Investigating the Use of Discourse Analysis features Among EFL Post graduate students improving writing quality and proficiency

A case study of M.A English language students, college of languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology

Mukhtar Omer AL sheikh ; College of languages, Sudan University oF Science and Technology. Email: mukhtaraladani466@gmail.com Tell: 0904909513 **Mahmoud Ail Ahmed**

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating difficulties encountered by Sudanese graduate students in using discourse as larger unit of learning. The study adopted a descriptive analytical approach .Two tools were used for data collection a test and questionnaire. The sample of the study consists of (30) M.A English language students at Sudan university of science and Technology in addition to questionnaire for (20) experts of English language teachers from different Sudanese universities. The data were analyzed statistically by using statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) Program which provides percentages results for test. The investigation itself is centered around the notion of discourse metafunctions hence ideational ,interpersonal , experiential or types process and textual features of texts.   This study tries to reveals how M.A Students make sense of the three components of text through metafunctions. M.A Students can develop their writing by using linguistic resources and grammatical one that are vital for expository writing the study has come out with reference to the achievement test the result have shown M.A English language students have poor knowledge in using communicative features that establish relations between ideas and events in their writing ,the main reason behind this problems is due to lack of practice   and un awareness .The findings show that in ability of using discourse features due to lack of discourse model in their learning. It recommend that texts features should be teach to raise students' knowledge and awareness in using discourse analysis and should adopt discourse as model to interpret and analyze text and its components also it recommends that students should practice discourse intensively so as to enrich them with varieties of language features of text because many text arrived from different sociocultural back ground of writers hence M.A Students need to be familiar with many forms of genres.
Key words : Discourse features, Investigating Text features, Knowledge of Discourses

المستخلص:

هدفت هذة الدراسة الى تقصى الصعوبات التى تواجه طلاب الدراسات العليا فى استخدام خصائص النص الكامل .

شملت هذة الدراسة ثلاثون طالبا(30) من جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا واتبعت هذة الدراسة المنهج الوصفي

التحليلي وركزت الدراسة على دور وظائف النص الكامل اللغوية والبلاغية معا لما تمتاز بة الخصائص من وحدات

في داخلها   وتم جمع البيانات با ستخدام اداتين هما الاختبار التشخيصي لطلاب ماجستير اللغة الانجليزية

واستبيان للاساتذة المختصين في مجال اللغة الانجليزية من مختلف الجامعات السودانية . و اختمت الدراسة بعدد

من النتائج اهما عدم معرفة   الخصائص وتفسيرها بشكل ايجابي لعدم ممارسة تحليل الخطاب كجانب من عملية

التعلم . اوصت اللدراسة بضرورة ممارسة وظائف النص التى لها دور في بناء قدرات الدارسين كما اوصت بتكثيف سمنارات وحلقات نقاش بصورة منتظمة لرفع القدرات التحليلية والكتابية معا

الكلمات المفتاحية : تقصي استخدام النص ,دوروظائف الخطاب , سمات النص .

Introduction:

Going beyond the sentences level to explore the textual structure of stretch of writing has and others communicative features of texts led to what currently referred to in applied linguistics analysis, which have approach by several linguists. Discourse analysis is study of language in use which extends beyond sentences boundaries hence adventuring to explore the structure and purpose of the whole text, the implicates of the practice of discourse analysis of the features yet Ideational , interpersonal ,and textual the main components of any discourse since text is basic unit of analysis . User of language have to make sense of text as well as they have to Produce them. According to Thorn Bury (2005), this is as true for second language users as it is for first language users. Kress (1985) states that 'language always happens as text and not as isolated words or sentences- from an aesthetic, social or educational perspectives; it is the text which is significant unit of language. Hence, adventuring to explore the structure and purposes the whole texts implication or implicates the practice of discourse analysis of features and uses of text has begun to play a crucial role in language learning as they allow a rich resource to examined and explored in pursuit of getting some kind of sense from them and have access to the language and the culture, of which the text is realization. Learners of English face different challenges when confronted with a text, and so they mobilize a variety of text attack strategies as Scott (Ibid) calls them. These challenges entail both learners respond to text and creating texts. The present study aims are to raise EFL Learners awareness of using discourse analysis as part of their learning.

This study presents a systemic functional linguistic analysis of two ways in turns it focuses on linguistic features utilized as receptive and productive i.e. the features that will present in this study in turns create a text of register. The study describes grammatical resources which are functional for expository writing which are divided under three main categories textual, interpersonal, and ideational resources. Hence, the three configuration are constitute text of register and result genres which attempts to describe how texts are structures, but it tries to account for these structures in terms of sociocultural force that shaped them. Yet language develops through social experience M.A Students need to experience with kind of writing task a genre that will be required of them.

