Using Macro-Level Metadiscourse Coherence Devices in Written Texts: A Product Perspective

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Abstract

This study aimed to theoretically explore new implicit metadiscourse devices of text coherence which have not been touched upon in metadiscourse literature, labeling them "macro-level metadiscourse coherence devices" (henceforth, macro-level MCDs); and empirically identify the level of using macro-level MCDs in written texts of the second-year students of English, Faculty of Education, Ibb University, Yemen, in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. To achieve the objectives of the study, content and descriptive analysis approaches were used, respectively. To collect the required data, a writing test was administered to all 60 students where a sample of 30 texts was selected randomly for analysis. The study revealed a number of findings; most notably, the overall level of using macro-level MCDs in written texts by the students was low (M = 7.93, SD = 2.44); and Sequencing Ideas scored the most macro-level MCD achieved by the students (M = 2.43, SD = 0.82) while Conclusion was the most problematic one encountered by them (M = 0.57, SD = 0.57). Accordingly, the study recommends curricula/syllabi designers and language teachers to consider macro-level MCDs to be introduced explicitly to students in the classroom.

1. INTRODUCTION

As far as discourse analysis is a new interdisciplinary field, its effect is prevalent in certain areas such as linguistics, pragmatics, education, psychology, sociolinguistics, politics, etc. Because language is not rather produced for granted, the field of text analysis is established to defend what is produced. Taking this field into account, as being the core of the current study, it is used to ascertain, and then unravel, some expected problems that associate language skills. A number of studies (e.g., Ramash & Ng, 2023; Oberling, 2023; Matroudy & Ebrahimi,

2022; Carrio-Pastor, 2022; Liao, 2020; Bal-Gezegin & Bas, 2020; Takač & Ivezić, 2019; Duruk, 2017; Hyland, 2002, 2005; Jones, 2011; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Swales, 1990) touched upon errors of language learner from an *explicit* discourse standpoint, showing, for example, sources of problems of cohesion, coherence, use of discourse markers, etc., and ignoring *implicit* sources of language learner problems. Even those studies that examined the errors of language learner (e.g., Zakaria & Abdul Malik, 2018; Zali et al., 2020; Mina & Biria, 2017) from an *interpersonal* perspective, they are still in the stream of explicitness of dealing with sources of errors. In other words, all these studies examined the language learner from a micro-level metadiscourse standpoint. Therefore, this study, to the best knowledge of the researcher, is one of the few studies that addresses what is "beyond discourse" (i. e., metadiscourse) in language learner, and the first one that addresses it from a macro-level perspective. That is, this study attempts to study coherence in language learner from a macro-level metadiscourse perspective.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 WRITTEN TEXT

According to Takač and Ivezić (2019) and Winter (1977), writing is a reflective activity which demands a lot of time to think about a certain topic, analyse it, and gather information about it. However, Swales (1990) believed that writing is the final stage of acquiring language skills. In the past, writing was thought by foreign language learners (henceforth, FLLs) as simple as the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading. Lately, scholars (e.g., Matroudy & Ebrahimi, 2022, Hyland, 2002) go beyond that considering writing as a reflective social activity through which writers send messages to societies. Communicating with societies is not an easy task for writers; rather, there should be proficient communicative skills in order to influence and persuade them. From these worthy notions, three approaches of writing are established: product, process, and genre. The product approach focuses on the end act of the writing process; the process approach helps learners work through several stages of writing; while, the genre approach is established to refute all previous approaches focusing on models and key features of texts written for a particular purpose (Carrio-Pastor, 2022; Byram, 2004). On this base, a written text can be defined as more planned, integrated, self-contained, distant and detached from its audience (Chafe, 1982). In this connection, Lenk (1998) argued that writers, unlike speakers, have a space to plan their text propositions showing "appropriate indexing of what comes next and how it is related to the overall scheme of writing" (p. 18), producing a relatively smooth and clear topic development. For Zakaria and Abdul Malik (2018) and Silva (1990), a written text can be examined from three perspectives. The first perspective is cognitive-psychological which figures out a written text as a recorder of the writer's psychological status

forming a general attitude. The second perspective is socio-cultural which enhances the way the writer respects social and cultural boundaries of societies communicated for the sake of respecting their norms, traditions, and habits. The third perspective is linguistic which requires the writer to select an appropriate use of language (e.g., words, structures, genre, style, etc.) to achieve text cohesion and coherence, alike. Relatively speaking, this perspective is the only concern of this study to examine coherence achievement in FLLs' written texts.

