

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE USE OF TRANSITIONAL DEVICES IN THE WRITING OF ESL
LEARNERS: A CASE OF BOLGATANGA GIRLS SHS STUDENTS**



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**A thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Joshua Agbovoe, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: **PROF. REBECCA AKPANGLO-NARTEY**

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my supervisor, Prof. Rebecca Akpanglo-Nartey. Your invaluable expertise and guidance paved the way for this thesis.



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I wish to express my appreciation to God Almighty for His love, care and protection for the years. My appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Prof. Rebecca Akpanglo-Nartey for painstakingly reading through the thesis. The patience she exhibited, and useful suggestions she gave made this work a success.

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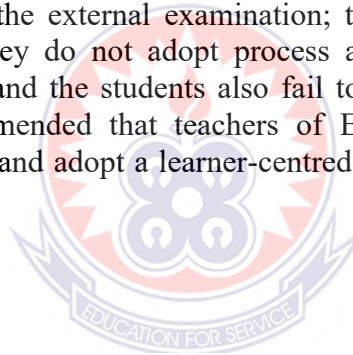
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated the use of transitional devices by students of Bolgatanga Girls Senior High School. Three objectives were set for the research: to identify the kind of transitional devices that appear in the writing of senior high school students, the challenges that are associated with the use of transitional devices by the students and the causes of the problems of using transitional devices by the students. To achieve these objectives, the researcher employed a case study approach. The researcher employed interviews and observation of students script for the collection of the data for the research. Essays of students were sampled for the extraction of the transitional devices used by the students. The data that was obtained was analysed based on the themes that emerged from the research questions. The findings of the study showed that Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School students use transitional devices of different categories in their writing tasks. The findings of the study revealed that the students contextually and semantically use connective devices appropriately, which makes their essays to achieve coherence and cohesion. It was shown by the study that even though the students use the connective devices appropriately, they overuse some of the transitional devices, while they avoid some. The study also showed that compound connective devices are sometimes misspelt by the students by writing them as separate words. The findings indicated that the teachers of English language place too much emphasis on the external examination; they also employ teacher-centred methods in teaching; they do not adopt process approach to teaching transitional devices to the students and the students also fail to undertake reading task on their own. The study recommended that teachers of English should teach transitional devices as distinct topic and adopt a learner-centred approach to teaching transitional devices to their students.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The English language is one of the important mediums of communication in the world today. According to Rao (2019), English language can be said to be the first global lingua franca and it is the most widely used language in the world in international trade, diplomacy, mass entertainment, international telecommunications and scientific publications as well as publishing newspapers and other books. The language has not only occupied a unique place in the world's communication, but has become a lingua franca of the international community (Crystal, 1997). For instance, Dyji (1996) observes that many people travel to different locations in the world for various reasons, including vacations, professional conferences, academic seminars, international conventions, public rallies, recreational events, military camping and other official gatherings and in most of these events, English is used as either a major or an auxiliary language. Dyji (1996) maintained that the lingua franca status of English language has made people who can read or understand the language more likely to be in touch with the latest thinking and development in an area of interest. Accordingly, as explained by Crystal (1997), English started functioning as the medium of instruction in higher education for many countries, including countries where the language has no official status. For instance, in the Netherlands and Germany, most post-graduate courses are taught using English language.

As the function of English continues to widen, the number of non-native speakers increases as speakers of other languages consider it beneficial to learn and express themselves in the English language. Research has shown that one of the crucial areas of English language that challenge non-native speakers of English is

writing. Barkaoui (2007, p. 35) remarked that “mastery of writing is one of the most difficult skills that second-language (L2) learners are expected to acquire, because development of writing skills involves the mastery of different cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural competencies.” Acquiring writing skills is considered more challenging than other language skills such as listening, speaking and reading. It is worthy of note that during speaking, there are additional features such as non-verbal communication, tone, stress and intonation that contribute towards the clarity of the message. In writing, however, these para-linguistic features and suprasegmental features that may contribute towards the clarity of the message are unavailable. It therefore behoves writers to demonstrate mastery of writing skills in their written communication situations to ensure that their intended messages are communicated clearly to their readers.

One of the elements that makes written messages clear to their intended readers is connectors. Even though it is essential for English as Second Language Learners to construct grammatically correct sentences and use appropriate vocabulary to enable their readers understand their messages, the role of transitional elements that join the sentences they put together is crucial. Transitional elements are employed by speakers of English to signal the logical connections between ideas contained in sentences. To be able to effectively communicate, Second Language Learners need to construct their sentences correctly and linguistically demonstrate cohesion, through the appropriate use of transitional devices, in their written communications. Kondal and Bairi (2016) argue that connective elements indicate rational associations in a text and play the role of helping readers to logically join various constituents and paragraphs in the text to foster the creation of a logic sense of the written message.

Non-native writers of English are considered to have acquired textual competence when they are able to demonstrate the capability of producing coherent texts. English as a Second Language learners' ability to appropriately use of transitions in their writings reflects the magnitude of their textual competence. In spite of the crucial role of transitions elements in ensuring cohesion and textual competence, English as a Second Language learners find it difficult using transitional devices appropriately. For instance, Hartnett (1986) remarked that even though connective elements in a text help the writer to achieve comprehensibility of the text, they tend to be one major cause of confusion pertaining to comprehension of the text by the readers when they are poorly used by the writer. It is therefore crucial that English as a Second Language teachers identify the challenges their students encounter regarding the use of transitional elements in their writing activities.

With this chapter presenting the general introduction to the study, the researcher sectionalises it as follows: section 1.1 presents the background to the study; section 1.2 offers the problem statement; sections 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 provide the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study and the research questions, respectively. In section 1.6, the chapter presents the significance of the study, while in sections 1.7 and 1.8, the delimitations of the study and the organisation of the thesis are respectively presented.

1.1 Background to the Study

In Ghana, the policy on language of education stipulates that English is the medium of instruction at all levels of education, with the exception of lower primary where the lingua franca of the community where the school is located is used alongside English in the classroom (Owu-Ewie, 2009). This means students of senior high schools in the country have had contact with classroom English use since they

started schooling, a period that is long enough to make them master certain writing skills. Unfortunately, however, English writing performance of students has not been impressive over the years. Research has shown that one of the areas of writing where English as Second Language learners have difficulty mastering is the use of transitional devices (Don & Srinivass, 2017; Mensah, 2014; Bikeliene, 2013; Vincela, 2013). Virtanen (2004) explained that connectives are very crucial in texts because they signal the semantic relations between the components of a specific text. Accordingly, transitions serve as the cohesive signposts in discourse, and tend to guide the reader or hearer by signalling how successive constituents within the text are related to one another. In order to produce a quality text, writers are required to develop organizational competence: the ability to write coherent texts. To achieve this, writers are required to master the meaning and textual use of transitional devices, also called linking adverbials or transition devices. It is therefore expected that with their appreciable level of exposure to the use of English language, senior high school students would be able to demonstrate appreciable mastery of the use of transitional devices. The reason being that, transitional devices “serve to make semantic connections between spans of discourse of varying length” (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999, p. 558). They can be categorised into different semantic groups, including enumeration and addition, summation, apposition, result/inference, contrast and concession. Research has demonstrated that the complex nature of this group of elements is markedly difficult for L2 writers to master (Plakans & Gebril, 2017). It has been explained that due to the semantic nature of transitional devices and their grammatical and positional variation, as attested by learner corpus research (Plakans & Gebril, 2017; Januliene & Dziedravicius, 2015; Don & Srinivass, 2017),

they tend to compound the writing challenges of English as a Second Language learners.

Due to the difficulty this category of writing elements poses to non-native writers of English, it has caught the attention of researchers in recent times. That is, the use of transitional devices in the writing of non-native English Language writers has been at the centre of research interest recently. For example, its use in editorials has been researched by Kim and Ahn (2012); its use in native English speakers' and non-native English language speakers' produced texts has been examined by Bikeliene (2013) and Vincela (2013). Other researchers, including Januliene and Dziedravicius (2015), Don and Srinivass (2017) and Mensah (2014) have also examined the use of these connectors in academic essays. Most of the studies conducted on the L2 writers' use of transitional devices revealed that there are instances of inappropriate use of the connectors, and that consequently results in incoherent texts. Liu and Braine (2005) specifically identified a strong correlation between transitional devices and the ultimate quality of writing. For instance, in the research of Crewe (1990), it was shown that the appropriate use of transitional/connective devices contributes to the success of writing, while a writer's failure in appropriately using these connectors adversely affects the text quality of the writer. Regarding this, when it occurs that a writer is unable to adequately use transitional devices in a text, the responsibility of the readers in decoding the text becomes huge, which consequently prevents the readers from enjoying the reading of the text (Anderson, 2014). It has been emphasised, therefore, that writers need to take the responsibility of ensuring that these transitional/connective devices are in their rightful positions and match their intended purposes (Anderson, 2014).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the senior high schools in Ghana, the mode of assessment of students is usually through written examination. This means that if a student has ideas but he or she is unable to put those ideas into text for the examiner to understand, such a student is probably going to fail the examination. It is therefore required of senior high school students to master the writing skills needed in order to put their thoughts and ideas into coherent texts. As it has been the case, there are many students who complete their courses of study without obtaining grades that could allow them enrol in tertiary institutions. Even though this problem could be attributed to several factors, their inability to demonstrate competent writing skills is a major factor. Research has shown that quality writing could be judged based on controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices, as well as consistent and helpful use of punctuation marks (Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Apse & Farneste, 2018). Therefore, inability of senior high school students to appropriately use transitional devices in their essays or writing tasks renders their write-ups poorly written pieces.

Additionally, research on connective devices has shown that the use of a particular transitional device or phrase in a text is dependent on the organizational pattern of the essay the writer intends to write or develop. For instance, illustration, classification, narration, persuasion, description, process and cause and effect patterns require specific transitional devices (Biber et al., 2002; Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Anker, 2009, Fawset, 2018). Even though certain connective devices may not be appropriate for some paragraph development patterns, the transitional/connective devices „to illustrate“, „to persuade“ and „to argue“ require that one uses enumeration. Additionally, it appears all essays, regardless of the pattern of development, are recommended to be finished with a summation connective device (Apse & Farneste,

2018). This implies that L2 writers of English could be overwhelmed by the occurrences of these connectors in their writing, thereby becoming prone to placing some of these connectors across sentence boundaries where they might not apply based on the paragraph pattern that is being developed. The current research seeks to determine whether the paragraph development patterns of the various essays that the students of senior high schools write contribute to the challenges they encounter in using transitional devices.

In another study, it was shown that one cause of inappropriate use of transitional devices in the writing of Second Language speakers is insufficient stock of English Language vocabulary. For instance, Anderson (2014) emphasised that learners of languages may not have enough linking devices (transitions) in their lexicon, and this tends to affect their use of these connectors. For instance, research findings have confirmed that English Language learners rely on a smaller collection of connective devices due to their level of acquired vocabulary as compared to native speakers and expert writers; therefore, they selectively overuse and underuse certain connective devices (Shaw, 2009; Lei, 2012; Ishikawa, 2011; Leedham & Cai, 2013; Lei, 2012; Vincela, 2013; Anderson, 2014). None of these studies was conducted in Northern Ghanaian setting; specifically, none of the studies employed senior high school students in Northern Ghana as research participants. Hence, the current study seeks to explore senior high school students to determine whether the students underuse or overuse certain connective devices and how that could be an effect of limited vocabulary for transitional devices.

Generally, the current study seeks to examine the senior high school students' use of transitional words/phrases in their written composition tasks in order to

understand the challenges the students have and the causes of the challenges regarding the use of these writing elements.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The research seeks to

- i. Identify the categories of transitional devices that appear in the writing of senior high school students.
- ii. Ascertain the challenges the students have concerning the use of these transitional devices.
- iii. Identify the causes of the challenges the students encounter regarding the use of the transitional words/phrases.

1.4 Research Questions

The research aims at finding answers to the following specific questions.

- i. Which categories of transitional words/phrases appear in the writing of senior high school students?
- ii. What challenges confront the students regarding the use of these transitional words/phrase?
- iii. What are the factors responsible for the challenges the students have regarding the use of the transitional words/phrases?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in several ways. For instance, it adds unto the literature on the L2 writers' use of English transitional words/phrases. Specifically, it brings context specific findings to the extant literature. It needs to be mentioned that the study is the first of its kind in the study site, therefore, it enables researchers who are interested in the phenomenon being studied to understand how students of senior high schools in

Ghana reflect the concerns in the literature regarding the use of English connective words/phrases. It specifically reveals which transitional devices are mostly used by the students: it reveals the Ghanaian situation of over-used and under-used transitional devices.

Additionally, the findings of the study reveal the specific challenges the students encounter regarding the use of English transitional devices. In this regard, the findings provide the causes of the problems the students in the senior high schools encounter concerning the use of connective devices. Ultimately, the findings of the study contribute to the literature by bringing the Ghanaian context to the discussion of the transitional devices.

Moreover, teachers and textbook writers are key stakeholders of English language education in the country, Ghana. Therefore, the findings of the current study would inform these stakeholders on their decision-making processes and activities. For instance, the study's findings inform teachers on their teaching activities, their selection of teaching materials and the method of teaching. Lastly, the outcome of the study would inform other researchers on what could be studied in the senior high school regarding students writing. For instance, the recommendations that the study makes could serve as a lead for future researchers, who the current study would become the foundation on which their studies build.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

There are different issues or challenges English as a second language learners encounter as evidenced in their writing activities. As a matter of fact, the use of transitional words/phrase is a microcosm of these learner-challenges. That being said, the current study's scope is on transitional words/phrases. Other writing challenges the students have are not investigated in the current research. The study examines the

kind of transitional devices that are used by the students as reflected in their compositions, the challenges that the use of these transitional words/phrases pose in the writing quality of the students, the causes of the challenges regarding the use of the connectors, and the probable measures that could be adopted to curb some of the challenges concerning the use of the transitional words/phrases. At the end of the study, the researcher suggests some probable areas of future research which could make the issues regarding the writing challenges of senior high school students more revealing.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into five chapters. The current chapter presents the general introduction to the study. It discusses the background to the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study and the research questions. Additionally, the significance of the study and delimitation of the study are presented in the Chapter One. In Chapter Two, the study presents the review of the literature. It presents the findings of other studies on the use of transitional devices in L2 learner writing. The analytical framework for the current study is also presented in Chapter Two. The third chapter presents the methodology the researcher adopted on investigating the phenomenon. Concepts like research design, population, sample technique, data collection instrument and method of analysing the data have been discussed in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, the study presents the data analysis and discussions. Chapter Five is the final chapter of the thesis. It contains the summary of the findings of the research, the conclusions that are drawn based on the findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis presents a review of studies that are related to the subject matter of the thesis. It must be noted that the purpose of using transitions in texts is cohesion and coherence. The review therefore, concerns cohesion and its contribution to the quality of texts, as well as transitional devices that are employed to ensure cohesion in texts. The review also discusses the issue of coherence and how it is related to cohesion. It thus, shows what other researchers have found about connectives and how they affect cohesion and coherence in text, especially in contexts where English is studied as second or foreign language. The chapter begins with a discussion of definitions of transitions in light of cohesion and coherence. In doing so, the terms cohesion and coherence are discussed based on their differences and similarities. It proceeds further to present the cohesion theory of Halliday and Hassan (1976) and the main criticisms levelled against it. A presentation of a review of empirical studies on cohesion and coherence in texts as prevailed in writings, especially that of students. A discussion of the role of cohesion is also presented in this chapter and was adopted for the analysis of the data concerning this study, while section 2.6 concludes the chapter.

2.1 Transitional Devices

Transitional devices are linking adverbials that perform the role of adverbials in sentences. Different terms have been used by linguists to differentiate them from the whole group of linking devices that include not only adverbials but also conjunctions (subordinating and coordinating) (Vincela, 2013). Linguists such as Bussmann (1996), Celce-Murcia and Larsen- Freeman (1999) and Kaplan (1995)

have referred to these group as conjunctive adverbials. Finch (2000), Wales (2001) and Biber (1988) have described them in their studies as conjuncts. The phrase, connective adverbials, has also been used by Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Cheng (2006) to describe this category of elements. Biber et al. (1999), Liu (2008), Shaw (2009), Vincela (2013) and Anderson (2014) have used the term, linking adverbials, to refer to the same group of elements. Among these studies, Biber et al. (1999) and Carter and McCarthy (2006) referred to them as linking adverbials in their corpus-based grammar reference books. One unique thing about these studies is that they aimed at producing an overview of linking devices in the texts of wide-ranging register groups. They therefore did not show how the use of these linking devices prevail in more specific registers.

In attempting to look at how these linking devices are used in more specific registers, Peacock (2010) investigated how linking devices are used in the research articles of eight disciplines. Liu (2008) focused on the semantics of these linking devices and produced a comprehensive list of linking devices. Liu's (2008) study was based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman's (1999) approach to the semantic categories of the linking devices. The researchers, including Chen (2006), Shaw (2009), and Anderson (2014) looked at students' writing by focusing particularly on the texts of one particular genre, articles or essay and the word-level frequency of connective devices in the corpus of student-composed essays.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 231), a linking device can be a single adverb such as: „then“, „next“, „but“, and „so“; compound adverbs including ‘therefore’ ‘thereupon’, ‘thereat’, ‘furthermore’, „nevertheless“, „anyway“, „instead“, „besides“; prepositional phrases such as „on the contrary“, „as a result“, „in addition“; prepositional expressions with „that“ such as „in spite of that“, „because of that“ and

with optional „that“ as a „result of that“, „in addition to that“. According to Biber (1999), these linking adverbials perform a crucial role of contributing and ensuring cohesion in a text, by serving as semantic connectors between spans of discourse of varying length. According to Vincela (2013) most of the transitional devices play specific semantic functions, and therefore have been categorised according to their semantic properties by linguists, though these categorisations differ from one linguist to the other. There are varying reasons for the categorisations of the transitional devices, as observed by Vincela (2013). Some of these reasons include the fact that the semantic relationships conveyed by connective devices in a discourse may vary; for instance, there are those that express contrast, those that show sequencing or result and those that show addition. Another reason for the varying semantic categorisation is that a particular transitional device may portray more than one semantic property. An example of such linking devices is „of course“, which depending on the context, may express „emphatic“ meaning and also „concessive“ meaning (Vincela, 2013). This informs the assertion of Liu (2008, p. 495) that “grammarians often differ in the way they classify semantic types of linking devices”.

