



**ERRORS OF UNITY AND COHERENCE IN SAUDI ARABIAN EFL
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WRITTEN PARAGRAPH - ACASE STUDY
OF COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & ARTS, TANUMAH, KING KHALID
UNIVERSITY, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

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Abstract:

This study investigates errors of unity and coherence in a paragraph written by the Fourth - Level students at the College of Science and Arts in Tanumah, King Khalid University. The purposes behind this study are to investigate, identify and analyze errors of unity and coherence committed by EFL university students in paragraph writing, moreover to identify the possible causes of these errors and to suggest ways of overcoming these problems. Furthermore, to provide suggestions for teaching and learning English paragraph writing to EFL university students. The study uses both testing and interview as primary sources for data collection. The findings indicate that students commit errors in unity and coherence, and that is their written performance is characterized by ineffective organization of the ideas, lack of transitional markers and the misuses of cohesive markers, the students' written paragraphs, in general, are characterized by an inconsistency in tense, faulty parallelism, omission of linking words and wrong selection of pronouns. The study concludes that students' problems with writing coherent and unified paragraph are attributed to many factors such as EFL students' insufficient knowledge about techniques of coherence and unity of paragraph writing in addition to their lack of motivation. Besides interference of EFL learners' mother tongue in EFL learning process and inappropriate teaching strategies and techniques employed by teachers in teaching coherence and unity of English paragraph writing. It is recommended that EFL university instructors should focus on giving ample practice on the elements of achieving unity and coherence of paragraph writing in addition to that they should give immediate feedback to students and encourage them to read a lot.

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1. Introduction

According to Brown (2000), in order to master the English language, learners had to be adequately exposed to all of the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing plays a major role in expressing one's ideas, thoughts, opinions, and attitudes. Through writing, people are capable of sharing ideas, feelings, persuading and convincing others. In an EFL context, writing benefits students in some ways. For example, Rao (2007) explains the importance of writing in the EFL context as it motivates students to organize ideas, analyze, criticize and develop the ability to summarize. In addition, it strengthens students' ability in reflecting, thinking, and learning the language. Writing specifically helps the students produce the language by developing and connecting the ideas in writing product. Furthermore, Anom et al. (2012) states that by writing, students are assisted to reinforce the grammatical structure, idioms, and vocabularies, which have been taught, to have an adventure with language, to go beyond what they have learnt to say and to become involved in the new language. Therefore, by writing, students do not only master the general structure of a text, but also master the grammatical structure, idioms, and vocabulary.

English writing skill, along with other basic skills (listening, reading and speaking), has always been an issue of great concern to EFL teachers and researchers. For instance, Damiani et al. (2011) in Asma and Radia (2017) regard the writing skill as the process that calls planning, reflection and the organization of ideas, in addition to the required effort and attention that EFL students are invited to respect.

Writing is one of the language competences, which should be mastered by EFL students. However, it has been assumed as the most problematic language skill for ESL/EFL learners (Ting, 2003; Ong, 2011) and even for native speakers (Norrish, 1983). Similarly, Bell and Burnaby (1997:148) as cited in Asma and Radia (2017) view writing skill as a cognitive skill that writers are required to master with attention to sentence structure, appropriate selection of vocabulary items, careful attention towards spelling and punctuation. They add that learners need to master the linguistic knowledge and the ability to integrate information coherently and cohesively in written discourse. Generally, writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers alike because writers should balance many aspects such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics.

With respect to the above-mentioned views, some EFL learners encounter difficulties in writing skill. Thus, the present study is an attempt to investigate the writing errors experienced by Saudi EFL university students in terms of coherence and unity of English paragraph writing and to propose strategies to help students overcome such difficulties.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

From the researcher's observation of the written performance of EFL university students at the College of Science and Arts in Tanumah, King Khalid University, it has become evident that unity and coherence of paragraph is a big obstacle to EFL students. However, the writing activities of EFL students in classroom display that, they commit grammatical, spelling, punctuation and capitalization errors. They find it difficult to produce an acceptable and convincing paragraph. That is, they may either write disconnected sentences or misuse cohesive devices. As a result, their paragraph lacks unity and coherence. Sometimes, it becomes very difficult to be understood. The overall performance of the students in writing skill is relatively poor and unconvincing at all. Based on this observation, the study tries to identify and analyse the students' written paragraph in terms of unity and coherence and to shed light on the factors behind students' poor writing performance as well as proposing suitable solutions.

1.2 Questions of the Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- a) What errors of unity and coherence do Saudi EFL university students commit in paragraph writing?
- b) What are the sources and causes of errors of unity and coherence in paragraph writing?
- c) What strategies can be used to improve EFL university students' ability in coherence and unity of paragraph writing?

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

The study hypothesizes the following points:

- a) Saudi EFL university students commit unity and coherence errors in paragraph writing.
- b) Majority of Saudi EFL university students' descriptive writing production lacks unity and coherence.
- c) The written production of Saudi EFL university students is characterized by ineffective organization of the ideas and inappropriate use of transitional markers.
- d) Lack of adequate vocabulary and lack of writing practice are associated with Saudi EFL university students' errors in unity and coherence of paragraph writing.
- e) Saudi EFL university students can improve their paragraph writing through extensive reading and practice.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

- a) To investigate, identify and analyse errors of unity and coherence committed by Saudi EFL university students in paragraph writing.

- b) To determine the probable causes of these errors.
- c) To suggest ways of overcoming these errors.
- d) To suggest some remedial recommendations and strategies to help EFL students produce a unified and coherent piece of writing.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Paragraph writing is considered as an essential part in writing skill, which should be mastered by EFL university students. On this ground, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be of great importance to EFL instructors, students, and syllabus designers. Generally, this study is regarded as a part of the contribution to the field of English language teaching.

1.6 Limits of the Study

The study is confined to the investigation, identification, and analysis of errors of unity and coherence in paragraph written by Fourth - Level Saudi EFL university students at King Khalid University, College of Science and Arts-Tanumah, Department of English Language in the academic year 2018/2019 during the First Semester.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Writing

Damiani et al. (2011) regard the writing skill as the process that calls planning, reflection and the organization of ideas, in addition to the required effort and attention that EFL students are invited to respect. Moreover, Harmer (2007), cited in Asma and Radia (2017), views writing as a process that should be undergone over different stages including, the drafting stage, the editing stage, the planning stage, and the final draft. Furthermore, Byrne (1996) thinks that 'writing' involves encoding of a message written through a sequence of sentences ordered together in certain ways, and it requires some conscious mental effort including making notes, drafting, and revising.

From the above mentioned views and definitions, the present study defines 'writing' as a thinking process which involves generating ideas, composing these ideas in sentences and paragraphs, and finally revising the ideas and paragraphs composed.

