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A Conversation Analysis of Ellipsis and Substitution in Global Business English Textbooks

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Abstract

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Despite the body of research on textbook evaluation from the discourse analysis perspective, cohesive devices have rarely been analyzed in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks. The acquisition and use of cohesive devices is inherent to naturalistic communication, including business interactions. Hence, L2 learners of business English should be exposed to these devices through cohesion-rich textbooks. This study examined the realization of ellipsis and substitution as two cohesive devices in 11 volumes of four global business English textbooks: *Business Result* (5 levels), *Business Opportunities* (1 level), *Business Venture* (2 levels), and *Powerbase* (3 levels). The corpus included 626 conversations with a total of 72,889 words. Corpus analysis of ellipsis and substitution frequency per 1,000 words showed that (a) frequency of ellipsis and substitution in conversational corpus was high, (b) ellipsis and substitution were not equally distributed across different levels, and (c) the textbook series constituting larger corpora did not necessarily represent more realization of ellipsis and substitution. Due to the importance of ellipsis and substitution, L2 learners of English for business communication need to be exposed to them through textbooks.

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1. Introduction

Authentic and naturalistic communication involves the proper use of its discursal features, including cohesion. Cohesion refers to linguistic devices like references, conjunctions, substitution, and ellipsis, which give texture and unity to spoken and written texts (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Lack or improper use of cohesive devices causes misunderstanding and miscommunication because it may lead to a loss of meaning in naturalistic spoken discourse (Crossley, Salsbury, & McNamara, 2010). The use of cohesive devices enhances concreteness and terseness of meaning exchange and negotiation and makes comprehensibility and interpretation of discourse easier (Demetrian, 2015; Foltz, 2007; Moreno, 2003). Ellipsis and substitution as the hallmarks of cohesion facilitate the development of naturalistic communication, especially between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) or between NNS and NNS. In view of this function, these devices are of significance and relevance to business communication which entails a great amount of negotiation between interlocutors and possible miscommunication and misunderstanding. Hence, cohesion should be an inseparable part of language teaching and learning, to prepare learners and those exposed to textbooks for engagement in naturalistic communication in target situations. Business communication courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs are common these days both in English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. In addition, business communication is on the limelight in international communication and in working environments. Thus, the acquisition and use of cohesive devices can promote naturalness and efficacy of business communication.

Cohesive devices, particularly ellipsis and substitution, are the relatively neglected areas of research, and there are few studies of these devices in English textbooks, including business English. With the exception of Gonzalez (2011) and Villaume and Cegala (1988), who conducted a conversational analysis of ellipsis and substitution, other studies concentrated on their distribution in students' writing (Liu & Braine, 2005; Yang & Sun, 2012) and students' proportionate composition quality (Chiang, 2003; Jafarpur,

1991). What seems to have been greatly ignored in the studies of ellipsis and substitution so far is how they are distributed in conversations of business English textbooks and what their realization is. Besides, to those non-native learners and non-native speakers who have already acquired a working knowledge of the target language, recoverability of ellipsis and substitution when encountering authentic listening materials in business English or listening to NSs is an acute problem. Thus, the dearth of studies on business English textbooks from the ellipsis/substitution perspective formed the motivation to conduct this study.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Cohesion and Cohesive Devices

Among the discursal features that create naturalness in communication, cohesion is of great significance. Cohesive devices or formal links (Cook, 1989) bring parts of a text together (Widdowson, 2007). One of the most contributory studies to our understanding of cohesion is the seminal work of Halliday and Hasan (1976). In their work, cohesion is defined as a semantic relationship between an element in the text and some elements crucial to its interpretation. They argue that cohesive relationships between and within sentences, which create texture, primarily determine whether a set of sentences constitute a text. Cohesion is further divided into 'grammatical' (expressed through the grammar), like reference, ellipsis, and substitution, and 'lexical' (expressed through the vocabulary), such as repetition (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Given the prominent status of cohesion, several studies have focused on cohesive devices (Bae, 2001; Crowhurst, 1987; Hu, 1994; Johnson, 1992; Song & Xia, 2002; Zhang, 2000, 2010). In addition, some researchers have analyzed the use of cohesive devices and their effect on rater perceptions (Chiang, 2003), students' written performance (Feng, 2010; Liu & Braine, 2005; Todd, Khongput, & Darasawang, 2007; Yang & Sun, 2012), quality of compositions (Chiang, 2003; Jafarpur, 1991), and conversations (Gonzalez, 2011; Villaume & Cegala, 1988).