2.2 COHERENCE

Coherence refers to the way through which parts of a written text are linked together to form an integrated whole rather than being a set of unrelated ones (Brostoff, 1981). However, Brown and Yule (1983) believed that coherence is the only device that makes the parts of the text sound more clear and connected to each other even with or without cohesive devices. They admitted that coherence is obtained if certain elements in a text are available such as context, subtext, schema, etc. In terms of context, a text should have a context in order readers understand what is meant by what is said. However, the subtext, reading between lines, helps readers focus on meaningful discrete units of a text (Takač & Ivezić, 2019). In case of schema, the role of background knowledge, it involves two kinds of knowledge, namely knowledge of the world (cf. content schemata) and knowledge of different text forms (cf. formal schemata). The two types of knowledge form an entire picture of the whole meaning of a text.

Socially speaking, as writing be a social activity, Hatch (1992) conditioned for cohering a text a careful consideration for a communication system, social norms and restrictions, and language scripts for particular speech acts. When these conditions exist in a text, both readers and writers can communicate more functionally. O'Brien (1995) added that readers and writers show an implicit agreement as the latter interpret what the former intend to say. This agreement constitutes a plan, structure, and schema which all form a procedure to develop an overall coherence.

Moreover, Lee (2002) provided four features for developing coherence. The first feature is that a written text has a macrostructure which helps both writers and readers understand how sentences are related to each other to contribute to the overall coherence. The second feature is that a written text has an informative structure which helps readers understand how information is organized and developed. The third feature is "connectivity" of propositions, whether explicit (e.g., cohesive devices) or underlying (e.g., synonyms), with each other in a text.

2.3. MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

To begin morphologically with, the term "metadiscourse" is composed of two parts: "meta-" and "discourse". The prefix "meta-" has multiple meanings such as "beyond", "unseen" (Hyland,

1997), "abstract", "implicit", "absent", "above", and "between lines" (Hoey, 1983). However, "discourse" refers to the use of language, be it spoken or written, in a context (Brown & Yule, 1983). Hoey (1983) considered "discourse" as any stretch of spoken or written language which seems to stand by itself. For Harris (1952), "discourse" is a language above sentence and clause levels. So, "metadiscourse" means "discourse about discourse" (Rahman, 2004, p. 32), "talk about talk", or "text about text" (Mauranen, 1993, p. 4). On this base, "metadiscourse" does not refer to the content material of a text (Williams, 1981). In Hyland's (2005, p. 37) words, it is "the cover term for the self- reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community".

For achieving metadiscourse in text, Hyland and Tse (2004) proposed three principles. The first principle is that metadiscourse is distinct from propositional aspects of a text. That is, it has no role to do with the propositional content of a text. The second principle is that metadiscourse embodies a writer-reader interaction through positing a good challenging text. This merit helps the writer to engross the reader's attention to what is written. However, the third principle refers to the internal relations in a text which connect sentences, paragraphs and other textual units, developing both cohesion and coherence. Form this point, one can notice that metadiscourse refers to certain devices which appear explicitly in text, add nothing to the propositional content of text, and develop cohesion and coherence. That is to say, and as far as coherence is considered, these metadiscourse devices appear *explicitly* (e.g., conjunctions, comparatives, contrastives, synonyms, etc.) in a text at the word level, falling, accordingly, under the category of micro-level metadiscourse. Because of this, these devices are referred as "markers" in a number of studies (e.g., Oberling, 2023; Mina & Biria, 2017)   These micro-level metadiscourse markers are the only concern of all related studies, lacking addressing other *implicit* devices of metadiscourse in a text that develop coherence from a broader context, namely introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, sequencing ideas, and conclusion. Such devices do not appear explicitly to readers, as micro-level ones, but are considered by (proficient) writers to develop text coherence. Therefore, "metadiscourse" is a cover term for both explicit micro-level markers and implicit macro-level devices used in a text. This definition, the current study contributes, shows clearly the problem of discourse literature in absenting part of metadiscourse, the macro-level devices, that shares in developing text coherence. This problem motivates the researcher to bridge this gap and/to show such implicit devices of metadiscourse. Appropriately, and for dichotomy consideration, the study labels such devices "macro-level metadiscourse". Below is a detailed discussion on such macro-level MCDs to show how they develop text coherence.

