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**A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Students
Writing :**
The Case Study of First Year Master Students in Didactics and Applied
Linguistics .

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requirement for the degree of Master in Linguistics

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the my best persons in my life who are taught me the alphabet and educated me on the principles of life, my father and my mother I love them .

I would like to dedicate this work to my dearest brothers SAMIR and MOHEMED ADAM

My dedication goes to my sisters IBTISSEM . MAHJOUBA .FOZIA . and

AMINA

The dedication extends to all my family without exeption BOUTIBA and BEN YETTOU.

To my friends FATIMA andFATIHA ASSMA SOUAD FOZIA WAHIBA with whom I shared both good sevenirs and hard times.

To my HUSBEND "BEN YATTOU MNAOUER" who made me to love life and to realized my dreams and my success .

For all who know and believe in me

SAMIA

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Abstract

This dissertation aims at investigating the problems that M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics in Mostaganem University face in communicating effectively by means of writing. In addition, it tries to reveal the types of grammatical errors they make in writing. The study conducts a practical investigation through a questionnaire. It is carried out by means of a diagnostic test that is given to thirty participants in the study. This diagnostic test involves writing a fifteen-line paragraph on one of the argumentative topics that are distributed to the participants. Since diagnostic test measures problems, weaknesses, or strengths. After their pieces of writing are analyzed, it is noticed that the subject students of English, at the Master level, are still incapable of producing a coherently and cohesively well-written essay. The findings make the students aware of their mistakes to avoid them.

Keywords: Writing, EFL, Cohesion, Coherence, Writing errors.

General introduction

Having a high level of writing ability is a prediction of future success in professional and academic situations (Weigle, 2002). It helps students to get access to higher education and to its language and literacy resources that are available in higher education for producing written texts (Lillis, 2001). As well, it enables students to meet the demands of the many different professional situations in which they may be working. And having a high level of writing ability means being able to write appropriately and effectively, that is, being able to communicate effectively by means of writing (Raimes, 1983). This high level of writing ability is something that foreign language learners would hope to achieve, especially those FL learners whose academic or professional career success depends on their ability to communicate effectively by means of writing. It is, however, an ability that many FL learners find difficult and problematic (Hedge, 2005). The reason for this is that they may fail to make their writing appropriate and effective despite the fact that they have spent many years developing the skill. This failure is the result of the demands that communicating effectively through writing makes on the learners and the nature of the writing activities.

The ability to write appropriately and effectively in foreign language requires the writer to integrate, during the writing process, a wide range of different types of knowledge—namely, linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge (Bruce, 2010, p.10). Linguistic knowledge encompasses the knowledge of the language system. This means, knowledge of grammar, lexis, and the ability to use this grammatical and lexical knowledge to create an extended written text which makes sense as a whole. Non-linguistic knowledge involves an ability to link the written text to the social and the cultural situations of which it forms a part. Furthermore, it entails an awareness of the writing process through which a writer goes.

The present research aims to, first, investigate the problems M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics in Mostaganem University face in communicating by means of writing. Second, identify whether or not they have grammatical problems in writing. Third, determine whether or not they have problems in writing cohesively and coherently. Fourth, identify how they face problems in linking linguistic features with social and cultural features when producing a written text. Finally, determine whether discourse analysis can be used as an approach that would help to identify a communicative text from uncommunicative texts or not.

Therefore, this study informs the following research questions,

1. Do M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics have problems in communicating effectively through writing?

2. Do they have grammatical problems in writing?
3. Do they have problems in writing cohesively and coherently?
4. Do they face problems in linking linguistic features with social and cultural features when producing a written text?

The findings in this study make the following contributions. They make students aware of the problems they have in communicating by means of writing and therefore prompt them to resolve these problems accordingly. They raise students' awareness of the progress they have made in communicating effectively through writing. In addition, they question the effectiveness of the English language program that is taught at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University to help students to acquire communicative competence in English.

The present study is divided into three chapters. The first and the second chapters are devoted to literature review. In the first chapter, the concept of discourse analysis is introduced. This is because, in this study, discourse analysis is taken as an approach that would help to identify a communicative text from uncommunicative texts. In the second chapter, what a writer has to deal with as s/he produce a piece of writing and the problems s/he may face are presented. The third chapter is devoted to the methodology. It describes the research design, along with the participants, and the collection of data. As well, it includes the interpretation of the collected data, the conclusion, and recommendations.

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CHAPTER ONE

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter explores some theoretical aspects on the study. It defines all about discourse and its relation to the text and context. Also, it deals with defining text, context, cohesion and coherence.

I.1. Discourse Analysis

Just as 'discourse' has numerous meanings, there are equally plentiful conceptualizations of discourse analysis, which have changed over time. Brown and Yule (1983, p.9) refer to it as '*how humans use language to communicate*'. Stubbs (1983, p.1) refers to it as '*attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause; and therefore to study large linguistic units such as conversational exchanges or written texts*'. He later notes that it also refers to '*the study of naturally occurring language*' (p.9), pointing out that some writers, such as, Van Dijk (1983) have used the term "text analysis", which could serve as well as discourse analysis (although text analysis implies a particular European tradition). While some discourse analysts focus on how meaning and structure are signaled in texts. Others, especially since the early 1990s, have used discourse analysis more critically to examine issues relating to power, inequality and ideology.

All forms of discourse analysis, however, have tended to stress the importance of naturally examining occurring texts, even if methods of analysis, focus (e.g. the extent to which intertextuality, methods of production and reception or socio-historical context is considered) and goals have differed. Besides, Burr (1995) claims that the term is an '*umbrella which covers a wide variety of actual research practices with quite different aims and theoretical backgrounds. All take language as their focus of interest*' (p.163). Burr implies that conversation analysis involves a form of discourse analysis, while it could also be argued that

discursive psychology, interactional sociolinguistics and all of the different strands of critical discourse analysis are also forms of discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis has mainly been a qualitative form of analysis; traditionally, it has involved a 'close reading' of a small amount of text, such as, a detailed transcription of a conversation or a magazine article, although in more recent years, discourse analysts have begun to use quantitative or corpus-assisted methods on much larger sets of data. Focusing more on the 'critical' form of discourse analysis, adopted by social psychological research, Burr (1995, pp.160–161) points out that its central beliefs and tenets include viewing research as a co-production between the researchers and those who are being researched, with an acknowledgement that objectivity is an impossibility. Instead, discourse analysts need to use reflexivity, with researchers reflecting on their own position and how that has impacted on the research process and findings. Indeed, it is necessary to know what a discourse is and what a text is, as well as what the difference between them is.

I.2. Text and Discourse

There are instances and individuals who use text and discourse as basically synonymous terms, there is a difference in their definitions as regards agents (who and whom) and purpose fulfilled. In text, agents are not a critical factor: there may be agents, there may not be. For example, in CERN press release texts, there are none and information is being reported. In a novel's text, there are agents, such as, Elizabeth and Darcy in "*Pride and Prejudice*", who carry on a conversational discourse amongst themselves that the reader observes. The purpose of text, therefore, is to relay or communicate information and may often be *non-interactive*, meaning the reader of the text is an observer Yule (1983,P34).

While *discourse* is used in a nontechnical sense to mean conversational communication, linguistics, narratology and literary theory have developed a technical meaning to **discourse**. It is this meaning that confuses the issue of the difference between text and discourse. To start

with, conversational discourse as between you and your friend or Elizabeth and Darcy is a behavioral event, called a recognizable speech event that has an individual purpose. Contrastingly, discourse in linguistics, narratology and literary theory is a social event of multi-layered communication in a variety of media (verbal, textual, visual, and audial) that has an **interactive** social purpose.

