



**Difficulties Facing English as Foreign Language Learners in Using
Cohesive Devices in Writing**

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

Teaching English Language

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2016

Abstract

This study intends to determine the difficulties facing English as Foreign language learners when using cohesion devices and coherence in their writing.

To achieve this purpose, the study adopted a descriptive analytical method, the population of the study consisted students and teachers.

The researcher used a questionnaire and a composition test as tools for data collection.

The data was analyzed by using the statistical program (SPSS), and then there was a textual analysis of subjects' written texts.

The descriptive analysis indicated that students' ignorance of correct usage of cohesive devices and coherence. Because there is less competence. The findings were been discussed in the light of the hypotheses.

As a solution of this problem the researcher pointed out the following recommendations:

Teachers and syllabus designers should contribute in developing curriculum.

Teachers should draw their attention to their students in order to improve their abilities to use cohesion devices.

The instructors should provide adequate training for teachers.

The syllabus designers should provide books for the students with adequate exercises.

I think when our students have written a text, teachers will consider the features of written texts. However looking through materials for teaching writing shows that the result of design of tasks .Awareness of theses can inform the ways of writing tasks in the classroom.

Students should also pay more attention to these elements of writing.

Teachers should practice their students to use cohesive devices through focusing on both grammatical and semantic convention of academic writing.

1.1 Introduction

Writing is an important skill and the learners should practice more because it is a necessary skill which enables them to construct accurate sentences, paragraphs and easy. It is also very important for the teachers to know the problems, difficulties and the need of his/her students so he/she can help and give them the best method of writing to help them be creative.

The researcher will present the type of writing in logical way, starting from constructing simple sentences and going on to guided composition. Writing skills in general is considered as one of the most important skills in language such as, reading, listening and speaking.

For the most part, a lot of EFL writers, in particular those at university level, lack of English writing abilities because their exposure to western writing tradition is very limited. Thus, they find themselves faced with English writing problems at different levels such as stating the topic sentences plainly, an expression of the main idea, evidence to support the main idea, and so on.

The medium of writing can be practiced for a wide variety of purposes, mainly those related to today's writing settings such as writing letters, articles, essays, reports, novels, books, etc. thus, it has been argued (Kuen, 2001) that the present rapid developments such as information technology, globalization and business transactions, have led to an enormous need for writing as a vital tool of communication worldwide.

The Nature of EFL Writing:

In all parts of the world, the study of EFL/ESL writing has become the focus of attention of most contemporary researchers, language teachers, applied linguists and rhetoricians. As a result, there is a widespread tendency for teaching EFL expository writing in most worlds' higher

education institutions (e.g. colleges and universities) in order to meet the urgent needs and growing challenges of the modern world. Kroll (2003:1) for example, argues that taking part in the world community. Especially within interconnected economic, technological and geographical realities, requires a fluency in English that expands beyond the spoken language and includes various uses of the written language too. Generally speaking, L2 writing research had begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the USA and some Western countries, including the UK due to the increasing number of overseas students joining tertiary-level institutions (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996:23) More importantly, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) put a great emphasis on the importance of second language writing and as a result of that L1 and L2 writing issues were considered as different areas of study. Some researchers such as Martinez (2005), Silva and Matsuda (2001b), and Thorson (2000) point out that L1 writing strategies are different from those of the target language writing. Thus, a great deal of researchers, including Kroll (2003:2) argue that over the past quarter of a century, colleges and research centers around the globe have noticed that teaching English writing skills to tertiary level learners whose mother tongue is not English, has become an important part of the higher education system. So, the growing focus on L2 writing as an academic discipline has been made evident by the large number of writing courses designed for EFL/ESL learners at various institutions: ranging from community colleges to the most famous graduate institutions. At the same time, the area of EFL writing has witnessed an increase in the number of papers published in books and specialized journals, the number of presentations delivered at regional and international conferences, and the widespread of scholarly journals which deal with the most current issues in second language writing teaching (Fujieda, 2006:59) it is natural, then, that in many places today, there is a notable increase in the number of specialized ELT forums, and ELT scholarly journals focusing on debatable issues of EFL/ESL writing.