2.2 Importance of Writing

Writing skill has always been considered an important skill in teaching and learning. Raimes (1983:6) in Anchalee, S and Pongrat, R (2008) pointed out that the close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course. She identified the different components for producing a clear, fluent and effective piece of writing: content, the writer's process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, grammar and syntax. According to Rao Z. (2007), EFL writing is useful in two respects: First, it motivates student writers' thinking, organizing

ideas, and developing their ability to summarize, analyze and criticize. Second, it strengthens student writers' learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language.

In the field of EFL or ESL instruction, Anchalee and Pongrat (2008.) explain the importance of writing by claiming that writing helps students learn. First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that were taught to students. Second, when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say and to take risks. Third, when they write, they necessarily become involved with the new language; the effort to express ideas and constant use of eyes, hand, and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning. As students struggle with what to put down next or how to put it down on paper, they often discover something new to write or a new way of expressing their ideas.

2.3 The Concept of Paragraph

A paragraph is defined by Oshima and Hogue (1999:17) as a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of some related sentences develops one main idea. From this definition Phylline, M. (2015) explains that a paragraph is a self-contained unit of a discourse in writing dealing with a particular point or a single idea. It consists of a series of sentences closely related to one another and devoted to the development of one topic. It is marked off by indentation at the beginning, pauses of various lengths and a break in the dot at the end. Zemach and Rumisek (2003:1) define a paragraph as a group of sentences about a single topic. Together, the sentences of the paragraph explain the writer's main or most important idea.

In fact, the above-mentioned definitions of a paragraph refer to a paragraph as a piece of writing consisting of several sentences, which discuss one main subject. These definitions indicate that the sentences must be related; they must have a particular structure and that the cardinal rule of paragraph writing is to focus on one idea. That is to say, a paragraph is comprised of sentences, but not random sentences. The present study defines a paragraph as a group of closely related sentences organized and revolved around a single idea or topic.

2.4 The structural Parts of an English Paragraph

For Mayers (2006) in Phylline, M. (2015), there are three important parts of the English paragraph as follows:

a. Topic Sentence

It is the most general statement in paragraph writing, which indicates what the paragraph is about. Mayers (2006) states that the topic sentence outlines the main idea of a paragraph to which the rest of the paragraph should be focused. A topic sentence usually occurs at the beginning of the paragraph but it sometimes occurs in other positions such as in the middle or at the end of the paragraph. Fleming (1999) in Wahiba, K. (2014) states that "*topic sentence is an introductory line which addresses what the main idea or thesis of paragraph going to be*". It is the primary purpose to get attention for

the reader to understand the idea. Oshima and Hogue (2006) explain that a topic sentence does not only name the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. It also tells the audience about the purpose of the paragraph. That is, the topic sentence tells the audience what ideas to expect in the paragraph. Reid (2000: 116) argues that a good topic sentence has two parts: the topic and the controlling idea. The topic is the subject of the paragraph. It is what we are writing about. The controlling idea limits the topic of our paragraph to the aspect of the topic that we want to explore in our paragraph, and it is termed as a restricting statement.

b. The Supporting Sentences

Alice and Patricia (2005) define the supporting sentences or supporting details as the sentences that follow further explain and support the topic sentence. They refer to a group of sentences that provides information and develops the idea expressed in the topic sentence. The supporting details are sentences used to support the main idea stated in the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, quotations, etc. Hogue (2008) acknowledges that "*supporting sentences are the biggest part of the paragraph that explain or prove the main idea in the topic sentence*". Therefore, supporting sentences are necessary for the paragraph to reinforce the main idea.

c. The Concluding Sentence

The concluding sentence is the final sentence in the paragraph. It reviews the topic sentence and gives some final thought about the subject. According to Mayers (2006), the concluding sentence occurs at the end of the paragraph. It emphasizes the point of the paragraph be emphasized by the readers. It usually has a sense of finality. Zemach and Rumsek (2003) believe that the concluding sentence concludes the paragraph by either summarizing the main idea that discussed in a paragraph or repeating the topic sentence in different words. For Katharina, R. (2016), the concluding sentence serves three purposes as follows: 1) it signals the end of the paragraph, 2) it summarizes the main points of the paragraph; 3) it gives the final comment on the topic and leaves the reader with the most important ideas to think about.

2.5 Elements of a Good Paragraph

Nunan (2002) in Khairy (2013) believes that there are some elements, which determine the quality of the paragraph. That is, the paragraph should have three main elements to be achieved i.e. unity, coherence, and adequate development. On the other hand, Walker (2010:3-14), cited in Nurul Fajri (2016), lists five elements of good writing, they are purpose, audience, clarity, unity, and coherence. These elements produce good writing. Since the focus of this study is on errors of unity and errors of coherence, this section will shed light on these aspects with a brief background on cohesion.

2.5.1 Unity of Paragraph

Oshima and Hogue (1999:30) note that unity means that a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from the beginning to the end. Every supporting sentence must

directly explain and support the main idea as stated in the topic sentence. Any information that does not directly support the topic sentence should not be included. Clearly, the paragraph will be unified if all the details in it support the points in the topic sentence. They affirm that the paragraph should only discuss one main idea and every supporting sentence should justify the main idea that is stated in the topic sentence. In brief, unity in writing is the connection of all ideas to a single topic, where all the supporting sentences should relate to the topic sentence.

A unified paragraph has a topical sentence and a group of sentences that provide support to the topical sentence. The supporting sentences should reflect the topic sentence. As Strunk, et.al (2000) believe that the supporting sentences must follow the idea mentioned in the topic sentence and must not deviate from it. By this way, unity in a paragraph is achieved. Any idea that does not address the topic breaks paragraph unity. That is to say, in order for a paragraph to maintain a sense of unity, the paragraph must focus solely on a single idea, point, or argument that is being discussed. Therefore, the paragraph should not begin to stray and develop new ideas.

To sum up, a paragraph has unity when all the sentences support one single idea. According to Alice and Patricia (2005), the paragraph must have one controlling idea in the topic sentence. Otherwise, the paragraph loses focus. The supporting sentences must support, demonstrate, prove, or develop the main idea in the topic sentence. If they do not, they will be irrelevant or off-topic and destroy the unity of the paragraph. The concluding sentence should restate idea in the topic sentence to reinforce the main idea for the reader.

2.5.1.1 Achievement of Paragraph Unity

As it has been mentioned before, Unity refers to the extent to which all of the ideas contained within a given paragraph "hang together" in a way that is easy for the reader to understand. To achieve unity, Maria, K. (2015) thinks that a writer must ensure two things only. First, the paragraph must have a single generalization that serves as the focus of attention, that is, a topic sentence. Secondly, a writer must control the content of every other sentence in the paragraph's body such that (a) it contains more specific information than the topic sentence and (b) it maintains the same focus of attention as the topic sentence.

