

**EFL teachers' knowledge and perception of metadiscourse (MD) markers in  
argumentative writing and their teaching practices.**

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## **Declaration of Original Authorship**

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

## **Abstract**

This study looks at English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about teaching metadiscourse (MD) markers in argumentative writing at Saudi Arabian universities. MD markers are important language tools that help make writing clearer, organise arguments, and guide readers. Many Saudi EFL students struggle to write logical and persuasive arguments, partly because they do not receive enough guidance on using MD markers. This research aimed to explore how well teachers understand MD markers, how they correct students' mistakes with them, and how they include them in writing lessons. It also studied teachers' views on the role of MD markers in improving students' academic writing skills. The study used a mix of methods to collect data, including interviews with 10 EFL teachers, classroom observations, an analysis of 100 student writing samples, and a questionnaire completed by 150 EFL teachers. Data from interviews and observations were analysed for themes, while the questionnaire responses were examined for patterns and trends. The findings showed that many teachers had a limited understanding of MD markers and often focused more on teaching grammar and vocabulary than on explaining how to use MD markers in writing. Teachers also faced challenges like not having enough time, strict lesson plans, and textbooks that did not cover MD markers well. Results from the questionnaire revealed that only a small number of teachers included MD markers as a regular part of their teaching. The study highlights the need for training programmes to help teachers learn how to teach MD markers effectively. It also recommends updating curricula and materials to include more examples and activities on MD markers. By addressing these challenges, this research provides practical suggestions for improving EFL teaching methods and helping students write clearer and better-organised essays in argumentative writing.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

MD Metadiscourse Markers

EFL English as a foreign language

CK Content knowledge

PK Pedagogical knowledge

PCK Pedagogical content knowledge

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Outline**

This study investigates English as a foreign language (EFL) writing teachers' knowledge and practices concerning the use of metadiscourse (MD) markers, as well as their beliefs about the importance of teaching and learning these markers in argumentative writing. This chapter begins by providing the study's background and context, specifically within the setting of Saudi Arabian higher education. It then articulates the research problem, followed by the study's rationale, objectives, and research questions. Additionally, it discusses the significance of the research, outlines its contributions to the field, and identifies the gaps in the existing literature that this study aims to address.

### **1.2 Study Background**

English is considered the most widely spoken language in the world (Crystal, 2003). Thus, achieving a high level of proficiency is important for both English first language (L1) users and those learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Learning a language requires developing the main language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among these, writing is widely recognised as the most critical skill in higher education, as students must produce essays and research reports to achieve academic success (Khairul Zakaria & Malik, 2018). Consequently, the quality of students' writing has a direct and significant impact on their academic outcomes.

Argumentative writing, which involves presenting and supporting a claim with evidence, plays a crucial role in academic discourse. This form of writing demands not only clarity of thought but also the ability to present arguments in a structured and coherent manner. Chuang and Yan (2022) investigated the relationship between argument structure and essay quality in assessed writing and found that well-structured arguments were positively correlated with higher essay quality. A key factor contributing to this structure is the effective use of



metadiscourse (MD) markers, which assist writers in organising their arguments and guiding readers through the text (Hyland, 2005).

MD markers, such as *although*, *however*, *moreover*, and *in conclusion* facilitate the logical progression of ideas, ensuring coherence and clarity in argumentative writing. These markers also help in transitioning between claims, evidence, and arguments, making the text more cohesive and persuasive. In EFL writing, research shows that teaching MD markers directly can greatly improve students' ability to write well-organised, clear, and persuasive texts (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Tavakoli & Amirian, 2012). Without the use of MD markers, essays risk appearing difficult for readers to follow, thus compromising the overall effectiveness of the writing. For these reasons, understanding and teaching MD markers is critical for enhancing the quality of students' academic writing (Zakaria & Malik, 2018).

### **1.3 Problem Statement and Study Rationale**

Learning EFL remains a critical focus in education worldwide, as many education systems now require students to develop proficiency in more than one language. However, while substantial research has investigated student abilities, needs, and weaknesses in EFL, relatively little attention has been given to the role of teacher knowledge and practices in shaping learning outcomes. Teachers play a crucial role in providing explicit instruction and step-by-step guidance essential for skill development, particularly in complex tasks such as writing. Effective writing instruction requires more than general language teaching expertise; it demands specific knowledge of pedagogical strategies and linguistic features, such as structuring arguments and employing metadiscourse (MD) markers, which are crucial for coherence and clarity in academic writing (Baralt & Morcillo, 2017; Li, 2017; Liu & Pascarella, 2019; Parsons et al., 2018; Yusri et al., 2018; Zeng, 2019).

Studies in the EFL field have shown that many teachers lack sufficient knowledge and skills to teach advanced writing features, such as MD markers. For instance, Ferris et al. (2011)

examined the training and feedback practices of EFL writing teachers in U.S. college courses. Their findings revealed that many teachers had little to no preparation for addressing broader aspects of writing, such as structure, development, or MD markers, with their feedback often focusing on grammar errors instead. Matsuda et al. (2013) similarly reported that U.S.-based EFL teachers lacked an understanding of what students needed to enhance their academic writing, stressing the importance of professional development to address these gaps. Shi and Chen (2020), in their Australian study, demonstrated that teacher training workshops improved students' writing outcomes by enhancing teachers' knowledge of advanced writing instruction. Although their study did not specifically address MD markers, it underscored the importance of equipping teachers to teach complex features of writing. Similarly, Lee and Yuan (2021), in their research from Hong Kong, highlighted that training programs often fail to provide sufficient support for teaching advanced writing skills. Collectively, these studies point to gaps in teacher preparation that hinder the teaching of features like MD markers, which are essential for helping students succeed in argumentative writing.

In Saudi Arabia, EFL writing instruction faces unique challenges, particularly in argumentative writing, where students often struggle to produce essays with logical structure, clear progression of ideas, and effective use of MD markers. These issues are compounded by cultural factors, including limited emphasis on critical thinking and argumentation in traditional education systems and differences in Arabic writing styles that do not align with English academic conventions (Al-Qahtani, 2005; Alshammari, 2018). This aspect will be discussed further in Section 1.5. Alharbi (2019) found that Saudi EFL students frequently produce essays that lack logical flow and effective use of linking words, while Alshammari (2018) noted that the absence of MD marker instruction leads to disconnected essays that do not meet academic writing expectations. These findings highlight the urgent need for improved

teacher training and instructional practices to help students meet the expectations of academic writing in English.

Writing is a challenging skill for many EFL learners, requiring significant mental effort to generate ideas, organise thoughts, and structure arguments while adhering to grammatical accuracy (Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015). Flower and Hayes (1981) described writing as a process involving planning, translating, and reviewing, each stage requiring specific skills and strategies. Kim et al. (2021) expanded this model to include generating and evaluating ideas, drafting, and reusing source materials. These processes illustrate the unique challenges faced by EFL learners, particularly when adapting to new writing conventions and incorporating features like MD markers. Even skilled writers in their first language (L1) often struggle to transfer these skills to their second language (L2) without targeted support and instruction.

Addressing these challenges requires focused efforts to enhance teachers' understanding of MD markers and their role in improving writing quality. Teachers must also be equipped with strategies to guide students in using these features effectively. According to Werbinska (2009), language teachers are responsible for preparing materials that enable learners to achieve their target outcomes. Bell (2005) emphasised the importance of “clear and enthusiastic teaching that provides learners with the grammatical (syntactical and morphological), lexical, phonological, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge and interactive practice they need to communicate successfully in the target language” (p. 260). In writing instruction, this means going beyond general language teaching to address specific challenges such as coherence, organisation, and the use of MD markers.

It becomes necessary, then, to investigate teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their instructional practices as a foundation for improving teaching strategies. By addressing these gaps, this research seeks to provide an evidence base to support the professional development of EFL teachers in this area. Given the lack of studies focusing on teaching and learning MD

markers in Saudi universities, the current study examines EFL teachers' knowledge, teaching practices and perceptions of MD markers in the context of university-level academic writing.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of how MD markers can be effectively taught in the field of academic writing. It is particularly valuable for EFL students, whose writing is often described as faceless and lacking clear attitudes or stances (Hyland, 2019). Teaching MD markers is expected to help EFL students enhance their academic writing by improving coherence, expressing their perspectives more clearly, engaging with readers effectively, and constructing well-supported academic arguments. Despite the importance of MD markers, there is limited comprehensive knowledge about how they are used in EFL teachers' writing classrooms (Zakaria & Malik, 2018). Few studies have examined EFL teachers' knowledge and instructional practices related to teaching MD markers (Abdelrahim & Abdelrahim, 2020). This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring EFL teachers' approaches to teaching MD markers and their potential impact on students' academic writing skills.

The findings of this research could serve as a valuable resource for EFL writing teachers, providing insights into the types of MD markers that are commonly lacking in EFL students' writing. Additionally, the results could guide teacher development programs, curriculum design, and professional training efforts to help EFL teachers integrate MD markers more effectively into their teaching. Ultimately, this research aims to support the creation of targeted interventions to improve EFL students' academic writing and ensure their success in academic contexts.

#### **1.5 Study Context**

##### **1.5.1 introduction**

Saudi Arabia's education system has seen major changes to meet the needs of its growing population and keep up with global progress. Education is free at all levels, from

primary school to postgraduate studies, making it available to everyone. Schools are separated by gender due to cultural and religious traditions, but both boys and girls receive the same quality of education.

In the past, education in Saudi Arabia took place in mosques, as formal schools had not yet been established. These mosques served as centres of learning, focusing almost exclusively on Islamic teachings and Quranic studies, which later formed the foundation of the modern education system (Alabdulaziz, 2019). In 1951, the Ministry of Education (MoE) was created to manage schools across the country, first focusing on boys but including girls by 1960. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was established in 1975 to focus on universities, but in 2015 it was merged back with the MoE to simplify management (Assulaimani, 2019).

The Saudi education system has several levels: six years of primary school, three years of intermediate school, and three years of high school. After high school, students receive the General Secondary Education Certificate, which allows them to study at university for four to six years, depending on the field (Alabdulaziz, 2019). Islamic values remain a key part of the Saudi curriculum, with a focus on building faith and character. At the same time, the country has started using modern teaching methods to make learning better. Programmes like Tatweer have brought new ways of teaching and better school facilities. However, problems like large class sizes and strict teaching styles still make it hard to improve the system completely (Alyami, 2014).

### **1.5.2 English language in Saudi Arabia's education system**

The teaching of English in Saudi Arabia has changed significantly since it was first introduced in 1928. At that time, English had a small role in the education system and was taught at the secondary level for only a few hours each week. However, its importance became clear in the mid-20th century, especially after the discovery of oil, which boosted the country's economy and strengthened its connections with Western nations. These economic and

international ties highlighted the need for English in business, trade, and communication. Al-Seghayer (2014) explains that this marked the beginning of slow but steady improvements in how English was taught and its role in the country.

The government soon realised that English was becoming more necessary in a globalised world and began to make it a bigger part of the school curriculum. By 1959, English was made a required subject in public schools, and over the years, its teaching was extended to include younger students in primary schools (Elyas & Picard, 2013). The establishment of Scholarship Preparation Schools (SPS) in 1936 in Makkah was an early step in teaching English, helping students prepare for studying abroad. However, these schools were only available to students planning to leave the country (Almesaar, 2024).

In the early years, the English curriculum was heavily influenced by other countries' school systems, particularly Egypt and France. Teachers were often brought in from neighbouring countries like Egypt and Sudan to teach English (Al-Seghayer, 2014). French was also part of the curriculum for a while but was removed in 1969 for political and economic reasons. Meanwhile, English became a key subject in both private and public schools because of its importance for careers and international communication (Almesaar, 2024). In the 2000s, growing pressure led to changes in how English was taught. The government made English compulsory in Grade 6 and later introduced it even earlier, in Grade 4, so students could start learning the language at a younger age (Almesaar, 2024). More recently, there have been discussions about starting English lessons in Grade 1 to help students gain confidence in the language earlier (Almesaar, 2024).

Despite these changes, many students still struggle to become fluent in English. Teachers often focus on memorising grammar and vocabulary, which does not prepare students to use the language in real-life situations (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Many students see English as just another school subject to pass exams rather than a useful skill for communication or work.

Even after years of learning English, many high school graduates cannot speak the language confidently (Al-Seghayer, 2014). To improve this, the Ministry of Education has been working to make English lessons better. This includes training teachers, setting up modern language labs, and working with international organisations to improve the curriculum. However, it is still difficult to help all students become fluent in English, and skill levels vary widely across the country (Elyas & Picard, 2013).

### **1.5.3 English language in Saudi Arabia Higher Education**

The role of English in Saudi Arabia's higher education system has grown significantly, serving as the main language of instruction for key disciplines such as science, technology, business, and medicine. Over the years, English has become increasingly important in universities, emphasising its role in preparing students for a global workforce and supporting the country's participation in international academic and professional fields (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017)

Many universities in Saudi Arabia offer English-taught programmes, recognising the language as essential for gaining global knowledge and advancing the nation's development in education and the economy (Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015). These universities also have programmes focused on teaching academic English, translation, and linguistics. To address gaps in English skills, particularly in areas like critical thinking, teamwork, and communication, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) introduced the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP). This programme, used by many Saudi universities, provides intensive English lessons, offering about 20 hours of instruction per week. It focuses on key skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary (Massri, 2019). The PYP helps students prepare for the demands of university studies and determines their eligibility for courses where English is the main language, such as engineering, medicine, and science (Massri, 2019).