2.3.1. INTRODUCTION

Introducing a topic is of crucial importance when writing a text. It is the first thing writers should do in order to communicate with readers (DeVillez, 2003). When writers develop an introduction in the first paragraph of a text, they attempt to bring ideas that tell readers about the topic of the text and what is going on in coming ideas. This *first* renders them recall all their previous knowledge that shows relevance to the topic being discussed in an attempt to comprehended the text (Golightly & Sanders, 2000). That is, such schemata form a means for connecting both previous and new knowledge developing easier comprehension (Takač & Ivezić, 2019). *Second*, readers get sensitized to subsequent ideas along the text and accordingly see, when reading, whether or not they are relevant to what is introduced in the beginning of the text (Carrio-Pastor, 2022). This means, writers are controlled by what is introduced in the beginning of the text to bring only what is relevant to help readers read the text smoothly and comprehend it easily. The necessity of bringing ideas that connect the ideas introduced to readers meaningfully develops text coherence (Oberling, 2023). So, a text introduction plays a significant role in establishing coherence in that text. In support of this view, Hoey (2001) argued that writing a very indicative introduction shows an initiation of the overall sense of the text. For this end, Collins (1998) argued that a text introduction should not be long because it may make the text dull. Mostly, this problem appears in written texts of Arab learners of English due to the effect of Arabic style in showing "orality", elaborating ideas, in the introduction (Zakaria & Abdul Malik, 2018; Hatim, 1997).

2.3.2. THESIS STATEMENT

According to DeVillez (2003), a thesis statement refers to the main idea of a text which can be expressed by one or two sentences. The thesis statement has two main functions. First, it helps readers identify the main topic of the text and know writers' point of view (Zali et al., 2020; McCagg, 1990). Silva (1990) added that if a writer cannot sum up the main idea of the text in one or two sentences, s/he probably does not clearly grasp the topic. In other words, writing a thesis statement tests the writer's clarity of thought. Once the writer decides on the main idea of his/her text, the thesis statement additionally serves as a guide to remind him/her to keep the text focused and organized. Second, it makes the text well-organized as it proceeds the supporting sentences, forming a base for the reader to process information easily (Duruk, 2017). This allows the reader to expect what follows of ideas in subsequent lines (Oberling, 2023; DeVillez, 2003). When the body paragraphs achieve the reader's expectation, the text becomes coherent. By contrast, if the thesis statement is misleading, or missing altogether, the body of the text may seem confusing or irrelevant.

White (1985) posits four qualities for an effective thesis statement. First, the thesis statement is neither too broad nor too narrow. That is, if the thesis statement is too broad, the text sounds superficial but if it is too narrow, meaning may be distorted. Second, it usually argues a point of view. That is, the thesis almost presents some viewpoints that can be questioned or challenged by the reader. It should not merely introduce the text's subject or make a factual statement about the topic concerned. In other words, it should be argumentative to allow readers to argue against it; otherwise, it is probably factual and lacks the writer's opinion. Third, the thesis statement should be concise in order to make the text so clear. Finally, it should be as strong as possible; meaning, avoiding weak personal phrases such as *in my opinion*, *I believe*, *I think*, and *it seems to me*, etc. Since the writer is the one who writes the text, it is obvious that the content is his/her opinion; no need to tell the reader. Violating, and to sum up, these schemes, it becomes difficult for a text to show some coherence.

2.3.3. TOPIC SENTENCE

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph which can clearly state the topic of the whole paragraph (Crowhurst, 1990). Mostly, it is the first sentence of the paragraph as it includes the main idea of that paragraph. Such a sentence can be supported by some following sentences that provide specific details related to it before the advent of the concluding sentence which often restates or summarizes the main idea of the topic sentence. This serial process makes the text more coherent which in turn makes the reader more engaged to the main idea of the text being addressed (Liao, 2020).

White (1985) provides three functions for a topic sentence. Firstly, the topic sentence makes the writer very adherent to the core idea of the topic to inform the reader about the topic of the paragraph and make him/her engrossed to that idea. Secondly, it should assert the writer's point of view or attitude to be very clear to his/her readers. In this regard, Ramash and Ng (2023) and Crowhurst (1990) argued that showing the writer's opinion should not be explicit; rather, it should be implicit to make the reader very interested. Contrastingly, Bal-Gezegin and Bas (2020) and DeVillez (2003) argued that expressing the writer's view in the topic sentence should be rather explicit to suit all types of readers. Finally, the topic sentence should not be vague, rambling, too narrow or too broad as it distorts the text coherence, on the one hand, and the reader's comprehension, on the other.

