



Logical Arguments Features in Tertiary's Writing

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the features of logical argument used by Sudanese university students in their writing. A descriptive, analytic research method was adopted. To collect the qualitative data, a questionnaire was utilized and distributed to 30 males and females students majoring English at Al .Neelain University. The findings of the study indicated that the Sudanese EFL students' writing was almost void of logical argument features. The study also recommended the replication of this study elsewhere so as to arrive more results.

Key words: descriptive- analytic- logical-argument- EFL students

المستخلص

هدف هذه الدراسة هو استقصاء السمات الجدلية المنطقية التي يستخدمها طلاب الجامعات السودانية في كتابتهم. فقد تم استخدام المنهج التحليلي الوصفي. و لجمع البيانات الكيفية، تم استخدام استبانة وزعت على ثلاثين طالب و طالبة يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كتخصص رئيس في جامعة النيلين. أشارت نتائج الدراسة الى أن كتابات طلاب الجامعات السودانية تكاد خالية من السمات الجدلية المنطقية. وقد أوصت الدراسة بإجراء هذه الدراسة في مجتمع دراسي آخر حتى يتم الحصول على نتائج أكثر.

كلمات مفتاحية: وصفي ، تحليل ، منطقي ، حجة ، الطلاب الذين يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Overview

According to Oxford English Dictionary (OED), argument might be defined as a connected series of statements or reasons intended to establish a position; a process of reasoning and thus includes what is termed 'argumentation'. Grounding on the nature of this complicated definition ,it is clear that argument seems to be an obstacle that hindering learners' writing skill. This idea is supported by Clarke (1984) who suggests that argument would hinder the children's writing competence due to the lack of their exposure to models of argumentative discourse. According to some researches, little is known about the teaching and learning of argument (Freedman, 1984). Therefore, it is necessary to approach the problems encountering students in argumentative writing. However, when arguing, it is

significant to persuade. Persuasion in writing intends to convince readers to believe in an idea and to do an action. Many writings such as criticism, reviews, reaction papers, editorials, proposals, advertisements and brochures use different ways of persuasion to influence readers. However, persuasion would not be achieved unless it based on logical perspectives. Logic is defined as a formal system of analysis that assists writers to invent, demonstrate and prove their arguments. Thus, between the extreme of argumentation and extreme of logic, the Sudanese university students are reported to produce inappropriate features of logic when they are writing. So, one of the impetuses for conducting the present study is to examine the logical arguments used by the Sudanese university students in their writing.



Research Questions

This study attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1- To what extent do Sudanese university students present factual information to support their writing?
- 2- To what extent do Sudanese University students derive conclusions from known information?
- 3- To what extent do Sudanese university students use credible supporting materials in their writing?

Research Hypotheses

In order to answer the research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1- The Sudanese EFL students do not present factual information to support their writing.
- 2-- The Sudanese EFL students do not derive conclusions from their known information.
- 3- The Sudanese EFL students do not use credible supporting materials in their writing.

Literature Review

Argumentation knowledge

Argumentation knowledge is essential for writers. It consists of structure, substance and appeals of argumentation. According to Chase's (2011) model, the aspects of the knowledge structure are summarized as follows:

- Introduction that gives an idea about the purpose of the essay.
- Conclusion that offers a summary for the whole essay.
- Standpoint which describes the writer's belief.
- Reasons answering the question being addressed in the standpoint.

- Coordinative reasons which are dependent on one another so as to defend the standpoint.
- Subordinative reasons consisting of a series of reasons where one reason represents a standpoint for the other.
- Convergent reason consist of more than one reason for the same standpoint.
- Alternative standpoint which is directly opposed to the writer's stated standpoint.
- Rebuttal is the statement that refutes the standpoint.
- Reason for rebuttal support e rebuttal.
- Nonfunctional unit includes: receptions, other information that does not appear to be relevant to the topic, and illegible or nonsensical information.
- Functional marker serves a particular purpose for the writer, and often used a transition to introduce reason, arguments and standpoints.
- Rhetorically functional repetition occurs when the writer restates previously expressed reasons, arguments or standpoints.

On the other hand, (Connor, 1990; McCann, 1989) claim that the soundness of the argument, is assessed against three criteria (1) the acceptability of reason; (2) the relevance or support the reason provides for the claim; (3) the sufficiency/adequacy the reason provides for the claim. With regard to the efficacy of appeal of argumentation, it is evaluated in terms of content appropriation, sensitivity to reader and evidence of control Connor (1985).