#### **1.5.4 Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching English**

The teaching of English in Saudi Arabia has often relied on traditional methods like the Audiolingual Method (ALM) and the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). These approaches focus mainly on repetition, grammar exercises, and memorisation. While these methods help with learning the basics of the language, they often fail to encourage critical thinking or practical communication skills, which are necessary for using English effectively in everyday situations (Al-Khairi, 2013).

A major challenge in teaching English is the continued use of outdated teaching techniques that focus more on final results rather than developing students' ability to think critically or express themselves clearly (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Other issues include large class sizes, a lack of teacher training, and limited chances for students to practise the language outside the classroom. These factors make it harder for students to develop confidence and fluency in English.

Saudi Vision 2030 has introduced important changes aimed at improving English education. These reforms focus on helping students gain the language skills needed for working in an increasingly globalised world and supporting the country's shift to a knowledge-based economy. Efforts include better training for teachers, modernising school lessons, and encouraging skills like critical thinking and effective communication (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023). However, problems such as the continued focus on memorisation and a lack of opportunities to use English in real-world settings remain significant challenges. Programmes like Tatweer have made progress in improving teaching methods and school facilities, but more work is needed to support teachers and provide better resources (Alyami, 2014).

To overcome these challenges, it is important to help Saudi students improve their use of MD markers in writing. MD markers are essential for creating clear, convincing, and well-



structured arguments. Teaching these markers in a simple and clear way can help students avoid mistakes and guide them in writing arguments that meet academic standards in English. This will allow teachers to support students in developing stronger writing skills and more organised arguments (Alshammari, 2018). Additionally, teaching MD markers while considering cultural differences can help bridge the gap between students' natural communication styles and the expectations of academic English. Lotfi, Sarkeshikian, and Saleh (2019) explain that cultural differences in the use of MD markers have a big effect on how clear and persuasive argumentative writing can be. Their study, which compared Iranian and Chinese EFL students, found that writers from these cultures often use hedges e.g., *might* or *perhaps* and boosters e.g., *definitely*, or *certainly* to show politeness, avoid directness, and maintain good relationships. This is different from Western writing, which focuses on being direct, logical, and engaging with the reader. Similarly, Binmahboob (2022) shows that Saudi writers often prefer politeness and indirectness in their writing, which can lead to less interaction with the reader compared to Western styles. Teaching students about these cultural differences can help them write more effective and organised arguments while staying true to their cultural identity. By addressing these patterns, teachers can help Saudi students write in ways that are both academically strong and culturally appropriate.

Drawing on personal experience as both an EFL student and a teacher in Saudi Arabia, I have observed that students often misuse or underuse MD markers in their writing. Reviewing student papers and teaching writing has shown that learners would benefit greatly from clear teaching on the effective use of these markers. This observation, combined with the gaps identified in the literature, underscores the critical need for focused instruction on MD markers to address ongoing challenges and weaknesses in argumentative writing. Research supports this perspective. For example, Taghizadeh and Tajabadi (2013) found that students who received instruction on MD markers produced more organised and coherent texts. Similarly,

Al-Owayid (2018) and Tavakoli and Amirian (2012) demonstrated that explicit teaching of MD markers significantly improved students' writing performance. Providing teachers and students with a clearer understanding of MD markers is essential for improving academic writing outcomes.

### **1.6 Purpose and Aims of the Study**

This study seeks to examine EFL teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and instructional practices concerning the teaching of argumentative academic writing, with a particular focus on the use of MD markers at the university level in Saudi Arabia. The research aims to address critical gaps in the literature by exploring how teachers' understanding and approaches fit with the requirements of teaching students to produce clear, convincing, and well-structured arguments in their writing. By investigating these aspects, the study contributes to the broader goal of enhancing academic writing instruction within the Saudi EFL context.

The specific aims of this research are as follows:

- To examine EFL teachers' knowledge of MD markers: Understanding the extent of teachers' familiarity with MD markers and their role in structuring academic arguments.
- To evaluate EFL teachers' ability to recognise errors: Investigating how effectively teachers identify student errors in the use of MD markers during assessment.
- To explore EFL teachers' instructional methods: Analysing teachers' ability to teach MD markers as part of writing instruction.
- To investigate EFL teachers' perceptions: Understanding their beliefs about the importance of teaching and learning MD markers and whether and how these beliefs shape their practices.
- To analyse EFL teachers' stated and actual practices: Comparing teachers' reported approaches with their observed classroom practices to identify potential gaps or areas for improvement.

This study aims to provide evidence-based insights that can inform teacher training programmes, curriculum development, and teaching strategies to improve EFL students' academic writing skills, particularly their ability to use MD markers effectively.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

1. How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?

2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?

2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?

2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

3. How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?

### **1.8 Thesis Organisation**

This thesis is organised into eight chapters, each addressing key components of the research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodology, findings, and implications. **Chapter One:** introduces the study, outlining its background, significance, and the challenges faced by Saudi EFL students in argumentative writing, particularly in their use of MD markers. The chapter also presents the research problem, rationale, objectives, and guiding questions. **Chapter Two:** reviews relevant literature, focusing on theories and studies related to metadiscourse markers, EFL writing instruction, and the broader pedagogical challenges within the Saudi educational context. This chapter builds the theoretical foundation for the study. **Chapter Three:** details the research methodology, including the study design, participants, data collection methods, and analytical strategies. It highlights the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. **Chapter Four:**

explores how EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers in argumentative writing, drawing on classroom observations, interviews, and student writing samples to answer Research Question 1. **Chapter Five:** examines teachers' awareness of MD markers and their perceptions of teaching practices. It integrates qualitative and quantitative data to address Research Question 2. **Chapter Six** analyses teachers' feedback on student writing, addressing Research Question 3. It focuses on how MD marker errors are identified and corrected, as well as teachers' strategies for enhancing argumentation and coherence in students' writing. **Chapter Seven** synthesises the findings from the previous chapters, discussing them concerning the theoretical framework and highlighting their broader implications for teaching and learning. **Chapter Eight** concludes the thesis by summarising the key findings and their implications for policy, practice, and pedagogy. The chapter also provides recommendations for improving EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia and suggests directions for future research.

### **1.9 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has introduced the study by providing an overview of its context, purpose, and significance. It detailed the challenges faced by Saudi EFL students in argumentative writing, particularly in their use of metadiscourse markers, and emphasized the pivotal role of teachers' knowledge and instructional practices in addressing these challenges. The research problem, rationale, and objectives were clearly outlined, and supported by relevant literature to establish the importance of this investigation. Furthermore, the research questions were presented to direct the study's focus. This chapter has established the groundwork for the subsequent chapters. The next chapter provides the theoretical background and context for this study, exploring existing research on MD markers, EFL writing instruction, and the pedagogical challenges within the Saudi educational framework. These discussions will provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the study's aims and methodology.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents relevant theories and research findings from the literature that underpin the current study. Initially, it explores the critical role of metadiscourse (MD) markers in EFL academic writing, focusing on how they enhance text coherence, clarity, and reader engagement. MD markers are essential in structuring arguments and facilitating interaction between the writer and reader, making them a key component of effective academic writing, particularly for advanced EFL students.

The review begins by defining MD markers and discussing relevant MD models, then examining studies investigating their impact on writing quality. It also addresses challenges faced by L2 students, such as the misuse of MD markers and the influence of teachers' knowledge and instructional practices. Additionally, the chapter reviews the main pedagogical approaches to teaching academic writing-product, process, and genre-based and evaluates their role in developing students' ability to use MD markers effectively. This literature review sets the foundation for the current study, which investigates how teachers' knowledge and practices influence the use of MD markers in the writing development of advanced EFL students.

### **2.2 Metadiscourse (MD) Markers in L2 Academic Writing**

#### **2.2.1 Definition of Metadiscourse Markers**

Metadiscourse (MD) markers are essential tools in language education and discourse analysis, helping to clarify relationships between writers and their texts and between texts and readers. According to Hyland (2019), MD markers have diverse interpretations within language studies, having emerged without a universally accepted definition. In essence, MD markers refer to linguistic elements that guide readers through a text, helping writers express their stance, organise their arguments, and engage with readers.

The concept of MD markers has evolved from early foundational definitions by scholars such as Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985), and Crismore (1989). Williams (1981) defined MD markers as “discourse about discourse, writing about writing, or whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed” (p. 212). In his view, MD markers serve to clarify and connect ideas within a text, highlight the writer's opinions, and demonstrate argumentative skills. Williams identified three main types of MD markers: hedges and emphatics e.g., *possibly*, *might*, and *of course*, sequencers e.g., *next*, *after*, and *therefore*, and narrators' attributions that present the writer's opinions e.g., *I was concerned* or *I think*.

Building on Williams' categories, Vande Kopple (1985) introduced a more detailed taxonomy with seven types of MD markers: connectives, code glosses, illocutionary markers, epistemology markers, attitude markers, commentary, and validity markers. These categories highlight the nuanced ways in which MD markers contribute to organising and qualifying arguments. Crismore (1989) emphasised that MD markers help “guide and direct the reader, signal the presence of the author, and draw attention to the speech act itself” (p. 7). In Crismore's view, MD markers serve as a bridge between the writer and reader, making the reading experience more engaging and navigable. Hyland (2004) expanded the concept of MD markers by describing them as

self-reflective linguistic expressions referring to the evolving text, to the writer, and to the imagined readers of that text. It is based on a view of writing as a social engagement and, in academic contexts, reveals the ways writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitudes and commitments. (Hyland, 2004, p. 133).

This broader view presents MD markers as not merely structural tools but interactive devices for connecting with readers. For example, interactional markers like *consider*, and *note* invite readers to reflect on specific ideas, while engagement markers such as *you might notice*

and we can see encourage active reader involvement. In this way, MD markers demonstrate the writer's awareness of readers' needs, guiding them through complex arguments.

### 2.2.2 Metadiscourse Markers Models

In the study of L2 academic writing, models of MD markers provide a structured lens through which their functions can be understood and categorised. Two primary models have emerged: **the narrow view** (Ädel, 2006) and **the broad view** (Hyland, 2005).

The **narrow view**, developed by Ädel (2006), is a reflexive model focused on the writer's awareness of text organisation. Ädel defined MD markers as a form of linguistic reflexivity, concentrating on the writer's knowledge of the text rather than on engaging readers. In this approach, MD markers serve mainly to aid text organisation, without interacting directly with readers. For studies focused on counting and analysing MD markers within texts, Ädel's model offers a straightforward framework for textual organisation (Toumi, 2009). In contrast, the **broad view** (Hyland, 2004) considers MD markers as tools for reader engagement and guiding reader interpretation, thus presenting an **interpersonal** model of MD markers with two main categories: **interactive** and **interactional**. According to Hyland (1998)

Metadiscourse is one indication of a writer's response to the potential negatability of his/her claims; an intervention to engage the reader and anticipate possible objections or difficulties of interpretation. Its role in academic discourse is therefore rhetorical, concerned with galvanising support, expressing collegiality, resolving difficulties and avoiding disputation. (Hyland, 1998, p. 440).

The **interactive** function of MD markers directs readers through organised text. **Transition markers**, e.g., *furthermore* or *in addition* contribute to text cohesion (Hinkel, 2001), while **endophoric markers**, e.g., *as shown above* help readers navigate the text, making it easier to follow (Burneikaitė, 2009). **Code glosses**, play an essential role in ensuring readers understand the writer's intended meaning (Hyland, 2007). **Frame markers**, e.g., *to summarise*

or *firstly* signal shifts in discourse, aiding readers in following the argument's structure (Hyland, 1998). As Shaw (2009) notes, frame markers enhance students' academic writing by helping them structure their ideas logically. **Evidentials**, e.g., *according to Smith* refer to external sources, underscoring credibility in academic writing (Khedri, 2018).

The **interactional** function of MD markers involves markers that help the writer develop arguments and connect with readers on an interpersonal level. **Hedges**, e.g., *possibly* or *might* express caution, while **boosters**, e.g., *clearly* or *undoubtedly* indicate confidence (Hyland, 2005). **Attitude markers**, e.g., *importantly* or *unfortunately* convey the writer's perspective toward the content, adding depth to the discourse (Hyland, 1998). **Engagement markers**, e.g., *let us examine* or *as you can see* create a sense of connection with readers by using inclusive pronouns (Alharbi, 2021). **Self-mentions**, e.g., *I believe* or *my view is* make the writer's presence explicit, reinforcing their stance (Hyland, 2005).

Together, these interactive and interactional markers are interpersonal in that they reflect the writer's awareness of readers' needs for explanation, clarity, direction, and engagement (Hyland, 2017). In Hyland's (2004) model, MD markers organise information and enable writers to express their position, facilitate coherence, and create an interactive reading experience. The belief that interactive and interactional functions make MD markers essential for coherence and clarity in text content underpins the current study; thus, understanding and using interpersonal MD markers is crucial. Through the interpersonal function, MD markers help writers construct reader-centred texts that enhance comprehension and foster engagement (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Table 2.1, adopted from Hyland (2004, p. 139), illustrates metadiscoursal resources and their functions.