2.3.4. SEQUENCING IDEAS

Sequencing ideas in a written text refers to the orderliness of points in a logical order from the beginning till the end (Takač & Ivezić, 2019; Carlos & Ceballos, 1986). This simply means that each idea must relate to the main idea (topic sentence) of a particular paragraph and the

other ideas in the same paragraph. According to van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), arranging ideas to achieve coherence can be achieved through considering the following tenets:

a) **chronological order**: the writer can explain points a step-by-step and relate events to their historical accounts bearing in mind the time of happenings;

b) **spatial order:** attributing the events to the right places and scenes**;**

c) **order of importance:** the writer should present ideas and arrange them according to their level of importance. That is, the most important idea should be written in the beginning and supported by reasons in order to persuade the reader;

d) **cause and effect:** the writer introduces ideas that show the problem clearly to the reader, following it by possible consequences to persuade him/her about the case being addressed;

e) **comparison and contrast**: the writer sometimes needs to show similarities between two things. S/he should begin with things similar to each other and then come to dissimilarities, if any. Carlos and Ceballos (1986) argued that it is not necessary to begin only with similarities; rather, it depends on the type of argumentation;   and

f) **classification**: analyzing the situation through which your opinion can be outstanding. Sometimes, there is a need to define the principle being addressed.

2.3.5. CONCLUSION

Conclusion is the last coherence device in text writing. Its function is to restate the thesis statement mentioned in the beginning of the text in different words (Thompson, 2003). This means, writers remind readers of the main topic of the text adopting their own positions about the topic (Mina, & Biria, 2017). This renders arguments connected to each other along the text achieving coherence. By conclusion, writers sum up the ideas said in the text in a concise and meaningful way. This in turn makes text coherent to readers (Liu, 2000).

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A large number of discourse studies conducted on the surface level of "discourse" to investigate explicit aspects such as cohesion, coherence, discourse markers, language use, etc., and rarely done on "metadiscourse" and its aspects in language learning. Specifically speaking, the latter branch of language learning is largely considered by past and modern researchers concerning explicit or micro-level markers used in a text, absenting the other implicit or macro-level ones that do not appear to readers but are felt by critical readers who are guided by the coherence development in text. As the topic of the study suggests, and to be more specific, reviewing the

related literature shows that there is, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, a lack of studies on macro-level MCDs. This problem is attributed to the lack of awareness of researchers in such metadiscourse devices and their role in developing text coherence. However, they pay more attention to the micro-level markers at the word level, addressing what is/not used of them such as conjunctions (e.g., and, but, however, etc.), contrast (e.g., unlike, however, etc.), exemplification (e.g., such as, as, for example, etc.), etc., ignoring the macro-level MCDs (e.g., introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, etc.). This theoretical problem has created a gap in metadiscourse literature. This in turn may affect the interested people in this field such as analysts (including psychologists, therapists, etc.), syllabus designers, language teachers, EFL/ESL learners, etc. That is, analysts and psychologists may analyse errors and diagnose persons' traits, respectively, from a micro-level discourse only; the case that may detain them to do their best in their concerned jobs. Concerning syllabus designers, they build writing course designs on the micro-level markers only. On this base, they provide unbalanced writing course designs in MCDs respect, creating a problem in EFL/ESL classrooms because teachers teach blindly what is listed in such syllabuses. Accordingly, EFL/ESL learners receive distorted knowledge on metadiscourse coherence thinking wrongly that text coherence can be developed only by micro-level metadiscourse coherence markers, lacking the role of the macro-level MCDs in developing text coherence. Yemeni FLLs in general, and those of Ibb University in particular, are part of those learners who are misled by this distorted knowledge, producing incoherent texts despite using micro-level coherence markers.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the conceptual and empirical works of literature, this study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the macro-level MCDs?
2. What is the level of using macro-level MCDs in the written texts of the second year students of English, Faculty of Education, Ibb University, Yemen?
3. What is the most problematic macro-level MCD (if any) encountered by the students when writing texts?

3.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to:

1. Explore (theoretically) the macro-level MCDs.
2. Identify the level of using macro-level MCDs in the written texts of the second year students of English, Faculty of Education, Ibb University, Yemen.

