

**THE USE OF LEXICAL REPETITION AND PATTERNING IN WRITTEN  
COMPOSITIONS OF JORDANIAN STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT MU'TAH UNIVERSITY: A CASE  
STUDY**

**EISSA HAMID AL KHOTABA**

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

**February 2010**

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**By**

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## **Dedication**

To My Mother, My Wife and Children

Ayman, My Mother, Jood, Omar and My Wife (in alphabetical order)

My Mother, My Wife, Omar, Ayman and Jood (by age)

(Since I Could Never Put One Before the Other)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Arguable Case(according to criteria)	*
Arguable Case (discourse external)	†
Co-reference	CO-REF
Complex Lexical Repetition	CR
Deixis	D
Demonstrative Pronouns	DM
Ellipsis	E
English as a Foreign Language	EFL
English as a Second Language	ESL
Hyponymy	HY
Other Substitution Links	OS
Personal Pronouns	PS
Simple Lexical Repetition	SR
Simple Mutual Paraphrase	SMP
Simple Partial Paraphrase	SPP
Superordinate	SUP
Substitutions	S

**PENGGUNAAN ULANGAN DAN POLA LEKSIKAL DALAM KOMPOSISI PENULISAN,  
DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR JORDAN YANG MENGIKUTI PENGKHUSUSAN  
DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS DAN KESUSASTERAAN DI UNIVERSITI MU'TAH:  
SATU KES KAJIAN**

**ABSTRAK**

Dalam konteks EFL (Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing), penulisan adalah suatu kemahiran yang pelajar EFL sepatutnya peroleh, yang dapat membantu dalam kerjaya mereka pada masa depan (Mirhosseini, 2009). Ramai penyelidik seperti Hoey (1991), Wong (2004), Klebanov dan Shamir (2006), Morris (2007) dan Kai (2008) mendapati bahawa penulisan karangan pelajar EFL dan ESL (Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua) sukar difahami kerana struktur dan susunannya yang tidak koherens. Para penyelidik ini, terutamanya Hoey (1991), menghujahkan bahawa ulangan dan pola eksikal dalam teks yang ditulis adalah perlu untuk menghasilkan karangan yang koherens dan tersusun. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat rungutan di Jordan bahawa pelajar yang berjaya mengikuti kursus EFL, tidak kompeten dan tidak boleh menghasilkan komposisi bahasa Inggeris yang koherens.

Akibatnya, pelajar Jordan menghadapi kesukaran mendapat pekerjaan atau dalam kerjaya mereka yang sedia ada. Di Jordan, terdapat andaian bahawa universiti mampu menghasilkan para graduan yang mahir bertutur dan menulis, dalam usaha mengurangkan pengangguran. Sehubungan dengan permasalahan ini, kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik penggunaan ulangan dan pola leksikal dalam karangan yang ditulis oleh 60 orang pelajar yang mengikuti kursus Bahasa Inggeris dan Kesusasteraan di Universiti Mu'tah. Rangka kerja berkonsep yang digunakan termasuklah kajian teori dan

empirik bagi penggunaan kohesi leksikal dalam pendidikan tinggi dan juga pendekatan yang digunakan dalam pengajaran penulisan kepada pelajar EFL. Sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada 60 orang pelajar EFL yang mengikuti program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Sastera (Bahasa Inggeris dan Kesusasteraan), di Jabatan Bahasa Inggeris dan Kesusasteraan, Universiti Mu'tah, Jordan.

Kajian ini menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data kualitatif dan kuantitatif seperti penulisan karangan dan temu bual separa – struktur. Data kualitatif dan kuantitatif daripada karangan dianalisis menggunakan matriks ulangan Hoey's (1991). Data kualitatif daripada temu bual separa-struktur pula dianalisis berdasarkan tema yang diutarakan.

Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar hanya menggunakan dua jenis ulangan leksikal, iaitu ulangan leksikal mudah dan kompleks. Yang kerap digunakan adalah jenis ulangan leksikal mudah (SR). Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat keberlakuan jenis ulangan leksikal yang lain, seperti parafrasa mudah (SP), hiponim (HY), *co-reference* (CO-REF) dan superordinat (SUP) dalam 60 komposisi bertulis.

Di samping itu, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar Jordan yang mengikuti program Bahasa Inggeris dan Kesusasteraan di Mu'tah, menggunakan empat jenis pola leksikal (*Central, Marginal, Topic-opening* dan *Topic-closing*) yang terhasil daripada penggunaan ulangan dan ikatan leksikal yang berbeza, yang secara tidak langsung menyumbang terhadap keseluruhan kohesi teks yang ditulis. Penyelidikan ini mencadangkan agar model ulangan dan pola leksikal Hoey's (1991) digunakan secara meluas di Jordan, sebagai suatu kaedah alternatif dalam pengajaran penulisan kepada

pelajar EFL Di samping itu, dicadangkan juga bahawa guru EFL di Jordan diberi kesedaran tentang bagaimana ulangan dan pola leksikal boleh menghubungkan serta mengikat ayat dan klausa dalam teks yang ditulis.

# **THE USE OF LEXICAL REPETITION AND PATTERNING IN WRITTEN COMPOSITIONS OF JORDANIAN STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT MU'TAH UNIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY**

## **ABSTRACT**

In an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, writing is a skill that EFL learners must acquire as that would certainly help them in their future career (Mirhosseini, 2009). Many researchers such as Hoey (1991), Wong (2004), Klebanov and Shamir (2006), Morris (2007) and Kai (2008) found out that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) learners' written essays are difficult to understand as they lack coherent structure and organisation. These researchers, in particular Hoey (1991), argue that lexical repetition and patterning in written texts are necessary to produce coherent and well-organised written essays. However, claims in Jordan are rife that students who have successfully completed EFL courses are incompetent and are unable to produce coherent English compositions.