**Table 2.1**  
*Metadiscoursal Functions and Examples*

Category	Function	Example
<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Help to guide the reader through the text</b>	
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses.	In addition, but, thus, and.
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	Finally, to conclude, my purpose is.
Endophoric markers	Refer to the information in other parts of the text.	Noted above, see Fig, in section 2.
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts.	According to X, Z states.
Code glosses	Help readers grasp meanings of ideational material.	Namely, e.g., such as, in other words.
<b>Interactional</b>	<b>Involve the reader in the text</b>	
Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitment to proposition.	Might, perhaps, possible, about
Boosters	Emphasise force or writer's certainty in proposition.	In fact, definitely, it is clear that
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to pro-position.	Unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly
Engagement markers	Explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader.	Consider, note, you can see that
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author (s)	I, we, my, me, our

## 2.3 Previous Studies on MD Markers in L2 Academic Writing

### 2.3.1 Impact of MD Markers on Writing Quality

To examine the impact of MD markers on the quality of EFL students' writing, Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) conducted a study on persuasive essays written by EFL university students. They found that, when evaluated against the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) assessment criteria, half of the essays were strong and half were weak, with an average score of 593 for the strong essays and 513 for the weak essays. Their study focused on students' use of academic words, correct tense, and MD markers. In the strong essays, students used different MD markers and showed awareness of how to interact with readers through the text. By contrast, the weak essays contained few MD markers, and the authors were unable to guide readers through the text. Hence, the study showed that the MD markers impact the quality of the written text as good essays included a wider range of MD markers than poor essays.

Amiryousefi and Rasekh (2010) further underscored the role of MD markers in enhancing EFL learners' writing skills through a quasi-experimental study involving 64 Iranian intermediate-level EFL learners enrolled in an English language institute. The participants, aged between 18 and 24, were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group that received explicit instruction on MD markers and a control group that did not. Over eight weeks, the experimental group participated in structured lessons focusing on identifying, analysing, and applying MD markers in their writing. In contrast, the control group followed a standard writing programme without emphasis on MD markers. The researchers employed pre- and post-test writing assessments to evaluate the impact of the instruction. Their study showed statistically significant improvements in the experimental group's writing coherence and overall quality, as compared to the control group, as assessed by independent assessors using established criteria. This suggests that explicit instruction enhances students' ability to organise arguments, clarify complex ideas, and improve reader engagement. These findings align with Müller's (2011) research, which highlights how MD markers promote reader engagement and contribute to textual coherence. Müller's study, conducted with university-level EFL students in Germany, demonstrated that proficient use of MD markers enables writers to guide readers through their arguments more effectively, thereby improving the readability and persuasiveness of their texts.

MD markers thus significantly affect academic writing quality and cohesion, as EFL writers may have useful information to convey but fail to convey it within the text. Therefore, L2 writers need to be aware of readers in their writing. This would help EFL writers communicate their message to readers and increase their persuasiveness. Hyland and Tse (2004) argued that academic writing is a mutual process between readers and writers and that using MD can help writers demonstrate their positions, attitudes, and opinions to readers in an argumentative text. In addition, Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) stated that using MD indicates

that the writer cares about interacting with readers and establishes their knowledge, which makes the text more comprehensible to readers, answers their questions, and meets their expectations. These findings highlight the essential role of MD markers in argumentative writing, where clarity and persuasiveness are crucial.

### **2.3.2 Barriers to Using MD Markers in L2 Students' Writing**

Research highlights several barriers to effective MD marker usage, including limited knowledge, cultural influences, and insufficient teaching support. Many studies have examined these barriers by analysing the use of MD markers in various forms of academic writing, such as theses, dissertations, articles, and essays, revealing shared challenges among EFL students. These barriers suggest that effective MD marker use is not merely a matter of linguistic ability but also reflects deeper cultural and instructional gaps.

For instance, a study by Lee and Deakin (2016) compared argumentative essays written by Chinese university students learning English as a second language (L2) with those written by native English-speaking (L1) students. The findings demonstrated that high-performing Chinese L2 students used interactional and interactive MD markers in ways comparable to L1 English students, enabling successful argumentation. However, low-performing Chinese L2 students struggled with MD marker usage, resulting in reduced clarity and writing quality. These findings suggest that the effective use of MD markers is a critical determinant of success in academic writing. Saudi EFL students also face many challenges when it comes to MD markers. Binmahboob (2022) found that Saudi students often used MD markers incorrectly because they did not fully understand how they work. The study showed that many students focused on basic MD markers like transitions e.g., *and* or *but* while ignored more advanced ones, such as hedges or self-mentions, which are important for making their writing stronger and more engaging. This lack of balance reduced the overall clarity and quality of their writing.

Research by Mahmood, Javaid, and Mahmood (2017) highlights that cultural preferences in Arabic writing often result in the excessive use of certain markers, such as basic transition words e.g., *and* or *but* or a complete avoidance of engagement markers e.g., *consider* or *note*. Their study investigated the challenges faced by 120 undergraduate Saudi EFL students from three different universities as they engaged in academic writing tasks. Through a mixed-methods approach combining textual analysis and semi-structured interviews, the researchers found that these cultural preferences came from typical writing habits in Arabic, which often focus on detailed and repetitive styles.

Similarly, Almalki (2020) conducted a qualitative study investigating the challenges Saudi EFL learners face in employing MD markers in academic writing. The study involved 25 Saudi postgraduate students from a university in Saudi Arabia, all of whom had at least an intermediate level of English proficiency. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and content analysis of students' argumentative essays to explore the influence of L1 writing habits. The findings revealed that these writing habits often came from the influence of L1 writing patterns and a lack of explicit training in recognising MD markers' interactive and interpersonal functions. For example, many students mainly depended on basic transition makers e.g., *then* or *finally* while neglecting more advanced engagement markers, such as hedges or self-mentions, which are essential for creating persuasive and reader-focused arguments. Almalki (2020) emphasised the need for targeted pedagogical interventions to address these gaps, particularly by raising students' awareness of the rhetorical functions of MD markers in academic writing.

Building on these findings, differences between students' L1 and English further complicate MD marker usage. Alghammas (2020) identified that Saudi EFL students' reliance on L1 writing habits often leads to limited variety in MD marker use. This creates difficulties in producing clear, structured arguments in English. This aligns with Yoon (2021), who

demonstrated that EFL learners frequently transfer patterns from their L1 into English writing, which affects the accuracy and effectiveness of their MD marker application.

Alharbi (2021) analysed MD marker usage in 20 research articles and 20 master's dissertations written by Saudi postgraduate students studying in the UK. The analysis employed a systematic content analysis approach, using Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse model to categorise MD markers into interactive and interactional types. To ensure validity, the study applied inter-assessor reliability measures, where two independent assessors reviewed the categorisation of MD markers, achieving a high level of agreement. The study revealed that while transitions and hedges were the most used MD markers in both document types, other markers, such as engagement and self-mention markers, were either rarely used or absent. Alharbi argued that this limited use of MD markers restricted students' ability to convey complex ideas, thereby compromising expression and coherence in academic writing. These findings highlight the need for EFL students to develop a thorough understanding and effective use of MD markers to meet the requirements of advanced academic writing.

Cultural factors, such as a preference for indirectness in Arabic writing (Al-Qahtani, 2005), further complicate L2 learners' ability to employ MD markers effectively in English. This cultural influence may cause students to depend too much on certain MD markers while avoiding others, creating imbalances in their writing. Alharbi's (2021) study highlights the need for teaching strategies that not only raise awareness of MD marker functions but also help students use them in a balanced way to improve clarity, coherence, and reader engagement in academic writing.

Some researchers also attribute the misuse of MD markers to limited knowledge of their application. Since 'misuse' can be understood in various ways, it is important to clarify its specific meaning here. In this context, misuse refers both to the incorrect application of MD markers e.g., inappropriate use within an argument and to their limited use, where students fail

to incorporate enough markers for effective communication. Together, these challenges highlight issues not only in the frequency of MD marker usage but also in their accurate application. Such limitations significantly impact the clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of academic texts. This underscores the importance of providing EFL students with clear guidance and practical training to apply these markers effectively in their writing.

Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) argued that low-performing L2 students often lack a comprehensive understanding of MD markers, which is evident from the minimal use of these markers in their writing. However, challenges extend beyond knowledge gaps. Even when students are aware of MD markers, they may struggle to integrate this knowledge into their writing in ways that enhance coherence and reader engagement. This gap between theoretical understanding and practical application can stem from difficulties in embedding MD markers within argument structures or using them effectively to guide readers. As a result, students often fail to produce the reader-centred texts expected in academic contexts.

Likewise, Mirović and Bogdanović (2016) found that authors experienced difficulty using MD markers effectively in their L2 (English) academic writing. The study involved 12 researchers who had written academic articles in both their L1 (Serbian) and L2 (English). Through a detailed analysis of these articles and follow-up interviews, the researchers identified significant gaps in the participants' ability to recognise and apply specific MD features in their English writing. Many authors struggled to understand and use certain MD categories, particularly those involving engagement and interaction, a challenge further complicated by cultural differences in MD usage between Serbian and English academic writing conventions. These cultural variations likely made it harder for the authors to use MD markers effectively, reducing the quality and clarity of their English-language research articles.

Al-Khazraji (2019) observed that EFL students sometimes misuse MD markers by focusing excessively on individual words or sentence-level coherence, neglecting the broader

cohesion that MD markers afford to a text. This narrow focus prevents students from building clear, cohesive arguments, further limiting their ability to effectively communicate their ideas in academic writing. Proper use of MD markers is essential for enhancing reader comprehension and engagement, enabling students to construct arguments that meet the expectations of academic discourse.

Some researchers link challenges in MD marker usage to differences between students' L1 and L2 writing habits. Bogdanović and Mirović (2018) studied 20 postgraduate researchers writing in English and found that many left out important markers like transitions or used others too much because they lacked training in how MD markers work in English. Serbian writing tends to organise ideas indirectly, which differs from the clear structure expected in English. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2005) found that Arabic-speaking students often overuse MD markers in Arabic but struggle to use them effectively in English. In his study, Al-Qahtani analysed 20 research article introductions, 10 written in Arabic and 10 in English, focusing on the structure and use of MD markers. He found that Arabic academic writing often uses repetition, detailed explanations, and extra information to strengthen arguments, which frequently involves basic MD markers like transitions e.g., *and* or *then*. In contrast, the English introductions focused on clarity and keeping the text short, using MD markers only when needed to guide readers. These differences in academic writing styles make it challenging for Arabic-speaking students to adjust their use of MD markers in English, often resulting in writing that is less organised and effective.

### **2.3.3 Overuse and Incorrect Use of MD Markers**

Another common issue in L2 students' writing is the overuse of certain MD markers (Btoosh & Taweel, 2011). For example, Mohamed and Rashid (2017) analysed 143,407 words from persuasive essays written by 269 undergraduate students at a Malaysian university and found that students relied more heavily on interactive MD markers than on interactional ones.

Specifically, transition markers e.g., *but*, *because*, or *also* and frame markers e.g., *first*, *then*, or *finally* were the most frequently used interactive markers. By contrast, interactional markers, which are essential for engaging the reader and building arguments, were rarely used in the students' writing. This imbalance suggests that while students can effectively structure their texts, they may lack the awareness or skill to use interactional markers, which are critical for creating persuasive and reader-centred arguments. Such interpretations align with findings from other studies, which observe that L2 students often prioritise structure over reader engagement in their writing (Korau & Aliyu, 2020; Milenković, 2020).

Bogdanovic and Mirovic's (2018) study similarly found that novice L2 students frequently struggle to use interactional markers like hedges, boosters, and attitude markers, which help express the writer's stance and connect with the reader. Through a mixed-methods approach, the authors analysed written samples and conducted interviews to understand students' challenges with MD features. Participants reported specific difficulties in recognising and applying interactional markers, shedding light on both the frequency and nature of these challenges. This issue appears consistent across different levels of education, as Mohamed and Rashid (2017) observed similar patterns among Malaysian undergraduates, indicating that the underuse of interactional markers is prevalent at multiple stages in ESL writing.

Extending this issue to a broader academic context, Ho and Li (2018) also observed that even among undergraduate students, there is a struggle to balance interactive and interactional MD markers effectively. Although the previous studies focused on students at an introductory level, evidence from Ho and Li (2018) highlights that this issue continues across various academic levels. In their study, Ho and Li examined the use of MD markers in the persuasive writing of 171 undergraduate university students, who were asked to write an argumentative essay of approximately 300 words within 35 minutes. The findings revealed that students with higher essay scores used more MD markers than those with lower scores.



However, despite their use of these markers, students often made specific errors, particularly in applying interactional markers, which resulted in inconsistencies in tone or inappropriately strong assertions. These errors suggest that students were aware of the need for MD markers but had difficulty applying their nuanced functions, especially in argumentative contexts where the distinction between interactional and interactive markers is essential for effective persuasion.

### **2.3.4 Impact of Instruction on Students' Ability to Use MD Markers**

Research has consistently shown that students' academic writing performance improves when they receive instruction on the use of MD markers (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996). Similarly, Vande Kopple (2012) highlighted that L2 students who were taught MD marker use were able to produce more coherent academic texts than their peers who received no such instruction. According to Hyland (2010), students who correctly used MD markers and engaged readers in their texts made their arguments clearer, leading to more positive evaluations from teachers. Conversely, a lack of MD marker use was associated with reduced coherence and persuasiveness.

