Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Overview

Although English is not the most widely used language in terms of native speakers, it is the most widely used language globally. This primacy of English in the global arena is attributable to the fact that it is the language through which international trade and diplomacy are realized, scientific and technological innovations are stated down, news and information are disseminated everywhere and in no time. As a communicative tool, English functions as a mediator between different socio-cultural, socio-economical and political groups. This indicates that there is social, economical, political and scientific power behind English language. Therefore, learning English is something inevitable or scientific and technological advancements will not be kept up with (Byram, 1997).

Learning English as a foreign language, in Sudan, starts at schools and continues to university level. Each one of these two contexts has its own culture and learning styles. According to Leki and Carson (1994 as cited in Al-Badwawi, 2011), students who are admitted at colleges or universities enter a new context of a new culture with its own norms, demands, and conventional ways of meaning-making which is different from school context. In other words, students entering universities will be upgraded from a simple school context to a rather complicated one that requires more critical thinking abilities, new learning styles and wide horizons which are totally different from those of schools, particularly, when they come to write. This university context will help the students gradually develop these abilities through tertiary and graduate studies' different stages. Therefore, the researcher is going to apply this study at the graduate level, particularly, M.A students having in mind that they are the only supposed students to have developed these abilities more than any other low level students. M.A students are supposed to have learned new literacy practices that will enable them to function successfully in the context of higher education. These practices are related to both the college or university as a site of cultural and academic literacies, and to the sub-cultures
and knowledge of the individual disciplines within the college. All these literacies are interrelated and their depiction in the written performance determine how far the students are getting improved (Leki and Carson, 1994).

Lea and Street (1998: 158 as cited in Al-Badwawi, 2011) state that:

"Writing at higher education is not just a mere collection of correct grammatical structures that contain shallow ideas, but a rich conceptual discourse that reflects students’ culture and accumulated knowledge."

This means that students' difficulties with writing can be attributed to the disjuncture between their past writing experiences in B.A program and in M.A Ones, particularly, for those who have come to attain their M.A degrees after long occupational lives. Enthusiastic students to permanent education who were not trained well on how to write essays in their B.A courses cannot write perfectly accurately. Accordingly, they encounter these difficulties in M.A programs where essay writing is regarded as the main form of assessment in several courses, that is why optimistic but weak students are frustrated after the results are declared.

What has been said by Lea and Street (1998) means that writing is an interdisciplinary skill that depends on the accumulated knowledge in different disciplines, and when it is taught, it should be taught at three levels: grammatical or linguistic level, discourse or cohesion/coherence level, as well as, conceptualized contextual level.

Lea and Street (1998) further explain that learning in higher education involves adapting to new ways of gradual knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organizing knowledge.

According to the above concepts, these ways of knowing are gradually developed by upgrading from a level to another. Academic literacy practices such as reading and writing within disciplines constitute central processes through which students learn new concepts and develop their knowledge about these new attitudes.

While not denying the importance of other literacy practices such as study skills or critical thinking, it is sometimes argued that academic writing is the most important
language-related ability that university students have to master to succeed in their studies (Leki and Carson, 1994).

To clarify Leki & Carson point, Students get high degrees in their examinations and research paper by their impressive writing which is cohesive, coherent, loaded with rich logically ordered concepts which are free from grammatical errors.

Hyland (2006) supports Leki & Carson attitudes by saying that studying in higher education is characterized by a strong emphasis on academic writing since learning is largely mediated through written language.

Hyland (2006) further explains that students acquire the knowledge of their disciplines, in large part, by reading the writings of others. They are then asked to produce good examples of academic texts showing their understanding and perception of this knowledge and their ability to manipulate and reproduce it in a logically constructed text. Students’ success at under or graduate level is measured by their competence in their discipline areas as shown by the production of written academic texts that conform to the norms and conventions valued by their discourse communities at the level of argumentation, conceptualization and organization, as well as, at the level of constituency or grammatical accuracy. Therefore, the ability to write well is highly valued by professors in higher education institutions as it is a means for demonstrating Students’ success at these features.

It can be claimed that university practices, especially those related to the assessment requirements in many higher education courses, are directly responsible for giving academic writing its current significance in Students’ lives. That is because in many institutions, essay writing is the preferred method of assessment of Students’ academic attainment (Lillis, 2001).

These concepts of Lillis insight the researcher to illustrate that a successful written text or essay is not only the grammatically correct one, but also the one that is cohesive, coherent and logically loaded with concepts which conform to the values and norms of organization agreed upon by the given discourse community.
Lillis (2001) confirms what is said by earlier mentioned scholars, that academic writing is fundamental to students' academic survival at university level education, yet at the same time, it is the most difficult skill to master since it requires both disciplinary knowledge (knowledge of the subject-matter) and linguistic knowledge (knowledge of appropriate language use). Academic writing is not a given skill even for students whose first language is English. As these students are highly competent in their linguistic abilities, they still need to learn and adhere to the specialized language and conventions of the academic discourse, and to interact with the several contextual factors that are found in their institutions.

According to what Lillis says, it is quite obvious that writing is an interdisciplinary context-sensitive skill that depends on the knowledge of different disciplines and gradually develops through intensive practice.

Discussing writing instructions in the American higher education context, Leki and Carson (1994) state that both native and non-native speakers of English are required to take a compulsory course of one or two terms of writing as an essential component of their degree study. In the case of ESL/EFL contexts, academic writing becomes an even more demanding skill because it requires that students have the knowledge of their disciplines, in addition to the linguistic competence to express this knowledge in a manner appropriate to their disciplines' communities of practice. Normally, students in ESL/EFL contexts do not have native-like linguistic abilities; however, they are not only expected to learn the content of the subjects they are majoring in, but also the special ways of constructing an academic text according to the conventions of the individual disciplines.

To the researcher's knowledge, as based on Leki & Carson ideas, there are three language users; native or first users, semi – native or second language users and foreign users as in the case of Sudanese teachers and students. Being third language users, the researcher has intentionally decided to measure the graduate students' written performance in terms of language use at inter and intra sentential level in grammar, cohesion and coherence, besides, the subject matter of educational discourse that reflects
situational and conceptual context. Since most of the students being tested are teachers, the researcher will test the concepts that are shared by their discourse community; the challenges that face them doing their jobs.

Dawalbeit (2009) when he criticized error analysis approach, he states that in the field of error analysis, the focus of writing assessment has primarily centered on the formal classic analysis of linguistic forms at sentence level, because it is difficult for error analysis if not impossible to deal with larger units at the discourse level. Therefore, the communicative value of discourse quality of language has not been deeply considered when following an error analysis approach.

Dawalbeit (2009) adds, it is true that linguistic accuracy has been considered a relevant construct for research in EFL writings and has captured the interest of both researchers and language teachers in the field of second language acquisition or foreign language learning, but it does not solely determine the quality of a good writing. However, in assessing writing quality, Dawalbeit sees that EFL researchers in general, and Sudanese ones, in particular, need to look beyond the formal analysis of grammatical aspects at sentence level towards a comprehensive and broader way of text analysis that incorporates both discourse and grammatical features as criteria for evaluation. In recent years, however, some applied linguists have shifted their focus of analysis from analyzing sentence structure towards a kind of analysis which is capable of tackling larger units of language.

Dawalbeit (ibid) believes that any error analysis research cannot measure the written performance of the students if handled alone, despite the fact that following this approach in any EFL context is crucially inevitable, particularly, when the intention is to evaluate the written performance as a communicative product.

Hence, the terms discourse and text have been introduced as units of analysis beyond sentence level. McCarthy (1991) points out that discourse analysis has become of great interest for both EFL instructors and researchers for its potentiality to display the features which are more appropriate in the analysis and evaluation of written texts. These features include the grammatical and discoursal ones which EFL students seem to be in
need of mastering so as to identify and incorporate in their composition and essay writing. Concepts such as cohesion and coherence have been identified by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) and complemented by Martin & Rose (2003) to include thematization or thematic progression as well as contextualization and conceptualization as major standards of textuality.

As far as grammatical accuracy and discourse analysis are concerned, this study attempts to make use of the combination of the two techniques of error analysis and discourse analysis which are regarded as complementary in the investigation of EFL students' writing difficulties. It actually aims at drawing the attention of EFL researchers and teachers to keep up to date with the recent developments relevant to the analysis of language in real use at discourse level. This research also attempts to focus quite firmly on the importance of the grammatical aspects as well as discoursal features within a written discourse. These points are somewhat not seriously and deeply considered by some previous Sudanese studies on the same area, particularly, the discoursal features.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study has been thought of as a result of the ongoing complaints and frustrations experienced by some M.A teachers at Sudan University of Science and Technology about the falling standards of M.A students as reflected in their poor written assignments and tests as well as, final exams. These teachers have drawn the attention of the researcher of this study, as for his position as a coordinator of the M.A program in English at Sudan University of Science & Technology, to the poor writing of the post graduate students of English in terms of grammar, vocabulary, text organization and connectedness as realized through cohesion and coherence. Accordingly, the researcher has decided to assure this by conducting a research that measures the grammatical aspects and some discoursal features as expected to appear in their written performance.

What has been observed by M.A. teachers has already been noted by Ellis (2004) when he says that in the past three decades a number of studies have been published showing that, students experience a great deal of difficulty in academic writing skill and their academic writings continue to exhibit numerous problems and shortfalls.
Ellis (2004) explains in details that he has found graduate and undergraduate students, after years of training, often fail to recognize and appropriately use the conventions and features of academic written texts. He says that their academic written essays are vague, confusing and rhetorically unstructured. He adds that non-native students of English written texts lack sentence - level features which are considered to be basic for any written discourse.

Leki & Carson (1994) also investigates a specific discourse and sentence level writing skills of highly advanced students. They say that in spite of their exposure to a substantial amount of reading and experience with writing in academic contexts, they are, still, unaware of discourse and sentence level features of academic writing. They conclude that explicit instruction in advanced academic writing and text is needed.

This means that writing in English is not a simple task, particularly, for EFL students who are supposed to exert much effort to reach a reasonable level of English language proficiency and learn how to write.

In their attempt to master the writing skill, these students are expected to make errors as they are not native speakers. It seems that one of the major causes of making errors in EFL writing is the lack of grammatical knowledge or their inabilities to put the theoretical knowledge of grammar into practice. This makes the students unable to construct well-formed sentences at discourse level, and the result is that numerous grammatical errors appear in their written products. Since grammatical accuracy is an essential feature in writing English, it will be valuable for EFL teachers to be familiar with types of grammatical errors that students usually make in order to help them avoid these errors and construct well-formed grammatical sentences in their writings.

Dawalbeit (2009) says that apart from grammatical problems, difficulties in EFL writing may also be attributed to the discourse aspects of the language, despite the fact that he hasn’t covered all discourse features essential to a written text. He adds that EFL university students are believed to have been exposed to a variety of courses pertaining to English grammar. Nevertheless, they are still unable to produce well-written essays,
because simply they do not know how to express their thoughts or organize their ideas in writing at discourse level.

Discourse features in writing, especially those used for creating cohesion, coherence, thematic progression and contextualization have been considered as basic properties of writing quality.

Furthermore, due to the fact that assessment of EFL writing is not only concerned with the grammatical aspects but also with discourse features, it is significant for EFL teachers to ensure that the students exhibit successful performance in writing skill, reflecting both grammatical and discourse characterization. In order to assist the EFL students improve the quality of their writings and employ useful writing techniques, the teachers should be provided with insights into various features which contribute to the overall quality of writing and which need to be taken into account when assessing and rectifying students' academic writings (Dawelbeit, 2009).

According to what have been mentioned above, there is a growing concern about the falling standards of academic writing among students at tertiary institutions. This lack of academic writing proficiency means that students often experience difficulties with their studies at tertiary institutions which might be attributed to the lack of both grammatical and discoursal features essential to writing.

According to Myles (2002 as cited in Al- Badwawi, 2011), the ability to write is not naturally acquired skill, it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional environments. Writing skill must be practiced and learned through experience. Myles (2002) further argues that writing involves composing which implies the ability to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing. Students writing in their L2 have to acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques, and skills, compared with students writing in their native language - L1. To the researcher’s knowledge the Sudanese university students might have been ignorant of these techniques and skills of writing and they should have been developed.
In the light of the issues discussed above, the present study is intended to address the grammatical types of errors and discoursal features which the researcher believes that EFL Sudanese university students need to master so as to produce well-written texts.

### 1.3 Research Questions

In examining, analyzing, and discussing the research problem, the following questions have been posed:

1. What types of grammatical errors that are more common in the academic writings of Sudanese university M.A. students?
2. What are the written discourse features of cohesion that these students frequently mishandle in their academic written performance?
3. What are the written discourse features of coherence that these students frequently misuse in their academic written performance?
4. What are the features of thematization and contextualization that are poorly treated in M.A students' written discourse?

### 1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

In considering the problem of the study, certain hypotheses can reasonably be formulated as being the main outlines of the research so as to answer the research questions already been stated in (1.3) above. These assumptions can be stated as follows:

1. M.A. students' written performance reflects little knowledge of essential grammatical categories.
2. The subjects' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of cohesion which are basic to a well-written discourse.
3. The students' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of coherence which are basic to a well-written discourse.
4. M.A. students poorly handle thematization and contextualization in their written performance.
1.5 Objectives of the Study

The problems reflected above have led the researcher to set the following objectives:

1- To identify and analyze some of the types of the common grammatical errors most problematic in EFL M.A. students' written performance, using the technique of error analysis.
2- To examine the major discourse features of cohesion misuses in the academic written performance of these students, using discourse analysis.
3- To examine the major discourse features of coherence misuses in the academic written performance of these students, using the same technique mentioned above in (2).
4- To investigate the ability of EFL Sudanese university students in thematic development and topic contextualization.

After investigating these misuses of essential discourse features, as expected to appear in M.A. students' written performance, the main objective will be to draw the attention of the university teachers to the complicated inter-related nature of writing skill with other disciplines. Accordingly, they are expected to change their teaching approaches to writing and give it much concern.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Having the researcher constantly consulting libraries, he has found numerous studies in applied linguistics focusing on the problems of the students in writing skill. Most of these studies either focus on sentential grammar (morphology and syntax) or on the discoursal feature of cohesion and coherence alone and their effect on the quality of academic writing, except Dawalbeit (2009) thesis which tackled grammar and these two features without much details and ignored the most important features of contextualization and conceptualization. Therefore, the significance of this present study comes from combining the features of discourse features of (cohesion and coherence) together with the ability of the students in terms of thematic development and the ability to contextualize their topic.
Accordingly, the present study is significant for five reasons: Firstly, writing is viewed as one of the basic productive skills which university students generally need whether they are majoring in English or need it for their study and for the expected future profession. Without good command of written discourse features and proper facility in constructing correct grammatical sentences, the students' performance in academic writing will remain poor.

Secondly, this present study seems to be the first of its kind, at least, among Sudanese studies, to combine the error analysis hypothesis with discourse analysis hypothesis in investigating M.A students' writing problems. Although these two linguistic hypotheses will be dealt with, theoretically and pedagogically as separate techniques, they are often regarded as complementary. Most of the previous studies on writing revolve round either analysis of grammatical and mechanical errors or round cohesive devices and coherence.

Thirdly, it considers thematic development, mentioning the types of themes such as single theme-rheme sentences, zig-zag themes, micro and macro themes and the ability of the senior students in using thematic progression.

Fourthly, it investigates the ability of the students in terms of topic contextualization whether situational or conceptual.

Finally, this study attempts for the first time in Sudan to measure these discoursal features at the postgraduate level, as it draws the attention of the university teachers to the fact that students' written performance cannot be improved if discourse features and modern approaching of teaching writing such as interdisciplinary socialization an others are not taken seriously in writing skill classes.

Moreover, the focus on both essential grammatical categories and basic discoursal features may, hopefully, provide valuable insights concerning the relationship between these two aspects of written discourse and their effect on the quality of writing as a whole.
1.7 Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study is the descriptive analytic method. The researcher will use two tools of data collection; a test for M.A students and a questionnaire for university teachers. The test will be distributed to 50 M.A. students of English at Sudan University of science & Technology, batch two as a purposive convenient sample, to evaluate their performance in some grammatical aspects and discoursal features essential to writing. To do this, the researcher will ask the students to freely write an argumentative essay entitled "The Challenges Facing Education in Sudan". This test will help the researcher, through statistical analysis of data, to reach certain results about the students' written performance in terms of grammatical accuracy, cohesion, coherence, thematization and contextualization. The researcher chooses the free essay test because of the assumption that they are likely to give more reliable results. As some scholars like Gharab (1996) & keshavarz (1994) argue, free essay test has been found to be more suitable than conditioned test, as it gives the students a sense of more freedom. Free essay test also helps the students avoid the pressure and constrains of conditions which are sometimes have negative psychological effects on their performance. The second tool; the questionnaire will be designed and distributed to 30 university teachers to help the researcher get the teachers' attitudes about the written performance of M.A. students in terms of grammar and discourse, and hence, the researcher can confirm the accuracy of the obtained results of the test.

The most important fact is that these M.A students (the study population) do not only represent the students of Sudan University of Science & Technology, but also other universities' students. Also, most of them are teachers and this will help measuring writing as a productive skill based on accumulated knowledge and experience. For these two reasons, this case study is considered purposive convenient sample.

1.8 The Scope of the Study

This study will be carried out at Sudan university of science and technology, particularly, the purposive sample of the second batch of M.A students of English. The focus will be on students’ written performance because writing is an integral part of
university education. The study will also focuses on linguistic aspects of grammatical accuracy and the discoursal features of cohesion, coherence, Thematization and contextualization as textual aspects.

This study will be carried out in five chapters. The first chapter is an introductory one. The second chapter revolves round the theoretical aspects which details error analysis, grammatical aspects, discourse analysis, cohesion, coherence, thematic development, contextualization, classical and modern approaches to writing and the relevant literature or previous studies. The third one, focuses on the methodology, whereas the fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of data, results and discussion of the attained results. The fifth chapter covers the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further study.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will revolve round the grammatical and discoursal features which are believed to be problematic for EFL university students, in general, and M.A students of English, in particular. These grammatical and discoursal features should be experienced and practiced by the students so that their linguistic knowledge can be developed within and beyond sentence level, in general, and their techniques can be applied in writing, in particular. To achieve this, the researcher is going to trace back the concept of grammar across linguistics, and to investigate the current approaches to grammatical analysis of English as well. The relevant grammatical aspects and the major discoursal features, which affect the overall quality of written discourse, will be investigated. Later, writing as a field of the study and its methods of assessment will be investigated. To the researcher’s knowledge, EFL written performance may not be improved unless the grammatical and discoursal techniques are combined together. But before kicking off, error analysis as a classic incapable method of assessing written discourse alone, as it is restricted to analysis at sentence level, will be overviewed.

Ellis (2008) demonstrates that error analysis, as a tool used for investigating and analyzing the way students acquire a second/foreign language, has a relatively short history dating from 1960s. Ellis (2008) continues to say that interest in error analysis research has declined and today it is rare to find published papers or articles devoted solely to descriptions and explanations of learners’ errors as a result to the over research in error analysis. In other words, the efforts exerted by some researchers such as Corder who introduced, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the theoretical rationale and empirical procedures for carrying out an error analysis research, and George who published Common Errors in Language Learning in 1972, as well as Richard who published Error Analysis in 1974; a seminal collection of empirical studies of learners errors, have led to the decline of error analysis.
Nevertheless, Ellis (2008) says that EA continues to play a significant role in L2 acquisition and learning due to what James published in 1998. The publication of James (1998, as cited in Ellis 2008) constitutes a powerful defense of EA against the criticism leveled at it saying that it is difficult to ignore error analysis in L2 acquisition and learning research, particularly in writing.

