcribing interviews, coding responses, identifying recurring themes, and categorizing them under main conceptual headings such as teaching challenges, discourse strategies, and students advancement. The combination of both instruments of results provided a complete picture of how discourse awareness contributes to coherent academic writing among ESL learners.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of undergraduate ESL students in Multan. A purposive sample of 80 students and 2 teachers was selected. The population of the study comprised of all the undergraduate-level ESL learners enrolled in language learning programs in private colleges in Multan. These students are at a critical stage of language development where they are expected to produce coherent academic essays but they usually struggle with discourse-level organization. Hence, from this population, a purposive sampling technique was applied to select 80 students from two private colleges. These 80 ESL learners were the sample of the study. The purposive sampling technique ensured that participants shared similar learning contexts, language proficiency and exposure to English as a second language.

Instruments

Data were collected using essay writing tests and a scoring rubric based on discourse features and semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers. The key research instruments used in this study included pre-tests, post-tests, essay writing tasks, and semi-structured interview procedures. The pre-test and post-test served as quantitative instruments to evaluate students' writing skills before and after the intervention. However, these tests required participants to write academic essays on comparable topics under controlled conditions, ensuring equivalence of findings. There are four instruments used in this study, discourse awareness checklist (self-assessment+ teacher evaluation), essay writing task based on academic task, coherence rubric based on criteria like flow, transitions, topic unity, and semi-structured interviews with 2 teachers for qualitative data.

Intervention Process

The intervention continued for six weeks and focused on teaching discourse components such as cohesion, sentence structure, paragraph unity, and sequencing. Undergraduate level students participated in guided writing tasks, peer review, and feedback sessions. This study used a mixed-methods research approach to explore the relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in academic essay writing among ESL learners. The mixed-methods approach was preferred because it allows for a complete understanding of the research problems merging quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data supported in measuring the extent to which discourse awareness effects coherence in learners' writing, while the qualitative part provided comprehensive insights into learners' and teachers' perspectives relating the fruitfulness of discourse-based instruction. This combination of both data forms ensured validity, triangulation and a deeper interpretation of findings. The study design adopted was an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, and in this design quantitative data were collected and analyzed first to identify the statistical relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in writing skills. The second part was qualitative data, which was conducted to explain the quantitative findings in detailed. The mixed-methods design was very accurate because it allows the researcher to assess the measurable influence of discourse awareness training and then investigate the underlying components that contributed to findings. This step-by-step structure upheld sequential flow and strengthened the general reliability and explanatory depth of the study. From qualitative side, 2 ESL teachers were chosen to provide qualitative insights into the teaching and estimation of discourse awareness in essay writing. This connection of students and teachers provided balanced perspectives from both the learning and instructional areas.

A rubric based on discourse competence model was used to assess the essays for coherence, cohesion, sequence, flow and discourse structure. The rubric comprised strong description for evaluating topic sentence clarity, paragraph unity, transitional devices, and the coherence of ideas. The qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews with language teachers, these teachers helped recognize instructional strategies, students' difficulties, and perceptions about discourse-based writing training. The study instruments were validated by three experts in Applied

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Linguistics to ensure content validity and reliability. The data collection process was carried out in three parts. The rubric can be used to score students' essays both quantitatively and qualitatively, each essay is scored in 6 areas and it is linked to theoretical framework.

Table 3: *Rubric for Assessing Coherence through Discourse Awareness in ESL Academic Essay*

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
1. Discourse Structure	Clear introduction, body, and conclusion; logical sequencing throughout	Minor issues in structure; generally logical	Basic structure present but weak transitions	Lacks clear structure; no paragraph unity
2. Use of Cohesive Devices	Frequent and accurate use of cohesive devices (e.g., however, therefore, in contrast)	Occasional cohesive devices used; mostly accurate	Few cohesive devices; some use of cohesive devices used incorrectly	Rare or incorrect cohesive devices
3. Topic Sentence Clarity	Each paragraph starts with a strong, relevant sentence	Most paragraphs have clear topic sentences	Topic sentences are vague or unclear	Lacks topic sentences; paragraph ideas are disjointed
4. Logical Flow of Ideas	Ideas flow smoothly and logically; clear progression from one point to another	Generally good flow with few abrupt shifts	Some jumps or disjointed ideas	Ideas are scattered; lacks logical connection
5. Paragraph Unity	Each paragraph fully develops one idea	Most paragraphs stay on topic	Paragraphs sometimes include mixed or unrelated ideas	Paragraphs are unfocused and mix multiple unrelated ideas
6. Coherence	Whole essay is highly coherent; clear thesis	Mostly thesis coherent	Some sections with are coherent	Overall essay is incoherent or

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Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Across	and logical build-up	minor lapses in	others	are hard to follow
Essay	of arguments	clarity	confusing	

Scoring Guide: Total Score Range: 6 – 24 and Performance Levels:

- **21–24:** Excellent – Strong discourse awareness and high coherence
- **16–20:** Good – Good structure and some minor issues with flow
- **11–15:** Fair – Average writing with significant gaps in organization and coherence
- **6–10:** Poor – Disorganized, lacking discourse control and coherence.