2.5.2 Coherence of Paragraph

Coherence is defined by K. Jennathul Birthous (2011) as "*the connection of ideas in a text to create meaning, or a flow of ideas, throughout the whole text or discourse that enables readers to understand how the writers' ideas are presented in the overall discourse*". Coherence is also defined by Altenberg, B. (1987:50-64) as the relationships that link the meanings of the sentences in text and may be based on the speakers' shared knowledge. According to Richards et al (1985) in Philline, M. (2015), coherence is "*the relationships which link the sense of utterances in discourse or of sentences in a text*"

Adelstein & Pival (1980) think that a paragraph has coherence if a series of sentences develop the main idea. To achieve the objective of conveying the writer's meaning, the writer has to avoid distracting the reader from his message by making the

message understood, that is, to make sure there is continuity between one part of the text and another.

McCrimmon (1967:109-130) thinks that a paragraph is said to have coherence when its sentences are woven together or flow into each other. If a paragraph is coherent, the reader moves easily from one sentence to the next without feeling that there are gaps in the thought, puzzling gaps, or points not made. According to Genevieve, M. (2014), this view is shared by Moe's (1979) who observes, "*In written work, coherence is achieved when the sentences in a paragraph relate to one another and when the paragraphs in a passage are presented in a reasonable sequence*".

Hyland (2006:311) in Mark, B. & Paulo, E. (2017) defines coherence as "*The ways a text makes sense to readers through the relevance and accessibility of its configuration of concepts, ideas, and theories*". From this point of view, coherence involves logical connections at the idea level (topic). To facilitate the reader's comprehension, all the sentences that make up each paragraph have to be logically arranged by following a continuous order based on the message they are trying to convey (Hinkel, 2004).

In summary, coherence is a product of many different factors, which are combined to make every sentence contribute to the meaning of the whole piece. Coherence refers to the unity created between the ideas by the succession of sentences. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one. Ideas that are arranged in a clear and logical way are coherent

2.5.2.1 Achievement of Coherence

Coherence refers to the extent to which the reader easily understands the flow of ideas in a paragraph. For this reason, coherence is closely related to unity. When a writer changes main ideas or topics within a paragraph, confusion often results. To achieve coherence, then, a writer should show how all of the ideas contained in a paragraph are relevant to the main topic. Oshima and Hogue (1999:40) think that in order to have coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one. Coherence can be achieved in a number of ways. Oshima & Hogue (2006) suggest the following four:

a. Repeating Key Nouns

Repeating keywords in a paragraph is an important technique for achieving coherence. Repeating the word or phrase that is the theme of an essay, or the topic of a paragraph, is a way of keeping the text focused. Maria, K. (2015) believes that repetition of keywords and phrases adds coherence to a paragraph by drawing the reader's attention to the controlling idea of the paragraph. There is no set rule as to how often a key noun can be repeated - the guiding principle must be clarity and an avoidance of making the reader feel that there is too much repetition. Of course, careless or excessive repetition is boring and a source of clutter.

b. Using Consistent Pronouns

Another way in which we create coherence is by avoiding the repetition of nouns, noun phrases or names and using pronouns instead. A text that does not use pronouns to

some extent will come across as overly repetitive. The important part when using pronouns is to be consistent by using the same person and number throughout the paragraph or text. Maria, K. (2015) explains that pronouns add coherence to a paragraph in two ways: they smooth the flow of the sentences by eliminating awkward repetition of nouns, and they help to knit a paragraph together by referring to nouns in previous or following sentences or sentence parts.

c. Using Transition Signals to Link Ideas

One of the most common methods of establishing coherence in a paragraph is the use of transitional words and phrases (sometimes-called linking words or linking adverbials) they refer to specific words and phrases that evoke links and transition between ideas. These devices indicate to the reader the specific relationship between what was said and what will be said. They can be added to a text to make it clear how the sentences are related to each other. They can be compared to traffic signs for motorists; they tell us what to expect on the next stretch of road – or text. If we removed all the road signs, experienced drivers would still find their way around, but traffic flow would slow down and there would be misunderstandings. It is the same with text.

d. Arranging Ideas in Logical Order

Any academic text will be incomprehensible unless the ideas expressed in it are arranged in some sort of logical fashion. There are several different kinds of logical order, but some of the more frequently used are chronology, importance, and contrast. Chronology, firstly, has to do with time, and in terms of logic, events are ordered in a sequence. Secondly, importance means that ideas are discussed in a sequence, which implies either an increasing or decreasing order of importance. Thirdly, the contrast has to do with ordering ideas by contrasting or comparing them. Finally, the achievement of coherence depends on two factors: sequential arrangement of sentences (McCrimmon, 1967; Moe, 1979) and the background knowledge of the reader or the hearer (Brown and Yule, 1983; Connor and Johns, 1990). Sequentially arranged sentences result in a smooth flow of information in a text. In addition, the reader or the hearer uses his/her background knowledge of the text.

2.5.3 Cohesion of Paragraph

Halliday & Hasan (2013) view cohesion as how words and expressions are connected using cohesive devices with five groups: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. For K. Jennathul Birthous (2011), cohesion is defined as *“use of devices that allow the writer to establish relationships and connect texts together within and across sentences”*.

Hardy and Leuchtmann (1996: 237) refer to cohesion as *“expressions of continuity that exist between one part of the text and another, specifically reference, substitution and lexical cohesion”*.

Bailey (2003) in Asma and Radia (2017) refers to text cohesion as the clarity and readability in which the writer needs to establish a link with various cohesive devices including reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. In this

respect, Cox et.al (1990) found that good readers tend to use the previously mentioned cohesive devices more wisely and appropriately than poor readers do.

Finally, Richards et al in Phylline, M. (2015) define cohesion as the grammatical and/or lexical relationships between the different elements of a text. For Bailey (2011:115) cohesion has been defined as “*joining a text together with reference words (e.g. he, theirs, the former) and conjunctions (e.g. but, then) so that the whole text is clear and readable*”

2.5.3.1 Cohesive Devices

Hedge(2005:83) refers to cohesive devices as “*a means by which parts of a text are linked as logically related sequences, they signal the relationship between ideas in such a way that the writer intentions are made clear*”. Halliday and Hassan (2013) indicate that cohesive devices are linguistic means of various nature that create the formal connectedness of text, concretely they are the expressions that are bound together by relations described a cohesive tie, and which form cohesive chains in the text. Halliday and Hasan have identified five kinds of cohesive devices in English: *Reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion*

2.6 Challenges of Paragraph Writing

Writing is of course, not easy and in some way, more difficult than speaking .For Norrish (1983:63) writing is more complex because it tests a person’s ability to use a language and the ability to express ideas. Moreover, Zergoune, C. (2013) thinks that writing skill is the most difficult skill to cope, because most of the students while taking their writing tasks, they face difficulties such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and organization of ideas. As a result, a person needs to write not only coherently but also correctly, which requires more time and effort. Liu and Braine (2005:623-624) in Anchalee, S and Pongrat, R (2008) think that this difficulty of writing leads students to be more susceptible to producing errors.