Grammatical features include the textual resource of thematic choice and development, clause – combing strategies (connectors and lexical cohesion, interpersonal sources metaphors, modality an ideational resources of nominalization and abstractions ideational. According to (Low, 2010; McCarthy, 1991; Mohan, Lenung and Slater, 2010) who encourages language teachers to use a discourse rather than   sentence   level.

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Hence at discourse level evaluation EFL writing can be examined from different viewpoints in the field of applied linguistic one of the possible approach is discourse analysis (DA which "focuses on knowledge about language beyond the word, clauses, and sentences" (Paltridge, 2006, p2), thus it views language at the level of texts" (p.6). DA helps language teachers' focuses on the relationship between sentences rather than treating them as isolated pieces.

Discourse analysts have embraced the current linguistic perspective which interprets language as strategic, meaning- making resources.

Eggins, (1994, p.1) in other words, language is seen as a resource for meaning rather than system of rules (Mohan and Slater, 2004 p. 255).

This is the systemic functional linguistic (SFL) interpretation of language developed by Halliday (1973, 1985). According to Halliday framework written or oral comprises central meaning or metafunctions, experiential, interpersonal and textual in turns result production text of register.

What Contextual analysis offer to language learners in terms of understanding their writing and reading strength challenges?

This study investigates the level of proficiency of Sudanese EFL university students in reading and writing while depending on discourse analysis, via engaging with text receptively and productivity. Hence, the terms discourse and text have been introduced as a unit of analysis beyond sentence level. McCarthy (1991) points out that discourse analysis has become of great interest to both EFL instructors and researchers for its potentiality to display the features which are more common and appropriate in the analysis and evaluation of written texts. This feature includes the grammatical features and discoursal ones which EFL learners to be in need of mastery so as to identify and integrate entire compositions and reading or in comprehension such cohesion and coherence as well components of a text ideational, interpersonal and textual have been identified by Beaugarde and Dresser (1981) as two major standards of textuality. Discourse Analysis as tool or means explore connection between written discourse analysis and reading instruction with particular emphasis on text organization research and its impact on comprehension instruction over the past 16 years research on discourse analysis demonstrated that text structure awareness has a strong impact or efforts to improve reading instruction. In an early review of the impact of text structures on reading, Pearson and Comperll (1981) at that time however they rightly pointed out that little was known about use of text structuring for improved instruction fifteen years later, it is possible to report that is now considerable body of research evidence which support the use of discourse analysis and text structure as means for improving reading comprehension. Furthermore, text awareness as genres while reading in same way it displays in written text.

Understanding these elements or components which are main features in written text via discourse analysis raises learners proficiency and competent through realization of text content and features, linguistic choice, the three components of a text which are vital to perceive or realize by learners when they confronted any written text are mainly ideational interpersonal and textual and so on between them. There is confusion around the meaning around the meaning of discourse analysis, since the term can be used in different ways, depending on the goals of research and depending on various regional schools of discourse research worldwide and depending on the developments of this fields Schifrin (1994:39) explains the subject of the study discourse analysis is an utterance or text unit or a communicative event that is generally perceived as having a unifying.

The study will provide answers for the following questions

1- Are M.A Students aware of communicative features of language use as internal part of their learning?

2- To what extent M.A Students are aware of using Ideational, Interpersonal textual features of learning?

3- Hypothesis of the study:

1- M.A Students are un aware of communicative features of language use.

2- M.A Students lack ability of combining their personal knowledge with textual information contained in text in their writing production.

Objectives of the study

The study tries to realize the following objectives:

The main objectives of the study are to investigate learners awareness of using discourse features and analysis in their learning giving better understanding of text features ,also it raise learners awareness on various discourse features and give the ability of linguistic choice as well as genres structures

Literature Review

Some research central to this study will be revised within frameworks of current theoretical approaches to EFL/ESL writing. Previous studies help researcher by informing them about the state of the art i.e. using the newest ideas and most up-to-date features and discourse conventions of the particular discourse conventions of particular discipline. However, the researcher reviews Sudanese and non- Sudanese previous studies related to the area of this present study will be reviewed immediately with respect to these approaches.

Theoretical approaches, related to the present study.

Discourse Analysis Movement

Chiang (1999) points out that focus on isolated sentence is not representative of actual communication. In evaluation of writing quality, writing assessment needs to be beyond sentences boundaries towards inter-sentential connections and discourse features. Discourse analysis, as defined by Crystal (1992, p. 909) is the study of continuous of stretches of language larger than a single sentences.

McCarthy (1990) elaborates that discourse analysis studies the relationship between language and context in which language is used. As it has been mentioned before discourse analysis as a new linguistic movement has been influenced by various disciplines including linguistics, Psychology and sociology.

