



## **Interpretation of written texts of English with the aid of reference, inference and context for the enhancement of student's awareness of discourse analysis**

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to pursue the interpretation of the written texts of Saudi students of English at Albaha University. The study examines students' abilities figuring out the intended meaning making benefit of their knowledge of reference, inference and context. Qualitative and quantitative methods were involved in the study surveying the topic at issue from various aspects. Results showed that Saudi students find the learning of cataphoric reference more difficult than the learning of anaphoric reference. Difficulty experienced by students making use of inference and context aspects is very frequent. It is probably due to superficial look of written texts.

**Keywords:** beyond words, pursue, context, reference, inference, anaphoric, anaphoric, interpretation

### **1. Introduction**

Discourse analysis has received a great effort from linguists and language researchers who are interested in language learning and language teaching of aspect. In fact, their effort covered a large scope of discourse analysis of English. For example, linguists accounted for issues such as the definitions, concept, scope, domain of discourse analysis. They also accounted for the interrelation; between discourses analysis and other disciplines of linguistics and aspects of knowledge. This large scope of discourse analysis points to the fact that discourse analysis suggests that in some days receives special interest from scholars representing home for different fields of knowledge receiving special (McCarthy 1991) [3]. Presently the scope of discourse analysis is limited to the analysis of spoken and written text. McCarthy (1991) [3] limits the interest of discourse analysis to the study of the relationship between language and the context where it is used. Other definitions also include areas like 'language use', analysis of spoken and written text starting from a single sentence to full conversation or written text, speech events/acts, connections between sentence elements and social function of language. The concept of discourse analysis suggests that it should work on the analysis of spoken or written texts for the improvement of our understanding of language as a human communicative activity. It functions to dismiss potential ambiguity giving the most acceptable interpretation of clauses, phrases or sentences or a whole text in a language. To do its job discourse analysis attempts to manipulate grammatical structure, phonological features, extra-linguistic elements, etc. Specifically, discourse analysis use aspects like reference, inference, ellipsis, etc, to approach text interpretation. Previous studies addressed this issue in different ways. The consideration of reference and inference represents crucial elements in holding successful communication when speech participants are involved in interactions. In this concern we need to accompany a linguistic text along with the surroundings; i.e. contexts

(Cutting 2002, Alzahrani, and Ali 2016) [1,5], Brown and Yule (1983) emphasized the role of reference and inference pointing to the involvement of existing knowledge or stored knowledge maintaining the interpretation of the intended meaning. Kairyte and Bikelienė (2016) [2] state that ambiguity may occur due to the interference of syntactic elements like reference, ellipsis or modifiers of L1. This type of ambiguity is created by reference assignment, ellipsis, and attachment of modifiers. In this sense ambiguity occurs when a pronoun points to false reference assignment. False reference in this context occurs because the two pronouns do not refer to the same person.

This paper attempts to discuss possible linguistic and non-linguistic strategies involved for the interpretation of a written text. The purpose behind this is to provide insights into full understanding of a written English text. The study also attempts to measure the efficiency of discourse analysis in dismissing ambiguity of sentences of English. Moreover, the study seeks inspirations into the teaching of written texts in EFL classes. Results represent a good contribution to the domain of effective teaching and learning of English in the Arab and international circles (global teaching trends). The topic of this study is assumed to receive little for language researchers.

### **2. The State of the research in the field**

This study pursues the argument of the utility of reference, inference and context in developing interpretation of ambiguous sentences of English facilitating. There is likely only just little research done in this aspect of language in Arabic context. Importantly, there is a large number of students of English who need to learn about how to avoid interpret written. Arguably, our target students have difficulty interpreting the intended meaning of texts. The topic in question forms an important research area involving non-native speakers of English. This is because mastering spoken

sentence forms fundamental unit of connected speech covering a huge part of our everyday interactions.

### 3. Foreseen Achievements

- To pin point problems understanding written texts in EFL classes.
- Suggest pedagogical material for the teaching discourse analysis of written texts.
- The study seeks to maintain internationally successful English communication boosting the interpretation of written texts of English.
- To add more literature for EFL students in managing the interpretation of written texts.