Dulay and Burt (1982) demonstrate that in the field of second language learning/acquisition, researchers have been interested in examining the performance of learners in the process of acquiring a second language using error analysis approach. According to them, error analysis is a term used for identifying and analyzing EFL learners’ deviations from native speakers agreed upon norms. In the process of acquiring a second language, learners inevitably make errors. As it is said “to err is human,” it seems that making errors is normal in the learning process. One cannot learn without making errors. In this sense, making errors is seen as an integral part of learning.

Over the last three decades, there has been a wide research interest in the analysis of errors committed by learners learning English as a second language (ESL) or learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Research on second language acquisition and error analysis has indicated that errors are inevitable in second language learning and learners’ errors should be identified, categorized, and analyzed in order to investigate the causes of errors and find out successful ways to reduce errors (Dulay and Burt, 1982).

According to Corder (1981), the purposes of error analysis can be said to range from the more theoretical to the more practical. Corder (1981) distinguishes the two functions of error analysis - a theoretical function and a practical one. The theoretical function of error analysis aims at examining the language learning process and describing the learner’s knowledge at a particular time with the aim of relating the knowledge he/she has had to the teaching he/she has received. The practical aim of error analysis is to provide some guidance as for remedial teaching programs and hence, unsatisfactory aspects in the learning and teaching process can be corrected.
Studies in the field of error analysis have been carried out to tackle the problem of error gravity; that is, to determine what types of error significantly hinder communication or cause the greatest difficulties for comprehension (Arani, 1993).

Polio (1997) explains that error analysis not only interests researchers in the field of second language acquisition but also those in the field of second language writing assessment. In writing assessment, a linguistic error is usually a concern. Although linguistic accuracy does not solely determine good writing, it has been considered a relevant construct for research in second language writing assessment and has captured interest of both researchers and instructors in the field.

Despite the fact that linguistic accuracy has been a concern in second language writing assessment and the studies on linguistic accuracy have contributed to the knowledge in this field, linguistic accuracy alone is apparently not adequate for the analysis and evaluation of writing quality or measurement of writing proficiency. Traditionally, in the field of error analysis, the focus of writing assessment has centered primarily on the formal analysis of linguistic elements at the sentence level. The communicative value or discourse quality of the language is often neglected. Despite the fact that error gravity studies have taken into consideration the communicative aspect of language in the judgment of writing errors, their emphasis on isolated sentence-level errors does not reflect actual communication (Chiang, 1999).

Moreover, in assessing writing quality, we need to look beyond the formal analysis of sentence-level grammatical features toward a broader way of text analysis that incorporates discourse features as criteria for evaluation.

Due to the insufficiency of error analysis in writing assessment, researchers have turned to apply discourse features in the analysis and evaluation of written texts (Conner, 1990). Discourse analysis is a term used in the study of continuous stretches of language longer than a single sentence (Crystal, 1992). It investigates the organization of both spoken and written language looking for linguistic features which identify the structure of the discourse (ibid). In terms of written language, discourse analysis goes beyond the
sentence boundary towards the analysis of language above the sentence level, as well as, the context affecting language in use (McCarthy, 1991).

As far as error analysis and discourse analysis are concerned, this study attempts to combine the study of grammatical accuracy using an error analysis approach with the study of discourse features of cohesion, coherence, thematization and contextualization using discourse analysis approach.

2.2 Definition of Errors

Errors are defined as the erroneous use of language made by learners that reflect deviation from the norms of native sources (Dulay & Burt, 1982). Corder (1981) makes a distinction between non-systematic and systematic errors. Nonsystematic errors also referred to as errors of performance or mistakes which are accidental random performance errors resulting from memory lapses, physical or psychological states such as fatigue or inattention. A native speaker also makes such mistakes due to memory failure or a slip of the tongue. Normally, he or she is aware of those mistakes and can correct them. Systematic errors or the errors of competence, on the other hand, are errors which reflect the learner’s underlying knowledge of the language. They are significant and worthwhile to study since they reveal a deficiency in language competence and they can provide evidence of the system of the language that the learner is using at a particular point on the course (Corder, 1981).

James (1998) also has attempted to make a distinction between mistakes and errors. In accordance with Corder (1981), mistakes can be corrected if they are pointed out to the learner. According to James, mistakes can be categorized into two types: first-order mistakes and second-order mistakes. First-order mistakes refer to deviance that is self-correctable with simple indication, whereas second-order mistakes require additional information or some hint as to the nature of the deviance. Errors, in contrast, cannot be self-corrected until further relevant learning is provided. The learner, thus, needs implicit or explicit input from the teacher in order to correct his or her errors.

According to James (1998), the definition of an error is an instance of language that is unintentionally deviant. Grammatical errors occur when non-linguistic factors
militate against the use of a form in a sentence (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981). For a sentence to be acceptable it must be grammatically correct, be produced in an appropriate context and must be free of errors (Lyons, 1977).

2.2.1 Significance of Errors

Corder (1981) states that the learner’s errors are significant in three ways:

1. Errors tell the teachers how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what remains to be learned.
2. Errors provide the researchers with evidence on how language is learned or acquired and what strategies the learner employs in language learning.
3. They can be regarded as a device the learner uses to learn a language.

Dulay & Burt (1982) also provide information about the significance of the learner’s errors. They view that studying the learner’s errors serves two main purposes:

1. It provides important information from which inferences about the language learning process can be made.
2. It indicates which part of the target language is most problematic to the learner and which types of errors affect and impede the learner’s ability to communicate effectively.

2.2.2 Types of Error

In error analysis, a distinction is made between two types of errors; developmental or intralingual errors and interlingual errors:

2.2.2.1 Developmental or Intralingual Errors

Developmental errors are errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language (Dulay & Burt, 1982: 165). This type of error reflects the learner’s competence at a particular time and indicates the general characteristics of language acquisition rather than reflecting the learner’s incompetence (Richards, 1974).

2.2.2.2 Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors are errors “similar in structure to a semantically equivalent phrase or sentence in the learner’s native language” (Dulay & Burt, 1982: 171). These errors result from “interference” or “transfer” from the mother tongue; therefore, they
reflect the native language structure. Several researchers in error analysis such as El-Sayed (1982) and Kharma (1981) have found that interlingual errors have accounted for the majority of second language learners’ errors.

2.2.3 Theoretical Issues Related to Error

2.2.3.1 Interlanguage

According to Selinker (1972 as cited in Pongsiriwet, 2001), the term “interlanguage” can be defined as the linguistic system which the learner produces in the process of learning another language. Selinker (1972) points out that since the same utterances produced by a language learner are not identical to those produced by a native speaker, it could be hypothesized that there must be a separate linguistic system governing the language performance of the learner in the process of learning the target language. This linguistic system is what he called “interlanguage.”

Following Selinker, Corder (1981) calls this linguistic system “the language learner language.” He states that:

“…..when the learner attempts to communicate the same set of messages, he produces utterances which are similar to those of other language learners, they are different from those of the native speaker of the target language, child or adult, dialect or standard speaker”.

The term “interlanguage” or “language-learner language” suggests that the learner’s language is systematic and rule-governed. It is the mixed or intermediate system showing systematic features of both the first language and the target language.

2.2.3.2 Fossilization

Fossilization is one of the observable phenomena of inter-language. It is a mechanism by which linguistic features, rules, and subsystems of the learner’s native language tend to be kept in the inter-language relative to a particular target language, regardless of the age of the learner or the amount of instruction and practice he or she receives in the target language (Selinker, 1972). Ellis, (2008) defined fossilization as:
“….a permanent cessation in learning before the learner has attained target language norms at all levels of linguistic structure and in all discourse domains in spite of the learner’s positive ability, opportunity and positive motivation to learn and acculturate into target society’.

This permanent cessation or fossilization will be kept in the learner’s inter-language and appears from time to time in the learner’s performance.

2.2.3.3 Language Transfer

The term “transfer” has been firstly defined by behaviourists as: “the automatic, uncontrolled, and subconscious use of past learned behaviors in the attempt to produce new responses” (Dulay & Burt, 1982: 101 as cited in Pongsiriwet, 2001). It has also been used by educational psychologists to refer to the use of past knowledge or experience in new situations. For example, the learners may use their past knowledge of their first language when they learn a second language. In second language acquisition, it is believed that the learner’s first language significantly influences the second language acquisition (ibid). Odlin (1989) defines “transfer” as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired. Based on this definition, two types of language transfer are distinguished: positive and negative transfer.

Odlin (1989) elaborates that the first language has great influence in SLA which may either lead to positive transfer in case of similarities, and to negative transfer in case of differences.

2.2.3.3.1 Positive transfer or facilitation

Positive transfer is “any facilitating effects on acquisition due to the influence of cross-linguistic similarities” (Odlin, 1989:168). It is believed that the influence of the native language can be of great use, especially when the differences between the native language and the target language are relatively few. Linguistic similarities produce positive transfer in several ways. For example, similarities between native language and target language vocabulary facilitate reading comprehension. Similarities in syntactic
structure assist in grammar learning and similarities between writing systems will provide a good start for learners in reading and writing the target language (ibid).

2.2.3.3.2 Negative Transfer or Interference

Odlin (1989) defines “negative transfer” as “cross linguistic influences resulting in errors, overproduction, underproduction, miscomprehension, and other effects that constitute a divergence between the behavior of native and non-native speakers of a language”. In other words, negative transfer is the use of a native language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. Ellis (2008) further adds that according to the behaviorist theories of language learning, the main impediment to learning is the interference from prior knowledge. Ellis continues to say that transfer occurs when L1 forms have penetrated the learner’s inter-language system.

2.2.4 The Contrastive Analysis Approach to Errors

The contrastive analysis approach is one of the first attempts to explain certain observable aspects of second language acquisition. Under the influence of Charles Fries (1945), it gained wide interest among theorists and researchers during 1940’s and 1950’s (Dulay & Burt, 1982). Lado (1957) formulated its method and developed it under the influence of Charles Fries. The rationale for the contrastive analysis approach was drawn from structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology. Structural linguists focus on the analysis and comparison of surface structure across languages. Behaviourist psychologists hold that language learning is habit formation; hence, the habit in the use of the first language can either interfere or facilitate the second language learning. The interference or facilitation of the old habit—the first language—will be determined by the differences or similarities between the old and the new habit—the first and the second language. Based on these two principles, proponents of contrastive analysis believe that a learner’s first language (L1) interferes with the acquisition of the second language (L2) (Dulay & Burt, 1982).

The purpose of contrastive analysis is, therefore, to compare and contrast the structure of languages and identify the problematic areas in second language learning. According to the contrastive analysis approach, ESL/EFL teachers should focus the
content of their classes on areas of differences between the first and the second language and use teaching methods that avoid bad habits and reinforce good habits in second language learning (Towell & Hawkins, 1994).

The contrastive analysis (CA) treatment of errors is based on a comparison of the learner’s first language and the target language, and it holds the differences between the two languages as the major cause of the learner’s errors. The CA approach appears to provide the significant information about the relationship between L1 and L2 so that the problematic areas for ESL/EFL learners could be predicted. In addition, it can be said to effectively handle language transfer, which is a major phenomenon in second language acquisition, as it focuses on similarities and differences between the two languages, the areas in which positive or negative transfer may occur could be predicted. The predictive ability of contrastive analysis, however, has been questioned by researchers in the field of second language acquisition. They argue that contrastive analysis does not always make appropriate predictions. Not all areas of difficulty predicted by contrastive analysis lead to learning problems and learning problems also occur in other areas not predicted by contrastive analysis (Dulay & Burt, 1982; Richards, 1974). Towell & Hawkins (1994) point out three main weaknesses of contrastive analysis:

1. Not all areas of differences between L1 and L2 lead to negative transfer.
2. Not all areas of similarities between L1 and L2 lead to positive transfer.
3. Only a relatively small proportion of errors in the speech and writing of second language learners could be attributed to different properties between L1 and L2.

The above points of criticism against contrastive analysis are supported by empirical studies such as Dulay & Burt (1974) who investigated errors and come out with the results that a small number of errors could be explained by the habit formation or interference from the first language. They also concluded that a high percentage of errors, on the other hand, were developmental errors, which resembled errors children make in the acquisition of L1. Richards (1974) studied types of errors in the acquisition of English as a second language which were not derived from transfer from the mother tongue. He supported what Dulay & Burt (1974) found that developmental errors were
frequent regardless of learners’ backgrounds. These errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

To the researcher’s knowledge, Sudanese studies that could be based on CA are not numerous. One of the Sudanese studies that seems to have something to do with traditional contrastive analysis is that of Karadawi(1994) which was concerned with EFL writing compositions problems in general. He investigated the writings of Sudanese secondary school final year students who studied English via Nile Course series. The students were asked to write a composition on a topic taken from high secondary school examinations of the academic year 1983. After a week, the same topic was translated into Arabic and was submitted to be composed in Arabic. Upon marking the two tasks, it has been concluded that the subjects wrote better Arabic compositions than English ones.

2.2.5 Error Analysis Approach

Richards (1974) elaborates that the failure of contrastive analysis to make appropriate predictions concerning the problematic areas in second language learning gave rise to error analysis movement in the early 1960’s. Error analysis (EA) stemmed from the attempt to provide an alternative to the CA approach to errors. EA was a movement with a rich source of explanations to account for errors unexplained by CA (Dulay& Burt, 1982). Since CA lost its popularity in 1960’s, EA has grasped the interest of ESL/EFL teachers and researchers. It became an alternative to CA and has continuously made a significant contribution to applied linguistics and second language acquisition. Consequently, a number of articles concerning error analysis and interlanguage( i.e. learner’s language produced in the process of learning L2) has been published. These published articles include Corder (1967) which was later edited in a book in 1981 entitled “Error Analysis and Interlanguage”. These articles also include Selinker’s paper (1972) entitled “Interlanguage” which was later printed in Richards (ed. 1984) (Ellis, 2008).

Ellis (2008) explains in details that there are five steps to be followed in conducting an error analysis research as follows:
1- Collection of some samples for L2 learners.

2- Identification of these errors which revolve round the issue of the grammaticality and acceptability of the produced discourse.

   e.g. My three sister are older than me. Concord Error
   - I runned all the way. Tense Error

3- Description of errors using the simplest way of descriptive taxonomy which is based on linguistic categories.

4- Explanation of errors. This step is concerned with why these errors were made by establishing the sources of these errors whether they are interference errors (errors that occur as a result of ‘the use of elements from the mother tongue while speaking/writing the target language), intralingual errors (errors that revolve round the rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn restrictions or conditions under which the rule should be applied), and developmental errors (errors that result from the learner attempts to build up hypotheses about the target language on the basis of limited experience).

5- Evaluation of errors whether they hinder communication or not.

**2.2.6 Error Gravity and Its Effect on Communication**

With the rapidly increased interest in the communicative competence and teaching language for the purpose of communication, the focus of attention has been shifted from mere grammatical accuracy to comprehensibility or communicative effectiveness as the major criterion in error correction or evaluation. A number of researches, dealing with the judgment of error gravity using comprehensibility or communicative effectiveness as criterion for error evaluation, have been conducted (Arani 1993). Error gravity studies have attempted to determine what types of errors significantly hinder communication or cause the greatest difficulties for comprehension. Burt (1975), for example, has found that wrong word order has affected overall sentence organization and significantly hindered communication. Errors such as noun and verb inflections and articles, on the other hand, has affected only single elements in a sentence and has not hindered
communication. By contrast, article errors have not affected comprehensibility and hence they should be judged with more tolerance.

2.2.7 Views on Error and Error Correction in ESL/EFL Writing

The issue of the learner’s errors and error correction in second language acquisition have been of great interest among researchers as well as ESL/EFL teachers. There seems to be a reality in language instruction at the college level that a number of teachers have little tolerance for student errors. Their attitudes towards errors are that errors indicate that the learner has not mastered the rules they have been taught. Certain types of errors are also perceived as an indication of insufficient instruction. To these teachers, “good writing” means “correct writing” and correctness is a highly measurable feature of acceptable writing (Shaughnessy, 1979).

However, there are teachers who rebel against the idea of error itself. They argue that linguistic forms are arbitrary. They are seen only as conventions that differ from language to language and from dialect to dialect, and there are instances in which variant forms can be understood by a listener or reader. Therefore, teachers should not be so concerned about student errors (Dawelbeit, 2009).

With respect to this issue, Eskey (1983) argues that providing positive feedback for incorrectly formed language may encourage the fossilization of errors, and focusing solely on a learner’s fluency may, in some cases, impede his or her accuracy achievement.

According to applied linguists, the idea of error correction is a controversial issue. To the researcher of this study, error should be corrected in a way that does not influence the learners psychologically.

To end this theoretical part, the researcher is going to provide some previous studies that are based on error analysis.

2.2.8 Previous Studies that are Based on Error Analysis

Scott and Tuker (1974) studied errors Arabic speaking communities made in their speech or their writing. These errors were classified into thirteen types: verbs, prepositions, articles, relative clauses, sentential complements, repetition of subjects or
objects, nouns, pronouns, word order, quantifiers, adverbs, adjectives and genitive constructions. Their findings reveal that verbs, prepositions and articles were the major sources of errors. The errors were explained in terms of performance, mother tongue interference of false interlanguage analogy.

Kharma (1981) also conducted study to investigate errors made by Arab students. His study focused on errors in the use of English definite and indefinite articles. The results suggested that the use of English articles was a serious source of difficulty to Arab students. Indefinite article ‘a/an’ were the source of the greatest numbers of errors followed by no article and the definite article ‘the’, respectively. Kharma, further, attempted to explain the causes of these errors and he found that a great number of errors were caused by the first language interference. However, he also pointed out other factors that might play important roles such as wrong learning strategies, overgeneralization and inadequate teaching.

Apart from Arab speaking communities, grammatical errors in English made by other learners from different language settings have also been reported. For example Jain (1974, cited in Kambal, 1980 :53) collected data from the written compositions of university students in India. He was interested in the errors which were not caused by language interference with the aim of identifying learning and teaching strategies that could cause these errors. He found that most of the errors made were due to overgeneralization of rules.

Moreover, Jain distinguished between what he called ‘systematic’ errors which showed a consistent system employed by the learners, and ‘asystematic’ errors, which were caused by the learners’ inability to use the rule of English grammar with certainty.

Ghadessy (1980) examined errors made by Iranian university freshmen in their written compositions. The most frequent types of errors he found were tenses, articles, prepositions, word order, and lexis and most of them were similar to several reported studies based on error analysis linguistic movement. Ghadssey revealed that these errors occurred as a result of overgeneralization, analogy, incomplete application of rules and false hypothesis based on limited knowledge of the target language.
El-Sayed (1982) investigated the frequent syntactic errors in compositions written by Saudi students. The errors were categorized into verbs and verbals, articles, pronouns, nouns, adjectives and prepositions. Verbs were found to be the major sources of errors. His findings also support the claim that mother tongue interference was the prime cause of learners’ errors.

Among the Sudanese empirical studies which addressed errors in EFL written performance from an error analysis point of view were Kambal (1980) and Attia (1990). First, Kambal who submitted his study to the University of Texas in the U.S.A. in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of Ph.D, set out to investigate and analyze the syntactic errors in the compositions written by the first-year students admitted to Khartoum University, faculty of Arts (1980). His study was an attempt to contribute to the remedial English programme taught to the first year students at that time. The subjects were asked to write, as correctly as possible, on three topics. After analyzing the data collected from the subjects under investigation, the researcher came out with the result that the subjects made five syntactic errors: verbs, tense, concord, articles and prepositions. The study concluded that it is necessary to make remedial English programme to deal with these syntactic difficulties.