Building on these findings, Aidinlou and Mehr (2012) investigated the effects of explicit MD marker instruction on a group of L2 students. The study used a pre-test to assess students' initial MD marker usage, followed by specific instruction on integrating these markers effectively. A post-test revealed a significant improvement in students' MD marker use, indicating that focused instruction enhanced their ability to apply these elements in academic writing. Instructional methods in these studies often included direct explanation of MD markers, guided practice exercises, and targeted feedback, helping students to understand and apply MD markers effectively in their writing.

Similarly, Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) compared intermediate-level students who received targeted MD marker instruction with advanced-level students who had not received

such instruction. The intermediate students outperformed the advanced students in MD marker usage, suggesting that targeted MD instruction can have a greater impact than general language proficiency alone. This finding emphasises the value of direct instruction in MD markers, even for students at higher proficiency levels. Additionally, Korau and Aliyu (2020) found that students who participated in specialised MD marker training demonstrated significant improvements in constructing coherent arguments and engaging their readers. This study further supports the notion that structured instruction is crucial for preparing students with the skills necessary for effective MD marker usage.

Hyland (2004) further emphasises the need for continuous improvement in MD marker use, suggesting that postgraduate L2 students, despite their advanced proficiency, often produce theses, articles, or dissertations that lack MD markers. Hyland (2004) further emphasises the need for continuous improvement in MD marker use, suggesting that postgraduate L2 students, despite their advanced proficiency, often produce theses, articles, or dissertations that lack MD markers. Numerous studies (e.g., Aidinlou & Mehr, 2012; Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010; Kaya & Sofu, 2020; Abkar Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021) consistently highlight the positive impact of MD marker-focused instruction on EFL students' academic writing. These studies demonstrate that targeted instruction enhances students' ability to use MD markers effectively, improving text coherence, clarity, and reader engagement. Such training helps students structure their arguments more persuasively and supports the development of reader-centred academic texts across various proficiency levels.

The importance of explicit MD marker instruction is further underscored in Kaya and Sofu's (2020) quasi-experimental study, which investigated MD markers' impact on student writing proficiency. The study involved 50 Turkish EFL students enrolled in a preparatory English program at a university in Turkey. Participants were divided into two groups: experimental and control groups, each comprising 25 students. Over six weeks, the

experimental group received focused lessons on identifying and applying MD markers, including hedges, boosters, and engagement markers, while the control group followed a standard writing curriculum without targeted MD markers instruction. Both groups completed argumentative essay tasks before and after the intervention, which were analysed to evaluate changes in coherence, persuasiveness, and reader engagement. The findings revealed that students in the experimental group achieved a better balance between interactive and interactional markers, producing more cohesive and persuasive texts than their peers in the control group. These results align with the findings of Mohamed and Rashid (2017), who demonstrated that MD marker instruction significantly improves students' ability to construct persuasive and reader-focused arguments. The study's mixed methods approach further highlighted gains in both structural organisation and reader engagement, illustrating the multifaceted benefits of explicit MD marker instruction.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that targeted MD marker instruction plays a crucial role in enhancing EFL students' academic writing across various proficiency levels. By preparing students with specific MD marker skills, teachers can help students move beyond structural organisation alone to develop persuasive, reader-centred arguments that are better suited for academic contexts.

### **2.3.5 L2 Teachers' Knowledge of MD Markers**

The previous sections show that research has found that students often struggle with the effective use of MD markers in their writing. These difficulties may be linked to several teacher-related factors. These include gaps in teachers' knowledge about MD markers, their beliefs and awareness of the importance of these tools, or their instructional focus in teaching academic writing. Such challenges may hinder the quality of instruction, leaving students without the guidance they need to develop the clarity, coherence, and engagement necessary for effective academic texts.

Several studies highlight this link between teacher expertise and student writing outcomes. For instance, Lee and Subtirelu (2015) conducted an exploratory study involving 18 L2 English teachers and lecturers teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to university students. Their analysis, based on corpora of classroom discourse, revealed that teachers primarily focused on language-related tasks and displayed limited awareness or use of MD markers in their instruction. This lack of familiarity with MD markers among teachers may prevent them from effectively integrating these tools into writing instruction, leaving students without the guidance needed to develop their writing skills. Similarly, Peng and Zheng (2021) surveyed L2 teachers to assess their knowledge of MD markers and their instructional practices. The results revealed significant gaps in teachers' understanding of specific MD elements, suggesting that this lack of expertise likely contributes to students' inconsistent application of MD markers in their writing.

Walsh and O'Keeffe's (2011) study found that teachers who clearly understood the purpose of MD markers, their types (interactive and interactional), and their importance in writing were better able to include these tools in their teaching. These teachers could explain MD markers clearly, show how they improve writing coherence and persuasiveness, and provide practical examples of their use. In contrast, teachers with less knowledge of MD markers often struggled to teach them effectively, explain their role, or give useful feedback. As a result, students taught by these teachers performed poorly in creating clear, organised, and convincing writing.

The findings of Bogdanovic and Mirovic (2018) further highlight the importance of teacher knowledge in MD markers. Their analysis showed that young L2 researchers often struggled to use MD markers effectively, partly because they lacked sufficient instruction on how to use these tools. As mentioned earlier, the study identified common challenges in using MD markers correctly, showing the need for better teacher guidance to help students improve

their skills. Nur, Arsyad, Zaim, and Ramadhan (2021) examined the focus of teachers' instruction in EFL writing classes, contrasting their emphasis on topic understanding versus the use of MD markers. The study found that teachers often prioritised helping students understand the essay topic and content over teaching MD markers. As a result, students were left with limited guidance on how to use MD markers to structure arguments and enhance reader engagement.

In addition to instructional gaps, challenges in providing feedback on MD usage have been documented. Ädel (2017), in her study of L2 teachers' written feedback, found that while teachers occasionally used MD markers, they often failed to ensure that students fully understood how these markers function to improve communication. This reflects a broader gap in teachers' ability to effectively teach the application of MD markers, underscoring the need for targeted training in both understanding and teaching these tools. Rodway (2018) emphasised that students view their teachers as essential knowledge resources for developing writing skills. However, when teachers themselves lack a comprehensive understanding of MD markers, they may struggle to provide adequate support, leaving students unable to improve their writing clarity and coherence. Teacher awareness is critical, as highlighted by Alqahtani and Abdelhalim (2020) in their study of Saudi EFL teachers. They found that many Saudi teachers lacked sufficient awareness of MD markers, which limited their ability to integrate these tools effectively into their instruction.

Explicit teacher training has been shown to address these challenges and improve teaching effectiveness. Kaya and Sofu (2020) found that teachers who received training in understanding MD markers and teaching their use were better at helping students. Similarly, Althiyabi and Assalahi (2022) found that teachers with a good understanding of MD markers were more prepared to give specific support, leading to noticeable improvements in their students' ability to write clearly and persuasively. Building on these findings, Fatahipour,

Tahmasbi, & Salehi (2020) showed that MD markers are used differently in storytelling compared to descriptive writing, highlighting the need for teachers to adjust their teaching to suit different types of writing. Without this type of focused guidance, students may find it hard to use MD markers effectively in various academic tasks. These findings support Hyland's (2010) view that teachers with a strong understanding of MD markers are better at helping students connect with readers and organise their ideas clearly.

In the context of Saudi EFL learners, a lack of teacher support has been identified as a key reason for students' difficulties with MD markers. Alenizy and Al-Homoud (2024), in their study of 100 argumentative essays written by Saudi university students, found that students often had trouble using MD markers correctly and consistently. The study used a quantitative method to count how often MD markers were used and checked how well they were applied based on academic writing standards. The researchers also conducted interviews with students and teachers, which showed that many teachers did not include clear lessons on MD markers in their teaching. This lack of guidance left students unable to use these tools effectively. Similarly, Taweel (2020) found that Saudi EFL students often overused certain MD markers, likely influenced by their first language. The study looked at 75 argumentative essays, analysing how often and how appropriately MD markers were used. It found that students often used MD markers in the wrong places or too frequently, showing they did not fully understand how to use them in writing. This problem was linked to a lack of proper teaching, as classroom observations and teacher surveys showed that students were not taught how to use MD markers effectively. However, neither study investigated teachers' knowledge, practices, or perceptions regarding the teaching or learning of MD markers in academic writing.

Further evidence of instructional gaps was provided by Alkathlan (2019), who explored gender-based differences in MD marker usage. By conducting a comparative analysis of student essays, the study identified significant differences in the frequency and type of MD

markers used by male and female students. The findings, supported by teacher interviews and classroom observations, revealed that students often misused interactional MD markers due to a lack of targeted feedback and instruction. Al-Otaibi and Hussain (2024) reinforced these findings in their quantitative study of Saudi students' academic writing. By analysing students' essays and administering teacher surveys, they demonstrated how insufficient teacher expertise contributed to the misuse of MD markers, particularly in interactional contexts.

From a pedagogical standpoint, explicit instruction in MD markers has been shown to significantly enhance students' writing performance. Studies such as Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) demonstrate that even students beyond beginner levels benefit from targeted MD instruction, with intermediate students who received focused training outperforming advanced students who did not. Farahani and Pahlevansadegh (2019) also observed notable improvements in IELTS writing performance among Iranian EFL learners who received explicit MD instruction. Similarly, Pastor (2022) advocates for multimodal approaches to MD instruction in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, arguing that teaching MD markers across different modes of communication prepares students for diverse academic contexts. These findings underscore the value of teacher expertise in delivering structured, explicit guidance on MD markers.

Collectively, these studies emphasise the critical role of teacher expertise in MD markers. Teachers with an understanding of MD markers can structure students to write clear, coherent, and persuasive texts. By addressing gaps in their understanding, teachers can enhance their teaching practices, support students' engagement with academic writing, and raise the development of advanced writing skills. Building on this, the following section examines models of teacher knowledge, offering a theoretical foundation for understanding the diverse types of knowledge that EFL teachers require to effectively teach MD markers and support academic writing development. These models provide a framework for analysing how

teachers' knowledge of content, pedagogy, and learners influences their ability to teach MD markers in varied contexts.

## **2.4 Teachers' Knowledge Bases**

It has been well-established in the literature that teachers must acquire different aspects of knowledge in addition to knowledge of the subject that they teach (see Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Shulman, 1987; Turner-Bisset, 1999). Practically, teachers rely on several types of knowledge to teach and plan lessons. Considerable research has debated and discussed the types of knowledge that teachers must have (Borg, 2003). Consequently, many knowledge models have been proposed by researchers. For instance, Shulman (1987) suggested a classification that includes seven categories of knowledge that teachers need to successfully teach students:

1. Content knowledge.
2. General pedagogical knowledge.
3. Curriculum knowledge, with a particular grasp of the materials and programmes that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers.
4. Pedagogical content knowledge.
5. Knowledge of learners and their characteristics.
6. Knowledge of educational contexts ranging from the workings of the group or classroom and the governance and financing of school districts to the character of communities and cultures.
7. Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (Shulman, 1987, p.8).

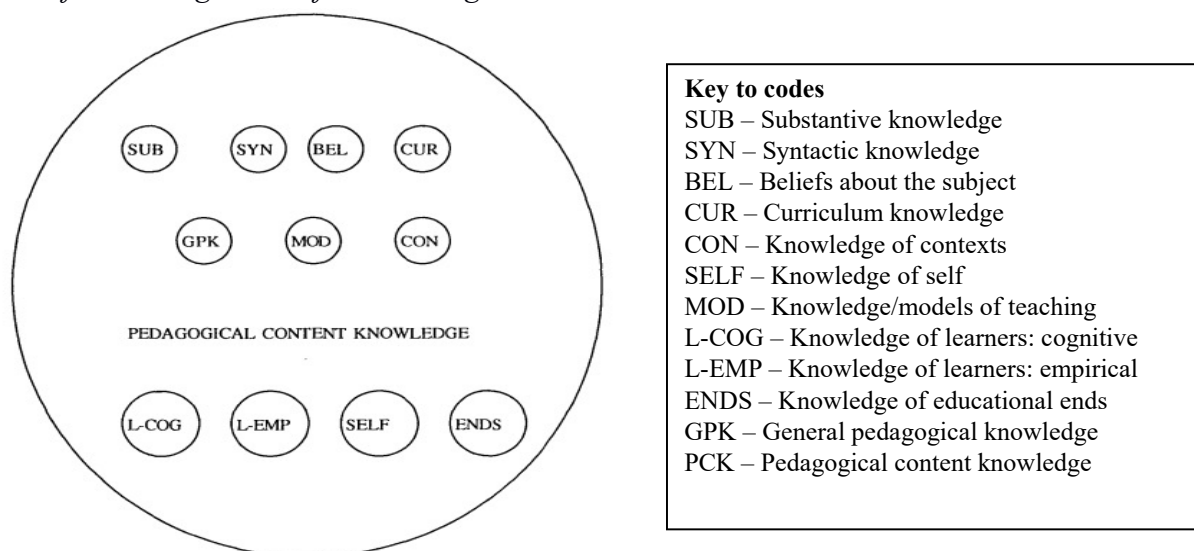
The crucial element of Shulman's classification is that it distinguishes between the concepts of content knowledge (CK), general pedagogical knowledge (GPK), and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). According to Shulman (1987), GPK is concerned with the “broad



principles and strategies of classroom management and organisation that appear to transcend subject matter,” whilst PCK is an “amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (p. 8). CK refers to the knowledge about things, which relates to content knowledge. Shulman’s classification motivated numerous researchers to explore teachers’ knowledge bases, either to gain more insights or to produce different models. Subsequently, Turner-Bisset (1999) developed a model of teachers’ knowledge bases that includes nine categories of knowledge (see Figure 2.1). The key aspect of Turner-Bisset’s model is that she included both CK and GPK under the umbrella of PCK.