McCarthy (Ibid) explains that discourse analysts are interested in studying spoken and written language in use and this means that discourse analysis is not only concerned with the analysis of spoken form of language as some people may think.

The study of Abdullah (2005) is one of the related study on discourse features it investigates of written discourse features in essay writing (149) forty years university students majoring in English the study aims to high light the problems that encountered by EFL Learners when writing full unit at Khartoum university faculty of Arts. The study came out with results that students writing characterized by poor grasp of discourse properties also claimed that the poor awareness of written discourse features correlated to overall quality of writing the study adapted descriptive analytical method as a research methodology. similar study about discourse features the study of Altybeb which investigated EFL learners writing performance on basis of grammatical ones the study aims to high light problems that EFL Learners encountered his study adapted descriptive analytical approach two tools were used for data collections test for students at Omdurman Islamic university a questionnaire for university teachers the study came out with results that students have shown poor writing characterized by misused discourse features and grammatical ones . In contrast previous study were seek for using communicative features and incorporated in writing performance at sentences level as main problems therefore investigated features that bind text and other grammatical features however current study seeks to incorporated features of whole text at discourse level the similarity all studies seek to advance learners awareness in utilizing discourse features .but current study present theory that language as unit not words or sentences it seeks to expose learners to cope with macro level rather than micro level .Also a similar study is the study of Recebide ,the study aims to high light challenges that encountered by English language learners at university of California in writing essay .The study focuses on grammatical resources and linguistic features , ideational ,interpersonal and textual as main sources which are considered as functional for expository writing the study came out with results that the students exhibit weak writing production characterized by misused linguistic features . Another study of Lala (2012) the study aims to high light challenges that encountered by EFL learners who make sense of meaning at selected texts the study adapted descriptive analytical approach test for students the study came with EFL Learners lack awareness of texts features and show weak interpretation

Methodology of the study

1-Research Method

This study is conducted through an analytical descriptive method as an appropriate way for investigating M.A students English language knowledge and using of discourse features in their learning.

2- Population

The sample of the this study selected randomly from the sample of the study consists of (30) M.A English language students from both , male and female ,for Academic year (2018—2019) at Sudan university of science and technology , college of languages .

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3-Tools

In this study two tools were used to collect data. A test was used for M.A English language students , at Sudan university of science and Technology It analyzed statically using tables and figures and questionnaire for experts teachers of language from different Sudanese universities .

Students diagnostic test is first tools of the study which investigate learners ability in utilizing linguistic resources and discourse features the test was check their ability in writing essay how they incorporating the features of writing and analyzed their problems and challenges . The second tool is utilized for collecting qualitative data in this study was an expert's questionnaire. It's randomly distributed to (20) English language practitioners from different Sudanese universities they gives their comments and attitudes.

Statistical Validity and Reliability for Students' Test

The first draft of the test was present to supervisor who checked it in addition to Ph.D. holders and assistant professors who helped in proof reading and reviewing , to assure the validity of

the test designed for the samples of population at the post graduate level four copies of the test were distributed to four experts Sudanese universities to give their evaluation and comments two of the experts consulted were Ph.D. Holders in status of associate professors and others in assistant professors. The professors were told that the purposes of the test was to investigate linguistics features, utilizing by M. Students writing performance in two ways as receptive and productive and its role in developing texts consulted experts provided their views and suggestions which taken in into considerations and then after the test was approved the researcher went to the lecturer hall and asked students to the test for academic purposes with aim of discovering point of weakness in order to find out results and solutions to these difficulties . They were all motivated and they wrote silently and enthusiastically. To test validity over the test , the researcher analyzed the performance of the 30 students have real problems in utilizing linguistic resources discourses features as well grammatical ones that are mainly vital for expository writing.

Descriptive analysis of statements

Table (1) shows the overall statistical percentage of the first hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics				
Statements	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
S 1	20	1.7000	.14690	.65695
s2	20	2.1500	.20869	.93330
s3	20	2.2500	.17584	.78640
s4	20	2.1500	.18173	.81273
s5	20	2.5000	.22361	1.00000

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Valid N (listwise)	20			

As indicated in the statistical above, in all statements of the hypothesis (1) was greater than the hypothesis arithmetic mean, and this indicate approval of the research sample, all that was stated in the expression, while the standard deviation ranges between 0.6-1.0, and this indicates the research sample to be approved by the respondents.