It is clear that this study focused only on syntactic errors which are stated as causing the major problems in EFL composition writing. As far as writing in English is concerned, syntactic errors are only part of a whole in dealing with EFL writing problems. It is, of course, well known that students’ linguistic competence, including syntactic knowledge, has a significant role to play in well written discourse. However, it cannot by itself alone provide radical solutions for the students’ writing problems, especially at discourse level.

The second Sudanese study which has adopted error analysis linguistic hypothesis is Attia’s (1990). The materials she used in eliciting data were compositions of freshmen university students enrolled at first-year, faculty of Arts, Khartoum University. These compositions were only answers to the English final examinations of three academic years: 1986, 1987, and 1988. The study focused on only one mechanical problem which
is spelling errors. In fact Attia was able to identify 4380 spelling errors in the corpus. She eventually came out with a result that spelling was a major problem compared to other research data. She pointed out three reasons which she believed responsible for this problem: a) difficulties are partly stemming from English orthography, b) difficulties can result from the students’ mother tongues interference and c) spelling problem can be due to inefficient teaching. In general, spelling problem cannot account for overall good or bad quality of a written discourse.

Dawalbeit (2009), also conducted a relatively better PhD. study that investigated students' written performance in terms of grammatical accuracy, cohesion and coherence. However, his study did not address the features of thematization and contextualization which are essential for evaluating a written product.

Actually, as many applied linguists like Widdowson (1979) and Connor (1996) argue, that description of sentences in isolation has been irrelevant to the notion of a set of combined sentences in a written text.

The present study, however, differs from the above mentioned studies as it adopts a model of linguistic analysis more suitable in accounting for both grammatical and discoursal features in the written discourse. The researcher of the present study believes that error analysis hypothesis cannot alone improve EFL writing. EFL writing can possibly be better improved through a combination of both linguistic approaches of errors and discourse analysis. In contrast to the above mentioned studies, this study adopts a technique of analyzing EFL writing based on more advanced linguistic theories, namely systemic functional linguistics and functional grammar.

2.3 The Development of Grammar Across Linguistics

All language learning researchers agree that linguistics has significant contribution to the teaching and learning of EFL as it introduces a grammatical description to the nature and the structure of English language. Therefore, it is relevant to review the characteristics of various models of grammatical approaches and the general principles which constitute the general framework of English language analysis (Dawelbeit, 2009).
Kreoger,(2004) defines grammar as a complete set of rules needed to produce well-formed structures. These structures could be structures of words, phrases, sentences or macro structures; texts. Kreoger adds that the main objective of a language is to communicate. This communication process depends on meaning and function, but it cannot be perfectly understood if it is not grammatically correct.

Widdowson (1973) explains that traditional grammarians have assumed that teaching and learning a language means teaching and learning its underlying system of grammar, since the context of language teaching is to be drawn from grammatical description. Hence, these traditional grammarians set out to describe the grammar which should serve as a source of the subject matter of language course ignoring the communicative function of the language.

It is, of course, well known in the literature of linguistics that the first linguist to call for an explicit description of language system was the Swiss scholar F. De Saussure who attempted to differentiate between what he called langue (language as a concept) and parole (language as a substance). (ibid, P: 10).

In investigating Saussure’s view, Finch (2005) remarks that Saussure approached language as a system in which words are related to each other as signs and can be strung together in various combinations to form sentences. It, however, seems to be basic for Saussure’s view the separation between the conceptual level of language (The abstract system of rules) and the substance side (the representation of these rules in actual sentences). It is important enough to say that the most significant point to see in Saussurian linguistics is the foundation of the most controversial issue among contemporary linguists, i.e. – the autonomy of the various components of linguistic system, especially syntax and semantics. (ibid :9).

Subsequently, in the course of time, the most important developments in the concept of grammar took place in America in the mid 20th century. The American linguists developed a methodology of grammatical analysis which they called later descriptive grammar and which is sometimes referred to as structural grammar. In principle, the task of linguistics in this type of grammar was to collect data of English
language and then analyze it by studying the phonological and syntactic patterns. The founders of this type of grammar, like Bloomfield, argued that a sentence could be analyzed in terms of what they called its immediate constituents; the smallest parts that constitute phrases, clauses and sentences. (ibid:9).

According to Radford (2004, as cited in Dawelbeit, 2009), Chomsky has later taken a cognitive approach to grammar, in contrast to the structural taxonomic approach of Bloomfield and his fellows just mentioned above. Briefly, this type of Chomskyian modified version of structural grammar is presented as a cognitive system internalized within the brain of what Chomsky (1965) called an ideal speaker – hearer of English. This means that in characterizing a grammar of English, linguists are actually attempting to uncover this internalized linguistic competence. This state reflects the observation of Corder (1873) when he says that some linguists view the grammar of a language as a characterization of an internalized set of rules and not a description of utterance / sentence produced by speaker/ writer.

However, in the progress and development of the concept of grammar across linguistics, new approaches have followed and they have all yielded many striking and vital insights in the natural use of language and in what is currently being known in applied linguistics as communicative grammar. Consequently, a distinction between traditional grammatical approach and communicative approach to language analysis is generally drawn by Canale and Swain (2002) when they say:

“by grammatical approach we mean one that is organized on the basis of linguistics, or what we call grammatical forms…. A communicative (or functional / notional) approach, on the other hand, is organized on the basis of communicative functions.” Canale and Swain (2002:2).

This last point of communicative based grammar is observed in the works of many contemporary linguists who advocate the communicative and contextual view of language in use. For example Bhatia (1993) asserts that the main objective of all recent developments in language analysis and grammatical description has been to understand the structures and the functions of language to communicate meaning. He adds that, within linguistics, discourse analysis has been developed and can be distinguished along several theoretical concepts as an extension of grammatical formalism. Accordingly, the
focus will be on formal and, sometimes, functional aspects of language use including pragmatics and semantics.

In the same way, Finch (2005) explains that the last quarter of 20th century witnessed the development of alternative grammatical models opposed to those preceding ones. These models, he adds, are not necessarily at variance with those already existing, but they give priority to certain grammatical aspects which other models have not primarily concerned with.

Perhaps, one of the most distinguishable and so controversial of all these new grammatical models is the functional grammar of Halliday contrasted with Chomskyian formal grammar. Finch continues to say that Halliday (1994) identifies these kinds of functions which he uses as the basis of what he, sometimes, calls systemic /functional grammar. These three principal functions which form the major components of meaning in functional grammar are: (a) the ideational function (the use of language to conceptualize the world), (b) the interpersonal function (the use of language as personal medium) and (c) the textual function (the use of language to form texts).

2.4 Discourse analysis

Going beyond the sentence level to explore the textual structure of stretch of language has led to what is currently referred to in applied linguistics as text linguistics and discourse analysis. Discourse analysis has been approached by some linguists from different three perspectives: formally, functionally and socially. The formal approach investigates how componential parts of texts are connected, whereas the functional approach analyzes how language is used in real life situations. The social approach focuses on the use of language to build social relations (Halliday, 1985 and Eggins, 2004). For example McCarthy (1991) views discourse analysis as one kind of analysis which is concerned more with the study of the relationship between language and context in which language is used.

Moreover, Brown and Yule (1983) assert that the tendency of discourse analysis for being simply the type of analysis of language in real use. Furthermore, Bhatia (1993) says that discourse analysis is the study of language in use which extends beyond the
sentence boundaries and which could be viewed theoretically within linguistics as an extension of grammatical formalism. However, the notion of text linguistics and discourse analysis seems to be more compatible with the analysis of language in use than that at sentence-level.

From another point of view, Thornbury (2005) argues that the analysis of the features of a text is actually considered to be an integral part of discourse analysis in its broader sense.

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 by which we mean the social groups to which they belong.

Discourse analysis provides information that shows who are those people taking part, and to what social group they belong, and hence their produced discourse is characterized by certain generic discoursal features that reflect the social group to which they belong (ibid).

To these discourse analysts, who elaborate on discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics, discourse analysis is based on the knowledge of situational and conceptual contexts that shape the language. Actually, there are many discoursal 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 feature of cohesion, coherence, Thematization and contextualization as provided by Martin and Rose (2003) and Eggins (2004).

2.4.1 The Development of Discourse Analysis and Text Linguistics

Many applied linguists, like Coulthard(1985), Cook(1989) and McCarthy(1991 as cited in Dawelbeit,2009), agree that the first modern linguist who drew the attention to the study of sentences in combination and coin the term “discourse analysis” was Zelling
Harris when he published an article entitled “discourse analysis” in 1952. Nevertheless, some other linguists consider the earlier call of Harris to discourse analysis has little to do with the current issues in this field. For example Widdowson (1973) argues that what Harris called discourse analysis has been referred to as text analysis, since Harris adopted a formal method to describe the sequencing of linguistic elements beyond the limits of the sentence.

The view point of Widdowson is compatible with another view adopted by functional linguists, like Halliday (1994) who has followed a functional semantic method to discourse analysis rather than that previous one which focused on sentences or text structure.

However, Conner (1996:80) in her attempt to review the history of text linguistics, says that in the 1970s and 1980s many linguists began to feel the need for new discourse tools other than those of structural traditional ones which were no longer adequate to explain texts. In effect, discourse analysis was developed in the 1960s simultaneously in many European countries like France and Czechoslovakia as well as in the united states. So, by the 1970s, Conner adds, discourse analysis was almost an approved method of language analysis and a new field of study with numerous treatments in many countries. Among these treatments are: Enkvist’s introduction to text linguistics in Finnish language (1974); Dressler’s in Germany (1972), VanDijk’s book in text grammar in the Netherland (1972), and Halliday and Hassan grammar of cohesion in English in Britain (Halliday and Hasan 1976, as cited in Connor 1996:81).

It is worth mentioning that the emergence of systemic functional grammar gave greater impetus for the rise of discourse analysis by providing new grammatical concepts like “theme” and “rheme” and relatively new discourse features like “cohesion” and “coherence”. Although Carrel (1982:480) criticizes Halliday and Hassan’s theory of cohesion, she admits that the most influential textual analysis techniques in applied linguistics has been the approach of Halliday and Hassan (1976).

As discourse analysis seems to be the most adequate tool of developing EFL students’ writing, the researcher will attempt to describe the inter-relationships between
the elements of meaning by explaining the discoursal features which are basic to the academic written texts.

2.4.2 Discoursal Features Essential to Written Texts

In this section the researcher is going to consider the features that distinguish a well written discourse from a merely random collection of sentences. The focus will first be on the concept of cohesion; a feature that binds or holds parts of a written text together and coherence; a feature that revolves round what makes a written text makes sense. Finally, thematic progression and contextualization will be overviewed.

2.4.2.1 Cohesion

McCarthy (1991:34) defines cohesion as a lexico-grammatical link between clauses and sentences within a written discourse. Moreover Halliday (1994:3) defines cohesion as a set of resources which realize semantic relations of different kinds within the text.

Of course Halliday and Hassan (1976) have explained the notion of cohesion in a rather detailed way when they published a book exclusively revolve round the analysis of cohesion in English. Briefly, they have investigated the grammatical and lexical cohesive devices that make a text hang together and create a texture (coherence) which is considered as a distinctive property of any well written text. They put it clearly that these grammatical and lexical cohesive devices characterize a text and distinguish it from disconnected sequence of sentences when they say:

“*There must be certain features which are characteristics of a text and not found anywhere............we shall attempt to identify these in order to establish what the properties of texts are*” (Halliday and Hassan, 1976).

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4) state that: Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and presupposed, are thereby integrated into a text.
Halliday and Hasan (1976: 13) mention that there are two distinct types of cohesive relations: grammatical and lexical cohesion which can be further divided into five categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Cohesive devices can be classified, as Freddi (2004) suggests, into two major groups: structural and non-structural cohesive devices. The non-structural devices of Freddi cover the cohesive devices of Halliday.

2.4.2.1.1 Non-Structural Cohesive Devices

2.4.2.1.1.1 Reference

It is viewed by some linguists like Cook (1989), Brown and Yule (1983) and Halliday and Hassan (1976) as a device which connects sentences with other sentences within the same written discourse and connects the text to its context so as to create meanings. Thornbury (2005) asserts that reference is an important aspect of cohesion and it causes a lot of troubles to EFL learners.

Furthermore, Halliday and Hassan (1976) elaborate that reference is commonly achieved through the use of certain grammatical items, namely, the personal pronouns, demonstratives and comparatives. These items direct the reader of a written discourse to retrieve information from other sentences elsewhere in the text and this is technically known as “endophora” or from a situation outside the text and this is known as “exophora”.

To add, Hatch (1992) further distinguishes two types of reference which personal pronouns can do: the first one happens when a pronoun points back to a previous reference (anaphoric). The other one happens when a pronoun points ahead (i.e cataphoric). These two types of reference can be illustrated by examples (i) and (ii) below:

I- If Cathy wants to pass the exam, she has to work hard. (anaphoric).

II- Jack asked her to dance and so Mary danced. (cataphoric).

Hatch goes on to explain that the demonstratives (this, that, these, those) are also cohesive ties and they can either be anaphoric or cataphoric. A comparative item can also
provide a tie to a referent and most of those comparatives are used as anaphoric reference. (ibid:224). According to Halliday (1985), exophoric reference is the ability to retrieve the referent from outside the text.

Modern discourse analysts like Eggins (2004) and Martin and Rose (2003) have come up with more classifications concerning cohesive devices particularly, cohesion by reference.

When the writer uses a presuming reference item, the reader actually tries to retrieve the identity of that item in order to follow the text. If the reader becomes unable to retrieve the referent, the interaction between the reader and the writer will run into problems (Martin and Rose, 2003). Those analysts go on to say that the identity of a presuming reference item may be retrievable from a number of different contexts, which are:

1- General context of a shared culture. This is known as homophoric reference. Eggins (2004) assumes that both the reader and the writer share a homogeneous culture.
2- From the shared context of situation. This is known as exophoric reference.
3- From elsewhere within the text itself. This, as has been explained above by Halliday & Hasan (1976), is known as endophoric reference.


1- Anaphoric reference: it happens when the referent is earlier mentioned in the text.
2- Cataphoric reference: It takes place when the referent will be mentioned later. (Cathy is a doctor. She works in Canada.)
3- Esophoric Reference: it occurs when the referent is mentioned within the same noun phrase. (Obama, the president of the united states visited Canada).
4- Comparative reference: it happens when the writer compares what is going to be mentioned with what has earlier been mentioned. Comparative reference is realized through the use of words like: the same, similar to, the best…etc. (kassala encounters many educational challenges such as: …….. the same challenges are encountered in Gezira).
5- Location reference: It involves the use of transition words like: here and there, as well as, firstly, secondly, thirdly….finally. These words anaphorically refer back to what has been mentioned earlier (Martin & Rose, 2003).

   (There are many educational challenges encountered in Sudan. Firstly,…….)

6- Bridging reference: It happens when the reference item refers back to an earlier mentioned item from which it can inferentially be derived.

   e.g. The writer can talk in one paragraph about how the situation in Sudan is unaffordable. Then, in any following paragraph mentions that Sudanese universities lack the qualified teachers, particularly the Ph.D holders. Inferentially, we understand that this unaffordable situation forces the teacher to fly out.

7- Whole text reference: It occurs when the referent is a sequence of actions or ideas that has been mentioned previously. To make it clear, Eggins (2004) says that the thesis statement of any essay includes controlling ideas. Each idea is developed in a separate paragraph. So all these paragraphs refer back or anaphorically to the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph.

2.4.2.1.1.2 Ellipsis and Substitution

   As mentioned above, reference is a semantic link among the constituent parts of a text realized through the use of grammatical items such as pronouns and demonstratives (Halliday, 1994). Ellipsis and substitution are viewed by Halliday (1994) as two variants of the same type of cohesive relations which also contribute to the semantic structure of the written discourse. Halliday adds that in ellipsis and substitution, in contrast with reference, the semantic relations are wording (i.e. lexico-grammatical) rather than directly in the meaning. In both ellipsis and substitution the anaphoric cohesion is achieved when something is pr-supposed by means of what is substituted or left out.
Substitution is the replacement of one item by another. The structure of the substituted item is the same as the item being substituted because it replaces the same kind of the linguistic element. It is classified into:

2.4.2.1.1.2.1 Nominal Substitution

It is the substitution of a noun or noun group. The words used as substitutions of a noun or noun group are: one, ones and the same.

* John bought the round glasses. The oval ones hurt his nose (Hatch, 1992).

2.4.2.1.1.2.2 Verbal Substitution

It is the substitution of a verb or a verbal group. The substitutions of a verb or a verbal group are: do, does, did, doing and done.

* Eastern people take this issue seriously, at least some of them do (Hatch, 1992).

2.4.2.1.1.2.3 Clausal Substitution

It is a kind of substitution in which the entire clause is substituted by words such as: 'so" or "not". So is the positive form of substitution, while the negative form of clausal substitution is realized through not.

*Is there going to be an earthquake? - It says so.

- So (clausal positive substitution) substitutes for the clause: there's going to be an earthquake. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 130).

On the other hand, Ellipsis is interpreted the same way as substitution, but an elliptical element is replaced by nothing. Thus, ellipsis can be regarded as substitution by zero (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). McCarthy (1991: 43) states that writers use this element when they assume that it is obvious enough within the specific context. Accordingly, it is classified into nominal, verbal and lexical ellipsis

2.4.2.1.1.2.4 Nominal Ellipsis

It is the omission of a noun in which the noun modifier is upgraded to the status of common noun.
2.4.2.1.1.2.5 Verbal Ellipsis

It is the omission of the verb from the verbal group.

* Is he complaining? He may be φ; I don’t care. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 171)

2.4.2.1.1.6 Clausal Ellipsis

It is a process in which the clause or part of it is omitted as in the case of direct responses (e.g. yes/no and wh-questions).


2.4.2.1.1.3 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are the third type of cohesive devices. McCarthy (1991:46) draws a clear distinction between conjunctions and the previously mentioned cohesive devices by saying a conjunction doesn’t set off a search of meaning backward or forward for its referent. In other words, conjunctions play the role of linking and organizing the relationships among the sentences of a text. Cook (1989, as cited in Dawelbeit, 2009) confirms that conjunctions are the most apparent type of cohesive devices of formal relations between sentences within a text. He adds that conjunctions contribute to the cohesiveness of the text through words and phrases which connect one clause or a sentence to another and they can generally be classified as follows:

1- words or phrases which add more information to what has already been said (e.g. and, further, moreover, add to that….etc…..). This group of conjunctions is known as additives.

2- Words or phrases which may elaborate or exemplify the information already given (e.g. for instance, for example , in other words….etc…..). This group of conjunctions is known as exemplifiers.

3- Words or phrases which may contrast new information with old information or put another side to the argument (e.g. , on the other hand, but, however…..etc…..). This group is known as adversatives.

