



**Sudan University of Science and technology**  
**Collage of Graduate Studies**  
**Faculty of Languages**  
**Department of English**



## **The Role of Context in the Perception of English Text**

*(Case Study: Second Year Students at Sudan University of Science and  
Technology)*

**دور السياق في فهم النصوص الإنجليزية**

**(دراسة حالة: طلاب السنة الثانية – جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا)**

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fulfillment of Master Degree in Applied Linguistics*

**Submitted by:**

Najat Abdo Ahmed Hassan

**Supervised by:**

Dr. Ayman Hamad-Elneel

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## **Dedication**

*To*

*My beloved mother*

*The soul of my father who taught me the  
meaning of lie*

*My brothers, sisters*

*and to*

*All my relatives*

## **Acknowledgement**

*In the beginning, thanks and praise be to God, who guided and help me to complete this research. Many thanks to Dr. Ayman Hamad-Elneel, who under his supervision and patience for guiding me I was able to accomplish this work.*

*My thanks go to my friends and colleagues who stood by me and encouraged me*

## **Abstract**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the importance of distinguishing context situation (field, tenor and mode) in passage. The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical method and used a test as a main tool for data collection. The test was distributed to forty (40) students at Sudan University of Science and Technology who study English in College of languages in the 2<sup>nd</sup> level and the discourse analysis has been applied to reach in the result. The research has reached to some findings, most important are: The awareness of students about the context situation help in delivering meaningful text and also help them understand the spoken/written text as well. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends: Students have to measure their written/spoken text according to context situation in order to deliver meaningful message for the audience.

## المستخلص

إن الهدف الأساس لإجراء هذه الدراسة هو بيان أهمية تمييز حالة السياق (المجال، المغزى و الأسلوب) في الفقرة. ولقد أتبع الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي حيث تم جمع البيانات الأولية من إختبار معد للطلاب والاختبار هو الأداة الرئيسة لجمع البيانات. وقد تم توزيع الإختبار على أربعين (40) طالباً في جامعة السودان للعلوم و التكنولوجيا والذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية في قسم اللغات في المستوى الثاني، وقد تم إجراء التحليل للتوصل إلى بعض النتائج. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى مجموعة من النتائج أهمها: وعي الطلاب لحالة السياق يساهم في إنتاجهم نصوصاً ذات معنى سواء كانت مكتوبة أو منطوقة. وبناء على النتائج أوصى الباحث بالآتي: يجب على الطلاب قياس منتوجهم الكتابي وفقاً لحالة السياق وذلك لتقديم نصي ذا معنى واضح للمتلقين.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**



# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.0 Background

When viewing particular produced text, the concern always remains on the actual context of this text. The message it delivers and the bond that it holds between the reader and the writer is the deepest concerns as well as the type of language used.

According to Manca, (2010) he states "*A different view of the relationship between language and meaning was provided by Malinowski (1923) at the beginning of the 20th century. The meaning of language was interpreted in terms of context of culture and context of situation. Malinowski's theories influenced linguists such as Firth (1957) and Halliday (1985) and language became to be considered meaningful only if considered within the language events in which it is used*"(P.1). So, getting into the context situation and cultural situation means getting into the heart of the meanings of the written/spoken language.

The study of context has been gaining popularity in recent years, either in linguistics itself or in many other interdisciplinary subjects such as semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis as well. Song, (2010: intro).

Shedding a light on context situation (field, tenor and mode) can give a clue to the reader about the actual meaning of the passage written and the message beyond it. The field of a text tells you which domain of experience the text is about: family life, religious observance, law enforcement, medicine, etc. The field of a text can easily be determined by examining the lexical words in the text, or even just the nouns. While

the tenor tells the kind of the other is or the kind of people the audience are, the mode of a text tells about the method the text appears to have been produced in. Mode is an element of the textual Meta function of a text. These three elements make possible for the speaker/writer to orient himself in the context of situation. The writer/speaker must try and maintain the situational and cultural context by finding suitable language type in the produced text.

Looking into three elements is necessary for the reader to consider the produced text is meaningful.

The main aim of this study is to show the importance of distinguishing context situation in passage among EFL learners, and it is believed that the study can provide big contribution in making students aware of the topic.

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Reading a text and grasping its meaning and the idea it holds is something even hard for native speaker to figure out. It surpasses the written words and utterances to finding out a systematic approach where the writer uses techniques that can guarantee the message to be delivered. Some measures need to be consider for every written text where context situation is identified. EFL learners need to know the techniques used in analyzing texts to some meaningful measures based on the three elements of context situation.

The researcher in her modest point of view believes that most of the students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year do not pay attention to context situation when they deliver written text. They do not consider context situation

when they deliver spoken message as well. This can be observed in their written performance as the researcher notices.

The lack of knowledge about context situation elements leads in turn into incompleteness understanding of written passages especially those produced by native speaker.

## **1.2 Questions of the Study**

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1- To what extent distinguishing context situation plays big role in obtaining the actual meaning of a passage for EFL learners?
- 2- How students consider context situation in their written texts.
- 3- What are the factors that prevent students from employing context situation elements in their written text?

