

Discourse Issue: Topic Management and its Role in writing Academic Essays With Reference to (EFL) Iraqi Students at University Level

**Assistant Lecturer: Waffa Qahtan Hameed
College of Historical Studies
Basrah University**

Abstract

For over than thirty years, the study of discourse occupied the main interest of the applied linguistics. And the discourse analysts become aware of the necessity for obtaining well- established approaches for systematic processing of the spoken as well as the written discourses. The aim of this paper is to argue the different strands of patterning in discourse and to rely much emphasis on those contexts and linguistic strategies that are quite relevant to a language student or a language teacher. Starting from the view point that *"learning how to engage in discourse is one of the most important goals in language learning and teaching"*(McCarthy, Matthiessen, & Slade , 2002 :55), so in this paper I shall attempt to present whatever accessible and relevant definition to discourse and discourse analysis. Actually it might be very helpful for having a systematic analysis to a given discourse and framing its interpretation.

Our understanding of the notion of discourse(and related notions such as coherence) seems to be less efficient and unable to provide linguistic interpretations for the use of certain communicative strategies rather than others. In this paper I 'm going to discuss one of the coherence related strategies; that is of topic management to find out how does it work when overlapping with other discourse strategies. As a notion, topic management is important because it helps to approach more systematically the notion of coherence which seems difficult to understand. Although the notion of topic management is rather evident in spoken discourse, I felt the need to investigate its markers in students' essays to fulfill their academic duties. The assessment of the students' responses will be dependent on a descriptive approach to the written discourse.

Key words: discourse, text, discourse analysis, coherence, topic management, presupposition.

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis draws upon different disciplines, including linguistics, philosophy, psychology, pragmatics, rhetoric and sociology to study language use. *"Discourse is a complex of social, psychological and linguistic phenomenon subject both to the rules of grammar, which all the language users know implicitly, and to the general principles of discourse; coherence, management, interpretation and organization in which those language users also command"* (Brown & Yule(1983). Within discourse analysis research attention is typically focused on text oral and written, and on the roles and the strategies of the speakers(writers) and the hearers(readers) who participate in that text.

As a matter of fact within the linguistic units of language(phonemes, morphemes, syntactic constituents, and lexical items) that characterize different levels of language investigation, a linguist would postulate a divers unit of analysis, that went beyond the phrase-level: namely discourse. In this concern, discourse might be grasped as a linguistic unit, or as a communicative level associated with the subject that produced it, or sometime as spoken or written consequence of a human activity which is intimately related to social ideologies(Puig,2003: 1).

Adopting discourse view of language use has something to do with three general premises(Cots,1995:79):

- (i) communicative competence;
- (ii) context, language variation and real data;
- (iii) negotiation of intention and interpretation.

Depending on Hymes(1972) perspective, the first premise involves the acceptance that" *a learner's capacity to communicate in a foreign language involves knowing not only(i)whether and to what extent a structure is formally possible(i.e., grammatically correct) , but also whether and to what extent it is(ii) psychologically feasible(i.e., it can be processed without a great effort), (iii) appropriate and (iv) actually said"*. Putting these four types of knowledge, communicative competence can be defined as the ability to perform verbally in a rather successful and acceptable way.

The second premise is very much influenced by the idea that" *language use varied and has different functions depending on the context"* (Cots,1995:81). To put variation into account, a language user will be faced with two options; either focusing on one kind of language use as it is considered the most realistic view point or accepting the fact that successful communication is based on the speaker's ability to manipulate these different language uses. And for the sake of having competent learners in communicative event, there is an urgent need to present them in as contextualized verbal behaviour as possible. This can be done

by using real instances of language use, in which the full potential of language can be well assessed through its social effects(ibid).

Within the third premise, the negotiation of intentions and interpretations, the language users have to use certain devices to ensure going from accommodating one's discourse to the discourse of the interlocutor through using discourse routines that would necessarily develop particular strategies such as the use of paraphrase and metaphor. Bygate(1987:34f) mentions series of strategies for negotiating meaning in spoken interaction, which can be manipulated by the speaker(e.g., announce one's purpose in advance, clarify meaning/ intention by summarizing, rephrase, exemplify) or by the listener(e.g., indicate understanding by gestures or verbal tokens, ask for clarification, indicate current interpretation"

2. What is discourse?

Knowing a language would certainly provide a language user with what is called the 'linguistic knowledge' which enables him/ her to combine phonemes into morphemes, morphemes into words, and words into sentences. In addition to that this knowledge ensures the ability to combine sentences to express thoughts and ideas. Consequently these large units are called discourse(Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003: 208f). In order to define a discourse , there is a need to make a distinction between discourse, text, and conversation. Accordingly, discourse can be used to designate any spoken or written form of language use; text will be used to describe any written type of discourse, whereas conversation will be restricted to any form of spoken discourse involving more than one interlocutor no matter whether the linguistic setting is formal or informal(Verschueren, 1999: 50). Within discourse, coherence and cohesion, the devices are typically used to order the parts of the text, maintain and establish casual links, ensure topic continuity, determine relations among discourse entities and also bringing between distinct parts of a discourse(Brown & Yule, 1983).

A discourse is something which exists quite outside a text. In this concern discourse "*encompassed the meaning of a text as the producer intended it, and the meaning as the receiver interpreted it*"(Mechura, 2007:3). The way which the discourse analyst has to deal with discourse as something which is not available in the text explicitly , but rather as something that can be reconstructed. Putting into account that he would not always reconstruct it as much similar as the producer intended to mean, or as the receiver intended to interpret, but that he probably will do in most cases.

There is an important point to be mentioned within the text study which is that a text involves making a sort of connection between two states of mind or projection of reality, that which informs the intention of its first person producer, and that which informs the second person at the receiving point. What the first person intends to mean, and what the second person interprets is a matter of initiating different discourses. Here again , there is a need to textualize a

discourse relationship between the first person intention and the second person interpretation to fulfill the coherence principle in communicative event(Widdowson,2003:62f). As communication involves community and membership to be mediated with the meaning of the text(ibid:66). Also within the study of discourse, there emerged a stage which is called the 'textuality' stage. It emphasizes the main aspects of texts and presents a text as a functional unit larger than a sentence. This stage is followed by the 'textualization' or 'discourse processing' stage in which analysts " *set about developing process models of activities of discourse participants in interactive settings and in 'real time'* " (de Beaugrande,1997:61-62) as cited in (Alba-Jues,2009:12).

Finally, Reboul, C.N.R.S-Crin & Inria-Lorraine., and Moeschler(1997:284) defines a discourse as a "*coherent sequence of utterances, in the same way as a sentence is defined as a grammatical sequence of words*". Here coherence is considered as a quality which attributed in the construction of a discourse. It does not connect with the determined linguistic markers for instance those of cohesion. In fact discourse has to be interpreted in a form of reducible utterances which constitute it having a particular connection between these utterances. It seems that discourse, like utterance, is understood depending on the interlocutors' ability to perform a mutual contribution to themselves and others beliefs, intentions, feelings...etc, via what is called 'the intentional instance'. Intentional instance involves two types of intentions: The local intention which is restricted to utterance, and the global intention which is concerned with discourse. The intentional instance has a significant role especially in performing appropriate reactions or anticipating the verbal behaviour of other participant(ibid:292). Precisely discourses should not be dealt with as "*just isolated linguistic "objects," but are integral parts of communicative acts in some sociocultural situation*" (Van Dijk,1983:24). By the sociocultural situation he means the context that gives the text a certain boundary connection. In this sense the pragmatic analysis of discourse is mainly focuses on the dimension of action in which a discourse is manipulated as some conventional principle of social action(questioning, greeting, promising, threatening ...etc.) called a "speech act".

3. Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is the analysis that involves the study of both text(i.e., what is said, assuming a verbal channel), and context(i.e., the environment in which 'sayings' or other linguistic productions occur). There are certain criteria to be fulfilled in a text as it is presented in Dressler(1981) as cited in (Alba-Jues,2009:6):

- 1) Cohesion: it has some thing to do with relationship between text and syntax.
- 2)Coherence: it a characteristic which is related to the meaning of the text.
- 3) Intentionality: it is related to the attitude and the purpose of the speaker or the writer.

- 4) Acceptability: it has something to do with the preparation of the hearer or the reader to evaluate the relevance or usefulness of a certain text.
- 5) Informativity: which refers to the quantity and the quality of new or expected information.
- 6) Situationality: it refers to the fact that " *situation in which the text is produced plays a crucial role in the production and the reception of the message*" (ibid).
- 7) Intertextuality: it deals with two basic facts; a) a text is always related to some preceding or simultaneous discourse, and (b) texts are linked and grouped in special text varieties or genres (e.g., narrative, argumentative, descriptive ...etc.) by formal characteristics.

Discourse analysis should be dealt with depending on two premises (Reboul, C.N.R.S-Crin & Inria-Lorraine., and Moeschler, 1997:283):

- a) Syntax and semantics are not sufficient to provide an account for the linguistic interpretation and also inference because their main interest is the sentence itself.
- b) To have an account for the linguistic interpretation and inference, there is a need to investigate a unit larger than a sentence which is that of a text.

When analyzing a text, discourse analysts emphasize the following questions (McCarthy, Matthiessen, & Slade, 2002:56):

- 1- Who are the participants involved in the discourse (i.e. the writer and reader(s), the speaker and listener(s)) ? what is the relationship between them? Is it the one between equals? Is there any difference in power or knowledge between participants?
- 2- How do we know what the writer or the speaker intends to mean? What factors help the analysts to interpret a text? What do we need to know about the context? What clues enable us to apprehend the meaning of a text?

Discourse analysis is an insight investigation to the spoken as well as written versions of discourse. It serves to fulfill different functions:

- 1) An important contribution of discourse analysis is that it has demonstrated that both spoken and written discourses have consistent and describable structures, with rather different levels of complexity reflecting the different functions of speaking and writing in a given culture. This is quite obvious in Halliday's point of view (1985:92) " *talking and writing, then, are different ways of saying. They are different modes for expressing linguistic meaning*".
- 2) The study of discourse analysis involves answering the questions about the language style, appropriateness, cohesiveness, rhetorical force, and topic / subtopic structures (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003: 209).
- 3) The current goal for discourse analysis is to describe language where it was originally found i.e., in its social context. Considering such a point of view, it is worth to mention that the human interaction includes other media in addition to language. As there are instances of other semiotic systems perhaps gesture, dance, song, photography or even clothing. It would be the discourse analysts' job

to provide an explanation to the relationship between these systems and language(Alba-Jues,2009:12).

4. Approaches to discourse analysis

In fact, approaches to discourse analysis have been varied in accordance with the disciplinary origins. Consequently, a number of discourse analysts appeared belonging to different academic disciplinary, they tried their best to handle the notion of discourse analysis from their own perspectives. In this paper, the focus will be on those approaches that are much related and reflected the greatest relevance to applied linguistics and language education.

4.1 Conversational analysis

The major contribution to the study of spoken discourse has come from the study of conversation, and in particular from the conversational analysis. The conversational analysis is mainly concerned with the detailed organization of everyday interaction. It offers particularly appropriate and accessible resources for sociological enquiry(McCarthy, Matthiessen, & Slade,2002:61). It aims to put satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- 1) How do participants take their turns in conversation? (it is related to turn-taking clues in conversation).
- 2) How do they open and close conversation?
- 3) How do they involve themselves in new topics? And close their old ones, shift topic, ...etc.
- 4) How is it that conversation generally develops with rather slight satisfactorily flow from one utterance to the other?(ibid)

4.2 Variation theory

This theory was first initiated and developed by Labove(1972). His contribution to discourse, namely his description to the structure of spoken narratives , influences language teaching theories. (Labove& Waletsky,1976:363) argue that the ' overall structure' of a fully formed narrative of personal experience is:

- 1) Abstract(summary of story, with its points),
- 2) Orientation(in respect place, time and situation),
- 3) Complication(temporal sequence of events, culminating in crisis),
- 4) Evaluation(narrator's attitude towards narrative),
- 5) Resolution(protagonists approach to crisis),

6) Coda(the point about narrative as a whole).

4.3 Systemic Functional Linguistics(SFL)

This approach has made a significant contribution to the understanding of spoken and written discourses in English. It proposes a functional description of language use, specially the sort of connection that relates language with context, in which the first would shape the other. Its main interest is to have an explanation to the nature and the organization of language in accordance with its function. For in stance, the utterance 'excuse me do you know the way to the local hospital?' serves the function of asking about direction. This interest leads to an investigation of how language is structured to achieve what is called 'socio-cultural' meanings. Therefore; systemic functional linguistics is concerned with the analysis of texts having into account its relationship with the social context in which they occur(McCarthy, Matthiessen, & Slade,2002:66).

4.4 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is mainly concerned with studying the relationship between language, ideology, and power. This approach is seemingly influenced by Halliday and systemic linguistics perspectives. It is also interested in "*analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination power and control, as they are manifest in language*" (Wodak, 2007: 209). Its main focus is on the way people manage to take explicit position in their ultimate understanding of discourse whether spoken or written. Accordingly , Van Dijk(1998: 1) believes that :

Critical discourse analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context

Basically, 'critical' can be realized as having distance to the data, embedding this data in the social interaction, making the respective political stance, explicit, and having focus on self-reflection as scholars undertaking research. Critical discourse analysis abbreviated CDA treated language as 'social practice' and consider the context of language to be of crucial importance to gain an appropriate understanding of how language functions when constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power(ibid). In CDA, texts are being dealt with not only in accordance with the textual regularities they display but also according to what class, gender, and ethnic bias they belong. Moreover what discursive practices are being formulated in a given text are quite appreciated to produce the social practices

which are being reflected in the first place (McCarthy, Matthiessen, & Slade, 2002:67).

Language by its nature provides us with a rather finely articulated components of differences in power in a seemingly hierarchical social structures in which very few linguistic forms have not at some stages been indulged into the function of the expression of power by a process of syntactic or textual metaphor. It is better to mention that power is signaled not only by the grammatical forms being operated in a text, but also by person's control of a social occasion through the device of genre of a text, or by being accessed to certain public spheres.