As a result, Jordanian students face difficulty in securing jobs or advancing in their existing careers. There is much expectation in Jordan that universities are able to produce graduates who are proficient in both speaking and writing skills to increase employability. In light of this problem, the study aimed to investigate the use of lexical repetition and patterning in 60 written texts written by English Language and Literature students at Mu'tah University. The conceptual framework that underpins the study includes theoretical and empirical studies on students' use of lexical cohesion in higher education and approaches to teaching writing to EFL learners. The sample of the study

comprised 60 EFL students in the Bachelor of Arts, English Language and Literature degree at the department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques such as a written task and semi-structured interviews. The qualitative and quantitative data from the written essays were analysed using Hoey's (1991) repetition matrix. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed by looking at emergent themes.

The findings indicated that the students only used two types of lexical repetition. These types included simple and complex lexical repetitions. The most frequently used type of lexical repetitions was simple lexical repetition (SR). Also, the findings show that there was no occurrence of the other types of lexical repetitions such as simple paraphrase (SP), hyponymy (HY), co-reference (CO-REF) and superordinate (SUP) in the 60 written compositions.

In addition, the findings revealed that Jordanian English Language and Literature students at Mu'tah University used four different types of lexical patterns (Central, Marginal, Topic-opening and Topic-closing) which resulted from their use of the different kinds of lexical repetition and bondage. Together these contribute to the overall cohesion of the written text. This research recommends that Hoey's (1991) model of lexical repetition and patterning be used widely in Jordan as an alternative method of teaching writing to EFL learners. In addition, it recommends that EFL teachers in Jordan are provided with the awareness of how lexical repetition and patterning are able to lexically connect and bond sentences and clauses together across written texts.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

English teaching methodology especially for writing skills in second language (ESL) settings, has undergone various stages of development in the last few decades (Mirhosseini, 2009). In the process of its development, certain models of writing were assumed to be the most successful at the various stages of development (Yang, 2007). One previous model emphasises the mastery of the mechanics of grammar to create errorless written compositions without much consideration to the manner a text is written. This has resulted in the judgment and evaluation of such written texts in terms of the number of errors and not in terms of the significance of the text or on the element of logic (Matsuda et al., 2006).

Morris (2007) admits that text books do not provide students whether in ESL or EFL context with adequate introduction to the depth and diversity of coherence features which are essential in the production of a good piece of writing. Thus, many EFL textbooks present sentences according to the grammar item which just teaches students to provide supporting examples and details without investigating the multitude of coherence features (Buckingham, 1979; Lee, 2002a).

Hoey (1991) criticises the focus on the grammaticality and mastery of sentence structure. He argues that such focus results in the neglect of discursive aspects, to little or no transfer to use in actual written composition with the effect that it might develop into an inhibiting rather than enhancing factor in a written product.

French (2005) also criticises the emphasis of conventional methods on the correct word usage, grammar, spelling and punctuation. He argues that these methods do not

provide much awareness to extra-textual features which contribute to the process of constructing coherence in a written text. In addition, the principal goal of these traditional methods was to endorse knowledge of the language system and to develop students' competence by means of controlled performance (McCrimmon, 1957; Johns, 1990). This was so because they believed that when learners are taught how to relate to the formal elements of the language system, their competence would develop automatically (Hyland, 2003; Newman, 2007). For this reason, sentences were treated as self-contained units and many believed that mastery of proper sentence structures will lead to an improvement in competence and performance. Such a practice was more like teaching to write sentences in a vacuum, since they do not specifically target a definite audience or a particular situation (Johnson, 2006; Van Dijk, 2007).

Klebanov and Shamir (2006) argue that there was an assumption that foreign language learners can advance from the sentence-level to appropriate essay writing without sufficient preparation, basically because learners can produce an effective written essay in their native language. In fact, this is still one of the beliefs that many English language teachers and learners in Jordan adhere to.

This researcher opines that teachers and learners of writing should not regard writing skills from a sentence level point view, but rather at the discourse level. This is similar to the opinion of Shakir (1991) who proposes that the teaching of writing should move further than the sentence level and the focus on the mastery of grammar. He emphasises on the importance and the need to provide an awareness of what makes a text coherent and consequently acceptable. This, he adds, is a responsibility which must be laid on the shoulders of the teachers of the native or English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers.

In relation to this, language teachers should train and teach their students to produce high quality written compositions and coherent texts in their native language first. The mastery of such a skill is likely to be transferred to their second or foreign language compositions (Li, 2009), with an awareness that each language has its own styles and means of producing and generating a good written text. In other words, both teachers and learners of English language should not consider a written text as merely a string of sentences put together (Mourtaga, 2004; McCarthy, Guo, & Cummins, 2005).

However, Cook (1989) noted that writing coherently in another language is not an easy task. It is, thus, important that an explicit definition of cohesion at both the semantic and syntactical levels should be provided to the students (Morris & Hirst, 1991). This researcher believes that this will enhance student's understanding of cohesion and coherence and could lead to improvement in their written essays.