To study text, one studies the written words that communicate some information: structure, theme, meaning, rhetorical devices, etc. To study discourse, one studies who is communicating with whom through what medium and for what social purpose. Using this answer as an example. To study or analyze the **text**, one will note the overall structure and most importantly will grasp the meaning of the content as it answers their question. To study or analyze the **discourse**, one will determine who is communicating with whom through what medium and for what the analyze discourse . In this answer It is communicating with you through a textual medium--but not you alone. It is also communicating with the larger social group made up of anyone who reads this after you do--and the discourse goes two ways as you or others comment upon, makes notes about, talk about, etc. its side of the discourse . This answer builds an intricate social network of participants in a multiple-direction interactive discourse. What is the purpose of this discourse? then that is more complex, and there may be many levels of purpose.

Of the many, the most obvious purpose is to answer his question and differentiate between text and discourse. Another purpose is for him to articulate ideas about concepts that are important to him. Another purpose is to respect him--and other readers--personal background and educational system while he do so. This is discourse, and it has multiple interactive layers and also has multiple complex social purposes.

The same analysis can be applied to his conversation with his friend and to the text of *Pride and Prejudice*: He can find the multiple layers in various media that comprise the

social event and the various purposes of discourse. **In summary:** Text is a behavioral non-interactive event restricted to him experience with understanding its characteristics and its meaning or information as its singular purpose. Discourse, in any medium, is a social interactive event with many layers of communication and many layers of purpose. Discourse can be written and / or spoken.

I.3. Written and Spoken Discourse

As was said earlier, a text is the result of an act of communication. Furthermore, it was pointed out that a text may be written or spoken. Here, attention is turned to exploring whether or not there exist differences between spoken and written texts. As Tribble (1996) argues, there are differences between them and they result from the fact that the social context, in which spoken language is used, is different from the social context in which written language is used. In fact, the different social contexts in which spoken and written languages are used affect the structure of the written or spoken text.

In spoken language, because the speaker is in a context where the listener is present, the former can exploit all the prosodic and paralinguistic features to get the meaning across, that is to say, to make his/her text communicative and comprehensive. The prosodic features (rhythm, phrasing, and pause) are aspects of spoken language that are used systematically to help give meaning to utterances (Tribble, 1996; P,45). The paralinguistic features are those features which are not part of the language, but which add meaning to what people say. These include gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and so on. Consequently, these features affect the structure of a spoken text. As Nunan (1993) puts it, the spoken text contains clauses that are joined together in a complex way . This means that the spoken text contains clauses that are chained together in an additive fashion. In addition, as Tribble (1996) remarks, the spoken text contains many grammatical and content words. Grammatical words include prepositions, pronouns and articles, while content words include nouns and verbs . In contrast,

in written language, because a writing activity is solitary, therefore the writer cannot exploit all the prosodic and paralinguistic features to get his/her meaning across, they have to compensate for the absence of these features (Byrne, 1988,P 23).

This means, Byrne continues, that the writer keeps the channel of communication open through his/her own efforts and ensures, both through the choice of sentence structure and by the way sentences are linked together, that the text they produce can be interpreted on its own. As a result, the text which is produced in these conditions has characteristics (p 44). Nunan (1993) notes that the text tends to consist of clauses that are internally complex (P55)which means that the text contains main clauses or clauses that are linked together by conjunctions. Additionally, the text is written in a heavily nominalized style. The text contains nouns that have been substituted for verbs in dense clauses.

However, these differences in structuring a spoken text and a written text are not absolute (Nunan, 1993, p76). Spoken texts and written texts share many characteristics. As Tribble (1996) highlights, a writer may choose to write in a speaking-like style by using active verbs in multi-clause sentences. Similarly, a speaker may choose to speak in a writing-like style by using a heavily nominalized style, that is, by substituting nouns for verbs in dense clauses (P77). These choices that a writer makes to write in speaking-like or writing-like style are determined by many factors, such as, the social context and the purpose for which he/she writes in the first place, and the same thing can be said about a speaker.

In short, it is essential to writers, especially to students writing in a foreign language, to be aware of the differences between spoken and written language. This awareness enables them to organize their sentences carefully so as to make their meaning as explicit as possible without a direct feedback from a reader (Byrne, 1988, P 09). In addition, it enables them to write in a variety of styles, namely speaking-like and writing-like styles, depending on the social context and the purpose for which they write. As noted above, since a text is the result

of an act of communication, it allows students to write in a foreign language to communicate effectively through writing. After showing the meanings of text and discourse, the next point discusses what makes the context relevant to the discourse and text.

I.4. The Relation between Text, Discourse and Context

Some of the differences between spoken and written texts have been tackled previously, and here we will consider the way in which a stretch of language is organized, hangs together, has unity, and makes sense as a whole. In doing this, we will look at the organization of a stretch of language from three standpoints. The first is related to thematisation. This concerns the organization of units larger than the sentence in a way that what is put first influences the interpretation of everything that follows (Brown and Yule, 1983, p89). The second is related to cohesion, and it deals briefly with the text-forming devices which make sequences of sentences hang together. The third is related to coherence which concerns the way sequences of sentences make sense as a whole. The consideration of these three elements will help to identify a text which can be interpreted as a coherent text. In this respect, much space should be given to the concept of thematisation.

I.4.1. Thematisation

The structure of the sentence in terms of theme-rheme also plays a role in exposing certain ideas. The linguistic elements selected to occupy the theme position are biased towards the personal viewpoints and experiences. As far as the expedition is concerned, Adela Quested and Moore (1984) topicalize certain linguistic units encompassing their feelings, disappointment and their pretended excitement. They orient the discussion to their role and sometimes to other language structures. Thematisation also has an essential function in disclosing the two women's waning emotion during the expedition. They anticipate an exciting journey to the caves. Almost all the linguistic units topicalized by the two Englishwomen are directed towards the participants. It is the job of the rheme part of the

sentence that makes their views and moods explicit. It seems that the idea of the journey to the caves makes the two women upset about almost everything and everybody. One of the aspects of their negative feelings about the others becomes evident when they talk about their servant, Antony. They focus on him when he is selected as the theme of their sentence.

At the sentence level, the thematic organization of a sentence consists of 'theme' and 'rheme'. Nunan (1993) argues that a theme refers to the initial element in a sentence. It is the element around which the sentence is organized, that is, the starting point of the sentence (P45). 'Rheme', as Brown and Yule (1983) put it, refers to everything that follows the theme in the sentence, and which consists of what the writer says about the starting point of the sentence. To illustrate this, the following example from Brown and Yule (1983, P.127) is presented,

- John kissed Mary.

From this example, it can be seen that John is the starting point and everything that follows John says what John did. However, this is not the only way of organizing the above sentence. As Brown and Yule (1983) note that there exist different ways of organizing what one wants to say. As a result, the above sentence may be expressed in the following ways,

- a. John kissed Mary.
- b. Mary was kissed by John.
- c. It was John who kissed Mary.
- d. It was Mary who was kissed by John.

These sentences are different, but express the same information. In each sentence, as Brown and Yule explain, although there are different starting points, it is asserted that kissing went on and that John did the kissing and that Mary was the one who was kissed. They go on

to explain that the reason why there are these different ways of expressing the same thing is that the choice of one form rather than the other depends on the intention of the writer (P 32).

There are other grammatical elements such as adverbs or adverbial phrases which can be the theme of the sentence. This can be noted in the following sentences (Yule, 1983. p.64),

- a. Later that afternoon, she received a reply paid telegraph.
- b. In one place, Betty saw the remains of the study safe.
- c. Without hesitating Betty replies.

The examples considered so far show the different ways available to the writer to organize what s/he wants to say at the sentence level. At the level of discourse, thematization concerns the organization of sentences into a text. At this level, the theme, according to Brown and Yule, refers to the topic entity. The topic entity refers to what is talked about in the text and to the starting point around which the text is structured, and it influences the interpretation of everything else that follows it in the text. Sometimes, the topic entity is the theme of all the sentences that constitute the text . The following example illustrates this point.