Hailemariam, W. (2011) finds that EFL students have several problems in writing such as vocabulary selections, punctuation error, generating an idea, organizing problems, spelling errors, and appropriate grammar usage. In writing an academic text, EFL students potentially face some problems related to the influencing factor of academic writing problems.

Clifford (1987), in Ibrahim (2015), notes that an important problem, which EFL students face in writing, is a content problem. Leki (1991) thinks that this problem could be because of the traditional methods teachers use to teach writing for spelling, punctuation, and mastering grammar. To solve this problem, Clifford (1987) suggests that teachers should encourage students to focus on the message, ideas or thoughts they wish to convey rather than grammar, spelling, punctuation, and others.

For Azad, A. (2015) paragraph components, the irrelevance of controlling ideas and support, mixing a number of ideas in one paragraph, repetition and redundancy, and lack of description, are amongst the common challenges that are found with regard to EFL learners.

Nassima, Z. (2015) categorizes EFL students' difficulties in writing into errors of spelling, grammar, coherence, cohesion, and linguistic accuracy. Thus, she thinks that it becomes a hard mission for teachers to correct and give written feedback for each student.

According to Kharm (1986) in Ibrahim, M. (2015), learners have the problems of structuring the paragraph, topic development of a paragraph, structuring the whole discourse and a theme in a discourse. *"The most common students' problem in paragraphing is either the paragraph is not limited to a single topic or the single topic is not developed or exemplified adequately"* (West, 1966: in Tasi, J. 2006: 17). Raimes (1983) thinks that the other problem of organization in student' writing is the difficulty of differentiating a topic and supporting ideas or generalizations and specific details.

Yanti, N. (2011) states that *"writing is complex and difficult to teach and to learn, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements"*. Similarly, Bell and Burnaby (1984) cited in Nunan (1989: 36) believe that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level, these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and letter for action. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts." Byrne (1988: 4) classifies the writing complexities into psychological, linguistic and cognitive problems. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:6) think that since writing does not come naturally but rather gained through continuous effort and much practice, it becomes a complex skill.

2.7 Causes of Weak Writing Performance of EFL Students

As EFL, students learn to write inside or outside the classroom settings, they experience difficulties, which hinder their writing proficiency. The writing difficulties are commonly shared among English native speakers and even students who are learning English both as a second or foreign language (Aragón et al, 2013 in Annab A. (2015)). Friedlander (1997:109) in Asma and Radia (2017) attributes the weak writing performance of EFL students to the influence of the first language on target language writing. He shows that *"writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second or third language"*. Al-Khasawneh (as cited in Huwari& Al-Khasawneh, 2013) states that *"EFL learners showed that they have many problems when writing in English because they rarely write in English"* (p. 2).

Ahmad, et al. (2013) think that poor writing skills originate from two factors: the teacher and the learner. Teachers lack appropriate pedagogic approach to teach writing, including providing prompt and effective feedback to students, and most crucially, teachers' lack of ability to motivate students. On the other hand, students face numerous challenges: effects of L1 transfer lack of reading, motivation, and practice. Moreover, Davies (1998:25.) in Asma and Radia (2017) relates the writing difficulty of EFL learners to lack of practice, he notes *"writing is essentially a creative process and good*

writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice". Grabe and Kaplan (1996:6) believe that writing does not come naturally but rather gained through continuous effort and much practice. Furthermore, Hedge (2005) states that "my own experience tells me that in order to become a good writer; a student needs to write a lot".

Ski (2005), cited in Thongma (2012:6) attributes weak performance of EFL learners in English language learning in general and writing skill in particular to the following factors:

- a) EFL learners have insufficient exposure to the language, as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms.
- b) Learners lack the motivation to learn English, as they do not see the immediate need to use the language.

Asma and Radia (2017) believe that a major factor behind EFL students' writing errors is the nature of writing process on the ground that writing is a complex process because it requires the mastery of grammatical devices, conceptual thinking and judgmental (have purpose and activating) elements (Byrne 1988, Heaton 1990). Moreover, they attribute writing difficulty to the lack of reading. In fact, shreds of evidence have shown that better readers are better writers and better writers are more likely to language exposure than poorer readers are. In this respect, Raimes (1994, p. 42) stresses the importance of reading into the foreign language by saying that "the more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns, organizational flow, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language". In addition to the efforts EFL teachers do to raise their competence to write, reading is approached to be the fruitful strategy that dictates implicitly the safe ground to be followed and it becomes the sample for students to appreciate. Overall, the lack of reading is among the sources that can cause dissatisfaction in EFL essay writing.

Hailemariam, W. (2011) relates writing problems to inadequate exposure of target language, lack of practice, the problem in writing apprehension, lack of appropriate feedback, lack of vocabulary, and carelessness are the possible causes of students' problems in EFL paragraph writing.

2.8 A Review of Some Related Studies

Errors committed by EFL students and their poor performance in writing skill have been investigated by many scholars and researchers such as Hackling (1991), Khan Sir et al. (2013), Andi, W. (2016), Anchalee, S and Pongrat, R (2008), and Katharina, R. (2016). For example, Khansir et al. (2013) examined the errors in the paragraphs written by EFL learners in Iran at an undergraduate level in terms of the topic sentence, supporting sentence, supporting details and the closing sentence. The research findings revealed that the largest number of errors committed by the students was in the supporting details, while the minimum number of error was in the supporting sentences. Furthermore, Andi, W. (2016) tends to figure out EFL students' experiences in developing paragraphs and difficulties in writing paragraphs of academic texts. The

researcher employed interviews as a tool for collecting data. The participants of the study were five students who were writing their research report as a requirement for their undergraduate degree. The study was conducted in one of the private universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The findings of the study showed that the students faced difficulties in English words and word choice, grammar, development of the main idea, coherence and cohesiveness, effective sentence, and citation. Nurul Fajri (2016) also attempts to find out whether unity, coherence, and word usage were used appropriately by EFL students in paragraph writing, the error made most by these students in constructing their paragraphs and the lecturers' attitudes about her student' writing errors. This study uses a qualitative research format, where all the data are described in a systematic way based on the research questions. A number of 21 second-year students from the English Department in a university in Banda Aceh was the sample of this research. To obtain the data, the researcher used a test. She also interviewed the lecturer to gain more understanding of her students' writing errors. The findings showed that some students did not use unity, coherence, and word usage appropriately in writing their paragraphs. Most errors were made in word usage (137 errors or 79%). Students made errors in spelling and omitted words and letters. There were 30 errors of unity (17%) and 9 errors of coherence (5%). It was found that many errors they made were influenced by their mother tongue, and were caused by their difficulties in learning English. The study was concluded that many of the students made errors because of interlingual and intralingual transfer. Furthermore, the lecturer believed that her students made errors because they lacked enthusiasm, motivation and rarely did their writing exercises.