Previous research has shown that EFL/ESL students experience serious difficulties in the composing process.



One of these difficulties is how to produce a well-connected and coherent piece of writing. In order to help students to understand the importance of producing a unified and solid piece of writing many researchers conducted studies in this respect. Abdullah (2000), for example, found that Sudanese university students were not able to make correct use of written discourse properties, which eventually reduces the overall writing quality. He adds that the average writing of student was characterized by a variety of coherence breaks such as misleading paragraph division and irrelevance.

Studies also reveal that some students avoid the use of cohesive devices in writing and others overuse them. This makes their writing appear awkward. Part of the reasons behind the difficulties students face in this respect resides in the teachers' ignorance of the importance of coherence and cohesion. Therefore, the studies recommend that teachers should first appreciate the importance of coherence and cohesion and then endeavor to raise students' awareness of them when writing in English.

Adopting strategies necessary for producing appropriate written texts is one of the challenges that EFL students face. Success in adopting the right writing strategies is an important step towards producing texts which are communicative in nature. So, instruction in writing strategies needs to address these challenges so that the students can succeed in producing effective texts. El Abed (1991) claims that there are no significant differences in writing quantity and quality between students who write with prewriting activities and those who

do not. However, it is obvious that adopting such activities can result in better writing.

As reported by Al Mubarak, A. A. (2017) the study shows that the students faced numerous challenges relating to Academic writing at university level. Successful academic writing is considered of utmost importance to the academic accomplishment of the English as second language students, especially in content areas in the contexts of tertiary levels. The present study investigated the challenging aspects of academic writing encountered by the students at the Al-Imam Al Mahdi University in Sudan. The significant results from this research revealed that students sample were not familiar with the academic writing strategies. It is noteworthy that academic writing is reportedly considered as the most common activity at the university level. It was discovered that many challenges about academic writing experienced by the students while writing, they were articles, punctuation, prepositions, irregular verbs, poor expressions, consistency paralleled structure, and used of verb tense.

Materials and Methods

In the current study, a descriptive, analytic research method is adopted. The qualitative data will be collected via a questionnaire.

Population and Sampling

The population is a complete set of elements (persons or things) that possess some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher. The population of this study was composed of the EFL teachers and students majoring English Al-Neelain University.



Concerning the students, they were the students who were in the first, the second and the third levels. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21. Most of them were native speakers of Arabic. Very few of them were second language English speakers (Nigerians). Some of them had received their primary and secondary education in some of the Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Oman.

With regard to the choice of the aforementioned subjects, it was determined by some factors. For instance, the students were in a position (English learners) which might help in providing deep insights into the use of vocabulary learning strategies. Teachers, on the other hand, were the most experienced to provide beneficial information about the syllabus.

Sampling

Sampling is a process of selecting a few from a bigger group. Creswell (2009) claims that sample designs are divided into two types: probability (random) and non-probability. Kothari (2004) claims that while non-probability sampling involves deliberate selection of items, the probability sampling does not. It is worth mentioning that both probability and non-probability sampling are further categorized to include multiple types of samples. In the current study, a non-probability sampling technique was adopted. This technique is projected in using convenience sampling which is a subcategory of non-probability sampling. This type of sampling has been selected because it appears ideal for testing entire population, for its inexpensiveness, fastness and availability. In addition, convenient sampling is useful for

detecting relationships among different phenomena.

In the current study, the students chosen for sampling consisted of 30 students at Al. Neelain University, the third level.

Questionnaire

Brown (2001, p.6) states that a questionnaire refers to “*any written instruments that provide respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers*”. Adding to that, questionnaires allow researchers to gather information that learners are able to report about themselves such as their beliefs and their motivation about learning or their reactions to learning and classroom activities and instructions. On the other hand, Dornyei (2003, p.8) claims that questionnaires provide the researcher with three types of data about the respondents ‘*factual, behavioral and attitudinal*’. Thus, in the present study, a questionnaire was adopted with the aim of seeking factual and behavioral data towards the strategies that the learners used to discover the meaning of vocabulary and particularly near-synonyms of English.

The learners’ questionnaire (LQ) was formulated in accordance with Likert 5-point Scale. Thus, five choices were given. Participants were asked to choose one of the five choices (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) by ticking the box that suits their actual use of the reasoning strategies.

Procedures of Data Collection

After finishing piloting the instruments, the researcher began collecting data in November 2019.