Mr. Mitsujiro Ishii, who as a former speaker of the Japanese House of representatives was instrumental in staging the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics and the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics, died on September 20th. He was 92. Ishii had served as Industry and Commerce Minister and in other cabinet posts under the late Prime Ministers, Shigeru Yoshida, Nobusuke Kishi and Eisaku Sata, before retiring in 1972. He was the speaker of the house of representative from February 1967 to July 1969. (From The Times, 25 September 1981, Brown and Yule, 1983). From this example, it can be seen that Mr. Mitsujiro Ishii as the topic entity of the text above is the theme of each sentence that constitutes the text. However, this is not always the case because, as Brown and Yule (1983) remark, the topic

entity may be the theme of some sentences in the text, but not all the sentences. This can be illustrated in many examples in which the topic entity is the theme of some sentences in the text, while adverbial phrases are the theme of other sentences in the same text. The reason why a writer may choose to write in this way is that s/he may want to organize what s/he wants to say about the topic entity according to different (temporally determined) perspectives on the individual concerned (Brown and Yule, 1983, p50).

In short, to understand the notion of thematization is of particular importance to writers, especially to students writing in a foreign language. It enables them to organize what they want to say at the sentence level and at the discourse level. At the sentence level, it gives them the possibility of organizing what they want to say in different ways. At discourse level, it permits them to organize what they want to say around a topic entity. This topic entity, as pointed out earlier, is what is talked about in the text, and it is the starting point around which the discourse is structured and it influences the interpretation of everything else that follows in the discourse. Around these concepts of text, it is necessary to talk about cohesion and coherence.

I.4.2. Cohesion

Earlier, organizing sentences into text is briefly mentioned. But, although we did say that these sentences are organized around a topic entity, we did not indicate the way in which these sentences that form a text are organized. Here, we will talk about the way sentences are organized to form a text. In order to do this, we will answer the following questions. Are sentences that constitute a text organized in a random way? Is a random group of sentences interpreted as a text? Are sentences that form a text related? The answers to these questions are based on the view that Halliday and Hasan (1976) have of what makes a text form a unified whole. According to them, a text is considered as such if there are cohesive relationships within and between the sentences that constitute it (1976, P 89). They continue

to say that these cohesive relationships create texture. Thus, a text has texture, and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. The texture is provided by the cohesive relations. The cohesive relation is set up in a text when the interpretation of some elements is dependent on that of the others (P 67). They illustrate this by the following example,

- Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof.

They explain this sentence by saying: “It is clear that “them” in the second sentence refers back to and is anaphoric to the six cooking apples in the first sentence. This anaphoric function of “them” gives cohesion to the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole; the two sentences together constitute a text.” (1976, p.02)

It can be seen that the sentences that constitute a text are not organized in a random way, but they rather are related and form a unified whole. Furthermore, it can be seen that there are elements in the text that make the sentences form a unified whole. These elements are what Nunan (1993) calls cohesive devices or text-forming devices. These text-forming devices are classified by Halliday and Hasan (1976) under three broad types: reference, ellipsis/substitution, and conjunction (P 45).

Reference items include pronouns (e.g. he, she, it, him, they, etc.), demonstratives (this, that, these, those), the article "the", and the items like such a (McCarthy, 1991). When these items are found in a text, they cannot be interpreted semantically in their own right; they make reference to something else in the text for their interpretation (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p50). To illustrate this, the following example is provided,

- Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain. He stepped in a puddle right up to his middle and never went there again. (From Halliday and Hasan, 1976)

It can be seen that “he” and “his” refer back to Doctor Foster for their interpretation and that “there” is semantically related to Gloucester.

Ellipsis is the omission of some essential structural elements from a sentence and these elements can only be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text (Nunan, 1993). The following example illustrates this,

- My father and my mother celebrate together their birth anniversary; both were born on December 25th, 1952.

It can be seen that the nouns “my father and my mother” are omitted and replaced by “both” in the second clause.

Conjunction is a cohesive device that, unlike reference and ellipsis which remind the reader of previously mentioned entities, signals relationships that can only be fully understood through reference to other parts of the text (Nunan, 1993, P 31).

There are four different types of conjunction which are additive, adversative, causal and temporal (McCarthy, 1991, P 33). The following two examples illustrate the point,

- She is intelligent, and she is very reliable. (Additive) (From McCarthy, 1991)
- I am afraid I will be home late tonight. However, I will not have to go in until late tomorrow. (Adversative) (From Nunan, 1993)

From these examples, it can be noticed that there are certain elements which make sentences form a unified whole. These elements as pointed out earlier are called cohesive devices, and a text that contains these devices is interpreted as a text. However, as Brown and Yule (1983) argue, there are cases of texts which are interpreted as texts, but which do not contain any explicit cohesive device. The following example illustrates this idea, which is a part taken from the beginning of a letter,

- Thank you for your comments about voicing. I will eventually get back to that lesson. (From Brown and Yule, 1983)

These sequences of sentences are normally interpreted as a text although there is no explicit cohesive device in the text. This raises many questions, such as, do cohesive devices always lead us to interpret a text as a text? Is a text that contains cohesive devices always interpreted as a text? Is a text that does not contain cohesive devices always interpreted as a non-text? Brown and Yule (1983) answer these questions by saying that cohesive devices do not always lead us to interpret a text as a text. According to them, a text does not only depend on the cohesive devices to be interpreted as a text, but it also depends on the context of the situation (p90). Thus, a text that does not display any explicit cohesive device is interpreted as a text.

In short, it is of particular importance to students writing in a foreign language to understand the notion of cohesion. It enables them to exploit the cohesive devices to create a text that forms a unified whole.

I.4.3. Coherence

As pointed out early, a text is interpreted as a text if it has texture, that is to say, if it contains cohesive devices that make the sentences that constitute it hang together. In other words, a text is interpreted as a text if it makes sense as a whole and if it is coherent. However, as Widdowson (2007) argues, cohesive devices do not always lead us to interpret a text as coherent (P 87). To support his argument, he gives the following example,

- We spend our holidays in Romania. This is a country where grapes are grown. They are a kind of fruit. So are bananas. Fruits contain vitamins, and these are essential for a healthy life. So is regular exercise. Jogging is good for you. We do it every day...

He explains this example by saying that although this text is co-textually connected with cohesive devices, it is not interpreted as a text. The reason for this is that it is difficult to

make any coherent sense of it . This raises the following question: what makes a text be successfully interpreted as a text? Widdowson (2007) answers this question by saying that the interpretation of text as a coherent text depends on how far it can be related externally to contextual realities, to the ideational and interpersonal schemata that readers are familiar with in the particular socio-cultural world they live in. Contextual realities involve the social and cultural context in which a language is used. The ideational schemata entail the function that language has of being about something and of expressing ideas (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p21). Interpersonal schemata involve relationship between people who are using a language (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, P 23). All these have a considerable bearing on the interpretation of a written text as a coherent text.

I.5. Genre

We saw earlier that the successful interpretation of a text as a coherent text depends not only on how far sentences that constitute it form a unified whole, but also on how far the text is related externally to contextual realities. Some of these contextual realities, as Tribble (1996) argues, are related to the notion of genre (p56). According to him, genre refers to different types of social activities enacted through different texts- spoken or written. This argument is similar to that made by Swales (1990). For Swales, genre is used to refer to a class of communicative events in which language plays both a significant and an indispensable role. He argues that the most important characteristic of a communicative event is the functions that language fulfils in the event and that these functions determine the form and the structure of the text and the expectation of the persons participating in the event (p66). To clarify this, let us look at a communicative event that involves writing a promotional letter. This event of writing a promotional letter is explained by Tribble (1996) as follows,

A sales executive may decide to send a promotional letter to some potential business clients. If the executive understands the genre constraints associated with this sort of writing

in a particular cultural context, s/he will not only know about the form or structure of the promotional letter, but s/he will be able to make appropriate lexical, grammatical, and content choices to give the letter the best chance of success with this type of reader. The executive, the letter and the potential clients are all participants in the event of writing a promotional letter.

From this explanation, we understand the way in which the functions that language fulfils in a given communicative event determine the form and the structure of the text that results from the event. But, what must be understood is that this event that involves promotional letter writing is not the only event that exists. There are other communicative events that involve writing. For instance, political speeches, newspaper articles, reports and so on, are communicative events that involve writing. These communicative events have their own distinctive characteristics in terms of the functions that language serves, and in terms of the way in which these functions determine the form and the structure of the text that results from each event.