**Figure 2.1**

*Model of Knowledge Bases for Teaching*



Both Shulman’s (1987) classification and Turner-Bisset’s (1999) model are rich and made significant contributions to the field of teacher education. However, many studies have sought to develop specific models for each curriculum area. In the following subsection, I review and discuss different knowledge base classifications or modules that are particularly relevant to second language or L2 teachers.

### **2.4.1 L2 Teachers' Content Knowledge**

Content or subject matter knowledge (CK) refers to the knowledge that teachers must have to teach a specific subject, such as geography, science, mathematics, history, or language. CK involves a solid understanding of ideas, facts, theories, frameworks, and other foundational aspects of a subject (Shulman, 1987). Research highlights the importance of CK as a core element of effective teaching (Pachler et al., 2007). In Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, CK in a subject includes three main parts: substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Substantive knowledge includes core facts, concepts, and theories, while syntactic knowledge relates to how teachers organise and present the subject to students. Teachers' beliefs shape their teaching decisions and influence how they incorporate new instructional methods (Turner-Bisset, 1999).

In the context of L2 teaching, scholars have identified specific CK elements necessary for effective language instruction (e.g., Adger et al., 2018; Andrews & McNeill, 2005). For example, Norrish (1997) emphasized that language teachers should possess not only an awareness of linguistic rules but also an in-depth understanding of language structure to apply this knowledge effectively in the classroom. Similarly, Adger et al. (2018) argued that language teachers need comprehensive knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary to provide clear and accurate instruction. This depth of CK supports both theoretical understanding and practical application.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) similarly argued that strong subject knowledge is essential across disciplines, asserting that teachers cannot meet educational standards without a foundational grasp of their subject. This is especially relevant for L2 teachers, who must not only understand language structure but also model its practical use for learners. In contrast to other subjects, where teachers may only need to convey CK, language teachers must continuously engage with the language in real-time, a skill that adds complexity to language

instruction (Borg, 2006). Birello (2012) reinforced that CK is fundamental to teaching any subject effectively, highlighting that a solid grasp of the subject matter is essential for quality teaching.

CK plays a particularly important role in L2 writing instruction, where knowledge of writing genres and linguistic structures is essential for providing meaningful feedback (Cheung, 2016; Zheng et al., 2022). For instance, Xavier et al. (2020) conducted a professional development course to enhance L2 teachers' CK in grammar and writing. Using a mixed-methods approach with pre- and post-course assessments and qualitative interviews, the study found significant improvements in teachers' CK following the course, which correlated with enhanced student writing outcomes. Similarly, Kaivanpanah et al. (2021) examined CK among EAP teachers in Iran and found that teachers recognised the need for stronger CK but often lacked resources or support to achieve this. The study concluded that while teachers were aware of CK gaps, they needed structured support to address them effectively.

Richards (1998) further argued that L2 writing teachers require not only CK but also pedagogical skills and decision-making abilities to be effective. A deep understanding of writing genres and structures enables teachers to address specific challenges faced by second-language learners. Tsui (2003) found that teachers with higher language proficiency are more sensitive to learners' difficulties and better equipped to address them. In her case studies of expert second language teachers, Tsui observed that these teachers could recognise subtle linguistic errors and anticipate potential misunderstandings due to their deeper grasp of language structures. This proficiency allowed them to provide nuanced explanations, model language effectively, and adapt feedback to meet individual learner needs. Richards et al. (2013) supported this finding by showing that teachers with higher proficiency provided more targeted feedback and engaged students more effectively in the target language. While proficiency is essential, Van Canh (2020) critiques an overly narrow focus on language

expertise, advocating for a broader view of CK that includes understanding language functions in various contexts. This perspective aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) idea that effective learning is supported and adjusted to meet learners' needs, and Ball et al. (2015) highlight the importance of adjusting language teaching to fit the specific classroom setting.

While previous studies have broadly examined the relationship between general language proficiency and teaching quality, few have specifically explored teachers' knowledge of particular content elements within writing instruction. Building on this research, the current study investigates the extent to which EFL writing teachers are knowledgeable about MD markers in argumentative writing. By examining this targeted aspect of CK, the study aims to understand how well-equipped teachers are to support students in developing effective argumentation skills.

#### **2.4.2 L2 Teachers' General Pedagogical Knowledge and Pedagogical Content**

##### **Knowledge**

PCK is an important part of effective teaching, especially in teaching EFL writing. It connects what teachers know about their subject (content knowledge, CK) with how they teach (general pedagogical knowledge, GPK). Mishra and Koehler (2006) defined GPK as "deep knowledge about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning and how it encompasses, among other things, overall educational purposes, values, and aims." (p. 1026). Shulman (1987) explained PCK as combining CK and GPK in a way that makes the subject easier for students to understand. Van-Driel et al. (1998) added that PCK involves changing subject knowledge into forms that can be easily shared with students and adapted to different learning needs. Parker (2004) stressed the importance of connecting teaching methods with subject knowledge, while Freeman (2002) pointed out that EFL teachers need not only CK but also special teaching skills to meet the challenges of language instruction. These skills include understanding language structures, second language learning processes, and the ability to break

tasks into steps, create useful activities, and give helpful feedback. Overall, these ideas show that PCK is a key tool for teaching EFL writing and helping teachers meet the needs of their students.

PCK is particularly important in EFL writing because teaching involves not just explaining language rules but also showing students how to use different writing styles, strategies, and skills. Zheng et al. (2022) explained that PCK helps teachers mix their subject knowledge with teaching strategies to make writing instruction more effective. They said EFL writing teachers need to understand the language features of writing and explain them in ways that help students learn. Teachers also need to adjust their teaching, provide detailed feedback, and create tasks that match students' needs and the goals of writing lessons.

There are specific gaps in PCK that make writing instruction less effective. For example, Sanchez and Borg (2014) looked at how EFL teachers explain grammar ideas and found that some struggled to give clear and accurate explanations because of a lack of subject knowledge and teaching skills. Although this study focused on grammar, it is directly related to writing because clear grammar explanations are important for helping students use grammar correctly in their writing. Poor grammar instruction can make it harder for students to write clearly and effectively. Similarly, Worden (2019) studied how a training course improved the PCK of seven EFL teachers. Before the training, the teachers had little knowledge of how to teach writing styles and often used weak strategies. After the training, which gave them direct instruction on writing methods, they showed strong improvements in their teaching. This shows that training can help teachers learn better strategies for teaching writing.

Some studies have focused on gaps in teaching practices, especially when it comes to MD markers and feedback. Daif-Allah and Albeshir (2013) looked at how students in Saudi Arabia used MD markers in paragraph writing. They found that students struggled because their teachers did not spend enough time teaching them how to use these tools. Teachers often

focused on surface-level aspects of writing, such as grammar, instead of teaching how MD markers improve clarity and build stronger arguments. This gap in teaching shows a lack of PCK, as teachers did not address the deeper role MD markers play in good writing. Similarly, Farooqui (2023) found that writing teachers often struggled to give enough feedback because of challenges like limited time, large classes, and strict lesson plans. These challenges made it hard for teachers to give the detailed, focused feedback students needed to improve their use of MD markers and their writing skills overall.

To address these issues, EFL teachers need both CK and PCK. CK gives teachers a solid understanding of the subject, while PCK helps them turn that knowledge into practical teaching strategies. This includes teaching how to use MD markers, providing helpful feedback, and creating tasks that improve students' writing. By improving their PCK, teachers can make their lessons more effective and better suited to helping students improve their clarity, arguments, and grammar in writing. Strengthened PCK gives teachers the tools to support students' writing growth and help them achieve better overall results (Drik, 2004). This study aims to explore teachers' teaching knowledge in detail to clarify the relationship between CK, PCK, and their impact on writing outcomes.

#### **2.4.3 Teachers' Knowledge of learners and self-knowledge**

Teacher knowledge of learners is a crucial factor in students' academic achievement (Shulman, 2005). Turner-Bisset (1999) identified two key aspects of teachers' knowledge about learners: empirical knowledge and cognitive knowledge. Empirical knowledge refers to the insight teachers gain through direct experience with their students, such as understanding their behaviour, interests, and learning challenges. This type of knowledge comes from observing and interacting with students in the classroom, helping teachers adapt their teaching methods to meet students' needs. By using this knowledge, teachers can choose strategies that

support students' understanding and help them achieve their learning goals (Abd Rahman et al., 2010).

Cognitive knowledge, on the other hand, includes two main areas: theories of student development and knowledge of specific student groups in context. Teachers are expected to understand and apply these development theories in their teaching (Borg, 2006). For example, they must recognise which skills are suitable for teaching children and design lessons accordingly. Teachers also need to identify what students already know, what they need to learn, and how to support them in reaching their goals (Abd Rahman et al., 2010). This understanding helps teachers recognise students' strengths, address their difficulties, and guide them effectively (Turner-Bisset, 2001).

In the context of language teaching, teachers must understand how learners acquire a language and build their language skills (Tarone & Allwright, 2005). Language teachers also need to be aware of learners' reasons for studying the language and how to use these reasons to make their teaching more effective (Borg, 2006). Additionally, knowledge of learners' characteristics, behaviours, and individual differences is essential in language instruction. For example, factors such as learners' age and language level should guide the choice of teaching materials, activities, and methods to ensure they match students' abilities and needs (Han et al., 2021). Barkaoui (2007) and Chuang and Yan (2022) stressed that recognising students' differences helps teachers motivate them and create a classroom environment that encourages communication and supports language development.

Borg (2006) identified five key challenges in teaching EFL that make it different from teaching other subjects. First, the nature of the subject requires teachers to use teaching methods that help students who may not yet fully understand the language. For example, teachers often need to simplify their explanations and use pictures or examples to make lessons easier to follow. Second, successful teaching depends on creating interactive classrooms. This

involves using special arrangements like group activities or language labs that give students more opportunities to practise speaking and listening. Third, language teachers need to keep improving their own knowledge of the language, especially if it is not their first language, so they can set a good example for their students. Fourth, language teachers often feel isolated, as it can be hard to work with teachers of other subjects to design school activities that involve language learning. Finally, teachers who are not native speakers often need extra support to improve their language skills and teaching methods. This is especially important for those who want to practise and build confidence in using the language themselves.

In the context of teacher education and professional development, self-knowledge has emerged as a critical component in shaping both CK and PCK. Turner-Bisset (1999) underscores the significance of self-knowledge as a core aspect of expert teachers' professional knowledge. This self-awareness involves a deep understanding of personal strengths, limitations, or beliefs, that impact on their practice. Turner-Bisset (1999) highlighted that self-knowledge enables teachers to critically reflect on their teaching approaches, understand the influence of their personal experiences on their pedagogy, and make informed adjustments to meet the diverse needs of their students. Through reflective self-awareness, teachers can create more meaningful connections between their insights and pedagogical knowledge, leading to enhanced student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

Borg (2001) expands on this by identifying how limitations in teachers' self-knowledge may directly impact their CK. In his study of EFL teachers, Borg found that some teachers were unable to answer students' questions when they differed from the prepared lesson content. This inability to address unplanned queries suggested a lack of CK, which could reflect a deficiency in self-awareness regarding the scope of their expertise. Teachers who lack self-knowledge may not fully recognise the boundaries of their CK, making them less effective in addressing students' needs beyond the immediate lesson context. Similarly, Farrell (2008)



emphasised that reflection is a key process through which teachers can evaluate their practices and identify gaps in both CK and PCK. He stressed that through regular engagement in reflective practice, teachers become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to refine their pedagogical approaches and seek out additional knowledge when necessary.

A recent systematic review by Zheng et al. (2022) found that EFL writing teachers' content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) are strongly influenced by various aspects of self-awareness, such as their beliefs about teaching, attitudes toward writing, and past teaching and learning experiences. These factors greatly affect how teachers view their roles and interact with students. For example, teachers who are aware of their beliefs about teaching are more likely to use flexible, student-focused methods that address the different needs of their learners. In contrast, teachers with limited self-awareness may rely on strict, traditional approaches that provide fewer opportunities for meaningful engagement and personalised feedback. Zheng et al. (2022) also emphasised the importance of teachers' attitudes toward writing. Teachers who see writing as a creative and communicative skill tend to create supportive classroom environments that encourage students to explore and improve their writing abilities.

The study also showed how teachers' personal experiences as learners and writers influence their teaching practices. For instance, teachers who have faced difficulties learning EFL themselves may better understand students' challenges and offer practical strategies to help them succeed. These experiences shape teachers' perceptions of their roles, the kind of feedback they give, and the teaching activities they choose to focus on. This finding is supported by Cheung's (2016) research, which explored how self-awareness influences writing teachers' professional identities. Cheung (2016) argued that teachers' personal and professional experiences affect their teaching approaches, particularly in how they structure

classroom activities and provide feedback. Similarly, Lee and Yuan (2021) indicated that teachers with expertise are able to understand their students' needs and provide class activities that are suitable to the students' learning needs.

