

UNIVERSIDAD MAYOR DE SAN ANDRÉS  
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS DE LA  
EDUCACIÓN  
CARRERA DE LINGÜÍSTICA E IDIOMAS



IDENTIFYING PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION  
DEFICIENCIES IN EFL ENGLISH STUDENTS'  
ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS AT LINGÜISTICS AND  
LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT OF UMSA

Tesis de grado para obtener el Título de Licenciatura

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UNIVERSIDAD MAYOR DE SAN ANDRÉS  
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IDENTIFYING PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION DEFICIENCIES IN EFL ENGLISH  
STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS AT LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF UMSA

Presentada por: Univ. María Quehui Quispe

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## RESUMEN

El presente estudio identifica las deficiencias más comunes en las composiciones que los estudiantes escriben. Estas deficiencias están relacionadas a la estructura de un párrafo en inglés, la organización de ideas de una manera coherente, uso de vocabulario para expresar ideas y generar ideas acerca de los temas sugeridos y decidir cómo empezar una oración e identificar la idea principal de un párrafo. Si los estudiantes presentan problemas con la gramática, el vocabulario, la cohesión y la generación de ideas; la redacción no será clara y coherente.

De esta manera, los ensayos fueron aplicados para medir la organización de los párrafos según los indicadores establecidos en la operacionalización de variables. Se escogió específicamente este tipo de ensayo porque la argumentación permite al escritor expresar su opinión en un tema y apoyar esa opinión con evidencias lógicas.

Es así que se aplicó la composición argumentativa como test para medir el rendimiento de los participantes. Se empleó el enfoque cuantitativo, de tipo exploratorio, no experimental; la población estuvo compuesta por 76 estudiantes del nivel IV de inglés, quienes cursaban la materia de Expresión Oral y Escrita II en el primer semestre del año 2015; la muestra que se obtiene es no probabilística con 16 participantes. Los instrumentos fueron: test y cuestionario Likert. El test estaba dividido en dos secciones: la primera sección de gramática y la segunda sección de escritura.

Los resultados indican que los participantes presentan problemas de escritura principalmente en lo que respecta a la gramática como ser: el uso de tiempos en los verbos y la falta de vocabulario, contenido y errores de cohesión.

*Palabras claves: escritura, deficiencias en la escritura, enseñanza del inglés, lingüística, lingüística aplicada.*



## **ABSTRACT**

The current study focuses on describing the most common deficiencies in EFL students when writing an essay, deficiencies related to writing a correct English sentence; organizing the ideas together in a coherent way; if they choose the right vocabulary to express ideas and having ideas about the suggested topics and deciding how to start a sentence/paragraph. Because if students present problems with grammar, vocabulary, cohesion and the generation of ideas; their writing will be not clear and coherent.

Thus, essays were used in order to measure the organization of paragraphs according of the indicators established in the variable operationalization. We choose specifically this type of essay, because argumentation allows writers to express their opinion on a topic and support that opinion with strong logic and evidence. Thus, we utilized an argumentative essay test in order to assess the participants` performance in EFL essay writing.

Therefore, our study's general objective was to identify the errors that are associated with students` coherence and cohesion problem in English argumentative essay writing, in students of Oral and Writing Expression II at Linguistics and Language Department. This objective help us to identify that vocabulary and grammar were perceived as the most writing difficulties.

The approach followed for our study is quantitative; the type of study is exploratory; the design is non-experimental; the population is 76 students; our sample in non-probabilistic with 16 participants.

The instruments were: a test and Likert questionnaire.

The test has been divided into two sections that helped us to identify the deficiencies mentioned before. The following two sections are: the grammatical section that focused on what is the knowledge of students about English Grammar. And the writing section, in

this part we suggest two topics; both topics have the function of make students to argument about what students think about them.

The Likert questionnaire was used, to evaluate if students were aware about their deficiencies regarding the writing of argumentative essays.

The results indicate that participants presented writing problems in their essays. These problems included lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of vocabulary knowledge, cohesion errors and lack of content.

*Keywords: writing, writing deficiencies, teaching English, linguistics, applied linguist*

## CHAPTER I

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing is a capacity of written language to transcend time and space makes the teaching and learning such an important experience. Through writing we are able to share ideas, arouse feelings, persuade and convince other people. We are able to discover and articulate ideas in ways that only writing makes possible.

Byrne (1996), states 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. Moreover, White and Arnold (1991) define writing as a form of problem-solving which involves such process as generating ideas, discovering a voice with which to write, planning, goal setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written, and searching with language which to express exact meanings.

So we can say that 'Writing' is defined as a thinking process which involves generating ideas, composing these ideas in sentences and paragraphs, and finally revising the ideas and paragraphs composed.

In relation to EFL argumentative essay writing cohesion, many researchers agree that cohesion, on a macro level is related to linking ideas whereas on the micro level, it is concerned with connecting sentences and phrases. This is the problem that students of 4<sup>th</sup> level from Linguistic Department at UMSA University have when they work on argumentative essays, specially, when they deal with the organization and writing paragraphs.

Thus, the present research is focused to describe the grammar deficiencies that the EFL students have when write an argumentative essay, for that, we will use appropriate research tools called Likert scale and tests.

The study consists of five chapters and they are: Chapter one is the introduction to study, statement of the problems of the research, the objectives and the hypothesis. Chapter two presents a detailed account of the relevant literature. Chapter three describes the methodology of the research and reports the results of the data analyses. And chapter four presents conclusions and recommendations.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Writing assignments are normally a requirement in any academic pursuit. However, writing has long been claimed to be a very difficult skill to acquire and is dreadful by L2 students. The notion of success in writing is associated with self-expression, flow of ideas, outsider expectations, growing confidence and enjoyment of L2 academic writing. L2 students are known to have problems coping with this. The continual disappointment of students due to their failure to express themselves well in writing may lead to loss of creativity.

This may concern not only the subject of composition writing argumentative essays but also all the other academic subjects which definitely require students to achieve good academic writing in order to succeed. Although writing argumentative essays can make an EFL student uneasy. It is related to their ability to succeed in the various academic subjects, which influences academic and occupational choices.

Writing an argumentative essay is considering a constant struggle which requires thinking, planning, searching for ideas, developing, organizing, reviewing, vocabulary and special paying attention to grammar. However, most of EFL students of Linguistic Department adopt ineffective way of expanding their ideas.

The present study intends to describe the most common factors that are related on EFL students' poor performance when organizing a paragraph in writing argumentative essays. To know these factors that involves in the process of writing; such factors include strategy use that involves the use of process writing (pre-writing stage, drafting stage and post-writing stage); second factors are cohesion that is the ability to arrange ideas and sentences

in a logical order and coherence that is concerned with the ways which the components of text are connected and writing apprehension including linguistic knowledge level. So we formulate the following question:

What are the most common writing deficiencies associated with students' problems in English argumentative essay writing of EFL students of "oral and written expression II" in the English Area at Linguistics Department at Mayor de San Andres University when writing an argumentative essay?

### **1.3 RATIONALE**

Students at Linguistic Department who learn English as a foreign language often say that writing is more difficult than any other skill. Because writing requires both mental and physical efforts on the part of the writer since it has been defined as the activity of transforming thoughts into language. The difficulty in writing stems from three kinds of problems: Psychological, Cognitive, and Linguistics.

In addition the EFL students have to handle many components at the same time: content, organization and syntax. Writing well is a major cognitive challenge, because it is at once a test memory, language, and thinking ability to think clearly about substantive matters. Knowledge of correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, diction, thesis statements, topic sentences and cohesive links within a paragraph, and global organization of text are necessary but not sufficient for effective writing. Effective use of knowledge will require that EFL students deliberately practice the craft of writing extended texts.

Moreover, being proficient in essay writing in English will enable to students of English as a foreign language to be successful writers.

Based on the above definitions we can find several reasons:

Firstly, the number of students that study in Linguistic Department is increasing but their English level is questionable and does not improve, especially when they are in 4<sup>th</sup>, level and when they have to write argumentative essays. Therefore, this study is aimed to

describe in depth some of the grammar, vocabulary, content, cohesion, coherence and syntax problems that the writing of EFL students have.

In addition, we will see the strategy use like the use of basic stages of writing process that involves writing the composing sentences and paragraphs also the spelling and punctuation.

Also we will identify problems in participants regarding their writing of argumentative essays with that the ability to arrange ideas and sentences in a logical order which is called cohesion and if students have coherence problems in EFL essay writing.

So that, the current study will contribute to the description of student's writing deficiencies. It provides an understanding of the problems faced by student in the cohesion and coherence of their written an argumentative essay.

#### **1.4 HIPOTHESIS**

The most common writing deficiencies problems that EFL students have are two: first, writing paragraph organization and second, problems involving coherence and cohesion factors such as: lexical, grammatical and semantic features. These two deficiencies are associated with academic writing when developing argumentative essays.

#### **1.5 OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.5.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To identify the errors that are associated with paragraph organization students' coherence and cohesion deficiencies in English argumentative essay writing.

##### **1.5.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To evaluate students grammatical skills in the use of simple and perfect tenses, as well, passive and active voices.

-To identify problems in participants regarding their writing of argumentative essay in the following areas: Content, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion and syntax.

- To identify the attitudes of participants to their problems in writing argumentative essay.

## 1.6 VARIABLES OPERATIONALIZATION

| VARIABLE                                | DEFINITION OF THE VARIABLES   | DIMENSION  | INSTRUMENTS                      | INDICATORS   |
|---|---|--|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>DEFICIENCIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING</b> | Deficiencies in academic writing, regards the lacks when writing the forms of expository and argumentative prose used by university students and researchers to convey a body of information about a particular subject, written in order to be precise, semi-formal, impersonal, and objective. (Murray & Moore, 2006) | The Academic writing of argumentative essays done by intermediate English students of level four at Linguistics department at UMSA University in TEFL field. | Grammar test<br><br>Writing test | <b>Grammar test</b><br>0 to 45 bad<br>46 to 70 regular<br>71 to 100 excellent<br><b>Writing test</b><br>Syntax<br>Vocabulary<br>Grammar<br>Cohesion<br>Content |
| <b>ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY</b>              | The argumentative essay allows writers to express their opinion on a topic and support that opinion with strong logic and evidence. (Li, 2009)  | The Academic writing of argumentative essays done by intermediate English students of level four at Linguistics department at UMSA University in TEFL field. | Writing test                     | <b>Writing factors</b><br><br>Syntax<br>Vocabulary<br>Grammar<br>Cohesion<br>Content   |
| <b>COHESION FACTORS</b>                 | Elements that defines instrumentally cohesion (Negari, 2011)  | The Academic writing of argumentative essays done by intermediate English students of level four at Linguistics department at UMSA University in TEFL field. | <b>Writing test</b>              | <b>Writing factors</b><br>Syntax<br>Vocabulary<br>Grammar<br>Cohesion<br>Content   |



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter two we present a detailed account of the relevant literature related to writing.

#### 2.1 WRITING IN TEFL

We hold fast to the idea that writing is an intensely personal and uniquely human act. Writing is a complex skill, and its development involves much more than the accurate use of grammar and a good range of vocabulary (Negari, 2011). Writing is a skill that is used to communicate the ideas.

Writing is the activity of being able to communicate with language. Also writing is a form of problem-solving which involves such processes as generative ideas, discovering a 'voice' with which to write, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written, and searching for language with which to express exact meaning. Moreover, writers rarely know at the outset exactly what it is they are going to write because many ideas are only revealed during the act of writing itself (Arnoldt, 1996). Writing is a constant process that involves the skills to write in a good way, because the ideas and planning have to be well organized and became very difficult.

Writing is one of the four language skills taught in foreign language. It has been dealt with differently by the various methods which foreign language teaching has gone through. *Teaching writing skill in a second or a foreign language has passed differend trends, each of which has had benefit and short coming* Fujieda (2006). According to Kirby (2003), *writing emerges from an ongoing, never-finished, constantly refreshed, and always singular act of creation. This fact, this ability, is absolutely remarkable, if not miraculous.*

For this author writing is based on act of creation, and so, the writing skill is in constant change by different methods. Also writing is seen as a difficult skill to achieve especially for EFL students deserves its fair share of specific attention in language teaching.

Writing in a second language or foreign language seems to be the most difficult language skill for language learners to acquire in academic contexts Arnoldt (1996).

Writing in a foreign language is difficult for EFL student, because academic contexts are, sometimes, very different from the native language.

Also (Murray D. M., 1972, p. 4) says: *writing is the act of producing a first draft. Is the fastest part of the process, and the most frightening, for it is a commitment.* Writing starts with first draft if it is well written the following process going to be easier.

Writing, in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1996), is explained as "*the activity of writing or the skill of producing linear sequences of graphemes in time*". The process of writing consist in use skills to produce linear sequences, if it have coherence the writing is good.

Another reference from (Muslim, 2014, p. 105) *writing well is really a big challenge for both native and not native students. In general, it is much bigger with the students of English as a foreign language. Students nowadays have very little interest in writing which is so important to fulfill the education requirements.* In general writing is difficult in any language, especially in a foreign language in this case the English language, for that reason, the student loose interest in writing.

Therefore, writing involves not only the graphic representation of speech, but also the expression and organization of ideas according to the conventions of the language. These conventions concern grammar, vocabulary, handwriting, spelling and punctuation (Harmer, 2001). For a good writing, grammar organization of ideas is very important. To know vocabulary, spelling and punctuation rules, help us to organize our writing.

In conclusion, writing takes time. In particular, time is needed to incubate, sift and shape ideas. Time for practice, time to share writing, time to complete pieces of writing, and time to respond to and evaluate all of that writing. We also know that time is one of the most precious resources of both teachers and students and that when, as is often the case, time is at a premium, writing is one of the first things to be cut back or relegated to homework. Yet, of all the skills, writing is the one which most needs and benefits from time. And it is an important skill for language learners that must be learned in order use it properly. (Fujiedad, 2006). To sum up, we can say that writing is acquired through a thorough and formal instruction and takes time to convey a message effectively and explicitly.