In short, from these explanations of the notion of genre, we can understand that the interpretation of a text as a coherent text depends on how far the text is related externally to contextual realities and some of these contextual realities are related to the notion of genre.

I.6. Context

Context is an important aspect of many strands of discourse analysis which helps in the interpretative process of linguistic phenomena, as well as, providing explanations. The analysis of context forms part of most critical discourse analysis approaches. Van Dijk (2001, p.108) makes a distinction between local contexts which are '*properties of the immediate interactional situation in which a communicative event takes place*' while global contexts are '*defined by the social, political, cultural and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place*'. Wodak (2001, p.67) identifies four levels of context that are used in the

discourse historical approach: (1) the immediate, language or text internal co-text, (2) the inter-textual and inter-discursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses, (3) the extra-linguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific “context of situation” (middle-range theories), (4) the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to (grand theories).

Conclusion

It has been seen that a text, whether written or spoken, is the result of an act of communication and that the interpretation of such a text depends on many factors. It depends on linguistic factors and socio-cultural factors. The linguistic factors encompass a consideration of how far the text is thematized, cohesive and coherent. The social and cultural factors involve a consideration of how far the text is related to the immediate social context in which an instance of language use occurs by looking at, for example, the place, the participants and the relationships between them, and the purpose for which the text is produced. In addition, they entail a consideration of how far the text respects the cultural norms and conventions that the community in which the text is produced has established for its language users.

As we are investigating the problems that M1 students face in communicating effectively by means of writing, this view of text as a result of an act of communication describes the kind of written text FL students have to produce. In addition, it gives an idea of how the written texts produced by these students are to be interpreted. In this chapter, we described the kind of text M1 students are required to produce. In the next chapter, the problems that these students may face in producing the kind of written text, described in the first chapter, are explored thoroughly.

CHAPTER TWO

ASPECT OF WRITING

Introduction

For those who want to develop their writing skills in another language, discourse—authentic language as it occurs in context—can be a primary resource. Writing classroom in English as a second language (EFL) can be organized so that students themselves learn to analyze the written discourse of the society around them and appropriate the results of their analysis for their own writing purposes. In doing so, they can personalize their learning, choosing discourse materials suitable for their own proficiency level and areas of special interest.

By introducing specific discourse analysis techniques and tasks, instructors can foster greater independence in their students as they develop the ability to take control of their own language development. A discourse analysis approach also leads to greater writing versatility, as student writers are exposed in a systematic way to a variety of written genres, or types of written discourse. Each genre presents a different set of rhetorical choices—from lexicon and grammar to format, content, and organization—that students can study and adapt to their own writing. Because cultures use genres to accomplish their social interactions, discourse analysis provides a window on the values and priorities of the community that created them. Moreover, the role of discourse analyst offers a more powerful identity for an ESL student than that of foreigner, alien, or nonnative speaker.

Students can become language researchers, or ethnographers, studying the surrounding culture's ways of writing and adapting what they learn for their own purposes. The discourse analysis approach presented in this volume is intended for high-intermediate to advanced students.

2.1 Textual Studies of Scientific Discourse

The product approach could be regarded as one of the most important sources which provided the study of scientific discourse with a large body of literature. Textual features constitute a great concern among researchers who analyze various aspects, moving from the smallest units as pronouns, articles, verb forms, cohesion, coherence, etc. to the broadest ones as research papers, reprint requests, lab reports. For many scholars, the product approach has a source of guidance and inspiration for science writing research and teaching.

At the instructional level, the procedures discussed in the opening of this chapter is regarded as well applicable to the teaching of scientific English classes, except that the content of texts is substituted by topics reflecting a scientific content. The practice is so commonplace that Kennedy and Bolitho (1984, p.08) note that in some of the earlier approaches to ESP, “scientific English can be taught through a general English syllabus with an overlay of scientific vocabulary.” Thus transformation, substitution, and conversion models discussed in the earlier section continue to implement scientific written material and disciplinary classes for quite a long time.

However, at the theoretical level, the characterization of scientific discourse has marked by controversial issues. Much of the debate is centered on to the nature of scientific language, and questions are raised. Does scientific language constitute a “universal mode of communicating”? (Widdowson, 1979, p.52), or does it represent a “language variety” which possesses characteristics of its own?

Many twentieth century linguists speak of scientific language as “a supernatural language”. Sapir (1921, p.239) writes that “*the proper medium of scientific expression is...a generalized language that may be defined as a symbolic algebra of which all known languages are translations.*” In line with this view, Widdowson (2007, p32) echoes the same concern. He argues that “*scientific discourse is a universal mode of communicating, or*

universal rhetoric, which is realized by scientific text in different languages by the process of textualization". He assumes that,

□ Disciplinary knowledge constitutes a "secondary cultural system which is independent from the primary cultural one. For example, although a Japanese man and a French man have different primary cultures (different language, belief, and way of life, etc.), as scientists, they share a common secondary culture.

□ The conventions which govern scientific discourse are independent from any linguistic system. He maintains that the rhetorical principles (as cause and effect, comparison, formulation of hypotheses, etc.) inherent to scientific knowledge can be found in a wide range of linguistic expressions.

□ Scientific discourse is also realized in a variety of ways (Symbols, formula, diagrams, etc.). "*These Non verbal modes of communicating*" he explains, "*bear witness to this universality and the independence of science from primary culture systems as reflected in different languages*" (1984, p76).

2.1.1 Grammar and Lexis

The shift in ELT from grammar to lexis mirrors a similar change in the attitude of linguists. In the past, linguists were preoccupied with the grammar of language; however, the advances in corpus linguistics have pushed lexis to the forefront. The term 'lexis', which was traditionally used by linguists, is a common word these days and frequently used even in textbooks. As Allen (2005) remarks, writers sometimes make grammatical mistakes despite the fact that they claim to have good command of grammar. These grammatical mistakes, according to him, result from some difficult rules. These rules concern three classes of categories: the first category includes words, the second one includes sentences, and the third one includes meaning of words (p77).

For Allen (2005), words are the building blocks of language and one uses words to express thoughts and ideas and to form phrases and sentences that express meaning. He continues to say that these words are grouped into word classes according to the roles they play in a language. These word classes are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, determiners, and so on. These words sometimes change form when they are used in a sentence. For instance, when nouns are used to name one thing they keep their original form, but when they are used to name more than one thing they change their form. For example, “hand” becomes “hands”, “child” becomes “children”, and so on (P 2005).

These word classes and the way in which words change forms are what a writer is required to know before undertaking a task of writing. However, when drawing on this knowledge, the writer encounters many problems. These problems are reflected in the number of errors and the severity of mistakes that the writer makes (Cumming et al. 2005, p32). For Cumming et al. (2005), a writer who has many problems makes many severe errors, which affect comprehensibility of the text, while a writer who does not have problems may make few unnoticed errors, which do not affect the meaning of the text. As noted by Allen (2005), the following points explain some example of mistakes that writers often make,

- Using a plural verb (as in they look) when a singular verb is needed (as in she looks), especially in long sentences in which the verb gets separated from the subject, e.g. in the badly formed sentence I have come to ask them what their understanding of the changes are;
- Making a slip with verbs ending in –ed and –ing, producing results that are imprecise or even absurd: Reduced to a pile of ashes, he gazed at the place where his house had been.
- Using incorrect forms, as in between you and I (the correct form is between you and me). Sentences are made up of words and phrases and clauses.

