

The Impact of Thematization & Contextualization as Discoursal Features on the Quality of EFL M.A Students' Written Performance.

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ABSTRACT :

This paper investigates the impact of the discoursal features of Thematization and contextualization on the quality of EFL M.A students' written performance. As the main objective is to observe this impact, the researcher distributed an essay test to the second batch of M.A students of English at Sudan University of Science & Technology in December 2013 in order to measure their abilities in these discoursal features. The 50 students were asked to write an argumentative essay entitled " The Challenges that Face Education in Sudan". To support the data obtained through the test, 30 copies of a questionnaire were administered to 30 university teachers, particularly, those who teach at the graduate level. The data collected through the two tools were statistically analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. After applying the descriptive analytical method for both research tools, the researcher has come up with some results concerning Thematization & Contextualization. As for Thematization, M.A students, in their written performance, mishandle both Single Theme-Rheme, as well as, Zig-Zag Themes. As for Contextualization, they misuse both situational and conceptual contextualization. These misuses negatively influence their written performance. To solve this problem, the researcher recommends exposing students to intensive writing skill courses that adopt Systemic Functional Linguistics theory; as it links text to its context of use and thematic progression, as a way of introducing connected ideas; otherwise, writing skill will remain a problem.

Key words: *writing quality, discourse analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Contextualization, Thematization*

المستخلص :

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة أثر السياقية و الجذرية، كخاصيتين خطابيتين، على جودة الأداء الكتابي لدى طلاب ماجستير اللغة الإنجليزية. و بما أن الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الورقة يتمثل في ملاحظة هذا الأثر، فقد قام الباحث بتوزيع اختبار كتابي عبارة عن مقال جدلي عنوانه: " التحديات التي تواجه التعليم في السودان" لطلاب ماجستير اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة السودان في ديسمبر 2013 و البالغ عددهم خمسون طالبا. و لتعزيز البيانات المحصلة عبر و سيلة الاختبار، فقد قام الباحث بتوزيع ثلاثين ورقة استبانة لأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية، خاصة الذين يشاركون في تدريس برامج الدراسات العليا. و قد حُلَّت بيانات كل من الاختبار و الاستبانة إحصائيا باستخدام (SPSS). و قد أشارت النتائج إلى أن طلاب ماجستير اللغة الإنجليزية لا يجيدون استخدام الجذرية البسيطة و الجذرية المتشعبة بالإضافة إلى السياقية المكانية الزمنية و السياقية الفكرية مما يؤثر سلبا على كتاباتهم. لحل هذه المشكلة، يوصي الباحث بأن

يخضع الطلبة لكورسات مكثفة في مهارات الكتابة بالإستعانة بنظرية علم اللغة الوظيفي لأنها تربط النص بالسياق بالإضافة إلى الجذرية التي تساعد على تقديم الأفكار بطريقة ترابطية و إلا ستظل مهارة الكتابة مشكلة قائمة. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** جودة الكتابة, تحليل الكتابة, علم اللغة الوظيفي, السياقية, الجذرية الفكرية.

INTRODUCTION :

Writing, as defined by Ellis (2004) is a difficult productive skill that requires both linguistic and conceptual knowledge. Actually, Sudanese teachers follow the classical teaching methods of writing. However, as Hyland (2002) believes that the classical process, product and communicative approaches will not help solve the problems of writing unless they are complemented with disciplinary socialization and academic literacy approaches that put consideration to the linguistic and conceptual knowledge, as well as the generic features that characterize essays from reports and reports from other different genres. These modern approaches help the students understand the role of Contextualization and Thematization in organizing and producing a written discourse.

According to Martin & Rose (2003) and Eggins (2004), discourse analysis is a branch of linguistics that has been developed as a result of intensive research in the field of systemic functional linguistics. They continue to say that discourse analysis focuses on how people use language in real life situations to do things like argumentation and persuasion using logical persuasive abilities that reflect the knowledge of the world around them which is shared by their discourse communities; the social groups to which they belong. Discourse analysis provides information that shows the people taking part, and to what social

group they belong, and hence their produced discourse is characterized by certain generic discursual features (ibid). Since the targeted sample is M.A. students of English and most of them are teachers, the researcher intentionally asked them to write about what is shared by their discourse community; an educational topic. To discourse analysts, who elaborated on discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics, discourse analysis is based on situational and conceptual contexts that shape the language use as language which is not used in vacuum. Actually, there are many discursual features which are essential to the quality of a well-written text. However, the researcher of this study is going to focus on the most influential discourse features, namely Thematization and Contextualization as provided by Martin & Rose (2003) and Eggins (2004). Historically, the researcher is going to introduce some linguists' and discourse analysts' views on discourse features.