Katharina, R. (2016) explored how the students structured and completely developed the ideas of a paragraph. The data of the study were collected from the third-semester students of Stikubank University, Semarang, Indonesia. In analyzing the data, the sentences in the paragraphs were numbered for easy identification of the topic sentence, the supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence. The completeness of paragraph development was revealed by examining how the supporting sentences developed the topic sentence. The study concludes that the EFL students under the study have problems with paragraph structure and paragraph development. Thirty percent of the students do not conclude or close their stand-alone paragraphs and merely 33% of the students are able to develop their paragraphs completely.

In terms of EFL Arab context, the challenges that Arab EFL students face in writing skill were investigated by many researchers such as, Al-Jarf (2001), Ezza (2010), Umair (2011), Ibrahim, M.(2015) Eltayeb, F.& Abbas,I. (2018). For example, Al-Jarf (2001), investigated the use of cohesive devices by 59 Arab EFL students from King Saud University. The substitution was deemed the most problematic form of cohesion for the students followed by reference and ellipsis. Furthermore, the outcome of the study also indicated that *"cohesion anomalies were caused by poor linguistic competence, especially poor syntactic and semantic awareness, and poor or inaccurate knowledge of the cohesion rules"* (Al-Jarf, 2001, p. 141). Furthermore, Ezza (2010) conducted a study in

order to examine the effect of educational policies on the quality of the students' writing. He found that the weakness in the writings of Arab learners' of English is not always due to an inherent weakness in the students. Educational policies pertaining to the number of students in each class and the use of outdated teaching methods are factors that lead to poor writing quality.

According to Genevieve, M. (2014), Umair (2011), conducted a study to identify the causes of the problems that Arab learners of English encounter in multi-ability academic English writing classes. The author found that the problems that EFL Arab learners encounter in writing composition can be partly ascribed to the organization of teaching materials and resources, time allocated to teaching English per week, students' attitudes and differences in their level of understanding.

In his study, Ibrahim, M. (2015) aims at identifying university students' writing problems in English language and suggesting ways of solving those problems. The study was conducted in the Teachers' College, and the College of Education, Nile Valley University, North Sudan. The study uses the descriptive research method. 20 English language students were selected using a simple random sampling procedure. They were instructed to write a composition of about 250 -300 words on "A description of my own hometown/village". 10 English language instructors reviewed the students' compositions. The aim was to identify the errors and mistakes made by the students. The findings reveal that those university students have various writing problems: language problems at the levels of morphology and syntax; usage errors, and mechanical mistakes, that is, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, lack of several writing development skills, and cognitive problems.

Eltayeb, F.& Abbas,I. (2018) investigate errors in paragraph writing committed by Saudi EFL university students .The study focuses on the errors in organizational structure and formatting elements of Saudi EFL university students' written paragraph. A testing, structured interview and personal observation of the researchers are all used as tools for collecting data. The findings of the study reveal that the students have weakness in paragraph writing due to some factors such as EFL learners' lack of the adequate stock of vocabulary, which results from insufficient English language proficiency besides EFL university learners' lack of motivation. Moreover, there are insufficient activities and practice of basic techniques of writing in addition to the lack of follow-up to writing performance of EFL learners.

Finally, from the above –reviewed studies , it can be concluded that these studies relate errors of unity and coherence in particular and weakness of writing performance in general to some factors such as interference of EFL student's mother tongue, lack of follow-up, insufficient writing practice and to other factors. In fact, the present study, like the previous studies, investigates errors of unity and coherence in English paragraph writing. The difference between this study and the previous studies is that the present study depends on two different tools for collecting data.

3. Methodology

In this section of the study, the research methodology is described in terms of the method of the study, population, sample, and tools of collecting data.

3.1 Method of Study

The study adopts a descriptive analytical approach.

3.2 Population of Study

The population covers English language teaching staff in the Department of English Language in the College of Science and Arts, Tanumah at King Khalid University. The study also covers the Fourth Level EFL university students who study the course of Writing Skill 4 in the First Semester in the academic year 2018/2019. The total number of students is 40. They speak the Arabic language as their mother tongue. Their ages range from 21 to 23.

3.3 Sample of Study

- a) 30 students' exam scripts from Fourth Level EFL students are randomly chosen from a writing test as a representative sample.
- b) 15 answers of the structured interviews, which are conducted on the English language teaching staff in the above-mentioned college.

3.4 Tools of Data Collection

Two different research tools are used for data collection. These tools consist of a test and structured interview:

3.4.1 The Test

The test is designed for the students chosen as a sample population. In this test, the students are instructed to write a descriptive paragraph about a certain topic. The writing task is done inside the classroom. It takes one-hour time. The test tries to identify errors of unity and coherence, as well as to find out whether these two aspects are used appropriately in the students' paragraph writing and what kinds of errors students most often commit.

3.4.2 The Structured Interview

Besides employing a test as a primary tool for collecting data, the study also conducts a structured interview on EFL university teaching staff who teaches writing skill courses. The interviewees are asked to reflect their points of views about the challenges that EFL university students experience in producing a unified and coherent written paragraph. They are also asked to identify the major causes behind the errors of unity and coherence, to propose solutions to these difficulties in paragraph writing and to suggest

some strategies to help EFL university students improve EFL university students' ability in unity and coherence of paragraph writing.

4. Data Analysis & Discussion

This section sheds light on the analysis and description of errors of unity and coherence committed by Saudi EFL university students in their written paragraphs. Moreover, this section focuses on the analysis of the structured interview conducted on EFL university instructors.

4.1 Analysis and Description of Students' Errors

In this respect, thirty students' test scripts are collected and randomly selected to be described and analyzed in terms of errors of unity and coherence as follows:

4.1.1 Errors of Paragraph Unity

Unity in a paragraph means that all the sentences are related to the topic sentence and its controlling idea. Thus, a paragraph lacks unity when it jumps from idea to idea, topic to topic, with no clear sense of purpose (Kramer et al., 1995). To achieve unity, sentences in the paragraph should be related clearly to the controlling idea and this is done by the topic sentence because it contains the ideas or topic that is developed in the rest of the paragraph.