## **2.2 WRITING STAGES**

Writing is a complicated process which involves a number of cognitive and metacognitive activities, for instance; brainstorming (This technique of jotting down words and phrases in a free association manner has become very popular), planning (students start planning and organizing the selected ideas), drafting (Students, start writing a tentative product that will require evaluation and revision later), and revising (students revise and evaluate in order to make changes if necessary). Writing involves much more than studying a particular grammar, analyzing and imitating rhetorical models. The process involves not only the act of writing itself, but prewriting and rewriting, all of which are interdependent. This process is not linear. *It is a process approach is divergent, with as many different outcomes as there are writers. On the other hand, writing will converge towards a pre-defined goal, with a model text being presented to form to focus of comprehension and text manipulation activities.* (Arnoldt, 1996, pp. 5-6)

Through a process writing approach, students learn to express themselves fluently, clearly, and correctly and work together to help each other develop their writing skills. The writing process is cyclical, giving students multiple opportunities to improve their writing.

The approach takes into consideration research showing what proficient writers do when writing and provides a framework for guiding student writers through similar steps.

*The process can be adjusted to accommodate different topics, time frames, and types of writing, including standardized writing tests for advanced writers. Process writing involves practice of all four language skills. When students work together on revision and editing, they practice speaking and listening. As they review other writers' papers, they also read. Components of the writing process include the integration of writing and reading, as well as genres, types, and purposes of writing. (Arnoldt, 1996)*

These five steps involve some form of the following:

- 1. A prewriting activity in which learners work together to generate ideas about a topic and organize those ideas.*
- 2. Writing a first draft, in which the focus is on putting the ideas down on paper without concern for grammatical or spelling errors.*
- 3. Revising the draft, often done in pairs or small groups, with a focus on the appropriateness of the ideas and the clarity of their organization.*
- 4. Editing the draft, with a focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation, transition words (first, next), and signal words (for example, another reason is). The complexity of the concepts and forms to be edited depends on the level of the students and on the elements they know or have studied. The use of an editing checklist for students is recommended. (Arnoldt, 1996, p. 7)*

Therefore:

Prewriting: generating ideas about a topic and organizing them, e.g., orally or in writing, through brainstorming or listing, or by using graphic organizers.

Writing a first draft: focusing on getting ideas on paper.

Revising: in small groups, pairs, or individually. Focusing on revising the ideas of the text (they are appropriate, complete, and well ordered) and not the mechanics.

Editing: focusing on the mechanics using checklists, keeping the level of editing appropriate to the students' language level.

Publishing: sharing with a wider audience: may include displaying the final text in the classroom; putting together a class book, magazine, or newsletter; and posting works on the Internet.

According to Petric & Czarl (2003), *there are three stages in writing involving pre-writing, writing and post- writing. These three stages of the writing process are interconnected and they are non-linear in that they may overlap and may occur repeatedly without any fixed sequence or order.* In this aspect, they consider the writing process as actions or behavior intentionally carried out by writers using their own strategies to produce good writing.

*A process approach argues that writers do not in fact start with a clear idea of the finish product. Rather, the text emerges out of a creative process. This process includes: planning (generating ideas, goal setting and organizing), drafting and-re drafting, reviewing, including editing and proofreading, and finally, “publishing”* (Franco, 2008, p. 50).

*Mainly, there are five stages of writing process, any stage can be skipped and returned to later. These are: prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. Learning and writing process is important for the students to express their thoughts, knowledge and feelings efficiently* (Nasir, 2013, p. 27).

*Therefore effective writing requires several things: a high degree of organization regarding the development and structuring of ideas, information and arguments. Furthermore, Writing is centred on the processes: Generating, Focusing, Structuring, Drafting, Evaluating and Re-writing.* (Negari, 2011). When prewriting and basic paragraph organization are complete, students can begin to draft a text. Frequently, the topic sentence or controlling the idea creates the most difficulty for writers. To sum up, the role of the process writing is to use the adequate step in order to develop students' knowledge.

In addition, his role is also to use the appropriate processes (i.e. the way to plan, organize, manage and carry out a writing teaching programme) in order to have motivated students

on the one hand, since motivation goes hand in hand with the positive attitudes towards a good and successful learning (Harmer 1984), and successful results on the other. Writing is then a creative process which enables learners to describe facts, express ideas and impart knowledge to an unseen audience.

Most obviously writing is a way of communication which requires both mental and physical efforts on the part of the writer since it has been defined as the activity of transforming thoughts into language. In effect, Byrne (1988) explains that the difficulty in writing stems from three kinds of problems:

Psychological, caused by lack of interaction and feedback between the reader and the writer.

Cognitive, because the organization framework of our ideas in written communication has to be mastered.

Linguistics, because in writing we have to express ourselves in a clearer and more grammatical manner than in speech, to compensate for the absence of certain features of spoken language such as gestures and facial expression.

In addition the writer has to handle many components at the same time: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, audience, purpose and the writing process. The combination of all these components makes writing a sophisticated and a difficult skill.

### **2.3 WRITING DEFICIENCIES IN EFL STUDENTS**

Academic writing demands much effort and practice in composing, organizing, and analyzing ideas. Students writing in a foreign language will naturally face with cognitive problems related to language learning (Negari, 2011).

In the last decade, a good number of studies conducted have proved that the interference of the mother tongue is a severe problem in EFL and ESL writing contexts. *Errors caused by L1 interference, based on five stages of investigation comprising data collection, error*

*identification, error description, attribution of error categories, and reflections on the findings. The results revealed that the errors most frequently made by the students were classified into 13 categories, namely noun, adverb, verb, adjective, verb form, preposition, article, spelling, concord, idiom, pronoun, passive voice, and word order. The causes of errors found were mainly from it is apparent that errors caused by L1 interference have been seen as an unavoidable obstacle that all EFL and ESL student writers have to encounter, resulting in ineffective L2 writing. The four most frequent errors found were determiners, subject and verb agreement, tenses, and prepositions. (Usaha, 2013, pp. 67-68)*

College students' errors in writing mainly fall in the category of syntax and grammar, these errors can be categorized in seven syntactic subcategories: prepositions, verbs, articles, conjunctions, relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and sentence structure Jaudi (2014).

Jaudi (2014) has mentioned that the students face several problems in phoneme clusters, spellings, grammar, mistakes due to L1 interference, structure, doubling of subjects, doof preposition, tenses, articles, appropriate vocabulary, wrong use of prefixes & suffixes etc.

Much research has offered valuable insights into the reasons of college EFL learners' weaknesses in English in general and writing skills in particular. Several studies in this regard and concluded that college EFL learners' problems are caused by the following reasons:

- a) *School graduates have lack of information regarding the university or college they enrolled in;*
- b) *there is deficiency in the English language curricula offered by some schools and universities;*
- c) *dreadful teaching methodology;*
- d) *problems with proper language environments;*
- e) *lack of personal impetus on the part of the students (Javid, 2014, pp. 166-167).*

A number of reasons are associated with students' coherence problems in English essay writing.

*First, the effect of topic-specific background knowledge was seen as influential on the general quality and local coherence of student writing. Second, it was highlighted that low English proficiency students find it difficult to develop coherent writing due to paying attention to language matters rather than making meaning. Moreover, it was indicated that college students tend to follow certain techniques in their written English that make their writing incoherent such as including a broad statement in the opening sections of their essays before introducing the topic sentence. In addition, students overused coordinate sentences and misused topic sentences which were the reasons for their incoherent and unacceptable quality of writing. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 213).*

*Problems in writing include lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of vocabulary knowledge, word-for-word translation, cohesion errors, lack of academic style, lack of content, and lack of proofreading. Moreover, students present problems with grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and generating relevant ideas. (Hammad, 2014, p. 1)*

*The main cause for the students' essay writing problems was lack of conscious reading practice. A second reason for the participants' EFL essay writing problems might be lack of writing practice. Another EFL writing problem is lack of content. The final finding is that most students tend to finish writing process without practicing proofreading. (Hammad, 2014, pp. 13-15).*

According to his findings, the causes of the problems may be dealt with from four perspectives, i.e., the learners, faculty members, curricula and the environment of teaching /learning context. It could be that the college students are more interested in getting better scores instead of learning the target language and they are in the habit of memorizing passages without understanding, grammatical rules and lexical items to achieve high grade point average Zaid (1993). Another very strong reason is that a vast majority of them lack intrinsic motivation and bear various extrinsic motivational factors to learn English language.



The college students need writing skills to paragraph level for carrying out their undergraduate English-major studies and that they also have serious problems in their academic writing due to their weaknesses in using appropriate lexical items, organization of ideas and grammar. The other weaker areas are prepositions, spellings, irregular verbs, articles, punctuation, suffixes and prefixes. (Javid, 2014).

## **2.4 WRITING DEFICIENCIES IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS**

An essay is a unit of an academic writing that can be described as an intellectual exploration of any subject or topic that at the same time contains different arguments and evidence that the writer uses to build it. According to McLean (2011) the essay consists of an introduction, which establishes the thesis and the body; the body proves the writers point through well-thought-out ideas and well-searched evidence; and a conclusion that summarizes the writer's arguments. (McLean, 2011, p. 21).

Before, to start with the essay is necessary to know the importance of a paragraph. A paragraph according to Stern (1976) *it is a unit of writing that consists of one or more sentences that focus on a single idea or topic. A well-written paragraph has a controlling idea, supporting points, and a conclusion related to the idea. A topic sentence makes a statement about the controlling idea, although not all paragraphs have topic sentences. The purpose, content, organization, and length of a paragraph can vary widely according to student needs and interests and the level of detail needed to support the controlling idea.* The paragraph offers the flexibility of being a microstructure for the essay and a macrostructure for sentences.

## 2.5 COHESION AND COHERENCE

Cohesion occurs when the semantic interpretation of some linguistic element in the discourse depends on another. It is the foundation upon which the edifice of coherence is built.

In relation to EFL essay writing cohesion, many researchers agree that cohesion, on the macro level is related to linking ideas whereas on the micro level, it is concerned with connecting sentences and phrases. *"The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text"*(Ahmed, A. H. 2010, p.212).

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), *while coherence may be dependent on external factors such as the background of the reader and "context of the situation", it may also be dependent on textual cohesion. Later they said, cohesion distinguishes texts from non-texts and enables readers or listeners to establish relevance between what was said, is being said, and will be said, through the appropriate use of the necessary lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. Cohesion occurs when the semantic interpretation of some linguistic element in the discourse depends on another. It is the foundation upon which the edifice of coherence is built.* (Halliday and Hasan, 1985, p. 94)

Coherence, on the other hand, *is concerned with the ways which the components of text are connected. In short, it is a relationship between lexical items and structures which are put together to construct a unified text. Cohesion is also one among the seven standards of textuality* (Alarcon, 2011, p. 2).

Coherence in written text is *"a complex concept, involving a multitude of reader- and text-based features"* *Text-based features mean cohesion (i.e., the linking of sentences) and unity (i.e., sticking to the point). Reader-based features mean that the reader interacts with the text depending on his/her prior knowledge. Coherence is defined as "the organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically" a*

*coherent essay consists of an introduction, a thesis statement, rhetorical support, and a conclusion. (Ahmed, A. H. 2010, p.212).*

Coherence and cohesion: related lexical items across clauses and sentences boundaries in written texts are a major characteristic of coherent discourse. This relation of vocabulary in texts is referred to as lexical cohesion (Halliday and Hassan 1976; Halliday and Hassan 1985; Halliday 1989).

*Coherence and cohesion are closely linked; together they help to achieve linguistic and semantic unity of the written work. Learners need to develop an awareness of these writing conventions in order to write meaningfully.*

*Coherence refers to the sense unity that should exist between sentences of the same paragraph. It is usually described in terms of correctness between sentences, use of explicit cohesive devices such as pronouns, repetitive structures, and transitional markers. Cohesion, on the other hand completes the unity of the text. It involves the use of rhetorical devices, which are technically called cohesive markers or linking words. These devices can be logical, grammatical or lexical. They help to establish relationships between different parts of a sentence or different sentences themselves. They also act as linguistic signals to help the reader make the transition between preceding and coming ideas or sentences. Lee (2002: 33) suggested five features to manage coherence in writing:*

*1. An outline of the main functions of the text and of the ways of expressing them to achieve the intended purpose. For example, when the text is narrative, the events are to be arranged in a chronological pattern.*

*2. An information structure: that is organizing ideas in a certain order. For example, old information is given before new ones.*

*3. To justify an idea or elaborate it with examples; otherwise, it becomes a generalization.*

4. *Connectivity of the surface text by the use of cohesive devices. Some examples are pronoun reference (he, she, it, this, that), conjunctions (but, also, therefore, however) and content lexical ties such as repetition, synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy.*

5. *The use of metadiscourse markers in texts helps readers organize, interpret and evaluate information. Some examples are logical connectives (therefore, but), sequencers (firstly, secondly, finally), certainty markers (certainly, no doubt).*

*1 Meta discourse: refers to linguistic material in text that is intended to help the reader interpret and evaluate the information given. It guides the reader through the text, linking individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and a coherent whole.*

*When students understand how these elements of discourse work in texts, they are more likely to use them appropriately to develop coherence in their writing tasks. (Bouyakoub 2012, p. 66-68).*

In English writing cohesive devices are major sources of incoherence and textual deviation. In addition, most of students have some weaknesses, in terms of coherence and cohesion, manifested in the students' written texts.

Furthermore, cohesion refers to the linguistic features which help make a sequence of sentences a text. A text is coherent when a reader understands the function of each succeeding unit of text in the development of its overall or global meaning.

The process of writing a paragraph may facilitate the way to write a good essay.

## **2.6 TYPES OF ESSAYS**

According to McLean (2011) there are different essays that include the following:

### **Definition Essay**

*“The definition essay defines a particular topic. When writing this type of essay, it is best to describe your topic using all possible avenues...,” (McLean, 2011, p. 111)*

the definition essay explains what topic means. These types of essays are also used to define terms or ideas such as “love” or “faith.” The theses of this kind of essay are usually literal definitions. (McLean, 2011, pp. 111-112).

### **Cause and Effect Essay**

*“The cause and effect essay analyzes a topic in terms of a) what caused it and b) what happened as a result.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 49) The cause and effect essay can be used to persuade the readers to your way of thinking about certain situation. It can also be used to inform your readers of an already proven fact by letting them know the causes. A simple type of essay more likely will have just one or two effects but it can also have multiple effects depending on the complexity. It can also explore several causes that all lead to the same effect. (McLean, 2011, pp. 49-50).