4- Words or phrases which may relate new information to what has already been said in terms of causes ( e.g. consequently, because, for this reason….etc…). This group is known as Causal.
Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) add what is known as conjunctive cohesion which refers to how the writer creates and expresses logical relations between the parts of a text using conjunctions. Martin and Rose (2003, as cited in Tshotsho2006) say that conjunctions look at inter-connections within a text through the processes of adding, comparing, sequencing or explaining. This connection creates the semantic unity. Different conjunctions serve different purposes within a text such as:

1- **Connecting arguments:** Conjunctions are used to connect arguments and to organize discourse. Conjunctions such as: "also" and "further" show that there is more to say to support the argument. On the other hand, the conjunction "thus" tells the reader that what follows is a conclusion. To put it clearly, additive conjunctions: "also, and, further" add arguments to support a thesis and the consequential conjunction "thus" is used to draw a conclusion. These conjunctions link logical steps within a text. They are also used to organize the stages of a text (Martin and Rose, 2003).

2- **Comparing arguments:** Conjunctions that are used to exemplify are used to compare general statements with specific instances. These conjunctions are: for example and for instance. To convince their readers, the writers should give real examples (ibid).

3- **Ordering arguments:** There are also conjunctions that tell the reader that a new stage is beginning. These conjunctions play a significant role in organizing the whole discourse. Therefore they are called global discourse markers. They include; Firstly, secondly, thirdly……finally (ibid).

Eggins (2004) says that conjunctions play three significant roles in ordering and organizing a discourse. These roles are explained as follows:

1- Elaboration: Elaboration is a relationship of restatement by which one sentence represents the previous one. The conjunctions that are used to realize this function are: in other words, for example, that is to say…etc (Eggins, 2004).

2- Extension: Extension is a relationship of either addition or variation. A sentence may add or change the meaning of the previously mentioned sentences. This is done through the use of conjunctions such as: " and, also, moreover, in addition" and "but, yet, on the contrary" (ibid).
3- Enhancement: Enhancement refers to ways by which one sentence develops on the meaning of another one in terms of dimensions such as: comparison, cause and effect. Comparative conjunctions include: likewise, similarly….etc. Causal conjunctions include: therefore, because, as a result (ibid).

2.4.2.1.1.4 Lexical Cohesion

It is another type of cohesive ties which has to do with repeated occurrences of the same or related lexical items. It seems that the complement of grammatical cohesion involve a system of open lexical items (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

This point is confirmed by Thornbury (2005, as cited in Dawelbeit) when he says that the written text is made cohesive by a combination of lexical items and grammatical devices, and that the lexical connectors include repetition and the lexical changing of words that share similar meanings. However, Halliday and Hassan (1976: 282) explain that it is not necessary to adopt one exact repetition of the same word in lexical cohesion. It may be the use of any kind of what they refer to as ‘reiteration’.

So, lexical cohesion is said to be achieved by what is technically known as reiteration, which means the repetition of a lexical item in the context of reference, or by collocation, which is also used technically as a linguistic term to refer to the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur (ibid:284).

Lexical cohesion is the use of lexis or vocabulary that is semantically related in meaning to another lexis or vocabulary in an earlier part of the text. Lexical cohesion provides cohesive effect which is achieved by the selection of vocabulary. As for this type of cohesion, the researcher applied a new categorization of lexical cohesion proposed by Halliday (1985). The new categorization, including repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and meronymy. this new categorization of lexical cohesion is described respectively.

1- Repetition

Repetition is the use of the same word in a discourse.

* A conference will be held on national environmental policy. At this conference the issue of salination will play an important role.

2- Synonymy

Synonymy is the use of two or more words having the same or similar meaning.

* The meeting commenced at six thirty. But from the moment it began, it was clear that all was not well. The meaning of Commence and began are similar. (McCarthy, 1991: 65)

3- Antonymy

Antonymy is a relation between lexical items which is established through the meanings of oppositeness (Thornbury, 2005).

* Bill created a new life for himself, and he destroyed all reminders of his old one.

- Created and destroyed are opposite in meanings Thornbury, S. (2005).

4- Hyponymy

Hyponymy is also a relationship between words. The meaning of one word includes the meaning of another (Halliday, 1985).

* We were in town today shopping for furniture. We saw a lovely table. Table is in hyponymy relationship with furniture (Halliday, 1985).

5- Meronymy

Meronymy is a relation between a concept and its parts. Two words have a relationship of meronymy if A is a part of B.

* It was a canary. The beak was injured.

- The beak is a part of a canary (Halliday, 1985).

2.4.2.1.2 Structural Cohesive Devices

In the production of a well written discourse, general attention should also be given to grammatical features and structural devices, besides the other non-structural ones already mentioned above. These structural cohesive devices are considered to be the fundamental aspects of grammatical accuracy. They are of great concern to EFL learners in the assessment of EFL writing. Polio (1997) asserts this point when he says although grammatical accuracy does not solely determine good writing, it has been considered as an integral part of well-written discourse. However, many linguists like McCarthy

1- Theme and Rheme

As mentioned earlier, cohesive devices are structural and non-structural. According to Freddi (2004: 214 as cited in Dawelbeit, 2009), non-structural cohesive devices are those which are not dependent on the structure of the clause, but rather on the semantic structure across text and they include the three grammatical devices, i.e. reference, ellipsis and substitution, besides, conjunctions and lexical items. Freddi, however, continues to say that as far as the structure of the clause is concerned in creating cohesion; the formal sequence in which the elements of the structure of the clause (subject – verb – object – adjunct) occur is not totally free. In other words, in the natural use of language, the speaker/writer could start the clause with any of those clause structure elements and whatever element we decide to put at the beginning of the clause is the ‘theme’ of the clause and what follows is the ‘rheme’ of the clause. (ibid: 201).

Halliday (1994) argues that in English the clause is organized as a message by having special order given to one part of it according to what the writer wants the reader to understand. In short, Halliday goes on to explain what is brought to the front place in the clause (i.e.- the theme) is what can serve as the framework within which the writer’s main idea or message to be understood. This means that the structural description already dealt with in sentence-level exercises can simply be adjusted to discourse-based approach to EFL writing.

2. 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 or 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. 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 as cited in Tshotsho, 2006), Eggins (2004) and Tabodda (2004) introduce different types of Themes explaining their application in written discourse, particularly essays, which can be summarized as follows:

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **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.

4. **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.
2.4.2.2 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.

2.4.2.3 Contextualization: Text & Context

Hallidy & 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.
Away 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) say 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.

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.

2.4.2.4 Coherence

Coherence is a controversial illusive concept, as its definitions are varied from a linguistic scholar to another.

However, despite the fact that many linguists and discourse analysts have introduced different definitions concerning the concept of coherence which share a common core, the most comprehensive and inclusive definitions, as the researcher observes, are those which are introduced by Martin & Rose (2003) and supported by Eggins (2004) and Tabodda (2004). The researcher will now introduce these definitions, focusing on Martin & Rose concepts.

Coherence is defined by Hallidy & Hasan (1976) as a texture or connectedness which results from the use of cohesive devices. Accordingly, they believe that cohesion is an index of coherence. According to McCarthy (1991), coherence means that a text makes sense and not just a jumble of sentences that may display surface cohesive features, and accordingly McCarthy disagree with Hallidy & Hasan in terms of the fact that any cohesive text is coherent. Witte and Faigley (1981) define coherence as the underlying relations between sentences which contribute to the text theme. The researcher believes that Witte and Faigley are reasonable when they talk about the concept of coherence from a semantic point of view. The most successful definition, as the researcher thinks, is introduced by Widdosown (1979) who considers coherence as a pragmatic concept as it is related to language use in real context. He says that coherence revolves round the ability of writers/speakers to use language in real context.

For example, Crystal (1992) defines coherence as the underlying connectedness of a piece of language. Another definition is provided by VanDijk (1972: 93) who views
coherence as a semantic property of discourse based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences.

Furthermore, Carrel (1982: 248) in her attempt to define coherence as distinguished from cohesion, stresses that the reader’s contribution should be taken into account when discussing the coherence of a text. She puts it clearly that interpreting a text is an interactive process between the text, on one hand, and the prior background knowledge and the memory of the reader, on the other hand.

The most related concepts of coherence are these of Van Dijk (1972) and Eggins (2004). According to them, coherent texts make sense to the reader. Van Dijk (1972: 93) argues that the sole method for evaluating a text's coherence is topical structure analysis. He adds that the concept of discourse topic also emerged from the theoretical framework of the Prague School linguists. The topics of successive sentences can be identified in relation to what Eggins (2004) called a "hypertheme". In effect, a discourse topic, which may or may not be explicitly stated in the text, is what the text, taken as a whole, is about.

Eggins (2004) demonstrates that there is a relationship between sentences in a text and discourse topic. He goes on to say that sentence topics, which are units of meaning organized hierarchically in the text, make a semantic contribution to the development of the discourse topic.

The development of the discourse topic within an extensive piece of discourse may be thought of in terms of a succession of hierarchically ordered subtopics, each of which contributes to the discourse topic, and is treated as a sequence of ideas, expressed in the written language as sentences. We know little about restrictions concerning the relationship between sentences and subtopics, but it seems likely that most sentences relating to the same subtopic form a sequence. The way the written sentences in discourse relate to the discourse topic is called topical development of discourse. This has led Eggins (2004) to finally classify coherence into: Topic introduction, Registerial Coherence, Generic coherence and Topic conclusion.
According to the nature of the present study, the researcher is going to adopt the concept of coherence as defined, described and categorized by Martin & Rose (2003), Eggins (2004) and Tabodda (2004), particularly, its application in essay writing.

According to these scholars, coherence is defined as a kind of logical connection through which the concepts of a written discourse are introduced and organized in a logically ordered manner. Accordingly, they believe that coherence revolves round how the topic is introduced, how registerial and generic coherence are realized and how the topic is accurately concluded. As for registerial coherence, they state that there is a kind of logical relationship among the sentences of a single paragraph with reference to its topic sentence, and any irrelevant sentence turns the paragraph registerially incoherent. This is what has been defined by earlier scholars as local coherence. As for generic coherence which is also called global coherence, they believe that there is a kind of overall holistic logical relation among the paragraphs of an essay and the order of the paragraphs should be according to the order of the controlling ideas stated in the thesis statement.

As mentioned before, coherence is considered to be a significant feature of a written discourse. In other words, a well-written discourse should be coherent; a feature that makes a written text logically hangs together and makes sense, i.e. - how the topic, logically and appropriately, is introduced, developed and concluded.

2.4.2.5 Review of Some Previous studies on grammar and Discourse features

There are many studies which focused on the relationship between the discourse features of (cohesion and coherence). The result of these studies have shown that there is little or no correlation between the use of cohesive ties and coherence of a text.

One example of these studies is the one conducted by Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) who asked college teachers to rate students’ essays with respect to general coherence and then carried out cohesive analysis of the essays. The result indicated that
there is no relationship between the cohesive ties and the coherence. The study, therefore, argued against using cohesion as indicator of textual coherence.

Again, McCulley (1985) investigated the relationships among cohesion, coherence and writing quality of EFL students’ persuasive essays. He reported somewhat different findings from that of Tierney and Mosenthal. He found that one cohesion category; the lexical cohesive features of synonyms, hyponyms and collocation – was significantly related to coherence and writing quality ratings. The evidence in this study suggests that not all of the cohesive categories are significant features in determining either coherence or writing quality, but coherence strongly influences the quality of writing.

Moreover, Spiegel and Fitzgerald (1990) supported what McCulley found in that there was some limited evidence of a relationship between cohesion and coherence, but that there was a strong positive correlation between the ratings of coherence and holistic quality of writing. They, however, found that there is no relationship between cohesion and writing quality.

With regard to the relationship between grammatical accuracy and discourse organization, Kroll (1990) reported no relationship between these two aspects of written discourse in a study conducted with the compositions of some students from different backgrounds. Her findings suggested that students could produce well-written essays in bad English and poor essays in good English.

Still one more example of the studies that investigated the relationship between grammatical accuracy, discourse features and holistic quality of writing is that of Pongsiriwet (2011). The study investigated compositions of 155 Thai freshmen university students majoring in English and different other fields of science. The participants were all enrolled in English foundation program held at the university. The results of the study showed that frequent types of errors include: nouns, pronouns, tense, articles, prepositions, word form, verb formation, subject-verb agreement and fragment.

As for the relationship between grammatical accuracy and the discourse features within a written discourse, the findings of the study revealed no statistically significant correlation between grammatical accuracy and cohesion, but a significant correlation
between grammatical accuracy and coherence. In investigating the relationship between grammatical accuracy, cohesion and coherence and their respective effect on holistic quality of writing, the results indicated the highest correlation between the holistic quality and coherence followed by the holistic quality and cohesion and finally between the holistic quality and grammar.

Among the Sudanese studies which have been based on discourse analysis and which are more relevant to the present study are Abdallah (2000), (Ali, 2007 as cited in Dawelbeit, 2009) and Dawelbeit (2009).

First, Abdallah (2000) investigated the written discourse features in the essay writing of 149 fourth-year university students majoring in English. His materials for study were originally written answers for the final examination held in the academic year 1998/99. The subjects of the study were asked to write essay answers to three questions two of which were mainly critics on literary topics already taught to the same subjects in literature courses. The third question was to summarize a short story.

On analyzing the data, the investigator came out with the result that the students’ writing was characterized by a poor grasp of discourse properties, i.e. discourse cohesion and discourse coherence. The investigator also claimed that the poor awareness of the written discourse properties correlated with the overall writing quality of the majority of the EFL students.

In principle, the present researcher of this study agrees with Abdallah (2000) in many ways, as he was more concerned in his study with analyzing EFL writing at discourse level rather than sentence level. Yet, it seems there are many points to be discussed with respect to the ideas presented in Abdallah’s study.

To start with, what Abdallah identified as cohesive devices are considered by some other applied linguists, like Halliday (1994) and Freddi (2004), as only one type of cohesive ties, namely, non-structural cohesive devices. In fact Freddi (ibid:214) distinguishes between structural and non-structural cohesive devices. She outlines that reference, ellipsis and substitution are classified as non-structural, though they are grammatical cohesive devices. They are not structural for the simple reason that, in their
work, they do not depend on the internal structure of the clause or a sentence within a written discourse, but rather on the semantic structure across text.

However, Halliday (1994) confirms that, from a functional grammar point of view, the internal structure of the clauses and sentences within a written text contributes a lot to the cohesion and coherence as two major features characterizing the good quality of writing.

Halliday (ibid: xvii) continues to argue that a text is a semantic unit but ‘its meanings are realized through wording’ and only through grammar that a meaning of a text could be interpreted.

Moreover, in his study, Abdallah neglected some grammatical categories such as verb, noun, and prepositions to be incorporated in the study and to be put explicitly as having something to do with EFL writing problems. Actually, he seemed to be interested in grammatical items to be displayed syntactically in written discourse competence.

Shortly, the present study takes into consideration the important role of the grammatical features, dealt with from both formal and functional perspective, together with the central role of discoursal aspects in enhancing the EFL students’ written performance. This view seems to be compatible with Freddi’s view when he says:

“....Formal analysis must at some stage take account of meaning and function, and functional analysis must at some stage take account of form”(Freddi, 2004: 23).

The second Sudanese study which attempted to investigate EFL written performance on the basis of discourse analysis is the one conducted by Ali (2007). The investigator addressed the problem which was concerned with the use of cohesive devices in the writing of fourth-year students majoring in English at Omdurman Islamic University. The materials of the study were samples of answer sheets in final examinations at the university in the academic year 2006/07. They were actually analytic and critic essays for questions in some literature courses. The result of the study showed that subjects tended to overuse reference cohesive devices in their essay writings and the reason, according to the investigator, was due to the students’ L1 interference.
Anyhow, for one reason or another, Ali (2007) did not include the rest of cohesive devices, other than reference. The other structural and non-structural cohesive devices such as substitution, ellipsis, lexical items and grammatical structures were totally neglected. Moreover, like Abdallah (2000), Ali (2007) used samples of students’ answer sheets which were originally analytical and critical essays for some questions in literature examinations. This cannot reflect the students’ abilities in productive writing, because the essay answers in literature examinations are, more or less, regarded by some teachers as just recitation of literary opinions provided by the teachers of literature courses and have already been discussed with the students.

Third, Dawelbeit (2009) investigated the effect of the grammatical aspects and discoursal features on the quality of EFL academic writing. His data was examination answers sheet at the undergraduate level. On analyzing the data, the investigator came out with the result that the students’ writing was characterized by a poor grasp of grammar and discourse properties, i.e. - discourse cohesion and discourse coherence. The investigator attributed this poor awareness of the written discourse properties to inadequate teaching.

All these researches did not cover all aspects of cohesion and coherence and totally neglected the concept of thematization and contextualization as they are essential to a written product. Actually, the modern discourse analysts introduced new concepts such as registerial coherence and generic coherence, situational and conceptual contextualization which have not been considered in these previous studies. However, this present study pays these features much concern and this what gives it a sense of novelty.

### 2.5 Classic Taxonomy of Writing Approaches in EFL

Most of the Sudanese researchers have adopted the classic approaches to writing in their researches which, as discourse analysts believe, can help solve the problem of writing. However, one researcher in Arab and African countries who has adopted some of the modern approaches to writing in her study is Al-Badwawi (2011) as will be illustrated later in this chapter.
Dawelbeit (2009) says that writing as a skill has different types each of which is of different characteristics. These different types fall into four categories:

1- Expository writing which is organized in such a way to provide the reader with certain information. The organization of the expository writing is also expected to carefully display the logical flow of ideas.

2- Persuasive or argumentative writing which is formed in a certain way through which the writer tries to convince the reader to believe in something or change his/her mind.

3- Descriptive writing in which the writer tries to provide the reader with a world picture of a specific person or the flavor of specific place or the look of a particular object.

4- Narrative writing in which the writers usually use to tell stories or some personal experience.

Generally, in tracing the history of writing in ELT, the researcher has found that writing played a variety of roles in classroom practice and these roles more or less, were shaped by the methodologists to achieve certain teaching purposes concerning grammatical accuracy. Anyhow, according to Raimes (1987: 36) writing curriculum should center up on learners’ needs, teaching objectives and syllabus design.

However, during the 1950s up to the 1960s, when the audio-lingual approach to language teaching was dominant, students were not allowed to write free compositions before reaching a high intermediate or advanced level of proficiency through mastering of grammatical forms. Generally, writing can be said to have been subjected to the controlled-to-free-audio-lingual method. However, some researchers and teachers criticized this controlled-to-free writing approach and began to think of a free writing approach in which students could be encouraged to care for content and fluency first and not to worry about the form (ibid).

In general, there are three major approaches to writing which seem to have great effect on writing throughout ELT. These approaches are known in the literature of writing as the product approach, the process approach and the communicative approach.
2.5.1 The Product approach

It can be understood from the previous section that the teaching of writing was considered to reinforce the grammatical aspects and, in this sense, writing was viewed to be of secondary rank and inferior to speaking. This point is stressed by Silva (1990: 11) who says that the emphasis was on the correct sentences and writing mechanism to reinforce the oral skills. Raimes (1983: 6) also confirms this point when he says that during the audio-lingual method, writing exercises were devoted to structuring of sentences and grammatical processing of paragraphs.

In the late 1960s, however, a new approach to writing was introduced as a result of the increasing awareness of EFL learners’ needs to produce written language. This new approach as Silva continues to say, is concerned with the finished texts. Silva adds that the main features of this approach, which is also known as traditional rhetoric approach, is concerned with the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms (ibid).

Accordingly, a composition has been treated as a rhetorical entity in itself and great attention, therefore, has been given to paragraph components, i.e. topic sentence, supporting sentence, conclusion, use of transitions and methods of paragraph development like definition, classification, illustration, comparison and contrast, reason….etc (ibid: 14).