	Pass	Failure	Total
Learners No	10	20	30
Percentage	33.3%	66.7%	100%

Result and Discussion
1- Students Test Results

With reference to table (1) above, it that illustrates there are (10) of the respondents with percentage (33.3%) answered or passed the test, while (20) of the respondents with percentage of (66.7%) failed to pass the test properly. It's obviously that the number of the respondents who failed to pass the test are greater than those who success in passing the test hence , it's clear that due to this result M.A Students of English language are un aware of communicative features of language use from this result it is possible to say the first hypothesis which was(M.A Students of English language are un aware of using communicative features) is accepted . Hence, it's clear that due to this result first hypothesis match with first question is accepted.

Table (2) shows the overall statistical percentage of second hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics				
Statements	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
s6	20	2.4500	.19835	.88704
s7	20	2.3500	.19568	.87509
s8	20	2.0500	.19835	.88704
s9	20	2.4000	.23396	1.04630
s10	20	2.1500	.18173	.81273
s20	20	2.5500	.23480	1.05006

Descriptive Statistics				
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	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
s6	20	2.4500	.19835	.88704
s7	20	2.3500	.19568	.87509
s8	20	2.0500	.19835	.88704
s9	20	2.4000	.23396	1.04630
s10	20	2.1500	.18173	.81273
s20	20	2.5500	.23480	1.05006
Valid N (listwise)	20			

As indicated in the statistical above, in all statements of the hypothesis (2) was greater than the hypothesis arithmetic mean, and this indicates the approval of the research sample, all that was stated in the expression, while the standard deviation ranges between 0.8-1.0, and this indicates the research sample to be approved by the respondents

Marks	0---9	10 -20	12—45	25- 50	Total
Number of learners	0	15	9	5	30
	0				
Percentage	52.2%	14.7%		29%	100%

According to the results shown in the table No (2) above it illustrates that there are (15) of the respondents with percentage (52.2 %) answered or passed the test, while (14 .7%) of the respondents with percentage of (40.7%) failed to pass the test properly. those who successes in passing the test hence , it's clear that due to this result M.A Students of English language are un aware of communicative features of language use from this result it is possible to say the first hypothesis which was(M.A Students of English language are un aware of using communicative features) is accepted . Hence, it's clear that due to this result first hypothesis matched with first question is accepted.

2-Results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted to investigate challenges encountered by M.A students in using discourse features in their writing. With regard to first variable dealing with question (Are EFL Learners aware of communicative features of language use as internal part of their learning? All experts agreed that a communicative feature is not addressed sufficiently covered also agreed that communicative features are taught with less stress on them. This indicates that lack of practicing communicative features is the main reason caused challenges for M.A students therefore; it has negatives impact on them. Another expert adds communicative features should be taught in text learning.

This shows that the first hypothesis (M.A English language students lack ability of using communicative features of language use it means that is approved by experts ideas mention above) Regarding of the variable of the second question) To what extent EFL Learners aware of Ideational, Interpersonal ,and Textual features of learning ? most experts agreed that there are many factors affecting M.A students of English language in using text components in their writing skills a great problem to M.A students one of the expert adds that incorporating teaching text components , another expert commented that teachers should draw their attention in teaching discourse features it is possible to say that the second hypothesis which indicates that (M.A English language students lack ability of their combining interpersonal, textual knowledge. With regard to the variables of question three (Do they show ability to compensate their full linguistic competence ? one of the expert adds that learners should have competence to help them to deal with English language; or otherwise there is problem in the system again he confirms for approving that lack of linguistic knowledge is major problem that is faced them It has been observed that all ideas support third hypothesis which was (EFL Students lack ability to compensate their full linguistic competence).

Conclusion

As indicated in the statistical above results of the test and different views from experts represents as main challenging for M.A Students to use discourse analysis , as main features of written text ,linguistics resources as basic unit ,hence M.A Students need to be aware of communicative features and discourse components in their writing from the results above show that M.A students are weak in using communicative features that introduce functions of sentences , establish relations between ideas and events therefore knowledge of language as main components of text is significance to students a great effort should be made by students to master discourse features of text . Hence ideational, interpersonal, and textual features in addition to above M.A Students need to adopt discourse analysis as model for learning English Language so as to enrich students with various features of text that naturally embodied in text because of many text arrived from cultural back ground of writers so as to develop students ability of analysis of larger unit rather than sentences level so it considered old model due to decontextualized text conversely using new model which is steering that language should be used with full context and larger unit. This study has come out with MA English language students have shown weak knowledge in using communicative features , that introduce functions of sentences this gap of knowledge is due to lack of practice from the analysis obviously MA students are un aware of this features and its role in binding text.

Based on the findings of the study, the following points are recommended:

1- M.A students of English language should familiarize themselves in utilizing discourse features and practice.

2- M.A students should learn communicative features of writing in text as whole.

3- Syllabus designers should include learning discourse features of texts as main sources of learning English

4- M.A students should strive to understand various features of texts, practicing text features are best ways for students to use discourse and genres styles.

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