### **Critical Essay**

*“Critical essays are essays that analyze another’s work, whether it is a book, an article, a movie, or even a piece of art.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 63) The critical essay is not necessarily negatively criticizing someone’s work but exploring and analyzing it. It needs some brainstorming and research ahead of time because the statements must be supported. Apart from a regular essays structure (introduction, body, and conclusion) it needs a summary and the analysis of the work. (McLean, 2011, pp. 63-64).

### **Compare and Contrast Essay**

*“The compare and contrast essay evaluates two topics by discussing their similarities and differences.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 81) This type of essay may be used in almost all subjects. For example, a political science class could compare the economics of different countries. In addition to an introduction, body and conclusion this type of essay must explore the similarities and differences between the subjects. (McLean, 2011, pp. 81-83)

### **Descriptive Essay**

*“The descriptive essay describes a person, place, object, experience, or event. Through the use of vivid details utilizing all the senses, you will describe every aspect of your topic”* (McLean, 2011, p. 127) this type of essays are very similar to fiction with the difference that the content is true. (McLean, 2011, p. 127) This kind of essay needs all sorts of details presented as vividly as possible to help the reader to experience it. (McLean, 2011, p. 128) .

### **Evaluation Essay**

*“The evaluation essay is similar to the argumentative/persuasive essay in that you are often trying to persuade readers to your point of view.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 163) The evaluation essay’s main purpose is to have the readers agree with the writer’s point of view. (McLean, 2011, p. 163) This type of essay is used in movies or books reviews. It is a type of argument that includes evidence to justify a writer's opinions about a subject. (McLean, 2011, p. 163).

### **Literary Analysis Essay**

*“There are several specific types of literary criticisms, but a basic literary analysis simply looks at a theme or element of a particular work and tries to discover the meaning behind it.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 179) This type of essay describes a theme or idea in a written work you have read. (McLean, 2011, p. 181) It requires the reader to take careful consideration of study and research about the topic in order to get resources to support his or her arguments. (McLean, 2011, pp. 181-182).

### **Narrative Essay**

*“The narrative essay tells a story. Often, these essays tell of an experience or an event that happened to you or someone else.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 203) The narrative essay may lead the writer to think of it as telling a story. These essays are often anecdotal,

experiential, and personal which allows the writer to express himself. (McLean, 2011, pp. 203-204).

In addition, the following kind of essay which is the argumentative essay, is the one that this study has taken into account, because, this type of essay is the one that is requested in English international test like, TOEFL and IELTS tests, in all around the world.

### **Argumentative/Persuasive Essay**

*“The purpose of this type of essay is to convince your reader to agree with your point of view.”* (McLean, 2011, p. 33) That is to say, the argumentative or persuasive essay expresses and supports a specific point of view. In fact, you can express or support any side of the argument as long as you have well-founded or reasonable points and suitable facts to support your arguments. (McLean, 2011, p. 33).

On one hand, essays, especially an argumentative essay may include any of the following organizational techniques:

**Controlling idea:** Provides the limits for the ideas in the paragraph. It makes the promise of what you will do in the paragraph.

**Supporting sentences:** Presents details, facts, examples, quotes, and arguments that fit in an organizational pattern to support the controlling idea.

**Organizational pattern:** Reflects the rhetorical style and order of ideas of the paragraph.

**Development:** Refers to the amount of information needed for the paragraph to be complete and the ideas fully developed.

**Coherence:** Refers to the degree to which the supporting sentences are logically linked to each other and to the controlling idea.

**Unity:** Refers to the extent to which the paragraph is about one unifying idea.

On the other hand, the basic structure of the Essay is:

The title of this piece of writing should summarize the content of the whole essay. An introduction is typically one paragraph and the first one in the essay. The body of an essay is where you develop your essay. The conclusion summarizes what the writer has

explained in his or her essay and it should affirm the writer's thesis. The conclusion is typically one paragraph.

It is primordial to provide an outline of what a good argumentative essay should look like when it is done.

## **2.7 PARTS OF AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**

### **The Title:**

- The best titles provide a brief and catchy summation of the essay's argument. A title has to convey the argument. Because the title will depend on the final argument, it is usually best to write the title after the essay is drafted. Endy (2011).

### **The First Paragraph: The Introduction**

- *Start with an **opening hook** to catch readers' interest. One strategy is to pose a puzzle or question that the essay will then resolve. Keep it brief, and make sure that its opening hook provides a bridge to thesis statement. Also be sure to avoid general statements that make sweeping and unsupported claims.* (Endy, 2011, p. 2)

- *The **thesis statement** should be one or two sentences long, and it should at minimum present the thesis to readers. Ideally, it can also briefly explain the main reasons behind the thesis. As with the opening hook, keep the thesis statement brief. In a short essay, the introduction should be just one paragraph total, about a half-page in length. Save specific evidence for the body.* (Endy, 2011, p. 3).

In this part the thesis have to be explained it will be precise but do not present evidence yet.



## **The Body:**

*Each paragraph in the body of the essay should start with a topic sentence. The topic sentence should announce the argument of the paragraph and make clear how the paragraph's evidence will support the essay's overall argument. The rest of the paragraph should then present and explain evidence that will support the topic sentence. In a sense, the phrase "topic sentence" is little misleading, because this sentence should convey the paragraph's argument, not simply its topic.*

- *Resist the temptation to cram too much into one paragraph. Each paragraph should develop one distinct idea. If you squeeze too many different ideas into one paragraph, the topic sentence will become muddled or it will introduce only one of the paragraph's several ideas.*

- *Although, each supporting body paragraph should be about a half-page in length. This length usually provides enough space for supporting evidence, without cramming too many ideas into one paragraph. (Endy, 2011, pp. 3-4)*

Both paragraphs contain a topic sentence that shows the main argument of the paragraph, with its specific examples to support the topic sentence.

## **The Conclusion:**

- *It is a quick summary of thesis; then muse on implications of the thesis. The conclusion provides a simple summary of the main argument. By the end of the body, a good essay will already have established its core argument. It is used to raise broader ideas that flow from the argument and evidence. (Endy, 2011, pp. 4-5)*

To conclude, a good argumentative writing depends of three specific qualities: precision in argument and use of terms, grounding in evidence, clarity and concision in prose.

## 2.8 WRITING A DIFFICULT SKILL

### Competence in Foreign Language Writing

A competency is the capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform "critical work functions" or tasks in a defined work setting. Competencies often serve as the basis for skill standards that specify the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in the workplace as well as potential measurement criteria for assessing competency attainment. Competencies define the applied skills and knowledge that enable people to successfully perform their work while learning objectives are specific to a course of instruction.

Competencies are relevant to an individual's job responsibilities, roles and capabilities. They are a way to verify that a learner has in fact learned what was intended in the learning objectives.

A Competency utilizes appropriate methods for interacting sensitively, effectively, and professionally with persons from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, educational, racial, ethnic and professional backgrounds, and persons of all ages and lifestyle preferences.

In short, competencies say how we can be certain they know it.

There are some factors that contribute to success in foreign language writing. Although, our emphasis is on the composing process.

*The strategies that make up the composing process are most valuable when writing involves complex issues and difficult problems. There is less need for planning, rereading, and revision when writing simple descriptions and summaries, and more need for these strategies when writing requires the integration of a great deal of diverse information, when a complex analysis is called for, or when data can be interpreted in different ways. (Krashen, 2004, p. 11).*

Writing is not the only way of doing this, of course, but it is a very effective way.

*There is no evidence that writing contributes to writing competence; those who write more do not write better and increasing writing does not result in better writing.*

*Writing, however, makes a different kind of contribution: Writing can make learners smarter. When we write something down on the page, we make a representation of our thoughts, of our “cognitive structures.” (Krashen, 2004, p. 10).*

Writing, however, makes a different kind of contribution to our cognitive structures.

*To give feedback to learners according to the errors examined in their writing. This is one of effective strategies for learners to improve their writing competence. Cohesion and coherence are two factors in the English text. Learners need to make great efforts to develop their proficiency in these two aspects if they desire to be able to reach a good level of competence in their academic writing. (Li, 2009, p. 13).*

*According to Spooner (1980) definitions of competence may focus on particular features of writing, such as structural or grammatical elements. In other views, acceptable mechanics are a minimum, but emphasis is given, in addition, to the quality of thought or to the logic and clarity of the communication.*

The use of grammatical elements in a good way helps to students to organize the paragraph into an essay.

### **The Factors Influencing EFL Writing Performance**

There are many factors influencing FL/L2 writing quality. According to the literature review, such factors include strategy use, cohesion and coherence, linguistic knowledge, writing apprehension, and L1 (First Language) transfer.

One important factor that can affect FL/L2 writing quality is strategy use. The use of process writing (pre-writing stage, drafting stage, and post-writing stage) through which writers practice a number of strategies. It may be argued that there is a close relationship (Hammad, 2014, p. 3).

A second factor contributing to FL/L2 writing quality is linguistic competence. *Linguistic competence is closely interacted with FL/L2 writers' composing process between such strategies and FL students' writing quality* (Hammad, 2014, p. 3) . According to Murrcaia (2002), *the use of grammar and vocabulary are essential for improving language learning.*

Some studies revealed that vocabulary and grammar were perceived by EFL students as the top most writing difficulties.

A third factor is the ability to arrange ideas and sentences in a logical order which is called cohesion and coherence. *Coherence means arranging ideas in a logical sequence and cohesive ties including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical ties affect text structure. The cohesion anomalies are caused by poor linguistic competence, specifically poor syntactic and semantic awareness and poor knowledge of cohesion rules* (Hammad, 2014, p. 4).

A fourth factor is L1 transfer. L1 transfer is defined as "*an automatic activation of well-established mapping skills in the first language triggered by second langue input*". *It is believed that transfer of first language inhibit second language acquisition due to the transfer of structure and vocabulary from L1 to L2* (Koda, 2011, p.467).

A fifth factor is writing apprehension. *The relation between FL/L2 writing apprehension and writing quality is uncertain. It may be argued that L2/FL writing apprehension correlates negatively with linguistic competence and strategy use. There were six sources of EFL writing apprehension including linguistic knowledge level, perceived language competence, writing performance level, perceived writing competence, fear of criticism, and instructional practices* (Hammad, 2014, p. 4).

In conclusion, the lack of linguistic competence and lack of strategy training caused EFL writing anxiety.

## **Writing difficulties**

Of the three elements of writing, content, organization, and language, it is fair to say that language has been considered the most problematic difficulty for L2 writers due to their limited language proficiency or limited linguistic knowledge. Olsen (1999) notes that *some EFL writers cannot create an effective written work due to the inadequacy of syntactic and lexical competence, which at times makes them confused with the systems of the target language they are learning*. She also claims that *it is impossible for L2 students to write in a second language properly without linguistic knowledge regarding grammar and vocabulary*. That is, L2 writing can be more difficult if syntactic properties of the two languages are very different, which makes L2 students rely on their first language when writing in a second language.

On the other hand, mother tongue majorly affects the use of the second language; consequently, they may at times combine the systems of the two languages in their L2 writing, which is called “language transfer or syntactic transfer”. This is considered a severe problem of L2 learners who are so dependent on their L1 syntactic properties that they transfer some L1 grammatical rules in their L2 writing, eventually causing such errors. In order to comprehend L2 writing difficulty in terms of language and syntactic transfer more clearly, a number of researchers as well as scholars have paid much attention to identifying what hardships L2 student writers may confront while writing.

The focus of L1 interference is on five categories: copula control, adverb placement, inability to use there is failure to use relative clauses, and confusion in verb transitivity. Apparently, grammar is one of the aspects involved in all types of language skills ranging from listening to writing by learners. Therefore, writing tasks do not seem easy for them because most of the language systems are different from the English systems. Errors, consequently, can be made at all times. Also states that errors caused by the dominant of the first language are called “the negative interference of the mother tongue” (Hammad, 2014, pp. 69-71) .

Additionally, paragraphs are mainly from the interference of the first language. That is due to the learners applied the structures of their mother tongue when they write in English. The differences in both vocabulary and the structures of the two languages cause the problems in writing the second language Hammad (2014).

## **2.9 INTERFERENCE AS A CAUSE OF L2 WRITING ERRORS**

L1 interference occurs when L2 learners transfer their own syntactic knowledge into the use of the target language. However, no language is identical regarding structures, lexicons, and systems; hence, the students' prediction of equivalence leads to the cause of error and mistake production in their second language written outcomes. Furthermore, Hashim (1999) defines the term L1 interference as a cross-linguistic and language transfer, which is referred to the interference of the students' mother tongue when they perform their language competence and performance either in spoken or written forms. The interference, in her sense, is the students' violation of the collocation restrictions such as the words 'do' and 'make', 'turn on' and 'open', etc. It can be said that the learners tend to violate the collocation rules in using words due to the limited vocabulary, which also further causes the interference to other levels like syntactic and discourse levels. (Hammad, 2014, pp. 70-71)

Interference, as defined and explained, is in relation to L2 writers' prediction in terms of syntactic equivalence between first and second language, which leads to such grammatical and lexical errors in L2 writing.

### **Writing errors vs. writing mistakes**

When talking about L1 interference, we understand that it is related to mistakes and errors made by L2 writers. Thus, it is necessary to clarify these two terms. Brown (1994) *describes mistakes as an unsuccessful use of grammatical rules; that is, learners study the language structures comprehensibly but fail when using them. This failure is perceived as a mistake, while errors refer to "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner"*. An error is what

*learners make in their L2 writing because they do not know the syntactic as well as lexical structures, whereas a mistake is in relation to the learners' low competence in using a foreign language.*

*The errors reflect the gaps in the learner's knowledge; that is, an error is produced due to the fact that the learners cannot identify what is correct and incorrect. In contrast, a mistake reflects the learners' inefficient performance; that is, it occurs because the learners are not able to perform what they already know correctly. Also notes, "a mistake occurs as the result of processing limitations rather than lack of competence while an error is the breaches of rules of code" (Usaha, 2013, p. 71).*

So, an error happens from a lack of requisite knowledge of a language learner. As such, he/she makes such errors in his/her writing because he/she does not know grammatical properties in a new language. The rules of L1 knowledge are then employed in the use of L2 writing, which causes the mother tongue interference.