Consequently, because of all the drawbacks in language teaching methods of the past, especially concerning the writing skill, much research has been conducted to investigate and demonstrate how the writing skill can be improved in terms of a text's cohesion and coherence (Halliday, 1978; Johnson and Holland, 2001).

Similarly, the goal of the present research is to contribute to this development. In addition, this research is needed in the Jordanian learning situation where students face problems in producing coherent and cohesive written texts. Cohesion in EFL students' written work, regarded as the most difficult issue that EFL students in Jordan face when attempting to produce a piece of writing, is often overlooked in EFL writing classes. Traditional teaching writing techniques in EFL classes have far too many disadvantages. In fact, cohesion in an EFL context provides a critical instructional opportunity for student writers and offers an appropriate avenue to produce coherent and unified written

text that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of class through using conventional methods of teaching writing (Al Ali, 2006).

In a Jordanian EFL writing context, there is usually no variation and the use of new approaches in teaching writing to EFL students. Teachers more often look at a written piece as a final product checking and reviewing their students' writings word by word and correcting every single error they observe in their writing. This really is considered as time –consuming and labor intensive. Interestingly, however, their efforts are not appreciated or valued, for students still replicate their previous mistakes and errors (Khuwaileh,2006).

Thus, teaching of English as foreign language has gone through many changes and developments during the last few years in terms of content, pedagogy, assessments, and achieved learning outcomes (Lee, 2002a). Similarly, EFL in Jordan is considered as an educational and instrumental language. It plays an important role in promoting connections, relations, understanding and cooperation between Jordan and the outside world. It is very important for the development of the economy, educational sectors and growth of the country. As a result, it is very essential to focus on the Jordanian context in teaching EFL in order to determine where the weak areas in the growth of language skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing) are and how can they be rectified.

English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching in Jordan is an essential issue and important for doing business in Jordan as it should be investigated on such a large scale in Jordan. In this regard, the focus of this research is on the cohesion of the written products of university students at higher education level of a group of students at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan. In addition, this research is essential to foster the development of students' logical thought

and independent writing ability, to foster good learning and teaching of writing habits and effective teaching writing methods in an EFL context, to develop the cultural and social knowledge and, last but not least to lay a solid base for further future research.

This research which adopts the discourse analysis perspective is concerned with lexical repetition and patterning at the discourse level unlike other studies which are more concerned with errors and cohesion at sentence level. Discourse analysis is unlike other approaches as it deals with sentences as a unit connected with a particular function within the entire linguistic context and not as a separate unit (Morris, & Hirst, 2004; Ferenz, 2005; Paltridge, 2006). It helps language teachers to understand the processes involved in learning English as a foreign language by providing them with the appropriate teaching techniques. Discourse analysis also considers the EFL students' writing difficulties and problems by proposing that the process of producing a written text is more than joining sentences to each other (Leki, 1995b). According to Beaugrande (1980) discourse analysis is the most appropriate approach in dealing with writing problems because it deals directly with functions that are responsible for producing coherent writing.

Moreover, the process of writing or composing a text includes learning the patterns of cultural thought that are often investigated by discourse analysts. This means that, discourse analysis is the most appropriate approach to investigate written work since it is functional in nature in dealing and treating with functions related to producing unified and coherent written texts (Samraj, 2002; Li, 2006).

## **1.1 History of Education in Jordan**

Jordan is an Arab Middle Eastern country with an area of approximately 97940 km. The population of Jordan is 6 million. It is one of the countries that came into being after World War I. Jordan was referred to as “Trans Jordan” during the British mandate in 1917 and 1949. Prior to that, Jordan was part of the Islamic country between AD 636 and 1917. Jordan was located at the centre of the Arab World, and was under the Umayyad, Ottoman, and Abbasid Empires’ succession (Younis, 2002). Jordan is a land-blocked state in the centre of the Middle East, except for the 25 km stretch of beach of Aqaba on the Red Sea to the south. It is situated on a basically elevated, rocky flat terrain that inclines downward to the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and the Gulf of Aqaba (The Ministry of Planning, 2008).

Jordan is still politically a young state despite the long cultural history it possesses. It has a variety of population that represents unique forms of culture and inheritance of a long history. It has one of the highest educated populations in the Arab World in general and Middle East in particular. Most of the population in Jordan practise a variety of professions ranging from agriculture, trade, mining, and handicrafts. Jordan is becoming more industrialized and urbanised under the global development and economic growth worldwide (The National Centre for Human Resources Development, 2005).

The population density in Jordan is found mainly in three main cities: Amman, the political and cultural capital, Zarqa to the east, which is the industrial city in Jordan, and Irbid to the north by the Jordan Valley. Figure 1.1 (refer to page,7) shows the map of Jordan and some of the major cities in Jordan as well as its neighbouring countries.