Both Zheng et al. (2022) and Cheung (2016) highlight the importance of self-awareness in helping teachers grow professionally. Teachers who regularly reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences are more likely to identify areas where they need to improve and take steps to build their skills. This reflection helps teachers improve their methods, adjust to the needs of their students, and create more effective learning environments for teaching EFL writing. For example, teachers who realise they have limited knowledge of specific writing styles may seek out training or resources to improve, enabling them to guide students more effectively in learning those styles. Including self-awareness in teacher development not only strengthens teaching practices but also helps teachers build better connections with their students, leading to improved outcomes in EFL writing instruction.

## **2.5 Writing Models**

Writing is widely considered one of the most challenging skills to acquire in learning and teaching, as it demands advanced linguistic and cognitive proficiency. As Hinkel (2020) explains:

A large number of studies have established that learning to write in a L2, and in particular, learning to write the formal L2 academic prose crucial in L2 writers' academic and professional careers, requires the development of an advanced linguistic foundation. Without this foundation, learners simply do not have the range of vocabulary and grammar skills necessary for academic writing. (p. 8).

This complexity necessitates a nuanced understanding of both language mechanics and organisational structure, underscoring the importance of effective pedagogical approaches to support EFL learners in mastering academic writing.

Several factors influence the teaching and learning of writing, including the student's proficiency level, the type of writing task, and the format, such as a draft, essay, article, or dissertation (Altinmakas, 2015). Therefore, understanding the diverse aspects of writing and addressing the unique challenges associated with each format is pivotal in enhancing the learning experience for EFL students. Even at advanced levels, many students struggle to produce high-quality academic writing. As a result, this research will focus on advanced-level EFL students, exploring strategies to address persistent weaknesses and improve their academic writing proficiency. To improve students' writing, it is important to understand the processes involved in thinking and composing, as well as finding effective teaching methods for EFL writing. By looking at different writing models and teaching approaches, teachers can better understand the challenges students face. This knowledge helps teachers adjust their lessons to meet students' needs and provides a way to check their progress (Davoodifard, 2022). Choosing the right writing model is key to helping teachers support students and to improving their writing skills.

A review of the literature identifies several models of the writing process that, although originally developed for L1 contexts, have significantly influenced both L1 and EFL writing research. Scholars such as Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987), Flower and Hayes (1981), and Williams (2003) developed key models that view writing as a process involving multiple stages of improvement, including rereading, adding, deleting, and modifying text. Among these, Flower and Hayes' (1981) cognitive model focuses on the complex mental processes involved in writing, outlining three key phases: planning, translating, and revising (Becker, 2006). Flower and Hayes' (1981) argue that writing "is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing" (p. 366). While originally designed for L1 writers, this model has been widely applied in EFL writing research. Scholars such as Grabe and Kaplan (2014) have suggested that EFL writers engage in similar

cognitive processes as L1 writers, although they often face additional challenges related to language proficiency limitations.

The three phases of the cognitive model are not strictly sequential; rather, they can occur at any stage of the writing process. These stages play a crucial role in helping learners develop their text (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022). The planning phase involves generating and organising ideas. In the translation phase, writers transform their plan into written language, following the structure they have developed. Finally, the revision phase focuses on evaluating and refining the written text, where writers assess the clarity, coherence, and accuracy of their ideas. Each of these phases demands specific strategies and approaches to produce high-quality writing. For example, generating strong ideas during the planning stage does not guarantee that the overall quality or accuracy of the writing will be maintained throughout the entire process (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2010).

Importantly, the cognitive model focuses on internal mental processes without specifically addressing external factors, such as teachers' knowledge or instructional practices. This research, however, shifts the focus to examining how teachers' understanding and use of MD markers can shape the way students organise and communicate ideas in academic writing. While the cognitive model provides valuable insights into the stages of writing, it does not address the specific linguistic tools, like MD markers, that facilitate the logical flow and coherence of a text. These markers not only help writers structure their arguments but also enhance readers' comprehension by guiding them through the text and engaging them in the argument. Therefore, this study explores how MD markers function in academic writing and how teachers' knowledge of these tools influences students' ability to create clear, cohesive, and engaging texts a focus that goes beyond the cognitive model's general emphasis on internal writing processes. In summary, while the cognitive model of writing provides a foundational understanding of the writing process, the focus of this research on the use of MD markers in

academic writing and teachers' knowledge of these elements requires a more linguistically oriented framework. Such a framework would better address the specific aspects of language use and pedagogical strategies necessary for effective academic writing instruction.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) proposed two models to compare the writing processes of expert and novice writers: the knowledge-telling model and the knowledge-transforming model. The knowledge-telling model, which primarily applies to novice L1 writers, describes how they rely on two key types of knowledge: CK (the information they are writing about) and discourse knowledge (how the information is organised in writing). Although originally developed for L1 writers, this model has also been applied to EFL writers by researchers such as De Larios, Murphy, and Manchon (1999), who suggest that EFL writers may face additional challenges due to limited language proficiency, which can affect their use of both content and discourse knowledge. In the knowledge-telling model, writers begin by recalling relevant ideas from memory that suit the topic and type of writing. They then add more content and ideas to their writing as they progress and make a final decision on the content when they feel they have included enough ideas. Finally, they check their draft by reviewing the knowledge stored in memory.

In contrast, the knowledge-transforming model applies to expert writers who combine content and writing knowledge in a more organised and thoughtful way. These writers start by planning their work and solving problems they find during the planning stage. They then use the knowledge-telling process to bring in ideas and organise them into their writing. Expert writers also think critically to develop new ideas and improve their text by reflecting on what they have written and what they want to say. However, both Scardamalia and Bereiter's models have been criticised by EFL researchers for leaving out important challenges faced by EFL learners. For example, the models do not consider the language difficulties many EFL learners face, such as having a limited vocabulary or struggling with grammar, which can make it harder

to organise their ideas and express themselves clearly. The models also ignore differences between how writing is done in English and other languages, which can make it hard for EFL learners to adjust to new ways of writing. Finally, the models assume that writers already understand the writing process, while many EFL learners need clear teaching on how to use MD markers like linking words and how to keep readers interested. Because of these gaps, these models, although useful for understanding how L1 writers work, are not widely used for teaching EFL learners (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014).

Williams' (2003) Writing Process Model, known as the phase model, builds on Flower and Hayes's (1981) framework but places a stronger emphasis on classroom instruction. Rather than presenting the writing process as a strict sequence, Williams (2003) outlines eight interconnected stages: prewriting, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, and publishing. He acknowledges that, in practice, writers may not follow each stage in strict order as some writers may engage in minimal planning, or an editor may take responsibility for the editing phase. However, these stages give a general idea of how successful writing usually develops. Further details and definitions for each stage are presented in Table 2.2 (Williams, 2003, p. 106-107).

**Table 2.2**  
*Williams' Stages of Writing*

Writing Process	Definition	Description
Prewriting	Generating ideas, strategies, and information for a given writing task.	Prewriting activities take place before starting on the first draft of a paper. They include discussion, outlining, free writing, journaling, talk-writing, and metaphor building.
Planning	Reflecting on the material produced during prewriting to develop a plan to achieve the aim of the paper.	Planning involves considering your rhetorical stance, rhetorical purpose, the principal aim of the text, how these factors are interrelated, and how they are connected to the information generated during prewriting. Planning also involves selecting support for your claim and blocking out at least a rough organizational structure.
Drafting	Producing words on a computer or on paper that match (more or less) the initial plan for the work.	Drafting occurs over time. Successful writers seldom try to produce an entire text in one sitting or even in one day.
Pausing	Moments when you aren't writing but instead are reflecting on what you have produced and how well it matches your plan. Usually includes reading.	Pausing occurs among successful and unsuccessful writers, but they use it in different ways. Successful writers consider "global" factors: how well the text matches the plan, how well it is meeting audience needs, and overall organization.
Reading	Moments during pausing when you read what you've written and compare it to your plan.	Reading and writing are interrelated activities. Good readers are good writers and vice versa. The reading that takes place during writing is crucial to the reflection process during pausing.
Revising	Literally "re-seeing" the text with the goal of making large-scale changes so that text and plan match.	Revising occurs after you've finished your first draft. It involves making changes that enhance the match between plan and text. Factors to consider usually are the same as those you considered during planning: rhetorical stance, rhetorical purpose, and so on. Serious revising almost always includes getting suggestions from friends or colleagues on how to improve the writing.
Editing	Focusing on sentence-level concerns, such as punctuation, sentence length, spelling, agreement of subjects and predicates, and style.	Editing occurs after revising. The goal is to give your paper a professional appearance.
Publishing	Sharing your finished text with its intended audience.	Publishing isn't limited to getting a text printed in a journal. It includes turning a paper in to a teacher, a boss, or an agency.

Williams (2003) referred to these stages as the "Stages of the Composing Process" (p. 106), with each stage involving different activities that writers use to improve their writing. For example, during the drafting stage, students start writing based on their ideas from prewriting and planning, organising their thoughts into a clear text. In the pausing stage, they reread their work and consider what needs improvement. Similarly, the reading, revising, and editing stages allow writers to check their arguments, make sure the text flows well, and fix

mistakes in sentences. These steps help students make their writing better and more effective over time. Although this model is helpful, it has been criticised for not fully addressing the specific challenges EFL writers face. Hyland (2004), for instance, points out that the model does not deal with the extra difficulties of writing in a second language. EFL writers need to create and connect ideas and write them correctly in the new language. They must choose the right linking words, follow academic writing rules in English, and avoid grammar mistakes all at the same time. These tasks are even harder because they need to consider what their audience expects, making writing a very complex process for EFL learners. Additionally, the model treats writing as something done alone without recognising how social interaction, such as feedback from teachers or classmates, can help improve writing skills. Because of these limitations, Williams' model does not fully meet the needs of EFL learners, especially in academic writing. For example, it does not focus enough on tools like MD markers, which are important for connecting ideas and guiding readers. This study addresses these gaps by investigating teachers' knowledge, practices, and perceptions regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers, highlighting their role in helping EFL learners create clear, well-structured academic texts and deal with the challenges of academic writing.

### **2.5.1 Writing models in the EFL field**

In the EFL field, developing writing models specifically designed for EFL learners is important because they face different challenges more than L1 writers. Models like Williams' writing process model (2003) and Scardamalia and Bereiter's models (1987) provide valuable comprehension of the writing process but were created for L1 writers. While these models can be adjusted for L2 learners, researchers have stressed the need for models that address the unique difficulties of L2 writing (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018; Becker, 2006; Leki, 1995; Mu, 2005; Sasaki, 2000; Zimmermann, 2000). To meet these needs, some researchers have



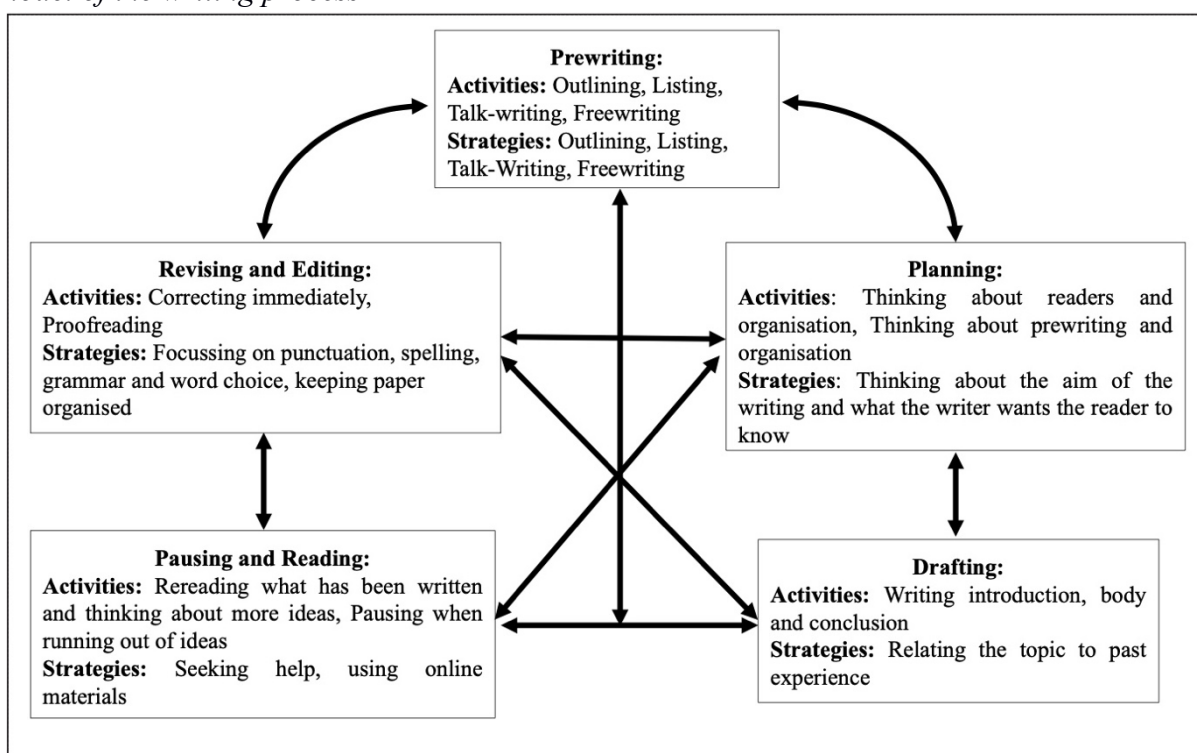
developed models specifically for L2 learners, including those by Leki (1995), Sasaki (2000), Mu (2005), and Abas and Abd Aziz (2018).