One methodical way for critical discourse analysts is " *to minimize the risk of critical bias and to avoid politicizing, instead of analyzing, is to follow the principle 'triangulation'*" (Wodak, 2007:210f). Within the triangulation approach, it is noticed that context has a crucial effect as it puts into consideration for types of level:

1. The co-text of each utterance or clause.
2. The co-text in the macro-text; the genre analysis.
3. The socio-political context of the speech event.
4. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationships of the receptive speech event to other appropriate speech events. (ibid:211)

5. Coherence related strategies

Discourse analysts have never been capable of providing an appropriate and a satisfactory definition of discourse unless they base their definitions on the notion of coherence and its structure which would be specific to it. It seems that coherence should be understood as " *a dynamic notion guiding the interpretation process*" (Reboul, C.N.R.S-Crin & Inria-Lorraine., and Moeschler, 1997:294). Some times, discourse analysts are likely to fail to have a relevant interpretation for a certain discourse depending on coherence only because the transmission of the interpretation process becomes mysterious and difficult, and nothing precise could be maintained. All what we think is to have a unit which permits the interpretation of discourse namely an 'utterance'. Within the relevance theory's view point ; the core element is the utterance itself , so it proposes a contextualization of utterance interpretation and of discourse which offers a considerable account of coherence. So coherence in this sense is " *merely a cut down to its true role, that an epiphenomenon of the process of discourse interpretation*" (ibid:294f). Accordingly, coherence is rather a relative notion in which the following principles are proposed:

- (a) The more easy to construct the global intention of a given discourse, the more coherent this discourse is likely to be .
- (b) The richer the global intention of a given discourse is, the more coherent this discourse appeared to be.

Generally, the coherence of a certain text would be much dependent on the way in which it is found and brought together terms or compatible themes. It manifests itself through certain points; the characterization in the words of the lexicon i.e., rhetoric of the sentence, the emergence and the rhetoric of the themes, the logic of the arguments and the narrative i.e., rhetoric of the narrative, the logic of the actions, and finally in the free association of the unconscious and of ideology structure i.e., the meaning of the discourse analysis obtained (Pavis, 2003:9).

To analyze systemically the physical, verbal, and socio-cultural context of communication, there is a need to grasp a very significant term in linguistic manipulation of discourse; which is that of communicative event. Generally, it is a particular kind of communication which involves the speaker's or the writer's recognition of a unified set of components that distinguishes it from other types of communication. This set of components tends to keep the process of communication rather stable throughout: the setting, the general purpose of communication, the sequence of speech acts, the participants, the instruments involved(channel, language variety), the tone, the genre and the rules of interaction(Cots,1995: 94). In discourse segmentation, there is a level within which a certain strategy operates to formulate an integrated system of the communicative event in which the participants are the real actors who decide, according to their goals and circumstances what to say, when and how to say it(ibid:97). Actually any analyzing to discourse and its coherent structure would certainly mean the inclusion of the coherence-related strategies in this integrated system that overlaps with the communicative event. These strategies are respectively: cohesion, turn-taking, and topic management.

5.1 Cohesion

Cohesion is a term that is generally applied to" *designate the over making of relationships within a discourse or a text(which is often represents the co-text of a discourse or text fragment under the account)* "(Verschueren, 1999: 104). It is a semantic concept, in which it represents the relations of meaning that exist in the text, giving it all the characteristics of a text(Halliday & Hasan 1976:4). Within a text, cohesion has certain markers which are in brief as follow:

1. Conjunction such as the use of ' and' for instance.
2. Anaphora markers which usually used as terms to refer to the same entity as some other terms prior in the discourse, thus establishing forms of coreference e.g., relative pronouns, demonstratives, and the possessives.
3. Self- reference for instance the use of the demonstrative 'this' functioning anticipatory in (this rose).
4. Exemplification in which there a great deal of using for instance, an example, such as...etc.
5. Juxtaposition which means the placement side by side e.g. () [].

6. Explanation in which we may notice the following of the dash and the comma.
7. Logical relations : here the use of conclusion expressions e.g. consequently, as a resultetc.
8. Ellipsis: in which omission of certain words or phrases is observed.
9. Numerals: the use of written numbers e.g. two, first, second....etc.
10. Highlighting.
11. Contrasting: it is done by means of the first opposing to the second utterances.
12. Comparison expressions.
13. Repetition: here repetition might involve incorporating elements of contrast and comparison or various kinds of semantic relations such as meaning equivalence or synonymy, meaning opposition or antinomy, and meaning inclusion or hyponymy.
14. Substitution.
15. Structural iconicity: here 'iconicity' is rather a general term used to indicate the non- arbitrary aspects of language form.

5.2 Turn- taking

In communication, there is a significant role for the cooperative activity to be fulfilled, in which participants have to perform their verbal interaction in an coordinated way. Turn- taking can be understood as a set of signals and rules which permit the participants to make an effective and efficient use of the turn system in conversation(Cots,2002:87). As a phenomenon, turn-taking is rather evident in conversation, and the corresponding conversational texts, but its rules and clues are being maintained and manipulated in the spoken form of discourse.

In order to reveal what is really going on in language use, a lot of attention should be paid to the structural properties of the linguistic interaction. It is said to be that the exchanges are locally managed in a way that turn in conversation can be decided in accordance with the development of the interaction. Yet this turn-taking is not random. It would rather reflect the social organization of conversation. Turn- taking is a phenomenon that involves a system in which there are overlaps and silences between turns(Verschueren,1999:37). It is important to mention that the frequency of overlaps and the length of silences are varied taking into consideration the aspects of communication habits that are predominate within a certain society or in a special type of context. Within the structure of turn-taking an interruption may take place without disrupting the flow of the development of conversation. Also an important aspect of conversational structure is the sequencing of turns. It involves the openings and the endings, that in a way or another indicate their coherent chunks of interaction(ibid:38). An influential analysis for turn-taking has proposed that this

phenomenon is typically controlled by three principles(Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) as cited in(Akmajian, A. et al.,1995:372):

(p1)

The speaker "selects" the next speaker.

(p2)

The first to talk becomes the speaker.

(p3)

The speaker continues his/ her own remarks.

5.3 Topic management

Closely related to turn-taking rules is the way in which participants manage and negotiate topics. In conversation, speakers have to be able to guarantee mutual understanding, trying to select appropriate levels of explicitness using discourse strategies. These strategies can be summarized as the following(Burns& Seidlhofer,2002:218):

(1) Assuring mutual knowledge with others.

(2) Assuming it elsewhere with the reference.

(3) Giving much more information.

Topic management refers to the set of signals used by the participant to introduce and manipulate different referents in a communicative event(Cots,2002:88). It serve to fulfill the following:

(a) It is used to understand coherence which is verbally initiated by the participant in a communicative event.

(b) It is considered as being the basic element in an interaction.

(c) It has certain markers that would contribute to the effectiveness as well as the efficiency of the produced message; by mainly signaling explicitly the relationships in terms of topical coherence between different elements or parts of the message(ibid). There are certain markers to be taken into account in topic management strategies:

1. Topic shift: in which we can notice expressions like the following:

-By the way.....

-I nearly forgot....

-Why can't we discuss....?

-Let me think, on the entirely different matter, now,

In the case of introducing different or new topic , this actually done by the participants' realization to have the responsibility to indicate their more or less explicitly the connection(or the lack of connection) between that topic and the already previous one, and , by doing so , one can guarantee the coherence of the text being constructed.

2. Structuring: such as the use of the followings:

- To start with the

- Moreover,....
- In addition to that.....
- Finally....

Structuring as devices are applied in cases in which topic might include different points or aspects. These markers have the function of reminders that the different aspects are introduced from the part of the same argument unit.

3. Paraphrasing: such as the use of – I mean....

- What I wanted to say.....
- Let me put it in another way...

These markers would supposedly indicate that what is coming next is not a new topic , but rather it is the same using different words or expressions. Also they can show the participant having an effort to make his / her message grasped by the other participant.