2.1. Thematization & Thematic Progression:

The notion of theme/rheme in the clause structure seems to have great effect on EFL students' written performance. In fact the orders of themes/rhemes of clauses within sentences and sentences within paragraphs and paragraphs within written texts are of great importance to the organization of the discourse. Halliday (1985) describes the notion of theme within the discourse as 'the point

of departure' and this seems to be compatible with Brown and Yule (1983: 133) when they have viewed the concept of thematization as discourse process rather than sentential in dealing with units larger than one sentence. Moreover, Brown and Yule explain that what comes first, as a theme or a topic, will influence the interpretation of everything that follows. They still argue that every clause, sentence and paragraph is organized in a written discourse around a particular idea that is taken as its point of departure (ibid: 134). To conclude this discussion, Ostrom (1983) clarifies the concept of thematization and staging of discourse which has just been mentioned above by saying that an initial main clause or sentence will state the idea or the theme of a written text and the rest of the sentences in the same written discourse will develop the body of the discourse by any means of specification, clarification, explanation, illustration or argumentation. Supporting what has been said above, Halliday, in his SFL resource (1994), introduced what is known as Thematic structure; the structure which gives the clause its character as a message. This concept can be understood in this way: the Thematic structure organizes the message in the clause as it consists of two elements; the Theme and Rheme. According to him, the Theme is the point of departure of the message. It is usually what the clause is about and the Rheme is the remainder of the message as it provides information about the Theme. To illustrate this, the researcher provides the following two examples. The Theme is underlined:

* The house is beautiful and large.

* Because of the bad weather, he didn't go to school.

Of course, Thematic structure is much more complicated than what has been outlined above. According to Halliday (1994), "the Theme is a particular structural configuration which is taken as a whole, organizes the clause as a message. Within this configuration, the Theme is the starting point of the message; it is the ground from which the Theme takes off" (ibid). To put it simply, the role of Theme serves as a point of departure of a message. After reflecting the topic of a discourse (the Theme), comes the part in which the Theme is developed (the Rheme). Halliday goes further when he says that the Theme-Rheme structure is not only a formalized category, but also a functional one. He says that the part embodying the Theme lies in the first component of the sentence, and the Rheme is the other component following the Theme. In other words, the Theme always precedes its Rheme (ibid). Martin & Rose (2003), Eggins (2004) and Tabodda (2004) introduce different types of Themes explaining their application in written discourse, particularly essays, which can be summarized as follows:

Single/ Topical/ Constant Theme:

According to them, topical Theme functions as the subject of the clause and what follows, i.e. the verbal phrase represents the Rheme which should necessarily develop its Theme.

Zig-zag/ Thematic shift:

A Zig-zag Theme, which is also called a Thematic shift, is the most difficult Theme to develop in writing. In a Zig-zag Theme, the Rheme of the first sentence becomes Theme for the second sentence,

and the Rheme of the second sentence becomes Theme for the third one, etc. successively. Therefore, a discourse that contains a Zig-zag is highly cohesive and coherent.

Hyper-theme:

Hyper-theme functions as a topic sentence of a paragraph, and what follows, i.e. the logically related supporting sentences represent the Rheme. Therefore, syllogistically, there is a strong correlation between registerial coherence (logical link among the sentences of a paragraph) and Hyper-theme.

Macro-Theme:

Martin & Rose (2003) state that Macro-Themes are higher level Themes predicting and organizing Hyper-Themes. To make it clear, Macro-Themes represent textual Themes that include all the points which are expected to be explained and talked of in all Hyper-Themes. More simply, a macro theme represents the thesis statement of the essay.

Systemic Functional Linguistics & Contextualization: As SFL, the textual analytical tool, is used by discourse analysts to analyze cohesion, coherence, Thematic development and Contextualization in oral/written texts. It

is necessary to provide some historical background about it. SFL theory grew out of a new grammatical trend known as functional grammar. This theory emerged out of a proposal that the grammatical organization of all natural languages reflects the function for which language has been evolved to mankind. The main contribution of functional grammar is depicted in its ability to show some functions that revolve round how meaning that is ideational (reflecting the experience and the knowledge of the world around us), interpersonal (reflecting social interactions) and textual (organizing the language as a message through thematic progression, cohesion and coherence) is realized using the language (Halliday, 1994; Martin, 1992). Halliday (1994) explains that any language use has a function. In other words, any language use serves constructing and reflecting some aspects of experience, and negotiating relationships in an organized language and hence a satisfactory message is realized. According to Eggins (2004), systemic functional approach to language helps us explain and analyze how meanings are made in every linguistic interaction. He adds, in our activities, and in our daily life we are constantly required to react and produce bits of language that make sense. These bits of language are