- The problems that can be encountered when arranging these words, phrases, and clauses into sentences are many. These problems are reflected in the number of grammatical errors that a writer makes (Hayes, 1996, p...). For Hayes, some of these grammatical errors may affect the comprehensibility of the text. These grammatical mistakes are,
 - Errors related to word order, e.g. do you eat every day meat? A correct form of this sentence is “do you eat meat every day?” This is because verb and object normally go together. We do not usually put other words between them.
 - Mistakes related to verb + preposition, e.g. let me describe them what I saw. A correct form of this sentence is “let me describe to them what I saw.” This is because “describe” in this sentence is an intransitive verb.
 - Errors related to spelling, e.g. Tom and Jean want to swim. This sentence is ambiguous because it is not clear if the verb want is in a correct tense or the writer of this sentence wants to mean “went” the simple past of the verb “go”.
 - Mistakes related to punctuation, e.g. my brother Longin who lives in Bujumbura is a civil engineer. A correct form of this sentence is “my brother Longin, who lives in Bujumbura, is a civil engineer. This is because the relative clause “who lives in Bujumbura” does not tell us which person the writer of this sentence means. We already know which person is meant. It gives us extra information about the person. (Murphy, 2004, p33).

When we use words to form sentences, we have to pay attention to what these words mean. The reason for this is based on the fact that if we do not pay attention to the meaning of the words we are using to form sentences, we can have many difficulties in expressing our thoughts and ideas clearly. As Allen (2005) remarks, there are many problems that result from our lack of attention as to the meaning of the words we use to construct sentences. He illustrates this with the following examples and explanations (p44).

- We can use words with controversial meaning. E.g. “alibi” which is a legal term for evidence of where an accused person was at the time of a crime can also mean an excuse or pretext. But, we cannot use this term if we simply mean excuse or pretext as in the sentence: Management is provided with an alibi for poor performance by the constant ministerial interference.
- We can confuse the meaning of words, especially words which have closer forms. For instance, regrettable means to be regretted (as in their intervention was regrettable) and regretful means having regrets (as in she shook her head with a regretful smile).
- We can use harsh or direct words that are offensive or embarrassing instead of using euphemism. Euphemism is the use of words or phrases which are less unpleasant and offensive. For instance, instead of using old age, we can use senior citizen or sunset years. Instead of using nakedness, we can use in one’s birthday suit or in a state of nature. But, we have to be careful in using euphemism because some euphemisms obscure or generalize the meaning (e.g. sexual assault for rape) or cause misunderstanding (e.g. cloakroom for lavatory).

To conclude, there are a lot of grammatical problems that a writer encounters. These problems are related to grammatical errors that the writer makes. As Cumming et al. (2005) notes, these problems may affect the comprehensibility of the text

2.1.2 Organization of Text Structure

Earlier, the organization of words into sentences and the problems that a writer encounters when arranging words in sentences I discussed. Now what to be considered is the way in which sentences are organized into a coherent text, and the problems that a writer

faces in organizing sentences into a coherent whole. In doing this, we will look at the linguistic devices which link sentences together to form a coherent whole.

If *focus* is the foundation for constructing a piece of writing, *organization* is the structural framework for that writing. Organization is important to effective writing, because it provides readers with a framework to help them fulfill their expectations for the text. A well-organized piece of writing supports readers by making it easy for them to follow, while a poorly organized piece leads readers through a maze of confusion and confounded or unmet expectations which may drive them to give up reading altogether. Organization, simply put, is the logical progression and completeness of ideas in a text. Instruction in organization focuses on two areas: **text structures** specific to the particular genre, and the **cohesive elements** that tie clauses, sentences, and paragraphs together into a cohesive whole Yule (1983,P 55).

- A writer may use an unclear cohesive tie, e.g. Three times daily for seven days only, except the condition deteriorates.
- S/he may use an appropriate cohesive tie, but does not realize their syntactic constraints and place them wrongly in a sentence, overuse them, or fail to use the correct punctuation, e.g. People who live in the country, whereas, have a pleasant environment. On the contrary, town-dwellers suffer from noise and furthermore cramped conditions.

However, as seen in the first chapter, cohesive devices do not always help to construct a coherent text. There exist texts which do not display any cohesive device, but which form a coherent whole. The question which arises in this case is: what makes a text form a coherent whole? The answer to this question is provided by Hoey (1983). According to him, the coherence of a text is provided by discourse relations. These discourse relations are explained in two ways.

The first is based on the logical relationships which sentences have within a sequence. The second is based on schema, which is described as the expectations the users of a language have of how information or ideas are organized in the real world. Hoey (1983) continues to say that when we are writing we associate sentences with elements of the general schema: situation- problem-solution/response- evaluation/result. He illustrates this with the following example,

- I was on sentry duty. I saw the enemy approaching. I opened fire. I beat off the attack (p70).

From this example, one can see that there is a logical relationship between the sentences that form the text, and that there is an evidence of the elements of the general schema. But, it would be wrong to think that this new way of thinking about how sentences are organized into a coherent text does not cause problems to the writer. In fact, as Tribble (1996) notes, there are problems that a writer faces when organizing sentences into a coherent text according to this new way of thinking. These problems result from a failure to connect sequence of ideas together to form a meaningful whole. He illustrates this with the following examples and explanations,

- We can write a text in which the opening sentence does not seem to be connected with the statements which follow, e.g. A Breathalyzer indicates the amount of alcohol in a person's body, rather than his reaction to alcohol. Dr Donald E. Sussman has developed a device which measures the unsteadiness of a drinker's eyes, just one of the neuro-physiological effects of drinking (p43).

The problems lie in the fact that the writer of this text wanted to establish a problem—solution pattern, but failed to do so. The failure results from the fact that the second sentence does not answer the question which the reader would have asked if the text were a dialogue.

After the first sentence, the reader would have asked such question as “How do Breathalyzers do this?”

What is concluded is that there are many problems that a writer face when organizing sentences into a coherent text. On the one hand, these problems are related to the cohesive devices which link sentences together. For instance, a writer may face the problem of overusing cohesive ties or using unclear cohesive ones. On the other hand, these problems are related to the fact that the writer may write a text which consists of sentences that do not form a logical sequence. Consequently, these problems prevent the writer from producing a coherent text.

2.1.3 Style

There is a notion that plays a crucial role in the organization of a written text. It is style. Style is defined as an effective and appropriate way of organizing what anyone wants to say when they write. Tribble (1996) identifies two major aspects of style, namely, formality and commitment or hedging. Organizing a written text according to these two aspects of style can cause problems to FL students. Tribble (1996) argues that formality can have a critical impact not only on how easy the text is to be read, but also on the way readers perceive their relationship with the writer. He continues to argue that this aspect of formality allows us to make our text formal and informal depending on the social context in which we are writing. In addition, he argues that when we are writing a formal text, we avoid using colloquial words or expressions, slang, jargon, tautology, vague words or phrases, and everyday similes (p54). From these arguments by Tribble, it can be inferred that there are many problems that students encounter when organizing their texts according to formality. These problems result from a failure to write according to formality. Turk and Kirkman (1989) illustrate this with the following explanation, “students can write in an informal style in a context in which

formal style is required” (p99) example when he writes a letter to his parents or someone he can use any style which means it can be formal or informal.

Hedging refers to the way in which a writer signals to the reader where s/he stands in relation to what s/he is writing about (Tribble, 1996, p31). This means that the writer signals to the reader the distance between himself and what he is writing. In doing so, s/he uses words and expressions that signal uncertainty (Jordan, 1992, P 32). Furthermore, s/he uses personal or impersonal style in order to increase and decrease his/her distance in relation to what he is writing (White and McGovern, 1994, p43). From this, it is concluded that FL students can encounter the following hedging problems when writing.

- Failure to use words and expressions that signal uncertainty in a context in which they are required.
- Using personal style in a context in which impersonal style is needed and vice versa.

To conclude, understanding the notion of style is of particular importance to students FL writing. It enables them to organize what they want to say in a way which is effective and appropriate to the context in which they are writing. In addition, it allows them to avoid the difficulties that are outlined above.