Connor (1996: 59) reports that after the introduction of traditional-rhetoric approach, writing became a respectable academic subject in America in the 1960s. It became a subject of research and a quite number of research journals were devoted to serve research on teaching and learning writing skill.

In conclusion, the product approach is reported to have developed the writing abilities of the students beyond sentence level.

2.5.2 The Process Approach

In the late 1970s, the researchers and the teachers of EFL seemed to be dissatisfied with the product approach to writing and, according to Zamil (1983), they began to criticize it as being more prescriptive, formulaic and overtly concerned only
with correctness. Consequently, as Connor (1996: 74) explains, some researchers began to consider composition studies as a complex cognitive process requiring appropriate strategies. She continues to say that these researchers, inspired by Emig’s (1971) pioneering research ‘The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders’, shifted their emphasis from product approach to what they called process approach. In the 1980s the process approach was already established and came to be associated formally with the two American scholars, Zamil (1983) and Raimes (1983). Zamil hopes writing should be conceived of as ‘expository’ so that writers can find ways to discover and formulate their ideas as they attempt to convey meaning. Raimes (1983: 216) argues that composing means thinking, expressing ideas and conveying meaning.

It is clear, then, there has been very little attention to be given to the manipulation of linguistic structures. On the other hand, great attention has been given to writing process and the students themselves while they are writing. This is because the advocates of this approach believe that writing is a task which requires deep thinking and certain processing through which students should have to do several cognitive operations. This last point is supported by Tim (1997, cited in Ibrahim, 2004: 52) who views writing as a combination of several complicated stages ranging as follows: a- generating ideas (brainstorming stage), b- prewriting activities, c- getting started, d- producing the first draft, e- revising, f- editing and rewriting. This means that writing is a process which can be taught with respect to these stages.

Despite the fact that the process approach to writing has enhanced the cognitive writing abilities of EFL learners, many drawbacks can be identified in connection with this approach to writing. First, the learners need much time to work out their ideas, attempt prewriting, produce drafts, edit and write. Second, this approach seems inappropriate to deal with in university examinations where time is limited. Third, it does not care much about grammatical accuracy and rhetoric aspects. However, due to all these three drawbacks, an alternative approach to writing has been thought of so as to provide EFL learners with better communicative methods to develop their writing skill.
2.5.3 The Communicative Approach

The origin of communicative approach to language teaching can be traced back to British language teaching dating from the late 1960s. Until then, the situational teaching in which language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation activities represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 64) the new communicative approach was partly considered as a response to the sort of criticism levelled by the prominent American linguist Noam Chomsky at structural linguistics. Chomsky demonstrated that the structural theories of languages were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristics of language creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. British applied linguists, on the other hand, emphasized another dimension which they saw was not well-addressed in the current approach to language teaching. The British applied linguists, as Richards and Rodgers explain, see the need to focus on language communicative proficiency rather than on a mere mastery of structures (ibid: 64).

Consequently, Wilkins (1972) proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. However, Canale and Swain (2002: 2) make a general distinction between grammatical and communicative approaches to second language teaching. They generally explain that the grammatical approach is the one which is organized on the basis of linguistic or grammatical forms (i.e.-phonological forms, morphological forms, syntactic forms and lexical forms). Moreover, they attempt to show the ways in which these linguistic forms may combine to form grammatical sentences. The communicative approach, on the other hand, is organized on the basis of the communicative functions and the grammatical structures which may be used to express these functions appropriately.

Again Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 67) outline some features of the communicative approach in contrast with the previous audio-lingual and situational methods. These features are that:
a- Meaning is more important than structure and form.

b- Contextualization of language item is a basic premise.

c- Language learning is learning to communicate.

d- Communicative function is the desired goal.

e- Writing can start from the first day and attempts to communicate are encouraged from the very beginning.

f- Language is created by the learners often through trial and error.

Another linguistic theory of communication favored in communicative approach to language teaching and learning is Halliday’s systemic or functional grammar. Halliday (1994) elaborates a powerful theory of functions of language more compatible with the views of the proponents of communicative language teaching which enhance the acquisition of language to perform different kinds of functions. Another applied linguist frequently cited in the literature of communicative approach is Henry Widdowson. In his view on the communicative nature of language, Widdowson (1979) draws attention to the relationship between the linguistic systems (syntax, morphology, semantics and lexicon) and their communicative values in texts.

However, these traditional approaches are not adequate to writing classes as they are based on the idea that all discourse genres are homogeneous and share the same features

2.6 Modern approaches to Writing in Higher Education

students' writing Approaches differ according to their perspective on the nature of writing and the focus of teaching. One of the factors that affected the conceptualization of writing is the changing views on the nature of literacy. The distinction is usually made between the autonomous and the ideological models of literacy (Street, 1984). The former views literacy as a-social, autonomous, de-contextualized skill located in the individual, while the later conceptualizes literacy as 'social practices, culturally situated and ideologically constructed' (ibid). The autonomous model of literacy focuses on the skills that the individual is required to possess in order to be academically successful. These skills are typically presented in a form of lists of functional competencies, which
are necessary for academic success (Street, 1984; Lea and Stierer, 2000). The ideological model of literacy, on the other hand, emphasizes that literacy is a context-dependent and social practice imbedded in the discursive practices of the academic community and not a mere context-free skill (ibid). Based on the above conceptualization, several researchers have discussed various approaches to writing in higher education. For example, Baynham (2000) identifies three approaches of academic writing, namely: the skill-based approach, the text-based approach, and the practice-based approach. Lea and Street (1998) also classify models of understanding students writing into three categorizations of study-skills, disciplinary socialization, and academic literacies approach.

The following sections offer a detailed discussion of these different approaches, highlighting the main features and the drawbacks of each:

**2.6.1 Skills based Approach to Writing**

Traditionally, approaches to student writing in higher education were embedded in the skills-based perspectives which have their roots in the psychological model of literacy (Lea and Stierer, 2000). This model defines literacy as the ability to read and write, or what Street (1984) labels as the autonomous model, which assumes that literacy is a psychological phenomenon related to individual cognitive skills and competencies (Mohamed and Banda, 2008:100). As such literacy is autonomous, context-free, value-free, and an apolitical concept (Street, 2003).

Proponents of the autonomous model believe that there are universalistic features of literacy such as the development of logical thought which is a prerequisite for rationality and objectivity (Baynham, 1995:47). The problem with the autonomous view of literacy as mentioned in Baynham (1995:47-48) is that proponents of the autonomous model try to universalize the literacy practices of a particular dominant group to all other groups as in the case of schooling system.

In order to succeed at the university level, students should abandon their previously learned literacy practices, and acquire new set of practices that are valued and encouraged within the new contexts (Street, 1994).
The main premise of the traditional skills-based approach to writing is the belief that there is a “generic set of skills and strategies that can be taught and then applied in particular disciplinary contexts” (Baynham, 1995: 19). According to this model, writing is seen as a technical ability of acquiring a set of de-contextualized skills such as paragraph essay writing (Baynham, 2000: 19). Other skills include grammar, spelling, text organization, drafting, and editing. Once these skills are mastered, usually through separate de-contextualized exercises, they can be transferred from one context to another, both from outside and within the university (Lea & Stierer, 2000:11). Transferability of writing skill across disciplines assumes that the contexts of these disciplines are homogenous; a notion that many researchers have contested.

Researchers often argue that disciplines are not homogeneous and that discipline specific activities do not permit the free transfer of these itemized skills from one context to another (Baynham, 2000; Hyland, 2006). Discussing the results of his case-study of writing in nursing education, Baynham, (2000) states that the skills-based approach did not help students respond to the requirements of academic writing in the various disciplines that they are asked to write about because of the differences that exist among these disciplines; thus undermining the notion of skills transferability.

In addition, literature on writing informs us that different genres of academic writing are associated with different disciplines depending on the particular ways of meaning making that are valued by the discipline's discourse community. Even when disciplines share the same genres, subtle differences can still be found, especially the organization of content and the register used in each discipline. Students are said to need more exposure and training in the types of genres that are normally associated with their study areas rather than being taught universalistic skills that may prove to be of little use for them in their academic studies because each discipline has a separate culture with its own norms and practices (Street, 2003:187).

Accordingly, researchers have argued that a more discipline-sensitive approach to writing is needed to take into consideration the diversity of genres that exist in the target study areas. This paved the way for the perspective of writing as a text approach.
2.6.2 Text-based Approaches to Writing

The text-based approach views writing as a textual product or artifact of form and structure. This approach focuses on the features of the written text and its correct production. Methods of analyzing texts from this perspective have been by examining either the surface lexico-grammatical structures of texts, or by looking at the discourse structures or a combination of the two approaches (Hyland, 2006: 5).

In the first approach, texts are viewed as de-contextualized autonomous objects that are the result of “a coherent arrangement of elements structured according to a system of rules” (Hyland, 2006: 6). Similar to the autonomous model of literacy, here the assumption is that texts are not related to the contexts of their production and interpretation, and that writing is a process of encoding meaning in a way that conforms to a set of rules. According to this approach, decoding of the written texts should not be a problem because the writer and the reader supposedly share common homogeneous practices which facilitate this process (ibid). Hyland (2006) goes on to state that the main teaching method associated with this view was the 'guided composition' with its emphasis on training students in textual production and accuracy. In addition, teachers' feedback on students' writing usually tends to focus on surface errors related to the language system. The development of students' writing ability is measured by their use of syntactically accurate structures.

The second approach, as mentioned above, analyzes texts as discourse. Although there is no agreement on what the term discourse means since it is used in a number of different ways by various linguists. However, there have been some attempts to define it. For example, Lea & Street (1998) emphasize the importance of communicative functions as a defining feature of discourse. According to them, discourse goes beyond the surface structures to include the communicative purposes or functions of the texts. This view is based on the premise that language is used for communication so the text is examined in terms of how it is structured to achieve this function; looking at the textual features not as separate entities, but as meaningfully and purposefully connected units aiming to achieve a specific communicative purposes (Hyland, 2006).
A number of approaches looked at texts as discourse; although different in focus, all of them share the common concern of exploring the ways in which writers manipulate the language options available to them to realize certain communicative functions within a given context. Discourse analysis also emphasizes that the different language choices that writers make are used to create a coherent text with a specific communicative purpose, thus they cannot be taught in isolation. Central to the notion of discourse analysis is the idea that the forms writers choose to convey their meanings vary according to the contexts (Hyland, 2006). This notion is the main underpinning of the Systematic Functional Linguistics developed by Halliday and his followers, which is concerned with studying the relationship between language and its function in social contexts (ibid: 15).

Street and Leung (2010: 298) state that the idea of function is understood in terms of the relationship between the meaning and the linguistic form. In other words, what people mean to say is realized by the specific linguistic means.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is based on the assumption that language is the most important tool of communication, of expression of thoughts and feelings, and of getting things as a universal concept of language in use” (Jones, 2005: 3).

2.6.3 Writing as a Social Practice

The dissatisfaction with the autonomous view of literacy led to a movement that has come to be termed as the "New Literacy Studies". The main feature of this movement is the notion that literacy is a social practice (Baynham, 1995; Lea & Street, 1998; Johns, 1997), and not merely the de-contextualized ability to encode and decode meaning. Baynham (1995: 2) defines social practices as “the way language operates to reproduce and maintain power relation bases as well as the ways that discourses and ideologies operate through language”. In other words, literacy has a social function in society and this function is realized through language. Therefore, literacy needs to be understood within its socio-cultural context. Consequently, literacy is defined as "social
practices that are complex and ideologically loaded” (ibid: 8). Based on the premises of the New Literacy Studies, writing is best understood when it is studied within its context since there are several social, political, and cultural factors that shape the production and interpretation of any written text.

According to the ideological model of literacy, any text is produced and interpreted within a specific socio-cultural context. Therefore, several factors influence both the production and the comprehension of the text. These factors include identity, power, and authority relations among individuals in the institution. For those reasons, it is argued that literacy can never be neutral or value-free and that it cannot be separated from the people and the contexts where it exists (Street, 2003).

Street (2003:77-78) summarizes the main premises of the ideological model by stating that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in the conceptions of knowledge, power and ideology.
This alternative model of literacy is socially and culturally sensitive because the focus shifts from individual proficiencies or deficiencies to literacy practices that differ across contexts and cultures (Maybin, 2007:515). Instead of conceptualizing literacy as the acquisition of transferable skills, it is viewed as a situated, socially constructed phenomenon taking place in a socio-cultural context that shapes the perceptions and the practices of the participants (ibid). Writing as a social practice is ideological and involves a "shift away from writing skills as an individual possession, towards the notion of an individual engaged in socially situated action" with the focus on how students' understanding of socio-discursive contexts and their 'habits of meaning' shape their writing practices (Lillis, 2001: 31). Lillis (2001) further draws the main distinctions between writing as skill–based and as social practice as follows: The skills approach views writing as an individual, autonomous, socially-neutral, and context-free activity that aims at the transmission of information and the encoding of meanings. The literacy practices of the dominant group are encouraged since they have the power in higher education institutions. One manifestation of this power is the prestigious status of essay as the default genre in higher education; a practice that has been labeled as the essayist literacy. Lillis (2001: 20) defines essayist literacy as the “institutionalized shorthand for a particular way of constructing knowledge which has come to be privileged within the academic institutions”, and thus students' inability to adhere to these practices is considered as a problem (ibid: 21). She goes on to argue that writing is used as a gatekeeping tool because it is the main (if not the only) method of assessment in many higher education contexts. This resonates with the earlier discussion of the role of dominant literacies in maintaining the status of the different groups within higher education institutions. Writing as a practice, on the other hand, emphasizes that students write for a social purpose through which they do not only construct meaning, but also construct their own identities and ideologies. (Womack, 1993).

Two approaches to student writing emerged as a result of the development of the ideological views of literacy. These approaches, as will be defined below, are
disciplinary socialization approach and the academic literacies approach which treat writing as a social practice that is governed by contextual factors.

2.6.4 Disciplinary Socializations Approach

The disciplinary socialization approach is sometimes called academic socialization (Lea and Stierer, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998). According to this approach, learning is a process of acculturation into new culture where students have to “understand the ways language is formed and the strategies that work to construct and represent knowledge in particular fields” (Hyland, 2006: 19). Learning is not viewed as the acquisition of a series of de-contextualized technical skills, but rather as a social activity that takes place within a particular social and institutional context. The unique contextual features shape the learning process and entails that the contexts where learning takes place are different (Hyland, 2006: 19).

Lea and Stierer (2000) maintain that each discipline is considered as an academic tribe and that students should acquire the norms, discourses, and interaction rules of this tribe in order to be able to participate in that discipline community.
2.6.5 Academic Literacies Approach

Similar to the disciplinary socialization, the academic literacies approach views language learning as a social practice that is governed by the discourse and literacy practices of a particular socio-cultural context. However, the academic literacies approach also deals with the issue of students' experiences in the discipline, especially in relation to identity struggle, the unequal power relations in the academy (Hyland, 2006:21), and the controversial nature of the writing process (Archer, 2006:451). On entering university, students are asked to take on new identities since they have to learn new ways of thinking and meaning making which can sometimes conflict with what they are used to.

In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of many university courses places an extra demand on students to switch between different identities required by different disciplines. Baynham (2000:17) illustrates the multitude of identities that students are required to alternate between is really a difficult skill to master.

This approach, as Baynham (2000) says, is the most inclusive and complex approach, as it tries to encourage students to acquire the culture and norms of each discipline and when they come to write they should write in accordance with the nature of the discipline they are asked to write about.

As a concluding point, writing is not an easy task and researchers are constantly trying to introduce more advanced approaches to solve the issue writing hallucination. We do not deny the importance of any approach to writing. In other words, all these approaches work together and the outcome is an ideal piece of writing.

2.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter covered the three tools of analysis which are: contrastive analysis, error analysis and discourse analysis. It also included the concept of grammar across linguistics, as well as the development of discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics. Discoursal features are detailed according to the latest developments in the field. Writing approaches as classified into traditional and modern approaches were discussed.
Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the methodology used in this study to realize the objectives set by the researcher. As this study investigates some grammatical aspects and major discoursal features as reflected in M.A students written performance, the descriptive analytical method has been followed. The descriptive method is described by scholars as a method which aims at collecting data objectively through either a test, a questionnaire or an interview. The researcher of the current study has adopted both tools of data collection; a test and a questionnaire. The researcher used an essay test to accurately observe, describe and analyze the real performance of the students in terms of grammatical accuracy and discoursal features essential to essay writing, and a questionnaire to reflect the teachers attitudes towards the performance of the students concerning these grammatical and discoursal phenomena.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study includes two main representative samples. The first essential subjects are the M.A students of English at Sudan University of Science & technology, and the second sample includes subjects who are university teachers at Sudanese universities, particularly those who teach at the graduate level.
3.2.1 The sample of the students

The sample of this research is regarded as a purposive convenient sample as it focuses on the second batch of M.A students of English at Sudan University of Science & Technology – college of languages. It is regarded as a convenient sample because those students come from different academic backgrounds. It is significant to mention that they are males and females. The total number of these students was 50 ones as follows:

1- 12 of them graduated from Sudan University of Science and Technology- College of Languages and Education.
2- 7 of them graduated from Elneilein university.
3- 9 of them graduated from Omdurman Islamic University.
4- 6 of them graduated from Khartoum University.
5- 2 of them graduated from Ahlia University.
6- One of them is Sudanese but graduated from Egyptian University.
7- 13 of them graduated from different Sudanese regional Universities such as Kordufan and Gezira universities.

Accordingly, those students do not only represent Sudan University of Science & Technology, But also other state and regional Sudanese universities. For this reason the sample is regarded as a purposive convenient representative sample.
From an occupational point of view, over 50% of the total number of the essay test subjects are school teachers with experiences ranging from 3 to 27 years. Some of them are doing their jobs as university part-time teachers.

Accordingly, the researcher has intentionally decided to ask them to write about an essay topic that will help measure their contextualizational abilities. This topic is part of their discourse community's knowledge entitled "The challenges Facing Education in Sudan". If the subjects were asked to write about domains of other different discourse communities, they would not be blamed if they couldn’t develop or contextualize the essay topic.

3.2.2 The Sample of the Teachers

The second representative sample of this research includes 30 university teachers. Some of them are males and others are female. This sample represents real experts who have been and are still in touch with students at different levels. These representative teachers have long experience in teaching English at the university level. Some of them were primary, intermediate and secondary school teachers before they joined the Ministry of Higher Education.

- The respondents are, at least, assistant professors or senior lectures.
- The respondents have long years of experience. (10 years minimally).

The following is a detailed description for the study sample individuals according to their academic status and the years of experience:
Table No.(3.1): The frequency distribution for the respondents according to their academic status:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Degree</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior lectures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table (3.1) shows that the majority of the study's respondents were assistant professors. Their number was (23) with percentage (76.7%). The respondents who were associate professors were (2) with percentage (6.7%). The table indicated that there was also a professor with percentage (3.3%) and (4) senior lectures with percentage (1.3%).

Table No.(3.2): The frequency distribution for the respondents according to their years of experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We note from table (3.2) above that most of sample’s respondents have experience over 20 years. Their number was (12) with percentage (40.0%). The number of the respondents who have experience between (16 – 20 years) was (9) with percentage (30.0%). The number of the respondents who have experience between (11 – 15 years) was (8) with percentage (26.7%), The number of the respondents who have experience between (6 – 10 years) was (1) with percentage (3.3%) and the number of the respondents who have experience between (1 – 5 years) was (0) with percentage (0.0%).