It took place at the Department of Languages. Prior to data collection process, a short meeting was held with Head of English Department in which the purpose of the study and the process of data collection were explained. During this meeting, permission for data collection was granted to the researcher. Similar short meetings were held with the staff teaching and students in which they were enlightened about the purpose of the study and the need for their participation. Upon granting the participants' willingness, data collection began the following day.

Firstly, the questionnaire was administered. Before handing out the questionnaire, the students were told that there was no wrong and right answer to the statements, and that they should respond as honestly and accurately as possible, and that their responses would

remain confidential. Furthermore, the students were provided with an example of how to respond to the questions in the questionnaire.

30 students from the third level completed the questionnaire. The researcher was present when the students were completing the questionnaire in order to answer any question or clarify any item that they might not understand or might find ambiguous. In order to achieve the most possible results of the questionnaire; the students were given a three- day period to answer it. On the third day, all the respondents- except 10- were able to submit their scripts. It is worth mentioning that those who were not able to submit their scripts promised to submit them the following day. After collecting all the scripts, they were coded for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Results of Data Analysis

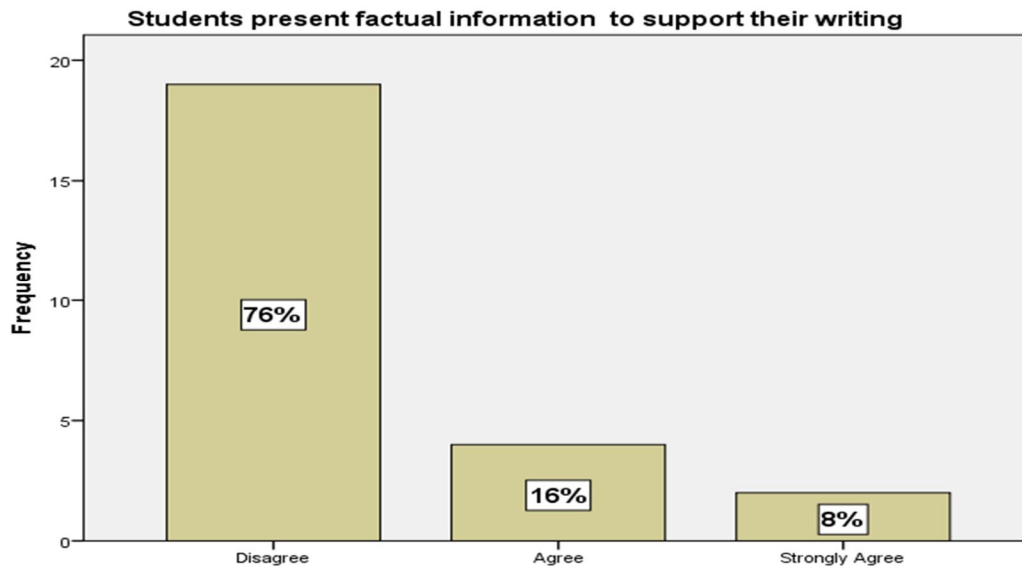
Table 1: The respondents' reported use of logical arguments in their writing

Statement	Number of Respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students present factual information to support their writing	25	2.6	1.04
Students present a sufficient amount of relevant examples in their writing	32	1.6	1.19
Students derive conclusions from known information	28	2.5	1.00
Students use credible supporting materials in their writing	30	1.4	0.50

Scale: 5:Strongly Agree 4: Agree 3:Neutral 2: Disagree 1: Strongly Disagree

Table 1 indicates that all the respondents disagreed with the students' use of ethos in their writing. Such a disagreement is supported by the means indexes that are ranging between (1.4) and (2.6).

Figure 1: Students present factual information to support their writing



The statement; *presenting factual information in the students' writing* was rejected by 76% of the respondents. Despite such a rejection, 16% and another 8% of the respondents agreed on it.