## **2.10 EFFECTIVE WRITING**

Writing is extremely limited because the need to encode information in English is much rarer than the need to decode. *Writing is a difficult skill that needs to be guided. To improve the writing skill, students have first to know and respect writing conventions, overcome the lexical barrier, master the necessary grammatical structures and reinforce mechanics (i.e. spelling and punctuation) (Bouyakoub, 2012, p. 193) .*

Much of the writing failure is due to students' lack of mastery of writing conventions and mainly lack of vocabulary luggage. *For lexical barrier is suggesting easy and purposeful activities to enhance learners' understanding and memorization of a big number of vocabulary items. This can be done by keeping a notebook of difficult words, holding lists of synonyms, opposites and useful expressions, and ultimately using a dictionary it help students build word paradigms. As far as word choice is concerned, it is very important to let students know the appropriate use of each word. In addition, integrating grammar*

*with writing would be of great help for students to learn writing. (Bouyakoub, 2012, p. 194) .*

So, is necessary to help students overcome the lexical as well as the structural barriers before engaging in writing activities.

As already mentioned, writing consists of several sub-skills that need to be taught separately and recursively so as to achieve the desired proficiency level.

*The lessons have to be prepared focusing on the appropriate use of spelling, punctuation and text organization before assigning a writing task. Spelling constitutes a real challenge for students. For this, various techniques can be used such as extensive reading, dictation and dictionary use. Punctuation is a set of symbols used in writing to help indicate something about the structure of a sentence and using the correct punctuation helps for convey the ideas exactly as it intend them. Teaching writing remains a difficult task for that many techniques can be employed in order to enhance the instruction of this skill as mentioned earlier (Bouyakoub, 2012, pp. 197-198) .*

One of these techniques is to use assessment as a means of teaching writing.

*The students can learn more when being assessed as they have the possibility to display the amount of knowledge they acquired about the target language. Assessing students'' writing and providing them with feedback is part of the learning process. The aim is to make students aware of their mistakes and of possible ways of correcting them. But, feedback does not only mean telling learners where they made mistakes, it also means offering them an assessment of how well they have done, making comments at various stages of the writing process (Bouyakoub, 2012, pp. 201-202) .*

*Effective assessment should be based on four traits including clarity, variety, sound pedagogy and reliable research as stated by Urquhart and Mciver (2005). Clarity means understanding what is being assessed. Variety refers to the use of multiple samples for assessment that involve different types of writing including descriptive, narrative,*



*expository and argumentative writing. Sound pedagogy means the use of strategies that leads assessment to reinforce the teaching practices.* (Bouyakoub, 2012, p. 202).

Students nowadays have very little interest in writing which is so important to fulfil the education requirements. This may be due to technology progress which has its negative effect on students` skills of writing because of the availability of ready-made assignments.

This literature review try to attract the students `attention to the importance of the following aspects writing which are paragraphing ideas, grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting. *Students should have mastered these basics before joining the college where they could direct their attention and efforts to learn how to analyze, synthesize assignments and critically respond to new information* (Harmer, 2001).

In addition the theoretical framework describes the most common deficiencies in writing essays in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, cohesion and coherence in order to know their failures and consequently improve their writing. *The main cause for the students' essay writing problems was lack of conscious reading practice. A second reason for the participants' EFL essay writing problems might be lack of writing practice. Another EFL writing problem is lack of content. The final finding is that most students tend to finish writing process without practicing proofreading.* (Hammad, 2014, pp. 13-15).

On one hand, essays, especially argumentative essays is taken into account in our data analysis, because, this type of essay is the one that is requested in English international test like, TOEFL and IELTS tests, in all around the world. *"The purpose of this type of essay is to convince your reader to agree with your point of view."* (McLean, 2011, p. 33). Therefore, it is the best tool for our study.

In addition, into the argumentative essays we will can see if students have some weaknesses, in terms of coherence and cohesion. . *"The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text"*(Ahmed, A. H. 2010, p.212). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), *while coherence may be dependent on external factors such as the background of the reader*

*and “context of the situation”, it may also be dependent on textual cohesion. So, a text is coherent when a reader understands the function of each succeeding unit of text in the development of its overall or global meaning.*

In sum, the use of such a tool will help the students to think about their writing by encouraging them to monitor their performances.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter we describe the methodology of this research.

#### **3.1 APPROACH**

There are three different ways of focusing a study. The quantitative, the qualitative and the mixed focus.

*A research in the quantitative focus uses the collection of data for validating a hypothesis, based on the numeric measure and the statistical analysis in order to establish patterns of behavior and finally validate theories.* (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2006, p. 5).

In the qualitative approach a research investigates the reason and how a decision is made, not just *what, where, when*. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed, rather than larger samples. In the qualitative paradigm a research aims to gather in deep understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. (Wikipedia, 2010, p. 1)

Finally, *mixed focus can use both focuses quantitative and qualitative in order to answer different questions in a problem statement.* (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2006, p. 755).

This study will follow a quantitative approach. Because it will use statistics and quantitative questionnaires in order to validate its hypothesis or deny it. For example, to obtain the results we have to use computer systems like Excel, then it will be showed in graphics with averages all of them in numeric and logical way. Therefore, we do not need to use a qualitative approach, because we do not apply qualitative techniques like the interview that is characterized by close contact between researcher and participants.

Our study is focused to explore the deficiencies that participants have in their writing essay, for that, we follow a quantitative approach.

### **3.2 TYPE OF STUDY**

There are different, types of studies, such as, exploratory, descriptive, correlative and explicative study.

*“A descriptive study looks for specifying properties, characteristics, and profiles of people, groups, communities, processes, objects and any other phenomenon that will be analyzed”*. (Danhke quoted in Hernandez Sampieri 2006 p. 102).

*“A correlative study associate variables by using a predictable pattern for a group for a population”*. (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernadez-Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2006, p. 104).

*“an explicative study is the one that will go beyond than the description of concepts or phenomena or the establishment of relations between concepts, actually, they want to find the reasons that causes an event”*.(Hernandez Sampieri, Fernadez-Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2006, p. 108).

Finally, *“An exploratory study is performed when the objective is to examine an issue or a research problem that has not been investigated enough, which you have many doubts or it has not been investigated before”*. (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernadez-Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2006, p. 100).

According to our objectives this research corresponds to the exploratory type, because it explores the reasons for writing deficiencies that EFL students have in their argumentative essays.

### **3.3 TYPE OF DESIGN**

The design of our study is non-experimental. We base our statement on Sampieri (1996) who says that: *non-experimental designs consist on observing phenomena within their*

*natural context in order to analyze them later and; mainly, variable are not manipulated deliberately.*

Therefore, our study had the following parameters:

**APPROACH: QUANTITATIVE**

**TYPE OF STUDY: EXPLORATORY**

**TYPE OF DESIGN: NON - EXPERIMENTAL**

### **3.4 POPULATION**

According to (Sampieri; 1996) *population refers to a group of elements that agree with a series of specifications, in other words, all objects, phenomena or situations that can be joined due to one or more characteristics.* The population of this study will be composed of 76 EFL students the fourth level of English from the Linguistics Department in the first semester of the year 2015, at UMSA University, which follows the parameter of equality, so it means that all of the integrant of our population is expected to have the same level of English, so that, all of them attend to “oral and written expression II” in the English Area at Linguistics Department at Mayor de San Andres University.

### **3.5 INTENTIONAL SAMPLE**

*The sample is a technique of the statistic area used in social investigation and it is based in the determination of three fundamental aspects: population of study, the sample and the size of the sample* (Dence Polit, 1995, p. 653). On the other hand Sampieri (1996) *say a sample refers to the group of elements that are taken from a population in order to; after its study, achieve valid conclusions about the population.*

Our sample will be non-probabilistic, that is, a subgroup of the population in which the selection of the elements does not depend on the probability but on the characteristics of

the investigation. Non-probabilistic samples refer to a procedure of informal selection. Therefore, our sample will be an intentional sample also called convenience samples are a matter of taking what you can get. Consequently, considering the population, 76 students, we request at least 16 participants who belong to the subject “oral and written expression II” in the English Area at Linguistics Department at Universidad Mayor de San Andres, the selection of this sample, we mean, the number of the sample, based on the literature review, as Sampieri (2006) said that the number of participants in a study should be at least in a number of 15, in order that the statistical variables would manifest in the study. That is, the reason of the number of our sample. (Hernandez Sampieri, 2006)

### **3.6 INSTRUMENTS**

According to Sampieri (1991) an instrument is: *a necessary technique for to obtain the information when we realize the investigation*. So, for this study we will use the following instruments:

#### **3.6.1 Test**

A test is a type of evaluation in which a person should answer and it will be used for measuring something. (wordreference.com, 2015).

We chose the argumentative essay, because the professors are most likely want students to write papers in an argumentative style. This style is distinct from the kinds of writing might do in other contexts. The argumentative essay allows writers to express their opinion on a topic and support that opinion with strong logic and evidence. That is, it requires a writer to defend a position on a topic using evidence from personal experience, literature, historical examples, and research to support his or her viewpoint. That is why, this type of essay, usually is required by most international English proficiency tests. Therefore, this study wants to seek in the writing deficiencies that students may have had regarding this piece of text in order that future studies would look for developing new solutions in writing argumentative essays.

Also written argumentative essay tests can effectively evaluate students' writing. Thus, we utilized an argumentative essay test so as to assess the participants' performance in EFL essay writing.

Therefore, to describe the students writing deficiencies, we divide the test into two sections that help us to identify the errors. Each of techniques will provide us students' difficulties related their writing skills. The following two sections are:

**The grammatical section** that is focused on what is the knowledge of students about English Grammar, in order to see if they have the same mistakes in context when they are writing the essay. What this grammar section was focus to seek was: the time of the verb, the tense of the verb, the voice, the mood, the subject verb agreement, the infinitive, the participle and the gerund. This test consist of twenty sentences without the verb, the students have to write the verb in the correct form taking into account the aspects before mentioned. In addition, the students have to analyze nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other grammatical categories to make good sentences. Each sentence is about five points, all the score is about 100 points.

**The writing section**, in this part we suggest two topics; both topics have the function of make students to argument about what students thinks about them. The topics are the following:

TOPIC 1: Should English be the official language in the United States? Why?

In this first topic, what we want to is that students stand their opinions, based in the idea that USA have as an official language to English, but because the minorities, every day USA have more languages in use such as: Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, etc.

TOPIC 2: Are tests scores a good indication of a schools competency? Why do you think so?

In this second topic, we want students start augmenting about the idea that if scores are the best indicators of students proficiency, or not.

These topics had been chosen, because, the purpose of this study is to determine the deficiencies in writing of argumentative essays, therefore the argumentation is the dimension where deficiencies occur, in addition, in order students start augmenting it is necessary that the questions that they had to choose should cause controversy in order to students argument their stand view about the topics suggested.

Based on these two topics students had to choose only one; the main reason of why students had to choose one topic is in order they have the ability of choosing the topic that is easier to write for them. Therefore, essays will be used in order to measure the organization of paragraphs according of the indicator established in the variable operationalization. Also this section help us to find the kind of deficiencies they have like coherence, cohesion, syntax and content. The score is about 100 points.

We chose specifically grammar and writing skills to describe the participants' grammatical knowledge, because if they present problems with grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and generating ideas; their writing will be poor.

### **3.6.2 Likert Questionnaire**

Moreover, we use questionnaire of Likert Scale which is widely used for research in the social area. This instrument consists of series of steps or items to which the participants' answers will be favorably or unfavorably, these answers are assigned a numerical value. In this study, this questionnaire will be used in order to see if students are aware about their deficiencies regarding the writing of argumentative essays.

## **3.7 PILOTING**

Piloting was applied for testing the instruments of this study and especially for testing the techniques of analysis and for precising the hypothesis.

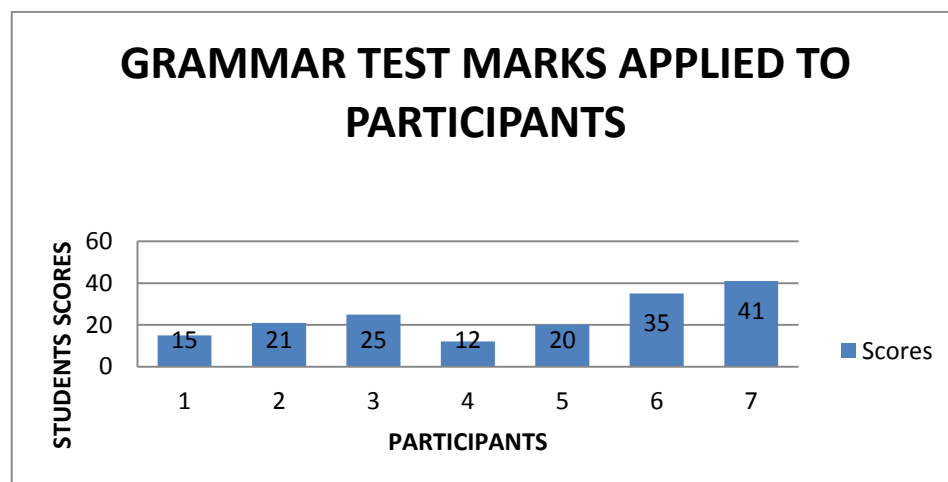
The piloting was programmed to work in three days on July 1<sup>st</sup>,2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> with seven students of English, from the Linguistics Department al UMSA University all of them from Oral and Writing Expressions in the experiment. Piloting was applied to seven



students from the sixteen from our sample, they were chosen by random. The piloting tried to see the accuracy of our selected instruments in order to measure the variables of this study.