3.3 Data Collection

Since this study has been conducted to measure the knowledge of the grammatical aspects and the discoursal feature of cohesion, coherence, thematization & contextualization as represented in the essays written by EFL M.A students of English language at Sudan University of Science & Technology, their written essays form the basic data of this research. To be more accurate, the researcher has complemented this essay test with a questionnaire intentionally administered to senior lectures, assistant professors, associate professors and full professors to reflect their real attitudes on the performance of the M.A students to support the accuracy of the results and findings. Because the method which is used in this research is descriptive analytical, qualitative and quantitative data are used to facilitate obtaining the expected findings. The qualitative research aims mainly at interpreting the phenomena on the basis of understanding individual perception and mastering of these grammatical and discoursal
features. Then, the researcher supported the qualitative research by quantitative numeric representation for more precision.

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

1- An essay test was administered to 50 M.A students of English at Sudan University of Science & Technology, as a purposive convenient sample.

2- A questionnaire was administered to M.A teachers at Sudan University of Science & Technology and the part-time teachers from other Sudanese Universities.

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

3.3.1 Validity and Reliability of the Essay Test

To test the validity and reliability of the essay test, 15 answer sheets were randomly selected, then the degrees of the students were recorded for each item in the four dimensions (Grammatical Accuracy, Cohesion, coherence, Thematization & Contextualization) of the essay and then manipulated using the (SPSS) through Pearson Coefficient Factor Test (for the validity of the essay) and Alpha Cronbach's (for the reliability of the essay).

3.3.2 Validity of the Essay Test

To assure the validity of the test designed for the samples of the population at the post graduate level, four copies of the test were distributed to four experts at Sudanese
universities to give their evaluation and comments. Two of the experts consulted were PhD holders in the status of assistant professors. The third one was also a PhD holder in the status of associate professor and the fourth one was an M.A holder doing his Ph D. The experts were told that the purpose of this test was to investigate the grammatical and discoursal features and their effect on the M.A students written performance.

The consulted experts provided their views and suggestions which were taken into consideration.

Then, the researcher typed the names of the students in a list giving them numbers from (1 - 50). After that, on an empty pieces of paper the numbers were written. Then, he asked the secretary of the English Department to randomly choose 15 pieces of paper from the 50 ones. The researcher found that the chosen numbers were: 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 18, 23, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 36, 39 and 40. Finally, the researcher went to the lecture hall and asked the students to leave except these (15) chosen students. The students were anxious at first, but the researcher cooled them down and told them that he was going to test them for academic purposes with the aim of discovering the points of weakness in order to find a relevant solutions to these difficulties. They were all motivated and they wrote silently and enthusiastically.

To test the validity of the test, the researcher analyzed the performance of the (15) students and came up with the result that these students have real problems in grammar and discourse features essential to writing as the following table shows:
As shown in Table (3.3), all the values of Pearson Coefficient Factor between items and 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 four dimensions of the essay and hence, this test of the current study can give accurate results.
3.3.3 Reliability of the Essay Test

To test the reliability of the essay test, the same 15 answer sheets which have been randomly selected for measuring validity are used again to measure reliability. The degrees of the students have been again recorded for each item in the four dimensions (Grammatical Accuracy, Cohesion, coherence, Thematization & Contextualization) of the essay and then manipulated using Alpha Cronbach's (for the reliability of the essay). The following table illustrates the results of this procedure.

Table (3.4) - Reliability of the Essay Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>No of items</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha (Internal validity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical categories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematization &amp; Contextualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the findings in Table (3.4), Alpha reliability factor for Grammatical categories = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items): 0.94, thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = 0.97.
The same Table shows that Alpha reliability factor for cohesion = (Cronbach’s Alpha based On Standardized items): \(0.88\), thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = \(0.94\).

It also shows that Alpha reliability factor for coherence = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items): \(0.86\), thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = \(0.93\).

Moreover, it illustrates that Alpha reliability factor for Thematization & Contextualization = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items): \(0.72\), thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = \(0.85\).

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

### 3.3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Staff Questionnaire

To test the reliability and validity of the staff questionnaire, 10 questionnaire copies were randomly selected, then manipulated using the (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.

### 3.3.5 Validity of the Staff Questionnaire

The questionnaire was first designed by the researcher and then approved by the supervisor. After that, five copies of the questionnaire which was designed to be administered to experts and teachers of English language at university level were
distributed to the following five expert – teachers of English language as the following table shows:

**Table (3.5): The Questionnaire Referees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Academic degree</th>
<th>Place of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professor Yousif Omer babikir</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sudan University of Science &amp; Technology and other universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dr. Taj Essir Hassan Bashoum</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sudan University of Science &amp; Technology and other universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Mohamed Ettayeb</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sudan University of Science &amp; Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dr. Mahmoud Ali Ahmed</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sudan University of Science &amp; Technology and other universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dr. Yousif Ettrifi</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sudan University of Science &amp; Technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five experts were all Ph. D. holders working at Sudanese universities. The experts were asked to check the validity of this research tool and give their views and advice. They approved the questionnaire and its content. The necessary modifications were made according to their remarks and suggestions.

To test the validity of the staff questionnaire, 10 questionnaire copies were randomly selected, then manipulated using the (SPSS), through Pearson Coefficient Factor Test. The following tables illustrate the results of this procedure.
As shown in Table (3.6), all the values of Pearson Coefficient Factor between items and the total of the dimension with reference to the total of the questionnaire are positive and greater than 0.20. This indicates a good validity for all the items of the dimension of the questionnaire and hence it is valid to give accurate data and results.

### 3.3.6 Reliability of the Staff Questionnaire

To test the reliability of the staff questionnaire, 10 questionnaire copies were randomly selected, then manipulated using Alpha Cronbach's. The following table illustrate the results of this procedure.
Table (3.7) - Reliability of the Staff Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha (Internal validity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical categories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematization &amp; Contextualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results in Table (3.7), Alpha reliability factor for grammatical categories = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items) is: **0.87**, thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.93**.

The same table shows that Alpha reliability factor for cohesion = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items) is: **0.83**, thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.91**.

It also shows that Alpha reliability factor for coherence = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items) is: **0.92**, thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.96**.
Moreover, it illustrates that Alpha reliability factor for Thematization & Contextualization = (Cronbach's Alpha based On Standardized items) is: **0.96**, thus Internal validity = (Square Radical of Alpha reliability factor) = **0.98**.

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

### 3.4 Procedures

After the reliability and validity of the tools have been confirmed, the researcher distributed copies of the two tools to the samples of the population.

#### 3.4.1 The students' Test

After the essay topic has been approved by some experts including the supervisor, the test was administered in May of the academic year 2013 to M.A students of English. They were instructed to write a well organized essay about "The Challenges Facing Education in Sudan". The students were requested to take this test as seriously as possible. They were encouraged and motivated to cooperate with the researcher to make the test run smoothly and successfully. On the other hand, the researcher was prepared to do his best to make the test as controlled as possible. Actually, there was no need to exert much effort as all the respondents know that the researcher is the head of the English Department and the coordinator of their programme.

It is worth mentioning that the test was firstly meant to measure the performance of the students in four areas as follows:

1- Grammatical accuracy.
2- Cohesion

3- Coherence

4- Thematization & contextualization

Secondly, it was meant to observe the effect of these variables on the students' written performance.

The researcher has used this highly advanced purposive sample because he is measuring the productive skill.

Soon after the students finished writing, they individually introduced themselves to the researcher begging him to read their written essays in order to evaluate and assess their written performance dreaming of some part-time hours at the Department of English language.

After a careful precise investigation of the students' essays, the following procedures for the identification and classification of errors and misuses were used:

1- Each essay was given a number to facilitate easy back reference.

2- The students' essays were firstly marked out of ten for grammatical accuracy.

3- Secondly, they were remarked for cohesion.

4- Thirdly, essays were remarked for coherence.

5- Finally, the researcher marked the essays for thematization and contextualization.
3.4.2 The Teachers' Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was basically to get the opinions and attitudes of the teachers towards the performance of the M.A students in terms of grammatical accuracy, discoursal features and their effect on the quality of academic writing.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of (30) teachers of English language at Sudan university of Science & technology and the part timers from other Sudanese universities. The first and the second part of the questionnaire focused on some biographical information about the respondents such as their academic degrees and years of experience in the field of teaching. The Questionnaire was composed in accordance with the research four questions. In other words, the questionnaire included 16 questions. Each group of four statements addresses one research question respectively as follows:

- The first group addresses grammatical accuracy.
- The second group addresses cohesion.
- The third group addresses coherence.
- The fourth group addresses Thematization and Contextualization.

3.5 Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier in (1.1) in chapter one, the researcher would make use of the combination of the two techniques of error and discourse analysis, a number of operations were performed on the basis of these two techniques of analysis to deal with grammatical aspects and discoursal features as represented in the students written
performance respectively. These operations include (a) the marking of the subjects essays as well as the classification of the grammatical aspects and discoursal features, and (b) quantitative analysis of these grammatical aspects and discoursal features.

3.5.1 Grammatical Aspects

The marking of the subjects essays was the first step towards the identification of the grammatical errors so as to answer the first research question which investigates the types of the grammatical errors more common in the academic writings of the M.A students.

In order to answer this research question, each essay was examined sentence by sentence for adherence to the grammatical rules of English. The errors were identified and classified. The identification of errors was based on the grammatical rules of standard English described in the standard grammar books.

The types of grammatical errors identified include the most recurring problematic ones that the researcher believed as causing many difficulties to non-native students. These grammatical errors included: articles, prepositions, concord, double subject, word order, subject omission, object omission, relative clause, adjectives and adverbs. However, the researcher in this study focused on the most frequently repeated errors in most of the students essays, namely articles, prepositions, concord and adjectives.

3.5.2 Discourse Features and the Quality of Writing

With regard to the second, third and fourth research questions which concern the discoursal features most frequently mishandled by Sudanese EFL M.A students in their written performance, each of the students' essays was examined again sentence by
sentence for adherence to the cohesive devices (to answer the second research question, and coherence (to answer the third question), and finally for thematization and contextualization (to answer the fourth question of the research), as basic discourse features characterizing a well written English text.

The errors in the use of cohesive devices, coherence, thematization and contextualization were identified and classified according to the rating scale sheet of assessing the discourse features designed by Chiang (1999) and Marin & rose (2003).

With reference to the above mentioned rating scale sheet, this study investigates in terms of cohesion, the following cohesive devices:

1- Reference.
2- Substitution and ellipsis.
3- Conjunctions.
4- Lexical cohesion.

In terms of coherence, the researcher is going to investigate:

1- Topic Introduction.
2- Registerial coherence or logical relatedness of ideas among sentences of a single paragraph with reference to the topic sentence.
3- Generic coherence or logical relatedness of ideas among paragraphs of an essay in a logical order with reference to the controlling ideas mentioned in the thesis statement of the introductory paragraph.
4- Topic Conclusion.
In terms of Thematization, the researcher will examine the abilities of the students in only two types of thematic progression:

1- Single theme – rheme sentences.
2- Zig-zag or thematic shift.

In terms of Contextualization, the researcher will measure the students' abilities in:

3- Topic contextualization at the conceptual level.
4- Topic contextualization in terms of the setting (place and time of the concepts).

To sum up, all cohesion errors, coherence misuses, as well poor performance in terms of thematization and contextualization were identified in each of the 50 essays, and then counted to find the frequency of each of them and its percentage. Then their effect on the quality of the students written performance will be measured.
Chapter Four
Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter displays the statistical results of data analyzed for both the M.A students' essay test and the teachers' questionnaire. The researcher will discuss the statistical results as they pertain to the research questions or hypotheses. The basic research questions which have been answered here are as follows:

1- What types of grammatical errors which are more common in Sudanese EFL M.A students' written performance?
2- What are the cohesive devices that Sudanese EFL M.A students misuse in their written performance?
3- What are the coherence features that Sudanese EFL M.A students mishandle in their written performance?
4- What are the features of thematization and contextualization that are poorly treated in M.A students' written discourse?

4.2 Organization and Presentation of the Results

For each of the research questions above, the results which are obtained are organized in such a way that information is presented in a form of answers to the research hypotheses comprising statistical tables.

The answer to the first research question includes: more common types of grammatical errors found in the students' written essays such as errors in the use of articles, prepositions, concord, and adjectives; their frequencies and their percentages. As for the second research question, the answers mainly consist of statistical figures concerning the discourse features of cohesion errors and misuses such as: reference, substitution & ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. As for the third research question, the answers mainly consist of statistical figures concerning the discourse features of coherence errors and misuses such as: topic introduction, registerial coherence, generic coherence and topic conclusion. According to the fourth research
question, the answers mainly consist of statistical figures concerning the discourse features of Thematization & Contextualization errors and misuses such as: single theme– rheme sentences, zig-zag or thematic shift, situational contextualization and conceptual contextualization.

To measure the impact of the grammatical aspects and discoursal features on the quality of the written performance of the M.A students, average scores of the grammatical aspects for the 50 essays were used together with the average scores of the discoursal features of cohesion, coherence, thematization and contextualization.

4.3 The Results

The results of this research study provide answers to the four research questions and display that M.A students' written performance is very poor as they are weak in grammatical aspects and discoursal features. This has been proved by the students' essay test and has been supported by the attitudes of the teachers which are represented in the questionnaire.

The rank order of errors according to the research questions is numbered successively as follows:
1- Thematization & Contextualization.
2- Coherence
3- Cohesion.
4- Grammatical categories.

4.3.1 The Results of the Essay Test

Research question 1

What types of grammatical errors which are more common in the EFL M.A students' written Performance:

Hypothesis 1

1- M.A. students' written performance reflects little knowledge of essential grammatical categories.

To answer this question, each of the (50) essays was closely examined sentence by sentence to check their adherence to the grammatical rules of standard English. Before
doing so, the researcher referred to some previous studies on error analysis as well as discourse analysis (e.g. Kambal, 1980; Pongsiriwet, 2001 and others). The researcher also consulted some experienced EFL university doctors about labeling and organizing errors. Those doctors have advised the researcher to mark each of the (50) essays out of (20) for grammatical categories, then count their frequencies and percentages as the following table illustrates:

**Table (4.1): Frequencies & Percentages of Grammatical Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Concord</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (28) M.A students out of (50) failed to use articles correctly with percentage (56), and (32) students failed to use prepositions accurately with percentage (64). As for concord (32) students made much errors with percentage (64) and (26) students failed to use adjectives with percentage (52).

To calculate the overall percentage of the failing students, the researcher sums up the number of the failing students in each grammatical category as the following table illustrates:

**Table (4.2) – The Overall Performance of the Students in Grammar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succeeded</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (35) M.A students out of (50) failed to use grammatical categories accurately with percentage (70), and only (15) students were able to use these grammatical categories correctly with percentage (30). This indicates that EFL M.A students are very poor in terms of grammatical aspects, particularly, concord and prepositions and they should further be trained and exposed to more grammatical lessons.
As it is said by statisticians, frequency distribution and percentage do not give accurate results. For this reason the researcher adopted Freidman mean of ranks for more precision as the following table reflects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Chi Squire</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.43±</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.24±</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.18±</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.50±</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table (4.3), The mean values of student's degrees in articles, prepositions, concord and adjectives were 2.43±0.90, 2.24±0.85, 2.18±0.82 and 2.50±1.04 respectively. The mean ranks of the four items came as: adjectives (2.91), articles (2.77), prepositions (2.26) and concord (2.18). This indicates that concord represents the most poorly treated category, followed by prepositions, articles and adjectives. Chi squire test also shows that concord error is significantly the most common grammatical error in M.A students' written performance (P < 0.05).

**Research question 2**

2- What are the cohesive devices that Sudanese EFL M.A students misuse in their written performance?

**Hypothesis 2**

2- The subjects' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of cohesion which are basic to a well-written discourse.

To answer this research question, it is necessary to identify errors, misuses, and lack of use of cohesive devices which have been grouped in the books of applied linguistics and discourse analysis into four major areas: a) reference, b) Substitution & ellipsis, c) conjunctions, and d) lexical cohesive devices. Accordingly, the researcher has
marked the written essays of the students out of (20) for these cohesive devices. This could be clarified in the following table:

**Table (4.4) - Frequencies & Percentages of the Cohesive Devices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Substitution &amp; Ellipsis</th>
<th>Conjunctions</th>
<th>Lexical Cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (28) M.A students out of (50) failed to use referential words correctly with percentage (56), (32) students failed to use substitution & ellipsis accurately with percentage (64). As for conjunctions (32) students made much errors with percentage (64) and (26) students failed to use lexical cohesion with percentage (52).

This indicates that EFL M.A students are very poor in terms of cohesive devices, particularly, substitution, ellipsis and lexical cohesion. Discourse analysis teachers who teach writing at Sudanese universities should train the students to use these cohesive devices by exposing them to much exercises using innovative teaching methods. In other words, the teachers should provide the students with variant texts to underline the cohesive devices and determine their types, or to ask them to write essays including cohesive devices such as comparative reference, bridging reference or whole text reference,…etc.

The researcher has 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 (4.5) below shows the results of M.A students' performance in the discoursal features of cohesion as appears in their written essays:
Table (4.5) – The Overall Performance of the Students in Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succeeded</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (37) M.A students out of (50) misused the discourse feature of cohesion with percentage (74), and only (13) students were able to use these sub-features of cohesion correctly with percentage (26).

For more precision Freidman mean of Ranks is used as the following table illustrates:

Table (4.6) - Freidman mean of Ranks Results for Cohesive Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Chi Squire</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>±0.57</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>39.87</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution &amp; Ellipsis</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>±0.80</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>±0.85</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Cohesion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>±0.90</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table (4.6), the mean values of student's degrees in cohesive devices were 2.50±0.50, 2.38±0.90, 2.35±0.85 and 1.90±0.57 for substitution and ellipsis, lexical cohesion, conjunctions and reference, respectively. The mean ranks of the four devices came as: substitution and ellipsis (3.03), lexical cohesion (2.68), conjunctions (2.67) and reference (1.62), which indicates that the reference is the most misused cohesive device followed by conjunction, lexical cohesion, and substitution and ellipsis. Chi squire test also shows that reference is significantly the most common misused cohesive device by Sudanese EFL M.A students (P < 0.05).

Research question 3

3- What are the coherence features that Sudanese EFL M.A students mishandle in their written performance?

Hypothesis 3

3- The students' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of coherence which are basic to a well-written discourse.
To answer this research question, it is necessary to identify errors, misuses, and lack of use of coherence, which have been grouped in the modern books of applied linguistics and discourse analysis into four major areas: a) topic introduction, b) registerial coherence, c) generic coherence, and d) topic conclusion. Accordingly, the researcher has marked the written essays of the students out of (20) for coherence features. This could be clarified in the following table:

Table (4.7) - Frequencies & Percentages of Coherence Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Topic introduction</th>
<th>Registerial coherence</th>
<th>Generic coherence</th>
<th>Topic conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (34) M.A students out of (50) ones failed to introduce their topic correctly with percentage (64), and (42) students failed to use registerial coherence accurately with percentage (84). As for generic coherence (46) students misused it with percentage (92) and (38) students failed to conclude their topic with percentage (76).