Figure 2: Students present a sufficient amount of relevant examples in their writing

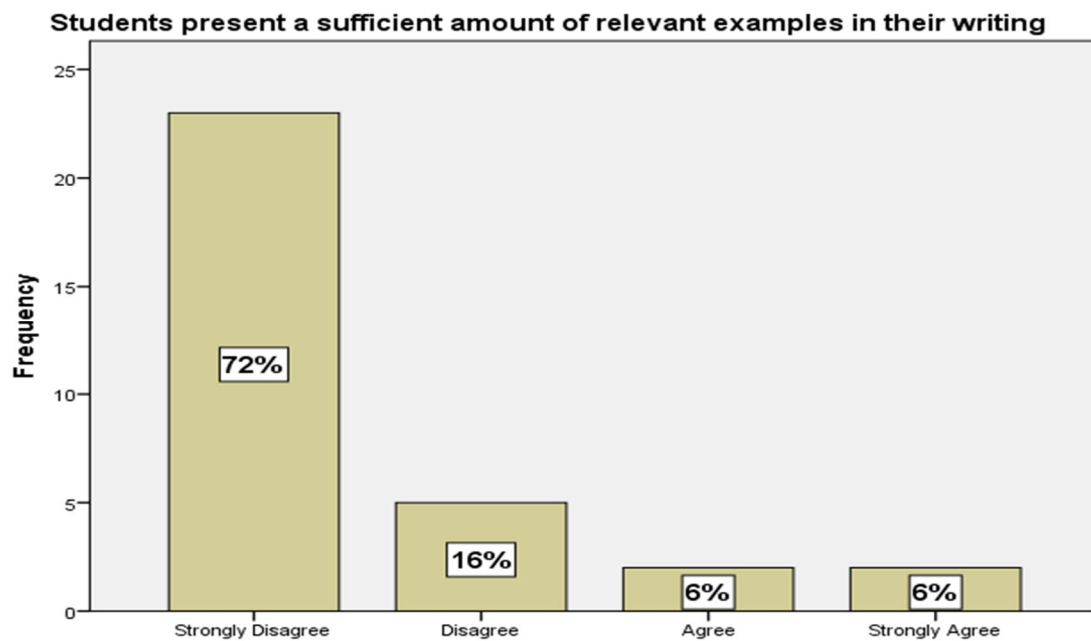
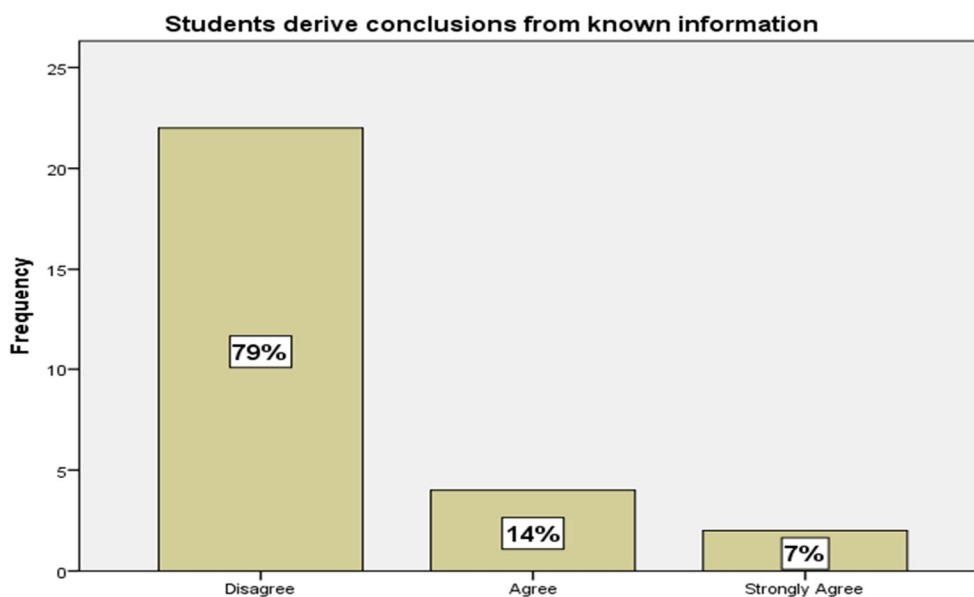


Figure 2 indicates that 72% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement (students present sufficient amount of relevant examples in their writing). This

disagreement was supported by another 16%. Despite such a disagreement, 6% of the respondents agreed on it.

Figure 3: Students derive conclusions from known information



The above figure demonstrates the respondents' disagreement with the statement (*students derive conclusions while writing*). It receives the highest percentage index of 79. In contrast, 21% of the respondents agreed on this statement.