On the approaches to the classification of linking devices, three main approaches have been identified in the literature: Quirk et al. (1985), Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Biber et al. (2000). The categorisation approach of Quirk et al. (1985, p. 634) distinguishes seven general categories with some subgroups. These categories include (a) Listing, which has two subgroups, enumerative and additive [equative additive and reinforcing additive]; (b) Summative; (c) Appositional; (d) Resultative; (e) Inferential; (f) Contrastive, with reformulating, replacive, antithetic and concessive occurring as subgroups; (g) Transition, which also has discursual and temporal as its subgroups.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) approach, being the second approach, differentiates between four key categories with their subtypes: (a) Additive, which has *emphatic*, *appositional* and *comparative* as subgroups; (2) Adversative, with its subgroups being proper adversative, contrastive, correction, and dismissal. The third category (c) is the causal, with general causal and causal conditional as its subgroups and (d) Sequential linking devices. These classifications have been widely used by linguists, including Milton and Tsang (1993), Chen (2006) and Liu (2008) in their studies on connectives.

Being the third classification approach, Biber et al. (2000) distinguish six semantic categories of connective devices: (a) Enumeration and addition, (b) Summation, (c) Apposition, (d) Result/inference, (e) Contrast/ concession and (f) Transition. Like most issues in linguistics, every view point concerning the transitions/linking devices presented by various linguists has its limitation. Some of these limitations include the already mentioned ones, especially, for the fact that some of these transitional devices carry more than one semantic component. Nonetheless, the current study adopts the classification approach of Biber et al. (2000, p. 875–879) due to its relative clarity for the analysis of the data; also, their approach has been considered because the texts from which these connective devices are going to be extracted are student-composed texts.

2.2 Transitional Devices and Quality of Text

On what constitute effective writing, there have been many subjective views on the quality of writing before corpus research confirmed that the successful use of transitional devices such as lexical adverbials (e.g., however) and phrasal adverbials such as „on the other hand“ (Chiang, 2003; Liu & Braine, 2005; Yang & Sun, 2012; Anderson, 2014) contributes towards text quality. For instance, Liu and Braine (2005)

specifically identified a strong correlation between transitional devices and the ultimate quality of writing. Crewe (1990) posits, concerning the correct use of transitional devices, that while correct use contributes to the success of writing, the inability for one to use these connectors appropriately adversely affects the writing quality. However, these researchers maintained that anytime readers encounter an unexpected or inappropriate linking adverbials or transitional devices, they can mentally substitute the adverbial they were anticipating in order not to lose the intended meaning and logical flow of the text.

Anderson (2014) explained that, there is a huge responsibility on the readers of texts in an attempt to make meaning from what has been written. Regarding this, readers would not enjoy reading if they have to assume the role of editors by looking for appropriate connective devices or linking adverbials to replace a wrongfully used one or fixing it at the omitted place in a text. Anderson (2014) emphasised, therefore that, writers need to take the responsibility of ensuring that these transitional devices in the texts are in their rightful positions and match their intended purposes.

Extant literature regarding transitional devices focuses on whether or not English as a Second language learners overuse these devices when compared to their native speakers. Granger and Tyson (1996) use the phrase “overuse hypothesis” to describe native French speakers linking adverbial habits. The finding of their study, however, disproved their research hypothesis, as it turned out that the learners of French underused linking adverbials compared to the native speakers. A study conducted by Ishikawa (2011) about Asian students’ use of linking devices in French, confirms the finding of Granger and Tyson (1996), to the effect that Asian students learning French use fewer linking devices. According to Anderson (2014), we need to understand that learners of languages may not have enough linking devices in their

lexicon due to their lack of mastery of the language, and this affects their use of these connectors. Thus, studies have confirmed that language learners rely on a smaller collection of linking adverbials due to their level of acquired vocabulary and mastery of the target language as compared to native speakers and expert writers and, therefore, they selectively over- and underuse linking adverbials (Ishikawa, 2011; Leedham & Cai, 2013; Lei, 2012; Vincela, 2013; Anderson, 2014). Nevertheless, findings of other researches indicate that non-native speakers overuse linking adverbials as compared to native speakers (Lei, 2012) or professional writers (Shaw, 2009).

On studies comparing the use of linking adverbials by different groups of non-native speakers, fewer studies have been conducted. Notable among these studies is Granger and Tyson (1996), in which a compilation corpus of papers written by students with deferring native languages. The findings of the research indicates that transfer issues significantly influence or contribute hugely to the difficulty learners experience in acquiring linking adverbials in English, and therefore, adding this challenge to the universal difficulties all learners of English experience, students become overwhelmed and their learning process becomes slow.

On the other hand, research conducted by Leedham and Cai (2013), and Lei (2012) using English learners with Chinese as their native language showed that the notable differences with regard to the use of linking adverbials is dependent greatly on methods that are used in teaching the students, as well as the teaching materials that are employed by the teachers at these institutions. The findings of their studies indicate that students' transfer issues play no significant role on the use of linking adverbials. Another study also aimed at comparing native Chinese speakers learning English as a Foreign Language at higher and lower proficiency levels. In that study,

Yang and Sun (2012) found that repertoires of linking adverbials of the students appeared to increase through time. This confirms that as students attain mastery in the English language, their use of linking adverbials also increases; thereby suggesting, regarding other findings that learners under use linking adverbials, that there is hope because they may improve as they take advances causes in English.

Another study about how frequently learners of English use linking adverbials was conducted by Anderson (2014). The findings of the study revealed that assignment particulars and other learner objectives affect the relative overuse of certain adverbials with conversational adverbials occurring more frequently in the compositions of the first year students. The result of the study concurs with the findings of Yang and Sun (2012) that as the students progress in their studies, their use of transitional words also increases. Significant differences were found in the use of adverbial pairs with nuanced differences, such as *yet* and *however*. The study concludes with pedagogical implications and suggested effective methods be adopted in teaching students how to use these transitional devices.

2.3 Transitional Device and Cohesion in Text

Halliday and Hassan (1976) define cohesion as “the relations of meaning that exist within a text and that defines it as a text”. It is a semantic relation between one element in a text and another one which is important to the interpretation of it. Thus, there is cohesion where the interpretation of any item in a text requires making reference to some other item in the discourse. They add that it is cohesion that provides the continuity in the text. In other words, cohesion expresses the continuity of meaning that exists between one part of the text and another one. Hence, they focus on cohesion between sentences and across paragraphs. They further explain that

cohesion consists of certain explicit linguistic features that contribute to the overall unity in a written text.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), cohesion is a property of a text that contributes significantly to the textual quality. The position of Halliday and Hassan (1976) regarding cohesion, that they must be explicit in text is in consonance with the work of Bain (1867) who after investigating the concept of cohesion noted that there exists some explicit relationship between textual elements, words, phrases and sentences, and that this relationship connects each element to the other. Thus, the explicit function of these transitional devices is that they accurately link elements in a text to the preceding one. Bain (1867) explains further that paragraphs in texts are made up of sentences that are not haphazardly knitted together or logically isolated strings of words, but holistically connected words and sentences, where the connection is apparent and deliberate for an intended objective. This implies that, textual cohesion is dependent on its satisfaction of two basic requirements: the meanings of the various components of the text must be related and, also, there must be an overt linkage between these components. The function of connectives is therefore to create explicit linkages between components (sentences and paragraphs) within texts.

2.4 Transitional Devices and Coherence in Text

In the literature, another concept that has been discussed concerning transitional devices in texts is coherence. Describing the idea of coherence, McCrimmon explains that:

A paragraph is said to have coherence when its sentences are woven together or flow into each other. If a paragraph is coherent, the reader moves easily from one sentence to the next without feeling that there are gaps in the thought, puzzling gaps, or points not made (McCrimmon, 1967, p. 109-130).

The observation of McCrimmon (1967) points to the need for texts to have its sentences to be reasonably and sequentially arranged. In other words, smooth flow of information from one sentence to another can only be achieved when the sentences in the text are presented logically and sequentially. Concurring the view of McCrimmon (1967), Moe (1979) explains that in a written work, coherence is achieved when the sentences in a paragraph relate to one another and when the paragraphs in a passage are presented in a reasonable sequence.

On his discussion of coherence in texts, Johns (1986) divides coherence into two categories: text-based and reader based. She maintains about text-based coherence that it is the inherent quality of a text, which consists of cohesion and unity. Her text-based coherence, on one hand, therefore involves the relationships that hold between sentences in a text and how the whole text is unified. Regarding reader-based coherence, on the other hand, Johns (1986) posits that it requires successful interaction between the reader and the text. In other words, reader-based coherence is the one enhanced when the degree of compatibility between the expectations of the reader and his assumption of the meaning through the underlying structure of the text is very high. In this view, coherence of a text is not the responsibility of the writer only, but the reader's reading skills and ability also play a significant role. However, when a reader fails to see a text as coherent, the fault may not be the writer but it could be that the reader is unable to demonstrate a high-reading skills that will match the prowess of the writer. This informs the argument that writers, in their writing process, must always hold their readers in view. Thus, the writing skills demonstrated in a text should commensurate that of the readers, since, a mismatch of the two would result in incoherence of the text. In this regard, writers are expected to simplify the

task of their readers by appropriately using transitional devices that help their readers follow their train of thought.

Connor and Johns (1990) contended that a text is coherent when the expectations of the reader are fulfilled. The reader uses his or her knowledge of the world to interpret a text, expecting that his or her knowledge will correspond to the organisation and argument of a text. The reader relies on this kind of knowledge to anticipate information that would be subsequently presented. Interacting with the reader, a coherent text accommodates the reader's expectation of sequential logical ideas, contributing to the reader's comprehension and the clear meaning of a text (Mensah, 2014). It must be noted, however, that the failure of a text to achieve coherence, as presented by Connor and Johns (1990), may be caused by either the writer or the reader, or even both. For instance, a skilful writer may write well by choosing words and sentence structures, and arranging them in the manner that commensurate the readers reading ability; however, when a particular reader lacks the needed skills, the text will still be incoherent. Hence, teachers must not only be concerned with how to make their students expert writers, but also develop adequate skills that make them resourceful in interacting with textual information, that reflects, at least their level of expected reading competency.

2.5 The Role of Transitional Devices

Research has shown that transitional devices or transition words play a crucial role by characterising a piece of text as a well-written text or a poorly written one. These transitional devices help in carrying readers from one idea to another idea without any ambiguities. For instance, they play the role of assisting readers recognise and appreciate the writer's train of thought by signalling where the writer's thought is coming from and where it is heading towards, and help the reader to systematically

follow the writer. Concerning this, transitional devices do not only assist the readers in following the direction of the ideas in the text, but they also guide the reader in understanding the relationship between the ideas expressed within the text (Mensah, 2014; Tshotsho, 2006).

From the preceding discussions, we observe that these transitional devices, when adequately employed in the text, enable the writer to achieve coherence in the presentation of the ideas in the textual discourse. Transitional devices generally serve as connectors between statements and or ideas in paragraphs (Duke, 1983). In texts, a connector establishes a relation between clauses and helps in linking sentences. As explained by Duke (1983), connectors in sentences make it possible for sentences and paragraphs to flow smoothly and coherently, allowing the reader to adequately understand the message being transmitted by the writer.

Additionally, transitional devices employed in a text help the writer to organise and present the various paragraphs that give evidence, opinions, or reason for and against a perspective. They may also act as a signal to the reader that the writer is presenting a conclusion or final opinion for a proposition being defended or supported.

In conclusion, transitional words and phrases are necessary to make the paragraphs coherent and cohesive. It can be argued that, without them, readers will find writings disjointed and hard to follow. That is to say that transition words can be used to tie sentences, paragraphs, and sections together, to indicate when one section is ending and another is about to begin, or to make a complex argument easier to follow.

2.6 The Appropriateness of Students' Use of Transitional Devices

It has been noted from the previous discussions that, when transitional devices are appropriately used by a writer, the written text become coherent and cohesive. Despite the important roles these transitional devices play in ensuring that writers write well, any inappropriate application of these transitional devices renders the text illogical and tends to confuse readers. For instance, a study conducted by Darweesh and Kadhim (2016), which investigated English as Second Language learners use of transition words, reported that some of the observable errors in the writings of the learners are attributable to the wrongful use of transitional signals. That is, their study showed that most errors were caused by using incorrect conjunctions, not using any conjunction at all or recognizing incorrect conjunctions.

Additionally, research that was conducted by Mahendra and Dewi (2017) in an attempt to unravel the challenges non-native learners of English encounter regarding the use of transitional devices in academic writing revealed that the learners had challenges pertaining to the use double transition signals such as “however, in fact”, “moreover, also”, and “either as well as”. Mahendra and Dewi (2017) concluded based on their finding that instances of wrongful use of these transition signals usually result in sentences that confuse readers because the transitions contained two different indications. Their study also added that the students’ use of transition signals “for instance” and “for example” had the highest range of different occurrence in the writings while transitions which indicate cause and effect, such as “as a result”, “as a consequence”, “consequently”, and “for that (this) reason” were not significantly used. Concerning transitional devices that show conclusion, Mahendra and Dewi (2017) reported that the connector “thus” occurred most in the writings of the learners.

Moreover, a study that sought to examine the distributions of the transitional markers in a corpus of thirty articles related to the discipline of English Language Teaching, written by academic writers who were native speakers of English and Persian academic writers was conducted by Elahi and Badeleh (2013). The findings of the study showed a significant difference between the uses of the connectives devices in the two groups of the articles. It was revealed that the native writers mostly used transitional markers that fall under the category of contrast and purpose, while Persian article writers mostly used transitional markers that indicate addition, time, result, place, example, summary and emphasis. The findings of the study revealed further that, transitional markers in the category of comparison and similarity were used almost equally by both groups of writers. Explaining the observable reason for the disparity in the use of the transition markers, Elahi and Badeleh (2013) indicated that the main reason for the difference in the use of the transitions could be the lack of mastery of norms and conventions of academic writing genre.

The findings of Elahi and Badeleh (2013) are in agreement with other earlier studies. For instance, the research of Noorian and Biria (2008) showed that a great and significant differences concerning the use of interpersonal markers exists between texts written by American and Iranian EFL Columnists. The study indicated that different factors interacted in the choice of meta-discourse markers in opinion articles in the newspaper written by the American and Iranian EFL Columnists. Some of these factors, according to the study, are culture-driven preferences, genre-driven conventions, and Iranian EFL writers' extent of foreign language experience. Findings of a study conducted by Pooresfahani, Khajavy and Vahidnia (2012) agree with the findings of Elahi and Badeleh (2013). Pooresfahani, Khajavy and Vahidnia (2012), in their study, reported that significant differences exist on the overall frequency of

meta-discourse features and on the particular occurrence of some categories in interactive and interactional features.

Astanti, Rozimela and Fitrawati (2016) also showed that the students mostly used transitions inappropriately. In all, 29 words of transitional signals were appropriately used while 35 transitional signals were inappropriately used. Astanti, Rozimela and Fitrawati (2016) revealed that, even though the students used the connective devices, some of them failed in the contexts of use, to perform the intended transitional or linking roles: they were inappropriately used by the students. The finding implies that the transitional devices employed by the students could not convey the supposed meaning, as their positions in the sentences rendered them weak in assuming the role of connectors of ideas in the sentences and paragraphs. The finding of Astanti, Rozimela and Fitrawati (2016) is consistent with the finding of Almaden (2006) that EFL teachers often find their students inappropriately using connective devices in their write-ups, causing the problem of incoherent paragraphs in their essays. Almaden (2006) concluded therefore that students' failure to achieve coherence as a result of inability to adequately use transitional devices, renders their writings a mere plain writing, making the reader struggle to make sense from what they write. This finding has also been confirmed by the research of Seken, and Suarnajaya (2013), which reported that inappropriate use of connective devices by learners of English makes their essays to lack coherence, and puts their readers in a position of editors in order to fully understand the arguments their students intended to put across in their writings.

From the discussion, we observe that transitional devices are crucial when it comes to writing. As indicated by the studies that have been done, the inability of students to appropriately use these transitional devices to connect the ideas in the

sentences makes their write-ups difficult to understand. The extant literature indicates that many students have the tendency to write less unified paragraphs, because they have difficulty in using the transition devices appropriately. Even though the students are able to use transitions words in their writings, they are unable to link them logically throughout the sentences in the paragraphs, and that creates meaning problem for readers: it prevents readers from following their train of thought and how points are built with evidence and examples.

2.7 Strategies of Teaching Transitional Devices to non-native Learners of English

The discussion so far indicates that there is a problem with the use of transitional devices by learners of English. This implies that English language teachers have the responsibility to ensure that their students master the meaning and appropriate use of these transitional devices in their discourses. In this regard, teachers of English need to rigorously teach their students the function of particular transition signals in paragraph construction. In the course of doing this, teachers must encourage their students to undertake extensive reading activities so that they can learn from other writers the appropriate ways by which these transitional devices are used. In this regard, the students may be tasked to undertake exercises that would compel them to read other books to enrich their knowledge on how international writers construct their paragraphs coherently and cohesively.