2.2 Process and Social Aspects of Writing

Earlier, it was stated that knowledge of the language system is one of the different types of knowledge that a writer draws on when he undertakes a task of writing. In what follows, other different types of knowledge that a writer draws on are explored. This other type of knowledge includes social context knowledge. This social knowledge involves knowledge of aspects of the specific context of situation in which instance of language use occurs (Lillis, 2001, p56)

These aspects of the specific context of situation include four components, the types of communicative event, the topic, the purpose, and the participants. Traditional approaches to teaching writing have been challenged, and new methods have emerged that reflect the new understanding of this process. Process approaches view writing as a process that evolves through several stages as the writer discovers and molds meaning and adapts to the potential audience. A consequence to process approaches to writing is that writing is a social activity. However, in the typical writing class, students as responders have little opportunity to explore social roles through their writing.

The participants are the writer and the reader, the relationship between them, and their background knowledge and expectations. These aspects of specific context of situation, as Tribble (1996) argues, determine the choice of vocabulary, grammar, and content and the structure of the written text (p78). Similarly, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue that these aspects of context of situation determine how much is to be said on a particular topic. They see that these aspects of context of situation help realize Grice's maxims of cooperation (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) (p33). They then elaborate on these maxims of cooperation by explaining each one as follows,

- The maxims of quantity require the writer to carefully consider the amount of information that should be imparted in the text.
- The maxim of quality requires the writer to provide support and justification for his/her position in order to render the text accurate and give it truth-value.
- The maxim of relevance requires the writer to create a text that makes a sense in the potential context in which it will be read.
- The maxim of manner requires the writer to make the text clear in terms of its linguistic forms and sentence structure, as well as, clear in the physical shape or format in

which it is presented, so that form and content are compatible and processing is made possible (p27).

From this, it can be seen that a writer draws on the social context knowledge when s/he undertakes a task of writing. In addition, as Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue, it can be seen that the writer who draws on this knowledge as required by the society in which s/he is writing is able to create a text which is comprehensible and communicative in nature. However, it is wrong to think that the writer is able to draw on this knowledge appropriately, that s/he does not encounter problems. As Allen (2005) puts it, there are a lot of problems that are related to the social context knowledge that a writer encounters. These problems result from a failure to appropriately use this knowledge (p23). Allen (2005) argues that this failure can have the following consequences on the writer,

- The writer may write something which is hard to read and therefore difficult to understand.
- S/he may have trouble deciding how much has to be said on a particular topic or issue and how to stay on the same topic without boring the reader.
- S/he may write something which does not meet the expectations of the reader.
- S/he may write something that contains words or phrases that irritate the reader from overuse.
- S/he may write something which is offensive to the reader, for instance, s/he may unintentionally use words that are offensive to some people, such as, words based on disability, words based on sex and gender, and so on (p22).

In brief, the social context knowledge is one of the different types of knowledge that a writer draws on when s/he undertakes a task of writing. This type of knowledge enables the

writer to create a text which is comprehensible and communicative in nature. But, as previously seen, there are a lot of problems that are related to this knowledge, and that prevent the writer from producing a communicative text.

II.3. Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second Language Writing

In the last point, the social context knowledge that a writer draws on when s/he undertakes a task of writing was discussed. Here, it is expanded and another type of context knowledge that a writer uses is considered. This context knowledge is known as the cultural context knowledge. It is not easy to understand the way in which a writer uses this knowledge to create a written text. To solve this problem, it is proper to turn to the notion of contrastive rhetoric introduced by Kaplan (1966).

According to contrastive rhetoric, many aspects of writing are influenced by culture. This influence is reflected in the distinctive differences that are observed in the written discourse of writers from different cultures (Kaplan, 1966, p18). This means, for instance, that a native speaker of Arabic writing in Arabic organizes his/her written discourse in a way which is different from the way a native speaker of English writing in English organizes his/hers (Weigle, 2002, p12).

These differences in the organization of a written text can cause problems to the native speaker of Arabic writing in English as a foreign language. These problems may result from the fact that the native speaker of Arabic writing in English may organize his/her text in an Arabic organizational pattern, that is, in a way that Arabic speakers organize their text in Arabic (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, p18). Furthermore, this influence is reflected in the consequence that cultural expectations can have for the coherence of written texts (Weigle, 2002, p22). Coherence, as Leki (1992, p33) notes, is not an inherent quality of the text itself, but rather comes from the accuracy of the writer's assessment of what the reader will be able to infer from the text. Because the reader of the text brings his/her background knowledge and

expectations to the text, the mismatch between the writer's intended message and the reader's interpretation of the message can occur. This mismatch may result from the fact that the writer organizes his/her text according to a rhetorical organizational pattern which is unfamiliar to the reader. For example, as Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) note that a native speaker of Arabic writing in English may organize his/her text in Arabic organizational pattern (p88). Such a text may be viewed by many readers, especially native speakers of English, as lacking in coherence and unity.

Cultural context knowledge is then another type of context knowledge that a writer draws on. This knowledge enables the writer to meet the expectations of the reader in terms of the organization of a written text into a coherent whole. As well, it enables FL students to avoid difficulties that they may encounter when organizing their text. These difficulties are related to the rhetorical organizational differences between different languages and cultures.

Conclusion

Writing is an activity in which many people engage for the purpose of communicating something to others who may be distant in time and place. For instance, people write to communicate information to others, to express their ideas and beliefs, or to establish relationships with others. This activity of writing puts some demands on people who engage in it. As seen in this chapter, these demands are classified into two broad categories, namely, language system knowledge and contextual knowledge.

The language system knowledge involves grammar and lexis and the ability to use this knowledge to arrange words into sentences and to organize these sentences to form a text that makes sense as a whole. The contextual knowledge encompasses the social and cultural context in which the task of writing takes place and the ability to create a text which is linguistically accurate and socio-culturally appropriate. However, people who engage in the

writing activity are likely to encounter many problems and these problems result from these demands that the writer is required to meet.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

This study aims at investigating the problems that M1 students face in communicating effectively through writing. It is carried out by means of a diagnostic test that is given to thirty participants in the study. This diagnostic test involves writing a fifteen-line paragraph on one of the argumentative topics that are distributed to the participants. Since diagnostic test measures problems, weaknesses, or strengths (Cohen, et al. 2007,P78), the output of the test is analyzed in search for the problems that the participants have in their written communication skill. These problems are codified into three categories. The first category includes problems that are related to grammatical rules, such as, grammatical errors that are found in the written texts that are produced by the participants. The second category involves problems that are related to cohesion and coherence, such as, cohesive and coherent errors in the written work of the participants. The third category entails problems that are related to the social and cultural aspects of writing, such as, the content that is not related to the topic and the purpose for which the text is written.

1. Participants

Participants in this study are First Year Master students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University in Mostaganem. The choice of these students is motivated by two factors. The first factor is that they have been studying English at University for over three years; therefore, their proficiency in written communication skill is at a higher level. The second factor is that they would benefit the study with the problems that most FL learners encounter in written communication skill. The number of M1 students who participated in the study is 30, and they were asked to write a fifteen-line paragraph on one of five argumentative topics that were distributed to them.

2. Administration of the Test

The test consists of a list of five argumentative topics. This test was distributed to the participants in the study, and the participants were asked to select from the list one topic and to write a fifteen-line paragraph on the selected topic. In order to write this paragraph, they were given forty five minutes, which is the time that a lecture usually lasts. After this time, the output from the test was collected and was analyzed by the researcher.

3. Research Methods

The objectives of this research aim at studying and answering one main research question. This question is,

- “Do M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University- Mostaganem have problems in communicating effectively by means of writing?”

This question is answered by means of three sub-questions. These sub-questions are the following:

- Do M1 students face grammatical problems?
- Do M1 students have problems in writing cohesively and coherently?
- Do M1 students have problems in linking linguistic features with social and cultural features when producing a written text?

The data collection to answer these questions employs a diagnostic test which involves writing a fifteen-line paragraph on one of five argumentative topics that were distributed to the participants. The collected data is analyzed by means of holistic rating scale developed and used by Bamberg (1983), by Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991), and by Cumming et al. (2005). This method of analysis measures the severity of the problems (Polio, 1997).