Figure 4: Students use credible supporting materials in their writing

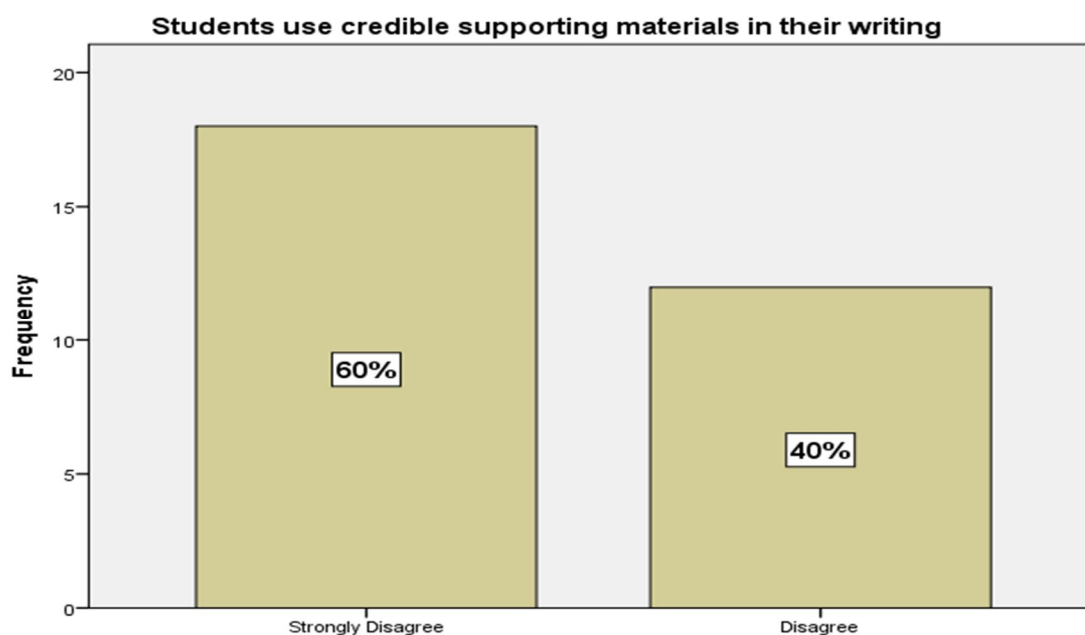


Figure 4 indicates that the respondents unanimously disagreed with the *students' use of supporting materials in their writing*. This disagreement is ranging between strong disagreement which receives a percentage index of 60% and disagreement having the percentage index of 40%.

Discussion and Verification of Hypotheses

This study is conducted to investigate the extent to which Sudanese EFL students use logical arguments in their writing. It also seeks to confirm the following hypotheses:

- 1- The Sudanese EFL students do not present factual information to support their writing.
- 2-- The Sudanese EFL students do not derive conclusions from known information.
- 3- The Sudanese EFL students do not use credible supporting materials in their writing.

Concerning the first hypothesis (*The Sudanese EFL students do not present factual information to support their writing*), the questionnaire results prove that 76% of the learners agreed with this statement, while 16% and 8% disagreed with it. This result might be explained by the fact that the Sudanese EFL learners ignore the techniques of developing a topic sentence such as providing statistic data, exemplification or even scientific information and so on. Another justification might be their ignorance of the topic they are addressing. That is to say, most of the students could not distinguish between factual topic and narrative one when writing. The more you are aware of the nature of topic that you are writing about, the more your writing becomes logical and persuasive. The same result

reached by Abdullah (2000), Leki (1992), Matsuda, (2001, 2003) and Silva, (1997). Regarding the second hypothesis (*The Sudanese EFL students do not derive conclusions from known information*), the results of the questionnaire also indicated that 79% of the students strongly agreed with such a statement. This rejection could be justified by their ignorance of writing techniques. That is, an essay or a paragraph should have end with a concluding sentence that sums up the whole writing. This result is congruent with the result of Mubarak, A. A. (2017) and El Abed (1991). With regard to the third hypothesis claiming that (*The Sudanese EFL students do not use credible supporting materials in their writing*), the result of the questionnaire indicated that 60% of the respondents supported this hypothesis. Lack of credibility might be due to the incredible and unreliable sources of information that are consulted by the students. It might also be referred to the students' ignorance of documenting their information. This result was also reached by Mubarak, A. A. (2017) and El Abed (1991). It is worth mentioning that the Sudanese EFL learners are not accustomed to consult references when writing.

Findings and Conclusion

The current study is an investigation into Sudanese university students' use of logical arguments in their writing. The key findings are that The Sudanese EFL students do not derive conclusions from known information. The findings also indicated that the Sudanese EFL students do not use credible supporting materials in their writing and they do not present factual information to support their writing.



Recommendation of the Study

The researcher recommends that teaching of writing techniques plus the replication of this study elsewhere so as to arrive at more findings.

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