To unravel the effect of grammatical and discourse features on rater perceptions of

writing quality, Chiang (2003) studied how 30 English professors (15 natives of English, 15 natives of Chinese) assessed 60 essays developed by university students. Chiang (2003) concluded that about 90% of raters regarded coherence and cohesion as vital quality-determining factors. Close scrutiny also showed that, compared with coherence, syntax, and morphology, cohesion was the best predictor of writing quality. This conclusion is in line with the studies by Chiang (1999), Jafarpur (1991), and Liu and Braine (2005).

To our best knowledge, only one study has addressed cohesive devices in business English. Magdalena (2007) conducted a study on cohesive devices in invitation business letters composed by Slovak companies inviting experts to the company. Corpus analysis manifested that the lexical cohesive devices of simple lexical repetition, synonyms, and substitution had a frequency of 26, 8, and 1, respectively, with repetitions on top of the list. With regard to grammatical cohesion, only references (demonstrative, personal, possessive, and comparative) were assessed. Results showed an occurrence of 13, 3, 4, and 5 times for each subset of reference, respectively. Nonetheless, word length of letters was not considered.

Two researchers conducted a conversational analysis of cohesive devices (Gonzalez, 2011; Villaume & Cegala, 1988). Gonzalez's (2011) work was focused on lexical cohesion, which goes beyond the scope of this study. In Villaume and Cegala's (1988) study, 120 participants were arranged in dyads, having verified they did not know each other. They were then briefed to communicate as strangers in a 'get to know one another' session lasting for 6 minutes. Afterwards, they were grouped into high-interactive and low-interactive participants. Villaume and Cegala's (1988) main finding was that the frequency of interactive ellipsis and non-interactive reference was less in low-interactive versus low-interactive than that in low-interactive versus high-interactive.

2.2. Ellipsis and Substitution

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that ellipsis and substitution are not lexical, but rather grammatical cohesion. Simply, ellipsis is when an item is omitted, and substitution is when an

item is replaced by another. In other words, ellipsis is the omission from speech or writing of a word or words that are superfluous or can be understood from contextual clues, while substitution is the action of replacing a word or words by another word or group of words. Halliday and Hasan (1976) consider ellipsis as a subset of substitution, calling it "substitution by zero" (p. 98). Substitution also seems to bear a passing resemblance to reference; however, they are fundamentally different. This is on the grounds that substitution is realized on the linguistic level and is related to grammar and vocabulary, whereas reference, such as 'it' and 'he', entails the level of semantics (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Therefore, wording rather than meaning lies at the heart of attention in substitution.

Substitution is broken down into nominal, verbal, and clausal categories (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Nominal substitution includes words such as 'one', 'ones', and 'same'. 'One(s)' functions as the head of a nominal group, and can only replace the head of a nominal group, and 'same' presupposes an entire nominal group. The verbal substitute in English is 'do'. Like the nominal substitute, 'do' acts as the head of a verbal group. Unlike the nominal substitute 'one(s)', 'do' always occupies the final position in the group. A further type of substitution is one in which what is presupposed is not an element within the clause but an entire clause (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The substitutes employed here are 'so' and 'not'.

Ellipsis is "something left unsaid" (p. 142). However, this "unsaid" is understood (Halliday & Hasan, 1976): "Where there is ellipsis, there is a presupposition, in the structure, that something is to be supplied, or understood" (p. 144). Thus, "ellipsis concerns the absence of linguistic elements from the overt form of sentences" (Thomas, 1979, p. 43). It is assumed that an earlier context will make the meaning clear (Cook, 1989). Ellipsis and substitution are dependent on the hearer's/reader's ability to retrieve the missing information from the surrounding context and are helpful in avoiding repetition (Buitkiene, 2005). According to McCarthy (1991), ellipsis occurs when elements omitted are assumed to be obvious from the context by the hearer/speaker.

The same subclasses for substitution – nominal, verbal, and clausal – apply to ellipsis. A nominal ellipsis anaphorically points to another nominal group presupposed by it (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Verbal ellipsis refers to ellipsis within the verbal group where the previous verbal group is presupposed by an elliptical verbal group. Finally, in clausal ellipsis, the clause is the point of departure and presupposes any clause in a complex together with all clauses contingent on it.

Ellipsis and substitution have been explored in a number of studies (Buitkiene, 2005; Johnson, 1994; Kempen, 2009; Konietzko & Winkler, 2010; Lee, 2011; Rostami Abusaeedi, 2010). Buitkiene (2005), for example, analyzed the distribution of cohesive devices across three registers: a legal text (restricted register), a short story (an open-ended register), and a newspaper article (placed somewhere in the middle of this continuum). Corpus analysis revealed that the legal text, short story, and newspaper included 2%, 3%, and 1% of ellipsis/substitution, respectively. It was also found that ellipsis and substitution were more likely in open registers than in restricted ones. However, the conclusion meriting acknowledgment was that substitution and ellipsis were the hallmarks of dialogs.