referred to as texts. **Contextualization: Text & Context:**

Halliday & Hasan (1989) define context as the non-linguistic factors that affect both spoken and written communicative interaction. They go further to say that all language uses have contexts whose textual features enable the discourse to cohere not only with itself but also with its context of situation. The term context is used to explain why certain things have been said or written at a particular point and a particular situation, and what will happen if the same to-point concepts are said in different situations. A way from the context of situation, there is a context of culture which is the broader conceptual background against which the text has to be interpreted and evaluated (ibid). Martin & Rose (2003) say that context is an important dimension of texture (homophoric coherence) for its function as a retrieval source. They go on to say that texts can only be interpreted and evaluated by reference to their context of situation and context of culture, which they later termed as situational context and conceptual context. Martin & Rose further explain that all texts carry their context with them. These systemic linguists, as they are interested in explaining how context gets into texts, realized that context gets into text through schematic structure (abstract mental knowledge in the mind of language user). Eggins (2004) clarifies that language becomes intelligible and understandable when it is placed within its situational and conceptual contexts. Eggins (2004) argues that all systemic linguists are interested in how people use language with each other in their social settings. He says that, getting

something done through the use of language involves two moves: text and context. Thus, text carries its context with it, so language and context are interrelated. Therefore, we are able to deduce context from its text and we are able to evaluate the produced bits of language from their context. He stresses that once a text is taken out of context, its purpose becomes ambiguous with some of its meaning lost. Christie (2005), Supporting Martin & Rose (2003) & Halliday (1994), says that any text is a result of situational and cultural (conceptual) contexts as contexts refer to what surround texts. Christie adds that a context is known because of the text that gives it life and a text is only known because of the context that makes it relevant (ibid). According to the above elaboration by scholars, context can never be separated from its text. Conclusively, these scholars explain that the situational context refers to the writer's abilities to abide by setting (place & time) of the concepts they are going to write about. As for conceptual contextualization, writers are not allowed to include any irrelevant information in their writings. To make it clearer, if the students were asked to write about technological innovations in USA, in the 20th century, the reader expects these students to write about only the USA innovations and not any other country's innovations only during the 20th century. 'This is known as situational contextualization. As for conceptual contextualization, the reader expects writers to write in details about all or most of the USA innovations in a chronological order. **Methods: Data Collection** Since this study is conducted to measure the knowledge of discursal

features of Thematization & Contextualization as represented in the essays written by EFL M.A. Sudanese students of English language at Sudan University of Science & Technology, their written essays form the basic data of this research, To get more accurate result, the researcher complemented this essay test with a questionnaire intentionally distributed to senior lectures, assistant professors, associate professors and full professors to reflect their real attitudes towards the performance of M.A students. This supported the accuracy of the results and findings. Although the method used in this research is descriptive, qualitative and quantitative data are used to facilitate obtaining the expected findings. This qualitative research aims mainly at interpreting the phenomena on the basis of understanding individual perception and mastering of these discursal features. Then, the researcher supported the qualitative research by quantitative numeric representation for more precision.

To sum up, this research was conducted in three steps as follows:

1- An essay test was distributed to 50 M.A students of English at Sudan

University of Science & Technology (batch two), as a purposive convenient sample.

2- A questionnaire was distributed to university teachers at Sudan University of Science & Technology inclusively and university teachers from other Sudanese Universities.

3- Statistical numeric description for the results of both the essay test and the questionnaire was conducted to facilitate verification of the hypotheses set by the researcher.

Validity and Reliability of the Essay Test

To test the reliability and validity of the essay test, 15 answer sheets were randomly selected, then the scores of the students in the dimension "Thematization and Contextualization", as reflected in their written essays, were recorded and manipulated using the features of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS); two measures were used: Pearson Coefficient Factor Test (for the validity of the essay) and Alpha Cronbach's (for the reliability of the essay). The following tables illustrate the results of this procedure.