Mahendra and Dewi (2017) also added that the students can be given practice writings where they will be tasked to use specific connective devices in their writing tasks. This will become effective when English Language teachers provide writing exercises that prompt the students to learn how to use the connective devices. In their recommendation, Mahendra and Dewi (2017) indicated such writing tasks could take the form of a cloze test, in which the students would be provided a model text that has

the transitional devices omitted for the learners to supply them. Additionally, the researchers proposed that such a writing task could take the form of a judging exercise, whereby the students would be given a model text that contain the specific connective devices, for them to judge the appropriateness of the use of the connectors in the text.

In the study of Elahi and Badeleh (2013), it was recommended that the teaching of English, specifically, writing courses should be process oriented; teachers should discourage the product-oriented approach to teaching of writing. Elahi and Badeleh (2013) observed that when the teaching of writing becomes product oriented, students tend to lose the sight on the processes that are involved in the writing tasks. According to Elahi and Badeleh (2013), product-oriented approaches to the learning of the language, both speaking and writing, do not prove helpful in sensitising the students to the discourse community. This means that students who are exposed to product-oriented approaches to writing may not write appropriately in a genre of which they have no clear picture in mind and those that they are not fully and seriously exposed to (Elahi & Badeleh, 2013).

According to Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014), English Language teachers, in an attempt to identify students' problems with transitional devices, could do a quick scan of the compositions of the students in order to ascertain their use of these transitional devices as a way of determining if they have been able to use them in a manner that makes their compositions coherent texts. Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014) intimated that the teacher, after identifying the students' use and analysis of the connectors in the compositions may recourse to interviews where the students whose compositions may be considered to be characterised by incoherence, could be made aware of the incoherent parts in the composition. The teacher of

English could then explain the reasons or causes of the incoherent ideas to the students involved. By using this strategy, Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014) explained that the students tend to become aware of how to judge their own writing for appropriate use of the transitional devices to ensure coherence in their pieces of writing. In this regard, the researchers posited that the students would subsequently master the ability to determine coherent information, even beyond what they are presented with in the classroom setting: the students would then become critical audience that can identify and current incoherent compositions. This approach would ultimately make the students good independent readers and writers.

In their study, Astanti, Rozimela and Fitrawati (2016) recommended that teachers of English should teach their students of English functional use of the transitional devices, repetition of key words and pronouns in the form of writing tasks. In this context, it can be suggested that, to produce a good writing, teachers need to help students to appreciate the connection of ideas they have and to be able to arrange the ideas in effective, logical and clear order in paragraphs. For example, students need to be helped to identify how to use transitions to show which ideas come first and which ideas follow the others. When teachers help students in this direction, students will keep in mind that the transitional devices function as signal between ideas in different paragraphs or sentences to attain coherence in writing. In effect, when the students express their ideas by using the transitional devices, their writings would present a smooth flow of ideas for easy understanding.

From the discussion, we may have observed that the various researchers, in their recommendations, appear to motivate English language teachers to become facilitator of learning by providing writing instructions in a manner that encourages and assists their students in generating, organizing, and ordering their ideas into

coherent texts. With regard to this, teachers of English should ensure that teaching materials that are employed in the teaching of the transitional devices should be based on the learners' development, needs and interests. For instance, Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014) maintained that in order to redesign a suitable material for language teaching, particularly writing, the students' competence concerning the use of transitional devices for cohesion and coherence needs to be examined.

2.8 Theoretical Underpinnings

There are different words and expressions including words and expressions such as "therefore", "consequently", "on the other hand", and "in conclusion" which serve as connective devices or transitional words or phrases. These expressions are observed in both sentential and intra-sentential levels within a text. It needs to be mentioned that even though these words and phrases are all considered transitional/connective devices, they have different contributions of meaning regarding texts. Some of the connective devices (e.g., afterwards, next, etc.) contribute meaning concerning time or chronological information, while others (e.g., conversely, on the other hand, etc.) introduce contrast in thought.

Different researchers have analysed transitional/connective devices from different perspectives, resulting in different categorisations of this group of text elements. For instance, Jones (2010, p. 201) conceptualises three types of connectives: „logical connectives“ (i) Coordinating conjunctions (e.g., and, or, but); (ii) Subordinating conjunctions (e.g., before, because, although) and (iii) Conjunctive adjuncts (e.g., meanwhile, moreover, therefore, however). Jones explains further that coordinating and subordinating conjunctions occur at the sentence level, where they exhibit logico-semantic relations between or among sentences or clauses. Conjunctive adjuncts, on the other hand, have a discourse-level, text-building function (p. 201-

202). According to the classification of Jones, „conjunctive adjuncts“ which is the third category, consists of words and phrases that link independent clauses within a text or discourse.

The current study is concerned with the third category of the classification of Jones (2010). It is worth noting that different names have been given to the same category of words by different researchers. In the literature, the term „adverbial adjuncts“ has been used by Nippold, Schwarz and Undlin (1992), while Oshima and Hogue (2006) describe them as „transition signals“. The terms „discourse markers“, „linking adverbials“ and „transitions“ have also been used by Fraser (1999), Liu (2008) and Maurer (2006), respectively. In the study of Taboada (2006, p. 572), it was realised that the same category of words has been assigned names such „coherence markers“, „lexical markers“, „discourse operators“, „discourse connectives“, „pragmatic connectives“, „sentence connectives“, „cue phrases“, „clue words“, and „discourse signalling devices.“ Even though different names have been used in the literature, the current research, for the purposes of convenience, adopts the term „connective devices“ or „transitional words.“ The adoption of these terms, even though other labels are sometimes mentioned, is for the sake of convenience. Connective/transitional devices serve as a cover term for both words and phrases that tend to play the role of linking components in the text.

Regarding this, the definition of Oshima and Hogue (2007) which indicates that transitional devices refer to words and phrases that connect a sentence“s idea with the idea expressed in another sentence, by way of showing that they are related to the topic sentence or the controlling idea of the discourse has been adopted in this study. Concerning this, examples of connective words include „first“, „second“, „next“, „finally“, „therefore“, and „however“. Some of these transitional devices are phrasal,

and they include „in conclusion“, „on the other hand“, „as a result“ and „on the contrary“. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 43), these connective devices convey different meanings, by signalling to the reader or listener when to provide a similar idea (e.g., similarly, furthermore, moreover, in addition), offer an opposite idea (e.g., however, on the other hand, on the contrary, in contrast), and give an example (eg., for example, for instance, etc.). These connective devices may also inform the reader that an event or action is the product of an earlier mentioned action or event or the result of an action (e.g., as a result, consequently, in effect, etc.). There are some transitional/connective devices that also inform the reader that the writer is about to end the discussion by way of concluding (e.g., in conclusion, to end it all, etc.). In this context, this study focuses on the use of connective devices that have been used in a paragraph to offer an explanation, an example, give emphasis, introduce a similar additional idea, and introduce a conclusion or summary.

Based on their grammatical functions, Oshima and Hogue (2007) conceptualise transitional/connective devices into three groups: sentence connectors, clause connectors, and mixed group called others. Based on the semantics of the connective/transitional devices, these researchers note that they may be generally grouped into eight types: addition, contrast and comparison, example, cause and effect, sequence and conclusion. These transitional devices function as linkers of ideas expressed in sentences and clauses or even paragraphs of textual discourses.

The analysis of the data in this study is grounded within the categorisation of Oshima and Hogue (2007; 2006). It needs to be mentioned that examining problems English as Second Language learners have with the use of transitional devices in their writings bothers along the area of difficulties the non-native speakers of English encounter in generating coherent writings in the form of compositions. Research has

demonstrated, as established in the literature review, that coherence is realised through linguistic features that are linked and organized through the use of connective or transitional devices, which have been alternatively called cohesive markers. Regarding this, the current research adopts the framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003).

The framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003) has been considered relevant to the analysis of the data because it considers the manner in which English Language learners connect and organize their idea through the use of transitional connective devices or cohesive markers. Even though many versions of the framework have been originated, the current study adopts that framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003) in the analysis of the data. Even though, in their study, the term transitional signal has been used, the current study adopts, for the purpose of the topic, the term transitional or connective device. Nonetheless, the concept of transitional signals as employed by Oshima and Hogue (2007), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003), is applicable in this study.

Functionally, Oshima and Hogue (2007) and Zemach and Rumisek (2003) categorise the transitional or connective devices (transitional signals) into six: transitions indicating additions, transitions indicating a time relationship and logical division of ideas, transitions indicating cause and effect, transitions which limiting or introducing example, transitions indicating comparisons, contrasts, or contradictions and transition indicating conclusion. Table 1 below presents the various categories of the transitional devices and examples that illustrate them.

Table 1: Categories of transitional devices and their examples

<p>Transitions indicating additions</p> <p>Also, in addition, besides, too, as well as, another, further, furthermore, moreover, in fact, including, to put it another way, in other words</p>	<p>Transitions indicating comparisons, contrasts, or contradictions</p> <p>Similarly, likewise, by comparison, in the like manner, but, yet, rather than, unlike, however, instead, instead of, although, regardless, on the other hand, nonetheless, nevertheless, on the contrary, in contrast, whereas, even though, even, when, in spite of, despite, either...or... neither...nor...</p>
<p>Transitions indicating a time relationship and logical division of ideas</p> <p>Before, now, next, after that, in time later, finally, since, soon, the next day, then, eventually, at first (second, third, last)</p>	<p>Transitions which limit and introduce example:</p> <p>If, unless, in case, in particular, Except, namely, for example, for instance, such as</p>
<p>Transitions indicating cause and effect</p> <p>Because, for, since, therefore, thus, as, as a result, so, as a consequence, consequently, for that (this) reason</p>	<p>Transition indicating conclusion:</p> <p>in conclusion, in summary, in brief, to conclude, in short, thus, to summarize, to sum up, finally</p>

Adopted from Oshima and Hogue (2007) and Zemach and Rumisek (2003)

2.9 Empirical Review

This section of the chapter presents a review of other studies on transitional or connective devices that have been conducted by other researchers. Even though these studies also looked at the same concept of connective or transitional devices, the settings and the participants of the studies are different. One of these studies is the one conducted by Alarcon and Morales (2011) in which both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to investigate the use of connective devices by

undergraduate students. The researchers sampled one-hundred and four argumentative essays of the students for the extraction of the data. The essays were examined by two inter-raters. Eventually, it turned out that only 64 sampled essays statistically qualified as the corpus of the study. In the analysis of the data, the researchers adopted the concept of grammatical cohesion, a framework of Halliday and Hasan (1976) for the analysis of the essays. The result of the analysis showed that the category reference had the highest frequency (90.7%) of the total cohesive devices with mean score 53.37. This was followed by Conjunction, which occurred 326 times (9.1%) in the essays, with the mean score of 5.34. The category substitution was the least used type of cohesive markers which was only 0.3%. The study reported that the cohesive markers in the essays of the students were not significantly correlated with the quality of the essays of the students. The qualitative analysis revealed that certain cohesive types assisted the students in the argumentation process. For example, the use of adversative conjunctions helped the students establish counterclaims. However, the connector „but“ happened to be the most frequently used adversative conjunction by the students. The researcher remarked that this may indicate their knowledge on the use of this kind of cohesive markers was limited, because there were instances where the students could have used concessives like „yet or however“ to establish stronger claims. Concerning this, the researchers explain that the qualitative analysis corroborates the concept of form and function in the sense that the argumentative essays of the students reflect the idea that certain forms of the categories were selected at the expense of others in order for the purposes of the argumentative essays to be realised.

Another study that examined the use of transitional devices in the texts of students is the research of Ounissi (2014). The study sought to examine the relevant

roles lexical cohesive devices play in creating unified texts, and to ascertain the awareness level of the students in Masters One class on the use of these cohesive elements in their writings. The researcher hypothesised that appropriate use of lexical cohesive markers (transitional devices) improves the quality of students' essays. In evaluating the hypothesis, the researcher employed a descriptive approach where students' test and teacher questionnaire were employed as data collection instruments. Ounissi (2014) employed questionnaire to survey the attitudes of the teacher respondents on the phenomenon being investigated. The analysis of the data revealed that the students were aware of the important role lexical cohesive markers play in enhancing the quality of their essays. This was evidenced in the analysis, as it was shown that the students employed all the categories in their essay writing tasks. Even though the study reported that all the categories were found in the essays of the students, it was also shown that there was an imbalance regarding the frequency of use of the various categories, as some were used more often than others. Another finding the study reported is that many inappropriate uses of the transitional devices were observed. Ounissi (2014) concluded, based on the findings that the students' knowledge of cohesion was not evident in sampled essays of the students.

In Thailand, Chanyoo (2018) researched into the common cohesive markers used in the writings of Thai undergraduate students who were majoring English as a course. The study aimed at investigating the frequency of cohesive markers used in students' writing tasks, and the relationship between the number and categories of cohesive markers, as well as the reflection of the use of the cohesive markers on the quality of the writings of the students. The researcher sampled thirty academic essays of thirty junior students majoring in English as the source of the data. In all, the researcher extracted a total number of 16,856 cohesive markers. In the analysis, the

researcher adopted Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesion as the analytical framework of cohesive markers, and employed a writing assessment rubric developed by Hogue and Oshima (2007) in determining the quality of students' written essays. The findings of Chanyoo (2018) established that four categories of cohesive markers, including reiteration, reference, conjunction and ellipsis, were frequently used by Thai undergraduate students. A one-way ANOVA analysis conducted by the researcher showed that there was a significant difference in numbers of cohesive markers used in the writings of the students. It was also reported by the study that students' writing scores positively correlated with the total number of words used in the writing task, the total number of cohesive devices used, and the number of references. The researcher concluded therefore, that Thai students learning English use different cohesive markers in their essays.

In Thailand, Tangkiengsirisin (2010) investigated the effects of teacher written feedback and students' revision on the use of cohesive devices in expository compositions written by Thai postgraduate students. In addition to the explicit instruction of the cohesive devices, the teacher written comments, including corrective, advisory and indicative comments, were provided to the students' essays. The feedback on cohesion in this study dealt with form, content and, most importantly, essay organisation. Each of the essays from this experimental group was provided with a combination of teacher written comments focusing on the improvement of cohesion. Sixty pre-test and post-test essays were composed by the students from both the experimental group and the control group. All the essays were analysed by using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion analysis model. *T*-tests were conducted to examine the differences in the use of cohesive devices between the pre- and post-test essays. The results revealed a significant improvement of cohesion in the

writing of the experimental group, particularly referential, conjunctive and lexical cohesive ties. The pedagogical implications regarding the teachability and the positive effects of teacher written feedback and essays revision were derived on the basis of the research results.

Gueliane (2015) also aimed at analysing to what extent third year students are aware of the use of grammatical cohesive devices in creating a cohesive piece of writing. For this purpose, it was hypothesized that the appropriate use of grammatical cohesive devices would improve the students' writing. A descriptive study was carried out using two basic tools; a test which was analysed in terms of students' use of grammatical cohesive devices and a questionnaire that was submitted for written responses of teachers in order to evaluate their attitudes toward students' use of cohesive devices. The results of the study revealed that third year students of English at Biskra University were aware of the importance of grammatical cohesive devices since they employed all the types in their essays. However, they failed to make balance in using those ties. Again, there was inappropriate employment of the devices since students exaggerated their use in repeating the same item and ignoring others. In essence, it can be inferred that the students wrote non-cohesive essays.

In addition, the research of Singchai and Jaturapitakkul (2018) explored the kind of transitional devices students use in their narrative essays, and the frequency of these cohesive markers. The researchers employed a sample of thirty grade 11 students at a public school in Bangkok as participants for the study. The researchers grouped the sampled participants into three: advanced, intermediate and beginner. The researchers extracted the cohesive devices from the 30 sampled narrative essays of the students. In presenting the findings, the study showed that four categories of cohesion devices were used by the students: reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical

cohesion. It was reported by the study that elliptical cohesive devices were absent in the narrative essays of the students. Comparing the frequency of the various categories that were present in the narrative essays of the students, the findings showed that 141 personal references „I“ was the most frequently used in the advanced group, followed by 113 additive conjunctions „and“ in the advanced group, 95 collocations in the advanced group and 18 nominal substitutions „one“ in the beginner group respectively. The researchers recommended based on the findings of the study that English Language teachers need to prepare a practical writing pedagogy that will help their students master the meaning and the use of the various categories of the cohesive markers.

Furthermore, Calle, Candelo-Becerra, de Castro, and Ramos (2018) focused on the application of a methodology to assess the cohesion of texts written by engineering students in areas such as computer systems, electrical and electronics engineering. The results showed that even though several students managed to present good written documents, there were also many problems in aspects such as the connection of the text, the handling of exophoric and endophoric references, and providing enough information to argue. The findings of Calle et al. (2018) showed that the students had problems with cohesion during writing. These findings will be a good basis for comparison in the current study.

Nilopa, Miftah and Sugianto (2017), in their research, investigated the use of transitional devices in the compositions of third semester students of English Department of the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) of Palangka Raya. The main objective of the study was to describe the types of cohesive devices used by the sampled students in their Essay Writing Course. The researchers sampled thirteen (13) third semester students of English Department of the State Institute for Islamic

Studies (IAIN) of Palangka Rayawho to participate in the study. In an attempt to obtain the needed data for the study, the student participants were tasked to write expository essays. The researchers employed Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework on cohesive devices, which covers reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, in the analysis of the data. The findings of the study showed that the types of cohesive devices found in the students' essays were conjunction (43.25%), reference (33.73%) and lexical cohesion (23.01%). Although there were a few cohesive devices to be used, the majority of the students' opinion essays failed to achieve cohesion. The results of the study implied that even though some cohesive devices were used in the essays of the students, overall, the majority of the essays failed to achieve cohesion because the cohesive devices were inappropriately used by the students.