Based on this notion, errors of paragraph unity in the present study will be dealt with in term of the following questions:

- a) Does the topic sentence state the controlling idea?
- b) Does the student fail to show the controlling idea?
- c) Do the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence?
- d) Does the concluding sentence restate the topic sentence?

The following tables give a statistical description of errors of paragraph unity, based on the four above-mentioned elements, committed by Saudi EFL university students in their written paragraph.

Table 4.1: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity

No	Elements of Achieving Paragraph Unity	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
a	The topic sentence does not state the controlling idea	15	50%

According to the table (4-1), it is noticed that (50%) of students do not state the controlling idea in the topic sentence of their paragraph.

Table 4.2: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity

No	Elements of Achieving Paragraph Unity	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
b	The student fails to show the controlling idea	10	33.3%

Table 4.2 indicates that, (33.3 %) of students fail to show the controlling idea in the topic sentence

Table 4.3: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity

No	Elements of Achieving Paragraph Unity	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
c	The supporting sentences do not relate to the topic sentence	27	90%

Table 4.3 above shows (90 %) of students do not relate supporting sentences to the topic sentence

Table 4.4: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity

No	Elements of Achieving Paragraph Unity	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
d	The concluding sentence does not restate the topic sentence.	26	86.6%

Table 4.4 indicates that (86.6 %) of students also write concluding sentences that do not restate the topic.

4.1.1.1 Analysis of students' written paragraphs

The following are some paragraph samples excerpted from the students' written performance. Let us read the student paragraph below and then discuss the four criteria of achieving paragraph unity mentioned above.

Paragraph No. 1: My Hometown

"Abha is one of the most beautiful cities in Saudi Arabia. It is situated in the south of Saudi Arabia. It is a calm city. I love Abha because it is beautiful .The weather is fantastic in Abha. I was born in Abha, but I live in Namas town. I like to think about it when I feel bored."

If we examine this paragraph, we can say that the first sentence states the topic sentence of the paragraph. The topic sentence states the controlling idea. It enables us as readers to expect that the following ideas in the paragraph will shed light on the beauty of Abha by supporting the topic sentence with relevant ideas. However, the writer gives sentences that are irrelevant or unnecessary to the topic sentence of the paragraph. That is to say, the second, third, fourth and fifth sentences do not support the opening point, and so the paragraph is not unified. Finally, it is noticed that the last sentence concludes the paragraph with an idea that does not restate the topic sentence. Thus, the paragraph " My Hometown" lacks unity.

Paragraph No. 2: My Best Friend

"My best friend is Yahya. He is twenty years old. Yahya was born in Najaran, but he lives in Abha. He is a good man and friend. Yahya is single. He lives with his family. He is a student at King Khalid University. He studies English. He likes swimming, drawing and listening to music. He does not like football. He likes salad and kabsa very much. He speaks Arabic and English."

Firstly, if we have a simple look at the paragraph, we can discover that it is introduced with an appropriate topic sentence that clearly states the limited topic and the purpose of the paragraph.

Secondly, it is noticed that the sentences from the second sentence up to the twelfth ones are not related to the topic sentence with the exception of the third sentence that relates to the topic sentence. It is expected that the writer should give some ideas about the personal characteristics of his best friend to support the topic sentence. Instead of discussing the reasons why Yahya is his best friend, the writer jumps into a description of the age, place of birth, marital status, hobbies, studies and language of his friend. These sentences do not contain ideas relevant to the topic sentence at all. However, the second sentence in the paragraph, suddenly changes its direction, begins to describe the friend rather than showing his personal characteristics of being the best friend for the writer, which appears as a new topic or idea, not so related to the controlling idea specified by the topic sentence, causing the paragraph to break apart. Thus, this paragraph lacks unity because it jumps from one idea to another. In fact, one of the common problems of paragraph unity encountered by EFL students in English writing is that the ideas are indeed related somehow, but due to the lack of a controlling topic sentence, the ideas scattered around loosely, thus damaging the unity of the paragraph. This problem is greatly associated with the insufficient exposure to exemplary and sample paragraphs about paragraph unity. The problem can be also related to the way in which paragraph unity is taught.

Paragraph No 3: My Favourite City

"My favourite city is Jeddah. I love this city because most of my relatives live there. Moreover, there are big malls, beautiful parks and beaches for relaxation. In addition to that, people in Jeddah are very friendly. I do like Jeddah and I hope to live there forever."

This paragraph starts with a clear topic sentence followed by supporting sentences that reflect on the topic sentence. This topic sentence indicates that the rest of the paragraph will explain why Jeddah is a favourite city for the writer. The reader can also anticipate the rest of the paragraph to explain how and why Jeddah is favourite. The second, third and fourth sentences are supporting sentences explaining or giving more information about the first sentence. All the supporting sentences in this

paragraph are relevant and related to the topic sentence of the paragraph. Therefore, this paragraph as a whole has a unified and logical structure that follows a clear pattern of paragraph development. The whole paragraph presents only one idea and rounds off with a concluding sentence that restates the topic sentence. Thus, the paragraph is unified.

4.1.2 Errors of Paragraph Coherence

A piece of writing has coherence when all of the ideas are organized and flowed smoothly and logically. As it has been mentioned before, in order to have coherence in writing, Oshima and Hogue (1999:40), suggest four ways to achieve coherence. The first two ways are repeating key nouns and using consistent pronouns that refer back to the key nouns. The third way is to use transition signals to show how one idea is related to the next. The fourth way to achieve coherence is arranging ideas in logical order. On the basis of this suggestion, errors of paragraph coherence in the present study will be identified according to the following elements:

- a) Repetition of keywords and parallelism;
- b) Consistent use of pronouns reference;
- c) Consistent use of transition signals or cohesive devices;
- d) Arranging ideas in a logical order.

The following tables give a statistical description of errors of paragraph coherence, based on the four above-mentioned elements, committed by Saudi EFL university students in their written paragraph

Table 4.5: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph coherence according to the repetition of keywords and parallelism

No	Errors of paragraph coherence	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
a	Repetition of keywords and parallelism.	15	50 %

Table 4.6: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph coherence according to the consistent use of pronouns reference

No	Errors of paragraph coherence	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
b.	Inconsistent use of pronoun reference	20	66.6 %

Table 4.7: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph coherence according to the inconsistent use of transition signals

No	Errors of paragraph coherence	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
c.	Inconsistent use of transition signals or cohesive devices	26	86.6 %

Table 4.8: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph coherence according to the illogical order of ideas

No	Errors of paragraph coherence	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
d.	Ideas do not follow a logical order.	22	73.3%

According to the above-mentioned tables (Table 4.5 - Table 4.8) there are many errors of coherence committed by EFL students in this study; For instance, 50 % errors happened due to repetition of keywords and parallelism. 66.6 % errors committed due to the inconsistent use of pronouns, 86.6 % errors in inconsistent use of transition signals. Many students fail to provide necessary or proper connecting devices between ideas. Moreover, there are 73 % errors made by EFL students concerning paragraph organization. All these errors indicate that the students generally have much difficulty in achieving paragraph coherence.