4. Show the most problematic macro-level MCD (if any) encountered by the students when writing texts.

3.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is one of the rare studies that addresses written metadiscourse coherence in general and the first one that addresses macro-level MCDs, in particular. That is, it attempts to add an additional concept to metadiscourse (i.e., macro-level metadiscourse) to enrich interested people in this filed such as analysts, syllabus designers, language teachers, EFL/ESL learners, etc. This in turn may attract their attention to this new concept and correct any misconception of metadiscourse as the oneness of micro-level markers which fall at the word level. This contribution may help researchers write on such a type to expose readers to this new concept to reinforce their previous knowledge on metadiscourse. This inclusively means, analysts (including psychologists, therapists, etc.) may get attracted to the macro-level MCDs and/to be able to analyse texts accordingly; hence, they open a new scope for identifying errors and diagnosing persons' traits proficiently. Moreover, syllabus designers may get informed of the new MCDs to pay attention to such devices when designing writing courses. That is, they may provide lessons on the functions of writing introduction, topic sentences, thesis statements, etc. in developing text coherence. On this base, a balance takes place between devices of both levels in writing syllabi. This merit may help teachers provide undistorted knowledge on metadiscourse (devices) in developing text coherence. In so doing, EFL/ESL learners may get sensitized to this type of metadiscourse and consider it when writing texts to produce well-coherent ones. Finally, the findings of this study may attract the attention of Yemeni FLLs in general, and those of Ibb University in particular, to the macro-level MCDs to be able to produce well-coherent written texts.

4. METHODOLOGY
4.1 SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES

The study targeted the second-year students of English, Faculty of Education, Ibb University, Yemen, in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. These students were selected particularly because they had studied four writing courses in the first two years of the undergraduate programme. That is, they assumingly had sufficient background in writing that could enable them to write coherent texts. To collect the required data, a writing test (see

Appendix I), designed by the researcher, was administered to all 60 students to write about one topic of no less than 350 words. Then, a sample of 30 students was selected randomly, by taking *even* numbers in attendance sheet, to assess their performance.

4.2 ASSESSMENT OF MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

The researcher drew on a rubric (see Appendix II) to assess the level of developing coherence in the students' written texts. The rubric was composed of *five* macro-level MCDs (i.e., introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, sequencing ideas, and conclusion) which were classified further into sub-sections. To rate the students' written performance, a 3-point Likert scale was used as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Scoring Criteria

Degrees	Range	Level
1	1 – 1.66	Low
2	1.67 – 2.33	Average
3	2.33 - 3	High

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF INTER-RATER'S RELIABILITY

Using a Pearson Correlation Coefficient to calculate inter-rater reliability scores, the analysis showed a higher degree of reliability between the two raters, PC = .922, confidence interval = 92%, $p \leq 0.05$.

5. RESULTS

To address the first research question of the study, a content analysis approach was used to explore the macro-level MCDs in a written text. This was achieved *theoretically* by reading multiple effective texts critically, besides the researcher's teaching and writing experiences in relation, and eliciting the implicit devices that make a written text coherent. The (content) analysis showed that there were *five* main implicit devices that develop coherence in a written text, namely introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, sequencing ideas, and conclusion. This study however calls them "macro-level MCDs".

To address the second and third research questions of the study, descriptive statistics was employed to calculate means and standard deviations obtained from the instrument. The students' use of macro-level MCDs was rated based on the rubric of assessment designed by the researcher (see Appendix II). Table 2 below summarizes the results:

Table 2: **Descriptive Statistics for Students' Use of Macro-Level MCDs**

Macro-Level MCDs	N	Assumed Mean	M	SD	Rank
Introduction	30	1.5	1.63	1.13	3
Thesis Statement	30	1.5	1.57	1.01	4
Topic Sentence	30	1.5	1.73	1.11	2
Sequencing Ideas	30	1.5	2.43	0.82	1
Conclusion	30	1.5	0.57	0.57	5
Total	30	7.5	**7.9**3	2.44	

5.1. USE OF MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

Table 2 above depicts that the overall mean scores of students (**M = 7.93, SD = 2.44)** showed that the students' overall level in using macro-level MCDs in their written texts was *low*. That is, only 52.86% of the students used macro-level MCDs in their written texts, regardless of the quality of performance scored accordingly, while 47.14% did not. This indicated that there was a lack of using macro-level MCDs in written texts; the case that rendered them incoherent.