Furthermore, several studies were carried out in EFL writing settings. Some of them, for example, have discussed how western writing pedagogies are introduced, negotiated and received in non-English

dominant countries, such as China, Turkey, Russia and Thailand (Clacher,2000: Cummings, 2003; Tarnopolsky, 2000; You, 2004;cited in You,2006:3). Some studies examined how English is taught in European traditions, whereas others have studied the socio-political processes of English writing in EFL perspectives, such as in China, India and Serilanka (ibid.p:3)

EFL/ESL writing as an educational phenomenon seems to occur in different ways, especially the ones that are related to socio-cultural dimensions. Matsuda (2005) for instance, points out that ESL writing in the USA, as indicated earlier, began in response to the needs of the increasing number of international students in American tertiary institutions. In contrast, Grabe & Kaplan (1996:23), maintain that any concern of L2 learners' writing requirements should be based on the wide diversity among L2 learners. Thus, it can be said that EFL/ESL writing teachers should bear in mind that L2 writing entails different contexts. For instance, Arabic writing is linguistically and rhetorically different as opposed to German, French, or Chinese writing. Each language leads its speakers to conceptualize the world differently from the speakers of other languages, and so writing can be perceived in the same way.

Yet, A distinction can be made between EFL writing and ESL writing. The former pertains to learners who intend to learn English to write in it, particularly scholarly writing and who live in a territory in which English is not dominantly spoken or written as a language of the community. Such situations can be found in countries such as Sudan, Chad, China, Indonesia, France, etc. On the other hand, the latter includes those learners who intend to learn English to write in it and live in territories where English is a language of the community. Examples of this category can be found in countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Ghana, South Africa, etc. However, ESL writing is also taught in English speaking countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. It is expected that in an ESL writing context, FL writers can practice their English in real life situations such as shopping and exchanging written documents (e.g. letters, e-mails) with the native speakers. Therefore, they may not face serious problems in improving their English writing in comparison to EFL writers whose writing practice

may not go beyond the classroom practices. That is, in most cases, EFL writing is considered as part of the department curriculum.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996:25) argue that L2 writing learners differ disproportionately in terms of the necessity for writing abilities. EFL learners might need English writing skills that range from a simple paragraph writing to scholarly essays and professional articles. On the other hand, in ESL contexts, they contend that the extent of writing necessity is greatly diverse, despite the fact that the needs here tend to be more academically oriented. Hence, it can be added that due to these variations in learners' writing needs, EFL/ESL writing theme and implementation might turn to be uneasy. The fact that EFL/ESL writing teachers should take into account the different factors involved in L2 writing area. That is besides learners' grammatical and lexical awareness, L1 linguistic influence, Cultural thinking and genre perspectives should be determined too. In this respect, Connors and Glenn (1999:392) point out that teachers' concerns about rhetoric should be related to matters of how to develop and arrange arguments in order to persuade readers, how to select and organize ideas to support arguments, and how to use logical, ethical, and pathetic techniques appropriately to convey the intended message. Apparently, it is important to notice that EFL/ESL writing instruction needs more than one element and that researchers and teachers should take into consideration most of these different elements.

Generally speaking, Writing has not received much attention during the early years of second language studies, probably because of the dominance of the audio-lingual approach in mid twentieth century. This negligence was evident in the USA between the 1940s and 1960s when the concept of language as speech became increasingly dominant under the influence of the attempts made by Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries (Kroll, 2003:17) Nevertheless, L2 writing teaching became a major issue at the annual gathering of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Which was convened in 1949 as the first specialized forum at which teachers and scholars met to discuss issues related to L2 writing? Consequently, writing issues were grouped into L1 and L2 levels, and the latter's level issues were included in the field of teaching English as a Second language (TESL).

L2 writing as an area of applied linguistics appeared in the early 1980s it received much attention as an essential field of investigation with its own disciplinary infrastructure in the 1990s that is, L2 writing appeared as an interdisciplinary field, incorporating various views rather than a single view. This also made many L2 researchers believe that social, cultural and educational dimensions would influence L2 writing. And as such, it becomes clear that on more theory or pedagogical approach that can describe the hidden perspectives of L2 writing (Fujieda, 2006:66).