4. Summing up: such as the use of expressions like: - To sum up.....

- What I 'm saying is basically is
- in short I can tell....

A way of closing a topic consists of pointing out the essential aspects that have been dealt with. These markers help to effect the transition to close the topic while at the same time enriching the conveyed message.

5. Exemplifying : It involves the use of certain expressions like: - for instance....

- let me take an example...
- take...

Exemplifying markers indicate that the following part is an attempt within the same topic to move from an abstract approach to the topic to a more concrete one.

5. 4 Presupposition

The concept of presupposition is considered as being central to linguistics. It is considered as an important aspect of meaning that focuses on the knowledge of the world and of the situations in which participants in any discourse may come across(Falk,1973:267). And to be more specific, any text analysis depending on presupposition theory necessarily helps to make explicit the implicit assumptions and intertextual relations that underlie text production(speech act theory(Austin(1961),(1962), and Searle (1969)). Having attempt to understand the nature of presuppositions and what do they stand for, they are those conditions" *which must be satisfied before the sentence can be used to make an assertion, ask a question, give a command, express a feeling, etc.*" (Fillmore, 1971: 381).

Although there are different types of presuppositions, it seems significant to take the prepositions which are tied to conventional means for the process of marking the information structure of a sentence, i.e. word order, intonation and duration, to mark topic and concentrate of a sentence, which is mainly called the "thematic presuppositions". An example of this type might illustrate what is said:

- Jane missed the train again.

Here the word 'again' implies that Jane missed the train before, at least once. In fact there are many linguistic phenomena that have been related to presupposition. Also it is not to forget the presupposed social nature of language use. Aiming at presenting the different types of presupposition, Yule has put a survey that typically focuses on six types of that presuppositions: existential, factive, non-factive, lexical, structural, and counter-factual. The following table will provide an explanation (ibid):

Table 1: It shows the classification of presuppositions types

Presupposition Type	Example	presupposition
Existential	The x	>>x exists
Factive	Iregrethaving that	>>I did it
Non-factive	he claimed to be a teacher	>>He was not a teacher
Lexical	She managed to escape	>>She attempted to escape
Structural	Who is coming	>>Someone is coming
Counter-Factual	If I were not ill	>>I am ill

6. Research questions

The traditional modes of observation upon which the description of language involved are sometimes based on the conventional linguistic analysis that can be obtained by testing the validity of their natural occurrence, say, in casual conversations, or by examining pre-existing texts. My aim is to investigate the following points:

- (a) Identifying the basic evidence property involving pre-specified sentences, so that the students are likely to come across any usage of them through the

students' interpretive consequences; in such a way that the pragmatic analysis is to be recognized on the basis of syntactic analysis.

(b) Arranging the linguistic levels upon which the students or the language users are met by employing informant technique. Such a technique would appear to solve the corresponding problem on the pragmatic level.

Before setting about analyzing the short story which has been given to the students, it is wise to seek out the necessary tools, and to be aware of what questions are need to be fulfilled. For the purpose of organizing our thoughts, there is a need to present a general diagram of the main tasks to perform. More precisely, there is a need to study the intertextual relations operating within the literary work. They are actually considered as 'unusual external' relations brought into the text(Fairclough, 1989 :85). The intertextuality relations include a great deal of external relations between texts such as:

- (I) quotations e.g. Mary said "I will be late tonight"
- (II) reported speech e.g. Mary said she would be late tonight.
- (III) Texts which are incorporated into another text without attribution e.g. 'Mary will be late tonight'

In fact those relations would involve that what is 'said' in a text is said against a background of what is 'unsaid', but taken as given. I shall concentrate on reporting relations as they are forms of intertextuality ones, particularly on narrative reporting of speech act. They consist of a set of voices which are potentially relevant, and potentially incorporated into text.

In practice, the elements of topic management which specify the language use are rich enough to prepare an empirical ground for language test. As it is said before, the main interest of this paper is to investigate the coherence related strategy namely topic management on the light of the discourse inference in the students' written texts. Of course, this would assist a clear 'insight' into the character of the target language. And for the sake of obtaining an accepted account for the role of topic management in discourse, there have been three questions to be fulfilled within the scope of this study:

1. Do Iraqi (EFL) students at university level have the capacity to manage the topic being discussed in their essays?
2. Since the test involves discussing the topic management within the limit of genre (a short story) , the involved students have been divided into two groups: the first one includes students who were exposed to many types of genre, but never been in touch with short story. The other group were studied most genre types including short story. So the question is ' is there any difference between the two groups' performance? '

3. Is there any relationship between the students' performance(the two groups) and the motivation of doing the essays putting into account the types of presupposition which are implicitly obtained within the text of the short story i.e., the recognition ability they might have.

7. Methodology

The current study has proposed certain questions concerning the role of topic management in the students' written discourses i.e. the students academic essays. It included informants all of whom were of similar age, and level of education. They were fourth stage (EFL) students, College of Arts and College of Education/ Basrah University. Sex variation was not taken into consideration as most of the participants were females. The students were divided into two groups in accordance with the college the belonged to. They were asked to write essay concerning a short story for Edgar Alan Poe they have been given entitled "Eleonora". The students were grouped in classroom setting within the time of one lecture limit(60 minutes):

- (a) 13 fourth stage (EFL) students in College of Arts, they have been asked to write critical essays, they were given certain questions presented in appendix (1) which assist them to fulfill this task and also investigate the study's proposals.
- (b) 25 fourth stage (EFL) students in College of Education, they have been asked to write critical essays, but they have not given any questions in this concern. They were free so as to do what was recommended in the way they are acquainted with.

7.1 Procedure

In this paper, the procedure involves two types of analysis:

1. Conducting a content analysis to the short story in hand depending on initiating presupposition questions to make explicit what have been implicit in the given text. Moreover, those questions are mainly based on a table of classification of the presuppositions according to the indicators involved to detect those presuppositions. Ultimately this would reveal the validity of presuppositions as representatives of the highly descriptive analysis. The table revealing the classification of presupposition depending on the type indicator is cited in (Wiemer-Hastings & Wiemer-Hastings, 1999: 93). And it is important to mention that some indicators can point to more than one type of presupposition.

Table 2: Classification of presupposition based on indicators. In the right column, expressions in parentheses identify the presupposed unit.

Indicator	presupposition type: The Question presupposes
"how often"...VP "how" aux NP VP "while"... VP "where" VP "why"...VP	an action(V)
"usually"...VP "how often" "frequently", etc	a habit(V)
"how many" NP "where is" NP	an entity: object , state or Person (NP)
Indexical "this"/ that" NP "these"/ "those" NP "such a (n)"NP	a shared referent or common ground (NP)
"how much" NP... "how much dose" NP "know" "how many" NP... Possessive pronouns Apostrophe's': NP s	a possession (NP); exception list: NP 's that can be presupposed (name,age,etc.)
"why" S	a state of affairs, fact, or Assertion(S)
VP infinitive "why" VP NP	an intention / a goal (infinitive /NP VP)
"who" VP	an agent (A person who VP)
"when" VP ..."when" NP VP	an event (VP)

The analysis included about (102) sentences taken from the text of "Eleonora" . The text has been classified into paragraphs, and paragraphs into sentences. It may seem that this problem is frequent, but then, these questions are parts of commonly used presupposition questions that have been designed applying that model of classification. Precisely and to be more familiar with the process of the analysis, let's take the first sentence of this short story into account:

- I am come of a race noted for vigor of fancy and ardor of passion. [1]

So the presupposition question would be using the indicator ("who" VP i.e. who are you?). The presupposition type would be an agent. Here the narrator is reporting some information about himself in which he intends to describe himself as a romantic person who is well-known for his passionate attitude in life.