**Figure 1.1:** Map of Jordan

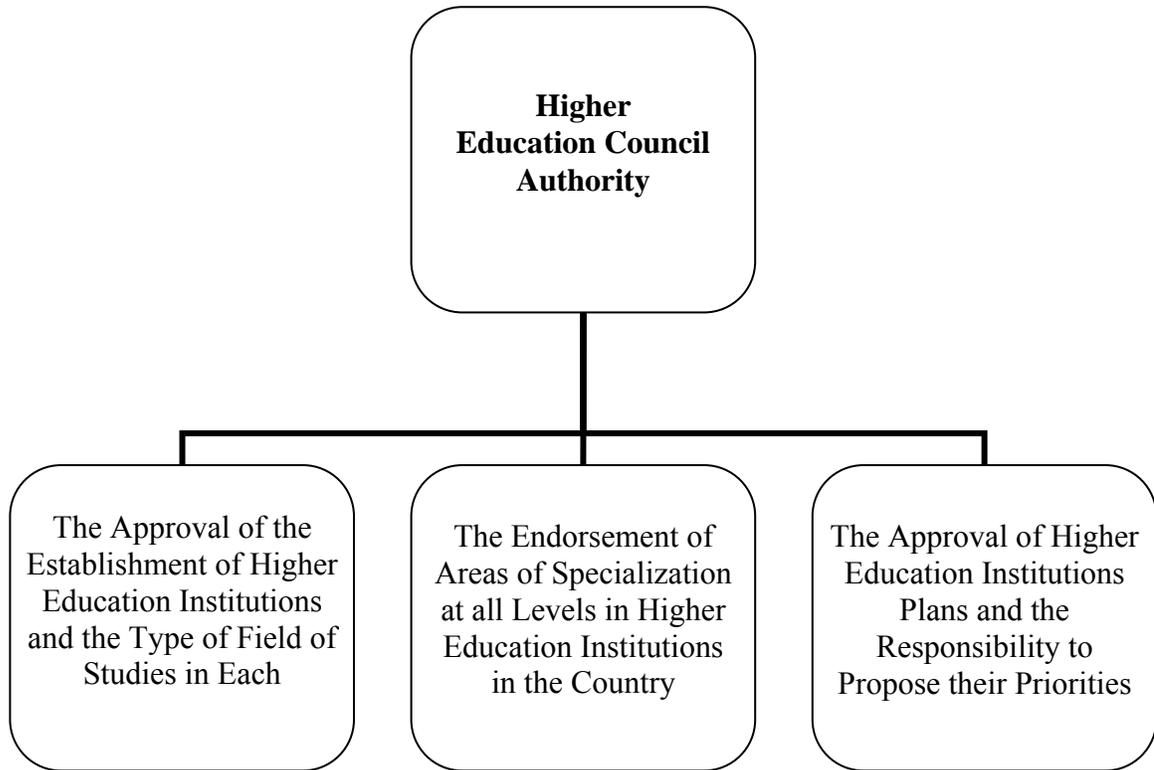
There is a considerable increase in the number of educational establishments and institutions such as schools, universities, and colleges. Despite being a young state located in the heart of the Arab World, Jordan has witnessed extensive growth in the field of education at all levels. The number of students' enrolment and educational establishments has grown tremendously over the years (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2008).

As a result, the demands for professional and qualified teachers are constant. In order to meet the high demands of education, many private and public colleges, universities, and schools have been established. They have been established to meet the ever growing number of high school students locally called Tawjihi graduates (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2004). This growing number of graduates and the

increasing interest in education in the state has precipitated the need for a proper mechanism to control the quality of higher education in Jordan.

As a result of these developments and the increasing demand for education, the Higher Education Council (HEC hereafter) was established to take charge of the planning of higher education, control its quality, draw up its educational policies, and carry them out. The Higher Education Council was established on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1982 (HEC By-Law No.3, 1982). A need to set up a new large-scale body to assist the Council execute its duties and responsibilities as well as provide assistance to carry out the government plans and its educational and scientific policies in higher education establishments and academic institutions was also identified (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2006).

The Ministry of Higher Education (MHE hereafter) was set up on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1985 (MHE By-Law No.3, 1980). The Higher Education Council and Ministry of Higher Education have the authority to execute the government's educational, scientific, and cultural policies administrating the higher education institutions and establishments in Jordan. Figure 1.2 (see page, 9) shows the Ministry of Higher Education's responsibilities, duties, and functions as determined in the governmental Article No.3 of the Higher Education By-Law No.28, of 1985 (The Higher Education Council ,2008).



**Figure 1.2:** The Responsibilities, Duties, and Functions of the Higher Education Council Authority (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2008)

Based on Figure 1.2 above, the responsibilities and function of the higher education council authority can be discussed in terms of issuing approval for establishing new academic institutions and the type of the field of studies in each one of them as well as endorsing the area of specialisation at all levels of higher education. Also, providing approval for higher education plans and responsibilities to propose their priorities is one of the higher education council authority's duties. Owing to the educational plans of the Ministry of Higher Education, the number of academic institutions and universities in Jordan has doubled now, and Jordan has become a hub for knowledge acquisition and education.