The main objective of the piloting was to see students' deficiencies when writing argumentative essays by using the tests presented in the methodology. To evaluate the instruments we used in this study, piloting was necessary for us. We found that the piloting was built in a good way because instruments measured data in the way that we expected to happen. We used a grammar and a writing test in order to see if there is a relation between student's grammar performance and the way how students write argumentative essays and see if the possible deficiencies that they could have, have a relation with their grammar repertory, it was useful, because it let us to measure the organizing of their ideas, using the vocabulary and the accuracy of grammar in the content and the cohesion of the whole text. In addition, we applied the Likert questionnaire in order to measure student's attitudes about problems in writing argumentative essays. In the following sections the collected data for piloting will be showed. In the graphics showed below, you have in the *x* coordinate the number of participants, and in the *y* coordinate you have the scores that students had in the different areas that this study evaluated.

**Graphic 1**



Graphic 1: In grammar test, the students had to fill with the adequate verb in each one of twenty sentences. As we can see in graphic one, students did not take into account the context, they did not analyzed the grammatical categories, and they looked for the clues that help to identify the tense of verb. For that reason, they had low scores in grammar, over 100 points they had less of 50 points in their scores. And the averages of the total score was 24%.

In writing test, to evaluate their knowledge, we took into account the following aspects described in the next five graphics, also for each graphic we provide examples to illustrate the graphics. The following examples show the grammar errors of the participants.

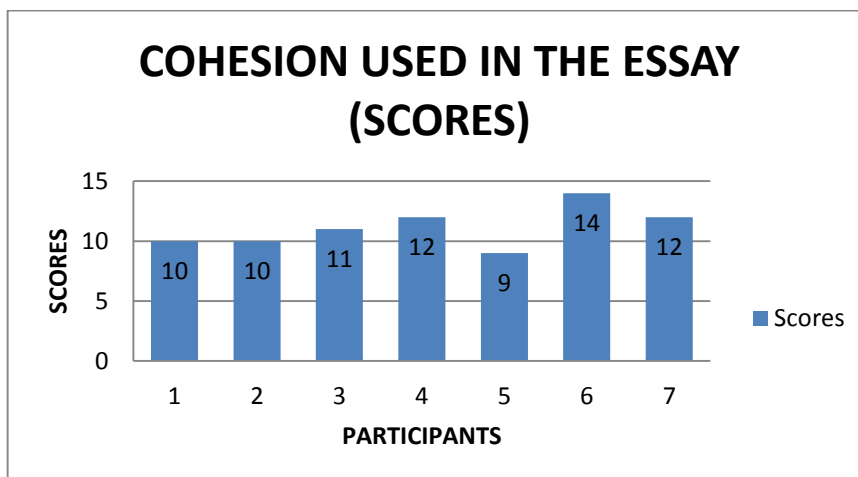
Example 1: when I first met him he “studied” architecture.

In this example, the participant 3 got confused with past tense, because simple past were used instead of past continuous tense.

Example 2: he “forgot” to come.

The example show that the participant 5 did not write the auxiliary verb “did” to complete the sentence. In both examples participant’s had problems regarding the use of verbal tenses.

**Graphic 2**



In graphic 2, we show that many students failed the way of connecting their ideas, into the sentences and paragraphs, the most important error, are related, on one hand, with the use of perfect tenses versus simple tenses, on the other hand, The use of discourse markers the possibly caused would be the poor Linguistics competences clearly showed in the average that was 24% over 100%.

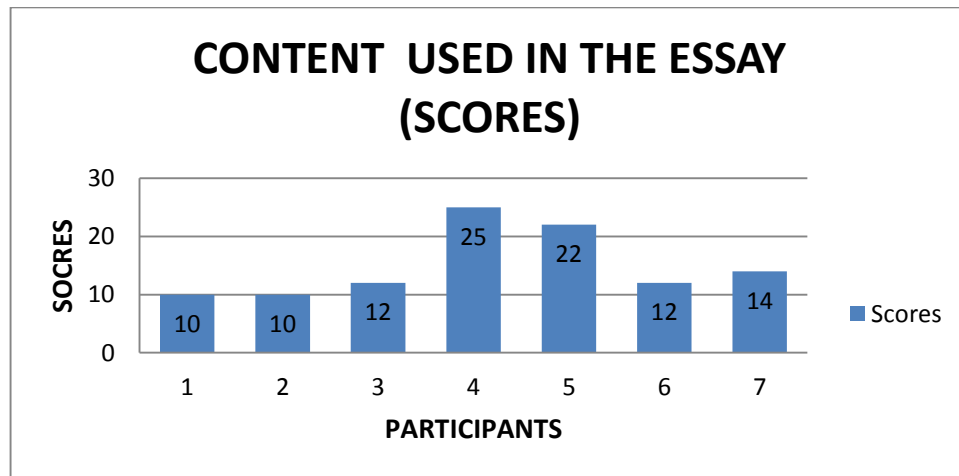
We could observe that the 76% of the participants used frequently the connecting words “and” and “but” as we show in the following examples:

Example 1: “and” also this country creates new ideas for science.

And the 24% of the participants used “although” “for that” “after that”

Example 2: for that reason, we have to learn another language.

**Graphic 3**

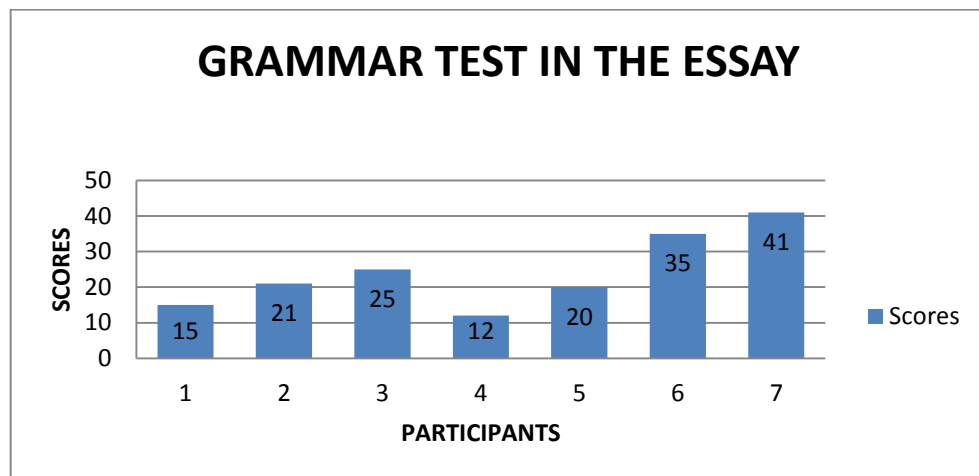


Graphic 3: another reason for students` essay writing problems is lack of content; also the content was very poor in their essays writing. It is showed in their incomplete paragraphs the ideas were not concluded, in most of the cases, participants showed, and that they have important such as: problems in maintaining the content in relation with the tittle and the

thesis statement established in the introductory paragraph. The average for this content test was 15%.

In both graphics, it is possible to see that cohesion in students' essay writing is very poor, the highest score is 25, so their abilities for writing the content of an argumentative essay is not enough, because the content average was less than cohesion test.

**Graphic 4**



Graphic 4: In graphic four, we see the average was only 12% over 100%. It means that students did not know how to use English grammar. This part is coherent with the grammar section that was described above; participants have problems in using specific grammar, such as, simple tenses and perfect tenses, as well as the use of connectors and discourse markers. The total average for grammar test was 12%. In the following examples we can look some of these grammar errors.

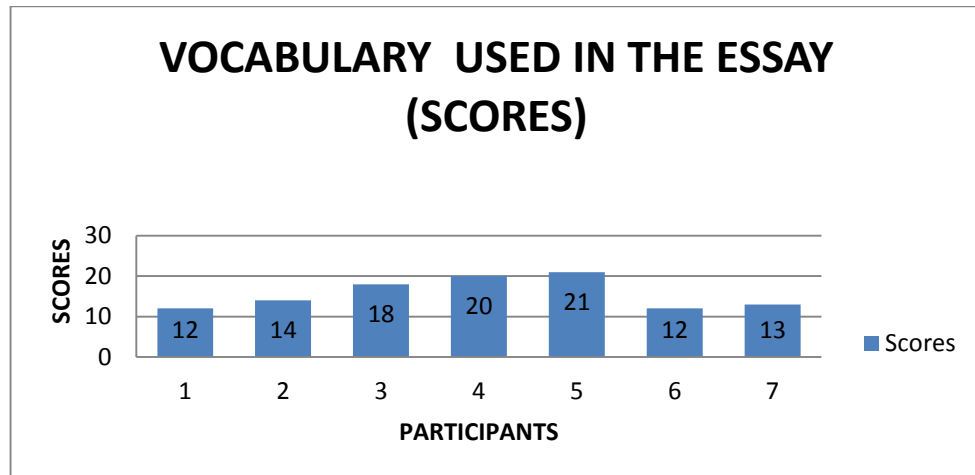
Example 1: my teacher a good person

The participant 5 in this example omitted the main verb of the sentence that was "is". This kind of error was very common in most participants.

Example2: my friend play the soccer with me.

This participant 4 shows the addition error, when he/she added the article “the” in the sentence that is unnecessary in it.

**Graphic 5**



In graphic 5, we see the scores of vocabulary test. This graphic shows that students did not use an appropriate vocabulary, not allowing to students to generate relevant ideas, thus, they write essays with a lot of mistakes, therefore, the average was 15% from 100%. Grammar and vocabulary are perceived to be two of the principal problems obstructing the effective writing of students. The following examples show the vocabulary errors.

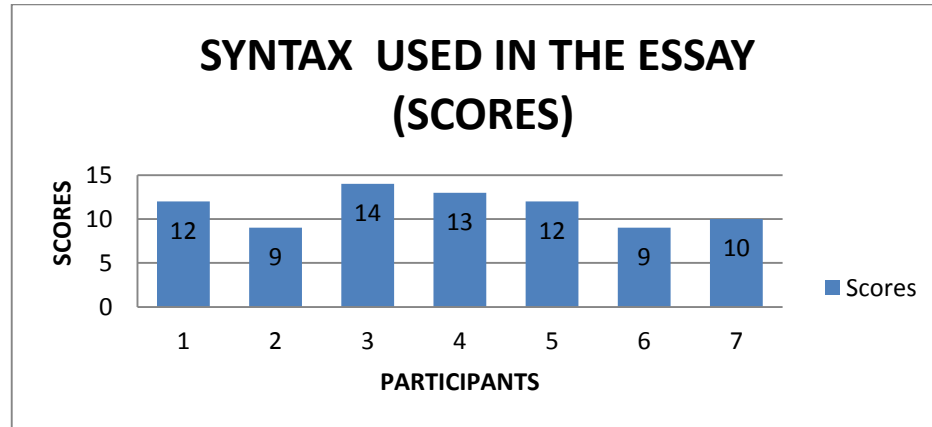
Example 1: for me I think everyone the students have homework, he like do in free time.

This participant 2 made mistakes in the use of the tenses, subject, verb agreement, word order and inappropriate sentence construction that we illustrate above.

Example 2: I make my homework every day.

In this example the participant 7 get confused in the use of the verb “do” instead the verb “make” were used, this is a common error that participants committed most of the times.

Graphic 6

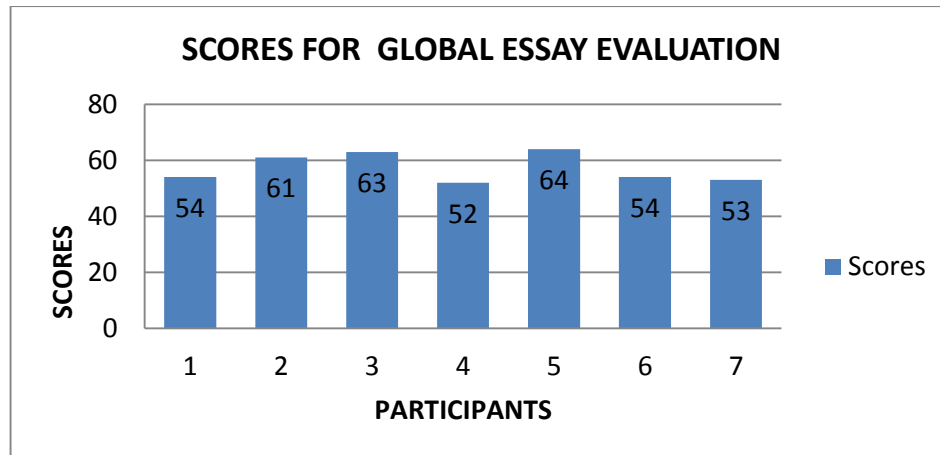


Graphic 6: In this graphic, the deficiencies related to syntax categories in writing argumentative essays are shown. In most of the cases, syntax in the way how students build the sentences are important, because they have problems in building sentences with their correct direct or indirect objects. The average of the syntax test was 11% about 100%. The following example was the most common committed by the participants in their essays.

Example1: English open me the door

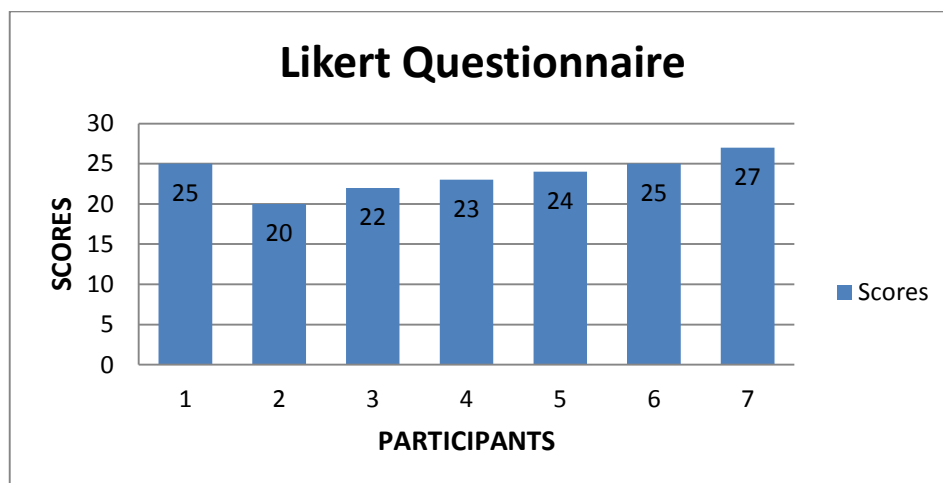
In this example the participant 1 had a mistake in the indirect object, which was caused because the influence of L1.