## **1.3 Hypotheses of the Study**

The study hypothesizes the followings:

- 1- Distinguishing context situation play big role in understanding produced text passage meaningfully.
- 2- Students are not aware of the context situation elements (field, tenor and mode) and in turn do not consider them in their written text.
- 3- There are linguistics factors (concerning the language capability) the limit students' use of context situation elements in their written texts.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The main aims of this study are to:

- 1- Show the importance of distinguishing written passage with regard to context situation among EFL learners.
- 2- Find out the functional theories that constraint the written text to be meaningful.
- 3- Explore the previous studies in relation with the topic and see how other EFL learners view context situation.
- 4- Analyze the produced text of the EFL students (study sample) against the functional context situation.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Investigating the area where language carries meanings based on the context situation is much challenging especially for EFL (English as Foreign Language)/NNS (Non-native Speaker) learners. This challenge is always ending into clarifying the path for those learners to answer questions like: who/why/how?, as they try to extract what is beyond any produced text.

EFL learners need to know the techniques used in analyzing text against context situation elements (field, tenor and mode) to extract the actual meaning of it. In term of delivering message through written text, the same learners need to use these techniques properly for their message to be meaningful as well.

The study is considered significant as it clarify the importance of distinguishing these elements of context situation and find out the impact beyond using them in EFL learners' written text.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The study adopts the descriptive analytical approach where discourse analysis is employed in analyzing particular text to context situation elements (field, tenor and mode). The research obtains data from two main sources: literature review and the primary data source represented in students' written text within the designed test.

## **1.7 Limits of the Study**

The study is limited to a sample of EFL learners in Sudan University of Science and Technology. The students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> level are considered the sample of the study from the entire population of the students available in Sudan University of Science and Technology.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review and Previous Studies**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review and Previous Studies**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

When the study of meaning became a linguistic discipline, the main interest of semanticists was in the technical level of language and the major focus was represented by the single word. A different view of the relationship between language and meaning was provided by Malinowski (1923) at the beginning of the 20th century. The meaning of language was interpreted in terms of context of culture and context of situation. Malinowski's theories influenced linguists such as Firth (1957) and Halliday (1985) and language became to be considered meaningful only if considered within the language events in which it is used. For this reason, language started to be analyzed only in authentic contexts: the focus of interest is not the single word any more but the meaningful relations words enter into with the other words around them (Sinclair 1991; 1996).

The importance of distinguish in context situation is the main concern of this study. The purpose is to see how considering context situation in account can help clarifying the meaning of the text. The chapter looks at the literature review and sees how term (context situation) was viewed. The previous studies also can give some different aspects of the topic being discussed.

#### **2.1 Context and Co-text**

When writing a passage all the contributing words are not independent from each other, they altogether form the meaning of the

passage. Words are defining words or in other word, carry their meanings. As Manca, (2012) states that:

"Words do not occur in isolation. The words of a text are surrounded by their linguistic environment, called co-text; the text takes place in a broader environment, called context. Both co-text and context are of utmost importance in the identification of the meaning of a text" (p.5).

It is important writer to choose the words that can effectively form the correct meaning of the passage. Every word in the passage takes its meaning from the co-text. That is to say both co-text and context are of utmost importance in the identification of the meaning of a text.

For example, the word order in the following sentence takes its meaning from its co-text, that is to say from the words that follow and proceed:

*Your order will be processed within 3/4 days after your request is submitted*

Items such as *processed*, *request*, and *submitted* contribute to the meaning of order that, in this case, refers to a request for a product to be delivered to you. Furthermore, the linguistic co-text of order allows us to understand what is going on, that is to say it helps us make inferences on the broader event where the sentence takes place. It can be clearly understood that this sentence has been uttered or written within an event whose topic is a commercial transaction, and where the participants are the customer and the seller Manca, (2012:5).

Furthermore, the role language is playing in this speech event can be analyzed in terms of medium which, in this case, is written (probably



an e-mail or a letter) and in terms of rhetorical function which is descriptive. The topic, the participants and the medium of an event constitute what has been called by Halliday (1985a) context of situation.

A different linguistic co-text of order would suggest a different context of situation as in the following example:

***Excuse me, can we order, please?***

Excuse me, can and please suggest that the linguistic event is probably taking place in a restaurant where some customers (the participants) are ordering their meal (the topic) to the waiter (the participant). In this case the medium is spoken.

However, there are also cases where the context helps us disambiguate the meaning of a sentence. The sentence she is a baby may refer either to a baby or to an adult who looks or acts as a baby. The two contexts and co-texts will help us understand the meaning of the following sentences:

1. *Introduce your child to books when **she is a baby**.*
2. *She shouldn't have a baby because **she is a baby herself***

Context and co-text play a key role in the analysis of meaning as we will see later. However, before moving to a more practical description of these two concepts, the following section will provide a brief overview of some traditional theories of context.

## **2.2 Theoretical Overview of Context Situation**

A theory of context was first developed by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. The influence of Malinowski is visible in the theories of many scholars, particularly in those of J.R. Firth, one of his

colleagues at London University and of Halliday who follows both Malinowski's and Firth's ideas in the development of his theory on the context of situation Manca, (2012).