- We had always dwelled together in the valley of the Many-Colored Grass.[2]

In example [3] the presupposition question that corresponds with it might imply a habit (" how often" VP i.e. how often had you dwelled in the valley?), in which the narrator "always" did it, day by day he and his beloved had roamed in the vale of the Many-Colored Grass.

Sometimes initiating presupposed questions would not prepare an evaluated ground for the use of certain structural occurrences in the involved text. In this concern, example[3] illustrates that point, as we can not include it under specific analysis due to its presuppositional content:

- if doubt it ye can not play unto its riddle the Oedipus.[3]

2. Conducting content analysis to the students' essays. The analysis will be based on the markers of topic management, in which it is intended to evaluate the students' performance. Then , a comparative analytical method to be applied with rather emphasis on the classification of topic management markers.

7.2 Evaluation

In this section, we intend to report summary statistics for the human ratings of our test questions. The detection of presuppositions are based on content analysis i.e., descriptive rules. The rules use a wide range of linguistic information about the sentence input, including particular words(such as "why"), part of speech categories(e.g., wh-pronoun). So in order to evaluate the measures we obtained, computed statistic based on human ratings.

Table 3: It shows the mount and the type of presupposition involved in the short story depending on Wiemer-Hastings table

Type of presupposition	Percentage Rate
An action	17.64
A state	25.49
An entity	13.72
An intention	8.82
An agent	10.78
A habit	5.88
An event	4.9

Fact	9.8
Shared referent	1.9
Passion	0.9

Table 4: It shows the College of Arts students' performance of topic management markers

Type Of the marker	No. of students	Percentage Rate
Realizing the topic	12	92.30
Topic shift	0	0
Structuring	0	0
Summarizing	10	76.92
Exemplifying	9	64.23
Paraphrasing	5	38.46

Table 5: It shows the College of Education students' performance of topic management markers

Type of marker	No. of students	Percentage Rate
Realizing the topic	25	100
Topic shift	25	100
Structuring	8	32
Summarizing	13	52
Exemplifying	1	0.4
Paraphrasing	8	32

8. The analysis of the results

This paper presents the rational use of presuppositions as they've been obtained out of the given story, in which it is noticed that there is a great deal of using presupposition type that is attributed for the description of a state (25.49), more particularly a state of mind in order to get some suspense for the story. However we should not ignore the other types. This actually reflects the narrators' intuitive factors of the actual language use. Moreover, it would be interesting to have to approach the language of that text with rather cognitive tools. The description of the test within the scope of this study has revealed the mental processes of assigning/ deciding a topic. In this concern, table 3 would make the idea much more obvious, as it shows to what extent the type of actions are rather stable and the events are progressing in a slow manner.

This study employs a qualitative and synchronic approach to analyze discourse topic management in written discourses i.e., the students' academic essays. This is actually done by applying topic management markers to see whether those students are really appreciate the texts they used to write day after day to fulfill their assignments. In many situations we face difficulties in assigning topic(s), and would rather think the utterances are reader-based and carry context sensitivity. Generally, the decision upon which we can base our judgment depends upon the type of our test criteria. Perhaps we could have a look at the table 4 & 5 to make the decision and ask if the involved test is relevant enough to be worth of processing. Interestingly, all the above results are attributed and closely related to relevance for assigning discourse topic and its management. The students' performance are greatly verified in accordance with the type of the test procedure , their cognitive ability, and their background of the target language. For instance, the College of Arts students seem to be better in some of the markers as compared with the other students i.e., College of Education students. The same thing could be said about the College of Education students.

Through the process of evaluating the obtained results, here it is noticed that the correlation statistics of the presupposition type involved in figure1 would presumably suggest the implicit influence of the prominent presupposition type in the whole story presuppositions. Also the figure 2 of the histogram reveals the slow movement of the story events that determined the contextual effects upon the students' performance.

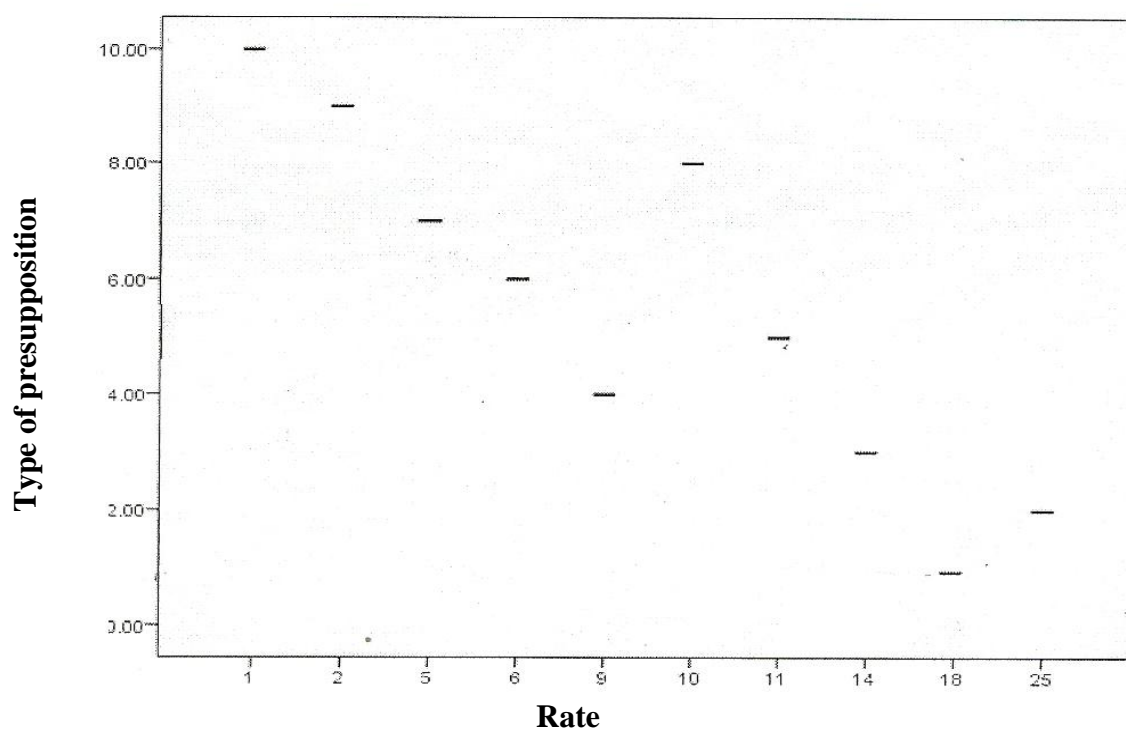


Figure 1: It represents the statistic schema for the story presupposition type

In the analysis, it is important to have a T-Test in this evaluation as the test includes samples of two groups each of which less than thirty subjects , in which the statistic ($t=4.211$) <0.05 . So this means that there is a significant difference between the prominent presupposition type(a state type) and the rest of the story presupposition types see table 6 and 7 that support the given hypothesis.