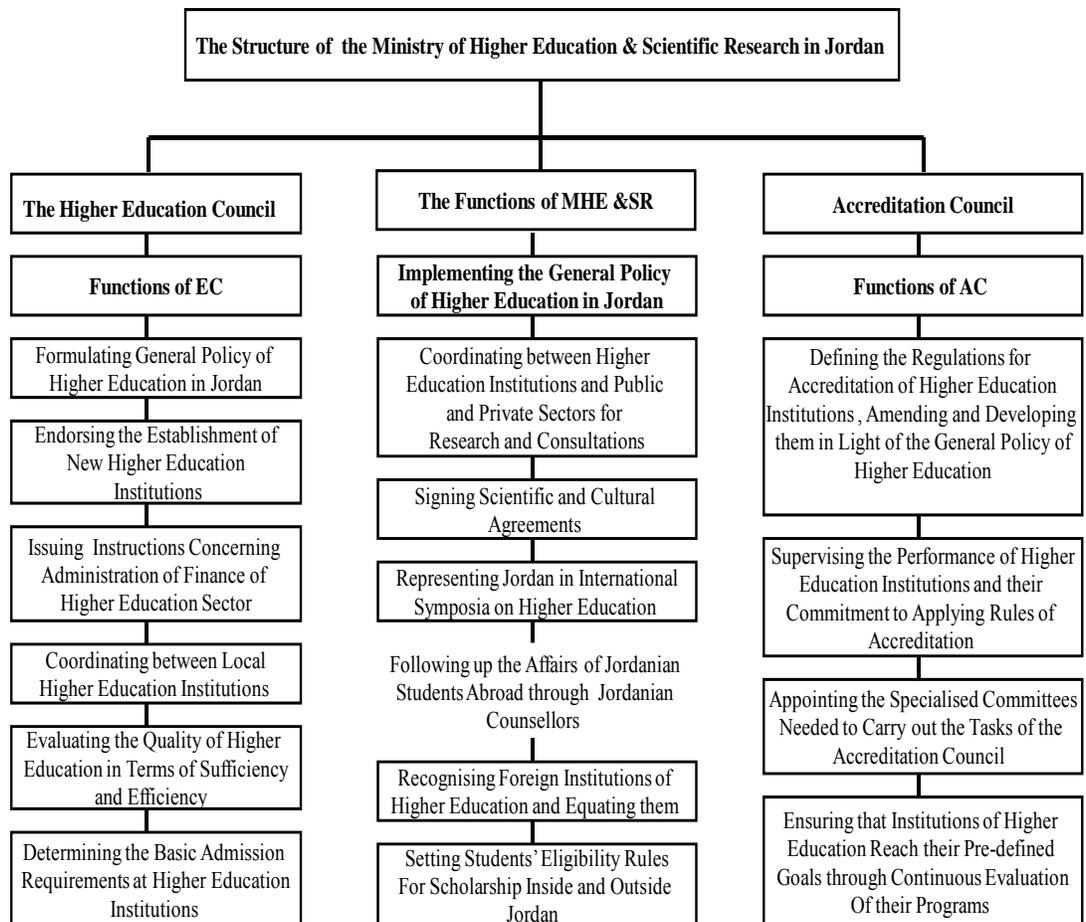
### **1.1.1 The Current Higher Education System in Jordan**

Higher education in Jordan started in the second half of the twentieth century, namely in the 1960s, when various Teachers' Colleges were founded throughout the state. Their foundation provided the state with the necessary education and qualified manpower needed to fit the global technological developments and the contemporary changes and high demand on education of all levels (Zughoul, 2001).

The University of Jordan was the first established public university in Jordan in 1962, and then followed by Yarmouk University in 1976, and six more universities were founded in different regions in the state. In 1989, the Council of Higher Education approved the establishment of Amman University in 1999 as the first private university in Jordan. Twelve more private universities were established since that date in different parts in Jordan (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2008).

Also, education in Jordan is provided at non-university education level such as community colleges that were established to provide specialized, career-oriented training programmes and courses to train their graduates and prepare them for work in middle level professions and working places. All community colleges are administered by and affiliated to Al Balqa Public University in Jordan. The Ministry of Higher Education was invalidated in 1998, but was re-founded in August 2001 according to a Royal Decree declaration by His Majesty King Abdullah Second, and renamed as the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Law No.40 was approved as a new Law on Higher Education in Jordan for the year 2001 that annulled the earlier law (Zughoul, 2001). By the issuance of this law, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was founded, which administered all higher education related issues.

Figure 1.3 below shows the structure of the Ministry of Higher Education’s Council Boards.



**Figure 1.3:** The Structure of the Ministry of Higher Education’s Council Boards (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2008).

Based on Figure 1.3 above, the structure of the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan can be discussed under the Higher Education Council, the Functions of Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Accreditation Council. These boards have different functions, responsibilities, and duties as shown in Figure 1.3 above. With the continuous efforts and instructions of His Majesty King Abdullah