According to Malinowski, context is classified into three types: context of utterance, context of situation, and context of culture. These elements are quite important in analysis of the text. For example, in order to understand a piece of text, it is necessary to know whom the speaker and hearer are, and the time and place of the production of the text Jiang Zhu, (2010: 142).

### **2.2.1 Malinowski and the theory of context**

The strict relationship between language and culture is well explained by Malinowski in 'The problem of meaning in primitive languages' (1923), where he argues that language can be explained only by considering the broader context of situation:

*"Language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the tribal life and customs of the people, and [...] it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance. [...] An utterance becomes intelligible when it is placed within its context of situation".*

In order to illustrate the notion of context of situation, Malinowski described a typical Tobriand fishing expedition: after the islanders had gone outside the lagoon into the open sea to fish, they had to navigate a difficult course through the reefs to get back to the lagoon. For this reason, people on the shore shouted instructions to the fishermen and the whole situation became a sort of competition between the different canoes and groups of people. The language used in such situations was full of technical terms, references to surroundings and indications of change, based on types of behavior well-known to the participants Manca, (2012). The linguistic material used was, therefore, inextricably

dependent upon the course of the activity in which the utterances were embedded. It was language in action and the message was clear only to those who knew what was going on. For this reason when he accounted for these situations he realized that it was necessary to provide not only a description of what was happening, the situation, but also of the total cultural background, because: Involved in any kind of linguistic interaction, in any kind of conversational exchange, were not only the immediate sights and sounds surrounding the event but also the whole cultural history behind the participants, and behind the kind of practices they were engaging in, determining their significance for the culture, whether practical or ritual. All these played a part in the interpretation of meaning.(Halliday, 1985:6)

Furthermore, Malinowski stresses the importance of the function of orders, arguing that their meaning is not given by the physical properties of their referents but by the way they are used in a given situation.

### **2.2.2 Firth and the Context of Situation**

The influence of Malinowski's view about the context of situation is also visible in the work of J.R. Firth. He adopted Malinowski's notion but in his linguistic theory the context of situation was the whole cultural setting in which the speech act was embedded, more than the context of human activity concurrent with, immediately preceding, and following the speech act. In Firth's view the context of situation is best used as a suitable schematic construct to apply to language events and is a group of related categories at a different level from grammatical categories but rather of the same abstract nature (Ibid). The categories brought into relation by the context of situation are:

A. The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities.

(i) The verbal action of the participants.

(ii) The non-verbal action of the participants.

B. The relevant objects.

C. The effect of the verbal action.

Firth's taxonomy has then to be applied to language events and in this way contexts of situation and types of language function can be grouped and classified.

**The relevant features of participants** (persons, personalities):

1. Susan Fletcher, NSA (National Security Agency) head cryptographer

2. Young guard

3. Stocky sentry

(i) **The verbal action of the participants:** *'ID, please' ... Thank you, Ms Fletcher ...*

(ii) **The non-verbal action of the participants:** *Susan's Volvo sedan rolled to a stop ... A young guard placed his hand on the roof ... He gave an imperceptible sign ... a stocky sentry with two attack dogs and a machine gun glanced down at her license plate and waved her through ...*

**The relevant objects:** ten-foot-high, barbed Cyclone fence ... her card ...equally imposing electrified fence ... final checkpoint ... machine gun

**The effect of the verbal action:** *Susan obliged and settled in ...*

According to Firth's theories, the meaning of what is going on is clear when all these features are analyzed and considered together.

The importance of the context of situation in the identification of meaning is linked to another Firthian tenet, that is to say 'the notions of personality and language' which are considered by Firth as vectors of the continuity of repetitions in the social process Manca, (2012).

### 2.2.3 Halliday and the Context of Situation

As previously mentioned, Halliday (1985a) takes up both Malinowski's and Firth's ideas. In order to describe the importance of the context of situation in communication, he makes us think about the way in which we communicate. He says (1985a:9) "*What is remarkable is how often people do understand each other despite the noise with which we are continually surrounded. How do we explain the success with which people communicate? The short answer, I shall suggest, is that we know what the other person is going to say. We may be partly surprised; but the surprise will always be within the framework of something that we knew was going to happen*".

Successful interactions are possible because we make predictions based on the context of situation. It provides a lot of information about the meanings that are being exchanged and that are likely to be exchanged.

In order to show the systematic relationship existing between language and the social environment he provides his own taxonomy of the context of situation, adapted below:

1. **The field of discourse**, that is to say what is going on, the nature of the social action;
2. **The tenor of discourse**, which refers to the participants, their statuses and roles, their permanent and temporary relationships;
3. **The mode of discourse** that is to say the role language is playing, the symbolic organization of the text, its status, its function in the context, the channel and the rhetorical mode.

Halliday argues that such an analysis of the context allows us to represent the system that lies behind the unconscious process of producing and understanding texts in a context of situation.

The notion of context of situation is also strictly linked to the concept of register. It means that the features of the context of situation somehow constrain the lexis and the expressions that can be used.