In the first part, a **pre-test** was conducted to measure the primary writing performance of the participants. In the second part, the experimental intervention was employed, focusing on discourse awareness feedback. The intervention continued for six weeks of instructional sessions focusing discourse components such as cohesion, coherence, paragraph unity, topic development and sequencing. The instructions were designed around model texts, planed writing activities and collaborative tasks that required students to classify and use cohesive devices. Each session followed a structured format, start with an introduction to a discourse concept, followed by examples, group investigation, and planed practice. The control group received traditional writing feedback focusing on grammar and vocabulary without clear discourse-level teaching, and after the intervention process, **the post-test** was administered to both groups to measure any changes in writing coherence and discourse awareness. The intervention method followed a systematic flow. Primarily, learners were introduced to the concept of discourse and coherence through sample essays. The students were taught to find cohesive components such as, reference, conjunctions, substitution, and lexical cohesion within texts. The students guided to utilize these components in their writing task. The sessions encouraged collaborative feedback, classroom activities to reinforce awareness of coherence in writing. Teachers play their role as facilitators, providing instructions, feedback and identifying examples of effective discourse organization. This procedure allowed students to adopt the use of cohesive devices and expand their overall coherence in writing tasks. The intervention concluded with deep discussions and the students measured their success and identified the strategies they felt most useful.

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Consequently, the methodology of this study was designed to methodically examine the connection between discourse awareness and essay coherence through favorable mixed-methods framework. The sequential mixture of quantitative testing and qualitative examination ensured not only the reliability of findings but also their instructive relevance for ESL writing instruction. The intervention procedure, rooted in discourse-based training, provided real implications for improving writing coherence and contributed useful insights for curriculum design and teacher training in ESL contexts.

Mixed-Methods Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed applying descriptive statistics, mean scores, t-tests, and correlation analysis and the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, coding and theme development to interpret instructors' perspectives and students' development.

Data Collection

The data were collected in three parts. The quantitative data was collected through pre-test, intervention and post-test. Essays were written under controlled conditions. The data collection consisted of a pre-test and post-test in which students wrote academic essays. A rubric based on discourse elements was applied to assess coherence. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 ELT teachers after the intervention to collect qualitative insights. The intervention process duration was 6 weeks. The intervention focused on teaching discourse elements such as, cohesion, sentence structure, paragraph unity, and sequencing. The students were trained through guided writing tasks, teachers' feedback, weekly feedback sessions and peer review but the control group received traditional instruction. The data analysis involved descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and correlation analysis for quantitative data and the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. There are four data collection tools, structured writing tasks administered under supervision, rubric-based scoring by trained evaluators, interviews recorded and transcribed by analysis and discourse awareness rated using a valid checklist.

Data Analysis Procedure: The data was analyzed in two parts. The quantitative data collected from pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean score and standard deviations, were

calculated to explain students' performance. Inferential statistics, such as paired sample t-tests and Pearson correlation, were used to determine the statistical significance of improvement and the relationship between discourse awareness and writing coherence. The qualitative data from teachers' interviews were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis.

Codes were created based on recurring ideas, which were then grouped into themes representing teachers' perceptions, instructional strategies, and students' responses. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings ensured a comprehensive understanding of how discourse awareness contributed to coherent essay writing. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative findings ensured a full understanding of how discourse awareness contributed to coherent essay writing.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative Findings: the results demonstrated a significant development in students' coherence scores after the intervention. Correlation analysis indicated a significant and strong positive relationship between discourse awareness and coherence.

Table 4: *Quantitative Data based on Essay Scores*

Step	Procedure	Details
1	Pre- and Post-Test Scoring	Essays scored using rubric (6 criteria, score range 6–24)
2	Descriptive Statistics	Mean, median, standard deviation calculated for each group
3	Inferential Statistics	Paired sample t-test for within-group comparison; independent t-test between groups
4	Correlation Analysis	Pearson r to determine relationship between discourse awareness and coherence

Table 4.1: *Quantitative Statistical Results*

Group	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t-value	p-value	Result
Experimental	12.6	19.3	6.81	<0.01	Significant Gain
Control	13.1	14.2	1.12	>0.05	No Significant Gain

Qualitative Findings

Teachers reported that students improved in using cohesive devices, organizing paragraphs, and maintaining logical flow.