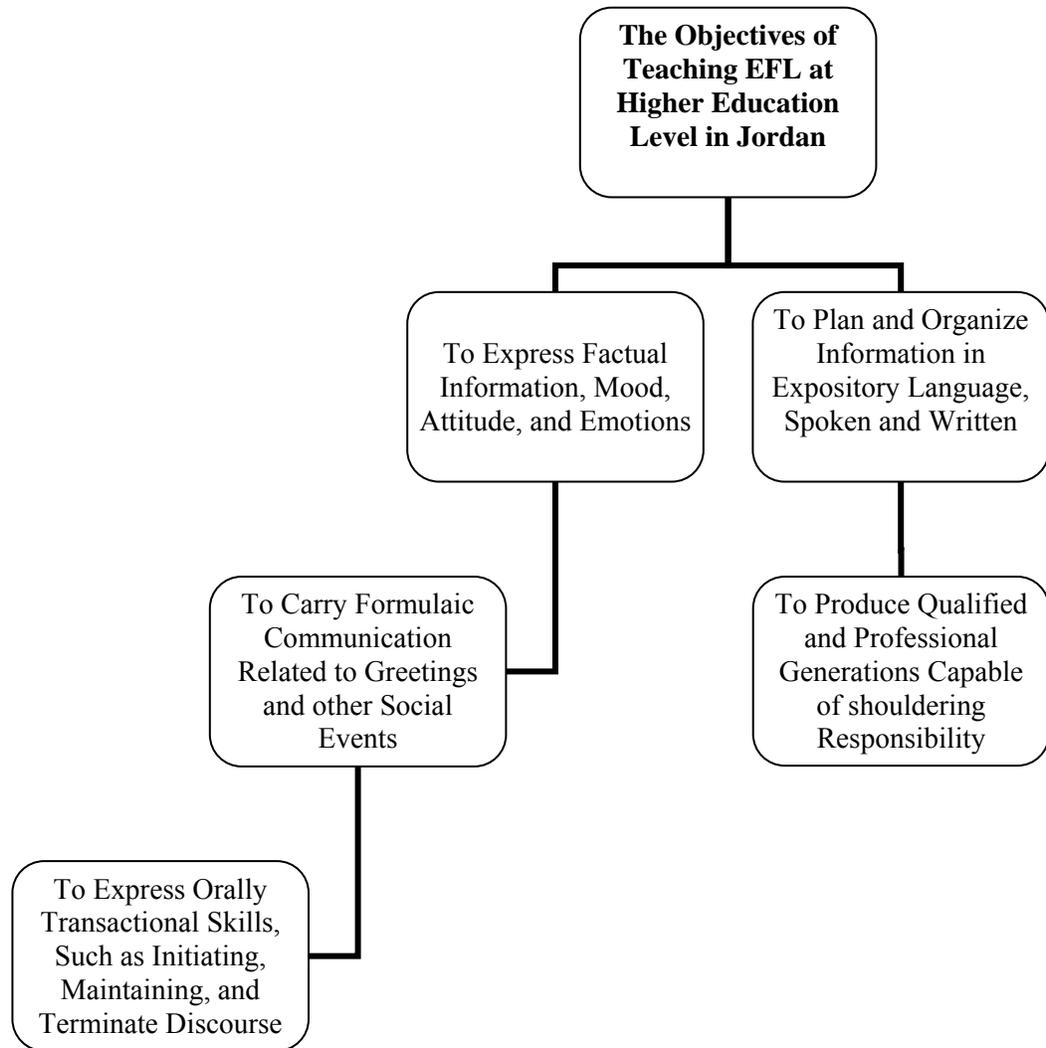
Second to reform and develop higher education in Jordan and enhance the functions, responsibilities, and duties of the Ministry of Higher Education Boards, the number of public and private universities reached more than twenty one universities in addition to many other community colleges and non-university education level institutions in Jordan (Zughoul, 2002).

### **1.1.2 The Status of English as a Foreign Language in Jordan**

English is taught in Jordan as a foreign language in post secondary and higher education sectors including schools, colleges, and universities (Younis, 2002). Students face various difficulties in acquiring English as a foreign language. These linguistic difficulties may be ascribed to several factors and causes including teaching materials, methods, curriculum, tests and examinations, social and economical background, English language departments teaching system, and cultural interferences (Zughoul and Abdul Fattah, 2003).

The Ministry of Education shoulders the responsibility of formulating the objectives of teaching English at lower education levels whereas the Ministry of Higher Education is concerned with the teaching of English at higher education levels (Fageeh, 2003). The English language curricula prepared by the two ministries aim at acquainting the students with the four basic skills of language which comprise writing, listening, speaking, and reading (Abu Hattab ,1992). Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) state that by the end of their university education, students are expected to utilize the sound system precisely, read and understand recorded material articulated by native speakers and produce cohesive writing . A number of objectives of teaching English at the university stage have been identified by the Ministry of Higher Education ( The Higher Education

Council ,2008). Figure 1.4 below shows the objectives of teaching EFL at higher education level in Jordan.



**Figure 1.4:** The Objectives of teaching EFL at Higher Education Level in Jordan (The Higher Education Council, 2008).

According to Figure 1.4 above, there are five main objectives of teaching English in Jordan. By teaching EFL at the higher education level in Jordan, EFL students are expected to express factual information, mood, attitude, emotions, and to plan and organise information in expository language, spoken and written. Also, by the end of

their EFL course, students should be able to express greetings and communicate other social events, and have the capability of shouldering responsibility of teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, EFL students in Jordan should be able to express orally transactional skills such as initiating, maintaining, and terminating discourse (The Higher Education Council, 2008).

The mastery of EFL whether at the written or spoken level is a central aim of teaching English at the Jordanian universities, colleges, schools, and institutes because English is the medium of instruction in these institutions (The Ministry of Education, 2004). In these institutions, mastery of English is needed for taking notes, describing objects or devices and writing essays, answering written questions, and writing experimental reports (The Ministry of Education, 2005). For these reasons, writing has always been an essential aspect of the curriculum of English whether as EFL (English as a foreign language) or EAP (English for Academic Purposes). The government of Jordan provides all the assistance in the teaching of EFL, so that the country can cope with the contemporary changes and development since English is the language of business, trade, communication, and economic and social developments (The Higher Education Council, 2008).

## **1.2 Profile of Mu'tah University in Jordan**

Mu'tah University was founded in 1981 by a Royal Declaration as a military establishment of higher education. Later, in 1986, a civilian wing was established in the university to accommodate other specialisations and majors in the civil field. The philosophy behind the foundation of Mu'tah University comes from an ambition of the Late His Majesty King Hussein to complete Jordan's responsibility as being an inheritor

of “The Great Arab Revolt”, the greatest Arab Revolution in the modern history (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2007). Stemming from this philosophy and to assist the country to constantly encounter global future challenges and changes, Mu'tah University with its Military / Civilian qualities is constantly attempting to provide the Jordanian community with capable and skilful graduates equipped with contemporary scientific and cultural background and future vision combined with high leadership qualities. The University was given the name “*Mu'tah*” after a battle that marked the first military conflict outside the Arab Peninsula between Muslims and Byzantine military forces in 629 AD and it was in fact established on the same site where that battle broke out (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2006).