Specifically speaking, and based on students' mean scores, *Sequencing Ideas* scored the **top rank** (**M = 2.43, SD = 0.82)** among the other macro-level MCDs used by the students, showing a *higher* level of performance. That is, only 81% of the students *sequenced ideas* in their written texts in a logic way, achieving coherence as a result. This indicated that the students were aware of the need to sequence ideas when writing texts.

Topic Sentence scored the 2nd **rank** (**M = 1.73, SD = 1.11)** among the other macro-level MCDs used by the students revealing that the students' level in *providing a topic sentence in* their written texts was *low*. That is, only 57.66% of the students wrote *a topic sentence* in their written texts, regardless of the quality of performance scored accordingly, while 42.34% did not. This means, the students had a lack of knowledge in the function of a topic sentence in developing coherence in a written text.

As regards to *Introduction*, it scored the **3rd** rank (**M = 1.63, SD = 1.13)** among the other macro-level MCDs used by the students. This showed that the students' level in *introducing* their written texts was *low*. That is, only 54.33% of the students introduced in their written texts, regardless of the quality of performance scored accordingly, while 45.67% did not. This problem was attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in the function of writing introductions to their texts to make them coherent.

As for *Thesis Statement,* it scored the **4th** rank among the other macro-level MCDs used by the students (**M = 1.57, SD = 1.01)** showing that the students' level in *writing thesis statements* in their written texts was *low*. That is, only 52.33% of the students developed *thesis*

statements in their written essays, regardless of the quality of performance scored accordingly, while 47.67% did not. This problem was attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in the function of *writing thesis statements* in developing coherent texts.

Finally, based on the students' mean scores **(M = 0.57, SD = 0.57),** *Conclusion* scored the last rank among the other macro-level MCDs. This indicated that the students' level in *concluding* their written texts was *low*. That is, only 19% of the students *concluded* their written texts, regardless of the quality of performance scored accordingly, while the vast majority of students **(81%)** did not. This problem was attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in the function of *concluding* written texts in developing coherence.

5.2. PROBLEMATICITY OF MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

The analysis of the mean scores revealed that *Conclusion* scored the most problematic macro-level MCD encountered by the students as the vast majority of them (81%) did not conclude their texts, making them incoherent as a result. This problem might be attributed to the lack of exposing the students to all macro-level MCDs in the classroom explicitly, in general, and the *conclusion* one in particular.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 USE OF MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

6.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis showed that the students had a problem in the beginning of their written texts. This problem was manifested in the lack of writing introductions to their texts, providing irrelevant introductions, or relevant introductions associated with incorrect sentence structures. These problems might be attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in the macro-level MCDs, the implicit sources of developing coherence, where *Introduction* is the first of them (Oberling, 2023). However, DeVillez (2003) found that the lack of writing an introduction in a text might be attributed to students' lack of awareness in the importance of writing an introduction in a text; the case that helps them develop incoherent texts. This in turn creates comprehension problems with readers (Takač & Ivezić, 2019). Golightly and Sanders (2000) attributed this problem to students' lack of exposure to enough techniques of writing an effective text in the classroom other than those of the paragraph level. That is, teachers usually expose students to the explicit sources (e.g., conjunctions, references, synonymy, etc.) of writing an effective text which develop text coherence, ignoring the implicit ones, the macro-level MCDs. In this connection, Hoey (2001) admitted that teachers themselves might be unaware of the necessity of writing introductions in text writings; the fact that allows them to absent this coherence feature from introducing it to students in the classroom. From a different

standpoint, Zakaria and Abdul Malik (2018) and Hatim (1997) believed that the lack of writing a text introduction by Arab learners is attributed to the effect of L1 in showing orality when writing a text.

6.1.2 THESIS STATEMENT

The analysis concerned showed that there was a problem with the students in writing thesis statements in their written texts. This problem was manifested in either the lack of developing thesis statements, providing irrelevant statements, providing insufficient statements, or providing ambiguous statements due to linguistic problems. These problems might be attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in writing texts in general and coherent ones in particular. By comparison, the analysis revealed that there was a relationship between the two macro-level MCDs of *Introduction* and *Thesis Statement* in that they showed a similar level of problematicity with the students. This means, the students were not aware of the main macro-level MCDs that help them in composing a coherent text. In contrast, McCagg (1990) found that no relationship between the two macro-level MCDs because a writer may introduce his/her text to the reader without developing a thesis statement in it. In this connection, Zali et al. (2020) observed that writing a thesis statement is rarely taken into account by proficient writers let alone novice ones.