In order to measure the extent to which the participants face the problems using holistic rating scale, the analysis is codified into three categories. The first category comprises grammatical problems which are reflected in grammatical mistakes that are found in the written work produced by the participants. The second category includes rhetorical organizational problems which are reflected in a failure to write a cohesive and a coherent text. This failure is, in turn, reflected in misuse of cohesive ties, in overuse of cohesive tie, and in the incoherence of the text. The third category comprises social and cultural problems which are reflected in the irrelevance of the text, to the topic and to the purpose for which the text is produced.

This codification enables us to classify the problems into four levels in each category. Each level indicates how severe the problems encountered are. In the first category which includes grammatical problems, the problems are classified according to Hamp-Lyons and Henning’s (1991) holistic rating scale into four levels. This classification is shown on the following table.

Levels	Problems Reflected in Grammatical Errors
1	No grammatical mistakes are found in the text.
2	Minor grammatical errors, such as, punctuation and spelling, which do not obscure the intended meaning.
3	Serious grammatical mistakes, such as, mistakes related to word choice, word order, tenses and awkward form which make the intended meaning difficult to recover.
4	Many severe grammatical errors, such as, spelling, punctuation, word choice, word order, tenses, and awkward form which make the intended meaning very difficult or harder to recover.

Table 1: Adapted from Cumming et al. (2005)

In the second category which comprises problems related to cohesion and coherence, the problems are classified according to Bamberg's (1983) holistic coherence rating scale divided into four levels. This classification is shown on the following table.

Levels	Problems Related to Cohesion and Coherence
1	Cohesive ties are used appropriately and the text makes sense as a whole.
2	There is an overuse of cohesive ties.
3	There is a misuse of cohesive ties; there is an overuse of cohesive devices. The text consists of paragraphs which do not begin with topic sentences and end with closing sentences.
4	The text is at all incoherent, that is, it does not make sense as a whole.

Table 2: Adapted from Bamberg (1983)

In the third category which includes social and cultural problems, the problems are classified according to Bamberg's (1983) holistic coherence rating scale into four levels. The classification is shown on the following table.

Levels	Problems Related to Social and Cultural Aspect of Writing.
1	The text is related to the topic and the purpose for which the text is produced.
2	There are digressions from the purpose for which the text is created.
3	There are frequent digressions from the topic and from the purpose for which the text is written.

4	The text is irrelevant to the topic and the purpose for which the text is written.
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Table 3: Adapted from Bamberg (1983).

The results from this analysis are used to statistically measure the mean and the standard deviation, and to interpret the data collected. To do so, we took the scores which were obtained from the analysis of the essays produced by the participants, and we computed the mean and standard deviation using Microsoft excel 2013. To interpret the data, we used Polio's (1997) method of interpretation. This method counts the severity of the problems which are perceived in the text by the rater.

Interpretation of the Problems

3-4: Very severe problems which severely affect the communication of the writer's intended meaning.

2-3: Serious problems which affect the communication of the writer's intended meaning.

1-2: Minor problems which do not affect the communication of the writer's intended meaning.

4. Analysis of the Data

4.1. Holistic Rating of the Data

Scores	Number of Students
4	1
3	16
2	12
1	1

Table 4: The Rating of Grammatical Problems Using Cumming et al.'s 1983 Holistic Rating Scale.

Since holistic rating measures how much the problems interfere with the communication of a writer's intended meaning (Kobayashi and Kinnert, 1992,P54), the above table contains scores which show to what extent the grammatical problems affect the communication of the participants' intended meaning. As pointed out on Table 1, Score '4' indicates that the grammatical errors which are found in students' essays severely affect the comprehensibility of the text. Score '3' shows that the grammatical errors found in the students' pieces of text affect the meaning of the text. Score '2' indicates that the grammatical mistakes found in students' essays do not affect the intended meaning of the text. Score '1' shows that the students did not make any grammatical mistake.

4.1.1. Sample Grammatical Errors Analyses

In this section, examples of grammatical errors from students' essay are followed by a description. Each score is represented by one example.

Score '4': *Internet is important and prominate means in our days, through which, it would have many benefites for university students (From S25).*

This sentence is very difficult to understand. It contains not only spelling and grammatical mistakes, but also awkward form errors. As kobayashi and Kinnert (1992) points out, awkward form errors consist of grammatically and semantically deviant phrases or sentences which obscure the writer intended meaning. This means, as indicated on the Table 4, that one student out of thirty who took the test produced a text which contains sentences which are very difficult to understand.

Score '3': *Technology in our days developed and it becomes a means that facilitate the life of people. From S21*

This sentence is difficult to understand, because it contains awkward form errors. This means, as shown on the Table 4, that sixteen out of thirty students who took the test wrote texts which contained sentences which are difficult to understand.

Score '2': *No one disagree with the following statement that says: « the world become a city. » (From S11).*

This sentence can be understood, despite the fact that it contains spelling errors. This means, as indicated on the Table 4, that twelve out of thirty students who took the test

produced texts which contain grammatical mistakes which do not affect the meaning of the text.

Score '1': *Nowadays, the internet is widely used. It is so important and beneficial that wherever you go you find people using it (From S12).*

These two sentences do not contain any grammatical error. This means, as shown on the Table 4, that one out of thirty students who took the test wrote a text which does not contain grammatical mistakes.

Score	Number of Students
4	5
3	6
2	13
1	5

Table 5. The Rating of Cohesive and Coherent Problems Using Bamberg's 1983 Holistic Coherence Rating Scale.

This table contains scores which show how much the participants face cohesion and coherent related problems. As pointed out on Table 2, Score '4' indicates that the text produced by the student is incoherent. Score '3' shows that the essay written by the students contains inappropriate use of cohesive devices which affect the coherence of the text. Score '2' indicates that the text produced by the student contains inappropriate use of cohesive ties which do not affect the meaning of the whole text. Score '1' shows that the text produced by the student is coherent.

4.1.2. Sample of Coherence Related Error Analysis

In this section, examples of coherence related errors from the students' written text are given, and each score is represented by one example.

Score '4': *Marks are one of the ways by which students all over the world are evaluated. Students differ in the way they look at these marks, of course if some*

students get a good mark, it would be a kind of motivation and acquirence of self-confidence. They continue their studies as normal as possible, but in the other hand if they get a bad ones it would be a kind of discouragment because all student work for marks, for geting good marks (From S1).

In this paragraph, the sentences do not form a coherent whole. This means, as shown on Table 5, that five out of thirty students who took the test produced texts which are incoherent.

Score '3': Childhood is the most important stage of one's life, because it affect in one way or another the future personality of the person (From S7).

In this example, the student wanted to establish a causal relationship, but failed to do so. This failure to use an appropriate cohesive tie severely affects the meaning of the text as a whole. This means, as indicated on Table 5, that six out of thirty students who took the test face this problem.

Score '2': Smoking do not effect the person who smokes, but moreover the persons who are near him (From S19).

In this example, because of the clearly signaled relationship between the two clauses, the reader will be able to infer that 'also' would have been used instead of the additive conjunction 'moreover'. This means, as shown on Table 5, that thirteen out of thirty students who took the test face this problem.

Score '1': Internet seems important for many students of university. Nowadays, many students use it. They consider it as a source of information. They use it in their studies and for other reason (From S6).

From this example, it can be seen that the student tried his best to make the text form a coherent whole. This means, as indicated on Table 5, that five out of thirty students who took the test produced texts which form a unified whole.

Score	Number of Students
4	1
3	10

2	12
1	7

Table 6. The Rating of Social Cultural Problems Using Bamberg’s Holistic Coherence Rating Scale.

This table contains scores which indicate how much the participants face social and cultural related problems. As pointed out on Table 3, Score ‘4’ shows that the content of the text produced by the students is not related to the topic and to the purpose for which the text is written. Score ‘3’ indicates that the text written by the students contains frequent digression from the topic and the purpose for which the text is produced. Score ‘2’ shows that the text produced by the students contains digression from the purpose for which the text is written. Score, ‘1’ indicates that the content of the text written by the students is related to the topic and to the purpose for which the text is produced.