Likewise, Rostami Abusaeedi (2010) investigated cohesive ties in 40 undergraduate students' writing samples, embodying 20 most and 20 least coherent samples. The observed frequencies in the use of cohesive devices were as follows: lexical ties (34.5%, 44.7%), reference (42.4%, 36.5%), conjunction (22.6%, 18.2%), ellipsis (0.35%, 0.12%), and substitution (0.35%, 0.12%), in order of poor and good samples, with ellipsis and substitution as the least frequent cohesive devices. It was, therefore, concluded that the general density of cohesive ties is not an appropriate indicator of good/poor writing, suggesting that the role of lexical ties (synonyms, collocations, repetition) be given prominence in composition courses. Agreeing with Buitkiene (2005) and Jafarpur (1991), Rostami Abusaeedi (2010) states that ellipsis and substitution are sparing in written discourse while they could be the most dominant types of cohesion in spoken discourse.

To classify different types of ellipsis based on information-seeking dialogs, Johnson (1994) examined 48 dialogs produced by participants who were provided with a scenario about restaurants, educational courses, insurance companies, or a conference. A total of 162 elliptical forms were identified and classified under repetition, response, elaboration, replacement, and telegraphic categories, illustrating that ellipsis might be used for different purposes in dialogs. Results further showed that the most significant types of ellipsis were 'response' (n=87) and 'elaboration' (n=25), with the least significant types being 'telegraphic' (n=2), and 'repetition' (n=5).

In the context of business communication, Carrió Pastor and Calderón (2010) studied variations in business English letters. While the main purpose of their study was not cohesion, one aspect they analyzed in business letters was textual cohesion. They found that textual connectors constituted only 2.80% of the letters, which shows the letters were cohesively quite poor. Drawing on this finding, Carrió Pastor and Calderón (2010) suggest that it is important to offer practical classes about text cohesion, particularly due to the ignorance of cohesive ties in many English textbooks which follow a grammatical approach. As a result, learners feel very insecure in using these ties.

The review of the preceding studies reveals that the need for investigating ellipsis and substitution in conversations is yet unfulfilled. This study is particularly significant for those with L1s other than English and involved in business communication in (inter)national contexts. This will foster awareness of the crucial role of naturalness and observation of NS norms in communication. Whereas many NNSs tend to use the full, non-elliptical forms and the same forms instead of substitution, elliptical and substitutional forms are more common in NS communication.

As the question of how ellipsis and substitution are realized in the conversations of business English textbooks has gone largely unanswered, the present study sought to investigate the distribution of these two cohesive devices in the conversations of business English textbooks. Moreover, the

realization of ellipsis and substitution needs to be studied across proficiency levels within each textbook series to ensure that textbooks provide cohesion-rich input across all levels. As cohesion is part of authentic communication, cohesive devices should be embedded in textbook volumes for all proficiency levels and hence should not be postponed to the advanced levels. To fulfill this aim, the following questions were raised:

1. How frequently are ellipsis, substitution, and their subcategories realized in the conversations of various business English textbooks?
2. What is the discursual realization of ellipsis, substitution, and their subcategories in the conversations of various business English textbooks?

3. Methodology

3.1. The Corpus

Eleven business English textbooks were used in the study, ranging from beginner to advanced levels, based on the publishers' statement on the levels. The target users of these textbooks are non-native L2 learners of business English, who intend to learn English for business purposes. Hence, the lessons and activities in these textbooks pursue the dual purpose of teaching language proficiency in English as well as business content. The criterion for the selection of these textbooks

was their focus on business English and their use at English language centers. The textbooks were selected as they were the ones commonly taught at language institutes offering business English courses in the context of the study where English is taught as a foreign language. The conversations were taken from the textbooks without any modification.

Table 1 lists the number of units, conversations, and words per textbook. The corpus incorporated four series of ESP textbooks, with varied levels. *Business Result (BR)* came in five levels: elementary (Grant, Hughes, & Turner, 2009), pre-intermediate (Grant, Hudson, & McLarty, 2009), intermediate (Hughes & Naunton, 2008), upper-intermediate (Duckworth & Turner, 2009), and advanced (Baade, Holloway, Scrivener, & Turner, 2009); *Business Opportunities (BO)* (Hollet, 1994) in one level: pre-intermediate; *Business Venture (BV)* in elementary (Bernard & Cady, 2000a), and beginner and pre-intermediate (Bernard & Cady, 2000b); and *Powerbase (P)* in beginner (Evans, 2002a), elementary (Evans, 2002b), and pre-intermediate (Evans, 2002c). Units in each textbook were examined, conversations were identified, and monologs were crossed out. Conversations were selected based on their naturalness and dyadic nature. A conversation activity was taken as any dyadic or polyadic interaction between individuals mutually present in a situation and interacting via language.

