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<p>Academic Writing Wizard http://www.aw-wizard.com/</p> <p><i>Reviewed by Adrian Wurr</i></p> <p>Gulf University of Science and Technology, Kuwait</p> <p>wurr.a@gust.edu.kw</p>	
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Overview	
Operating System	Web-based application accommodates all Operating Systems
Minimum Requirements	Network connection and supported browser (Firefox, Chrome, Safari, IE 8 and above)
Support	Tutorials, email
Target language	English
Target audience	Secondary & Post-Secondary
Price	Institutional pricing (approximately \$20 per user)
Free trial	Yes
Characteristics	Form-based approach to teaching writing, emphasizing cohesive links, paragraph and essay organization. Essays are constructed using smaller linguistic units (phrases & paragraphs) using writer- and corpora- based prose.

Academic Writing Wizard is a web-based instructional tool to help writers develop cohesive and coherent essays. The program was originally developed for undergraduate EFL students but has been successfully used in secondary and tertiary English L1 and L2 instructional environments. The program is based on the premise that since languages are rule governed, learning a foreign language is primarily a process of learning how to string meaningful chunks of the target language together. Applying this simple premise to more sophisticated, corpus-based word and phrase databases, Academic Writing Wizard helps developing writers use cohesive links and formulaic academic expressions more consciously in their writing. Recent research (Al Sharoufi, 2014) examining the efficacy of the program found statistically significant ($p < .0001$) improvements in students' use of cohesive devices, lexical repetitions, and phrases.

User-friendly tutorials and YouTube videos help instructors register for and use the free-trial program in their classes. Once an account is created, students are led through a four-step process to writing an essay or academic report. First, students must select the number of paragraphs they want their essay to include. Then for each paragraph in the essay, they select the connecting words and types of lexical and phrasal repetition they want to include in the essay in steps 2-5.

Step 2 involves selecting connecting words from a list of common conjunctions (e.g., *and moreover, indeed*). In step 3, students select which type of lexical repetition they want to use, simple, complex, and/or phrasal. Each is developed further in step 4, where drop-down menus provide the student with a list of options for improving cohesion in different parts for the essay.