### 4. Methods to be used

The study adopts qualitative and quantitative methods conducting the experiments. A read test was designed for Saudi students to resolve like reference type, inference, and context. This test is intended to reveal the students' understanding of the meaning of the texts.

### 5. Participants, Material and scoring procedures

Test material comprises a read test titled "living free" (appendix1) was distributed to 30 Saudi students of English

(Faculty of Sciences and Arts-Mandaq) to read an English text carefully. After that the students were asked to read a list of reference including anaphoric, cataphoric and exphoric references and then to resolve reference type on the light of text atmosphere. The study bases on a discourse analysis course taught to students for a whole term. In the end of the course students are supposed to take final examination. The course covers full description of the items of linguistic discourse analysis. The course is intended to enhance' students understanding interpreting read texts.

### 6. Results and Discussion

The involvement of reference, inference and context in the interpretation of written sentence is crucial language theme which is very common across arguably many languages. Although they may differ in some way or another they meet in the purpose behind them. In English language reference stands for all expressions pointing to persons, things or place which include anaphoric, and cataphoric reference. These include pronouns, demonstratives etc. which function to distinguish people and things via number, gender and agreement (Brown and Yule 1988). For explanation consider the examples given in table 1

**Table 1:** examples of anaphoric and cataphoric references

No	anaphoric reference	cataphoric reference
a	John works hard. He passes his exam.	John works hard. He passes his exam.
b	When he arrived, John noticed that the door was open.	This is my book

In sentences (a) reference is labeled as anaphoric and (b) is cataphoric. These synaptic structures serve to achieve coherence of a spoken text making its reference clear to readers. It also helps to dismiss ambiguity that may take place in a read text. More specifically, in a Saudi class of English the idea behind reference is not very much clear to students. The results of tests revealed that around 70% of scores of students experience confusions reporting correct pronoun-referent link; i.e. between anaphoric and cataphoric reference on sentence level. The wrong performance probably occurs as result of the wrong selection of the reference item. Similarly the lack of knowledge of syntactic reference forms a major reason behind ambiguity where students fail to decide the appropriate meaning of text. An interesting finding is that Saudi students learn anaphoric reference before cataphoric reference. This finding converges with (Kennison, *et al.* (2009) [6] whose results showed that anaphoric pronouns were resolved more rapidly than cataphoric pronouns when a co-referent interpretation was possible. Linguists point to "exphoric reference" as context and extra-linguistic element. Exphoric reference points to something absent from the written text. Pronouns like here, there this, that, etc., frequently accompany exphoric reference. The results of our test show 30% to 40% of Saudi students resolved exphoric reference. This finding suggests that students do not have enough experience deciding reference type. The finding also implies that resolving exphoric reference is the most difficult type of reference for students to learn. Moreover, regarding inference of meaning students very low score 30% - 40%.

This shows that students are lacking inference abilities of meaning from text atmosphere. The results also support the idea that when students approach a written text they should look beyond words Brown and Yule (1983) [4]. This argument motivates the development of the readers' experience of the text.

It seems that students need to receive more training on the involvement of linguistic and extra linguistic elements deciding correct reference and clear interpretation of meaning.

### 7. Conclusions

Resolving anaphoric reference is more difficult than resolving cataphoric reference. It is probably due to the lack of practice of reference types in a read text.

Complexity of context access by Saudi students occurs because students do not look beyond the written words.

Students need understand how inference, context, presupposition and implicatures function in a read text. This is because the combination of these aspect of discourse analysis work jointly to serve the interpretation of the intended meaning.

### 8. Pedagogical implications

Students of English as a foreign language need to learn more about discourse analysis of reference, inference and context.

Practice forms robust factor enhancing the command of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge in developing understanding of discourse analysis.

Both students and EFL teachers should consider culture

differences between English and their own culture as culture influences the interpretation of meaning in some way.

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