Table 1
The Number of Units, Conversations, and Words per Textbook

Title	No. of Units	No. of Conversations	No. of Words
BR (Elementary)	12	73	5364
(Pre-intermediate)	16	68	8427
(Intermediate)	16	72	8627
(Upper-intermediate)	16	102	14733
(Advanced)	12	87	15844
BO	14	29	4573
BV (Elementary)	12	66	3703
(Beginner & Pre-intermediate)	12	29	3396
P (Beginner)	10	48	1895
(Elementary)	10	23	2518
(Pre-intermediate)	10	29	3809
Total	140	626	72889

Note: BR: *Business Result*; BV: *Business Venture*; BO: *Business Opportunities*; P: *Powerbase*

3.2. Data Analysis Framework

Units and conversations along with word length of each textbook were counted (Table 1). Each dialog was counted as one activity irrespective of its length. As the initial phase of counting, units per textbook were calculated. In the 140 units analyzed, 626 conversations were identified. The largest number of conversations was found in *Business Result*, which encompassed over two-thirds of the corpus, outnumbering the rest of the textbooks in both conversation count (402 vs. 224) and word length (52,995 vs. 19,894). Even more noticeable were upper-intermediate and advanced *BR* textbooks, making up over two-fifths of the corpus with 30,577 words.

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the frequency of each type of ellipsis and substitution and to run an intra-textbook comparison across different levels. For comparison purposes, the distribution of ellipsis and substitution categories was calculated per 1,000 words, a benchmark to standardize comparison between textbooks with varying word counts (see Chen, 2012; Natsukari, 2012). Besides, an in-depth analysis of the dialogs was run. This is what McDonough and Shaw (2003) term as *Internal Evaluation* and Ellis (1997) as *Micro Evaluation* in which significance is attached to some content matter aspects of the textbook. By employing Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive devices and their framework for analysis, the distribution of ellipsis and substitution was analyzed. Conversation scripts were analyzed twice: once for ellipsis, and a second time for substitution. This was a caution exercised to prevent cases that might have escaped the analyst's eyes due to the confusion caused by the spontaneous probe of all subcategories of ellipsis and substitution. The multiple analyses at different levels aimed to provide a solid ground to detect probable differences among textbook series. To explore research question 2, requiring an inter-textbook comparison of the realization of ellipsis and substitution, all conversations were analyzed to locate various subcategories of these two cohesive devices.

Due to the potential complexity and subjectivity of identifying ellipsis and

substitution, which might affect the results, a second rater was asked to cross-examine a portion of the corpus. The second rater was instructed for 90 minutes on how to identify these two cohesive ties and their subcategories. He was also provided with several samples extracted from conversations to gain a better understanding of the realization of substitution and ellipsis. Afterwards, 15 conversations, constituting 1881 words, were randomly chosen to be inter-rated.

Table 2

Inter-Rater Reliability of Rating of Realization of Ellipsis and Substitution

Ellipsis/ Substitution	Rater 1	Rater 2	r
Nominal Ellipsis	1	2	0.98
Verbal Ellipsis	15	15	
Clausal Ellipsis	19	24	
Nominal Substitution	6	6	1
Verbal Substitution	1	1	
Clausal Substitution	5	5	

Inter-rater evaluation of ellipsis and substitution in conversations appears in Table 2. With respect to substitution, not a single discrepancy was found between the two raters with identically equal cases detected for nominal (6), verbal (1), and clausal (5) subcategories. An inter-rater reliability +1 lends further countenance to the identical performance of both raters. As for ellipsis, verbal ellipsis enjoyed equal realization on the part of the two raters. However, the second rater's analysis of nominal ellipsis in one case and clausal ellipsis in six cases differed from that of the first rater. The inter-rater reliability index of 0.98 for ellipsis, constitutes evidence of strong positive correlation of the two ratings.