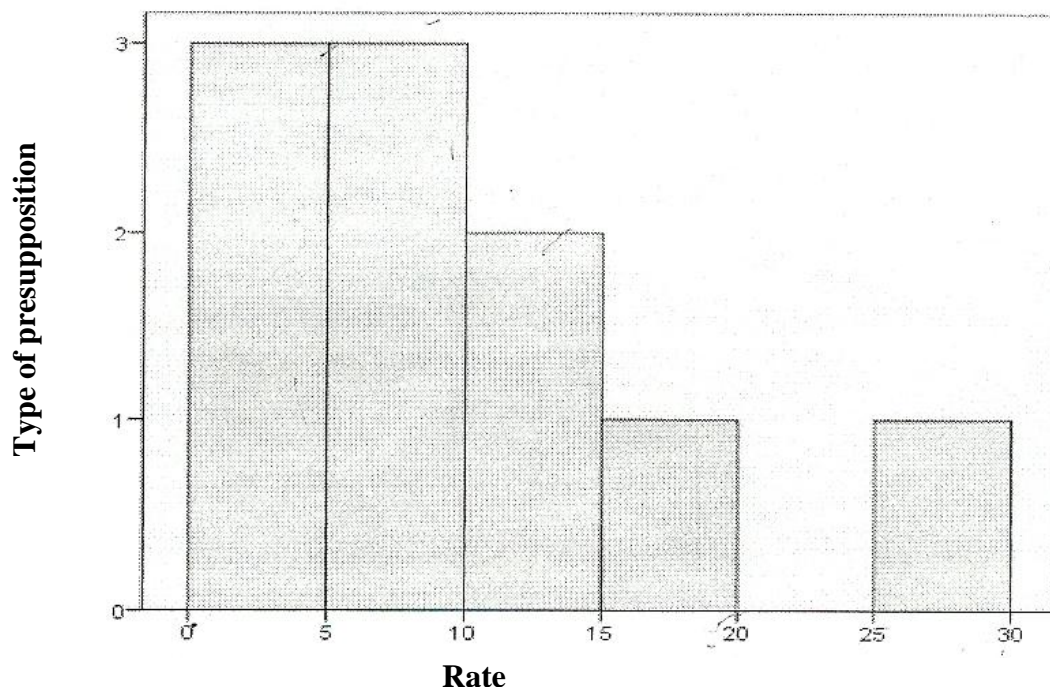


Figure 2: It shows the histogram of the story presuppositions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std.error mean
Rate	10	* 9.98	* 7.495	2.370

Table 6: It represents one-sample statistics for the presupposition type of the story.

	T	D f	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference
Rate	* 4.211	9	.002	9.979

Table 7: It show the one-sample test of the story presuppositions.

The study test is conducted in the case of the equality of the data and inequality of the groups samples. And this actually would suggest that there is a significant difference between the performance of the two groups. By looking at the table 8 , it is seen the standard deviation of the first group is less than the second group. And since the ($p\text{-value}= 0.136<0.05$) in table 9 , so the first group is better in some of the topic management markers. But, it is not to forget that the second group is the best in the other markers. However , there is nothing general in the students performance, and definitely our assumption concerning the implicit effect of the type of presuppositions involved in the story on the students response to it, is a matter of rationality and relevance.

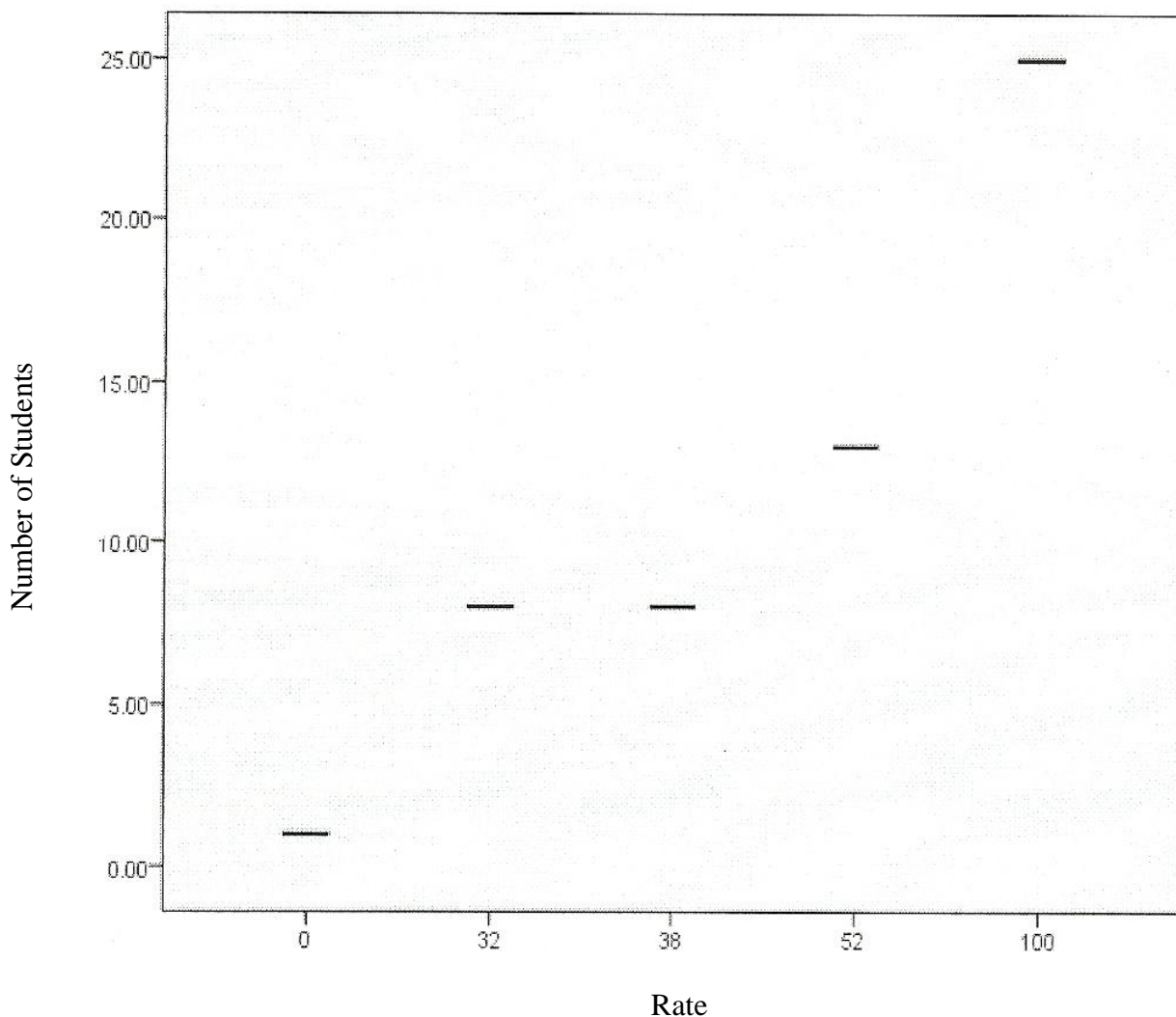


Figure 3: It represents the statistic schema of the College of Education students performance