The writing model by Abas and Abd Aziz (2018) is particularly designed to help EFL writers with their writing difficulties and the challenges that they might face. This model takes into consideration the extra thinking and language skills that EFL writers need, which include generating ideas in their L2 language, organising these ideas, and following the academic policies of the target language. Unlike L1 models, which often assume that the learners or the writers already have strong language skills. Therefore, this model includes strategies to help EFL writers with their writing difficulties more than limited vocabulary or grammar knowledge.

A key feature of the Abas and Abd Aziz (2018) model is its focus on the use of MD markers functions as an important tool in academic writing. Teaching and learning MD markers is especially important for EFL learners because these markers help students connect ideas, organise arguments, and guide readers through their text. MD markers help students create well-organised academic texts, which improve their text clarity, flow, and structure. This model focuses on the use of MD markers, which might many EFL students to struggle to use them in their academic writing. A key aim of this study is to emphasise the importance of teaching and learning MD markers, as they play a main role in improving the clarity, organisation, and effectiveness of academic argumentative writing. By linking ideas and helping readers follow the text, MD markers ensure that the arguments are presented clearly and logically to the readers. This aligns with the principles of the Abas and Abd Aziz (2018) model, which highlights the need to consider the reader's point of view and keep the text well-organised throughout the writing process. Figure 2.2 below shows the Abas and Abd Aziz (2018, p.20) writing model.

**Figure 2.2**

*A model of the writing process*



According to Abas and Abd Aziz's writing model (2018), there are five stages, each including activities and strategies that support the writing process. This model involves a dynamic process where students often revisit earlier stages. For example, during the Pausing and Reading stage, writers assess their text and adjust to improve its clarity and comprehension. This stage also provides an opportunity to evaluate whether students are considering or using MD markers and whether teachers guide students on their importance.

The model highlights the role of readers in the "Planning" stage and again during the "Revising and Editing" stages. In the planning stage, students structure their text to meet readers' needs, focusing on content clarity. During the revising and editing stages, they refine their work to enhance clarity, coherence, and engagement. At these stages, students can reflect on their arguments, the needs of their readers, and the overall organisation of their writing. Understanding these stages is crucial for identifying how MD markers are taught and used in EFL writing.

## **2.6 Pedagogical approaches in the teaching of academic writing**

In EFL academic writing, approaches to teaching are essential for understanding how the writing processes outlined earlier are translated into instructional strategies for students. This research focuses on EFL students at the university level; therefore, three approaches will be reviewed according to their suitability for the university level. These are the process, the product, and the genre-based approaches. The product and process writing approaches are the most common writing pedagogy approaches to have been used in EFL classrooms for the last 20 years, and the genre-based approach is the most recent approach, which emerged to help EFL writing for different academic disciplines (Hassan & Akhand, 2010).

Bean and Melzer (2021) highlighted that these approaches can be more effective when combined with practices like peer review, reflective tasks, and audience-centred activities. These strategies encourage deeper engagement with writing and help students develop a clearer understanding of their writing processes, enabling them to meet the structural and communicative demands of academic writing. Integrating such techniques can enhance the effectiveness of these approaches and better prepare university-level EFL learners for academic writing challenges.

### **2.6.1 Product Approaches**

The product approach is known as a traditional approach in teaching EFL writing. In this approach, students try to focus on their teachers' requirements to write a text. The teachers focus more on the text as a product rather than on the students' process or on what the students face or do during their writing of the text (Hassan & Akhand, 2010). This means that teachers correct the final text but do not know how the students wrote these texts if the students made any mistakes during the writing process, or why they made these mistakes (Yan, 2012). Teachers use the product approach mainly to focus on grammatical rules and text organisation. The teachers' main goal is to make students produce texts that match the examples they have

provided (Hyland, 2003). Hence, the students focus on producing the text without errors in spelling and grammar and try to follow the style of the given example (Hyland, 2003). Four stages are used to teach writing in this approach. The first stage, familiarisation, involves showing students examples of essays or written text to understand the structure, vocabulary, and style. Following this, the controlled writing stage requires students to engage in exercises that are close to the written examples that have been provided to them. In the third stage, guided writing, students attempt to copy a model writing by organising a series of pre-established ideas to follow the model. The fourth stage is the free writing stage, where students independently build their writing by applying the writing style they have learned (Hyland, 2019).

Badger and White (2000) argue that this approach primarily conceptualises writing as the mastery of language structure. It focuses on teaching students correct grammar, vocabulary, and writing styles through the imitation of model texts. However, this approach has faced criticism for overemphasising the final written product and neglecting the writing process, particularly in terms of engaging with readers (Javadi-Safa, 2018). Similarly, Haider (2012) notes that traditional teaching methods in Pakistan place most of the emphasis on the final piece, neglecting the important steps of drafting, revising, and editing. He indicated that this limited focus on process-oriented writing can negatively impact students' development, as they miss opportunities to improve their writing through editing and revision.

Although this product-focused approach may benefit novice learners by helping them obtain basic writing skills, it may not be as effective for more advanced students, who need to engage more deeply with writing as a process. As this study examines how teachers evaluate students' use of MD markers and their instructional methods for teaching argumentative writing that engages readers, the limitations of product-based methods may not fully align with the objectives of this study. However, understanding how these traditional methods are applied can

still provide valuable insights into how teachers balance both structural and process-based approaches in their instruction.

### **2.6.2 Process Approach**

In contrast, the process approach to writing shifts the emphasis from the final product to the various stages involved in text creation, aiming to develop students' skills throughout the writing process. Hyland (2003) highlights that this approach provides both teachers and students with a deeper understanding of key stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (Yan, 2012). Unlike the product-oriented model, which focuses mainly on the quality of the final draft, the process approach emphasises the importance of how students develop their ideas and progress through these stages, encouraging creativity and exploration of different strategies (Hyland, 2019).

Despite its advantages in promoting general writing skills, the process approach can neglect critical linguistic features. Specifically, it may overlook elements such as MD markers, which are vital for constructing clear and persuasive argumentative texts, particularly in academic contexts (Hyland, 2003). Carlin (2005) further critiques the process approach for focusing on personal and expressive writing, arguing that it may not sufficiently prepare students, especially students with limited vocabulary, with the structured language skills necessary for formal academic writing.

Additionally, Türkben (2021) identified practical challenges in classroom application. Many teachers struggle to fully apply the process approach, which often means students miss out on important benefits like feedback and revising their work. While the process approach can foster creativity and enhance general writing skills, it requires additional support to address linguistic precision, especially for students working on advanced academic texts. This highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates both creative development and explicit instruction in formal academic writing skills.

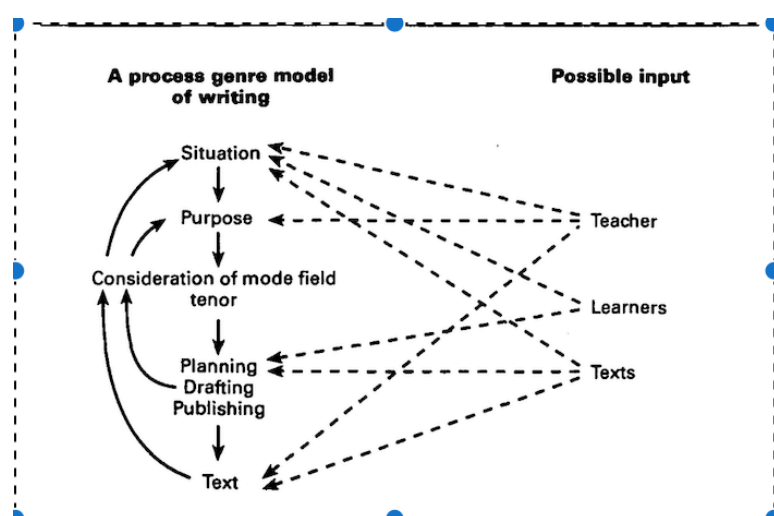
### 2.6.3 Genre-based Approach

The genre-based approach is an extension of the product approach but tailored specifically for teaching academic writing (Badger & White, 2000). In this approach, writing is seen not just as a final product but as a response to particular social purposes and audiences, with different genres serving different communicative functions. Students are guided to write in various genres, such as essays, research articles, or reports, to address specific writing purposes (Hyland, 2004).

In this approach, the teacher's role is essential. Teachers provide structured, step-by-step instruction, guiding students through the conventions and expectations of each genre. This includes modelling examples, setting clear objectives, and using real-life simulations to contextualise tasks. Formative feedback is also a critical component, helping students recognise the linguistic and structural requirements of each genre while providing scaffolding for planning, drafting, and revising their texts (Hyland, 2003). Badger and White (2000, p. 159) illustrate this dynamic process in the genre-process writing model, emphasising the teacher's role in supporting genre-specific writing strategies, as shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3**

*A genre process model of teaching writing*



The genre-based approach integrates elements from both the product and process approaches. It encourages students to engage with writing as a structured, iterative process, beginning with identifying the social purpose and audience for their text, planning accordingly, and then moving through the drafting, revising, and final editing stages. By simulating real-life situations, teachers help students apply genre knowledge to real-world writing tasks, facilitating not only the creation of appropriate texts but also the development of essential skills in text organisation, coherence, and reader engagement (Badger & White, 2000).

This approach is particularly relevant to the study of MD markers in argumentative writing at the university level. Hyland (2003) emphasises that a genre-based pedagogy enables students to participate more effectively in academic contexts by providing them with the ability to structure their writing and engage with readers through strategic linguistic choices. MD markers are vital in this process, as they guide the reader by clarifying the writer's argument, indicating the structure of the text, and fostering interaction with the reader's expectations. Understanding and teaching the effective use of MD markers is, therefore, essential to the genre-based approach, as it enhances both reader comprehension and argumentation.

This study aims to explore how teachers' knowledge and practices concerning MD markers influence the writing development of advanced EFL students, particularly in the context of argumentative writing. The genre-based approach is well-suited to this investigation because it focuses on how writers can communicate effectively within specific academic genres, using MD markers to create coherent, reader-focused texts.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter offers a detailed review of the literature on metadiscourse (MD) markers in EFL academic writing, focusing on their significance in enhancing text organisation, coherence, and reader engagement. It begins by defining MD markers and introducing key theoretical models, such as those by Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985), and Hyland

(2004). These models differentiate between interactive and interactional markers, shedding light on their respective roles in guiding readers through texts and supporting argument development.

The chapter also examines prior research on the impact of MD markers on writing quality, showing that their effective use contributes to clearer, more persuasive, and coherent academic texts. Challenges such as the overuse or misuse of MD markers, the influence of students' L1 writing habits, and the lack of explicit instruction are discussed. These barriers highlight the need for more targeted pedagogical approaches in EFL writing instruction. Pedagogical approaches, including product, process, and genre-based models, are evaluated for their effectiveness in teaching academic writing, with the genre-based approach emerging as particularly relevant due to its integration of structured guidance and reader engagement strategies.

Existing research highlights the critical role of teachers' knowledge and instructional practices in teaching MD markers. However, there remains a lack of detailed studies examining how teachers' instruction aligns with students' writing development, particularly regarding their ability to use MD markers effectively. While this study does not directly measure the causal influence of teachers' knowledge and practices on students' outcomes, it seeks to explore the relationship between these factors. By examining teachers' practices, perspectives, and knowledge, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the instructional strategies that support the development of advanced EFL students' academic writing skills.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores the importance of MD markers in improving the quality of academic writing and the necessity of focused teacher instruction in this area. The identified research gap lies in the limited exploration of how teachers' instructional methods, awareness, and feedback contribute to students' use of MD markers in argumentative writing. Addressing this gap, the current study seeks to explore teachers' knowledge, practices,



and perspectives, providing insights into effective instructional strategies that can enhance the academic writing abilities of advanced EFL students.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?

2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?

2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?

2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

3. How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodology of the study, detailing how the data were gathered and analysed to achieve the research aim. This study explored Saudi EFL academic writing teachers' knowledge, practices, and perceptions concerning the use of MD markers in academic writing. The literature review highlighted the importance of MD markers in ensuring academic writing quality and coherence. However, EFL students were found to face challenges in using MD markers in their academic writing that might be related to the teaching they had received. Therefore, this study investigated EFL teachers' knowledge of MD markers, their instructional practices, and their perceptions of teaching MD markers in argumentative academic writing.

The study aimed to expand the research on EFL teachers' subject knowledge of MD markers and how they teach these markers. Additionally, the study explored teachers' perceptions of teaching MD markers and examined their feedback practices using students' writing samples. Data were collected from EFL teachers, and the analysis of students' writing samples was included to investigate how teachers provided feedback on using MD markers. The study addressed three main research questions:

1. How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?
2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?
  - 2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?
  - 2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

3. How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?

The main topics covered in this chapter include the research paradigm and its justification, the research design, context background, participants, data collection methods, methods used for data analysis, criteria for reliability, validity, and quality of the research, ethical considerations, and potential limitations. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### **3.2 Paradigm Rationale**

Research paradigms can be seen as agreements or beliefs that scientists share amongst themselves which help in understanding how problems can be addressed (Kuhn, 1962). A paradigm can also be seen as a belief system that is shared which has an influence on how research evidence is collected and interpreted by the researchers when they seek knowledge (Morgan, 2007). Several researchers have proposed varying paradigms but there are three broad classifications provided (Suri, 2013) which are positivist, interpretivist and pragmatic. The appropriate research paradigm depends on the researcher's philosophical assumptions that are considered with the research questions and the nature of knowledge (Cresswell, 2014).