4. Results

4.1. Frequency of Ellipsis and Substitution

The purpose of this study was to investigate the representation of ellipsis and substitution in business English textbooks and to explore probable differences in their distribution across levels and textbook series. The first research question was purported to investigate the realization of ellipsis and substitution in the conversations of business English textbooks (*Business Opportunities*, *Business Result*, *Business Venture*, and *Powerbase*) in

different series and across levels (i.e., beginner to advanced). Table 3 displays the distribution of each category of ellipsis (nominal, verbal, and clausal) per textbook, the overall number of ellipses in each textbook, the total number of each category of ellipsis in each series, and the overall account of ellipsis. As many as 603 cases of ellipsis were identified on the whole, where verbal ellipsis was by far the most prevailing type with 349 occurrences. By contrast, nominal ellipsis was realized with remarkably lower frequency (only 20 cases). As for clausal ellipsis, it was the second most

frequent category with 234 cases. The total number of ellipses in *Business Result* textbooks (N=321) was more than twice as many as that in *Business Venture* (120 cases), more than three times as many as that in *Powerbase* (N=93), and more than four times as many as that in *Business Opportunities* (N=69). While *Business Result* textbooks, with 8 cases of nominal ellipsis, took the lead over *Business Venture* (N=6) and *Business Opportunities* (N=6), *Powerbase* showed no realization of cases of nominal ellipsis.

Table 3

Distribution of Nominal, Verbal, and Clausal Ellipsis in Textbooks

Textbook	Nominal Ellipsis	Verbal Ellipsis	Clausal Ellipsis	Total
BR (Elementary)	2	41	21	64
(Pre-intermediate)	4	50	23	77
(Intermediate)	1	30	13	44
(Upper-intermediate)	1	41	23	65
(Upper-intermediate)	0	37	34	71
<i>Total BR</i>	8	199	114	321
BO	6	32	31	69
BV (Elementary)	4	46	32	82
(Beginner & Pre-intermediate)	2	23	13	38
<i>Total BV</i>	6	69	45	120
P (Beginner)	0	20	18	38
(Elementary)	0	13	8	21
(Pre-intermediate)	0	16	18	34
<i>Total P</i>	0	49	44	93
Total	20	349	234	603

Note: BR: Business Result; BV: Business Venture; BO: Business Opportunities; P: Powerbase

Furthermore, cross-level analyses revealed small to great differences in the frequency of ellipsis across different levels (Table 3). In *Business Result*, for example, ellipsis cases were identified to be 64, 77, 44, 65, and 71 in elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced levels, respectively. However, the realization of ellipsis was not proportional and linear. Whereas elementary-level *Business Venture* manifested more cases of ellipsis than beginner and pre-intermediate level (82 vs. 38), *Powerbase* contained 21 and 38 cases of

ellipsis in elementary and beginner level textbooks.

Table 4 illustrates the distribution of nominal, verbal, and clausal substitution per textbook and across levels, the total number of each type of substitution per package, and the overall account of substitution in all textbooks. All in all, 145 substitution categories were identified, out of which nominal substitution, with 72 cases closely equated clausal substitution (N=38) and verbal substitution (N=35) combined. The highest proportions of nominal, verbal, and clausal substitution were

found in *Business Result*, with 35, 25, and 22 cases, respectively. By contrast, the lowest figures were found in *Business Venture* (N=4),

Business Opportunities and *Powerbase* (N=3), and *Business Venture* (N=4).

Table 4

Distribution of Nominal, Verbal, and Clausal Substitution in Textbooks

Textbook	Nominal Substitution	Verbal Substitution	Clausal Substitution	Total
BR (Elementary)	3	10	2	15
(Pre-intermediate)	4	4	4	12
(Intermediate)	5	1	4	10
(Upper-intermediate)	13	6	2	21
(Advanced)	10	4	10	24
<i>Total BR</i>	35	25	22	82
BO	11	3	7	21
BV (Elementary)	3	2	1	6
(Beginner & Pre-intermediate)	1	2	3	6
<i>Total BV</i>	4	4	4	12
P (Beginner)	9	1	0	10
(Elementary)	6	1	4	11
(Pre-intermediate)	7	1	1	9
<i>Total P</i>	22	3	5	30
Total	72	35	38	145

Note: BR: *Business Result*; BV: *Business Venture*; BO: *Business Opportunities*; P: *Powerbase*

To investigate the subcategories of ellipsis and substitution across textbook series in more details, percentages of their distribution in each series were calculated. Nominal ellipsis was realized with the widest frequency (40%) in *Business Result* and with the lowest frequency (0%) in *Powerbase*. *Business Venture* and *Business Opportunities* equally included 30% of nominal ellipsis. The highest percentage for verbal ellipsis was found in *Business Result* (57%), which is more than six times as frequent as that of the lowest percentage in *Business Opportunities* (9.16%). Almost half of the cases of clausal ellipsis belonged to *Business Result* while *Business Opportunities* merely held 13.25% of the other half. As far as substitution categories are concerned, *Business Result* received the largest percentages: nominal (48.61%), verbal (71.43%), and clausal (57.89%). This markedly outweighs percentages in other series. It was not far from expectation due to the word length and number of levels in *Business Result*. Likewise, while the

distribution of substitution cases was found to be higher in upper-intermediate and advanced levels of *Business Result*, i.e., 21 and 24, beginner to (pre)intermediate levels did not manifest a noticeable difference.