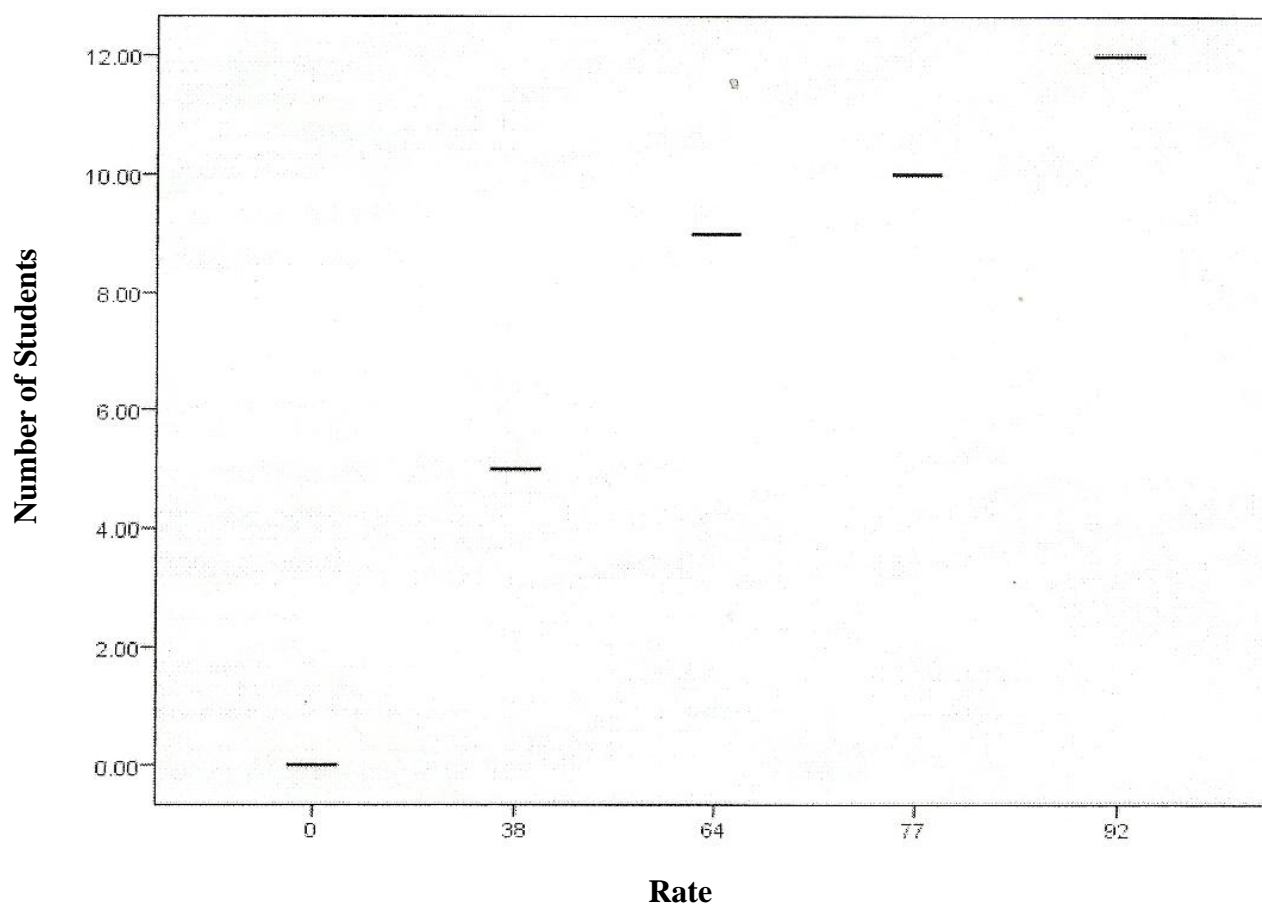


Figure 4: It represents the statistic schema of College of Arts students performance

VAR00	N	Mean	Std .Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Student a	6	6.0000	5.17687	2.11345
B	6	13.3333	4.81156	4.00555

Table 8: It shows the group statistics between the two groups performance

t-test for Equality of Means				
T	D f	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
-1.619	10	* .136	-7.33333	4.52892

-1.619	7.584	* .146	-7.33333	4.52892
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Table 9: It explains the independent samples of the conducted test

9. Discussion

The current study purpose was to investigate the (EFL) students' ability to manage the topic in their academic essays. This is done by conducting a content analysis for both the genre(the short story) and the students' essays. Actually bringing discourse analysis to the language of classroom is one of the most important tasks that enables linguists and analysts to describe and explain how language is actually used in classroom.

In attempting to answer the study's questions, it sounds very interesting to mention that the main focus of this study is not describing the foreign language, but how to use that language to communicate the intended message depending upon the written discourses provided by those students i.e., the essays. First, and concerning the first question, we can say that those students have the ability to manage the topic of their critical essays, but to some extent their performance was not good as it was expected; so there must be a pragmatic knowledge guiding their performance. They are weak in the way of organizing the patterning of the structure of the written discourse. Also, they are unable to use some important and strategic devices such as paraphrasing to maintain a coherent text, as only(34.21%) of the two groups informants used that device.

As for the second question about the difference in performance between the two groups included in the test, it is shown that there exists differences between them, and I can not describe them as remarkable ones, but rather less conscious attributed to the syllabus adaptation and methodology of teaching employed, enhancing certain devices rather than others. Obviously, the student do not very often appreciate the communicative event indulged in and find themselves in the situation where the risk of misunderstanding increases because they do not share the same cultural values and have different expectations about how to do thing with the foreign language. The students of College of Arts do not use topic shift to indicate the type of their explicit connection with the topic they are discussing. Whereas students of College of Education have made a good use of that device may be due to their interest of writing such essays because they were moving from one subtopic to another minding coherent markers for their texts. The

students of (CoA) used more exemplifying markers(64.23%) as compared with the students of(CoE) in which only(0.4%) of them used these markers, may be this attributed to the required test which included a set of multiquestions to be fulfilled in the case of the (CoA), also see appendix(1).

And in order to take the third question in to account, there must be a sort of defined functional approach to view the students communicative competence trying to present as contextualized verbal behaviour as possible. Thus, the operating within the presupposition as analytical method becomes necessary, since the best way to contextualized language is to use real instances of language use. Introducing the presupposed nature of language use called for a way for the detection and the investigation of presupposition types in the text of the written discourse. More precisely, this study has employed the (Wiemer-Hastings & Wiemer-Hastings, 1999) table for detecting the type of presupposition in the short story to see if there exists any kind attributed for the use of particular presupposition rather than the other. It is noticed that the short story contained a great deal of presupposition type attributing for the description of a state, particularly a state of mind, in which the narrator insists to manipulate this in the production of the test of his story as a narrative technique, we can take the following sentences in the light of what is mentioned above:

- I am mad.[4]
- The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the Seraphim. [5]

The presupposed question that corresponds with the sentence[5] is "why S" i.e., why you behave like that? , its type would be the one explaining the narrator' state of mind; he is rather a mad man because he thinks of nothing but his love and his beloved. Concerning example[5], it also goes with the same presupposition type involving state of affairs "why S" i.e., why Eleonora was lovely?. So the answer would be that...she was lovely because she was like the angel Seraphim. Let's examine another example:

- No murmur arose from her bed. [6]

Here in this sentence the indicator of the presupposition is likely to have a different interpretive association, in which("how many" NP) has replaced that initiated presupposition question i.e., how many sounds did arise from her bed?. What a wonderful image can be drawn out of this very calm creature!.