## **2.3 Elements of Context Situation**

Context-based Situation Categories are the three main elements described by Halliday.

### **2.3.1 Field of Discourse Definition**

Field of discourse is defined as “the total event, in which the text is functioning, together with the purposive activity of the speaker or writer; it thus includes the subject-matter as one element in it” (Halliday 1994, 22). The field describes activities and processes that are happening at the time of speech. The analysis of this parameter focuses on the entire situation, e.g. when a mother talks to her child.

### **2.3.2 The mode of discourse**

The mode of discourse refers to “the function of the text in the event, including therefore both the channel taken by the language – spoken or written, extempore or prepared – and its [genre], or rhetorical mode, as narrative, didactic, persuasive, ‘phatic communion’ and so on” (Halliday 1994, 22). This variable determines the role and function of language in a particular situation. When analyzing the mode of a text, the main question is ‘What is achieved by the use of language in this context?’ For example, a fairy tale (in written form) may have a narrative or entertaining function. A spoken conversation can be argumentative (in a discussion) or phatic (e.g. to contact someone or to keep in touch with someone).

### **2.3.3 Tenor of discourse**

Tenor of discourse (sometimes also referred to as style; cf. Esser 2009, 78) describes the people that take part in an event as well as their relationships and statuses. “The tenor refers to the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary, among the participants involved” (Halliday 1994, 22.). There might be a specific hierarchy between the interlocutors, e.g. when the head of a business talks to an employee, or they may have only a temporary relationship, e.g. when a person asks an unknown pedestrian for the time.

All three variables (field, mode, tenor) taken together enable people to characterize the situational context specifically, and, thus, to recreate part of the language that is being used (cf. Halliday 1994, 22f.). Halliday provides the following example to explain the significance of collective information about the three parameters:

“For instance, if we specify a field such as ‘personal interaction, at the end of the day, with the aim of inducing contentment through recounting of familiar events’, with mode ‘spoken monologue, imaginative narrative, extempore’ and tenor ‘intimate, mother and three-year-old child’, we can reconstruct a great deal of this kind of bedtime story [...]” (Halliday 1994, 22f.)

## **2.4 Features of Context**

J. R. Firth, regarded by many as the founder of modern British linguistics, proposed an approach to the principled description of social contexts which bears a close resemblance to more recent descriptions which we shall examine:

“My view was, and still is, that ‘context of situation’ is best used as a suitable schematic construct to apply to language events... A context of situation for linguistic work brings into relation the following categories:

A. The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities.

(i) The verbal action of the participants.

(ii) The non-verbal action of the participants.

B. The relevant objects.

C. The effect of speech act.” Zhu, (2010).

## **2.5 Functional Text Analysis of Context Situation**

The following section is an overview of how texts are functionally analyzed against context situation (Field, tenor and mode).

### **2.5.1 Field**

The field of a text tells you which domain of experience the text is about: family life, religious observance, law enforcement, medicine, etc.

Field is an element of the experiential metafunction of a text. When analyzing a text for its field, you will want to examine:

- The lexical items.

The field of a text can easily be determined by examining the lexical words in the text, or even just the nouns. You will want to find an answer to these two questions:

Semantic domains: Which discipline do the lexical words refer to?

Certain words are more common in one discipline than in another. You could prove this by corpus research, otherwise use your own intuition, specialized dictionaries, etc.

Because semantic domains are inherently hierarchical and overlapping, we may make a very general pronouncement (“this text is about science”) or a very specific one (“this text is about particle



physics”). A text may also refer to more than one semantic domain  
Michal Boleslav, (2005).

**Specialization:** How well known are the lexical words to a general audience and to a specialized audience?

Again, your own intuition or dictionaries or corpus research could help you judge this.

- The process and circumstance types. For example, in news text ‘about’ a terrorist attack, a large proportion of the participants will refer to terrorists and a large proportion of the processes will refer to acts of terrorism Boleslav, (2005).

### **2.5.2 Tenor**

The tenor of a text tells you:

- What kind of person the author is, or is presenting himself/herself to be.
- What kind of people the expected audience are.
- What the relationship between them is, or what relationship the author is presenting it as.

Tenor is easiest to analyze in spoken conversations when all speakers are present and participating. Tenor is more difficult to analyze in written texts when the author is anonymous and when the recipients are not present.

Tenor is a component of the interpersonal meta-function of a text.

#### **Tenor in interactive texts**

Interactive texts are usually spoken and include a face-to-face conversation, a telephone conversation, but not a prepared lecture. Some written texts are also interactive, for example a real-time Internet chat. To a lesser extent, written texts directed at a single participant known to the writer (as opposed to those directed at the public) are also interactive.

### **Social distance (familiarity, friendliness)**

The degree of distance between participants can usually be detected from the presence or absence of informal language. For example:

- Use of colloquial vocabulary: “I’ve got a lump” (colloquial) instead of “I’ve developed a lump” (formal).
- Use of a dialect: “We’ve had us jabs for flu” (dialect) instead of “We’ve had jabs for flu” (standard).
- Use of terms of address: given names, nicknames, pet names indicate closeness, formal names indicate distance.
- Presence of contractions: “I’ll” (informal) instead of “I will” (formal).
- Presence of ellipsis: deliberately failing to mention something out of shared knowledge means presuming that both parties know it. People who are close have shared knowledge (shared experiences in the past, etc.).