4.1.2.1 Analysis of Students' Written Paragraph

The following are some paragraph samples excerpted from the students' written performance. Let us read the student paragraph below and then discuss the criteria of achieving paragraph coherence

Paragraph No.4: My Best friend

"Having a good friend is an interesting thing in this life. Anyone must have a friend. Anyone can chose his friend. My best friend is Hizam Saad. I meet him last year at the college. Hizam is a good person. When I face any problem he helps me, stands beside me and tried to comfort me. My best friend always helps you. I am very happy Hizam is my best friend. When he is absent from the college I miss him very much. All my colleagues at the college know him as a good student. If I do not have a friend, you will be sad. Anyone must have a friend to support him and give him advice. Life is hard you need someone to help you. Hizam was born in Khamis Masheet, he lives in Tanumah. Hizam likes drawing, listening to music and to play football.

The paragraph above is characterized by many errors. It demonstrates errors in tenses, run-on sentences, faulty parallelism, omission of linking word and wrong selection of pronoun. Below are samples of the student's above-written paragraph errors.

A. Tense errors

No	Errors	Correction
1	Anyone can <u>chose</u> his friend.	Anyone can <u>choose</u> his friend.
2	I <u>meet</u> him last year at the college	I <u>met</u> him last year at the college

B. Run-on sentence

No	Errors	Correction
1	Hizam was born in Khamis Masheet, <u>he</u> lives in Tanumah	Hizam was born in Khamis Masheet, <u>but he</u> lives in Tanumah

C. Faulty parallelism

No	Errors	Correction
1	When I face any problem, he helps me, stands beside me and <u>tried</u> to comfort me.	When I face any problem, he helps me, stands beside me and tries to comfort me.
2	Hizam likes drawing, listening to music and <u>to play</u> football.	Hizam likes drawing, listening to music and playing football.

D. Omission of linking word

No	Errors	Correction
1	I am very happy Hizam is my best friend.	I am very happy <u>because</u> Hizam is my best friend

E. Wrong selection of pronoun

No	Errors	Correction
1	If I do not have a friend, you will be sad.	If I do not have a friend, <u>I</u> will be sad.

As it is mentioned before, for coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one.

If we have a look at paragraph No 4 again, it is noticed that the writer starts his paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence. The topic sentence consists of the topic "having a good friend" and the controlling idea "is an interesting thing in this life". We expect as readers of this paragraph that there will be clear, smooth connections between sentences and that the ideas are logically arranged, but the writer fails to give a clear link between sentences. No sentence hints at the content of the next sentence. That is to say, there is no logical organization of sentences. The ideas are illogically arranged, the details are loosely scattered around in the paragraph, which needed to be linked together with effective cohesive devices. The paragraph is poorly organized and the transition techniques between sentences are weak or missing. The writer gives an effective topic sentence, but when it comes to coherence, it is not that satisfying. For one thing, the details about his best friend are listed one after another, without a clear order. Based on what is mentioned above, we can say that the writer fails to maintain paragraph coherence.

Besides ineffective organization of the ideas, the lack of transitional markers and the misuses of cohesive marker, the students' written paragraphs, in general, are characterized by an inconsistency in tense, faulty parallelism, omission of linking words, wrong selection of pronoun, shift between past and present tense which indicates a disorder in time sequence in the paragraph, thus confusing the reader. All

these errors suggest that the students face the biggest difficulty in paragraph coherence. Therefore, it is important for the writer to clearly mark the relationships between sentences and ideas. To do this, the writer has to organize his thoughts logically and to provide clear transitional markers to indicate any change in the flow of ideas in a paragraph.

Finally, the lack of paragraph coherence can be related to the lack of writing practice inside and outside the classroom in addition to the students' insufficient knowledge about coherence in paragraph writing. These errors can also be attributed to EFL university students' lack of the adequate stock of vocabulary, which results from insufficient English language proficiency, so they have difficulty in creating, supporting or organizing the ideas. Another factor behind these errors is EFL university students' lack of follow-up to their writing activities. That is to say, EFL university students do not get suitable feedback.

4.2 Examples of Students' Errors

The analysis of the writing samples' errors in coherence shows many inadequacies. Each error type will be explained by at least one example; the examples below are taken from the students' written paragraphs as they are, with no correction.

A. Errors in Parallel Structure

In case of making a list of things, the students sometimes list phrases or clauses that are not parallel in structure. The absence of parallel structures in the paragraph makes it incoherent.

Error: *"My best friend likes swimming, drawing, playing football and to listen to music."*

Correction: *"My best friend likes swimming, drawing, playing football and listening to music."*

B. Run-on Sentence Errors

These sentences run together without correct punctuation. It is noticed in this present study that the students' written performance is characterized by run-on sentences. Look at the following example:

Error: *"My friend gave me a valuable thing, it is an interesting book."*

This run-on error involves putting a comma at the end of a sentence and then writing another closely related sentence. We cannot put a comma after the word 'thing' and carry on writing. To correct this error, *a period* should be placed after the word 'thing'. Thus, the correction will be as follows: *"My friend gave me a valuable thing. It is an interesting book."*

This error shows that the student does not know some of the basic punctuation conventions and rules. A paragraph is not just a juxtaposition of sentences without being controlled by punctuation rules. This kind of error can be attributed to negative transfer from the students' mother tongue, Arabic. It is common in Arabic to have a paragraph consisting of many sentences with only one full stop at the end; you can hardly find two or more Arabic sentences without being connected by conjunction instead of a full stop.

C. Fragment Sentence Errors

Some sentences are missing verbs or subjects. For example "my friend a kind person". The sentence is missing a verb. This is a type of incomplete sentence that may confuse the reader. Such error can be attributed to non-existence of the copula in the Arabic language besides its multiplicity of forms, that is to say, the copula "be" has more distinct forms with respect to person, number, and tense than any other verb in English. The correct sentence, therefore, is "my friend is a kind person".

D. Faulty Pronoun Reference

There are many errors with pronoun reference committed by EFL students in their written paragraphs. For example: "My friend likes living in Abha because you can go shopping in large supermarkets."

In the example above, faulty pronoun reference occurs because the pronoun "you" is used instead of "he". Such errors can confuse readers and obscure the intended meaning. To fix the sentence, use "he" instead of "you". Therefore, the correct sentence is "my friend likes living in Abha because he can go shopping in large supermarkets."

E. Wrong Use of Linking Words

Error: "I was born in Baha and I live in Tanumah." The connective word 'and' is used instead of 'but'. Correction: "I was born in Baha, but I live in Tanumah."