**Graphic 7**



Graphic 7: in this graphic, we can see that most of the students have an acceptable level of English, because the average of the group is 57%, it means that they are not in a very higher level of English proficiency, but they are not lower than 57%. The devices present learning problems. Most of the participants need to be drawn to their attention of participants and treated systematically, also they need to look at the clauses and sentences in context.

**Graphic 8**



Graphic 8: the Likert questionnaires showed how aware students are regarding their problems when they write argumentative essays, the maximum score for this instrument is 30 pts. The score was 23 pts. Therefore, students were aware about their deficiencies.

The piloting probed that the instruments measured the information that is needed in an effective way.

### **3.7.1 DATA ANALYSIS**

After introducing, the parameters of this research, next, the Data Analysis will be showed.

The objective of data analysis is to prove the hypothesis. Therefore, the tests were necessary, because we needed to see if students committed errors when they write argumentative essays. To describe students writing deficiencies we divided the tests into three sections that help us to identify those errors.

The first section was about a grammar test, that test consisted of twenty sentences without the verb, students had to write the verb in the correct form. Each sentence has a score of five points, and the whole score was over 100 pts. The second and principal section was about the way how students write argumentative essays, therefore two topic were suggested in order to measure the organization of paragraphs according of the indicator established in the variable operationalization. Also that section helped us to find the kind of students' deficiencies like cohesion, content, grammar, vocabulary and syntax. The score was over 100 pts.

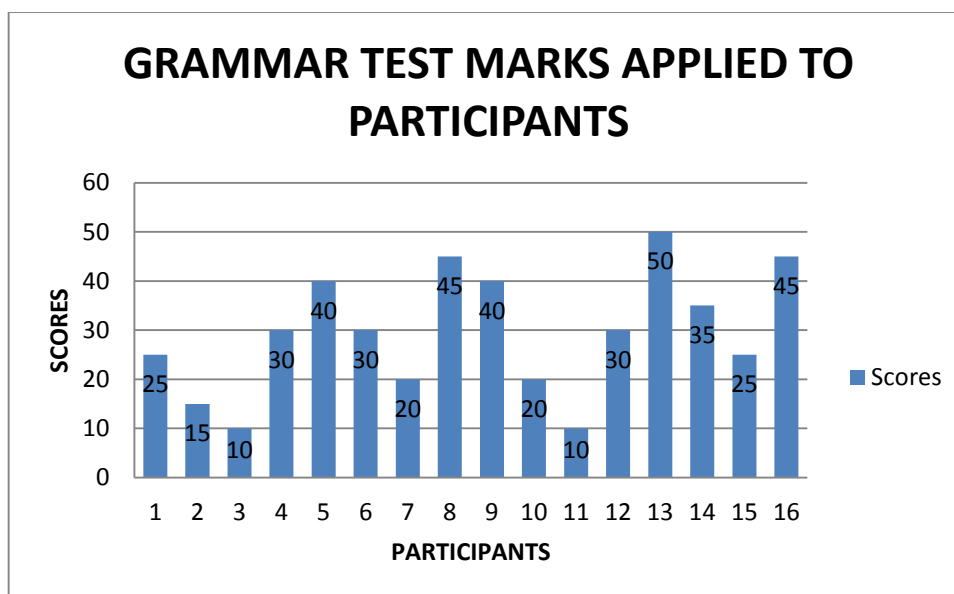
Moreover, we used Likert questionnaire it was applied in order to see if students are aware about their deficiencies regarding the writing of argumentative essay. In the following parts the collected and data analysis will be showed. In the graphics showed below, you have in the  $x$  coordinate the number of participants, and in the  $y$  coordinate you have the scores that students had in the different areas that this study evaluated.



### 3.7.2.1 SECTION ONE: GRAMMAR TEST

This instrument was a grammar test; it was focused on testing students' grammar abilities about the use of the following verb tenses and characteristics, such as: the tense of the verb, the voice, the mood, the subject, the verb agreement, the infinitive, the participle and gerund. So, this technique consisted of twenty sentences without the verb, students had to write the verb in the correct form taking into account the grammatical categories before mentioned and the context of each sentences. The score of this test was over 100 points.

Graphic 1



Graphic 1: the sample of our population was a group of 16 participants. The graphic 1 shows that the lowest score was 10 pts. (participants 3 and 11) and the highest score was of 50 pts. (participant 13) and the rest of the scores were between 15 and 45 pts. (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 16). Taking into account that the highest score should have been 100 pts. And the acceptable score could be 51 pts. The graphic describe all of the students failed the grammar test, and only the participant 13 was near the acceptable score with 50 pts. Below, in the following examples, we present the most common grammar errors that students committed:

Example1: my son “did not start to” work yet.

In this example, the participant 9, did not take into account the verbal tenses.

Example 2: the car “do” not start.

This example shows that the participant 6 does not have clear the auxiliary verbs.

Example 3: I wonder what he “says” now.

The third example, the participant 11 did not take into account the adverb that identify the present progressive tense that is “now”.

Example 4: How long “was he” at school?

The participant 14 in this example shows that did not take into account the context.

Similar errors were observed in the essays, all of the students mixed the verbal tenses, they preferred to use in the simple tenses because they found easier to manage.

Another reason for these lower scores probably would be because students did not analyze in a good way the answer or they could not develop grammar awareness, also they did not take into account the nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other grammatical categories that help to identify the correct time of the verb. In addition, each sentences had the word clues like “just”, “yet” and others also to identify the tense of the verb. In this test most of the students wrote the verb in simple present and past simple tense and in some cases they forgot the auxiliary verb.

The average of the total score was 29% that means that students, all of them failed in grammar test.

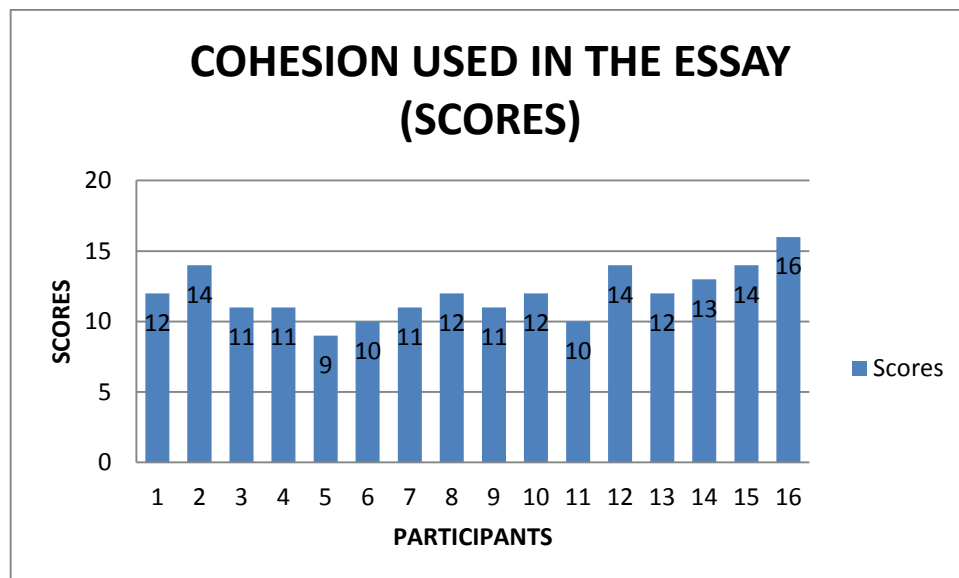
### 3.7.2.2 SECTION TWO: WRITING TEST

Writing test is the principal instrument, because through this technique we could see the students' background knowledge about writing argumentative essays and their deficiencies regarding this issue. To carry out this test we suggested two topics to students, in order they write argumentative essays; the first one was: should English be the official language in the United States? Why? And the second one was: are tests scores a good indication of a schools competency? Why do you think so?

Based on those two topics students had to choose only one, it was in order to measure the organization of paragraphs according of the indicators established in the variable operationalization that is at the first chapter of this paper. In addition, students had to write argumentative essays using the adequate content according their level, it help us to find their deficiencies in writing.

In order to describe better we divided the writing test into the following aspects: cohesion, content, vocabulary, grammar and syntax. The score of each aspect was 20 points.

**Graphic 2**



Graphic 2: this graphic shows the cohesion in the argumentative essay. Cohesion is property of language which binds the sentence together which make a text cohesive, and semantic propositions, which unify a text and make it coherent. Cohesive ties, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical ties including structure. So that, participants had to how to link sentences and how these sentences relate each other.

In this graphic 2, we show students' ability to arrange ideas and sentences in a logical order. The score of this cohesion test was over 20 points.

The lowest score was of 9 pts. (participant 5), the highest score was of 14pts (participant 2, 12 and 15) most of the score was 12 pts. (participants 1, 8, 10, 13, 16) and other scores were 10, 11 and 13 points (participants 6, 3, 4, 7, 9, 14). This graphic shows that participants found problems in the cohesion of an argumentative essay.

The following examples show the results of the analysis with the most common features of the cohesive devices that were *and* and *but*.

Example 1: But this conception is wrong. (participant 2).

Example 2: But in the moment of the tests they feel nervous. (participant 7).

Example 3: And knowledge that is why we cannot take good scores. (participant 16).

Example 4: And they are very important to follow students' progress (participant 6).

### **Others Common Connectors used in writing test**

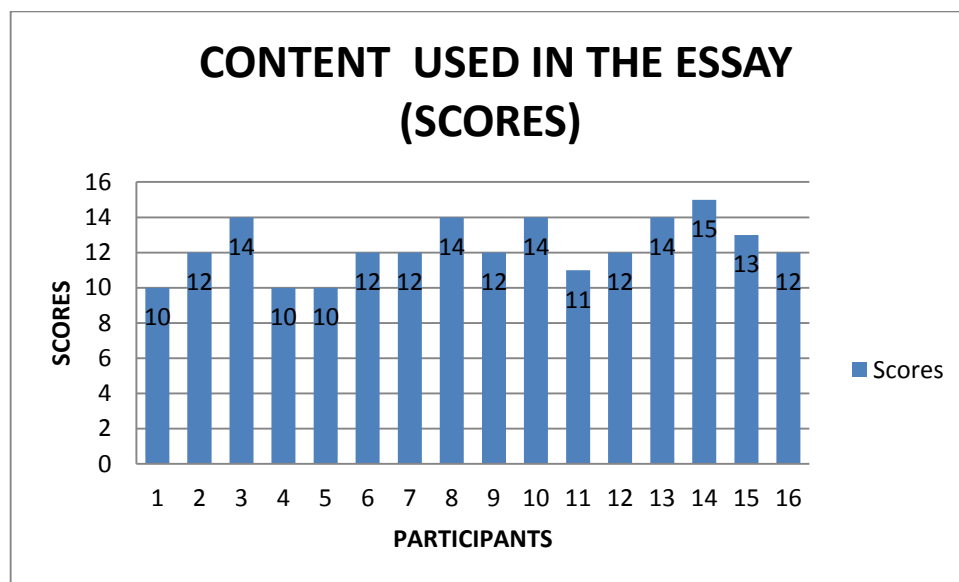
and, so, because, although, as a conclusion, in one hand, in other hand, for that, also, in addition, without, first of all, second, after that, in other cases, but, in conclusion.

This test showed that some of the participants did not use an appropriate connecting words and in most cases they did not use any markers to process relationships among ideas as expressed through phrases, clauses and sentences. According to (Brown, 2001) there are

almost one hundred of markers to process relationships; with which learners of intermediate proficiency levels ought to be thoroughly familiar. So as we can see in the examples above the participants only used seventeen connecting words.

Furthermore, in students' writing we found that cohesion anomalies were caused by poor linguistic competence, specifically poor syntactic and semantic awareness and poor knowledge of cohesion rules. Moreover, participants also recognized the lack of coherence between the first sentences of the scrambled order, which did not appear connected in any meaningful way. The average of the total score was 12% over 20%.

**Graphic 3**



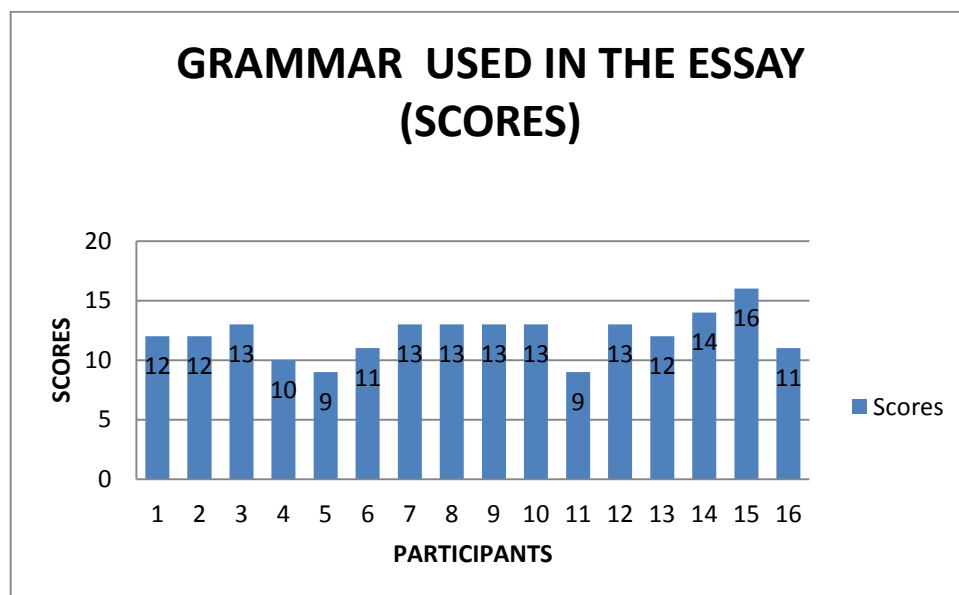
Graphic 3: as we know content is a very important aspect in order to develop writing. It refers to the form and the meaning of the language used, taking into account the organization the paragraph of ideas, appropriate vocabulary choice and adequate grammar use. And lack of content knowledge became one of the problems in writing.

In this part we took into account how participant organized their ideas and how to organize the paragraphs. The average of this test was 20 %.