Moreover, the study of Palmer (1999) explored the cohesion in an English classroom. The principal objective of the research was to investigate the approach by which non-native English language students ensured that their texts were coherent. The results showed that lexical reiteration was often used by English as Second Language (ESL) students in order to create coherent texts. Palmer therefore recommended the enhancement of the teaching of cohesion in English lessons, in an attempt to join any theoretical approach to both reading and writing instruction with a more practical activity.

In China, Liu and Braine (2005) sampled 50 argumentative essays of Chinese learners of English in order to ascertain the frequency of the occurrence of cohesive markers, and to determine whether the use of the cohesive markers had any influence on the quality of the argumentative essays of the students. The result of the analysis showed that there was a correlation between the frequency of cohesive markers in the

essays and the quality of the essays. The researchers concluded that a higher frequency of cohesive markers corresponded to higher essay score, which implies that the essay with high frequency of cohesive markers also has high quality of the presentation of ideas. The study reported further that among the three cohesive categories the research examined, lexical cohesive items were most frequent, followed by reference items and conjunctions items respectively. The qualitative analysis also revealed that some cohesive features like the use of variety of conjunctions and the misuse of conjunctions were present in the essays of the students. This means that some of the students had problem with the appropriate use of the cohesive markers.

Another study that investigated the use of cohesive devices by Chinese learners of English is Meisuo (2000). The researcher employed a qualitative research paradigm to investigate the relationship of cohesive ties and quality of essays using the expository essays of Chinese students. The study reported that lexical category of cohesive devices had the highest percentage of ties, followed by conjunctions and references. The findings suggested a general pattern of cohesive features in the expository composition of Chinese undergraduates. Meisuo (2000) further revealed that the students had problems with the use of the cohesive markers as problematic cohesive features such as errors, ambiguity, overuse and misuse of cohesive devices were present in the essays of the sampled students. Meisuo's (2000) study however found that there was no significant relationship between the number of cohesive ties used and the quality of writing.

In addition, Leo (2012) examined how three age-on-arrival (AOA) groups of Chinese-background ESL students use two types of cohesive devices on a standardized essay exam. A discourse analysis of 90 first-year students' expository writing samples was conducted to ascertain how factors such as first language (L1)

and length of residence (LOR) in Canada influence a student's ability to create cohesive and coherent writing. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) students use lexical and referential discourse markers. Twelve essay features of this group of Generation 1.5 students were compared with those of two other cohorts of Chinese students with a shorter LOR. Key writing variables that measure academic writing proficiency were quantitatively analysed to compare the expository writings of the CBC cohort with those of the later AOAs. The results indicated that synonymy and content words distinguish the writings of the CBC students from those of their later-arriving peers. A qualitative analysis of one CBC essay reveals that a more flexible and contextualized approach to evaluating writing by long-term Generation 1.5 students was required to acknowledge fully the productive lexical and discursal strengths of these students.

The study of Faradhibah and Nur (2017) was focused on writing skills, especially about cohesion as the important element in writing. The aim of this research was to find out the students' difficulties in maintaining cohesion in the writing process. The study employed descriptive qualitative study. The subject of this research was the students of the Department of English of Tarbiyah group 1 and 2 in the 2016/2017 academic year. The total numbers of students were 36 students. Written test and interview were the instruments used to collect the data in this research. The findings of the study showed that there were some difficulties faced by the students in maintaining their cohesion in the writing process, specifically in determining and stating their ideas, fulfilling the supporting details, and using the proper signals and spelling, as well as punctuation.

From all the studies reviewed, it can be inferred that the number of cohesive devices used alone could not be a reliable indicator of the quality of writing (Meisuo,

2000). The review also showed that it is not always that the frequency of cohesive devices employed by the writers correlated with the quality of the texts. It is also revealed that even though most of the studies indicated that specific categories of cohesive markers are employed by the students in their essays, the mere use of these markers does not mean their essays were of good quality as some of the studies reported inappropriate use of these cohesive markers.

Chen (2008) investigated college students' use of cohesive devices and the relationship between the number of cohesive features and writing quality. An analysis of 46 essays collected from 23 EFL undergraduates was done. The results showed no significant relationship between the number of cohesive devices and writing quality. Shahriar and Pathan (2012) discussed the role of cohesion in a coherent English text. They analysed two English texts; a poem, 'Daffodils' by William Wordsworth and an advertisement from a UK website gumtree.co.uk. A report was then developed on the textual analysis, which showed that different genres have different elements that bring coherence. However, it was noticed that lexical cohesion forms strong cohesive ties and brings coherence in case of both the texts analysed. The paper argued that although cohesion is an important aspect of developing a coherent text, coherence is also possible without cohesion.

In Africa, Kadiri, Igbokwe, Okebalama, and Egbe (2010) investigated the use of lexical elements of cohesion in the essay writing of students of English as a Second Language. Two hundred essays of final year students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka were collated and analyzed by the researchers in order to identify the lexical elements used to achieve cohesion in writing. The result showed that students used three lexical elements in varying degrees in their writings. These included: repetition, synonyms, and lexical sets (collocations). Students tended to use more of repetitions

and made minimal use of synonyms and lexical sets to achieve cohesion in writing. This led to poorly written essays by students. The findings imply that lexical cohesion elements should be taught in schools to enable students use them appropriately in writing.

In another study, Adeyemi (2017) investigated how Nigerian learners of English as Second Language (ESL) achieve cohesion in their written texts and the areas in which they showed underdevelopment in their usage of cohesive devices compared to their native counterparts. The study was conducted on the premise that communicative competence in academic writing is crucial to the general academic performance of students at the tertiary level of education. The researcher employed a comparative analysis using the NLEC (Nigerian Learner English Corpus) and LOCNESS (Louvain Corpus of Native English Student Essays) to examine if there was cohesion in the texts of the students, and ways by which they achieved cohesion in texts. The study also used the theory of Contrastive Rhetoric as an interpretative framework for the analysis to interpret potential alternative composition styles, choices and use of cohesive devices by Nigerian learners of English. The analysis of reference and conjunctive cohesion was done first using the complete data of LOCNESS and NLEC. This was followed by the analysis of ellipsis, substitution and lexical cohesion using a sample of 20,000 words from LOCNESS and NLEC. The extraction of reference and conjunctive cohesive devices as well as cluster patterns was done using the WordSmith Tools 5.0.

Adeyemi (2017) in examining the similarities and differences in the use of reference and conjunctive cohesive items between LOCNESS and NLEC, a chi-square test of independence was done. The likelihood ratio chi-square was also used in the analysis to verify the results. The log-likelihood calculator was used for the

analysis of ellipsis, substitution and lexical cohesion using a sampled data of 20,000 words from LOCNESS and NLEC to determine the significance of the difference between the frequency scores of the two groups in order to determine over and underuse. The results showed significant differences in the use of specific cohesive devices in the two corpora in the areas of conjunctions and lexical cohesion. The Nigerian learners demonstrated underdevelopment in their use of conjunctions and lexical reiteration. The two types of cohesive devices are the major areas Nigerian learners significantly differ from their L1 counterparts. The analysis evinced the NLEC learners significantly overuse some conjunctive elements and underuse the others. Lexical repetition is also overused by the learners as referential cohesive device. The theory of contrastive rhetoric enabled a better understanding and interpretation of the different rhetorical patterns observed in NLEC writing. Some of the differences identified in the Nigerian learners' texts were traced to the L1 influence. The study indicated that the overuse of cohesive devices in the learners' essays impedes the overall quality of the Nigerian learners' essays.

In a study that was conducted in Egypt, Ahmed (2010) focused on the organisational problems that Egyptian student teachers of English encounter in their English essay writing tasks. In particular, the study sought to examine students' cohesion problems in English as Foreign Language (EFL) essay writing tasks. A mixed method research design was used including a questionnaire and a semi-structured in-depth interview. Analysis of findings revealed that students encountered some problems in the cohesion in EFL essays. This finding calls for improved instructions on cohesion in essay writing.

In Ghanaian context, Mensah (2014) explored cohesion in the writings of final-year senior high school students. The objective of the research was to ascertain

the categories of cohesive devices that the senior high school students use. In the study, Mensah (2014) emphasised inter-sentential cohesion, and the kinds of cohesive markers that the students have challenge with regarding their use. Another objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which students' challenges with the appropriate use of the cohesive markers could be attributed to teaching strategies their teachers employ in teaching them. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of cohesion, which are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, the study sampled forty-five final-year students' essays for a qualitative analysis. The findings showed that students have problems using reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The study reported that these students either misused or overused these linguistic tools in their attempt to achieve cohesion. Also, eight teachers of English were made to answer questionnaires and also identify cohesive devices in a short paragraph, to determine whether the way cohesion is taught contributes to students' difficulty in using cohesive devices. It was found that, the teachers were able to identify all the intra-sentential ties, but failed to identify the inter-sentential ones which were the focus of the study. Another revelation was that the teacher-centred methodology employed in teaching cohesion did not offer the students the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process.

In her conclusion, Mensah (2014) intimated that senior high school students' difficulty in writing cohesive essays is partly blameable on their inadequate knowledge about the meaning and use of cohesive markers, lack of vocabulary and the teaching strategies their English language teachers employ in teaching cohesion. The study therefore, recommended that English Language teachers in the senior high school should pay more attention to the teaching of vocabulary, synonyms, collocation and superordinate terms to increase students' vocabulary stock. It was also

suggested that the English language teachers adopt teaching strategies that are student-centred in order to make the students active participants in the learning process. Lastly, the study of Mensah (2014) recommended that English Language teachers in the senior high schools should ensure that their students are given adequate writing-practice tasks on the use of cohesive markers.

In another Ghanaian study, Afful and Nartey (2014) explored grammatical cohesion in the Language and Literature abstracts of undergraduate dissertations presented to the Department of English of University of Cape Coast (UCC). A total of 50 abstracts (25 each from Language and Literature) were sampled for the extraction of the data. The study was conducted using mixed research design. The theoretical framework that was employed by the researcher in analysing the data was Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion. The findings of the study indicated that out of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) four grammatical cohesive devices (conjunction, reference, substitution, and ellipses), reference and conjunction were observed in the writings of the study participants. Second, the use of these grammatical devices in the Language and Literature abstracts demonstrated more similarities than differences. The study's findings showed further that the undergraduate students studying English at University of Cape Coast lack the ability to use cohesive markers appropriately.

These findings of the studies that have been conducted have implications for pedagogy, theory, academic writing and further research. In the current study, the researcher intend to extend the study setting to Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School to ascertain how the phenomenon manifests in the writings of the students and how it could inform the strategies the teachers of English use in teaching their students.

2.10 Gaps in the Literature

The discussion in this chapter has shown that transitional devices have been named differently by different researchers. The review of the extant literature has demonstrated that researchers have examined the role of transitional devices in ensuring effective presentation of ideas in texts. The literature review has also shown that mastery of the appropriate use of these connectors help learners of English improve their writing ability. Nevertheless, most of these studies have been concerned with features of a good paragraph, topic/supporting sentences, paragraph coherence, and text cohesion. Only few of the studies have looked at the situation in Ghana. In the literature, it was observed that the studies that focused on Ghana gave little attention to students' use of transitional devices to support cohesion and coherence across longer stretches of discourse. Additionally, the studies on the use of these transitional devices have examined the types of transition devices that are used in the writings of students. In the current study, the researcher contributes to the literature by looking at the types of transitional devices that are used in compositions of students. The study further analyses the contextual appropriateness of the observed transitional devices in the compositions of the students. Finally, the study seeks to reveal some ways by which teaching and learning of these transitional devices could be improved for an enhanced students' ability in appropriately using these transitional devices to ensure an improvement in their writing skills. In this regard, the present research aims at examining senior high schools students' use of transitional devices in their essay writing tasks.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the extant literature related to the study of transitional devices, also called transition devices or linking adverbials. The review

has presented various perspectives to the analysis of the phenomenon as observed in the studies of other researchers. Issues relating to cohesion and cohesive devices / ties were all reviewed. Empirical studies related to the current study were also discussed. Overall, it was realised that most essays written by students lacked effective usage of cohesive markers. There was also minimal literature from the Ghanaian context. In terms of the research site for the current study, the literature shows that the scope of the study on cohesive markers is yet to be extended to that place. Additionally, most of the studies that were carried out in the Ghanaian context employed the theoretical perspective of Halliday and Hassan (1976). Hence, the current study adopts the theoretical framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003) in analysing the data.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This thesis examines senior high school students' use of transitional devices in achieving coherence and cohesion in their essays. It has been observed that the ability to achieve cohesion and coherence in students' writings contributes significantly to high academic performance, especially in Ghana where most of the assessment mechanisms are in the form of writing. The study seeks to ascertain which of the various transitional devices are used by senior high school students, and those that seldom appear in their essays as they attempt to achieve coherence and cohesion. The researcher employs various strategies in investigating the issue. Regarding this, the current chapter discusses the methods the researcher adopted to investigate senior high school students' use of transitional/connective words/phrases in their composition writing tasks. The chapter is segmented as follows: section 3.1 discusses the research design for the study and why such a design has been considered, section 3.2 presents the overview of the research setting and the study population. The rest of the sections include 3.3, which presents the sampling method and sample size, 3.4 data collection instruments, 3.5 data analysis procedures and 3.6 discusses some ethical considerations the researcher gave to the study. The conclusion of the chapter is presented in section 3.7.

3.1 Research Approach

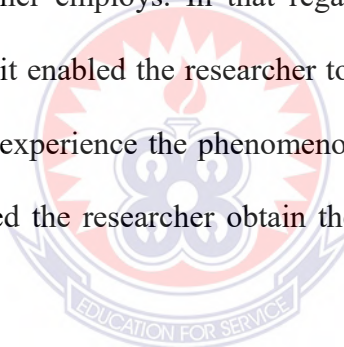
The plan that shows the methodical procedure by which a researcher follows in investigating a phenomenon is described as the research design. It serves as a guide that moderates how the study starts and ends. An adequately established research design of a study, therefore, functions as a blue print for the study (Creswell, 2013).

Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific directions for procedures in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Similarly, Van Wyk (2012) indicated that a research design is the overall plan for collecting data in order to answer the research questions. The case study research design was used for the study.

Due to the nature of the research objectives of this thesis, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach to study transitional devices used by senior high school students. Qualitative research, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), begins with assumptions and employs interpretative/theoretical frameworks that drive the study's problems, addressing the meaning individuals or groups of people considered research participants ascribe to a particular social or human phenomenon. With qualitative research approach, the researcher adopts an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry whereby data is collected in a natural setting which is sensitive to the people and the places under study. With qualitative research, the research usually analyses the data through inductive and deductive approaches in order to establish patterns or themes (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative researcher is therefore interested in understanding the meaning the research subjects have constructed; that is, how the study participants make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world within which they form a part (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive and the material practices which make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers

study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people assign to them. In this regard, this thesis delved into the situation surrounding the teaching and learning of English language in by senior high school students by exploring the use of connective signals in the writings of the students.

The researcher employed qualitative research approach for the study. As qualitative research, the methodology of the study is fashioned on the assumption that social reality can best be observed through the people who directly experience the phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). In this regard, Shimahara (1998) asserted that the research problems and the scope of the study must inform the methodology the researcher employs. In that regard, qualitative research approach was considered because, it enabled the researcher to gather data from the field where the research participants experience the phenomenon the study sought to investigate. This approach also helped the researcher obtain the needed data through the use of interview sessions.



3.2. Research Design-Case Study

A case study, according to Stake (1994), involves an in-depth exploration of a case or different cases which are studied in their specific settings for an all-inclusive understanding. Explaining it further, Burns (2000) maintains that a case study ensures an intensive, holistic and descriptive analysis of the phenomenon a researcher intends to analyse. A case study focuses on a single or few cases in their natural setting for a thorough understanding by investigating to understand their “relationships and processes, experiences or events” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 32). Though a case study may be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory, this study adopts an explanatory and descriptive type of case study due to its aim to answer questions that involve *why* and

how the students employ and use the transitional words /phrases and their writing tasks. One of the strengths of a case study, according to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 256), is its “attention to subtlety and complexities of the case in its own right” as the researcher rigorously examines it through a careful and systemic collection and interpretation of data. Emphasising the advantages that case study offers the researcher, Silverman (2001) notes that the researcher’s verbatim account of the responses of the research participants in a case study helps to reduce the problem of observer’s bias during the interpretation and analysis of the data.

3.3 The Research Setting

The current study is conducted in Upper East Region of Ghana. Since the study is a case study, the researcher selected one senior high school in the region. The school selected is Bolgatanga Girls’ Senior High School. The school was established in 1956 as a girls’ school. It was a boarding middle school for girls until it was converted into women’s training college in 1965. The school was later changed into a girls’ senior high school in 1973. Bolgatanga Girls’ Senior High School has a student population of 3000 with staff membership of 175, consisting of 105 teaching staff and 70 non-teaching staff. The programmes that the school runs are General Arts, General Science, Business, Home Economics and Visual Arts.

Bolgatanga Girls’ Senior High School runs the double track system. It is a category A school. As pertains to all government senior high schools in the country, the admission of students into the schools is solely through the computerised placement system. The headmistress of the school has no hand in the kind of students the school admits. As a normal practice in the educational system of Ghana, one can only qualify into a senior high school after a successful completion of junior high school. It must be noted also that, all students in the senior high schools in the

country, and for that matter, those in the Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High school, are those who have satisfied the requirement for the admission into senior high school. One of these requirements is the attainment of a pass grade in English. This presupposes that every student in the selected school of the research was admitted on merit and therefore there is no huge difference between the academic competence of these students and their contemporaries in other senior high schools in Ghana.