These features may be an indication of actual social distance or closeness between the participants, or they may be deliberate attempts to make the writer appear closer to his/her intended readers, perhaps to persuade them for something. This is a common technique in tabloid journalism where it is known as synthetic personalization.

### **Tenor in non-interactive texts**

Non-interactive texts are (usually) written texts directed at the public, as opposed to texts directed at a single person known to the author. Some spoken texts are also non-interactive, such as lectures and rehearsed speeches. When analyzing a non-interactive text for its tenor, you want to find out how the personality of the author (or of the institution the author belongs to) is projected in the text. This projection is called a persona.

## **Personalization**

Personalization of a text refers to whether the speaker is revealed in the text and drawn attention to, such as by the use of the personal pronoun “I”, or whether he/she is obscured and underplayed. Personalization also refers to whether the audience is referred to and drawn attention to, such as by the use of the personal pronoun “you”. Finally, the personal pronoun “we” is also an example of personalization, referring to both the author and the audience.

Personalization is usually achieved with these techniques:

- Personal pronouns.
- Directives (“Click here to...”, “Don’t panic”)
- Rhetorical questions (“What’s a girl to do?”)
- Questions seemingly coming from the reader or from another, imagined participant.

Personalization can be used for many purposes:

- To position the audience as agreeing, thereby making it difficult for them to disagree. Example: “Surely you of all people see that Darwin’s theory of evolution cannot explain human nature.”
- To create a feeling of solidarity between the author and the audience (“we”).
- To create a feeling of intimacy.
- To create an impression of the interactivity of a one-to-one conversation (“pseudo interactivity”)

## **Relative status (equality, inequality)**

When analyzing an interactive text for its tenor, you will be interested in the status of the participants to each other. Are they equal, or is there some amount of equality between them? This will typically be reflected in the choices the speakers make while speaking.

### **2.5.3 Mode**

The mode of a text tells about the method the text appears to have been produced in. Mode is an element of the textual metafunction of a text.

#### **Axes of the Mode continuum**

The Mode of a text can be modeled as a point in a continuum defined by axes such as these:

- The spoken/written axis: some texts are prototypical spoken texts (such as a face to-face conversation) and display signs of high interactivity; others are prototypical written texts (such as a scientific journal article) and display no signs of interactivity at all. Between them there is a continuum of texts which carry characteristics of both, such as radio programmes and personal letters.
- The action/reflection axis: depending on how close in time a text is to the events it describes, it may display signs of spontaneity. For example a dialog during a sports match is bound to be more spontaneous than a newspaper report on the same match the next day.

#### **Interactivity**

You will want to find out if the text was constructed in an interactive process. Typical indicators of an interactively produced text are:

- The presence of terms of address.
- The presence of attention attracting words, such as “look”.
- The presence of questions and answers.

Further indicators may help you determine the precise nature of the interaction:

- Face-to-face conversations. These are usually indicated by:
  - Turn-taking.
  - Interruptions.
  - Overlaps.
  - Hesitators.
  - Supportive feedback (“right”, “OK”, “yep”, “really?”).
  - Deictic references to the shared physical environment (“Could we move that into this corner here?”).
  - Intentionally vague language if the vagueness concerns information which can be found in the shared environment. Example: “this thing” instead of “this chair” because the speakers are in the same environment, which gives them shared knowledge, which gives them enough contexts to figure out what “thing”, refers to.
- Discourse markers, for example:
  - “Anyway” to indicate that the speaker wishes to return to another topic.
  - “Right” to indicate that the speaker is ready to move to another topic.
  - The thematic organization of the text is such that:  
The experiential themes are often pronouns (“I”, “you”).  
The interpersonal themes are often interrogative words (“how”, “when”).
- Oral/aural conversations when the participants can’t see each other, such as a telephone call.  
These are indicated by the same features as face-to-face conversations but usually lack the deictic references and the intentionally vague language (although there are exceptions, such as when both participants are looking at a copy of the same document).
- Written exchanges.

- Synchronous, e.g. Internet chat.

Even though these are written rather than spoken, they usually bear the same characteristics as oral/aural conversations.

- Asynchronous, e.g. e-mail discussions.

These usually involve repetition or quoting of what others have said in preparation for a response.

These indicators may be a reflection of the way the text was actually produced, or they may be a deliberate attempt to make the text appear interactive, typically with the intention to make the audience feel involved. Typical techniques are:

- Apparently direct address to the audience: “You can bet that...”.
- Use of (rhetorical) questions: “Just how much damage can they do?”
- Responses to an imagined contribution from the audience or from another speaker/writer: “Sure, we all know...”.

### **Spontaneity**

As part of analyzing a text for its mode, you will want to answer:

- Whether the text seems to have been produced on the spot/on the fly/in real time/on-line, that is without an opportunity to edit or correct it.
- Or whether it seems to have been produced off-line, in a situation when it is possible to edit and correct it before it is finally presented to the audience.