Following the above initiatives, the number of studies exploring EFL/ESL writing has increased tremendously. For example, articles on L2 writing issues have become available in journals such as College ESL, English for Specific purposes (ESP), Language Learning and TESOL Quarterly. Other journals in composition studies such as College Composition,

Teaching English in the two-year College, WPA: Writing program Administration, and Written Communication, have also appeared to tackle problems of L2 writing. Furthermore, owing to the interest in research on L2 composition, the journal of Second language Writing was found in 1992 providing scholarly insights into in the field (Deluca et al. 2002)

Pedagogically speaking, L2 writing instruction takes different ways throughout the world. For example, in some countries' rhetoric, EFL/ESL writing is taught as a scientific subject, and it is analyzed at different stages of the language structure. In other words, a written text is categorized into exposition, narration, description and argumentation. However some countries' doctrine tends to value a written product over a writing process which is considered as a linear process in writing instruction (You, 2006.2)

To conclude, it has been reported that L2 writing, Whether in English or other languages. Stemmed from composition studies and applied linguistics aspects, Based on this assumption. Various views, such as structural aspects, contrastive rhetoric, error analysis, cohesion and coherence, have substantially contributed to the understanding and

expansion of ESL/EFL writing as an area of research study (Wurr, 2004:16)

1.1 Statement of the problem

The researcher has noticed that, from her experience of teaching English as foreign language at university, the students under graduate encounter a lot of difficulties in writing English. There are a lot of factors behind these problems, so this research tries to shed light on these writing problems and how to overcome them.

More importantly, dealing with EFL undergraduate students and observing some English essays, articles and these written by some EFL writers, the researcher has noticed that the most of them, especially university students confront serious rhetorical problems when writing in English language.

1.2 The objectives of the study

- The study aims to identify writing problems that EFL university students face in writing and tries to find out the causes of these problems and to suggest ways of overcoming them.
- Investigate the relationship between EFL reading competence and EFL writing ability in terms of rhetorical techniques improvement.
- Shed light on the cohesion and coherence problems in Sudanese EFL writing context.
- Display the great importance of genres in the teaching of academic EFL writing.

1.3 Significance of the research

Although there is a growing concern about the studies that dealt with ESL, EFL studies conducted in Sudan and elsewhere in some Arab countries, there were very limited studies into writing problems resulting from the impact of the cultural background. Therefore, this study is unique in the sense that it focuses on an area likely to be of great importance and interest to background writers and under graduate students majoring in English.

On the whole, since a greater emphasis has been devoted to the potential poor performance of EFL learners in most learning setting, the significance of this study centers around the fact that it attempt to investigate unexplored causes of some Sudanese under graduate students' weaknesses in achieving communicative competence in written English.

1.4 Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions are posed:

- To what extent do EFL under graduate students face logical organization problems in writing an expository text?
- To what extent does lack of coherence characterize EFL under graduate students' expository writing performance?
- To what extent can extensive EFL reading improve EFL under graduate students' writing ability's in terms of rhetorical techniques?
- Are there any significant of lack cohesion characterize EFL under graduate student's expository writing performance?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

This part of the study is designed to provide some hypotheses which are thought to be relevant answer to the research problem; they include:

- EFL under graduate face logical organization problems in writing an expository text.
- Lack of cohesion characterizes EFL under graduate students' expository writing performance.
- Lack of coherence characterizes EFL under graduate students' expository writing performance.

- Extensive EFL reading improves EFL under graduate students' writing abilities in terms of rhetorical techniques.

1.6 Research Methodology

As far as the methodology of the student is concerned, the researcher will use a descriptive analytic method. The data will be collected through two instruments: teachers' questionnaire based on likert scale and students' English expository writing test, which will be evaluated by an analytic scoring method. That is to say, each essay will be marked according to four main parameters. Furthermore, to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument used for data gathering, a pilot study will be conducted to a randomly selected sample of the research subjects. The subjects will be consisted of Sudanese EFL university teachers and Sudanese EFL under graduate students.

1.7 Limits of the Research

The overall results of the current study are assumed to be confined to the following perspectives:-

- The subjects of the study are the under graduate students majoring in English studying at Jazan university during the academic year 2014-2016.
- The subjects also consist of university teachers of English language.
- The type of writing in this study is related to English expository writing. This is because, expository writing becomes extremely important to all under graduate student irrespective of their disciplines, i.e. they deal with writing longer text which requires a good knowledge of rhetorical techniques.
- The type of questionnaire in this study is closed- ended questionnaire which will be administered to university teachers of English language.

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