3.4 Population and Sampling Method

Hayford (2013) defined population as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we tend to generalize the results of the research. The target population for the study was all the students of Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School, and the teachers who teach English Language in the school. The total number of the students in the selected school is about three thousand (3000). This number consists of only girls, because the school is a girls' school. There are thirteen English language teachers, comprising 8 males and 5 females, in the school. The study chose only form three students for the study because the form two students were on vacation at the time of the data collection. The form one students were also excluded because the researcher thought they had not spent enough time in the school and would not have learnt enough or mastered how to use the transitional devices. Thus, as the researcher intended to make a generalisation about the population, there was a need for the use of participants that share similar characteristics. The difference between form three and form one students academically is so much that the researcher could not have categorised them together in terms of academic competence.

The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to extract participants of the study. A small sample of teachers was selected because they are

English Language teachers responsible for teaching English Language to the students in Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School. The English language teachers were purposively sampled because they are in the best position to provide relevant information regarding the research questions. According to Avoke (2005), purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to handpick the cases to be included in the sample, where the selection of the research participants is determined by the researcher's judgment of typicality. Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) explained that in purposive sampling technique, the researcher uses his/her judgment to select a sample that he/she believes, based on prior information, would provide the needed data. It is for the above reasons that purposeful sampling was chosen by the researcher of the current study to guide the selection of participants for this study.

Therefore, using purposive sampling technique, the researcher used General Arts, Science and Business students for the study. These classes were selected on the basis of convenience. In all, 75 students were sampled to participate in the study. The sampled population consisted of only females, because the school is a girls' school. Twenty-five (25) students were selected from each of the sampled classes. In selecting the 25 students from the classes, the researcher informed the classes of the need for 25 students from each of the classes to participate in a study. The researcher then wrote „yes“ and „no“ on pieces of paper for the students to pick. It needs to be mentioned that there were more than 50 students in each of the classes. However, there were only 25 pieces of papers that contained „yes“. There were some students who picked „yes“ but were not willing to participate in the study, so they were replaced with those who wanted to participate but initially picked „no“ responses. In choosing the classes, the researcher made the class captains of the various classes of General Arts, Science and Business to pick pieces of papers which had „yes“ and „no“

written on them. This was necessary because all of these classes had at least A and B. For instance, the General Arts class has General Arts A, General Arts B, General Arts C, General Arts D and General Arts E, with each one consisting of Class One and Class Two. This implies that when you take General Arts A, the school has General Arts A 1 and General Arts A 2. The choice of this sampling method was to ensure fairness of representation (Cresswell, 2011) and also, to enable every class to have an equal chance of being selected.

Regarding the teacher participants, the researcher employed all the thirteen English language teachers in the school. This means that five (5) female teachers and eight (8) male teachers were sampled to participate in the study.

Table 2: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by number of years worked

Number of Years Taught	Number of Respondents	School
1-4	3	Bolgatanga Girls' SHS
5-8	4	Bolgatanga Girls' SHS
9-12	4	Bolgatanga Girls' SHS
Above 12	2	Bolgatanga Girls' SHS

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of teachers by number of years taught. In the distribution, 3 English Language teachers in Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School have taught English Language between 1-4 years, and 4 teachers of English Language teachers in Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School have taught English Language between 5-8 years. Table 1 further shows that 4 English Language teachers have been teaching English Language between 9-12 years. Two English Language teachers in the school have over 12 years of experience in the teaching of English Language.

Table 3: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	School
Male	8	Bolgatanga Girls'' SHS
Female	5	Bolgatanga Girls'' SHS

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of teacher respondents by gender. It shows that eight (8) English Language teachers in the school, Bolgatanga Girls'' SHS, are male teachers, while five (5) of the English Language teachers are females.

Table 4: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Academic Qualification

Qualification	Number of Respondents	School
Master''s Degree (M. A/M.Ed)	4	Bolgatanga Girls'' SHS
Bachelor''s Degree(B. A/B.Ed)	9	Bolgatanga Girls'' SHS

Table 4 above describes the demographic characteristics of respondents by academic qualification. It indicates that, 4 teachers of English Language in Bolgatanga Girls'' Senior High School have their master''s degree while 9 of the English Language teachers in the school have Bachelor of Arts degree or Bachelor of Education degree. None of the teachers in the school has Master of Philosophy or a doctorate degree.

3.5 Data and data Collection Instrument

Even though the research approach is qualitative, the data collection method is the mixed method approach. The researcher gathered data through interviews, observation of students'' essays. Concerning the use of interviews to gather the data, DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) assert that interview is appropriate for a qualitative

study because it can be conducted on phone, through the internet, face-to-face, and allows the interviewer the opportunity to probe questions for respondents to express their true feelings using an interview guide based on the research questions. The interview items probed into the themes in the research questions on teaching and learning of connective words/phrases in Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School. The researcher developed an interview guide which was used to interview the English Language teachers on the issue of connective devices. The interview guide used by the researcher in eliciting the data is semi-structured. As explained by Macmillan and Schumacher (2001), semi-structured interview guide allows a researcher an opportunity to generate some questions (aide memoire) in advance; it makes it possible for the interview questions to be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Since an aide memoire or guide is allowed in this type of interview, the questions were phrased, and allowed for probing and clarification of answers, on the key issues raised in the research questions. Some of the questions intended to help the researcher know the views of the teachers concerning how their students used these connectors to achieve cohesion, whether the students were taught how to use transitional devices and the general methods of teaching and assessing their students with respect to these connective devices. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and transcribed for the qualitative analysis.

To complement the information gathered through the interview session, the researcher participated in some of the English lessons involving the sampled classes to observe the method of teaching some of the English Language teachers employ in teaching their students, and to understand the participatory level of the students during classroom teaching and learning. In one of these observed class sessions, the teacher

taught the students how to write argumentative essay. Here, the researcher observed the classroom teaching and learning activity and made notes on the use of connective words and phrases. Since the researcher contextualised the study in a particular social situation, the researcher adopted a qualitative analysis with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of how senior high school students use transitional devices, and how the findings could provide strategies that would be about improvements. With the adoption of a qualitative design, therefore, this study sought to collect a rich and descriptive data about the contexts, manner and understanding of transitional devices as used by students of senior high schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thus, as it has been argued, a qualitative approach is used when a researcher intends to observe and describe a natural phenomenon in order to understand it better. Selinger and Shohamy (1989) explained that descriptive research involves a collection of techniques used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation. The interpretative nature of the design enabled the researcher to explore and reveal the problems that confront final year students in the use of transitional or connective devices in their written essays.

With regard to written essays, the researcher made the sampled students to write four essays each. The essays written were argumentative essay, descriptive essay, cause and effect essay, and process essay. The students were made to write the four different essays on four different occasions. The essay questions were given to the students as an assignment. Each of the 75 sampled students wrote four different essays. In all, 300 essays were obtained for the extraction of the connective words/phrases. The researcher, with the help of two consultants, an Assistant Lecturer of Communication Skills at Bolgatanga Technical University and a Graduate Assistant at the Linguistics Department of University of Ghana, went through all the

scripts to identify and extract the connective words and phrases the students used in their essays. The extracted connectors were typed into a data base, together with the sentences in which they were used for the analysis.

The researcher, to ensure reliability, grouped the questions the students answered based on themes such as argumentative, descriptive, etc. This made the sorting and grouping of the transitional devices easy. The data was organised in frequency percentage tables. This enabled the researcher to quantify in percentage terms, the transitional devices that were overused and underused by the students. Additionally, the grouping helped the researcher identify the connectors that were inappropriately used in the essays. It also aided the comparison of the various categories of the transitional devices with regard to inappropriateness of use.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

The degree to which a tool for assessment produces a stable and consistent result is referred to as reliability (Brown & Priyanvada, 2010). The term reliability on one hand, is concerned with the extent to which an intended measurement of a phenomenon is able to provide a stable and consistent result. Regarding this, reliability as the repeatability of a test result. For instance, a scale or test is considered to be reliable if a repeat measurement that is made under stable conditions gives the same result. Reliability is important as it refers to the consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument. The research instrument, which in this study is the interview guide is required to be reliable by probing the same issues across the participants. Reliability of a research instrument results in the confirmability of the instrument.

Validity on the other hand, refers to the degree to which the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Brown, 1996). This means that when a research instrument adequately measures the intended variable the study examines,

then it can be described as valid. Thus, the level to which a research instrument satisfactorily measures what it is expected to measure is considered validity. Validity ensures transferability. Transferability in qualitative research is synonymous to generalizability, or external validity in quantitative research. Transferability is established by providing evidence that the research findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations (Statistics Solutions, 2020). Therefore, the findings of the study could be applicable in institutions of different environment, experiences and educational opportunities with other students concerning the use connective devices.

Accordingly, Guba and Lincoln (1994) recommended that in order for researchers to curb the challenges associated with validity and reliability in qualitative research, the notions of credibility, confirmability, accuracy, dependability and transferability should be considered. In the current research therefore, the researcher ensured the confirmability of the research instrument by giving the interview items out for peer review. The items were further presented to the researcher's supervisor and a consultant for expert judgment, suggestions and approval.

3.7 Accuracy and Trust Worthiness Data

Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that researchers consider validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. Creswell and Poth explained further that accuracy is a distinct strength of qualitative research in an account made through extensive time spent in the field, the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study (creation of relationship), and a thick description of participants. The researcher in this case had a prolonged engagement with the teachers and students (over two years). This prolonged stay in the research field opened up multiple opportunities for trust building and

establishment of cordial and lasting relationship with the research participants. By virtue of the good rapport with the participants, the researcher could collect reliable data through in-depth interview with the participants; hence, ensuring trustworthiness of the data obtained. To further ensure the trustworthiness of the data generated and findings of the research, the interview guide was critically analysed before it was administered. After each interview session, the researcher played the audio recording for the respondents to listen to and agreed that what they heard was exactly what they said during the interview.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Applied Linguistics of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana which stated the purpose of the study. Since Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School is in Bolgatanga Municipality, the letter of introduction was sent to Ghana Education Service Directorate of the Municipality and the Headmistress of the school to obtain permission to carry out the research. The researcher had an interaction with the teachers of English language in the school for an appointment to conduct the interview and observe classroom teaching and learning. The purpose of the study explained in details to the teachers. Having read the introductory and permission letters by the Department and Municipal Education office respectively, the school head agreed, and gave the green light for the commencement of the data collection. The researcher then sought the teachers consent for the interview. Having agreed to participate in the interview, the teachers agreed with the researcher, a suitable date, time and venue for the interview.

On the day of the interview, the researcher met the participants one after the other at a designated office. The interview began with greetings from the researcher

and a self-introduction. The researcher encouraged the participants to feel free to express themselves since there were no correct or wrong answers. During the interview, participants were tape-recorded with their permission. The interview questions were asked from an interview guide and lasted for thirty minutes. The interview ended by assuring the participants that their identity in the study would remain anonymous and would not be disclosed without their consent. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants and the school head for their support and assured them that copies of the findings would be made available to them upon their request.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analysed qualitatively using narrative themes from the interview data which were audio recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the interview data was guided by key themes that emerged from the data. The process started with transcribing all interviews and highlighting words and sentences that served as units for more detailed themes. The transcripts of the audio recording were compared to audios of the interviews to ensure that nothing was left out and nothing was added which was not part of the audio. After this, responses from each participant were played back several times. This was done to identify the various points of view reflected in the major themes in the research questions. In order to categorize each view expressed, each major theme was written down individually on pieces of paper and as the responses were played several times, the key words and phrases expressed were jotted down under each theme. The various views gathered were then compared according to the themes to reveal the concept map for connections. The various words, phrases and opinions that reflected on the research questions were finally categorized in relation to the themes that emerged. Lastly, verbatim expressions of the

respondents were used in reporting the data with inferences from literature where necessary.

Regarding the student data, the extracted connective elements were grouped according to the categorisations in the literature, the adopted theoretical perspectives. This categorisation helps the researcher to determine the connective devices that appear most and those that are seldomly used by the students. The grouping also aided the identification of the erroneously used transitional elements the causes of the errors in the writings of the students. Percentage tables were employed to display frequency of the connectives and accuracy of use as they appear in the essays. To be able to describe and explain the errors of the use of the prepositions, sentences in which the misuse of the prepositions occur in the essays of the students were presented as data and errors described. To help make the explanation clear, the views of English Language teachers were provided in addition to the findings in the literature.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

It is expected that in conducting research that involves human participants, the researcher follows certain procedures during the study so that ethical issues of research are not contravened. In ensuring that the study adheres to ethical principles, the researcher, before starting the study by way of administering interviews and observing classroom teaching and learning activities, wrote to the headmistress of the school, Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School to seek permission for the study. The research participants were also briefed about the purpose and methods or procedures of each of the stages of the study for them to understand. The headmistress of the school, upon accepting the methodology of the study, invited the heads of departments sampled for the study and introduced the researcher to them. She implored them to assist the researcher in the process of conducting the study.

Research participants have the right to expect the researcher to treat them as autonomous individuals, respecting their decisions about whether to take part in the research, and about what personal information they would or would not share with others. This was accomplished through a thorough informed consent process that was presented in English Language and read to them in the classroom, even before the sampling process. The teacher participants were also given copies to read. Informed consent is not valid unless the researcher makes sure that the participants understand the information that has been provided. In ensuring this, the researcher considered the characteristics of the proposed subject population-levels of cognition and literacy, the complexity of the information to be conveyed, the subject's emotional state, and setting under which the consent process will take place in determining the appropriate way to present the information. Hence, the heads of the sampled departments and the form masters of the classes organised the students of the sampled classes and the researcher explained the conditions of the research to them. The researcher explained to the students that the research was purely for academic purpose and the use of their scripts would not affect them in anyway.

One of the principles of research ethics is that participants' initial decisions to take part in research are not binding. A participant may choose to stop or rescind their decision to take part in the study for any reason or without cause. To this effect, participants were informed that they could decide not to continue participating in the study. The privacy of the study participants needed to be protected before, during and after their participation in the research activity. In ensuring this, the researcher ensured that data were not collected without the individual's knowledge and consent. The names and identification numbers of the students were not to be written on the essays they were to write. After the essays were submitted, the researcher placed

codes that were devised by the researcher to identify each script. Thus, the essay papers were given pseudonyms.

Another issue of research ethics is confidentiality, which refers to agreements made between researchers and participants, through the consent process, about if and how researchers would protect information provided by the study's participants. These agreements may include plans for retention of identifiers associated with the data and methods for safeguarding data, such as encryption or limited access to identifiable data. The protection of confidentiality occurs after the data is collected and in the hands of the researcher. Here, the researcher saved the transcribed data into his personal laptop with a password known to only the researcher. The participants were also assured that the information provided in the form of interviews would not be used for any purpose beside the intended purpose of studying the use of connective devices by the students (Oliver, 2003). Thus, to minimise the participants' fear of exposing their personal information to the public domain, and to ensure better and valid results, the researcher informed the study participants that their information would be treated with absolute confidentiality.

3.11 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the procedure by which the researcher conducted the study. It has been shown that a mixed method approach, involving observation, interview and extraction of transitional/connective devices from students' essays has been adopted for the study. On the analysis of the data, qualitative approach has been used, with minimal quantitative descriptions involving percentage tables. With the quantitative descriptions, the researcher showed that data collected were organised into percentage tables in order to enable the researcher to determine, in terms of percentages, which of the connective devices were under used and which were over

used by the students. The qualitative analysis helped the researcher to understand and interpret the problems students face in their attempt to ensure cohesion in their academic essays. The chapter also highlighted how the researcher mitigated the issues of research ethics. It showed that permission was sought from the school authorities and consent forms were provided to research participants before the commencement of the study. It has also indicated how the confidentiality and privacy of the participants were taken care of throughout the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis presents the analysis of the data and discussion of the findings. The chapter presents both the data obtained from teacher participants (interviews) and the extracted connectives from the essays of the students, as well as the classroom observation. The researcher interviewed English Language teachers of the school used for the study concerning the teaching of connective devices and students' use of connectives. The data from the teacher participants and extracted data from the essays of the students were corroborated by classroom observation for the analysis. The findings reflect the themes that emerged from the data under the main variables of the research questions.

4.1 Categories of Transitional Devices that Appear in the Writings of the Students

It needs to be mentioned that the current study is grounded within the framework of Oshima and Hogue (2006, 2007). In this study, therefore, connective devices are words and phrases that connect sentences, clauses and even paragraphs. Regarding the appropriateness of use of these transitional devices, the research focuses on the meaning contributions these elements make to the entire meaning of the paragraph and the essay. The implication is that the current study is concerned with semantics of the transitional devices, without discussing the grammatical functions of the connectives. Based on their semantic functions, Oshima and Hogue (2007) note that connective devices may be generally grouped into eight types: addition, contrast, comparison, example, cause, effect, sequence and conclusion. In the analysis, it is assumed that the students employed the transitional devices as

linkers of ideas expressed in clauses, sentences and paragraphs in their essays. The tables that have been presented below contain the various transitional devices that appear in the various essay types written by the students.