Table 1: Validity of the Essay Test:

Dimension	Items	Coefficient factor with dimension	Coefficient factor with Total
Thematization & Contextualization	Single Theme-Rheme	0.85	0.52
	Zig-Zag or Thematic Shift	0.85	0.57
	Conceptual Contextualization	0.44	0.31
	Situational Contextualization	0.81	0.63

As shown in Table 1, all the values of Pearson Coefficient Factor between the items and the total of the dimension

with the total of the essays are positive and greater than 0.20. This indicates a good validity for all the items of the

dimension of the essay and, hence, this accurate results.
test of the current study can give

Table 2: Reliability of the Essay Test:

Dimension	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items	Cronbach's Alpha (Internal validity)
Thematization & Contextualization	4	0.72	0.85

According to the findings in Table (2), Alpha reliability factor for Thematization and Contextualization = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items): **0.72**; thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.85**.

As it is evident from the data above, the items of the dimension of the essay have attained a high level of reliability and internal validity. Accordingly, it is valid to answer the questions of the current study.

Validity and Reliability of the Staff Questionnaire

To test the reliability and validity of the staff questionnaire, 10 copies were randomly selected, and then manipulated using the features of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS), through Pearson Coefficient Factor Test (for the validity of the questionnaire) and Alpha Cronbach's (for the reliability of the questionnaire). The following tables illustrate the results of this procedure.

Table 3: Validity of the Staff Questionnaire

Dimension	Items No	Coefficient factor with dimension	Coefficient factor with Total
Thematization & Contextualization	1	0.87	0.88
	2	0.94	0.88
	3	0.98	0.93
	4	0.97	0.91

As shown in Table 3, all the values of Pearson Coefficient Factor between the items and the total of the dimension with reference to the total of the questionnaire are positive and greater

than 0.20, which indicate a good validity for all the items of the dimension of the questionnaire and hence it is valid to give accurate data and results.

Table 4: Reliability of the staff Questionnaire

Dimensions	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items	Cronbach's Alpha (Internal validity)
Thematization & Contextualization	4	0.96	0.98

According to results in Table (4), Alpha reliability factor for Thematization and Contextualization = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items) is: **0.96**; thus Internal validity = (Squire Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.98**.

As it is evident from the data above, the items of this dimension of the staff questionnaire have attained a high level of reliability and internal validity. Accordingly, it is valid to answer the questions of the current study.

Results:

Research Question1: What are the features of Thematization and Contextualization that are poorly

Table (5)- Discoursal Features of Thematization and Contextualization:

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Failed	48	96.0%
Succeeded	2	4.0%
Total	50	100.0%

The above table shows that the percentage of students who successfully handled thematization and contextualization was (4%), while the percentage of the students who mishandled these features was (96%). This reflects poor knowledge and practice of thematization and

treated in M.A students' written discourse?

To answer this question, the researcher calculated the frequencies and percentages of success and failure of the students, then calculated the means of each item in this dimension. After that, the researcher subjected the four items to Freedman Chi Square test of mean ranks. The following table illustrates the results of this procedure.

Table (5) below shows the results of M.A students' performance in the discoursal features of Thematization and Contextualization as appears in their written essays:

contextualization as discourse features by M.A students as their written performance shows. Table (6) below displays Freidman mean of ranks to know the more common features of Thematization and Contextualization that are poorly treated in their written essays

Table (6) - Common Features of Thematization and Contextualization:

Items	N	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Chi Squire	P value
Single Theme-Rheme	50	1.78	0.55	2.69	125.47	0.0001
Zigzag or Thematic Shift	50	1.61	0.58	2.38		
Conceptual Contextualization	50	0.45	0.56	1.08		
Situational Contextualization	50	2.54	0.71	3.85		

As shown in Table (6), the mean values of students' degrees in thematization and contextualization were 2.24 ± 0.71 , 1.78 ± 0.55 , 1.61 ± 0.58 and 0.45 ± 0.56 for situational contextualization, single theme-rheme, zigzag or thematic shift and conceptual contextualization respectively. The mean ranks of the four

features came as: topic situational contextualization (3.85), single theme-rheme (2.69), zigzag or thematic shift (2.38) and conceptual contextualization (1.08), which indicate that the conceptual contextualization is the most poorly treated feature followed by thematic shift (zig-zag), single theme-rheme and

situational contextualization successively. Chi Square test also shows that conceptual contextualization is significantly the most poorly treated discursal feature ($P < 0.05$). These discursal misuses, as the statistical results reveal, negatively minimize the quality of the written product.

Research Question 2: What are the university teachers' attitudes towards this procedure.

the written performance of M.A students in terms of thematization & contextualization?