6.1.3 TOPIC SENTENCE

Regarding the topic sentence, the students showed a problem in writing topic sentences in each paragraph. This problem was manifested in either providing inappropriate topic sentences, or providing ambiguous ones that showed linguistic problems. According to Liao (2020), these problems create another problem of understanding the supporting sentences that follow the topic sentence(s) due to the association of linguistic problems. This in turn may render the reader baffled over the main idea of the paragraph showing incoherent texts as a result (Crowhurst, 1990). In this connection, White (1985) observed that the absence of topic sentences in a text produces incoherent texts which consequently affects the reader's comprehension. This problem might be attributed to the students' lack of knowledge in the macro-level MCDs and their function in developing text coherence (Bal-Gezegin & Bas, 2020).

6.1.4 SEQUENCING IDEAS

Sequencing ideas posited the top rank among the other macro-level MCDs because the majority of the students sequenced ideas in their essays. This merit might be attributed to the effect of their previous knowledge in ordering events chronologically at the paragraph level to achieve some logic. That is, they might use this macro-level MCD subconsciously to show

some logic in text rather than developing coherence. This finding comes in line with that of Takač and Ivezić (2019) who observed that learners sometimes sequence events based on their occurrences rather than seeking to achieve text coherence. Even though, some students still showed a problem in sequencing ideas which was manifested in providing illogical sequence and violating coherence as a result. In support of this view, Carlos and Ceballos (1986) found that most students sequenced ideas in essays in regard to time only ignoring the other tenets of this feature such as cause and effect, comparison and contrast, spatial order, etc. This problem might be attributed to the lack of exposure to the macro-level MCDs in general and *Sequencing Ideas* one in particular in the classroom explicitly (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). In so doing, students can use them consciously when writing texts to achieve coherence. In other words, there is no related explicit instruction in the classroom that consciously implants this type of knowledge in students' mind that ensures developing text coherence.

6.1.5   CONCLUSION

The analysis revealed that the majority of the students showed a problem when concluding their written texts. Accordingly, it, unlike others, becomes the most problematic macro-level MCD encountered by the students. This problem was manifested in either the absence of conclusions, or bringing irrelevant conclusions in 81% of the written texts. Such students, as Mina and Biria (2017) argued, let their texts open causing text incoherence. This problem might be attributed to the lack of knowledge in the macro-level MCDs in general and developing a text conclusion in particular. Liu (2000) observed that when students did not write conclusions, they might not be aware of the importance of writing conclusions in developing text coherence. While, Thompson (2003) attributed this problem to teachers who do not attract their students' attention to the way they write effective texts in the classroom. This, according to him, can be developed by allowing students to practice free/controlled writing focusing on the way they conclude texts. Mina and Biria (2017) found that those who do not conclude texts, they do not remind readers of thesis statements and topic sentences discussed in texts (cf. coherence); the case that renders the latter miscomprehend the topic discussed.

6.2 PROBLEMATICITY OF MACRO-LEVEL MCDS

The analysis of the mean scores revealed that *Conclusion* scored the most problematic macro-level MCD encountered by the students because the vast majority of them (81%) did not conclude their texts, making them incoherent as a result. This problem might be attributed to the lack of knowledge in the function of *Conclusion* in developing text coherence. Because a text conclusion summarizes the main idea of that text in different words to remind readers

of it and make them comprehend the text easily, the students might think that there is no need to repeat the main idea of the text to readers (Thompson, 2003). Put differently, it is the responsibility of readers to read the text again and again until comprehending it (Jones, 2011). Again, it is the problem of teachers in the classroom who have a lack of awareness in such a macro-level MCD in creating text coherence which in turn helps readers comprehend the text. For this reason, they should know about this coherence feature and/to teach their students explicitly in the classroom (Matroudy & Ebrahimi, 2022). In so doing, the latter may get sensitized to this important macro-level MCD in developing text coherence.

7. FINDINGS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, and based on the literature reviewed and texts analysed, the study explored implicit metadiscourse devices of text coherence which have not been touched upon in the previous studies of metadiscourse, labeling them "macro-level MCDs". Such a new contribution may add some knowledge to library in this sub-filed of discourse, enriching readers, scholars, language teachers, FLLs, psychologists, therapists, etc. This may open other new scopes to be addressed theoretically.