Table 4.2: *Qualitative Data based on Semi-structured Interviews*

Step	Procedure	Details
1	Transcription	Teacher interviews transcribed and coded thematically
2	Coding	Themes: Student awareness, use of transitions, paragraph unity
3	Pattern Analysis	Triangulated with essay results to identify impact of training
4	Integration	Qualitative findings interpreted to explain statistical outcomes

Table 4.2.1: *Qualitative Findings*

Theme	Supporting Quotes	Interpretation
Improved Cohesion	“Students began using cohesive words like ‘however’, ‘furthermore’ more frequently.”	Training increased lexical cohesion
Structural Awareness	“Now they start with topic sentences and build arguments around them.”	Paragraph planning improved
Flow of Ideas	“Their essays make more sense, like everything is connected.”	Stronger discourse coherence observed

Findings and Results

In quantitative findings, a statistically significant improvement was received in coherence scores of the experimental group after explicit discourse practice. The qualitative data revealed students understanding of essay structure, transitions, and topic clarity. The correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between discourse awareness and essay coherence ($r = 0.72, p < .01$). Students with higher discourse knowledge showed better paragraph unity and logical transitions. Teachers’ interviews emphasized the lack of formal discourse instruction in the curriculum and the common challenges included poor topic development and weak use of cohesive devices. The study confirmed that coherence is enhanced through discourse awareness in academic essay writing. Students were able to understand structural and rhetorical patterns so they produced organized readable texts forced. Qualitative findings strengthened the need for discourse-level teaching in classrooms.

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Discussions

The findings supported previous research that discourse awareness improves writing coherence. The results identify the importance of discourse-based instruction in classrooms. The findings of this study showed a very significant positive relationship between discourse awareness and coherence in academic writing among undergraduate levels.

Applying Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion and Coherence Theory and Canale and Swain's (1980) Discourse Competence Model, this study confirms that students who possess a clearer understanding of discourse structures tends to produce more stronger connection in their writing. The quantitative analysis showed that students who scored high on discourse awareness achieved high coherence scores, this discovers that when students understand how to organize ideas, use transition, and apply textual conventions, their writing became more logical and effective. These results are consistent with previous research. Discourse competence directly impacts how students structure their written texts. Students trained in discourse strategies were more likely to write essays with clear paragraphing, topic sentence and logical development. Teachers reports identified that students who struggle with coherence often lacked exposure to explicit discourse instruction in their curriculum. Many teachers acknowledged that while grammar and vocabulary are regularly taught, text-level discourse elements are emphasized, leading to gaps in coherence. Teachers' interviews highlighted that students can possess good language skills but still fail to integrate their ideas meaningfully. This reflects Hyland's (2004) argument that academic writing is more than correct sentence. Academic writing is about communicative purpose, audience awareness, and organization, which ae deeply rooted in discourse competence.

The analysis of student's essays demonstrated that those who applied cohesive devices effectively and organized topic unity in paragraphs were better able to communicate their arguments. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) found that cohesion leads to coherence.

Discussion on Framework showed that how students' awareness of discourse such as organizing ideas, using transitions, paragraph unity supports students to write more coherent academic essays.

Table Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Aspects	Interpretation	Relevance to Study
1. Halliday & Hasan's Cohesion Theory (1976)	This theory explains how cohesive devices (e.g., “however”, “therefore”, “in addition”) help link ideas in writing.	Helps assess students' ability to connect sentences and ideas, a key part of discourse awareness.
2. Canale & Swain's Communicative Competence Model (1980)	One part of this model is discourse competence, which means knowing how to organize language in a meaningful way.	Shows that discourse awareness is an essential skill for meaningful and structured essay writing.
3. Concept of Coherence (Witte & Faigley, 1981)	Coherence means the whole essay “makes sense” and ideas are connected logically from start to finish.	Coherence is the dependent variable in this study—it is from what we're trying to improve through awareness.
4. Rubric for Assessment (Research Tool)	The study uses a rubric to score students' writing based on discourse and coherence features.	Helps measure how well discourse awareness affects actual writing coherence.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Teachers must incorporate discourse-based teaching strategies in writing instruction. Curriculum designers must take in discourse awareness in ESL syllabi. Future research should discover and investigate larger samples and longer intervention periods.

Implication of the Study

This study identified the urgent need to link discourse-level writing instruction into ESL classrooms. Instructors must go beyond grammar and vocabulary to teach students how to structure essays using cohesive devices, topic sentence and paragraph unity. Teachers should focus on coherence-building strategies, such as using transitions, organizing ideas, and maintaining thematic unity. ELT teachers in Pakistan, particularly at the undergraduate level, must be trained in genre-based and

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discourse-based writing instruction. Present syllabi emphasize sentence-level skills, which fail to equip students with the tools required for coherent academic writing.

Conclusion

The study concluded that discourse awareness meaningfully expands coherence in academic writing among students. ESL learners who received discourse-based instruction showed better organization and flow in their essays. The findings suggest that integrating discourse-based instruction into classroom may improve students' writing skills and academic performance.

Table Results

Features	Results and Outcomes
Essay Scores	Increased significantly after discourse awareness intervention
Cohesive Device Usage	More accurate and frequent in post-test essays
Paragraph Structure	Greater clarity, logical flow, and unity in experimental group essays
Teacher Perceptions	Stronger command of academic discourse markers and essay structure observed

Ethical Consideration

Ethical standards were wisely kept throughout the study. All students were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study and participated voluntarily. Written consent was gained from the college administration, teachers, and participants before conducting the study. The participants' identities and reports were kept confidential, and all information were used only for academic purposes. The researcher ensured transparency, clarity for participants' rights at every step of the study procedure.

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