To answer this question, the researcher calculated the percentages, means and relatives weight of the staff answers on the items of this dimension and the following table illustrates

Table (7)- Teachers' Attitudes:

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	Mean	RW *	P value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms single theme –rheme sentences.	1	3.3	1	3.3	2	6.7	16	53.3	10	33.3	30	4.10	82.0	0.03
Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of zig-zag theme or thematic shift.	1	3.3	1	3.3	2	6.7	4	13.3	22	73.3	30	4.50	90.0	0.001
Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of topic contextualization at the conceptual level . (conceptual Contextualization)	1	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	6	20.0	21	70.0	30	4.50	90.0	0.001
Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of topic contextualization in terms of the setting (place &	1	3.3	1	3.3	2	6.7	4	13.3	22	73.3	30	4.50	90.0	0.001

time) of the concepts. (Situational Contextualization)														
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* **RW: relative weight (calculated as percentage = (mean/5)*100).**

Results in Table (7) show that the percentages of the opinions of the staff, who strongly agree with the fact that thematization and conceptualization features are poorly mishandled in the EFL M.A students' written (essays) performance, are: 73.3%, 73.3%, 70.0% and 33.3%, for Zigzag theme or thematic shift, Situational contextualization, conceptual contextualization and single them-rheme respectively, with mean values of 4.50, 4.50, 4.50 and 4.10 and relative weights of 90.0, 90.0, 90.0 and 82.0 respectively. This indicates that these features of thematization and contextualization are poorly treated by EFL M.A students in their written essays as (P < 0.05) (all means are greater than neutral value "2.5" and all relative weight is above 50.0).

Discussion and Interpretation of the findings:

Thematization:

AS earlier defined, the theme is the point of departure or the old information. This theme should be complemented by a rheme as new information.

e.g. Water consists of H₂ O. To understand what "H₂O" is, we need to go back to the theme water. Actually, there are many types of themes such as single theme- rheme, topical theme, textual theme, micro theme, hypertheme, macrotheme, whole text theme and zig-zag theme. As these students are EFL ones and they were expected to be poor in thematic realization, the researcher exclusively tested them in two types of themes: single theme-rheme and zig-zag

or thematic shift. The bitter fact is that their written essays are full of fragments and run-on sentences. These two writing errors result in thematic misuses.

Contextualization:

As Eggins (2004) elaborates, without contextual information, it will be very difficult to determine which meaning is being made; he adds that language is clearly understood in its context of situation or context of culture. He goes further when he says that context shapes the language and language shapes its context.

One of the major problems, that the researcher has observed in the essays written by the students while marking the tests, is their inability to contextualize their topic. The researcher has noticed, as the results reveal, that most of the students completely fail to contextualize their topic. To contextualize their topic, the students should have firstly restricted their essays' thesis statements to some or all the challenges that encounter only education. Then, each challenge, whether economic (which has forced the qualified experts to leave their country creating generation gap), academic or political should be developed or talked about in a single paragraph according to the order of the challenges in these statements, and this is known as conceptual contextualization. Secondly, they should have contextualized their topic by talking about the challenges that particularly face Sudan these days and not any other country. This is known as situational contextualization. However, a large number of the students are unable to contextualize their essay topic due to

lack of knowledge, poor learning strategies and insufficient teaching. The researcher believes that the major reasons behind these misuses could be attributed firstly to the nature of the writing approaches followed by the teachers. In Sudan, teachers adopt the classical methods of teaching writing, e.g., process approach, product approach and the latest one, according to our believes, the communicative approach. However, this contextual information would be perfectly considered in writing, if the teachers adopt the modern literacy teaching approaches such as: socialization, academic or interdisciplinary socialization approaches, as well as SFL approach to writing. What the students should have done to contextualize their essay topic is that they should have asked themselves some questions before stating the controlling ideas: Are there any challenge that education in **Sudan** face? If yes, how many challenges? What are these challenges? The last two questions determine the number of the paragraphs. But, the students have talked about many things rather than the challenges of education. The most embarrassing thing is that most of the students haven't talked about the real existing challenges that face Sudan and hence their essays are off-point. In essays No. (1, 7, 9), for example, there was nothing about educational challenges in Sudan, and instead of discussing the challenges that encounter Sudan, they have discussed, in a poor language, education as a system or as a course. In essays No. (3, 5), the students have talked about education in the past. They have talked about Sudan colonization by the British and about