Until 1985, a Special Royal Trustee Commission performed both as the University Board of Trustees and the University Council Board. In 1985, the Council Board of Higher Education took over the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the University Council until the University established its own Council Board in 1997. The site of Mu'tah University in the southern part of Jordan, the less developed part of the state, is designed to function as a basis of knowledge, modernisation, enlightenment, and development and growth of this region (The Ministry of Planning, 2002).

This region has been identified as a target area for some significant and economically productive investment projects. These involve phosphate, fertilizers, electricity generation, potash, cement, and attraction site for religious and leisure tourism. The administration and operation of these investment projects and industrial developments require extremely trained, qualified, skilful, and talented human resources to cope with

the technological advancement and developments, which is to be supplied by Mu'tah University (Zughoul, 2002).

### **1.2.1 Programmes Offered at Mu'tah University in Jordan**

The university at the present time experiences fundamental growth in all academic and educational fields so as to improve its role in serving the local society and the state as a whole in addition to providing quality education for students and graduates. Currently, Mu'tah University consists of eleven faculties and schools. Table 1.1 shows the different Faculties, Schools, Units, and Centres at Mu'tah University in Jordan. All the faculties, schools, units, and centres are equipped with the most contemporary laboratories and computer networking to serve learning, and teaching, and scientific research (The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2008). The Civilian Wing includes 12 Colleges which provides 34 different kinds of degree programmes, 25 Master programmes and two PhD programmes. The Military Wing encompasses five colleges. The College of Military Sciences ,the College of Police Science , Her Highness Princess Muna College for Nursing and the Allied Health Professions , the Royal Leadership and Staff College and the Royal National Defence College (The Higher Education Council, 2008). Table 1.1 (Refer to page, 17) displays the different faculties, schools, units, and centres at Mu'tah University in Jordan.

**Table 1.1:** Faculties, Schools, Units, and Centres at Mu'tah University in Jordan  
(The Higher Education Council, 2008)

<b>Faculties and Schools</b>	<b>Units and Centres</b>
Arts	Deanship of Students Affairs
Engineering	
Science	Deanship of Scientific Research
Law	
Economic and Administration	Deanship of Higher Studies
Education	
Sports Science	Centre for Southern Studies and Continuing Education
Shariah	
Agriculture	Computer Center
Nursing	
Medicine	

Since its foundation, Mu'tah University has produced 35, 000 graduates (at the time this research is written). Currently, it has a total of 17,000 students from all over the country and abroad. The faculty has a total of 2500 administrative members. The University's beacon of teaching, learning, and training has over the years established the capacity for cultural, educational, academic, social, and economical development in the southern part of Jordan. In addition, the university administration concentrates on the

future vision in a five year strategic plan, which will improve the university's task and develop the quality and the uniqueness of the education that it provides (Al Khateeb, 2004).

### **1.2.2 Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan**

The Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University is very progressive. It offers the chance to expand subject knowledge and communicative and interpretative skills for its graduates and students. The Department also aims at improving and enhancing the students' linguistic ability and skills at Mu'tah University by equipping them with high leadership and professional qualities (Zughoul, 2001). The Department of English language and Literature has an enrolment of 585 students (at the time this research is written). However, one of the major problems that students at the English Language and Literature department at Mu'tah University in Jordan face is producing cohesive and coherent written texts or compositions. According to Al Khateeb (2004) , EFL Jordanian university students spend several years of doing basic writing courses at colleges and university but still encounter many problems when attempting to produce a piece of writing. He argues that a considerable number of these students write isolated and disconnected sentences and phrases that result in the production of incoherent written texts. Basically, they are unable to write words, phrases, and sentences in a connected manner to create a well-organised written text. Besides, many of their teachers complain that the objectives of teaching English writing are very demanding in which the curriculum of teaching English as a foreign language in Jordan is state-centric and is traditionally designed by and planned by the Ministry of

Higher Education. To address the problem, the department offers compulsory service courses as part of the university's requirements to all students and graduates (Al Ali, 2006).

The aim of the basic writing curriculum at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University is to help students write and express personal ideas, views, feelings, and use correct and appropriate English. Also, it aims at helping them write and produce grammatical, well-organised, and cohesive written texts. With English firmly established as the universal language, and international language for trade, commerce and travel, students will eventually possess a worldwide market for their skills (Zughoul, 2002).

Despite the availability of a number of writing courses at Mu'tah University, it is found that their EFL students still have many language problems and difficulties especially in producing coherent and meaningful written essays (Al Khateeb, 2004).

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

English is taught in Jordan as a foreign language whereby students are expected to master all the four basic language skills i.e. reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Ramadan, 2003). But, most of the EFL Jordanian students face difficulty when they attempt to produce any piece of writing (Al Omari, 2004). One of the major problems is writing cohesively and coherently. Many EFL students produce disconnected and isolated sentences which result in incoherent and sometimes meaningless written texts (Al Natsheh, 2007). These students who have already completed many years of studying writing at university level are still incompetent and unable to produce coherent writing. This may be related to many reasons such as the writing curriculum which is imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan. Requiring EFL students to follow specific traditional methods to teach writing (Obeidat, 2006).