The researcher has 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 (4.8) below shows the results of M.A students' performance in the discoursal features of coherence as appears in their written essays:

Table (4.8) – Students' General performance in the Discoursal Features of Coherence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that (43) students misused the discourse feature of coherence with percentage (86) and only (7) students were able to write coherent text with percentage (14). This indicates that the third research hypothesis have come true. For more reliable and accurate results, Freidman mean of ranks was used as the following table shows:

**Table (4.9) - Freidman mean of Ranks Results for Coherence Sub-Features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Chi Squire</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic Introduction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>±0.81</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registeral Coherence</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>±0.66</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Coherence</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>±0.58</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Conclusion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>±0.91</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table (4.9) above, the mean values of student's degrees in coherence sub-features in essays written by M.A students were 2.11±0.91, 1.92±0.58, 1.35±0.66 and 1.18±0.81 for topic conclusion, generic coherence, registerial coherence and topic introduction, respectively. The mean ranks of the four features came as: topic conclusion (3.49), generic coherence (3.03), registerial coherence (1.80) and topic conclusion (1.68), which indicates that the topic introduction is the most mishandled coherence feature followed by registerial coherence, generic coherence, and topic conclusion. Chi square test also shows that topic introduction is significantly the most common mishandled coherence feature by Sudanese EFL M.A students in their written performance (P < 0.05).

**Research question 4**

4- What are the features of Thematization & Contextualization that are poorly treated in M.A students' written performance?

**Hypothesis 4**

4- M.A. students poorly handle thematization and contextualization in their written performance.
To answer this research question, it is necessary to identify errors, misuses, and lack of use of Thematization which have been grouped into: single theme, topical theme, macro theme, micro single theme, hyper theme, textual theme, zigzag theme; and contextualization which revolve round many factors such as situational and conceptual contextualization. Since the students under investigation are neither native nor ESL, the researcher has investigated their performance in two types of themes namely: single theme - rheme and zig-zag or thematic shift. As for contextualization, the researcher investigated the students performance in terms of conceptual contextualization and situational contextualization. The following table illustrates this.

Table (4.10)- Frequencies & Percentages of Thematization and Contextualization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Single theme-rheme sentences</th>
<th>Zig-zag or Thematic shift</th>
<th>Conceptual Contextualization</th>
<th>Situational Contextualization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that (26) M.A students out of (50) ones failed to use single theme-rheme sentences correctly with percentage (52), and (50) students failed to use zig-zag themes accurately with percentage (100). As for conceptual contextualization, (40) students made much errors with percentage (80) and (38) students failed to reflect situational contextualization with percentage (76).

The researcher has 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.

The table (4.11) below shows the results of M.A students' performance in the discoursal features of Thematization and Contextualization as appears in their written essays:

Table (4.11) – Students' performance in the Discoursal Features of Thematization and Contextualization:
The above table shows that (48) students misused the discourse features of Thematization and Contextualization with percentage (96.0) and only (2) students were able to thematize and contextualize their essays with percentage (14). This indicates that the fourth research hypothesis have come true.

To verify the accuracy of frequency and percentage calculation, Freidman mean of Ranks was used. The following table illustrates this:

### Table (4.12) - Freidman mean of Ranks Results for Thematization and Contextualization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Chi Squire</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Theme-Rheme</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>125.47</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zigzag or Thematic Shift</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Contextualization</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Contextualization</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table (4.12), the mean values of student's degrees in thematization and contextualization features as reflected in their written performance 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 indicates that conceptual contextualization is the most poorly treated feature followed by Zigzag or thematic shift, single theme-rheme, and situational contextualization. Chi squire test confirms that conceptual contextualization is significantly the most poorly treated thematization and contextualization feature by Sudanese EFL M.A students in their written performance (P < 0.05).
4.3.2 Summary of the Results for grammatical aspects and discoursal Features

Table (4.13) - The Overall Results of the four Variables and Their Impact on the Quality of the M.A. Students' Written Performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Chi Squire</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Accuracy</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.35</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>73.46</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematization &amp; Contextualization</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table (4.13), the mean values of student's degrees in each dimension of the essay were 9.35±3.26, 9.13±3.27, 6.56±1.73 and 6.38±1.79 for grammatical categories, cohesion devices, coherence features, thematization and contextualization respectively. The mean ranks of the four features came as : (3.27) for grammatical categories, (3.26) for cohesive devices, (1.74) for coherence features and (1.73) for thematization and contextualization. This indicates that the most common problems in essay writing could be ordered as: thematization and contextualization, coherence features, cohesion devices and grammatical categories.

4.3.3 Discussion and Interpretation of the Test Results

4.3.3.1 Grammatical Errors:

Discussing the grammatical errors found in the corpus, the researcher would try to interpret by giving some reasons and justifications with respect to the first research question which concerns the common grammatical errors occurring in the essays written by M.A students of English. It has been mentioned earlier in (4.3) that the grammatical errors which frequently occur in the essays of the subjects are the same as those found in other previous studies on the same area.

With regard to the causes of the grammatical errors found in this study, the researcher does not adopt one particular approach in his attempt to account for these
errors. Therefore, possible causes may be proposed according to the nature of the error examined.

One possible source of these errors may be the influence (interference) of the mother tongue language. Another source of these errors may be the use of unsuitable learning or teaching strategies. Some other sources of errors may be clearly explained as due to false analogy within English.

The researcher while marking the essay test of the students for adherence of grammatical accuracy, he found many grammatical errors including: articles, prepositions, tense and aspect, concord, word order, double subjects, verb omission, modal verbs usage, relative clauses, adverbs and adjectives, as well as some mechanical errors such as spelling mistakes and capitalization errors. However, he focused on the most common ones in the essays of the students which include: articles, prepositions, concord and adjectives.

4.3.3.2 Errors in the use of articles:

The students essays are loaded with misuses of articles. These misuses of articles can generally be attributed to mother-tongue interference as well as learning strategies. The following examples illustrate how the wrong omission or insertion of the definite article "the" and indefinite article "a" has appeared in the subjects' essays.

1- Education represent … great challenge…………………..
2- a lot of subjects are not needed and others are not find a good teachers.
3- the pupils and the students their desire to go the institutions and to the schools.
4- It is very difficult to learn …. Foreign language in sudan because…………..
5- …… because …aim of my writing is to talk about…..

The omission of the indefinite articles in examples No. (1) and (4) can be explained as due to the interference of the mother-tongue language. In fact, in both classical Arabic rules which these students have learned at school, or Sudanese colloquial Arabic, which is naturally acquired as a mother-tongue, there is no morpheme or indefinite article corresponding to that one in English. In example No. (2), this student has inserted the indefinite article (a) followed by a plural noun (teachers). according to
English grammar, the indefinite article never comes before plural nouns. This error may be attributed to ignorance of rule restrictions, or overgeneralization. In example No. (3), this student has erroneously inserted two definite articles in context which requires a use of zero article.

Another error in the use of articles is the omission of the definite article in contexts where its presence is obligatory, as in example No. (5).

These errors of the omission of the definite article can hardly be attributed to the interference of the mother-tongue language because there is a corresponding morpheme for the definite article in Arabic and the use of it would have been necessary as it is in English. Hence, one possible explanation for this case may be due to certain learning strategies resulted in uncertainty experienced by the subjects of this study about the correct use of definite articles. It can also be attributed to inadequate teaching.

It is quite clear that these students in the above five examples, have committed other un-analyzed errors in this study rather than articles' errors such as: errors in tense and concord, as well as, mechanical errors of spelling and capitalization.

4.3.3.3 Errors in the Use of Prepositions

The erroneous substitution of one preposition for another constitutes the majority of the prepositions' errors committed by the subjects under investigation. This has resulted in grammatical constructions of little semantic sense and some times of no meaning in certain contexts.

The following samples which are also extracted from the students' essays show the misuses of prepositions of place, of time relations as well as, the prepositions following certain verbs:

1- Education at Sudan is very……………………………………

2- If you moved to Gebeish on the west of sudan you……………..

3- in that time, when wadi saydna and hantoub schools were found……

4- The best envirment on Sudan are not available.

5- …………… has a big effect in……………………………

6- the government insisted in destroying the good schools.
In examples No. (1) and (2), the preposition (in) should have been used instead of (at, on) successively, to indicate place. In example No. (3), the preposition (at) should be used to indicate time relationship. These prepositions have erroneously been substituted. In example No. (4), the preposition (in) should have been used instead of (on), as the conventionalized rule dictates using the preposition (in) with countries.

In examples No. (5) and (6), the preposition (on) should have been used instead of (in), as the rule necessitates using the preposition (on) after the noun: "effect" and the verb "insist".

The reasons behind these misuses of these prepositions can hardly be attributed to the mother-tongue interference. The possible source of these errors may be due to inadequate teaching or poor learning strategies.

It is quite clear that M.A students of English are still in need of being exposed to more lectures concerning the use of prepositions. The lectures should also be supported with much practice.

4.3.3.4 Concord Errors

Concord errors represents the third grammatical errors committed by M.A students of English. Some of these errors concern subject – verb agreement. There are also errors in the use of plural and singular nouns after the demonstrative pronouns such as: 'this", "that", " these' and 'those'.

To start with, one common concord error involves the omission of third person singular morpheme (s) with the singular subjects as the following examples illustrate:
1- Education represent great challenge.
2- The challenge that face education always is the shortage ……

Also, there are some other problems of concord with the verb to "BE" as has appeared in the subjects' written essays. The following examples illustrate this type of errors:
1- The methods of teaching is very weak.
2- There is no plans that the ministry of teachers follow.
3- The Sudanese university are very poor and they are getting poor.
4- These problem are maded by the government.
5- A lot of subject are not needed.

In the fourth example, this student has done two types of grammatical errors. The first is concord error and the second is tense error attributed to overgeneralization of the past tense inflectional morphemes, as well as the confusion between regular and irregular form of the verb in the past. This bad usage resulted in using double inflectional morphemes of past participle tense, i.e. the students used the both past participle tense's inflectional morphemes of regular and irregular verbs. The correct use should only be "made" as the verb is irregular. Despite the fact that tense errors are not common in the subjects' essays compared with other grammatical errors, but the researcher has reflected it in this study to be avoided later. It is very much pleasing that the student understands passivizational rules.

4.3.3.5 Adjective Errors

Adjective errors represent the fourth grammatical errors. The subjects under this investigation, have used nouns or other different parts of speech in place of adjectives. This means that they lack the knowledge of the rules of derivational morphology that are used to change parts of speech as the nature and position of the constituent dictates. Also, syntactic rules that order the constituents of a sentence are also ignored by these students. The following examples illustrate these errors:

1- There are many economics problems.

2- ……. and the teachers need science training.

3- ….. is that there are no experience teachers.

The above examples show that these students have real problems in the use of adjectives. In the first example, the student should have omitted the morpheme "s" of nominalization, and add the derivational morpheme "ic "or ical" to form the adjective. In the second example, this student should have used "scientific" instead, and the third student should have used "experienced" by adding "ed" to form the adjective.
To sum up, these students have real problems in grammatical categories which may be attributed to mother-tongue interference, overgeneralization of the rules or restricted incomplete applications of the rule. Moreover these errors may be attributed to poor learning strategies adopted by the learners or, inadequate teaching. However, these learners should further be exposed to more lectures in grammar accompanied by more exercises before these errors get fossilized.

4.3.4 Cohesion Errors

As has been mentioned earlier, for a text to be cohesive, certain cohesive devices should accurately be used. These devices include: reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. The researcher will introduce some examples of the errors and misuses of these cohesive devices providing some justifications for their occurrence in the students' written essays.

4.3.4.1 Reference Errors

Referential cohesive devices' errors were so common in the students written essays. These errors were in the use of endophoric reference through the use of personal and demonstrative pronouns (cataphorically or anaphorically). The students' written essays lack comparative reference, bridging reference, whole text reference and esophoric reference which occurs when the referent occurs in the phrase immediately following the presuming referent item, that is, within the same nominal phrase, or comparative reference when the identity of the presumed item is retrieved because an item with which it is being compared has earlier been mentioned using connectors such as: the same, the best, and comparing this with what has been mentioned in the above paragraph. The written essays also lack homophoric reference which is derived from the shared context of culture and exophoric reference which is derived from the context of shared situation. Moreover, the essays written by the students did not represent any kind of whole text reference which entails the reference is a sequence of events or actions mentioned in earlier paragraphs. There is also no representation of bridging reference which occurs when the presuming reference item refers back to an earlier item from which it can be inferentially derived.
These misuses and poor use of referential cohesion can be attributed to many reasons such as: inadequate teaching and the students' dependence on spoon feeding, i.e. they are not inclined to knowledge searching.

Actually, the majority of the students have used reference by pronouns erroneously and redundantly duplicating the presupposed and presupposing items as the following example illustrate:

* The challenges they are used by the government destroy education and make the students hate education.

In terms of whole text reference or bridging reference most of the essays are too poor. Generally speaking, the students unawareness of English reference, as has been observed, affects the communicative value of their written essays in three ways:

1- Redundancy of referential forms.

2- Absence of referential forms.

3- Carelessness of using referential forms.

**4.3.4.2 Substitution and Ellipsis Errors**

Substitution, as has been defined earlier, is the replacement of the nominal, verbal or clausal constituents by words such as ( "one, ones" for nominal substitution, "do, does, did" for verbal and "so" for clausal substitution. Ellipsis, on the other hand is a kind of substitution by zero.

Most of the essays written by the students lack the cohesive devices of substitution and ellipsis. This may be attributed to their poor knowledge and in adequate teaching. It is very much necessary that these students should be trained and developed in terms of cohesion by substitution and ellipsis.

**4.3.4.3 Conjunction Errors**

The essay test was to write an argumentative essay which is defined as an essay in which one agrees or disagrees with an issue using reasons to support one's opinion. The goal in an argumentative essay is to convince the readers that the opinion is right.
Since this essay is an argumentative one, the researcher expected these students to use various kinds of conjunctions to convince and help the readers smoothly and logically run through the paragraphs of the essay such as: firstly, secondly, finally. Exemplifiers, explanation, elaboration, reasoning, reinforcement, extension and adversative conjunctions were also expected to be found in their essays.

However, most of the students' essays were incohesive due to fewer or erroneous use of cohesive devices of conjunctions. This may be attributed to many factors. Firstly, writing skill courses which are taught during the undergraduate stage do not pay great attention to conjunctions, i.e. conjunctions are not adequately taught or practiced. Separate lectures should be allotted for conjunctions; their types, usage and practice.

4.3.4.4 Lexical Cohesion Errors

The researcher of this study has expected that M.A students of English can use lexical items such as: synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms,, collocates, myronyms, reiterated words, and lexical chains. However, these students were unable to use these lexical items adequately, and if and when they were used, they were erroneously used. The most embarrassing lexical errors is that one of the students has used: "ministry of teachers" instead of saying ministry of education.

These errors could be attributed to inadequate teaching in the courses of semantics and "vocabulary", as well as poor learning strategies.

To sum, these students need to be developed and improved in cohesive devices through the courses of grammar, writing skills, vocabulary in use, semantics and discourse analysis. This should be supported with successful learning strategies.

4.3.5 Coherence Misuses

Lack of coherence is another major difficulty that the researcher has observed in most of the essays written by M.A students. This has been approved by the statistical analysis results.

Coherence is defined by Cook (1989), as the quality of being meaningful. Halliday & Hassan (1989), say that coherence is realized when the text hang together creating
texture. Martin & Rose (2003) and Eggins (2004), as mentioned earlier, defines coherence as a logical connection among the constituent parts of a text or an essay creating a unified whole, and they have elaborated that for a text or an essay to be coherent; the topic should be appropriately introduced, and there should be logical connection among the sentences of a single paragraph (registerial or micro coherence), and there should be logical order and connection among the paragraphs of an essay according to the order of the controlling ideas of the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph (generic or macro coherence), and accordingly, the topic should be appropriately and properly concluded.

4.3.5.1 Errors of Topic Introduction

The researcher has expected that these students, as they are postgraduate students, could start their essays with an introductory paragraph that attracts the attention of the readers by introducing this educational topic in a manner that suits M.A students. The researcher also expected them to write a clear thesis statement that contains a number of challenges that face education only in Sudan, and provide the reader with information concerning the issues that will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs in a logical order. Contrary to what has been expected, most of the students have not started their essays with an introductory paragraphs. They instead starting talking in one sentence about politics, and in another one about historical points such as independence and colonization as well as the Sudanese schools which were closed down. Others have directly, after saying that there are many challenges facing education in Sudan, talked about Rufaa school and Ahfad University for women mentioning the pioneers of education at that time and ended by saying that education now is getting worse. Actually there in no challenge that is being discussed in their essays. The strange thing is that they say there are many challenges but they have talked about none. These disjoined sentences create incoherent text causing some confusion to the reader.

4.3.5.2 Registerial Coherence

Registerial coherence, as defined by some discourse analysts, is the ability to construct logically related sentences in a paragraph with reference to the topic sentence.
Most of the students were unable to write a unified paragraph, due to their inabilities to support and abide by the topic sentence. These students have talked about many challenges in one paragraph which makes their paragraphs lack registerial coherence.

4.3.5.3 Generic Coherence

Generic or macro coherence as defined earlier, is a kind of logical connection among the paragraphs of an essay. The number of the challenges stated in the thesis statement determines the number of the supporting paragraphs in a logical order as ordered in it. Then, each paragraph should logically develop only one challenge. However, a large number of the students as the mentioned statistical figures show, misused generic coherence. If the topic is not logically introduced, neither registerial nor generic coherence will be realized. This will make it difficult for the reader to decipher the students' argument.

These misuses indicate that these students are not perfectly taught, and the learning strategies they adopt are not helpful.

4.3.5.4 Topic Conclusion

As Eggins (2004) states, the conclusion of an essay should state memorable fact, final thought or pose a question, there is little need to repeat or summarize what the readers have just read.

Most of the essays written by the students were badly concluded. Others were left without conclusions. This indicates that these students lack writing skill techniques, particularly paragraphs and essays. Moreover, they lack the knowledge and practice of coherence as a discoursal feature.

4.3.6 Thematization & Contextualization

4.3.6.1 Thematization

As earlier defined, a single theme is the point of departure or the old information usually in a form of nominal group. This theme should be complemented by a rheme as new information in form of verbal phrase.

e.g. Water consists of H2O.

To understand H2o 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, zig-zag theme. As these students are EFL ones and they have been expected to be poor in thematic realization, the researcher has exclusively tested them in two types of themes: Single theme-rheme sentences and Zig-zag or thematic shift. The bitter fact is that their written essays were full of fragments and run-on sentences. These two writing errors have lead to thematic misuses.

4.3.6.2 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.

The major problem that the researcher has observed in the essays written by the students while marking the tests was their inability to contextualize their topic. The researcher has noticed as the results reveal that most of the students completely failed to contextualize their topic.

Firstly, to contextualize their topic, the students should have, in the first place, restricted their essays' thesis statement to some or all the challenges that encounter only education. Then, each challenge, whether economical (which has forced the qualified experts to leave their country crating generation gap), academic or political should be developed or talked about in a single paragraph according to the order of the challenges in the theses statements, and this is known as conceptual contextualization.

Secondly, they should situation ally contextualize their topic by talking about the challenges that particularly face Sudan and not any other country. However a large number of the students were unable to contextualize their essay topic due to lack of knowledge and poor teaching approaches.

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, we as teachers, adopt the classical methods of teaching writing, e.g., process
approach, product approach and the latest one according to our believe; the communicative approach. However, these contextual information would be perfectly applied in writing, if the teachers adopt the modern literacy teaching approaches such as: socialization, academic or interdisciplinary socialization approaches. For more information refer to chapter two.

What the students should have done to contextualize their essay topic, is that they should have asked themselves some questions: Are there any challenges 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. Some of them have not 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 challenges 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 most of them 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 fail 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.