4.1.3. Sample of Social and Cultural Problem Analysis

In this section, examples of social and cultural problems from the students’ written text are given, and each score is represented by one example.

Score ‘4’: *Childhood is the most important stage of one’s life because it affect in one way or another the future personality of the person. Therefore to know how to deal with the child during the stage take a huge importance by researchers or psychologist. So they give a list of advices and instruction for child’s parent to deal well with them like preventing child from watching television or using internet (From S7).*

The content of this paragraph is not related to the topic: « Watching television is bad for children. » Additionally, it is not related to the purpose of producing an argumentative paragraph. This means, as shown on Table 6, that one out of thirty students who took the test produced a text which is irrelevant to the topic and to the purpose for which the text is written.

Score ‘3’ : *Nowadays, the television becomes the most important part in our lives, in order to follow what hapening by watching news, movies, programms, sports, and so on. But, is watching television bad for the children? When children watching television they didn’t get or understand what they watching, at the contrary, watching television may complicate their ideas. Because they are not ready yet to understand*

what they watching such as, news, sports, political debates, and so on. But parents should select what is useful for them, like program for children (From S4).

From this example, it can be seen that the subject students frequently moved away from the topic, « Watching television is bad for children ». In the first sentence, the student says that television is important to us. In the second sentence, he asks himself/herself if watching television is bad for children. In the next sentences, instead of answering the question, s/he says that children do not understand what is talked about on TV, because they are not mentally ready to understand most TV programmes, and that parents should select programmes that are useful to them. This means, as indicated on Table 6, that ten out of thirty students who took the test face this problem.

Score '2': Societies, anywhere, are suffering from bad behavior and issues, which are performed by human. One of the most observable one is smoking in public places, which have bad impacts on human health as well as on the beauty of nature (From S17).

From this example, it can be seen that the students moved away from the purpose of arguing « Smoking should be banned from public places». This means, as shown on Table 6, that twelve out of thirty students who took the test have this problem.

Score '1': Nowadays, the internet can be considered as beneficial tool for university students. Many electronic resources are available on the internet. This can help to save time and money.(From S30).

From this example, it can be seen that the student tried his best to write something which is relevant to the topic: « Is the internet beneficial to university students? ». This means, as previously indicated on Table 6, that seven out of thirty students who took the test produced texts which are at least relevant to the topic. The essays, from which all these examples were extracted, were scanned and put in the appendix.

4.2. Statistical Analysis of the Data

Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean	2.52
Standard Deviation	0.62

Table 7. Grammatical Problems

As revealed on Table 7, the mean is 2.52 with the standard deviation of 0.62. From this result, it can be interpreted, as pointed out earlier, that the participants face serious grammatical problems which affect the meaning of the text they produce.

Mean	2.33
Standard Deviation	0.99

Table 8. Cohesion and Coherence Related Problems

As indicated on Table 8, the mean is 2.33 with the standard deviation of 0.99. From this result, it can be concluded that the participants have serious cohesion and coherence related problems. These problems, as pointed out earlier, interfere with the communication of the participants' intended meaning.

Mean	2.16
Standard Deviation	0.83

Table 9. Social and Cultural Related Problems

As shown on Table 9, the mean is 2.13 with the standard deviation of 0.83. From this result, it can be interpreted that the participants face social and cultural problems related to writing. As pointed out earlier, these problems affect the communication of the participants' intended meaning as well.

	Means	SD
Grammatical Problems	2.53	0.62
Cohesion and Coherence Related Problems	2.33	0.99
Social and Cultural Problems	2.16	0.83
Average	2.34	0.18

Table 10. Mean and Standard Deviation Indicating Participants' Written Communication Problems

In order to answer the research question “Do M1 students have problems in communicating effectively through writing?”, several methods of analysis were employed to analyze the collected data. First, holistic rating scale was used as a method of analysis to rate the problems the participants face in written communication skill. Second, descriptive statistic was used to measure the results which were obtained from the holistic rating of the participants' written communication problems. Table 10 summarizes the results that are obtained after the statistical analysis of the participants' written communication problems. The result from the statistical analysis of the overall problems (M= 2.34, SD= 0.18) indicates that the participants face grammatical problems, cohesion and coherence related problems, and socio-cultural problems. From this result, it can be concluded that the participants face problems in communicating effectively by means of writing.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the present study, the following recommendations are formulated. First, since it was found that M1 students have problems in communicating effectively by means of writing, teachers should do the following to help students to solve these problems,

1. When correcting a piece of writing produced by students, teachers should focus more on those errors that affect the meaning of the text.
2. After every correction, teachers should indicate to the students the mistakes they have made and should encourage the students to work toward correcting these errors.
3. Teachers should encourage students to practise writing as much as possible.

Second, Written Expression course should be incorporated in programs that are taught to Master students.

Finally, since the current investigation was carried out with M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics as participants, generalization is limited. Therefore, a more representative study that would include M1 students in Didactics and Applied Linguistics, Civilization, Literature, and other fields as participants should be carried out in future research. This study would help to shed light on the problems that Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University students face in written communication skill.

Conclusion

This chapter is devoted to the methodology that is employed to investigate the problems that M1 students face in communicating effectively by means of writing. After the collection of data, two methods are used to analyze the collected data. The first method is holistic rating scale. Because the data collected involved written texts produced by thirty participants in the study, this method is employed to analyze the data and to rate them according to the severity of the problems found in the texts. The second method is descriptive statistic. This method of analysis is used to measure statistically the results that are obtained from the first method. The results from the latter method of analysis lead us to conclude that M1 students have problems in written communication skill.

General Conclusion

This study aims at answering one main question which is, “Do M1 students have problems in communicating effectively by means of writing?”. This question is answered by means of three sub questions. Do M1 students face grammatical problems? Do M1 students have problems in writing cohesively and coherently? Do M1 students face problems in linking linguistic features with socio-cultural features when producing a written text? After the analysis of data to answer these questions, the following results are obtained.

First, the findings reveal that M1 students have serious grammatical problems. These grammatical problems are reflected in grammatical errors that are found in the written texts produced by the student subjects who participated in the study. As pointed out earlier on Table 1, these grammatical mistakes include errors related to word order, word choice, tenses, and awkward forms. In addition, it is pointed out that these errors affect the communication of the writers’ intended meaning. This means that the grammatical errors that are found influence the communication of M1 students’ intended meaning.

Second, the findings indicate that M1 students have cohesion and coherence-related problems. These problems result from the participants’ failure to write cohesive and coherent texts. This failure is related to the misuse of cohesive ties, the overuse of cohesive devices, the use of unclear cohesive ties, and the lack of unity between sentences that constitute the texts the participants produced. The results from the statistical measurement of the mean and standard deviation show that these problems interfere with the communication of M1 students’ intended meaning.

Third, it was shown that M1 students face social and cultural problems. These problems are related to the fact that the participants in the study frequently digressed from the topic and the purpose for which the texts were produced.

Finally, it is concluded that M1 students have problems in communicating effectively by means of writing. Two factors lead us to draw this conclusion. The first factor is that the results from the analysis of the data indicate that M1 students have grammatical problems, cohesion and coherence-related, and social and cultural problems as well. The second factor is that it is concluded that the severity of these problems affect the communication of M1 students’ intended meaning. The latter factor then leads us to conclude that M1 students face problems in communicating effectively by means of writing.

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Appendix

A TEST

Dear fellow students, write a 15-line paragraph on one of the following topics:

1. Smoking should be banned from public places.
2. Watching television is bad for children.
3. Grades (marks) encourage students to learn.
4. Should the internet be censored?
5. Is the internet beneficial to university students?

Remarks: Write your essay with an audience in mind. This means that you have to produce a text that effectively communicates something to a potential reader. For instance, on the first topic, you have to produce a text which persuade smokers to stop smoking in public places. As well, you have to write a text that make people who work in social services take tough measures that deter the habit of smoking in public places. To achieve this, your text has to conform to the following points:

- It has to be coherent.
- It has to be in a formal style.
- It has to be related to the topic.