This graphic shows that the lowest score was 10pts (participants 1, 4 and 5), the highest score was 15 pts. (participant 14), the others score was 11, 13 and 14 (participants 11, 15, 8, 19 and 15) and the most common was 12 pts. (Participants 2, 6, 7, 9, 12 and 16) consequently the average of this category was 12 %.

The test describes us the participants could not found ideas which could help them in writing their essay compositions. Otherwise, they did not write many paragraphs on one idea, as they express one meaning in different structural patterns. In addition, most of the students wrote very short argumentative essays because they did not connected phrases and sentences due to they did not know how to organize their ideas well. It is important to mention that this part was labeled for guest teachers.

**Graphic 4**



Graphic 4: grammar is one of the aspects involved in all types of language skills. So that, common deficiencies in the students writing is grammatical errors. With this test we want to see how the participants apply the grammatical rules in their composition.

This graphic 4 shows the grammar scores that participants have. The lowest score was 9pts. (Participants 5 and 11), the highest score was 15 pts. (Participant 15) and others scores were between 10, 11, 12 and 14 pts. (Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 14and 16) and the most common score was 13 pts. (Participants 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12). The average of this grammar test was 12% over 20%. With this average we can see that the participant passed the test but they had problems with some aspects that is showed in the following examples:

Example 1: I didn` t to learn.

In the first example the participant 7 added the preposition “to” that made the sentence incorrect.

Example 2: they forgot all the that he or she had learned.

This second example shows that the participant 8, wrote “the, that” together that was unnecessary, was sufficiently to write “that” it was the correct option.

Example 3: English is the second language spoked in the world.

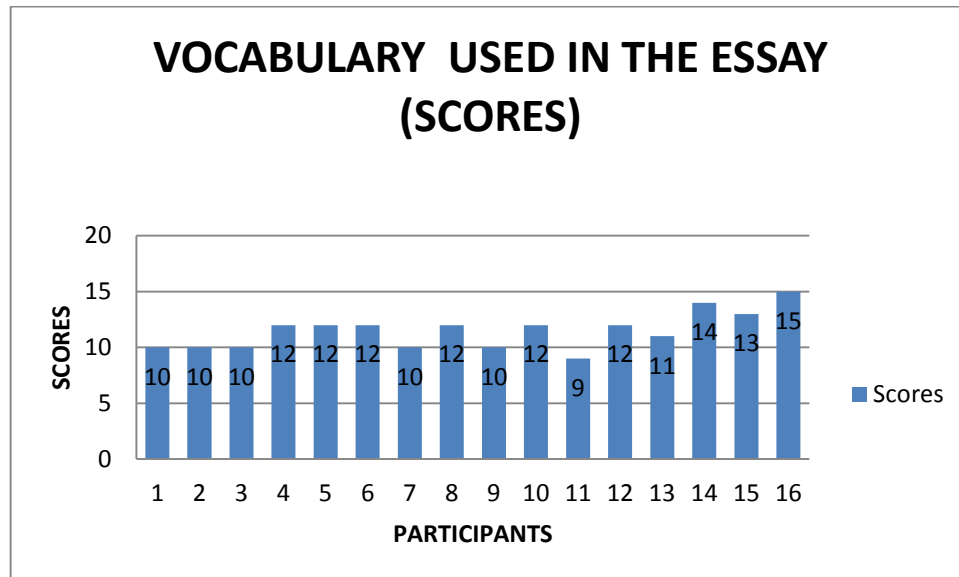
In this example, the participant 11 confused the irregular verb with regular verb in the verb “spoke” that is irregular verb and its past participle is “spoken”.

Example 4: Is the basis to built a healt society. (participant 15).

In this example we can observe that the participant 15 mixed the verbal tenses. The sentence is the present time but the verb in infinitive is in the past “built” the correct have to be “build”. In addition, the participant wrote “healt” instead of “health”.

Most students had problems with tenses, prepositions, comparatives and superlatives, and definite and indefinite articles; they could not use them correctly in their writing. To sum up, the grammatical knowledge is not only important but necessary for participants to improve their writing performance.

Graphic 5



Graphic 5: it is true that written English typically uses a great variety of lexical items than spoken conversational English. And the requirement of vocabulary in essay writing is too much. Because, writing allows the writer more processing time, because of a desire to be precise in writing, and simply due to of the formal conventions of writing, lower frequency words often appear.

In the test, participants had to choose the right vocabulary to express ideas and having ideas about the suggested topic and deciding how to start a paragraph of an argumentative essay.

This graphic presents that the lowest score was 9 pts. (Participant 11), the highest score was 15 pts. (Participant 15), the most common score was 10, 11, 13 and 14 pts. (Participants 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 14 and 16). The average for this vocabulary test was 11% over 20%.

Example 1: we don't need...

The participant 3, presents a vocabulary error in his/her essay, it is the use of the contracted form of the verb phrase "do not" "we don't need..." as we know, essays are in a formal



context, thus we do not have to use any contractions forms. This kind of errors were found in participants writing essays.

#### Example2: calificación

The second example was found in the participant 10 in the word “calificación” that was due to his/her lack of vocabulary background, the correct word had to be “score”. Errors like this were common errors in their essays.

#### Example 3: the students can look the opportunities

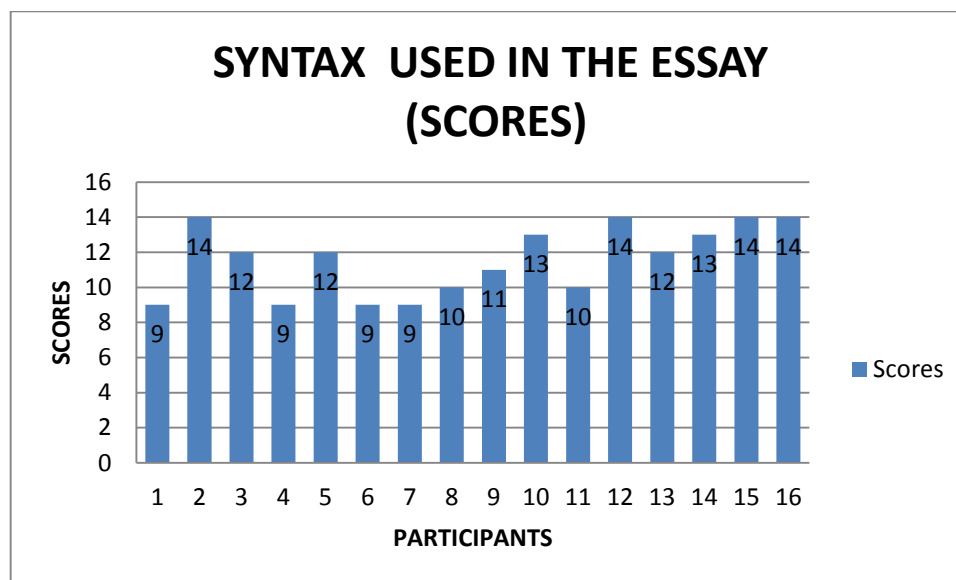
In this example, the participant 15 chose an inappropriate vocabulary in the verb “look” that the correct form was “look for”, most of the time participants committed the same errors, and these were due to their lack background.

#### Example 4: pace the test

The participant 8 presents inappropriate choose of verb he/she wrote “pace” when the correct verb is “pass” similar errors were frequently in most of the participants.

With this test, we found that most of the participants did not use the appropriate vocabulary to the context, due to their limited vocabulary.

Graphic 6



Graphic 6: in this graphic 6 we describe how students use syntax when writing argumentative essays. It is necessary to mention that syntax is a sub division of grammar that refers to the set of rules describing the different ways words are combined in phrases, sentences and clauses. So that, participants had to master most of the grammatical rules that applied to arranging words correctly into sentences. Also they had to revising their writing products. The total score of this test was 20 points.

In this graphic we can see that the lowest score was 9 pts. (participants 1, 4, 6, and 7), the highest score was 14 pts. (participants 2, 15, 15 and 16) and other scores were 10, 11, 12, and 13 (participants 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14). The total average of this graphic was 11% over 100%.

The relevant errors is showed in the following examples:

Example 1: Teachers give to students many tests.

In this example, the participant 3 used “to ” in an incorrect way, because the grammatical rule says when the direct object is first, we do not use “to” or “for”.

Example 2: My friend bought a car her father.

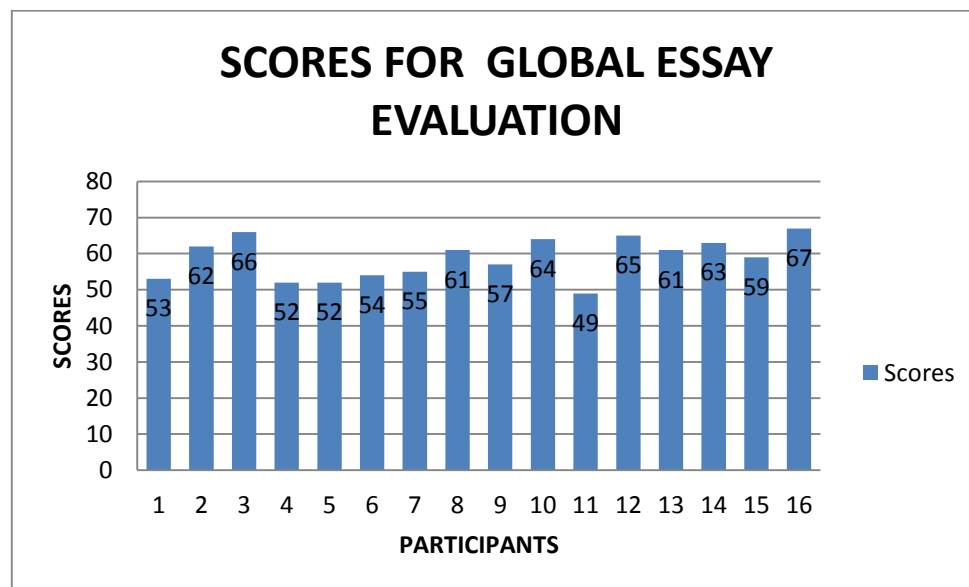
In this example, the participant 10 did not write any prepositions. The rule says when some verbs have two objects: a direct and indirect object, when the direct object is first, use “to” or “for” before the indirect object.

Example 3: the English gave to us many opportunities.

The examples shows that the participant 4 wrote an object pronoun “us” in an inadequate place. Because when the direct object is a pronoun (me, you, him, her, it, us, them), it normally come first.

We found that most of the participants did not follow the rules to organize sentences and paragraphs correctly and they did not take into account the clauses.

**Graphic 7**



Grammar is the set of structural rules governing the composition of clauses, phrases and words in any given natural language. Also it refers to the study of such rules and this field includes morphology, syntax and phonology, often complemented by phonetics, semantics and pragmatics.

The present graphic sum up to relevant average of the five graphics described before. We proposed to participants two topics they had to choose only one topic. Then, the participants were assigned to write argumentative essays of at least 55 words of each paragraph. The total score of the writing section was 100%.

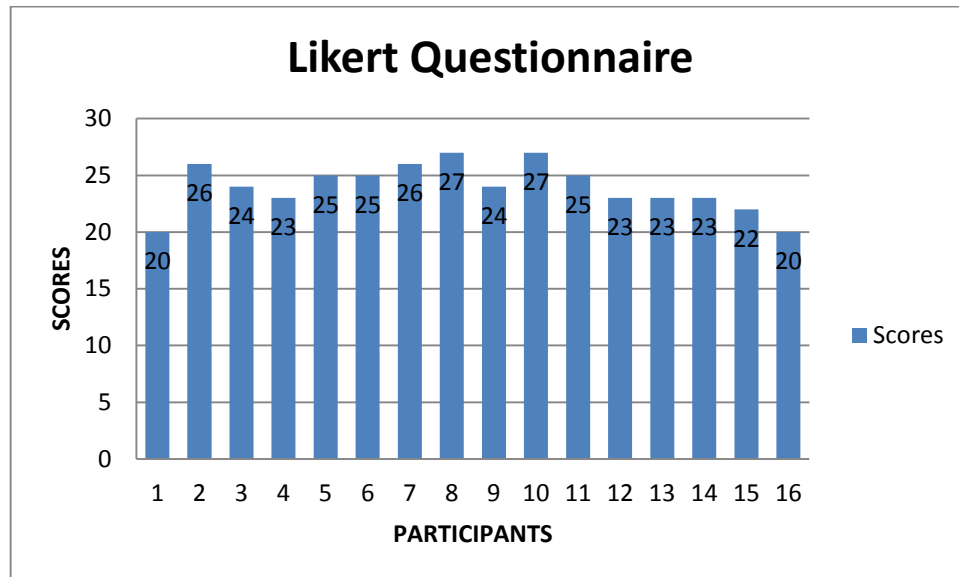
The final analysis of the participants' writing an argumentative essay revealed that 12% of the participants had problems with grammar. Moreover, 11% of them seemed to be bothered by their lack of vocabulary knowledge; 12% by their lack of content knowledge; 11% by problems with cohesion and 11% by lack of syntax. The average for cohesion, vocabulary and syntax were 11% and for grammar and content the average were 12%.

The total average for global essay was 58%, it means the students writing ability is still far from satisfactory. That is why to acquire writing skill demands laborious study of language use and much practice of reading and students do not practice such laborious study.

One of the reasons for the participants' problem with English writing was lack of conscious reading practice. The reason behind the absence of conscious reading practice was that they did not pay attention when they read. Likewise, participants have to read in a voluntary way, therefore they gain reading ability, linguistic competence, vocabulary, spelling and writing.

As a conclusion of the three sections, in the graphic 1 (global grammar test) the final average was 29% over 100%, it means that grammar is one of the aspect involved in all types of language skills ranging from listening to writing. In this test grammar it was perceived to be the principal problem obstructing the effective writing of the participants. However, in the graphic 7 (global essay evaluation) shows the average 58% over 100%. It means that the participants develop their writing and reading skill in an acceptable way, but is still far the satisfactory score.

Graphic 8



Graphic 8: the Likert questionnaires show how aware participants were, regarding their problems when they write argumentative essays. We used the Likert questionnaires in order to see if participants were aware about their deficiencies regarding the writing of argumentative essay. The maximum score for this instrument was 30 points. In this section, participants had to choose one option for each questions.