Table 5: Transitional devices in cause-and-effect essays (Write an article for publication in one of the National Newspapers on the causes of teenage pregnancy and its effects on the victim)

Transitional device	Frequency	Percentage
1. To begin by	26	7.8
2. Also	57	17.0
3. In addition	26	7.8
4. Moreover	21	6.3
5. Lastly	7	2.1
6. Firstly	13	3.9
7. Secondly	18	5.4
8. Furthermore	19	5.7
9. To start with	16	4.8
10. In conclusion	22	6.6
11. To conclude with	8	2.4
12. First and foremost	7	2.1
13. To commence with	7	2.1
14. On the other hand	3	0.9
15. To curb the issue	1	0.3
16. To end it all	1	0.3
17. To draw the curtains	4	1.2
18. To add with	4	1.2
19. To continue with	2	0.6
20. To set the ball rolling	5	1.5
21. Last but not least	7	2.1
22. And to end with	3	0.9
23. Thirdly	7	2.1
24. Notwithstanding	3	0.9
25. To continue	3	0.9
26. And again	7	2.1
27. Nevertheless	1	0.3
28. In spite of	1	0.3
29. On the contrary	1	0.3
30. Despite of	1	0.3
31. Last but not the least	7	2.1
32. To begin with	22	6.6
33. In summary	2	0.6
34. In a nut shell	1	0.3
35. Conclusively	2	0.6
TOTAL	335	100

Source: Field Data (2023)

From Table 5, it is revealed that a total of 335 transitional/connective devices appear in the cause-and effect essays of the students. Among these transitional devices, the connector *also* occurs most with the frequency of 57, representing 17.0%. This is directly followed by *in addition* and *to begin by*, which according to Table 5 each occurred 26 times, representing 7.8% each. *To begin with* follows with the frequency of 22, representing 6.6%. It is observed from Table 5 that some of the transitional/connective devices were hardly used in the cause-and-effect essays of the students. For instance, the analysis showed that transitional devices such as *in spite of*, *despite of*, *nevertheless*, *in a nutshell*, *on the contrary* and *to end it all* occurred once, representing 0.3% respectively. The rest of the transitional devices and their frequencies as they occurred in the cause-and effect essays of the students are captured in Table 5.

Table 6: Transitions in the descriptive essays (Describe the person you envy and why you do so)

Transitional device	Frequency	Percentage
1. To begin with	8	6.7
2. Also	10	8.3
3. In addition	15	12.5
4. Moreover	9	7.5
5. Lastly	4	3.3
6. Firstly	7	5.8
7. Secondly	6	5
8. Furthermore	10	8.3
9. To start with	4	3.3
10. In conclusion	15	12.5
11. To conclude with	1	0.8
12. To set the ball rolling	3	2.5
13. Last but not least	8	6.7
14. Thirdly	1	0.8
15. Notwithstanding	1	0.8
16. And again	4	3.3
17. Nevertheless	2	1.7
18. To begin with	8	6.7
19. In a nut shell	4	3.3
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Field Data (2023)

In Table 6, the analysis presents the transitional devices that appeared in descriptive essays written by the students. It was shown in the analysis that 120 instances of the use of transitional devices were recorded in the descriptive essays. Among the 120 instances of the use of connective devices used in the descriptive essays, „in conclusion“ and „in addition“ occurred most, with each occurring 15 times, with each representing 12.5% of all the transitional devices in all the essays. „Also“ and „furthermore“ follow closely with each one recording a frequency of 10 (8.3%). „Moreover“, „to begin with“, „last but not least“, „firstly“ and „secondly“ also appeared quite frequently in the descriptive essays, as the analysis indicated frequencies of 9, 8, 8, 7 and 6 respectively. In terms of percentages, these transitional devices recorded, in the analysis, 7.5%, 6.7%, 6.7%, 5.8% and 5% respectively. It could be observed that a great number of the transitional/connective devices were not used by the students in their descriptive essays. For instance, „on the other hand“, „in spite of“, „however“, „on the contrary“ and „in summary“. Table 6 presents the rest of the analysis of the use of transitional/connective devices in the descriptive essays of the students.

Table 7: Transitions in argumentative essays (There is an argument on the public domain on the topic students should be allowed to use phones in the school. Write your argument for or against the motion)

Transitional device	Frequency	Percentages
1. To begin with	7	4.3
2. Also	18	11.0
3. In addition	9	5.6
4. Moreover	25	15.3
5. Lastly	3	1.8
6. Firstly	16	9.9
7. Secondly	14	8.6
8. Furthermore	6	3.7
9. To start with	6	3.7
10. In conclusion	8	4.9
11. To conclude with	4	2.5
12. First and foremost	2	1.2
13. To commence with	1	0.6
14. On the other hand	1	0.6
15. To end it all	3	1.8
16. To set the ball rolling	3	1.9
17. Last but not least	8	5
18. Thirdly	5	3.1
19. Notwithstanding	4	2.5
20. And again	6	3.7
21. Nevertheless	2	1.2
22. In spite of	1	0.6
23. To begin with	7	4.3
24. In a nut shell	4	2.5
TOTAL	163	100

Source: Field Data (2023)

Another essay type that was examined was the argumentative essay. As shown in Table 6, the students employed a lot of connective devices in the written essays that

were developed using argumentative pattern of development. From the analysis captured in Table 7, it could be seen that the transitional devices that were employed most by the students in developing their ideas in the argumentative essays were „moreover“ (25), „also“ (18), „secondly“ (18), „firstly“ (16), „in addition“ (9) and „in conclusion“ (8). Table 7 indicates the appearances of these transitional devices take 15%.3, 11%, 9.9%, 8.6%, 5.6% and 4.9% respectively. It is worthy of note that some of the transitional devices did not appear in the argumentative essays of the students. Some of these transitional devices include „in summary“, in spite of, in conclusion, „on the contrary“, „to continue“ and „on the other hand“.

Table 8: Transitions in process essays (Write an essay on the process involved in achieving academic success in S.H.S)

Transitional device	Frequency	Percentage
1. To begin with	11	4.5
2. Also	26	10.6
3. In addition	8	3.3
4. Moreover	12	4.9
5. Lastly	5	2.0
6. First	30	12.2
7. Secondly	22	9.0
8. Furthermore	17	7.0
9. To start with	12	4.9
10. In conclusion	29	11.9
11. To conclude with	4	1.6
12. To commence with	4	1.6
13. To end it all	4	1.6
14. To add with	3	1.2
15. To continue with	1	0.4
16. Last but not least	9	3.7
17. And to end with	4	1.6
18. Third	13	5.3
19. To continue	1	0.4
20. And again	9	3.7
21. Nevertheless	1	0.4
22. Moreover	12	4.9
23. In summary	1	0.4
24. In a nut shell	7	2.9
TOTAL	245	100

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 8 presents the analysis of the data regarding the kind of transitional/connective devices used by the student participants in their process pattern essays. As shown in the analysis, a total of 245 transitional devices were employed by the students in the development of the process essays they wrote. Out of this number, it could be seen that the connector, „also“, „in conclusion“ and „first“ occurred most with frequencies of 30 (12.2%), 29 (11.9%) and 26 (10.6%) respectively. Table 8 further shows that some of the transitional devices were not used in the development of process essays by the students. As captured by the analysis in Table 8, connectors, including „on the contrary“, „on the other hand“, in spite of“ and „notwithstanding“ were not used by the students in their process pattern essays.

From the analysis, we observe that the students have employed transitional words or connective devices for different reasons. In consonance with the framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007) and Zemach and Rumisek (2003), the results in the various tables show that the students employed transitional/connective devices that indicate addition, comparison, time relation, and introduce example, cause and effect relation and conclusion. Even though these types of transitional/connective devices have all been used in the essays sampled, it is worthy of note that not all of them have the same frequency of representation. For instance, looking at the transitional/connective devices that signal addition, the students failed to use some of the examples, including „besides“, „in other words“ and „as well as“. It is also observed that in the cause-and-effect essays, the students did not use the transition devices „consequently“ and „thus“. The connective/transitional devices that were not found in the essays of the students explain the fact that some of the transitional devices were not used by the students.

4.2 The Appropriateness of the Transitional/connective Devices in the Essays of the Students

The second research question sought to ascertain the challenges that confront the students regarding the use of transitional devices. In determining these challenges, the researcher looked at the sample essays of the students and interviewed teacher participants of the study. The data showed that apart from few instances where the students failed to spell the transitional devices appropriately, the semantic contributions of the transitional devices used by the students in their essays were appropriate. For instance, in the following examples from the data, the students appropriately used the transitional devices.

ST1: *In addition, the use of mobile phones by students in school opens way for students to view pornographic sites.*

ST2: *Moreover, the use of mobile phones by students prevents them from attending event*

ST3: *Furthermore, through my friend, I have been able to work on my dancing skills*

ST4: *Nevertheless, why won't I envy Immaculate who gorgeous, brilliant, etc,*

ST5: *To begin with, the person I envy is my in-law....,*

ST6: *Inconclusion, I envy Daniel because he is caring, loving and God fearing*

ST7: *However, after Daniel had completed SHS, he had a scholarship to study economist...*

ST8: *Furthermore, Mr. Dorah exhibits some characters that make me envy him...*

ST9: *In a nutshell, determination, etc are the reason why I envy Mrs Asayare...*

ST10: *In conclusion, students should be allowed to use mobile phones in SHS*

From these examples, the researcher observed that the semantics of the transitional devices fit well into the contexts they have been used by the students. The transitional devices have been used in the appropriate sense and they contribute to sentences in which they occur.

The main challenge that was identified was the inappropriate spellings of some of the transitional devices. Even though, largely, the students were able to spell most of the transitional devices well, there were few instances where the students exhibited unsatisfactory ability in writing some of the transitional devices. Regarding this, the data showed that transitional/connective devices that are written together as one word, were written as separate compound words. Mention can be made of the transitional device „furthermore“. In the data, some of the students wrote this connective device as two separate words. Another compound transitional word that was often spelled by the students as separate compound word was „moreover“. The finding of the study is therefore consistent with the research of Faradhibah and Nur (2017), which reported that non-native student writers of English have challenges in spelling compound transitional devices.

Apart from these writing deviations observed, in terms of spelling of some of the transitional devices, it could be seen from the examples above that the transitional devices have been semantically appropriate in terms of the context in which the students used them. From the data, the transitional devices that signal addition have been used in that manner; those that show contrast, like „however“ „nevertheless“ and „on the contrary“ have also been appropriately used. Mention can be made of the transitional devices „in a nut shell“ and „in conclusion“, which have been appropriately used contextually in the sentences *„In a nutshell, determination, etc are the reason*

why I envy Mrs Asayare...’ and *„In conclusion, students should be allowed to use mobile phones in SHS’*.

From the examples, it is noteworthy that transitional devices used in the essays of the students have played their roles well by joining sentences in the paragraphs of the essays. Some have joined the various paragraphs within the essays. As shown in the data, it was observable that the students used the transitional devices accordingly to establish the connection between the ideas being discussed in the various essays.

In this regard, the students have been able to employ the transitional devices as explicit textual clues that restrict the interpretation of a semantic relations of ideas in the essays for understanding by the readers. Students are required to construct their sentences correctly by applying the transitional devices in their appropriate contexts. As revealed in the data, the students were able to construct their sentences correctly and applied the transitional devices in a manner that helped them make the understanding of their essays easier. This is consistent with the argument of Heino (2010) that appropriate use of transitional or connective devices is an indication of rational associations in written texts, which is a strategy the writers employ in assisting their readers to join various structural components and ideas in the essay to create a logic sense of the essay. The findings of the current study that the student participants, based on the sentences extracted from their essays used the transitional devices appropriately, contrasts with the findings of Hamed (2014) which explored the use of transitional devices in the essays written by English as Foreign Language students in Libya. This is because Hamed (2014) reported that Libyan students used connective devices inappropriately in their writing task, creating difficulties in ensuring logical relations in the essays of the students.

Another observation made from the essays of the students was that the semantically appropriate use of the transitional devices as found in the sample of the essays, revealed that most of the essays, especially, the argumentative essays appeared logical, convincing, and easy to follow the writers' line of argument. For instance, it was recognised that most of the students started the discussion of the points raised with connective devices, including „firstly“, „to begin with“, „first“ and „to start with“. The finding is consistent with the finding of Chen (2008) on college students' use of cohesive devices and the relationship between the number of cohesive features and writing quality. According to Chen (2008), there is a relationship between transitional words used in the essays of the students and the general quality of the essays.

Some of the initial sentences that introduce the points for discussion in the paragraphs of the essays are presented below.

1. *Firstly, broken homes is one of the causes of teenage pregnancy*
2. *To start with, inadequate education is one of the causes of teenage pregnancy*
3. *To begin with, poverty cannot be overlooked*
4. *To set the ball rolling, she is richest young midwife in my region*

As observable from these sentences, the students employed semantically appropriate connectors at the beginning of their discussion to set the reader at the position where it becomes easier to follow the writer's train of thought and argument. In this regard, the students, in terms of the semantics and the contexts of the various topics of discussion, employed the appropriate transitional/connective devices in their essays. This means the ultimate goal of the use of transitional devices in a text is to achieve text quality. Even though it is not always the case that the frequency of cohesive devices employed by the writers correlated with the quality of the texts, in

this study, the students have been able to employ, in most cases, the connectors in their right senses and contexts. Meisuo (2000) for instance, maintained that even though specific categories of cohesive markers are employed by the students in their essays, the mere use of these markers does not mean their essays were of good quality as some of the studies reported inappropriate use of these cohesive markers. As shown in the data for the current study, the sampled student essays showed that the connectors have been appropriately used by the students in their essays.

Similarly, the concluding paragraphs were also introduced with connectors that signal to the readers that the writer was closing the argument on the topic. The following examples illustrate this position.

1. *Lastly, another cause and effect of teenage pregnancy is curiosity*
2. *Finally, bad peer influence is another cause of teenage pregnancy*
3. *In conclusion, broken homes, etc are the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy*
4. *Lastly, students having the opportunity to use phones in SHS will mean that few students would attend classes*
5. *To end with, since achieving success is when someone get or gain his or her purpose in school, the above are some of the processes.*

From these examples above, the researcher realised that the student writers provided hints or cues to their readers to realise that the discussion was about ending. It implies that the readers are being made to assume that the writer has exhausted the points and the discussion or argument is about to end. Additionally, the provision of connectors that signal the closing of the discussion allows the readers to evaluate the entire argument or discussion of the writer in terms of completeness, unity and coherence. In this regard, the inclusion of appropriate connectors in the writings of the

students, as explained in the analysis affirms the argument of researchers that connectors in discourse play different facilitating roles in enhancing the comprehensibility of written texts. The findings, therefore are consistent with the assertion of Sabzevari, Haghverdi and Biria (2016) that the effective use of transitional devices in discourses is helpful in the interpretation of a message. In this regard, the student writers appropriately employed the connective devices in order to fulfil their role as discourse facilitators. Concerning this, Sabzevari, Haghverdi and Biria (2016) comment that these logical connectors, if placed appropriately, function as signposts, guiding the reader through the discourse. The findings of the current study contradict the findings of other researchers that non-native speaker of English language use connective devices inappropriately. For instance, in the study of Al Mughrabi (2017), it was revealed that the use of connectors by students is challenging, considering the errors they make. The study particularly reported that even though non-native speakers of English are prone to inappropriate use of the transitional devices in their essays, the problem improves as the students' progress in their academic training. The findings of the current study disagree with a study conducted on Chinese student writers of English in which Liu and Braine (2005) reported in the qualitative analysis of their study that the students had problems with the appropriate use of the cohesive markers.

4.3 Challenges Associated with the use of Transitional Devices in the Students'

Essays

In the previous section, it was reported that from the sampled essays, the student writers were able to semantically and contextually apply the connective devices. This brought about the logical presentation of ideas in the essays of the students. In spite of the appropriate use of the transitional devices, the analysis identifies some challenges.

4.3.1 Overuse of certain transitional devices

From the analysis of the data from the essays of the students, it was revealed that some of the transitional devices appeared too often in the essays of the students. For instance, in the „cause-and-effect“ essays, the analysis showed that 57 instances of the appearance of the transitional „also“ were observed in the essays of the students. It turned out that the connector „also“ was the most used connective device in the sampled essays of the students. This means that the connector „also“ is often over used by the students. The sentences from the sampled essays illustrate the overuse of the connector „also“.

1. *Also, broken home can also lead some young ladies into teenage pregnancy*
2. *Lastly, curiosity and adventure are also one cause which could lead to teenage pregnancy*
3. *Also, peer pressure is another cause of teenage pregnancy*
4. *In addition, teenage pregnancy may also cause by curiosity among the youth*
5. *Secondly, the cause of teenage pregnancy can also cause by the influence of peer groups*
6. *To sum up, there is also another major cause of teenage pregnancy which is financial problem*
7. *Furthermore, poverty can also cause teenage pregnancy*
8. *To continue, it can also lead to drop out of school*
9. *To draw the curtains to an end, early parenthood can also be an effect*
10. *In addition to, peer group pressure can also cause teenage pregnancy*
11. *And again, school dropout is also causes of teenage pregnancy*
12. *In addition, curiosity is also another cause of teenage pregnancy*

From these examples, it is observable that the connector „also“ has appeared in all these sentences. It is worthy of note that some of these sentences have been taken from a single essay. What makes it look intriguing is the fact that most of the sentences contain connectors that already signal addition of an idea. This makes the use of the connector „also“ in the same sentence to appear tautologous. Considering sentence (4), the researcher noticed that the additive connector, „in addition“ which implies that the writer had already discussed a point in the previous paragraph and intended to add another point, has been used. However, the writer added „also“ which seems to be performing the same semantic function in the phrase „in addition“ performs in the same sentence. An analogous sentence to sentence (4) is sentences (10) and (12) in which the writer used „also“ even though the additive connector „in addition“ had been used in the same sentence. In sentences (8) and (11), the writers employed the connective device „also“ to signal an addition of an idea, even though the same sentences that contain the connector „also“ contain connective devices that signal addition. In sentence (11), for instance, the phrase „and again“ has been used by the student to indicate addition of idea. However, the writer added „also“ which also signals addition of idea. This suggests that the connective device „also“ is prone to overuse by the students. The findings of the study are in agreement with other studies. For instance, in the study of Güneş (2017), the research revealed that Turkish students overused connectors, especially those that express addition of ideas, including „also“. The same result is also reported by Mahendra and Dewi (2017). According to the findings of the study of Mahendra and Dewi, Indonesian students from Ganesha University of Education used connectors in their academic writing tasks with the connector „also“ appearing as one of the most frequently occurring connector in the essays of the students. The results of the current study contradict the

finding of Faradhibah and Nur (2017) that the over used transitional in the essays of the students creates a challenge for the quality of the essays. In the current study, the over use of some of the transitional devices in one essay does not have any negative effect on the logical presentation of ideas and the general organisational patterns of the essays.