English as a medium of instruction. Finally, they have concluded that education now is very bad in comparison with the past without reflecting any challenge in their essays. In essay No. (14), the student has talked about education in Sudan from a historical point of view saying that education in Sudan started in Rufaa, then he talked about Babikir Badri and Ahfad university, Wadi Syedna and Hantoub schools as well as Bakht-erruda Institute. Then he has talked about the system of education that has been changed. Finally, he said that education now is very poor without logical representation to any challenge. The researcher has intentionally asked the M.A students to talk about educational challenges because they are teachers. However, it has been noted that these students lack the cultural knowledge of their domain which is shared by their discourse community. Eggings (2004) says that "when the student fails to write about a discourse topic shared by his discourse community; this student is problematized and lack the knowledge of his discourse community as well as the linguistic features essential to writing". Accordingly, these discursal sub-features greatly influence the written discourse as they determine its quality. The more the students are able to use these features, the more they are able to produce written discourse of high quality.

Reasons behind this poor performance: M.A students' written performance is very poor in terms of Thematization & Contextualization for many reasons:

1- The students were not intensively exposed to English writing skill and the

relevant courses prior to and during the university stages.

2- At the university level, the teachers do not abide by the elements of the courses that they should teach, and if they do, they do not teach in details. What adds injury to insult is that they still stick to the traditional teaching approaches. Therefore, the students are ignorant of both the concept of contextualization & Thematization and their importance in writing.

3- As observed, the teachers are demotivated and indifferent and instead of being mentally occupied by the promotion of their students' standards, they are mentally occupied by thinking of flying out.

4- The students are also indifferent. They have one dream; just to finish their study and not how to finish it. This is due to the economic crisis that made them think of getting jobs instead of mastering their language.

5- According to point No. (4), they do not adopt successful leaning strategies.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

Conclusions:

The main findings of the present study which answer the questions investigated can be summarized as follows:

As for the discourse features of Thematization & Contextualization, the misuses made by the students of this study in the 50 essays can be summarized as follows:

- a- Single theme-rheme has been misused by (21) students with percentage (42%).
- b- Zig-zag theme has been misused by (50) students with percentage (100%).
- c- Conceptual contextualization has been misused by (45) students with percentage (90 %).

d- Situational contextualization has been misused by (41) students with percentage (82 %).

These results reflect that these M.A students have real problems in discorsal features which, as statistically verified, affect their written performance. This has been supported by the results of the second research tool; the questionnaire. The statistical analysis for the questionnaire respondents' answers reveal that M.A students of English are so poor in writing as they lack the practical experience of these discorsal features.

Recommendations:

In the light of the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations:

- 1- There should be placement test for the expected M.A students before they are finally accepted.
- 2- The poor students should attend intensive courses in grammar, writing, vocabulary, and discourse analysis; according to the points of their weakness.
- 3- More systematic assignments on the use of discourse features should be applied and practiced, until teachers make sure that these students do not have any discorsal problem. This could be realized if the salaries of the teachers are increased. The most advanced countries have been and still investing in education. Accordingly, many conferences entitled "Economies of Education" are held.
- 4- Teachers should follow the updated theories of text linguistics as well as the modern approaches of teaching writing such as interdisciplinary socialization approaches that teach writing skill at two levels: linguistic level and conceptual

level; each according to the genre to which it belongs.

5- After teachers introduce the theoretical knowledge in terms of discourse features of cohesion, coherence, Thematization & contextualization, they should provide the students with assignments in a form of written texts, then they should ask them to determine the discourse features in each text, till they assure that their students can detect the discourse features in any text. Finally, they should provide the students with some topics to write about, requesting them to pay great attention to these discourse features. Before marking, teachers can select the texts which are full of discourse misuses, after hiding the names, and introduce them to the students asking them to correct by deletion and addition. These features are interrelated as each one helps the other to realize. For more information, (Cf, Tabodda, 2004).

6- As for Thematization & contextualization, students should be provided with the concept of thematization and the types of theme. Then teachers can ask them to write some sentences that have topical themes, 3 sentences that contain macro or micro themes. In the future, if they couldn't be able to apply these themes in their writing, they will, at least, be able to use single theme-rheme sentences in their writings without misuses. As for contextualization, students should be acquainted with the concept of contextualization whether context of situation or context of culture as well as the contextual factors that determine the quality of a well-written text. The teacher should ask the students to drop out any sentence that is off-point in terms of

conceptual contextualization or situational contextualization.

7- Teachers should not view errors as a reflection of the students' incompetence of writing: rather, they should accept that errors are significant part of learning as some scholars say: "errors are precious indicators of learning".

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