Note that this distinction refers to spoken as well as to written texts. Spoken texts can also be prepared and rehearsed before delivery.

These are the indicators of spontaneous text:

- There are pauses and hesitations.
- There are mid-utterance corrections and reformulations.

- There is qualification of what has been said before.
- There are mid-utterance changes of syntax.
- There is repetition.
- There are abrupt changes of topic.
- Clauses have heads, e.g. “The white house on the corner, is that where she lives?”
- Clauses have tails, e.g. “It can leave you feeling very weak, shingles, can’t it?”
- Adverbials are placed arbitrarily, in places where they would not occur in a preplanned text. Example: “I was worried I was going to lose it and I did, almost”.
- There are chains of clauses connected with coordinating conjunctions, typically “and”: “... and ... and ... and ...”.
- Subordinate clauses are used as if they were coordinate clauses.  
Examples:
  - o A: “Well actually one person has applied.”

B: “Mm.”

C: “Which is great.” [Would be “(And) that is great” if not spontaneous.]

D: “Though it’s all relative, of course.” [“Though” would be omitted if not spontaneous.]

## **2.6 Communicative effectiveness**

A text is effective if it succeeds in achieving its purpose. The purpose of a text can be anything from the communication of factual information to convincing the audience of the validity of certain opinions. In all cases, the communicative effectiveness can be judged in two broad areas:

- Whether the text lays out its experiential content in the best possible way for the receiver to follow easily. This is dealt with under “Thematic organization” and “Cohesion” further below.
- Whether the text satisfies the expectations of its register in terms of its Field, Mode and Tenor.

This document deals with the communicative effectiveness of more or less prototypical written texts, such as newspaper articles and scientific texts.

### **2.6.1 Suitability to register**

A text is effective if it is suitable to the register of which it claims to be an instance. This includes:

- **Field:** A text is effective if the Field as constructed by the text is identical to the Field intended for the text. In other words, a text is effective if it appears to be “about” what it is meant to be “about”.
- **Mode:** A text is effective if it displays the characteristics of its intended mode. For example, a scientific journal is deemed effective if it constructs its mode in accordance with the customs of scientific articles, namely with low interactivity and low spontaneity.
- **Tenor:** A text is effective if it constructs the expected tenor for the participants. For example a political speech is deemed effective if its tenor is such that the speaker appears confident about the information presented. A speech where the speaker comes across as uncertain would be judged as ineffective.

### **2.7 EFL Text Discourse on Context Situation**

It is believed that taking discourse analysis on EFL written text reflects some of their understanding about the context situation.



### **2.7.1 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is the study of relationship between language and the context where it is used McCarthy, (1991). It examines how sentence in spoken and written language from larger meaningful units in various social contexts ranging from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk. Thus the data resulting from discourse analysis illustrates that the language use for human communication is intertwined socially, cognitively and linguistically Hatch, (1992)

### **2.8 Previous Studies**

Following are previous studies done in the same field of the current study with slight variations of the topics being discussed.

#### **(1) Study of Debora (2010). Context, register and genre: Implications for language education.**

The study explores from a systemic functional linguistics perspective, the relation among the concepts of ‘context’, ‘register’ and language education.

The study adopts the systemic functional linguistics theory in analyzing the data for the study purpose.

The study found that the notions of register and genre can be used to make students aware of the sociocultural features of the text-type that is being taught and of which linguistic choices are more likely to be made in its textualization, as well as to help teachers to identify and focus on whatever aspect of language in use the learner needs most help with.

## **(2) Study of Philip L. Graber (2001). Context in Text. A Systemic (Functional Analysis of the Parable of the Sower)**

The aim of this study was to investigate the aspects of context are embedded in texts. The method adopted in the study was a discourse done in some scripts of religious texts extract from different sources from different libraries.

The study found that language of the text plays a constituting role in the social activity in which it engaged. The study also stated that the relationships between three linguistically relevant variables of context of situation — field, tenor and mode — and the semantic functions that realize them are in great degree.

### **2.9 Summary**

The research has provided some overview over the study topic from literature review along with previous studies that have discussed the same topic. The researcher notices that the two studies are in agreement to the current study in term of hypotheses claims.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology**

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter the researcher reviews the methodology adopted in the study. The sample used and the method of data collection along with procedure followed is discussed as well. The researcher reviews also the validity and reliability on data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

In its quest to reach the desired outcome, the study has adopted the descriptive analytical method where primary data have been collected from students' test. The discourse analysis has been done on their produced text. The secondary data source was obtained from literature review done with regard to study topic and the previous studies. The reason behind adopting such method is to obtain overall result and finding of the problem being tackled. The two methodologies combined can give a full picture of the picture of the aspects of the problem.

#### **3.2 Study sample**

The researcher has chosen (40) students who study English as a foreign language at Sudan University of Science and Technology.. The sample has been extracted from the entire population available in the department of English language. The researcher has delivered the test papers to (50) students who represents the sample.

### **3.3 Tools and Instruments**

The only tool used in this study is a test designed for students which consists of two questions. The questions required from students to write down text to two different audiences: administration and a friend.