In the presentation of the study's results, our discourse analysis implies the segmentation of the text structure in which it would provide an empirical ground for the description of topic markers of the that short story. Going back to our results, it can be said that the second type of presupposition that has influenced

the overall the way of analyzing that text; which is that used for the description of an action. The following sentences might illustrate that type of presupposition:

- They penetrate rudderless into the vast Ocean.[7]
- We sat locked in each other's embrace.[8]

The second type of presupposition indicator presumes an action that; in sentence[7] the initiated question can be("how" aux NP VP) i.e., how do they penetrate into the.....?. The same thing could be said about the sentence [8] , in which the initiated question that matches with it would be (how did you sit?).

10. Conclusion

This paper has arrived at these points as its final conclusions:

1. What is being talked about will be judged differently at different points, and participants themselves may not have identical views of what each is talking about. It involves the learners to be aware of the implicit information in a given text especially presuppositions.
2. In the study of discourse we shall insist on the premise that " it is the speakers and writers who have topics and not text".
- 3.Topic management markers help to decide where does the beginning of the coherent fragment of discourse occur in a given text. In that way , a learner feels comfortable and, therefore, be willing to try those markers in real life situations and with the linguistic materials he is already taken in classroom.
4. Much more focus should be paid to enhance the comprehension skill among (EFL) students by depending on the extra-linguistic knowledge, especially what is related to the context in which the texts occur. In context, there are aspects which are directly reflected in the text, and which need to be called upon to interpret the text. They are the activated features of the context. They actually suggested as being the constituent parts of the "contextual framework" within which the topic is operated that is called topic framework.

5. Promoting discourse awareness in the classroom in which language learning process should include approaches in favour of unconscious type of learning as well as focusing on meaning and use.
6. There should be an approach to study discourse analysis depending on the presupposed nature of language use , in which presupposition is a phenomenon that contains information " constituted" from the general knowledge of the foreign language, from situational context of discourse, and from the completed parts of discourse itself through using real instances of language use.
7. The language teachers should know something about discourse analysis to help their students to grasp the different aspects of language interpretation and inference. For instance, the very same text which has been used to introduce or reinforce a grammatical structure or a function could be used, instead, to talk about the type and distribution of speaking turns(if it is a dialogue), the level of politeness, the construction of coherence and understanding by means of specific linguistic token or the type of communicative situation.

Appendix (1):Form of the test questions

Q: Read the given short story entitled "Eleonora" very carefully. Then try to write a critical essay. The following points are to be taken into consideration when interpreting and analyzing the story. Please be brief and to the point:

1. Mention the theme of this short story.
2. What impression could the narrator create when presenting his ideas?
3. Try to sum up the main story events and identify their nature.
4. How could you be sure that the narrator has revealed his emotions rather pessimistically? Mention some related lexical items exploring that idea.
5. Paraphrase the last paragraph from " I wedded...to Eleonora"

6. If you could put another title to the given short story, what could it be?

Appendix (2): A sample of student's answer sheet
College of Education

* Major themes and Plot *

A woman returning from beyond the grave to visit her former love is a device often used by Poe. Eleonora was sick "made perfect in loveliness only to death". She does not fear death, but fears that the narrator will leave the Valley after her death and transfer his love to someone else.

The narrator emotionally vows to her, with the mighty ~~mighty~~ ~~power~~ as his witness to never bind himself in marriage "to any daughter on Earth".

After Eleonora's death, however, the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass begins to lose its lustre and warmth. The narrator chooses to leave to an unnamed "strange city". There he meets a woman named Ermengrache and, without guilt, marries her. Eleonora soon visits the narrator from beyond the grave and grants her blessing to the couple.

I think this story "Eleonora" an autobiographical story written for Poe to alleviate his own feelings of guilt for considering other women for love. At the time of the publication of this very short story, his wife "Virginia" had just begun to show signs of illness although she would not die for another five years. The narrator is Poe himself living with →

2

his young cousin and his aunt. The abrupt ending with the narrator's new love only named in the third to last paragraph is somewhat unconvincing if this is Poe's attempt at justifying his own feelings. Poe considered the tale "not ended so well as it might be". Perhaps it is in the vagueness of the reason which will only be revealed in Heaven for permission to break his vow. Even so, compared to the endings of other Poe tales where the dead lover returns from the dead and ~~the narrator's new love~~ ~~the message~~ in "Eleonora" is ~~that a man~~ beyond the grave, this is a "happy" ending, free of antagonism, guilt or resentment.

In this story there are also sexual themes. The narrator's name Pyres implies fire and passion. As he and Eleonora grow their innocent relationship turns to love with descriptions of the changing landscape being erotic or sexual - animal life and plant life sprouting forth and multiplying. Eleonora's death serves as a symbolic end to ideal romantic love which is soon replaced with the less passionate married love for Ermengarde. Eleonora embodies many typical traits in Poe's female character. She is young, passive and completely devoted to her love.

Appendix (3) : A sample of student's answer sheet
College of Arts

الموضوع : التاريخ / / ٢٠٠

① ~~Low~~ The semantic theme of the story is Love and Faithfulness

② The impression Could the narrator Create when he presents his story, is that he is very sad and lonely

③ The Summary of the story :

Men have Colled him mad, because he has taken a Vow, that he will never marry another girl

④ He is pessimistic because, he mentions Sad words Suchas last sad change, befall humanity Sorrow feel theme.

⑤ Once again in the Silence of the night, There was a sweet ~~voice~~ and familiar voice, Saying;

" Sleep in peace! ... it is the End of your Sadness and Sorrows, you will meet her in the heaven "

⑥ "River of Silence"

Z.W

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مسألة في الخطاب اللغوي : إدارة الموضوع ودوره في الخطاب المكتوب في المقالات الأكاديمية بالإشارة إلى الطلاب الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية بالمستوى الجامعي .

المدرس المساعد : وفاء قحطان حميد
كلية الدراسات التاريخية
جامعة البصرة

الخلاصة :

لأكثر من ثلاثين عاما احتلت دراسة الخطاب الاهتمام الأكبر في علم اللغة التطبيقي . واخذ محللو الخطاب يدركون أهمية الحاجة في توافر أساس جيد لمعالجة منظمة للخطاب المنطوق والمكتوب على السواء . إن هدف هذا البحث هو التصدي وإظهار مختلف أنماط النماذج الخطابية ولاعتماد الكثير من التأكيد على تلك السياقات والاستراتيجيات اللغوية ذات العلاقة المباشرة بمتعلم ومعلم اللغة اعتماداً على وجهة النظر القائلة "بأن تعلم كيفية الانضمام أو الارتباط بالخطاب اللغوي هو احد أهم الأهداف في تعلم وتعليم اللغة" مكارثي وماتسين وسلايد(2002). لذلك في هذا البحث أحاول تقديم مجموعة من التعاريف ذات العلاقة بما يعنيه الخطاب وتحليل الخطاب . إن فهمنا للخطاب وما يتعلق به مثل الترابط الموضوعي coherence يبدو في بعض الأحيان اقل كفاءة وغير قادر على توفير تفسيرات لغوية لاعتماد إستراتيجية تواصل معينة أكثر من غيرها . إن إحدى هذه الإستراتيجيات هي إستراتيجية إدارة الموضوع في الخطاب لمعرفة كيفية عملها عند تداخلها مع استراتيجيات أخرى وبيان أهميتها في توفير مقاربة أكثر تنظيمية للترابط الموضوعي والتي تبدو للوهلة الأولى صعبة الفهم . ورغم أن هذه الإستراتيجية تكون واضحة في الخطاب المنطوق , أردت دراستها في الخطاب المكتوب في المقالات الأكاديمية للطلبة العراقيين في جامعة البصرة .