To conclude, M.A students' written performance is very poor in terms of cohesion for many reasons:
1- The students were not adequately taught English writing skill and the related courses.
2- At the university level, the teachers do not abide by the course description that they should follow; and if they do, they do not teach in details. What add injury to insult is that they are still stucked to the traditional teaching approaches. Therefore, the students are ignorant of both the concept of contextualization and its importance.
3- As observed, the teachers are de-motivated and indifferent because they are mentally occupied by thinking of flying out.
4- The learners are also indifferent, they have one dream; just to finish their study and not how to finish it.
5- According to point No. (4), they do not adopt successful leaning strategies.

4.4 The Results of The Staff Questionnaire

A questionnaire has been designed to collect data from senior teachers of English at some Sudanese universities. The aim has been to reflect their attitudes about the impact of the grammatical aspects and discoursal features on the quality of the students' written performance. (See Appendix 1). This questionnaire was designed in accordance with Likert's 5-point scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree). It is worth mentioning that the final modified and amended version of the questionnaire has been accredited after discussion and consultation with senior teachers of English. Moreover, the validity of the questionnaire was examined by a number of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was statistically calculated, and the result of this calculation indicated that the reliability of the questionnaire was within the acceptable range. Keeping in mind that there is no rule for the optimal size, but there is minimal size, 30 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the university teachers of English who teach at Sudanese universities at the graduate level in order to collect data that reflect their attitudes about the written performance of the M.A students in terms of
grammatical and discoursal features. The researcher has statistically analyzed the collected 30 copies of the questionnaire using the programme statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The researcher come up with some results. The answers to the following questions represents the obtained results.

**Research Question 1**

*What are the university teachers’ attitudes towards the written performance of M.A students in terms of grammatical accuracy?*

To answer this question, the researcher has calculated the percentages, means and relative weights of the staff answers on the items of this dimension and the following table illustrates this procedure.

**Table (4.14) - Staff Attitudes towards the Mishandled Grammatical categories in Students’ Written Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>RW*</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category: articles.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>12 40.0</td>
<td>15 50.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category: Prepositions.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>10 33.3</td>
<td>16 53.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category: Concord.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>16 53.3</td>
<td>10 33.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category: Adjectives.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>6 20.0</td>
<td>8 26.7</td>
<td>8 26.7</td>
<td>7 23.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* RW: relative weight (calculated as percentage = (mean/5)*100).

The Results in Table (4.14) show that the percentages of the opinions of the staff who strongly agree to the fact that these grammatical categories are erroneously used in the EFL M.A students' written (essays) performance are: 53.3%, 40%, 33.3% and 23.3% for concord, articles, prepositions and adjectives respectively, with mean values of 4.30, 4.30, 4.07 and 3.47 and relative weights of 86.0, 86.0, 81.3 and 69.3 respectively. This
indicates that these grammatical categories significantly misused by EFL M.A students' in their written (essay) performance as ($P < 0.05$) (all means greater than neutral value "2.5" and all relative weight above 50.0).

**Research Question 2**

**What are the university teachers’ attitudes towards the written performance of M.A students in terms of cohesive devices?**

To answer this question, the researcher has calculated the percentages, means and relative weights of the staff answers on the items of this dimension and the following table illustrates this procedure.

**Table (4.15) - Staff Attitudes towards the Mishandled Cohesive Devices in Students’ Written Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>RW*</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by reference.</td>
<td>1     3.3       1     3.3 1     3.3 7     23.3 20    66.7 30    4.47 89.3 0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by substitution and ellipsis.</td>
<td>2     6.7       3     10.0 2     6.7 12    40.0 11    36.7 30    3.90 78.0 0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by conjunctions.</td>
<td>2     6.7       6     20.0 4     13.3 11    36.7 7     23.3 30    3.50 70.0 0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of lexical cohesion.</td>
<td>1     3.3       1     3.3 1     3.3 6     20.0 21    70.0 30    4.50 90.0 0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* RW: relative weight (calculated as percentage = (mean/5)*100).

The results in Table (4.15) show that the percentages of the opinions of the staff who were strongly agree to the fact that these cohesion devices are more poorly used in the EFL M.A students' written (essay) performance are: 70%, 66.7%, 36.3% and 23.3% for lexical cohesion, reference, substitution and ellipsis and conjunctions respectively, with mean values of 4.50, 4.47, 3.90 and 3.50 and relative weights of 90.0, 89.3, 78.0 and 70.0 respectively. This indicates that these cohesion devices are significantly mishandled by EFL M.A students in their written (essay) performance as ($P < 0.05$) (all means greater than neutral value "2.5" and all relative weight above 50.0).

**Research Question 3**

**What are the university teachers’ attitudes towards the written performance of M.A students in terms of coherence as a discourse feature?**
To answer this question, the researcher has calculated the percentages, means and relative weights of the staff answers on the items of this dimension and the following table illustrates this procedure.

**Table (4.16) - Staff Attitudes towards the Mishandled Discourse Sub-features of Coherence in Students’ Written Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>RW*</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance lacks coherence as the topic is not properly introduced.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>18 60</td>
<td>8 26.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A students' written performance lacks registerial coherence.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>6 20</td>
<td>20 66.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic coherence is poorly mishandled in M.A students' written performance</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>6 20</td>
<td>20 66.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A students' written performance lacks coherence as the topic is not properly concluded.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>3 10.0</td>
<td>14 46.7</td>
<td>11 36.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* RW: relative weight (calculated as percentage = (mean/5)*100).

The results in Table (4.16) show that the percentages of the opinions of the staff who strongly agree to the fact that these coherence features are poorly mishandled in the EFL M.A students' written (essays) performance are: 66.7%, 66.7%, 36.7% and 26.7% for registerial coherence, generic coherence, topic conclusion and topic introduction respectively, with mean values of 4.43, 4.43, 4.10 and 4.03 and relative weights of 88.7, 88.7, 82.0 and 80.7 respectively. This indicates that these coherence sub-features are significantly mishandled by EFL M.A students in their written (essay) performance as (P < 0.05) (all means greater than neutral value "2.5" and all relative weight above 50.0).

**Research Question 4**

**What are the university teachers’ attitudes towards the written performance of M.A students in terms of thematization and contextualization?**

To answer this question, the researcher has calculated the percentages, means and relative weights of the staff answers on the items of this dimension and the following table illustrates this procedure.
Table (4.17) - Staff Attitudes towards the Mishandled Features of thematization and contextualization in Students’ Written Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>RW*</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms single theme–rheme sentences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of zig-zag theme or thematic shift.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of topic contextualization at the conceptual level. (conceptual Contextualization)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of topic contextualization in terms of the setting (place &amp; time) of the concepts. (Situational Contextualization)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* RW: relative weight (calculated as percentage = (mean/5)*100).

The results in Table (4.17) show that the percentages of the opinions of the staff who strongly agree to the fact that these 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).

Table (4.18) - Staff Attitudes Concerning the Overall Results of the four Variables and Their Impact on the Quality of the M.A. Students' Written Performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Theoretical Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>DF*</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>±3.47</td>
<td>9.68</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>±3.61</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>±3.48</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematization &amp; Contextualization</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>±3.68</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DF: degree of freedom: N-1)
The results in Table (4.18) show that the mean values of the overall staff opinions about the written performance of M.A students in grammatical categories, cohesion devices, coherence features and thematicization and conceptualization students' were: 16.13±3.47, 16.37±3.61, 17.00±3.48 and 17.60±3.68 respectively. All of these values are above the theoretical mean indicating that these problems significantly affect M.A students' written (essay) performance (P < 0.05).

4.5 Some respondents' comments

Respondent No.(3) has said that: in grammatical aspects, M.A students seem to have knowledge of the basic grammatical aspects in theory. In practice, as far as skills are concerned, there seems to be a big gap between what they know and what they can do. In relation to discoursal features, M.A students do not seem to realize these features in English language.

Respondent No.(4) has said that: I have noticed that M.A students are encountered by other grammatical problems such as the misuse of Relativization as well as other discoursal problems mentioned by the researcher.

Respondent No.(5) has stated that: M.A students are very poor in grammatical categories and discourse features, and they have to be trained more or academic disaster may take place.

Respondent No.(9) has said that: There is an impact of mother-tongue language on the M.A students' written works. For example, some concepts are literally translated into English, that is, the interference of mother-tongue (i.e. Arabic). However, for another speaker or user of English this may be confusing. It may render the text incomprehensible.

Respondent No.(16) has said that: grammatical categories, cohesion and coherence seem to be the most clear obstacles at the M.A level and should be reconsidered.

4.6 Verification of hypotheses in the light of results

Based on the results of the statistical analysis for both tools of data collection, the researcher will verify the study hypotheses in brief as follows:
Hypothesis 1
M.A. students' written performance reflects little knowledge of essential grammatical categories.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher marked the essays written by the 50 M.A. students for adherence to grammatical accuracy in four grammatical categories (articles, prepositions, concord and adjectives). Accordingly, the results of the statistical analysis as depicted above show that \( P < 0.05 \). This indicates that M.A. students are very poor in these grammatical categories. Therefore, this research hypothesis is verified.

Hypothesis 2
The subjects' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of cohesion which are basic to a well-written discourse.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher marked the essays written by the 50 M.A. students to examine their performance in the cohesive devices of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. Accordingly, the results of the statistical analysis as depicted above show that \( P < 0.05 \). This shows that M.A. students mishandled these cohesive devices in their written performance. Therefore, the second research hypothesis is verified.

Hypothesis 3
The students' academic written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal features of coherence which are basic to a well-written discourse.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher marked the essays written by the 50 M.A. students to measure their performance in coherence sub-features such as: topic introduction, registerial coherence, generic coherence and topic conclusion. Accordingly, the results of the statistical analysis as depicted above show that \( P < 0.05 \). This reflects that M.A. students poorly handled these coherence sub-features. Therefore, the third research hypothesis is verified.
Hypothesis 4
M.A. students poorly handle thematization and contextualization in their written performance.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher marked the essays written by the 50 M.A. students in terms of single theme-rheme, thematic shift, situational contextualization and conceptual contextualization. Accordingly, the results of the statistical analysis for these discoursal sub-features as depicted above show that \( P < 0.05 \). This illustrates that M.A. students misused thematization and contextualization. Therefore, the fourth research hypothesis is verified.

Statisticians explain that when Pearson value comes as \( P < 0.05 \), the performance of the students is problematized. As observed, Pearson value for the performance of the M.A. students in the four research variables is \( P < 0.05 \). This indicates that M.A. students' written performance is full of grammatical inaccuracy and discoursal misuses such as cohesion, coherence, thematization and contextualization misuses. Accordingly all research hypotheses have come true. ☐
Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary for the present study. It sheds light on the study problems, questions, objectives and its limits. Moreover, the methodology for collecting data and conducting this study will be summed up. Then, a brief conclusion about the findings of this study will be presented. Finally, recommendations that concern university students' written performance in terms of grammatical errors and discoursal misuses, as well as, suggestions for further research will be introduced.

5.2 Summary

As mentioned before in the first chapter, the present study aims at analyzing EFL M.A students' written performance using a combination of two techniques. These two techniques are: error and discourse analysis. It also aims at reflecting the possible attained pedagogical implications that the researcher has come up with for improving the teaching of writing at under and post-graduate level.

Actually, this study attempts to investigate difficulties in M.A students’ written performance from grammatical and discoursal perspective in order to give some insights into the nature of English written discourse. In investigating these problems, the following research questions have been posed:

1- What types of grammatical errors that are common in the essays written by M.A students?
2- What are the written discourse features of cohesion that these students misuse in their written essays?

3- What are the written discourse features of coherence that these M.A students mishandle in their written essays?

4- What are the written discourse features of Thematization & contextualization that are misused in the M.A students' written performance?

To search answers for these questions, the following hypotheses have been made:

1- M.A students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical categories essential to a well written discourse.

2- M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal feature of cohesion.

3- M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of discoursal feature of coherence.

4- M.A students' written performance shows poor awareness of Thematization & contextualization.

A theoretical background that concerns the development of the concept of sentence and text grammar, cohesion, coherence, Thematization, and contextualization as represented in systemic functional linguistics which have been introduced in chapter two, besides, the classical and modern approaches to writing. This chapter also introduced some related previous studies. These studies can be summarized as follows:
1. Studies predicting students' difficulties from contrastive and error analysis perspectives. The drawbacks of these two linguistic techniques when used alone are also outlined.

2- Research concerning EFL/ESL students' written performance, specifically in the area of discourse analysis.

3- Studies reporting grammatical errors and discourse misuses in EFL/ESL writings in different countries.

4- Studies of grammatical and cohesion errors, as well as, coherence mishandling in written English made by EFL Sudanese students.

A research method utilized in this research has been described in chapter three. Two tools of analysis has been used; a test for M.A students, and a questionnaire for senior university teachers. A total of 50 essays, written by the second batch of M.A students of English at Sudan University of Science & Technology, represent the basic population for this study. The test was meant to analyze the grammatical aspects and discoursal features of cohesion, coherence, Thematization & contextualization and their effect on the students' written performance. As for the second tool, a number of 30 copies of the questionnaire were given to 30 university teachers at Sudanese universities in order to provide their attitudes about M.A students' written performance in terms of grammatical and discoursal features.

The statistical results of the grammatical errors and discoursal misuses of cohesion, coherence, Thematization & contextualization, in addition to their impact on writing were presented in chapter four.
5.3 Conclusion

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

1- M.A students seem to have real problems in some grammatical categories. These categories include: articles, prepositions, concord and adjectives. The most problematic areas of grammatical categories that yielded the highest percentages of occurrence are: the articles, followed by prepositions, concord and adjectives successively.

2- Of all the cohesion errors selected for analyzing the discourse sub-features in this study, reference errors and lexical errors yielded the highest percentage. Substitution & ellipsis represent the third problematic area followed by conjunctions.

3- As for the second major discourse feature of coherence, the misuses made by the students of this study in the 50 essays can be summarized as follows:

a- Topic introduction has been misused by (34) Students with percentage (68%).

b- Registerial coherence has been misused by (42) students with percentage (84).

c- Generic coherence has been misused by (46) students with percentage (92).

d- Topic conclusion has been misused by (38) students with percentage (76).

4- 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 discoursal 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 discoursal features.

In terms of the possible causes of errors identified in this study, negative interference (transfer) from mother tongue language and other sources of errors concerning rule learning - such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules – together with inadequate learning and insufficient teaching seem to be the most likely causes of errors in this study. Other reasons will be detailed in the following subsection.

5.5 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 grammar and on the use of discourse features should be applied and practiced, until teachers make sure that these students do not have any
grammatical or discoursal problems. 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 grammar and 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- 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".

7- EFL teachers have to consider that EFL students, as they are in the rank of third users, often transfer the language of their mother tongue into English, a matter that may results
in interference errors. The influence of Arabic on English has been noticed in some of the essays written by M.A students. Therefore, the teachers should be aware of areas and degrees of similarities so that they can draw the attention of the students to these errors to be avoided in the future. This can be realized by adequate teaching accompanied by much practice.

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

9- More systematic assignments on the use of discoursal features should be applied and practiced. After the teacher 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 grammatical accuracy and discourse features. The teachers before marking, can select the texts which are full of grammatical errors and discourse misuses, after hiding the names, to the students asking them to correct by deletion and addition.

10- As for cohesion, the teachers should provide the students with some in-cohesive essays asking them to rewrite these essays in a cohesive way.

11- As for coherence which has been found the most significant feature of the quality of writing, the effective teaching method should be developed to assist the students produce
more coherent text. One of the most recommended teaching technique that help realizing coherence in students writing is peer revision and editing of writing. As suggested by Fleckenstein (1992), the teacher may begin the activity by presenting incoherent essay, selected from the students assignments, to the whole class. Then, the teacher can ask the students to revise the essay to make it more coherent. The students should be encouraged to revise the essay by addition, deletion or rearrangement. This teaching method seem to be more effective in terms of coherence.

12- 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.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following studies for further research:

1- It seems necessary to examine the M.A students' written performance with the aim of measuring grammatical aspects and discourse features in a comparative way. In other
words, the researcher recommends comparing M.A students performance in some Sudanese universities. This will, of course, support the results of the present study.

2- As this study has been limited to some of the grammatical aspects and some discourse features as represented in M.A students' written performance, investigating other written text aspects of other different nature of errors and misuses may make more contribution to promote the quality of writing. Such investigations may be in the areas of register analysis (field, tenor and mode of the discourse), or genre analysis research (to investigate the agreed up on moves of a certain genre and its cultural aspects.

3- Making use of the references of "Critical Discourse Analysis in Education", further research may be conducted to discover the exact reasons behind poor performance of the students' writing. Such investigation may be entitled as: "Investigating grammatical Errors and Discoursal Misuses & their Effect on Writing Quality: A Critical Discourse Perspective.

4- A study to investigate the methods and techniques adopted by Sudanese university teachers in teaching discourse analysis should be conducted.

5- A study to measure the grammaticality and discourse features in published or unpublished theses and dissertations should be conducted.

6- A genre based study should be conducted to measure the generic differences between linguistic and literary researches.

7- A research that investigates the Effects of Genre Moves on EFL Learners’ Performance in Writing could be conducted.
References


Gharab, A (1996), An Analysis of the Written Performance of Iraqi Students at the University Level, Error Analysis Based Research. A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of English for the PhD in English, University of Khartoum, Khartoum University press.


130


Dear Colleagues,

This Questionnaire is one of the tools for a Ph.D. research work entitled (The Impact of the Grammatical aspects and Discoursal Features on the Quality of EFL M.A Students' Written Performance) at the College of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology. The researcher attempts to investigate the impact of the grammatical aspects and discoursal features on the quality of EFL M.A Students' written performance. You are kindly requested to cooperate by answering the questions or responding to the given statements.

Please tick (√) where appropriate.

Qualifications (Academic status):

a) Lecturer
b) assistant professor
c) Associate professor
d) Professor

Years of Experience in Teaching English:

a) 1- 5 Years
b) 6 – 10 years
c) 11 – 15 years
d) 16 – 20 years
e) above 20 years

Give your responses to the following statements by ticking (√) one of the alternatives given under each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M.A. students’ written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category; namely the articles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M.A. students' written performance shows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
little knowledge of the grammatical category; named the prepositions.

3 M.A. students' written performance reflects little knowledge of grammatical category; namely the concord.

4 The written performance of the M.A students reflects little knowledge the adjectives as a grammatical category.

5 M.A. students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by reference.

6 M.A. students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by substitution and ellipsis.

7 M.A. students' written performance shows poor awareness in terms of cohesion by conjunctions.

8 Sudanese M.A. students' written performance reflects poor awareness in terms of lexical cohesion.

9 M.A. Students' written performance lacks coherence as the topic is not properly introduced

10 M.A. Students' written performance lacks registerial coherence.

11 M.A. Students' written performance lacks generic coherence.

12 M.A. Students' written performance lacks coherence as the topic is not properly concluded.

13 The written performance of the M.A. students reflects poor awareness of single theme-rheme sentences

136
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The written performance of the M.A. students reflects poor awareness of zigzag or thematic shift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The written performance of the M.A. students shows poor awareness of conceptual contextualization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The written performance of the M.A. students shows poor awareness of situational contextualization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comment:**
You are kindly requested to add any comment or suggestion that you think to be of relevance or importance

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
Thanks for your highly appreciated cooperation
Ayman Hamad Elneil Hamdan; a Ph.D. research student
Appendix (2)

A Research Test

Dear student, you are kindly requested to write a well-organized essay on:

The Challenges Facing Education in Sudan.

Please consider the grammatical and discoursal features which are regarded essential to a well-written text.