4.2. Discoursal Realization of Ellipsis and Substitution

To address the second research question regarding the realization of ellipsis and substitution, instances of each type will be presented below:

Nominal ellipsis, i.e., the absence of a noun or noun group, is instantiated through examples (1) and (2). Based on this definition, *people* and *holidays* are omitted after the underlined parts in (1) and (2), respectively.

Nominal Ellipsis

(1) **Jim:** *How many people work on it?*

Olivia: *About thirty, I think.*

(Business Result, Elementary, p. 122)

(2) **Nina:** *Maybe you should take some holidays too.*

Florin: *I don't have any left.*

(Business Result, Pre-intermediate, p. 148)

Samples (3) and (4) exemplify nominal substitution, which is the substitution of a noun (group) by *one(s)*. In example (3), *products*, and in (4), *email address*, *email address*, *business email*, and *email*, are replaced by *one(s)*. Example 4 is noticeable due to manifesting four cases of nominal substitution. Even more noteworthy is the use of modifying elements, e.g., *the* article and demonstratives, prior to the substituted word.

Nominal Substitution

(3) **A:** *How do you operate?*

B: *Well, first we do a lot of market research. We ask people what they want, and we use this information to improve our products or design new ones.*

(Business Venture 1, p. 86)

(4) **A:** *It was great meeting you again. I have an email address for you but I'm not sure if it's current.*

B: *No, you've probably got my old one. Here's my new card with my email address... Er... The one above is my business email. I check it regularly so please use this one.*

A: *Ok, I'll use the business one, then if that's ok?*

B: *Sure.*

(Business Result, Upper-intermediate, p. 150)

Verbal ellipsis, i.e., the absence of a verb (group) in the clause, was anticipated to occur in five different positions. The first place for the occurrence of nominal ellipsis is in responses to yes/no questions, where the verb group is totally missing. An example can be found in (5) below, where “we don't” or “we don't have a catalog” is not stated. The second position is in the absence of the “*be*” form, realized in example (6) in which “*That's*” or “*It's*” is missing before “*Great*”. The third one is in short yes/no questions and question tags, after which the verb group is absent (examples 7 and 8). The fourth can be found in the absence of any verb (group). This is evident in example (9), where “*play*” is left untold. The final position is the ellipsis of a

verb (group) immediately after a modal (e.g., *might*, *will*, *shall*, *could*), for which no instance was observed in the corpus.

Verbal Ellipsis

(5) **Customer:** *Do you have a catalog?*

Eurooffice: *No. But you can see all our products online.*

(Business Result, Elementary, p. 119)

(6) **Paul:** *Well, I think the next step is to get him over to visit us and show him our operation.*

Sandrine: *Great. I'm going to speak to him in the next few days. I'll invite him then.*

(Business Result, Intermediate, p. 159)

(7) **A:** *Ken Lee. I work in the customer service department. I deal with clients' problems.*

B: *And I'm Marisa Leon. ... Now let's begin, shall we?*

(Business Venture 1, p. 84)

(8) **A:** *... it looks a bit odd to me.*

B: *Does it?*

A: *Well, if you look at the scale at the bottom of the page, you'll see what I mean. Surely that can't be right.*

(Business Result, Advanced, p. 152)

(9) **B:** *... What about you? Are you still playing golf?*

A: *Yes, I am. But I don't play as much as I used to.*

(Business Result, Upper-intermediate, p. 152)

Verbal substitution, i.e., the replacement of a verb (group) by “*do*”, is present in samples (10) and (11). In example (10), “*do*” functions as the substitute for “*have your new address*”. In example (11), it replaces “*think you should show them the new schedule*”. Other substitute terms, such as *thing*, *likewise*, *same*, and *go ahead*, were excluded from the study mainly due to their not being classified amongst nominal, verbal, and clausal subcategories of substitution.

Verbal Substitution

(10) **A:** *Do you have our new address?*

B: *No, I don't think I do.*

(Business Venture 1, p. 85)

(11) **A:** *Do you think I should show them the new schedule?*

B: *Yes, I do. And they're going to ask a lot of questions about delivery times, so be prepared.*

(Business Opportunities, p. 162)

Clausal ellipsis, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) pointed out, does not take the form of the omission of single elements of clause structure. Indeed, it entails the omission of an entire clause. The present study identified two very recurrent positions where clausal ellipsis tends to occur. The first position is reported speech form both in wh-questions and yes/no questions. Example (12) supports this fact for reported speech wh-questions, where after the underlined part “*let me see*”, “*what the date on progress report is*” is omitted. In examples (13) and (14), the omission of “*that*” and “*if*” clauses is also noticeable. In example (13), for instance, “*that some people might see that as a form of bribery rather than generosity*” is omitted after “*I don't agree*”. The second position hosting this type of ellipsis is where a modal is omitted from the clause. In example (15), “*you could confirm tonight*” is missing after “*of course*”.