The teacher participants were interviewed concerning the overuse of certain transitional/connective devices in the essays of the students. Some of the responses of the teachers are presented below.

TR1:

Well, I think some of the students do not have all the connectives that are appropriate for the various essay types. It seems that the students have mastered some of these connectors and they have become conversant with their use. I think this explains the reason why some of the connective devices appear too frequently when they write the examination. So far as a point is added in the discussion to an already discussed point, they are likely to use specific connectors, irrespective of the essay that is been written.

TR2:

Some of the students are confident they can use certain transitional devices well; hence they appear to over use some of these connectives. Usually, I have observed that most of the students like using connectives that show addition of points.

TR3:

It is not every connective device that the students could use. It seems they always use the ones that they know they can use appropriately. I have personally been advising them to choose words that they can spell and use them appropriately. So, I believe some of the transitional devices are dominant in the essays because they are the ones the students are comfortable with.

TR4:

The students use transitional or connective devices that they are sure they can use them correctly. In the context of examination, they are aware that every mistake or error they commit comes with deduction of marks. Hence, they are always alert in using these connectives. The transitional that they normally use are those that they have mastered. I think this is the reason why some of the connectives appear overused in the essays of the students.

TR5:

There are transitional devices that appear generally easy to use. Their meanings are straight forward. These connectives seem to be flexible because they can be used in almost all the of pattern of development. Probably, the flexibility of use of these transitions makes the students overuse them.

From the responses of the teachers, some of the transitions or connectives appear many times in the essays of the students because they are flexible to use. According to the teacher respondents, flexibility of use means that such transitional devices can occur in most of the different patterns essay development or types of essays. It is worthy of note that transitional devices such as „also“, „in addition“, „first“ and „to conclude/in conclusion“ have high frequencies in the various essays.

The findings of the study concerning the overuse of certain transitional elements confirms the report of Adeyemi (2017) that Nigerian learners of English significantly overuse some transitional devices. Adeyemi indicated that lexical repetition in the writings of the students was intended by the learners as a referential cohesive strategy. Unfortunately, this makes them prone to overuse of some of these transitional signals. Even though Adeyemi (2017) reported that the overuse of the transitional signals makes the writings of the students to be deficient in quality, the current study showed that students have been able to use the transitions appropriately.

The findings of the current study that some of the transitional devices that show addition were repeated in the same sentences confirm the findings of Gueliane (2015) about the use of transitional devices to mark cohesion in essays by third year students of English at Biskra University where the students resorted to repeating the same transitional device and ignoring others. Like the current study which indicates that the students demonstrated awareness of the importance of connective elements in ensuring cohesion in their essays; therefore, employing them in their writings, Gueliane's (2015) research revealed that third year students of English at Biskra

University were also aware of the importance of connective devices, and employed all the types in their essays. The point of departure of the current research from the research of Gueliane (2015) is that, in the current research, the students did not use the transitional devices haphazardly, while the students who participated in the study of Gueliane (2015) failed to make balance in using transitional devices rendering the essays of the students usually non-cohesive.

4.3.2 Underuse of certain transitional devices

Another challenge concerning the use of the transitional devices by the students is the underuse of certain connective devices. From the sampled essays, it is noted that there are some transitional or connective devices that the students hardly use them. The analysis of the cause-and-effect essays of the students showed that connectors, including „nevertheless, „in spite of“ „on the contrary“ and „despite“ appeared once in the entire sampled essays of the students. It is assumed that depending on the pattern of development and the kind of essay being written, the writer may employ certain transitional devices at the expense of others. However, it has been consistent from the different essay types that, generally, some of the transitional devices are underused. The students seldomly used them. It was noted that throughout the various essay types, some of the transitional devices were hardly used. In some of the essays, certain transitional devices did not appear at all. Regarding this, the research sought the views of the teachers concerning the non-existence of some transitional devices in the essays of the students.

TR1:

The students have not mastered the use of all the transitional devices. There are some connective devices that they might not even know their meanings and the kinds of essay types or pattern of development that they may apply.

TR2:

Some of the connectors are phrases and others are compound words. I think these are the ones the students have difficulty understanding their use. You know in essay writing, marks are deducted for errors, so the students would want to avoid any connector that they are not sure of its contextual use.

TR3:

I personally do not use certain connective elements. For instance, hardly would you hear people using expressions like 'nonetheless', 'nevertheless', 'notwithstanding' 'conversely' and many others. It is therefore not out of order that some of these connectives are missing in essays of students. Even though they might come across some of these connectors in their personal readings, our challenge with these students is that they seldom read. This makes them to be limited to only what the teachers use in the classroom.

TR4:

I think we often pay attention to simple connectors; these are the ones we think the students would not have difficulty in using them appropriately. You see, we are also trying to avoid petty errors that could cost the students marks in the external examination. So, we tend to teach them to use simple ones. One would expect that the students would learn some of the connectors from books that they read, but you know our students, they hardly like reading.

TR5:

Generally, certainly transitions are hardly used by writers. It is not specific to our students. Even teachers who teach these students do not use them frequently. Generally, we want to be simple in our presentations. Similarly, I am sure the students would also want to avoid committing avoidable errors. If there are other connectors that they feel they are sure of its usage and the type of essay they are writing is okay for it to be used, they will go for such connectors.

From the responses of the teacher participants, it confirmed that indeed certain connectors are underused by the students. Some of the teachers explained that the students have not mastered how to appropriately use some of these connectors, and this makes them try to avoid them in their essays. Consequently, the teacher participants revealed in their responses that the students are conscious of mark deduction in examination; they are aware that failure to appropriately use connectors has dire consequences on the marks they obtain in the essays. This makes the students to avoid connectors that are likely to make them commit errors in their writing.

It is further noted by the teachers that the avoidance of certain connectors is a general phenomenon, not peculiar to only students. According to some of the teachers, even expert writers in Ghana hardly use certain connectors due to their complexity. A teacher confirmed this by asserting that “*I personally do not use certain transitional elements. For instance, hardly would you here people using expressions like ‘nonetheless’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘notwithstanding’ ‘conversely’ and many others.*” From the responses of the teachers, one would infer that certain connectors are unavailable in the lexicon of the students, because their teachers, whom they learn from, also fail to use these connectors. It is worthy of note that these students learn most of the words and phrases in the language from their teachers. The teachers are the principal providers of input for the students. Therefore, if these connectors are not received as input from the teachers, then it might as well not come out from the students as output.

The responses further show that the students could have learnt how to use some of the connectors from books they read in the library, articles they read online and other materials they might have found available. However, the students’ sheer failure to engage in personal reading has deprived them of the opportunity to learn some these connectors. One teacher explained that “*even though they might come across some of these connectors in their personal readings, our challenge with these students is that they seldom read. This makes them to be limited to only what the teachers use in the classroom.*”

The findings of the current study confirm the report of the research conducted by Nilopa, Miftah and Sugianto (2017) that English as a Second Language learners tend to use few cohesive devices because their vocabulary stock does not contain certain transitional elements. Even though the findings of the current study reveal that

the connective devices in the samples were appropriately used, the findings of Nilopa, Miftah and Sugianto (2017) established that the majority of the essays studied failed to achieve cohesion because the few connective devices found in the essays of the students were inappropriately used.

4.4 Causes of the Challenges Students Encounter in Using Transitional Devices

The research sought to ascertain the causes of the challenges the students encounter in the use of connective devices. To achieve this objective, the researcher employed classroom observation strategy and interview involving English Language teachers. The observation note is complemented by the responses of the teachers.

4.4.1 Lack of reading among students

The findings of the study show that one of the reasons why students encounter the problem of overuse and underuse of certain transitional devices in their essays is lack of reading. As revealed in the responses of the teachers, the students have little interest in reading and this does not help them to master the use of transitional devices as the only connective devices they are fortunate to master are those the teachers use in the classroom. Explaining their position on the issue, some of the teachers made the following remarks.

TR1:

Our students have little interest in reading. This situation tends to make their knowledge of words limited to what they hear from their teachers. It is worthy of note that in the classroom, teachers are not likely to use every transitional device. This makes some of the students to lack adequate number of transitional devices which would have enable them to vary their expressions when writing essays.

TR2:

There are different transitional devices that could be used in specific essay types. For instance, in writing argumentative essays, certain connective devices are more certain to feature. However, you are not likely to find all of these appropriate connective devices in a single

argumentative essay. It is therefore important that our students read wide so that they can identify other connective devices and how they have been used by other expert writers. Unfortunately, our students appear unenthusiased to read anything beside what they are given in the classroom.

TR3:

Transitional devices are comparable to any other word or expression. There are words we use today which were not learnt from our teachers. Some of these words were learnt from story books we read in school. Even as at now, I am still adding on to my stock of vocabulary. I want to say that the lack of interest by our students to inculcate in themselves the habit of reading has deprived them the advantage of expanding their vocabulary. This has consequently affected how they use transitional devices also. It is through reading that you are going to identify or realise how expert writers use the transitional devices in their writings. Since most of the students have limited number of transitions that they can use appropriately, they tend to overuse them.

TR4:

Some of the transitions are not used in the classroom, when we are teaching. However, our students need to go the extra mile by reading books. This would make them acquire the use of these transitional devices. I don't think we can teach everything. The more they read, the more they would become knowledgeable in the use of different connective devices when writing.

From the responses of the teacher participants, it has been indicated that the lack of reading interest in the students, which makes them not to read wide has contributed to their inability to use certain transitional devices. Due to the fact that the students do not have knowledge of these transitional/connective devices and how to appropriately use them, they tend to avoid them in their writings. It is worthy of note that some of the transitional/connective devices may not be used appropriately by the students because they have not mastered their use very well. In order for the students not to get penalised by their examiners, they tend to avoid some of the transitional/connective devices in their essay writing tasks.

4.4.2 *Too much focus on passing examination*

In looking at some of the contributing factors of over use and under use of certain transitional or connective devices in the writings of the students, respondents remarked that the emphasis has been on how to pass the external examination. The quest to pass the external examination prevents students from exploring the use of other connective devices. The idea is that students are often advised by their teachers to use transitional devices that they would be able to use appropriately. The responses of some of the teachers are provided below.

TR1:

In our teaching activities, we try to always conscientize the students to use words and expressions that they can use correctly without giving the examiner any chance to subtract marks from them. It does not really contribute anything if you use words that would rather put you in a position to lose marks. So, I think our advice to them on ensuring that they use words that they can appropriately use. I think if we allow them to explore these connectives the way they can, they can use almost all of them appropriately.

TR2:

Sometimes, our lessons are based on what we expect in the examination. Most of the essays that we make the students write in the terminal examinations are past questions from the external examination, WASSCE. So, the connective devices that appear complex and we think may be challenging to the students are usually not used in the illustrative examples we provide. I am sure a careful study of books that answer past questions on essays will show that some of these transitional devices are not used.

TR3:

Even though I wouldn't want to be emphatic on this one, there is no doubt the target of both teachers and students in the teaching and learning activities that go on in the school is good performance in the external examination. The teachers try to admonish their students to be simple and straightforward in the presentation of the answers in their examination. This is aimed at helping the students avoid petty errors in the examination. I think this kind of focus on passing the external examination makes both the teachers and students to be extra careful in other not to be affected adversely in the external examination. This does not give the students the freedom to explore other words they might not be sure of their correct usage.

TR4:

I, personally have been advising my students to try and avoid certain words and constructions. I know my students are not too well grounded in the use of certain words. I wouldn't want them to use such words in the examination because they might not get used appropriately. May be if we have allowed our students to explore a little, without being too concern with the external examination, they might learn how to these connectives and expression.

From the responses of the teachers, it is deduced that both teachers of English and students pay so much attention to passing the examination, West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE). According to the teacher respondents, the emphasis placed on passing the external examination does not allow the students to explore other transitional devices they might not be familiar with, and this makes them to overuse other transitional devices while others are not used in their essays.

4.4.3 Teaching method

Another cause of challenges students experience regarding the use of certain transitional devices is the teaching method the teachers employ in teaching connectives. It is noted in the literature that language teaching methods teachers employ in teaching students contribute greatly to the mastering of the language by the students. Pertaining to this, the researcher observed some of the classroom teaching and learning activities to ascertain the methods the teachers employ in the classroom. The observation note revealed that the teaching approach the teachers use in teaching the students was teacher centred. It was observed that the teachers do not allow the students to use the transitional devices to form their own sentences. Usually, the teachers use essays that other people have written, usually, solved past questions in teaching the students. In this approach, the transitional markers that are used are

usually those that the authors of these books used. This does not allow the students to explore the transitional devices in their own fashion.

Another observation was that instead of the teachers allowing the students to form their own sentences with the transitional devices, they refer the students to the recommended books for teaching English. This makes the students to rely only on how the authors of the books have used the transitional devices in the sample essays. To complement these observations, the teacher participants of the study were asked to express their views on how they teach transitions. The responses below are some of the views of the teachers.

TR1:

I personally do not teach the transitional devices as a separate topic. I normally teach these transitional/connectives when I am teaching the different essay types. It is during the teaching of the essay types that I explain some of these transitions/connectives to the students. I explain the how they are used and the kind essays in which they should be used.

TR2:

There are different books that have been written on the various essay types. In the sample questions solved in these books, usually are past questions from WASSCE papers. I usually use some of these questions as dummies for the teaching that kind of essay. Ideally, students are supposed to write some of these essays for assessment in the classroom. However, for the large number of students, I normally discuss their end of term examination papers with them. generally, I think the students do not explore enough the use of some of these transitional devices.

TR3:

Most of us do not have enough time to mark the essays of the students. So, in the whole term, we make them write one or two essays. This is because of the large class sizes we have in our various classroom. The only instance the students get the opportunity to practise how these connective devices are used is during the examination.

TR4:

I don't teach the transitions in isolation. I normally teach them when I am teaching the various types of compositions. This is because, normally, because I use the solved past questions to teach the students, I use the connective devices in these written essays to explain the meanings and functions of these connective devices. I think this affect the ability of the students master other connective devices.

From the responses of the teachers, it was realised that the approach and methodology of the teachers in teaching transitional devices affects the ability of the students to learn and master the use of the transitional devices. It can be deduced from the responses that the approach the teachers adopt in solving past questions are used without giving the students the opportunity to explore the use of other connectives which do not feature in the past questions, is a contributing factor to the unavailability of certain connective elements in the essays of the students.

4.4.4 Techniques teachers can adopt in improving the teaching of transitional devices to the learners of English

Another theme that emerged from the data is the strategies teachers can use in helping their students master the use of transitional devices. In obtaining the information the researcher interviewed the teachers and consulted the literature on the teacher and learning of transitional/connective devices in English language, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts. These techniques of teaching as suggested in the responses of the teachers and the findings in the literature aimed at helping students overcome the challenges of overuse of certain connectives and inability to use certain transitional devices.

4.4.4.1 Transitional devices should be taught as a distinct topic.

From the responses, it was revealed that teachers have the responsibility of ensuring that their students use transitional devices appropriately. This also implies that teachers are in the position to ensure that their students master the transitional devices that they are unable to use so that they can use those transitions too. The idea is that when the students avoid overuse of the transitions, it helps in preventing monotony and makes their essays interesting to read. In this regard, teachers of English need to rigorously teach their students the function of particular transitional

devices in paragraph construction. In the course of doing this, teachers must encourage their students to undertake extensive reading activities so that they can learn from other writers the appropriate ways by which these transitional devices are used. The students may be tasked to undertake exercises that would compel them to read other books to enrich their knowledge on how expert writers construct their paragraphs coherently and cohesively using required transitional devices. The following are some of the responses provided by the teacher interviewees.

TR1:

Teachers are supposed to give plenty assignments to their students. They must take the transitional devices individually and teach them. This will make the students use all the connective devices in writing paragraphs.

TR2:

I think the situation whereby we teach the transitional devices in when we are teaching different composition types is not helping enough. This is because it is not all the connective devices that appear in the various essays we use as model, those in the solved past question. So, some of the connective devices do not get mentioned in the lessons. The implication is that those that are found in the solved past questions may not be learnt in class. So, I think if we should treat them as a topic on its own by taking one after the other and teaching them, the students will be able to master all of them.

TR3:

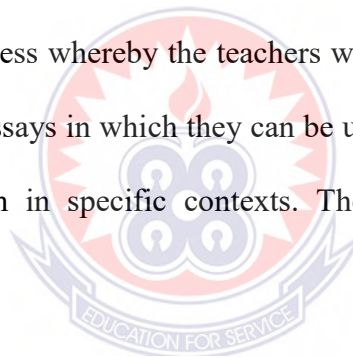
The transitional devices are many. Some show addition, others give reason and establish cause and effect. So, I think if they are treated as a topic and the students are made to practice the use of these connective devices in distinct essays, they will be able to use all the connectives. This will also prevent the tendency of the students to over use some of the connective devices. This is because, they will get the opportunity to master the use of other connective devices that can also fit specific context of use of other connectives.

From the responses of the teachers, it was realised that the approach of teaching transitions whereby they are taught during the time of teaching the various essay types is not too helpful. As revealed in the responses, teaching the connectors during the lessons on the various essay types does not help the students to master the

use of the connectives individually, as some of the transitional devices do not appear in the model essays the teachers use in teaching the students. The findings are in agreement with the argument of Mahendra and Dewi (2017) that the students can be given practice writings where they will be tasked to use specific transitional devices in their writing tasks. This will become effective when English Language teachers provide writing exercises that prompt the students to learn how to use the connective devices of all types.