#### **3.3.1 The Test**

The done was done to obtain the required results about the context situation elements that students may use as well as reflecting the different aspects of their understanding how to distinguish between them. The test paper consists of two questions wit. The first question covers the claim research hypotheses.

### **3.4 Procedures**

The researcher has delivered the sample of the study test papers and asked them to accurately write down two different letters to distinctly two different audiences. For paving the way for students to give the perfect performance, the researcher advised participants to take the test in an empty hall without giving their names. The data have been collected then and analysis was done through discourse analysis measure where the collected texts are measure to meet the elements of context situation.

A functional analysis was done for the obtained data. The researcher provides comments for further demonstration.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

For accuracy and guaranteed result, the researcher has consulted experts in the design of the test paper. Some modifications were made and the final version of the paper was printed.

The reliability analysis was done through SPSS program and the result was obtained with degree of 91.4% which indicates the reliability of the test questions.

**Chapter Four**  
**Data Analysis and Discussion**

# Chapter Four

## Data Analysis and Discussion

### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher analyzes the test data obtained from students writing. Brief comments are provided for more explanation.

#### Analysis of Students' Text:

From collected data of the test, students' texts are analyzed according to their awareness of context situation (field, tenor and mode).

### 4.1 Field Discourse Analysis in Students' Text

	Frequencies	Percentages
Using of lexical words	124	68.7%
Semantic domain	34	18.7%
Specialization	23	12.6%

The table above shows the statics in frequencies and percentages of students' "using lexical words", semantic domain and specialization when they write text in different context situation. The table result shows how students are aware of using field discourse in their writing.

As can be seen in the table, students use about (124) lexical words with percentage (68.7%). The words used are the indicators of the field of the text being written. Students use (34) words in semantic domain to distinguish the field of the first text with percentage (18.7%). The use of specialization is the minimum one as they only use (23) possible specialized words with percentage (12.6%).

Students are asked to write about complaint letter to the university administration about the lack of English language labs. Most of the participants use words refer to English specialization, with words have



relationship with learning English. It is noticed that students tend to speak about the learning language rather than focusing on the main problem of the letter.

The obvious thing in students letter is that the majority of them pay no much attention to the field discourse. Most of the letters do not accurately explain the problem or the issue being discussed.

It is noticed also students use more lexical words known for specialized audience, which a positive indication for distinguishing the field of the text.

#### **4.2 Mode Discourse Analysis of the Students Text**

The mode of a text tells about the method the text appears to have been produced in. Mode is an element of the textual meta-function of a text.

##### **Interactivity**

Some texts are prototypical spoken texts (such as a face-to-face conversation) and display signs of high interactivity, others are prototypical written texts (such as a scientific journal article) and display no signs of interactivity at all.

In the written texts of students, the researcher notices that no interactive indicators are used to get the receiver involved in the text such as (*Look!, as we see here, this one...etc*).

The written text, as this one is always non-interactive text where no instant involvement of the receiver.

##### **Spontaneity**

As part of analyzing a text for its mode, we need to see whether the text seems to have been produced on the spot/on the fly/in real time/on-line, that is without an opportunity to edit or correct it. Or whether it

seems to have been produced off-line, in a situation when it is possible to edit and correct it before it is finally presented to the audience.

Note that this distinction refers to spoken as well as to written texts. Spoken texts can also be prepared and rehearsed before delivery.

As noticed in the first part of students test, the produced text has no indicators of interactive tools, rather students use forms of sentences normally occur in preplanned text. For example:

- *"The lab is badly needed, for we lack many skills need to be mastered"* instead of informal "We need the labs, badly".
- *"It is always good to have English lab"*.

### **4.3 Tenor Discourse Analysis of the First text**

Tenor is easiest to analyze in spoken conversations when all speakers are present and participating. Tenor is more difficult to analyze in written texts when the author is anonymous and when the recipients are not present.

Tenor is a component of the interpersonal metafunction of a text.

Non-interactive texts are (usually) written texts directed at the public, as opposed to texts directed at a single person known to the author. Some spoken texts are also noninteractive, such as lectures and rehearsed speeches. When analyzing a non-interactive text for its tenor, you want to find out how the personality of the author (or of the institution the author belongs to) is projected in the text. This projection is called a persona.

In the first part of the text the researcher analyzes the written text of the students' against personalization, standing and stance.

#### ***Personalization***

The researcher applied corpus analysis to the (30) students who write about the first part and the following results are obtained.

Items	Frequency of Occurrences	Percentage
We, I	85	58%
You	42	28.7%
Directives	19	13.3%

The table above shows the frequencies and percentages of using personalization in the written text by students.

As it can be seen in the table, students use pronouns (*We and I*) frequently to get the reader involved in the letter. This is type of personalization which is used to draw attention of the audience. Probably the purpose here is to create a feeling of solidarity between the author and the audience (administration). Many examples can be found:

- *"We can look at the problem as educational..."*.
- *"We have to find solution..."*.
- *"I believe that conducting labs for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year...."*

Students also use (*You*) to refer to the audience, and in the test (42) pronoun is used with percentage (13.3%).