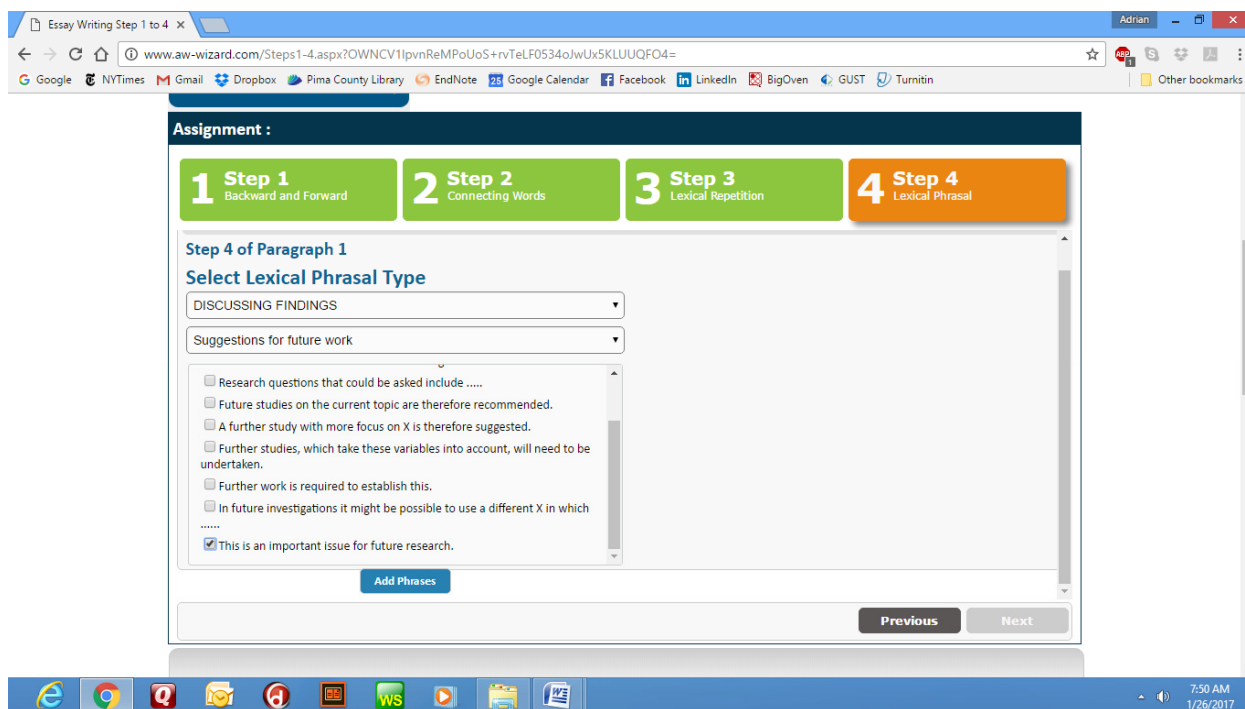


Figure 1: Step 4 Screenshot -- Selecting lexical phrases commonly used in conclusions to show need for more research

For example, **Figure 1** shows a list of lexical phrases commonly used in the conclusion of a research paper for making suggestions for future work on the topic. Finally in step 5, students are shown a visual representation of lexical devices used such as the one in **Figure 2**, wherein each cohesive device is identified in color-coded highlights in the text. This final step and screenshot is where the real value of Academic Writing Wizard lies because, however abstract the grammatical concepts of cohesion may seem to developing writers, seeing each cohesive link in their essay highlighted makes intuitive sense. Providing students with immediate feedback on which parts of the essay are stronger and weaker cohesively is akin to how streetlights provide pilots flying over more and less developed landscapes at night with a map of the cities and countryside below. With the information provided in the Cohesive Trio Density Matrix and grammar and style checkers, students are able to revise their essays further. In pre- and post-samples of student writing Al Sharoufi (2014) analyzed, students use of transitions, lexical repetition, and lexical phrases increased an impressive 72.9%, 107.6%, and 141.4% respectively!

The screenshot shows the Academic Writing Wizard (AWW) interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'HOW TO USE AWW'. Below it, a central panel titled 'Cohesive Trio Density Matrix' displays a paragraph of text with various cohesive devices highlighted. A legend at the bottom of this panel identifies the colors: light blue for Backward Reference (Anaphora), pink for Forward Reference (Cataphora), yellow for Connecting Words, and orange for Lexical Phrases. The interface also features a 'QUICK LINKS' sidebar on the left and a 'WRITE YOUR NOTES HERE' sidebar on the right. The footer contains navigation links for 'About essays', 'Useful Info', 'Style Info', 'Citation Info', and 'Follow us on'.

Figure 2: Step 5 Screenshot showing cohesive links used in essay

While the form-driven process outlined in steps 1-4 seemed like putting the cart before the horse for me as a native speaker of English, I found the alternate procedure informative: writing my paragraphs first and then identifying the connecting words and cohesive devices I had used using the drop-down menus in steps 2-5. Using the software this way helped me to learn the grammatical terms for different cohesive devices, and more importantly, some of the common expressions of these words and phrases used in different rhetorical moves. Al Sharoufi stated that this was originally the approach to writing he had in mind when he designed the software, but feedback from users led him to allow the composing process to unfold either way – by writing an essay first, then strengthening cohesion with the help of the software, or by composing paragraphs and embedding cohesive links along the way with suggestions from Academic Writing Wizard (personal communication, February 28, 2017).

Either way, for the target audience of EFL students and teachers working in more traditional academic settings, Academic Writing Wizard will appear familiar and novel simultaneously because of its high-tech application of traditional writing pedagogies. Indeed, since most writing teachers must teach the forms of writing specified in course and program curricular guidelines, if you are assigned to teach 5-paragraph essays then the only responsible question left to the instructor is how best to teach the genre. Academic Writing Wizard provides teachers and students in situations like this an effective, high-tech option for learning grammar, writing, and computer literacy skills simultaneously.

References

- Al Sharoufi, H. (2014). A novel framework for teaching academic writing. *Pragmatics & Society*, 5(3), 484-507.

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