4.4.4.2 Adoption of process approach to the teaching of transitions

On how to make the students better in using transitional devices, the teacher respondents noted remarked that the approach to the teaching of transitional devices should be a gradual process whereby the teachers would focus on the meaning of the transitions, the type of essays in which they can be used and then the other transitions that can substitute them in specific contexts. The responses of the teachers are provided below.



TR1:

I think going forward, we need to make the teaching of transitional devices a topic on its own, whereby we are going to teach the meanings of these transitional devices, and kind of essays in which they may be applicable. As we teach the connectives in this manner, it will also enable the teachers to opportunity to make the students practise the use of each transition device in developing specific paragraphs.

TR2:

Teaching of the various categories of connectives could be done by looking at their meanings and particular pattern of development of essays in which they could be used. Approaching the teaching and learning of the connectives in this manner could provide the students the opportunity to know the synonyms of some of the connectives so that they could vary them in their essays. I think that picking them from the essays in which they occur does not make their meanings and contexts of use, as well as their substitutes clear to the students.

From the responses of the teachers, the researcher deduced that teaching the transitions by looking at the essays in which they occur tends to place the emphasis on the essays and not necessarily on the transitional/connectives. This deprives the students the opportunity to master the synonyms of the transitional devices so that they could vary the transitional/connective devices in their essays. It can be inferred from the responses that the teaching approach whereby the students master the transitional/connectives gradually by knowing their meanings, other connectives they can substitute and guiding the students to use the transitional or connectives in writing sentences and paragraphs helps in making them master these transitions and employ different connectives in one essay. According to the responses from the teachers, this approach will help prevent overuse and avoidance of certain transitional devices in the essays of the students. The implication is that teaching of transitional devices in English should be process oriented; teachers should discourage the product-oriented approach to teaching of transitional devices, as product approach makes the students lose sight on the processes that are involved in the writing tasks. The finding is in consonance with the assertion of Elahi and Badeleh (2013) that product-oriented approaches to the learning of a language, both speaking and writing, do not prove helpful in sensitising the students to the discourse community.

4.4.4.3 Provision of corrective feedback in the form of discussion of students' essays

Another strategy, which teachers can adopt in making their students master the use of connective devices to avoid overuse and avoidance of certain connectors, that emerged from the analysis is the discussion of the essays written by students. According to the responses of the teachers, when teachers discuss the essays, they would be able to point out the issues with transitional devices used and how to make them better. In this regard, transitional devices that have been overused may be

changed with their synonyms. This according to the teacher respondents would also prevent the non-appearance of certain transitions in the essays of the students. It is worthy of note that as the corrective feedback is provided during the discussion of the essays, misspelt connective devices could also be corrected.

A teacher explained that:

The teachers can sample the essays of the students and discuss them with the students. Just writing the problems in the books of the students does not give the students enough explanation.

Another remarked that:

The teachers should sample essays that have issues with overuse and underuse of connectives for discussion in class. The teacher, by this approach, may give synonyms of the connectives and explain them to the students. With misspelling of the connectives, this can be corrected by writing the correct spelling for the students in the essays. However, when a connective device is replaced with another one, it must be explained to the student. The student might not understand the meaning of the new connective device.

From the responses, it is realised that when correction is provided it helps the students to improve their writing ability and use of words. This finding is consistent to the proposal of Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014) that English language teachers need to identify students' problems with connective devices by reviewing their essays in order to explain their challenges to them. As the findings show, when students' essays are discussed, it makes them become aware of how to judge their own writing for appropriate use of the transitional devices in their writings. In this regard, the students would subsequently master the ability to determine coherent information, even beyond what they are presented with in the classroom setting: the students would then become critical audience who can identify and correct issues of connectors in their own writings, which in effect makes the students good independent readers and writers. (Andayani, Seken & Marjohan, 2014).

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the discussion of the data obtained. The presentation has been made in accordance to the objectives of the research. Concerning research question one, the analysis of the data showed that the students employed different transitional devices in their essays as shown in the analysis. These transitional/connective devices include those that show addition, logical relation, contrast, cause and effect and conclusion. In the analysis, it was shown that among the different categories of the transitional devices, those that indicate addition were used more than the other categories. It was noted that some of the connective devices were not used by the students in all the essay types that were analysed.

Regarding the research question two, which sought to ascertain the challenges the students have concerning the use of transitional devices, the analysis of the data showed that two main challenges prevailed in the writings of the students. These challenges are overuse and underuse of some transitional devices. Regarding the overused transitional devices, the analysis showed the additive connector „also“ is often overused by the students. The discussion revealed that there were instances in the essays of the students that „also“ was used even though other additive connectors had been used in the same sentence. Concerning the underused connectors, it was shown in the analysis that the connectors „nonetheless“, „notwithstanding“, „however“, among other complex connectors were unavailable in some of the essays or occurred once in other types of essays.

Another notable challenge that was revealed in the analysis was the misspelling of complex transitional or connective devices. It was revealed that compound connectors were written by the students as separate words. In spite of these challenges, the analysis of the data showed that the students employed the transitional

or connective devices appropriately. This means, the students used the connectors in their appropriate contexts and this contributed to the logical presentation of the ideas they presented in their essays.

On identifying the causes of the challenges of overuse and underuse of transitional or connective devices by the students, the discussion of the data showed that the teaching and learning have been carried out with the main objective of students passing the external examination. This makes the teachers to use past questions in teaching the students, which prevents the students from exploring the use of other transitional or connective devices which do appear in the solved of past questions. It was also shown that the students hardly read outside the past questions the teachers use in teaching them. As a result, their knowledge of the transitional devices and how they are used is limited to only those that are employed by the examiners and appear in the solved past questions. It is also noted that the methodology the teachers employ in teaching the students transitions does not allow the students to explore the use of other connectives. From the discussion, it was observed that some of the teachers do not use some of the transitional or connective devices when they are teaching. These teachers also advise their students to always use simple transitional devices that they have mastered so that they would not commit errors in the external examination to lose marks.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations made on the findings from the study which explored the use of transitional devices by senior high school students in composition tasks. The aim of the study was to reveal how these students use connectors in their essays in order to understand the challenges with the use of these cohesive signals and to trace the causes of these challenges. It has been reported in the literature (e.g., Mahendra & Dewi, 2017; Güneş, 2017; Gueliane, 2015) that English as a Second Language learners have difficulty in using connective devices appropriately. The current study was conducted in Ghana, specifically, Bolgatanga Girl's Senior High School. The researcher employed qualitative methodology in both data collection and analysis. Three main objectives were set for the study. The first objective was to identify the categories of transitional devices that appear in the writings of senior high school students. The second objective intended to ascertain the challenges the students have concerning the use of these transitional or connective devices. Lastly, the study sought to identify the causes of the challenges the students encounter regarding the use of the transitions. With this chapter being the final chapter of the work, it has been sectionalised into four. Section 5.1 presents a summary of the findings of the study; section 5.2 contains the conclusions drawn based on the findings of the study, and section 5.3 captures the recommendations based on the findings. The chapter ends with a conclusion on the section.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of the research regarding objective one, showed that students of Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School used all the categories of transitional or connective devices as linkers of ideas in their essays. It was observed from the findings that the students employed connectors for different reasons, including addition, comparison, time relation, introduction of example, cause and effect relation and conclusion (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Zemach & Rumisek, 2003). The study revealed that despite the presence of all the transitional elements in the essays of the students, the frequencies of these in the various essays varied. While some of the connectives appeared in all the essays types the students wrote, there were some connectors that were unavailable in all the essays. For additive connectors, for instance, the study revealed that „besides“, „in other words“ and „as well as“ were not used by the students, even though the patterns of development for the paragraphs were appropriate for these connectors to be used. In the essays that were developed using cause-and-effect pattern, the findings showed that the connective devices „consequently“ and „thus“ were not used by the students. This means that the transitional devices that are not found in the essays of the students are not used by the students.

On the appropriateness of the transitional devices used by the students, the findings of the study revealed that even though some transitional devices were not used by the students, those that were used were contextually and semantically used appropriately. The study showed that despite the fact that certain connective devices may not be appropriate for some paragraph development patterns, the connective devices „to illustrate“, „to persuade“ and „to argue“ require that one uses enumeration. Additionally, it appears all essays, regardless of the pattern of development, are

recommended to be finished with a summation connective device (Apse & Farneste, 2018). To this end, the students were able to employ transitional devices that were appropriate regarding the essays they wrote, and the pattern of development they employed in writing the essays. This ensured that the essays of the students presented logical and rational arguments and ideas (Heino, 2010). The findings of the current study that the student participated, based on the sentences extracted from their essays, they used the transitional devices appropriately, which contrasts the findings of Hamed (2014) on Libyan learners of English that they use connective devices inappropriately. The findings of the current study that the students used the connectives appropriately also contradicts the findings of other researchers that non-native speaker of English language use connective devices inappropriately (Al Mughrabi, 2017).

The second research question sought to reveal the challenges Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School students encounter in using transitional devices in their essays. The findings showed that some of the students failed to spell compound connective devices correctly. The words „furthermore“, „moreover“ and „however“ are some of the compound words that were spelt by some students as separate words. This finding agrees with the finding of Faradhibah and Nur (2017) that non-native student writers of English have challenges in spelling compound connective devices.

Another challenge that the finding of the study established was the overuse of certain transitional devices. The findings of the study showed that the connective „also“ was overused by some of the students. The same finding was reported by the studies of Güneş (2017) on Turkish students and Mahendra and Dewi (2017) on Indonesian students. The findings of the research showed that there were certain transitional devices that did not appear in the essays of the students. For instance, in

the „cause-and-effect“ essays of the students, the connectors „nevertheless, „in spite of“ „on the contrary“ and „despite“ appeared once in the entire sampled essays of the students. The findings showed that some of the students have limited vocabulary and that has affected the number of connective devices they could use in the essays. The findings therefore confirmed the research report of Nilopa, Miftah and Sugianto (2017) that English as a Second Language learners tend to use few cohesive devices because their vocabulary stock does not contain certain connectors.

The third research question targeted the causes of the challenges the students have in using the transitional devices. Concerning this, the findings showed that lack of extensive reading among students prevents them from knowing other transitional devices they could use in writing their essays. The findings showed that the only connective devices the students could use were the ones their teachers use in the classroom. It was also revealed that both teachers and students place too much emphasis in passing the external examination. This makes the teachers to advise the students to always use simple connectors, those that they are sure they could use appropriately in the context of the pattern in which they are developing the paragraph. The findings of the study showed that the quest to avoid losing marks in the external examination prevents students from exploring the use of other transitional or connective devices in their essays. Finally, the teaching method used in teaching the students is a contributing factor to their inability to use certain connectors in their essays. The findings showed that teachers of English often use solved past questions as samples for teaching the students. The students also memorise the formats of these written essays without exploring their own skills in writing so that they can explore some of the transitional devices.

The study also revealed the strategies teachers of English Language could adopt in making their students avoid notable challenges such overuse and avoidance of certain transitions in the writings of the students. According to the findings, discussion of students' essays would serve as an opportunity to explain corrective feedback to the essays. Additionally, the findings of the study indicated teachers could adopt process approach to the teaching of transitions instead of product approach. As revealed in the findings, process approach would help in knowing the meanings of connectives and their synonyms.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that students of Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High Schools are able to use transitional or connective devices appropriately based on the pattern of development that they employ in writing their essays. This means that the essays of the students exhibit the features of coherence and cohesion. It is concluded, therefore that, as these connectors are appropriately used by the students, the essays written by the students exhibit logically presented ideas, and allow readers to follow the writers line of argument and presentation of ideas.

This conclusion disagrees with the conclusion of Astanti, Rozimela and Fitrawati (2016) and Almaden (2006) that teachers often find their students inappropriately using transitional or connective devices in their write-ups, causing the problem of incoherent paragraphs in their essays. For instance, Almaden (2006) concluded that students' failure to achieve coherence is as a result of their inability to adequately use transitional or connective devices, rendering their writings a mere plain writing, making the reader struggle to make sense from what they write. Accordingly, the conclusion of the current study that Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High

School students use connectors appropriately, which, makes the essays they write coherent, contradicts the conclusion of Seken, and Suarnajaya (2013) that non-native learners of English inappropriately use connective devices which make their essays to lack coherence, and force their readers to assume the position of editors in order to fully understand the arguments the students intend to put across in their writings.

Another conclusion from the study is students of Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School, in their use of compound connective words, exhibit the general spelling challenge of English as Second Language writers (Akteruzzaman, 2016; Waya & Kwambeh, 2014). The current study revealed that words that are supposed to be written together are separated by some of the students in their essays. Furthermore, it is concluded that the students overuse certain connectors because they have limited vocabularies and their focus on avoiding errors in their written compositions, prevents them from exploring other connectors. Lastly, we conclude that the teachers' method in teaching the students, which according to the findings is teacher-centred contributes towards the non-use of certain transitional or connective devices by the students. It is further concluded that teachers could change their strategies in teaching the students connectives, and that would bring an improvement in the use of connectives. Even though, generally the study reported that contextually, the students were able to use the transitional or connective devices appropriately, the problems of overuse of certain connectives which leads to monotony in their essays could be avoided if teachers employed new strategies in their teaching methodologies and approach. The provision of corrective feedback through classroom discussion of students' essays, the adoption of a process approach to the teaching of connective transitional devices and teaching connective devices as distinct topic are some of the strategies that could help

students avoid overuse of connectives, underuse/avoidance of certain connectives and misspelling of compound connectives.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the findings that the methodology and approach of teaching transitional devices are contributing factors of students overuse and avoidance of certain connective, it is recommended that, teachers of English teach transitional or connective devices as a distinct topic. This would give the students the opportunity to master the meanings of individual connectives, their synonyms and how they are used depending on the essay being written or the pattern of paragraph development. As the transitional or connective devices are taught as a topic, there could be writing tasks in the form of a cloze test, in which the students would be provided a model text that has the transitional or connective devices omitted for the learners to supply them. The students would get the opportunity to write their own sentences and paragraphs using the various transitional or connective devices they are taught. As recommended by Mahendra and Dewi (2017), such writing tasks could also take the form of a judging exercise, whereby the students would be given a model text that contain the specific transitional/connective devices, for them to judge the appropriateness of the use of the connectors in the text or the possible synonyms of the connective devices, that can possibly replace them.

In this context, it can be suggested that, to produce a good writing, teachers need to help students to recognise the need to avoid monotony, repetition of the same transitional or connective device in paragraphs. In as much as the students need to exhibit connectedness of ideas in their writing tasks, they have to be able to vary the transitional or connective devices so that as they seek to present their ideas in effective, logical and clear order in paragraphs, they would not repeat connective

devices. For example, students need to be helped to identify how to use transitions to show which ideas come first and which ideas follow the others. Teachers should therefore help students to be aware that as they employ the devices as linkers of ideas in different paragraphs or sentences to attain coherence in writing, they must be alert to avoid overuse of certain connective devices. For instance, Adeyemi (2017) established that the overuse of cohesive devices in essays of English Language learners hinders the overall quality of the learners' essays.

In this way, the students would be able to express their ideas by using the connective devices, which would make the ideas in their writings to smoothly flow for easy understanding, and at the same time avoid repetition of connectors to avoid boredom (Astanti, Rozimela & Fitrawati, 2016).

From the findings of the study, it is also recommended that English language teachers become facilitators of learning by providing writing instructions in a manner that encourages and assists their students in generating, organizing, and ordering their ideas into coherent texts. With regard to this, teachers of English should ensure that teaching materials that are employed in the teaching of the transitional or connective devices should be based on the learners' development, needs and interests. For instance, Andayani, Seken and Marjohan (2014) posited that in order to redesign a suitable material for language teaching, particularly writing, the students competence concerning the use of transitional or connective devices for cohesion and coherence needs to be examined.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that teachers appreciate the role of errors their students make concerning the use of transitional or connective devices in English, and based on that identify specific practical solutions to the challenges of the students. It is suggested that teachers take conscious effort to teach

the spelling of compound connective devices and ensure that their students master both their use and spellings. This will help the students avoid losing marks on mechanical accuracy in the external examination.

It is also recommended that English language teachers in the senior high schools adopt the communicative language teaching approach in teaching the transitional devices to their students. This will make their students participate in the classroom teaching and learning process, and use the transitional or connective devices in conversations with their peers. This will enable the students to become editors of their own speech or writings and that of their peers. For instance, in his study Nginios (2013) criticized the inductive method teachers of Spanish as second language employ in the teaching of Spanish grammar. According to Nginios (2013), in this teaching approach the learners deduce the grammatical rules of Spanish, which they are learning as second language. This according to him might have influenced the learners to fossilize certain errors, due to inadequate explanation or practice. In this regard, the adoption of communicative language teaching method by teachers of English language in the senior high schools will offer a set of classroom language activities that will make learners focus on developing awareness about English transitions/connectives, the synonyms, spellings and contextual uses.

The study further recommends that managements of schools with large class sizes should put mechanisms in place to split the classes. This will enable the teachers to have personal or individualised teaching so that unique problems of individual students can be identified and dealt with.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

It is recommended that a future study

- i. explores effective instructional approaches and strategies for teaching students how to use transitional devices effectively in their essays.
- ii. examines the impact of feedback on students' incorporation of transitional devices in their essays.
- iii. looks at the phenomenon from a quantitative methodological perspective in order to reveal the true instances of repetition and avoidance of some of the transitional/connective devices.
- iv. should increase the number of schools and participants to ensure the generalisability of the findings.



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