The researcher notices also students use directives in many occasions in their text. The aim behind using directives is to draw audience attention and have them involved in the text. Many example can be seen as follows:

- *"Suppose that..."*.
- *"Imagine if ...."*.

## Personalization

Students use Personalization in their written text with few examples can be found as follows:

*"It is necessary that ....."* instead of "you should". *"...and it is important that..."* instead of "You have to...".

## Standing

Standing tells you how much of a claim the author lays to expertise and authority. The standing of a text here answers the following questions: (1) Does the writer come across as being in a position to criticize or give praise? (2) Does the writer come across as being in a position to tell other people what to do?

Writers achieve standing of a text by actually criticizing or giving praise, and this can be detected by the presence of evaluative expressions. Evaluative expressions are such expressions which go beyond describing undisputable facts and express an opinion on facts. Few examples can be witnessed in the written text such as:

- *"weak base of English..."*.
- *"unprepared nature..."*.

Criticism and praise may be given in less obvious ways as well and when that happens, it is an example of the tenor being manipulated deliberately.

Writers achieve standing of a text by telling or recommending people what to do. This can be detected by the presence of imperative sentences (very obvious) and the presence of meanings involving obligation and necessity (less obvious), for example *"will have to"*, *"can no longer afford"*, *"should"*, *"must"*.

## Stance

In analyzing the stance of students' text we evaluate the attitudes and modality. The attitude of a text tells you whether positive, negative or neutral meanings are expressed. The modality of a text is an aggregate of various meanings relating to permission, ability, obligation, necessity, volition, and prediction.

### Attitude:

As the researcher notices from the obtained data, negative expressions are used by students to express their attitude towards the lack of English labs, for example "*weak, bad and inappropriate*".

Students use asserted attitudes rarely to express their thoughts about the problem. This kind of attitude can be seen in forms like "*the weak base of English skills is the most important thing that is to be dealt with...*"

### Modality:

	Examples	Frequency	Percentage
Modal verbs	Can, could, may, must	65	67%
Semi modal verbs	Have to	14	14.4%
Words expressing modality	Need to, necessity and possible	18	18.6%

The table above shows the statistical result of modality occurrence in students' text from the test. As it is noticed, the modal verbs are the most frequent used one (65) with percentage (67%). The use of semi modal verbs is (14) with percentage (14.4%) while using words expressing modality is (18) with associated percentage (18.6%).

Students use attitude and modality to strengthen their idea in the message deliver to specific audience as is the case in their letter to the collage administration (test: part one).

#### **4.4 Overall Result**

Looking at the produced text of students in the test, there are many obstacles that encounter them in using context situation elements. Although the letters most of them write are comprehensible but lack the proper attention to context situation. The problem is that students face is in the mode the follow in their text writing. The field specification is much easier for them as can be noticed clearly in the test.

**Chapter Five**  
**Conclusion, Findings, Recommendations and**  
**Suggestions**

# **Chapter Five**

## **Conclusion, Findings, Recommendations and Suggestions**

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the Importance of Distinguishing Context of Situation (Field, Tenor and Mode) in Passage.

To achieve the desired goal of the study, descriptive approaches were used along with test paper as tool for data collection. The research has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the research methodology and framework. In the second chapter, the researcher reviews the topic of the research in literature. The third chapter is the methodology of the research, while the fourth chapter is data analysis where the researcher discussed the obtained results. The fifth chapter concludes the research with findings and some recommendations. The researcher also provided some suggestions for further studies.

### **5.1 Findings**

Based on the data analysis, the research has reached into the following findings:

- 1- There is big role of distinguishing the context situation on understanding the meaning of a written passage.
- 2- The awareness of students about the context situation helps in delivering meaningful text and also helps them understand the spoken/written text as well.
- 3- Few students pay attention to elements of context situation (field, tenor and mode) when they write a passage.



- 4- Most of the students lack the knowledge about the context situation and as a result their texts lack the accuracy and the clear meaning.
- 5- The functional analysis shows that students need to know how properly can use the elements of context situation in their writing and spoken text.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings obtained, the researcher recommends the following:

- 1- Great attention must be paid to context situation as it is important and help in giving the text its meaningful shape.
- 2- Students have to measure their written/spoken text according to context situation in order to deliver meaningful message for the audience.
- 3- Researches need to be conducted in the area of context situation for students need to know its importance in written/spoken text. These researcher help the author and audience of a text know how to engage properly through it.

## **5.3 Suggestion for Further Researches**

- As this study limited to university level students, conducting researches that investigate the problem in secondary level would be of great help.
- The sample of the study needs to be in large scale and the selection of the participants to be according to many variables (educational background, reading books...etc).

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# **Appendix**

## Test

Following is a *test* designed for research purpose. Please write down the topic in your simple easy language. The researcher assures that the data will be kept confidentially for research purpose only

Thanks,

Najat Abdo Ahmed, M.A degree candidate

### **Part One: in Short**

- Write down a complaint letter to your collage administrations about the lack of English language Labs

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**Part Two: In short**

- Tell your friend in Britain about the weather in Sudan

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