Clausal Ellipsis

(12) **A:** *What's the date on the progress report?*

B: *Let me see. Oh yes, here it is. March 3rd, 1995.*

(Business Venture 1, p. 88)

(13) **Interviewer:** *Some people might see that as a form of bribery rather than generosity.*

Shamsul: *I don't agree. It would be seen as corruption if all the money went to just one individual.*

(Business Result, Upper-intermediate, p. 155)

(14) **A:** *... Mm. Yes, a slight problem - I think some of your data is confidential.*

B: *Oh, really? I'm sorry, I didn't realize – thanks for pointing that out.*

(Business Result, Advanced, p. 156)

(15) **A:** *No, it isn't definite yet. Could I confirm tonight?*

B: *Yes, of course.*

(Business Opportunities, p. 165)

The last category of substitution, i.e., clausal substitution, is the replacement of a clause by “*so*” or “*not*”. Substitution by “*so*” is evident in examples (16) and (17), where “*so*” is employed as a substitute for “*we are ready to order*” and “*you can help me*”, respectively.

Clausal Substitution

(16) **Waitress:** *Hello, are you ready to order?*

Host: *Yes, I think so. We'd like a bottle of sparkling water...*

(Business Result, Elementary, p. 121)

(17) **A:** *Good afternoon, ma'am. Can I help you?*

B: *Yes, I hope so. I bought this portable CD player here yesterday, and it doesn't seem to work.*

(Business Venture 2, p. 97)

5. Discussion

The first finding of the current study showed that ellipsis and substitution are quite frequent in conversations. This substantiates the viewpoint held by Buitkiene (2005) and Rostami Abusaeedi (2010), who see ellipsis and substitution as belonging to the realm of conversations. Likewise, Liu and Braine (2005) argue that the occurrence of cohesive devices is not even noticed in written discourse whereas they could be the most dominant types of cohesion in spoken discourse. This finding is also in line with Jafarpur (1991), regarding ellipsis and substitution as a hallmark of conversations. The high frequency of ellipsis and substitution might be primarily due to the casual nature of conversations. However, the very fact that business English is relatively formal, compared with other related genres, casts doubt upon the notion of formality as the sole determining criterion for the distribution of ellipsis and substitution. Instead, it shows that conversations, by nature, are replete with such cohesive ties. Although not all dialogs were precisely focused on business agenda, they were in the least revolving around business matters.

The similarity this study bears to Villaume and Cegela's (2003) study is that both showed ellipsis to be frequent in conversations. In their study, ellipsis was frequent in high-interactive versus high-interactive interlocutors, and

reasonably frequent in low-interactive versus high-interactive ones. While the frequency of ellipsis and substitution was already attended to in students' writings (Feng, 2010; Liu & Braine, 2005; Rostami Abusaeedi, 2010; Todd et al., 2007; Yang & Sun, 2012), their frequency in business English conversations is not comparable with that in other genres. For instance, in Liu and Braine (2005) and Rostami Abusaeedi (2010), ellipsis and substitution were identified as the least frequent, leading to the conclusion that "ellipsis and substitution seem not to have any application in written discourse" (p. 154).

Ellipsis was also found to be four times as frequent as substitution. It is actually the use of ellipsis that makes one's speaking sound English (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Even in most other languages, ellipsis shapes the naturalness of the language spoken. Empirical evidence and the argument above by Halliday and Hasan (1976) support the observed difference in frequency. The reverse would not be anticipated since ellipsis is a defining feature lurking in dialogs. Furthermore, ellipsis allows interlocutors to dispense with the repetition of the same word, phrase, or clause, which in turn makes it possible to avoid monotonous dialogs. Reliance on ellipsis, highly featuring in native speakers' spoken communication, can be developed in non-native speakers through appropriate learning tasks.

Findings showed that ellipsis and substitution were more frequent in the *Business Result* textbook series on the whole. The reason why this was the case might be due to the greater word length of the *Business Result* series, comprising two-thirds of the whole corpus. The point is that just one, two, or three levels of the other textbooks under study (*Powerbase*, *Business Opportunities*, and *Business Venture*) were published. Hence, a proportionately one-to-one comparison between and among different series was not viable.