The lowest score was 20 pts. (participants 1 and 16), the highest score was 27 pts. (participants 8 and 10) and the other scores were between 23 to 26 pts. (participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15). The total averages were 23% over 100%. Therefore, participants were aware about their deficiencies in writing.

A good argumentative essay looks like when it is done and it has to following steps in the writing process.

Considering text organization, some problematic areas were detected: cohesion, unstructured paragraphs (for example inadequate form of in paragraph) and relevant of the content.

First, students' lack of cohesion recorded in their paragraphs revealed the inappropriate use of transitional expressions (for example coordinating and subordinating conjunctions) which allow the unity of the text.

Second, the majority of students seemed to be unaware of the logical order of ideas and the adequate form of the paragraph. In their compositions we noticed that these students did not organize their paragraphs into a topic sentence that comes at the beginning of the paragraph and introduces the overall idea of the topic, supporting sentences that support or explain the topic sentence. This reveals a misconception of the paragraph writing techniques.

At this level most of the participants did not show a logical development as far as the topic they were dealing with is concerned. Most of them failed in the use of appropriate and logical links to separate ideas and sentences. They also lack in variety in connectors and are confined to write long sentences with excessive repetition (for example redundancy of words, clauses and even sentences).

And finally, it is important to mention most of the participants wrote only one body paragraph also they did not use connecting words to relate paragraphs. Moreover, they used punctuations but they did not write capital letters when were necessary.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 CONCLUSIONS**

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. It involves encoding a written message through a sequence of sentences ordered together in certain ways, and it requires some conscious mental effort, including making notes, drafting, and revising. Moreover, it involves such process as discovering a voice with which to write, planning, goal setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written, language which expresses an exact meaning. Although, writing has been considered the most difficult skill from the four English learning skills.

On the other hand, the argumentative essay focuses on what is the right side of a particular issue. It involves multiple reasons and evidence to support the overall thesis and counter arguments are often discussed and refuted as well, why the argument is valid and explain the reasons. In short an argumentative essay must be logical from beginning to end.

The argumentative essay became the most common type of writing assignment that college students encounter throughout their academic careers.

Based on the definitions expressed above, the present study describes the writing deficiencies in EFL students. Thus, our main objective was: To identify the errors that are associated with paragraph organization students’ coherence and cohesion deficiencies in English argumentative essay writing.

This study identified the factors causing writing deficiencies in EFL students and identify the most common factors that are related on EFL students’ poor performance in writing argumentative essay.

Therefore, we carried out an explanatory and descriptive study in order to find out deficiencies in writing. So that, in order to identify students writing deficiencies we used a test to measure their errors and we divided it in two sections that helped us to describe those errors. In the first section we had a grammar test, with this test, this study identified that most of the participants wrote the verb tense in simple present and past simple tense and in some cases they forgot the auxiliary verb. In the second section it had a writing test, in this test; we can see that all of them had a lack of grammar, vocabulary, content, cohesion and syntax that were an obstruction to develop coherent and relevant ideas.

Summing up, regarding the objectives stated in this study we can say that all of them were accomplished.



## 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

After the conclusions of this study, and considering the data exposed above. In this last part we suggest some recommendations for writing a good argumentative essay that teachers should take into account when teaching students how to write an argumentative essay.

First of all, we have to take into account that a good argumentative writing depends on three specific qualities:

1. precision in argument and use of terms
2. grounding in evidence
3. clarity and concision in prose.

Therefore, be careful when teaching the following recommendations.

The Title:

- The best titles provide a brief and catchy summation of your essay's argument. Your title will depend on your final argument, it is usually best to write the title after you have drafted the essay.

The First Paragraph: The Introduction

- Start with an opening hook to catch your readers' interest. One strategy is to pose a puzzle or question that your essay will then resolve. Whatever you do, keep it brief, and make sure that your opening hook provides a bridge to your thesis statement. Also be sure to avoid general statements that make sweeping and unsupported claims.
- The thesis statement should be one or two sentences long, and it should at minimum present your thesis to readers. Ideally, you can also briefly explain your main reasons behind the thesis. The introduction should be just one paragraph total, about a half-page in length. Save specific evidence for the body.

The Body:

- Each paragraph in the body of the essay should start with a topic sentence. The topic sentence should announce the argument of the paragraph and make clear how the

paragraph's evidence will support the essay's overall argument. The rest of the paragraph should then present and explain evidence that will support the topic sentence.

#### The Last Paragraph: The Conclusion

- The conclusion to provide a simple summary of your main argument. Moreover is important avoid stylistic problems to avoid when writing an argumentative essay but these writing problems are not ungrammatical.

1. Avoid unattributed quotations

2. Avoid passive voice sentences, especially ones that obscure the real person or force doing the action.

Other stylistic or grammatical pitfalls that might distract your readers:

- Avoid casual language and slang.

- Avoid excessive use of the thesaurus. A thesaurus will often suggest words that do not fit your exact needs. If you do not really know the word, be careful. Better yet, consult a good dictionary or search reliable websites to read how other writers use the word. Then decide if it fits your needs.

- Do not end a paragraph with a sentence that introduces the topic of the next paragraph.

Recommendations for teachers and students:

- Writing can be taught by successful teachers who always pay great attention to students' learning process and writing method and strategy to find out their difficulties in learning. Giving students more chance to write and make his or her efforts to encourage students to write.
- As we saw, vocabulary as well as grammatical pattern structures, is a problem in the writing process to many students. To solve these problems, students must read more broadly. Reading can not only enrich students' vocabulary but also help students think and express ideas in correct English.
- To start to write an essay, as a first step, students should use simple sentences, because conciseness is one of the elements of good writing. The students have to know that the longer the sentence and the more complex the sentences, they must be used in their compositions.

It is recommendable, as well, to research deeper this field, because it is necessary to understand the problems that a n EFL student has when learning how to write this type of essay, in order to develop pedagogical procedures for deal with them, taking into account that this type of essay is asked by most of the international English tests.

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# **ANNEXES**

## Annexe 1

### Essay Students Evaluation

#### GRAMMAR TEST

| <b>PARTICIPANT</b> | <b>SCORE</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b>           | 25           |
| <b>2</b>           | 15           |
| <b>3</b>           | 10           |
| <b>4</b>           | 30           |
| <b>5</b>           | 40           |
| <b>6</b>           | 30           |
| <b>7</b>           | 20           |
| <b>8</b>           | 45           |
| <b>9</b>           | 40           |
| <b>10</b>          | 20           |
| <b>11</b>          | 10           |
| <b>12</b>          | 30           |
| <b>13</b>          | 50           |
| <b>14</b>          | 35           |
| <b>15</b>          | 25           |
| <b>16</b>          | 45           |

#### ESSAY EVALUATION

##### PARTICIPANT 1

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 10 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 12 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 10 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 9  | <b>53</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 2

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 14 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 12 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 10 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 14 | <b>62</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 3

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 20 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 11 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 10 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 12 | <b>66</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 4

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 10 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 11 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 10 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 9  | <b>52</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 5

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 10 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 9  |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 9  |                    |
| Vocavulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 12 | <b>52</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 6

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 10 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 11 |                    |
| Vocavulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 9  | <b>54</b>          |



PARTICIPANT 7

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 11 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 10 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 9  | <b>55</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 8

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 14 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 10 | <b>61</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 9

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 11 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 9  | <b>57</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 10

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 14 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 13 | <b>64</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 11

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 11 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 10 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 9  |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 9  | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 10 | <b>49</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 12

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 14 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 12 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 14 | <b>65</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 13

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 14 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 11 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 12 | <b>61</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 14

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 13 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 13 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 11 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 14 | <b>63</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 15

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 13 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 11 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 11 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 12 | <b>59</b>          |

PARTICIPANT 16

|                |    |                    |
|----------------|----|--------------------|
| Content /20    | 12 |                    |
| Cohesion /20   | 12 |                    |
| Grammar /20    | 11 |                    |
| Vocabulary /20 | 15 | <b>Final score</b> |
| Syntax /20     | 17 | <b>67</b>          |

**LIKERT QUESTIONNAIRE**

| <b>PARTICIPANT</b> | <b>SCORE</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b>           | 20           |
| <b>2</b>           | 26           |
| <b>3</b>           | 24           |
| <b>4</b>           | 23           |
| <b>5</b>           | 25           |
| <b>6</b>           | 26           |
| <b>7</b>           | 27           |
| <b>8</b>           | 24           |
| <b>9</b>           | 27           |
| <b>10</b>          | 25           |
| <b>11</b>          | 23           |
| <b>12</b>          | 23           |
| <b>13</b>          | 23           |
| <b>14</b>          | 22           |
| <b>15</b>          | 20           |

**Annexe 2**  
**GRAMMAR SECTION**  
**ASWER KEY**

1. When we reach Land's End we will have walked 1,500 km.
2. I just remembered that I have not paid the rent yet. I'm surprised that the landlord has not rung me up and reminded me.
3. It's a beautiful drive. I am sure you will enjoy the scenery.
4. The car doesn't start. If you get in Tom and I will give you a push.
5. I put the five-pound notes into one of the books; but the next day it took me ages to find it because I forgot which book I had put it in.
6. He has been playing the bagpipes since six this morning. He has just stopped.
7. My son has not started work yet. He's still at High School. – How long has he been at school? - He has been there for six years. Before that he spent five years at primary school.
8. Mary: I wonder what he is saving now. Ann: Well, his girlfriend comes from Japan too, so I suppose he is speaking Japanese.
9. When I first met him he was studying architecture.
10. While we were fishing someone broke into the house and left us this note.

11. It won't be easy to get out of the country .The police are watching all of the ports.
12. If I catch some fish, will you cook them for me?
13. He did not forget to come.
14. It has been raining for the last two hours so the game has been postponed
15. When I saw him he was painting a picture of his wife. – Do you like it?
16. The car had nobody I it but the engine was running.
17. Tom can't have the newspaper now because his aunt is reading it.
18. This shop is closing for good next Monday.
19. Where are you going tonight? – I am going out with Peter.
20. At 3 a.m. Jane woke up her husband and said that she thought that someone was trying to get into the house.

## **Annexe 3**

### **Likert Questionnaire**

1. To write an argumentative essay is difficult
  - a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree
  
2. The English grammar that I learned influences the way how I write an argumentative essay.
  - a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree
  
3. The most important problem that I have when I write an argumentative essay, I think, It is because Nobody explained to me how to write an argumentative essay.
  - a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree

4. Syntax is important when writing an essay
- a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree
5. Coherence is the way how ideas are organized in a text. When I write an essay I think that I have problems of coherence, because I have usually problems organizing my ideas in an essay.
- a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree
6. Cohesion is the way how ideas are represented by sentences, linking words, grammar, etc. I think that when I write an essay I have a problem with this issue.
- a) Strongly agree
  - b) Agree
  - c) Impartial
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Strongly disagree

## Annexe 4

### Grammar Section

**DIRECTIONS: Fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb.**

1. When we reach Land's End we \_\_\_\_\_ 1,500 km. (walk).
2. I just remembered that I \_\_\_\_\_ the rent yet. I'm surprised that the landlord \_\_\_\_\_ me up and reminded me. (not pay, not ring).
3. It's a beautiful drive. I am sure you \_\_\_\_\_ the scenery (enjoy).
4. The car \_\_\_\_\_. If you get in Tom and I \_\_\_\_\_ you a push. (not start, give).
5. I put the five-pound notes into one of the books; but the next day it \_\_\_\_\_ me ages to find it because I \_\_\_\_\_ which book I \_\_\_\_\_ it in. (take, forget, put)
6. He \_\_\_\_\_ the bagpipes since six this morning. He \_\_\_\_\_. (play, just stop)
7. My son \_\_\_\_\_ work yet. He's still at High School. – How long \_\_\_\_\_ at school? - He \_\_\_\_\_ there for six years. Before that he \_\_\_\_\_ five years at primary school. (not start, he be, be, spend)
8. Mary: I wonder what he \_\_\_\_\_ now. Ann: Well, his girlfriend from Japan too, so I suppose he \_\_\_\_\_ Japanese. (say, come, speak)
9. When I first met him he \_\_\_\_\_ architecture. (study)
10. While we \_\_\_\_\_ someone \_\_\_\_\_ into the house and \_\_\_\_\_ us this note. (fish, break, leave)
11. It won't be easy to get out of the country .The police \_\_\_\_\_ all of the ports. (watch)
12. If I catch some fish, \_\_\_\_\_ them for me? (you cook)



13. He \_\_\_\_\_ to come. (***not forget***)
14. It \_\_\_\_\_ for the last two hours so the game \_\_\_\_\_  
(***rain, be postponed***)
15. When I \_\_\_\_\_ him he \_\_\_\_\_ a picture  
of his wife. \_\_\_\_\_ it? (***see, paint, you like***)
16. The car had nobody in it but the engine \_\_\_\_\_. (***run***)
17. Tom can't have the newspaper now because his aunt \_\_\_\_\_ it.  
(***read***)
18. This shop \_\_\_\_\_ for good next Monday. (***close***)
19. Where \_\_\_\_\_ tonight? – I \_\_\_\_\_ out  
with Peter. (***you go, go***)
20. At 3 a.m. Jane \_\_\_\_\_ up her husband and said that she  
that someone \_\_\_\_\_ to get into the house. (***wake, think, try***)

## Annexe 5

### Writing Section

**DIRECTION 1: SELECT A TOPIC FROM THE TWO ONES THAT YOU HAVE BELOW AND WRITE AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY:**

**<sup>1</sup>TOPIC 1:**

Are tests scores a good indication of a schools competency? Why do you think so?

**<sup>2</sup>TOPIC 2:**

Should English be the official language in the United States? Why?

**DIRECTION 2: Write a TITLE, INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH, TWO DEVELOPMENT PARAGRAPHS AT LEAST and a CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH. Be sure that each paragraph contains at least 55 words.**

---

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup>These topics had been chosen, because, the purpose of this study is to determine the deficiencies in writing of argumentative essays, therefore the argumentation is the dimension where deficiencies occur, in addition, in order students start augmenting it is necessary that the questions that they had to choose should cause controversy in order to students argument their stand view about the topics suggested.