The errors committed by students in the use of connecting words can be attributed to the lack of practice and insufficient knowledge about the use of linking words.

F. Subject-verb Agreement

Error: "The students at my college is friendly." It is noticed in the example that the main verb of a sentence does not agree with its subject. Correction: "The students at my college are friendly."

G. Excessive Repetition of Keywords

Example: "My favourite city is Abha. Abha is a big city. Abha is a beautiful city. Abha is a clean city. Abha is in the south of Saudi Arabia. Abha has nice weather." This error in the excessive repetition of the keyword 'Abha' can be attributed to the student's ignorance of rules of coherence techniques in general and ignorance of rules of pronoun usage in particular.

H. Wrong Choice of Preposition

Error: "My friend does not like the help of others. He wants to rely to himself."

Correction: "My friend does not like the help of others. He wants to rely on himself."

This error can be related to negative interference of the student's mother tongue and to the ignorance of preposition rules.

I. Wrong Choice of Words

There are some errors of wrong selection of words as in the example below:

Error: "My father and my mother told me to study hard."

Correction: "My parents told me to study hard."

This type of errors can be attributed to the student's lack of vocabulary and to the way teachers teach vocabulary.

J. Wrong Ordering of Adjectives

Error: *My friend usually tells me story interesting.*

Correction: *My friend usually tells me an interesting story.*

This type of error in the wrong ordering of adjectives can be attributed to the interference of Arabic language because the adjectives in Arabic come after the nouns.

4.2. Analysis and Findings of the Structured Interview

Based on the analysis of structured interview conducted on the EFL university instructors, the following points can be summarized:

A. *Do you believe that EFL university students face difficulties in unity and coherence in their written paragraph?*

The EFL university instructors totally believe that Saudi EFL university students face difficulties in unity and coherence of their written paragraph.

B. *To what extent do EFL university students commit errors in unity and coherence of paragraph writing?*

Majority of university EFL instructors admit that a big number of EFL university students face difficulties in unity and coherence of paragraph writing.

C. *What challenges do you think EFL university students experience in producing a unified and coherent written paragraph?*

Most of the interviewees think that the following are the major challenges experienced by EFL university students in producing a unified and coherent written paragraph:

- a) Ineffective organization of the ideas
- b) Lack or inappropriate use of transitional markers.
- c) Inability to write an effective topic sentence and support it with suitable supporting details. The EFL students often fail to provide sufficient details or examples to support a topic sentence. This inability of developing a paragraph might be attributed to the lack of adequate vocabulary. It is evident that the lack of details and examples in developing a paragraph is in fact quite common among the students' English writing.
- d) The written production of EFL students, in general, is characterized by errors in spelling, grammar, word usage, and punctuation.

D. *What do you think the main factors behind errors of unity and coherence made by EFL university students in paragraph writing.*

Majority of EFL university instructors believe that there are many factors could have contributed to students' inability to achieve unity and coherence in English paragraph writing. These factors can be summarized as follows:

- a) EFL students have insufficient knowledge about techniques of coherence and unity of paragraph writing.
- b) EFL university students' lack of motivation.
- c) Lack of adequate vocabulary is also associated with EFL university students' errors in unity and coherence of paragraph writing.

- d) Lack of writing practice might have also disabled students to achieve unity and coherence in paragraph writing.
- e) The difficulty of the topic might contribute to an ineffective organization of the ideas.
- f) Interference of EFL learners' mother tongue in EFL learning process.
- g) Inappropriate teaching strategies and techniques employed by teachers in teaching coherence and unity of English paragraph writing .That is, the ways coherence and unity of paragraph are taught seem ineffective .
- h) EFL students' limited knowledge about the techniques of achieving paragraph unity and coherence.
- i) Lack of exposure to authentic texts in English.

E. *What would you like to suggest for improving EFL university students' ability in coherence and unity of paragraph writing?*

To improve the ability of the EFL university students in coherence and unity of paragraph writing, the interviewees suggest the following points:

- a) There should be ample practice for the elements of achieving unity and coherence of paragraph writing.
- b) Motivating students to perform better on writing tasks.
- c) Promoting peer assessment on writing tasks.
- d) Designing tasks, which relate to students' real life?
- e) Teachers should give immediate feedback to students.
- f) EFL university instructors should evaluate their techniques and strategies of teaching writing skill.
- g) Encouraging students to consider the elements of achieving coherence and unity in paragraph writing.
- h) Guiding students to write with clear organization and flow with a particular focus on the techniques of connecting sentences.
- i) Free writing practice is a good exercise for improving students' writing ability

5. Results, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Results of the Study

Based on the analysis and discussion of the students' writing performance and the analysis of the interviews made so far, the study has come out with the result that the following factors contribute to most of the errors of unity and coherence in the written paragraphs of Saudi EFL university students:

- a) EFL students have insufficient knowledge about techniques of coherence and unity of paragraph writing.
- b) EFL university students' lack of motivation.
- c) Lack of adequate vocabulary is also associated with EFL university students' errors in unity and coherence of paragraph writing.

- d) Lack of writing practice has also disabled students to achieve unity and coherence in paragraph writing.
- e) The difficulty of the topic contributes to the ineffective organization of the ideas.
- f) Interference of EFL learners' mother tongue in EFL learning process.
- g) Inappropriate teaching strategies and techniques employed by teachers in teaching coherence and unity of English paragraph writing.
- h) EFL students' limited knowledge about the techniques of achieving paragraph unity and coherence.
- i) Lack of reading and lack of exposure to authentic texts in English.
- j) EFL university students do not get suitable feedback.

5.2 Conclusions

The study investigates errors of unity and coherence in Saudi EFL university students in paragraph writing. To collect data, the study depends on the analysis of structured interview conducted on EFL university instructors and on the analysis of the students' written paragraphs in addition to the personal observation of the researcher. It is reflected that these learners have trouble in paragraph unity and coherence. The study comes to the conclusion that there many major factors behind EFL students' poor writing performance such as EFL students' insufficient knowledge about techniques of coherence and unity of paragraph writing. In addition to the lack of motivation. Furthermore, lack of adequate vocabulary due to lack of reading. Moreover, interference of EFL students' mother tongue and lack of practice are also associated with EFL university students' errors in unity and coherence of paragraph writing. Finally, the study recommends that there should be ample practice on writing in addition to the close and continuous follow-up to the students' writing activities.

5.3 Recommendations

The present study recommends the following:

- a) EFL university instructors should focus on the ample practice of the elements of achieving unity and coherence of paragraph writing.
- b) Giving immediate feedback to students is an important step to enhance writing skill.
- c) EFL university students should be encouraged to read a lot. Extensive reading will help them increase their knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

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