The largest proportion of ellipsis and substitution categories belonged to nominal substitution and verbal ellipsis. This is on the grounds that nouns or noun groups often give way to substitute forms. Nominal substitution was the most frequent category, providing that the nominal substitute "same" was excluded

from the analysis. The point here is whether the higher level of the textbook will lead to a concomitant increase in the frequency of ellipsis and substitution. The results showed that the trend was not linear, meaning that high/low level of the textbook did not necessarily convey high/low distribution of cohesive devices. For example, *Powerbase: Beginner* included more cases of ellipsis than *Powerbase: Elementary*, and *Powerbase: Pre-intermediate* outnumbered *Powerbase: Elementary* in terms of substitution. In *Business Result*, there was a slight decline from elementary to pre-intermediate as far as substitution is concerned, and then a marked climb in the upper-intermediate level. As for ellipsis, *Business Result: Pre-intermediate* embodied more cases than other levels, the intermediate level contained fewer elliptical forms than the elementary level, and the advanced level represented ellipsis less frequency than the elementary level.

The impact of word length on the lower or higher frequency of substitution and ellipsis was also confirmed in this study. Although comparison across textbook series disclosed considerable occurrence of ellipsis and substitution in *Business Result*, compared with that in other series, it should be noted that the other textbook series were devoid of an equal number of levels or the same level; for instance, the pre-intermediate level did not exist in all textbook series. The results were contrary to the expectation that the larger the word length of the textbook, the more frequent ellipsis and substitution will be. For example, *Business Opportunities*, with almost half as many words as *Business Ventures 1* and *2*, showed more cases of substitution and ellipsis than *Business Venture 1* and less realization of ellipsis than *Business Venture 2*. The same inconclusive results were obtained for *Business Result* and *Powerbase*, indicating that neither textbook level nor word length corresponds to the frequency of substitution and ellipsis appearing in the conversation sections of business textbooks.

In sum, given the prominent status of cohesion, it can be argued that, as in written communication, ellipsis and substitution are the best predictor of conversation quality (Chiang, 1999; Gonzalez, 2011; Jafarpur, 1991; Liu & Braine, 2005; Villaume &

Cegala, 1988). Furthermore, this status is in full compliance with the suggestion by Chiang (2003) and Jafarpur (1991) that to reach naturalness in productive skills (both writing and speaking) cohesive devices are substantially helpful. It follows that the rich realization of ellipsis and substitution, as two cohesive devices, in business English textbooks can contribute to the acquisition and use of cohesion for naturalistic communication by ESP learners of business English.

Ellipsis and substitution are important cohesive devices, determining the authentic use of the language. A corpus analysis was conducted in the present study on ellipsis and substitution to gauge their frequency in business English textbook conversations. Spoken discourse was chosen because it was hypothesized that these two cohesive devices are more frequent in conversations (Buitkiene, 2005). Four different textbook series (*Business Result*, *Business Opportunities*, *Business Venture*, and *Powerbase*) were analyzed and raw frequencies, frequency per 1,000 words, and percentages were calculated within textbooks and across textbook series. The findings reveal that the level of the textbook has a minor role in the low or high frequency of ellipsis and substitution. Further, the findings suggest that the impact of corpus size across different series (i.e., BR: 52,995 words) on frequency is partial and irregular. Although the flow of ellipsis and substitution is not fixed depending on the level or word count per textbook, the fact still remains that the formal context of business communication hosts a noticeable proportion of ellipsis and substitution cases.

These findings offer implications for business materials developers, suggesting that conversations in business textbooks should represent authentic materials, especially as far as ellipsis and substitution are concerned, to maintain the required naturalness. The underrepresentation of cohesive devices deprives learners of sufficient exposure these devices, which, in turn, impedes their acquisition and use by the learners. Thus, business English textbooks should be reflective of cohesive devices to facilitate learners' participation in naturalistic communication in the target business contexts. Moreover, due to the great contribution of

ellipsis and substitution to naturalness in business speaking, ESP teachers need to raise students' awareness of the use of ellipsis and substitution through explicit instruction. There are also implications for the learners and users of business English textbook who are exposed to the realizations of ellipsis and substitution in Business conversations. Finally, there will be grave communicative consequences for those who are willing to acquire naturalness via textbooks which fail to reflect norms of naturalness.

One limitation of the present study was that only two cohesive ties were analyzed in the conversation sections of Business English textbooks. If cohesive ties are investigated in the reading sections of Business English textbooks, findings can better reveal the representation of cohesion in these textbooks. Another limitation was that two cohesive ties were explored, ellipsis and substitution. The prime reason behind the choice was the similarity of ellipsis and substitution in nature and the expectation of inter-related results. More conclusive findings, however, would be attained through replication studies on other cohesive devices in business English textbooks. Future studies may examine ellipsis and substitution in textbooks of similar levels to produce evidence of the impact of textbook levels on the frequency of ellipsis and substitution.

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