Empirically, and based on the analysis of the results, the study found that the overall level of the 2nd year students, Faculty of Education, Ibb University, in using macro-level **MCDs** in written texts was *low*. This finding revealed that the students encountered difficulties when writing effective/coherent texts due to the lack of using macro-level **MCDs**. This finding is based on the fact that the students *first* were not aware of all macro-level **MCDs** and their functions of creating text coherence although they completed all four obligatory writing courses of the programme. This problem might be attributed to the specification of all writing courses, notably advanced writing, which might not consider coherence and its implicit sources at the text level. This finding may assist curricula/syllabi designers to account for macro-level **MCDs** at both levels of paragraph and text when designing syllabi. In this relation, language teachers should teach macro-level **MCDs** to students in the classroom *explicitly* supported by appropriate activities inside and outside the classroom.

Second, the level of students in writing did not exceed the sentence level rather than the paragraph and text levels as they provided fragmented sentences in most of the paragraphs. This finding accords with those of Bal-Gezegin and Bas (2020) and Mina and Biria (2017) who believed that the incorrect sentence structures produce incoherent texts rendering readers encounter difficulties in grasping meaning when moving from one idea to another. However, this finding contradicts those of Duruk (2017) and Brostoff (1981) who found that the majority of the participants showed correct sentence structures at the text level. This finding may attract teachers' attention to expose students explicitly to transitional words and their functions in the

classroom. This can be achieved by *firstly* providing students with model texts in the classroom to show them the transitional words used and their functions in connecting ideas and developing coherence. *Secondly*, students can be allowed to write parallel texts, show both position and function of transitional words used, and check the level of coherence developed.

Third, the students showed a problem when introducing and concluding their written texts which was manifested in providing zero or/and irrelevant ones. This problem might be attributed to the lack of awareness in the need for writing text introduction and conclusion, as macro-level MCDs, for producing effective writing. This finding accords with those of Oberling (2023), Mina and Biria (2017) and DeVillez (2003) who found that the students show a lack of awareness in the importance of introducing and concluding texts in creating text development. However, it opposes the finding of Jones (2011) who found that readers, rather than writers, cannot be dependent on writers in comprehending a written text; that is, they can use multiple reading skills and strategies for this purpose. This finding may attract the attention of language teachers to sensitize their students to the importance of these macro-level **MCDs** in creating coherence, on the one hand, and teach them how they are stated in text, on the other. Furthermore, they can be recommended to provide students with sufficient free and controlled writing (texts) supported by providing feedbacks to improve the latter's performance.

Fourth, the students showed a lack of knowledge in grammar (rules) which appeared in most of sentences used causing a meaning ambiguity. This finding accords with those of Liao (2020) and Crowhurst (1990) who admitted that linguistic problems create a lack of grasping the meaning of sentences. However, this finding falls in contrast with that of Takač and Ivezić (2019) who found that linguistic problems cannot affect readers' text comprehension in the related context. This finding may attract the attention of teachers of writing courses to comment on students' erroneous sentences and classify such errors. Similarly, teachers of grammar courses should pay more attention to students' grammar problems, correct them continuously along teaching all grammar courses, and comment on each error committed. If necessary, adding other classes to teach problematic rules encountered by students can be recommended. In so doing, the knowledge of grammar acquired cannot detain the coherence flow in the text developed when using macro-level MCDs.

Finally, there was no problem in sequencing ideas in students' texts. This merit might be attributed to their previous knowledge of ordering logic-based events at the level of paragraph (i.e., first, second, third, etc.) taught in the first two writing courses (Writing I & Writing II). The use of such macro-level MCD subconsciously helped them show some logic in describing events. This finding comes in line with that of Takač and Ivezić (2019) who found that most students show proficiency in ordering text events to achieve some logic. This logic

is the main tool of developing text coherence. In contrast, Carlos and Ceballos (1986) found that students can be aware of sequencing events chronologically only; the case that renders them show illogical sequence for other items of place, ideas, etc. This finding may attract the attention of teachers to attract their students' attention to this macro-level MCD in achieving logic and creating text coherence. However, this finding may call teachers of Writing III and Advanced Writing Skills courses to revise sequencing ideas to students in Writing I and II courses and teach them its new MCD function of achieving text coherence.

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