In relation to this, Rababah (2001) notes that the major writing problems that teachers of English as a foreign language in Jordan complain about are those related to the students' inability to create cohesive written texts. Similarly, Al Rabee (2004) and Al-Ali (2006) claim that students at Jordanian universities face problems when they attempt to produce coherent written compositions. Khuwaileh (2006) believes that Jordanian EFL students are incompetent in the writing skill because they face problems at the discourse level. Although, these students understand the importance of cohesive devices that are necessary for making a written text coherent, they still find it difficult to use them accurately. In relation to this Bacha (2002, 161) states that:

“...Arabic non-native speakers' English-writing problems have shown university student texts to lack lexical variety, subordination and to rely heavily on redundancy that does not add any new information to the text. However, students need to develop their writing skills in order to cope with their university coursework in the medium of English“.

Also, preliminary interviews conducted in July 2006 with two EFL teachers at Mu'tah University revealed that third year English Language and Literature students who are doing their basic writing course face difficulty in producing coherent writing inspite of having undergone many basic writing courses in their university.

Generally, teachers of higher education in Jordan are highly concerned with the writing performance of their EFL students as they are expected to write clear, grammatical, well organised and cohesive texts (Monassar, 2005). To achieve these objectives, the teachers direct all their efforts towards equipping them with the appropriate linguistic skills and techniques required for advanced work at a higher level.

Despite the importance of lexical cohesion in producing coherent texts, this researcher believes that it has not received the attention it deserves in Jordan. This is reflected by the scarcity of research on cohesion problems (Abu Hattab, 1992; Bacha, 2000; Al Mashour, 2001; Bataineh and Zghoul, 2006). It is, however, hoped that this study which investigates the use of lexical repetition and patterning used by English Language and Literature students at Mu'tah University in Jordan for the academic year 2008 will shed some light on the cohesion problems that Jordanian university students face.

In this regard, the researcher aims to adopt Hoey's (1991) framework of lexical cohesion to investigate the use of lexical repetition and patterning and other types of lexical repetition in compositions written by English Language and Literature major students at Mu'tah University in Jordan and put forward some recommendations and suggestions to enable university students in Jordan to improve their writing quality.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The main goal of this research study is to acquire data on the use of lexical repetition and patterning produced by 60 third year Jordanian students majoring in English Language and Literature. In relation to this issue, this study aims to achieve the following objectives.

- a)** To investigate the different kinds of lexical repetitions frequently used by students in their written compositions.
  
- b)** To examine how students use lexical items to build bonds and relations via repetition between clauses and sentences.
  
- c)** To analyse which lexical patterns are generated from students' use of lexical repetition.
  
- d)** To investigate how lexical repetition and patterning contribute towards coherence of students' written compositions.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of this research study, the present study aims at addressing the following research questions:

**Q1:** What are the different kinds of lexical repetitions frequently used by students in their written compositions?

**Q2:** To what extent do students use lexical items to build bonds and relations via repetition between clauses and sentences?

**Q3:** Which lexical patterns are generated from students' use of lexical repetition?

**Q4:** How do lexical repetition and patterning contribute towards coherence of students' written compositions?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The present study is conducted to assist English as foreign language (EFL) learners at higher education level to understand the significance of the use of lexical cohesion, particularly lexical repetition and patterning, in written essays produced by Jordanian students majoring in English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan. This study would help EFL learners by providing them with new knowledge and skills to produce coherent and meaningful written texts. Even though an EFL learner might possess practical knowledge of the grammar of the target language, they might not possess the ability to generate coherent written essays. Therefore, this study which examines lexical repetition and patterning hopes to provide learners with a deeper understanding and insight to enhance their awareness of the significance of lexical links and bondages in creating coherent and unified written essays.

This research study is also useful for EFL teachers. It would provide them further insights that can be used for further significance and enhance their teaching methods. It is hoped that the findings of this study will enable the teachers to provide more constructive feedback to their learners rather than merely providing comments on whether the written work is good or not. It would also help them by providing suggestions on the kind of teaching materials and textbooks that are to be utilized. It will also provide suggestions to curriculum planners and material writers and designers to integrate components that emphasise lexical cohesion, specifically lexical repetition and patterning practices.

In this regard, the findings and results of this research study can contribute significantly to research on lexical repetition and patterning in an EFL context.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This research is based only on third year English Language and Literature programme students in a public university. The relatively small size sample used might not provide it the statistical support for any conclusive findings that may be directly generalizable to the whole Jordanian higher education student population in similar English Language and Literature programmes or different academic majors in other public universities. Yet, the findings achieved from the chosen sample from this case study can provide practical insights on students' basic writing performance and their use of lexical repetition and patterning , as there is scant research in this area in Jordan.

In this research, two EFL teachers participated in analysing their perceptions on university students' use of lexical repetition and patterning and teaching of basic writing courses. Although, this might seem like a limitation, it is important to note that these EFL teachers comprise the total number of teachers who teach the basic writing courses in the B.A English Language and Literature degree programmes at Mu'tah University.

This research acknowledges the fact that there might also have been other controlling factors in students' learning environment during the time of conducting the main study that might have had an effect on their writing performance. This is why the triangulation methodology was used as a vehicle for cross validation.

Finally, there were two additional constraints: the researcher was also one of the three raters of the students' written essays and this might affect the reliability and validity of this research in terms of his objectivity. Also, the study was confined to lexical cohesion in compositions written by 60 English Language and Literature students at Mu'tah University in Jordan from a discorsal point of view and excludes the problems that students face at sentence level and this might have some bearing on the results of the