#### **Philosophical Assumptions**

Philosophical assumptions refer to the researchers' point of view and practice for a specific study (Creswell, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) illustrated that there are four philosophical assumptions within the paradigms including epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology.

*Epistemology* describes how individuals know something as being real or the truth. Cooksey and McDonald (2019) argue that this describes what is considered knowledge and it is connected with the nature and form of knowledge and ways to acquire and communicate it.

A philosophical branch that deals with the underlying assumptions that are made for investigating the social phenomenon or assumptions on what makes sense, the essence of the phenomenon or what is considered real is *ontology* (Scotland, 2012). It studies reality and its existence, becoming or being, and varied categories of things in existence and their relationships (Creswell, 2014).

The *methodology* describes assumptions related to the research design, approach, procedures, and research methods applied during an investigation (Keeves & Adams, 1997). The methodology is important for ensuring that the process followed is systematic while research is being conducted and dictates the logical sequence of activities for gaining knowledge about the problem being researched. This considers the assumptions in the research, its limitations, and how these were being minimised or even mitigated during the process of the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The ethical issues that are being considered or need to be considered when a research proposal is formed is *axiology*. For this, it is important to define, evaluate and understand the concepts of what is considered to be the right or wrong aspects of behaviour as regarded by the research. These include research ethics whereby it is important to understand what is considered to be the correct behaviour for conducting the research (Sanden & Egbert, 2013). Every research paradigm has its own philosophical assumptions that distinguish it from other paradigms.

### **Pragmatist Paradigm**

This study follows the paradigm of pragmatism. Pragmatism can best be understood by first outlining the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. The positivist paradigm is rooted in the scientific method, where experimentation and systematic inquiry are used to explore observations and answer questions (Creswell, 2014). Within this paradigm, deductive logic guides the research process through hypothesis formulation and testing, often employing

mathematical equations, calculations, and operational definitions to draw conclusions (Park et al., 2020). In the positivist paradigm, the epistemology is objectivist, with multiple realities forming its ontology. Although experimental methods are commonly associated with positivist research, the methodology also includes other structured approaches, such as surveys and quantitative analyses, to explore and verify observed phenomena (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The interpretivist paradigm, by contrast, is centred on a subjective understanding of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Reality within this paradigm is socially constructed and dependent on individuals' thoughts, experiences, and beliefs (Lichtman, 2012). This paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, and a naturalist methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The pragmatic paradigm, which builds upon ideas from both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, was historically shaped by early pragmatist philosophers such as Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. Later, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) expanded pragmatism within research methodology, emphasising its capacity to combine contrasting approaches effectively to address research questions. Pragmatism emerged from philosophers' arguments that the truth about the world cannot be fully revealed solely through scientific methods, as proposed by the positivist paradigm (Feilzer, 2010). Similarly, pragmatist philosophers argue that social reality cannot be solely constructed, as suggested by the interpretivist paradigm (Assalah, 2015).

Pragmatist researchers contend that an objective reality exists independently of human experience, grounded in the environment yet influencing human experience (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). According to Creswell (2014), pragmatic studies focus on the practical questions of 'what' and 'how.' Pragmatist philosophy also posits that reality and knowledge arise from socially constructed habits and beliefs (Morgan, 2014). While pragmatists recognise that knowledge is often based on social constructions, they argue that some constructions better

match individual experiences than others (Morgan, 2014). In this paradigm, epistemology integrates both subjectivist and objectivist perspectives (Creswell, 2014), and ontology encompasses multiple realities. Pragmatist methodologies often apply mixed methods, such as combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of research questions (Rorty et al., 2004).

### **Justification of Chosen Research Paradigm**

This study aimed to explore Saudi EFL academic writing teachers' knowledge and teaching practices regarding the use of MD markers, as well as their views on teaching and learning these markers in argumentative writing. The positivist approach, which focused primarily on collecting objective data and testing hypotheses, was not suitable because it did not allow for a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs and thoughts about their practices. Similarly, the interpretivist approach, which emphasised the complexity of reality and the personal nature of knowledge, was also not entirely appropriate. While recognising teachers' perspectives was important, relying solely on this approach would have made it difficult to explore teaching practices and knowledge in a structured way that could have informed broader conclusions.

Given these limitations, a pragmatist approach was considered most appropriate for this study, as it balanced both objective measures and subjective perspectives. Pragmatism enabled the researcher to examine teachers' knowledge of MD markers, their teaching practices in argumentative writing, and their views on teaching and learning these markers. By combining measurable data with insights into teachers' beliefs, this approach provided a flexible framework for exploring real-world issues and focusing on practical outcomes, while acknowledging that knowledge was shaped by individual experiences.

A review of the literature revealed that several studies had explored students' use of MD markers in their writing, showing how these markers improved coherence, structure, and

engagement. For example, Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) found that students who used MD markers effectively wrote essays that were more organised and persuasive compared to those who did not. Similarly, Amiryousefi and Rasekh (2010) showed that EFL learners who received explicit instruction on MD markers demonstrated better writing clarity and engagement with their readers. Hyland (2004) also highlighted the importance of MD markers in helping writers connect with readers, present their arguments clearly, and organise their ideas effectively. In addition, Müller (2011) showed how MD markers improved academic writing by guiding readers through arguments and making texts easier to follow. These findings underscored the critical role of MD markers in enhancing students' writing skills, suggesting the need to investigate how teachers understood and taught these markers. Building on these insights, this study shifted the focus to teachers. It examined whether EFL teachers understood the importance of MD markers in their teaching practices and students' learning, assessed their knowledge of MD markers in argumentative writing, and evaluated whether they required additional professional development.

The pragmatist paradigm supported the use of mixed methods by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. This combination allowed the study to uncover measurable trends in teachers' knowledge and practices while also gaining deeper insights into their perspectives and classroom experiences. Quantitative data highlighted patterns and trends, while qualitative data enriched the findings with contextual and personal insights. Together, these methods provided a comprehensive analysis, addressing aspects that neither approach could fully capture on its own.

This mixed-methods approach was particularly effective for examining the complexity of Saudi EFL teachers' understanding and practices regarding MD markers in academic writing. While existing research had largely focused on students' use of MD markers, studies on teachers remained scarce, especially those using mixed methods in Saudi university

contexts. By adopting this approach, the study addressed this gap, ensuring a detailed and meaningful exploration of the research questions. The pragmatist paradigm provided the necessary depth and flexibility to comprehensively understand the research problem.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Mixed Methods**

The research design referred to the way that was practically possible for the research to be conducted systematically to generate evidence to ensure the research question was being answered appropriately (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2016) stated that research design involved decisions about finding information and choosing which was relevant and how the data needed to be collected, as well as the analysis of the findings considering the clear research objectives. In line with the chosen philosophical stance, this study adopted a mixed methods research design, which meant it combined both qualitative and quantitative research. Hanson et al. (2005) suggested that a mixed methods research design was more operational in a study that had multiple phases. According to Cohen, et al. (2018) quantitative methods were combined with qualitative methods, this helped to overcome the drawbacks of qualitative research, which included Issues relating to testing hypotheses and theories. Personal bias of the researcher while interpreting the results of the research. Issues relating to results not being generalisable for other subjects.

In this study, combining qualitative and quantitative methods was the most appropriate to investigate and explore EFL Saudi teachers' knowledge and perceptions about the use of MD markers in teaching academic argumentative writing. In phase one, the researcher started with qualitative methods to provide a depth of understanding and perspective from participants to address the research questions. This method was naturalistic as it aimed to look at the everyday life of individuals, smaller groups, and communities by observing them in their natural environment, which was particularly useful in educational processes and settings

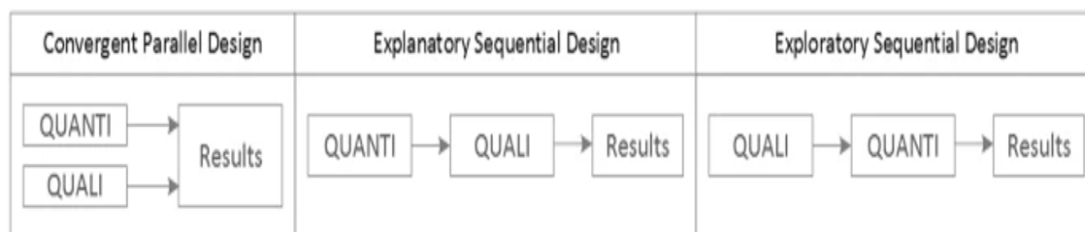


(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Phase two employed a quantitative approach using close-ended questionnaires, which were designed not only to reach a larger sample size but also to examine whether the patterns and insights from the smaller, qualitative sample were consistent across a broader population of participants (Cresswell, 2014). This study was considered exploratory by its nature of including qualitative and quantitative methods. The reason behind adopting this methodology was to explore and gain more information about EFL Saudi teachers' knowledge about MD markers in academic argumentative writing and their perception of their actual teaching practices in academic writing classes.

### 3.3.2 Exploratory Sequential Design

Based on why, when, and how varied qualitative or quantitative data strands are collated, the research design can be classified (Creswell, 2002). In the mixed-methods approach, there are three key design methods which include convergent parallel design, exploratory sequential design, and finally, the explanatory sequential design. This is shown below.

**Figure 3.1**  
*Mixed Methods Designs*



Source: Busetto et al. (2020, p. 6)

In this study, the researcher sought to gain in-depth qualitative insights from a small group of participants before exploring whether the findings could be applied to a broader group. To achieve this, the study adopted an exploratory sequential design, where qualitative methods were implemented first, and the findings were then used to inform the subsequent quantitative phase (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The initial qualitative phase involved classroom observations,

collecting students' writing samples taught by the observed teachers, conducting interviews with the teachers, and gathering writing samples from the teachers themselves.

Following this, the study progressed to the quantitative phase, which involved administering an online questionnaire to a wider group of EFL teachers. The questionnaire was designed to collect data on teachers' subject knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices related to the use of MD markers in EFL academic writing. By employing multiple methods, the qualitative findings could be corroborated and enriched through triangulation, ensuring that the results complemented each other and broadened the scope of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The table below outlines the phases of the study for further clarification.

**Table 3.1**  
*Summary of the study plan*

questions	Data	Method	Sample	Size	Period
1. How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?	Qualitative	Class Observation	EFL Writing Class.	10 Classes	4 Weeks
2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?		Semi-Structured Interview	EFL Teachers	10 EFL Teachers	3 Weeks
2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?					
2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?					
2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?					
3. How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?	Quantitative	Students' Writing samples	Students' Writing	100	4 Weeks
2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?		Questionnaire	EFL Teachers	150	4 Weeks

The mixed methods approach established a vital connection between the research paradigm and the methodology applied in this study. This connection was reflected in the alignment of the research questions, participant selection, data collection instruments, and analytical techniques, ensuring a coherent and comprehensive exploration of the study's objectives (Kivunja & Kuyuni, 2017).

### **3.4 Priority**

In mixed methods research, the concept of priority referred to determining whether greater emphasis was placed on qualitative or quantitative approaches to best address the research questions (Creswell, 2014). In this study, a qualitative priority was considered most suitable, given the central aim of exploring EFL teachers' knowledge, practices, and perceptions concerning the use of MD markers in argumentative writing. The qualitative strand allowed for an in-depth exploration of these teachers' experiences and teaching practices, which was critical for understanding the complexities of their instructional approaches.

This research followed a "QUAL → quan" design, as described by Creswell and Clark (2017), where the qualitative phase was given greater weight. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, provided rich, detailed insights that were essential for capturing the depth of teachers' understanding and practices. Subsequently, the quantitative phase, which utilised questionnaires, served to widen the findings to a larger sample, ensuring that the patterns observed in the qualitative phase were tested across a wider population. By prioritising the qualitative strand, the study provided a comprehensive exploration of the research problem before seeking to generalise findings quantitatively.

### **3.5 Integration**

After establishing the priority of qualitative data in this study, it was necessary to determine how the qualitative and quantitative data would be combined. In mixed methods research, integration refers to combining both types of data to answer the research questions

effectively (Creswell, 2002). Since this study followed an exploratory sequential design, the integration happened at specific stages throughout the research process. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), there were several key points where qualitative and quantitative data could be brought together: during the design, data collection, data analysis, or interpretation phases. For this study, the integration was mainly done during the interpretation phase. After collecting and analysing the qualitative data, which provided detailed insights into the teachers' knowledge and practices regarding MD markers, the quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire to expand these findings to a larger group. The results from both phases were then combined to allow a full comparison and understanding of the findings. This method of integration ensured that the qualitative insights were supported and strengthened by the quantitative data, leading to clearer conclusions that reflected both individual experiences and broader patterns in the teaching of MD markers (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

### **3.6 Study Context**

The sample for this study was drawn from universities in Riyadh that host English departments. According to recent data, Riyadh has 17 universities, including both public and private institutions, many of which have established English departments (uniRank, 2023). This focus aligns with the study's emphasis on the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing. The university level was considered the most appropriate context for this research, as academic writing constitutes a substantial part of university coursework and assignments (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020).

The sample for this study comprised students who shared several characteristics, such as nationality, year level, and gender (all students were female), and who were enrolled in the same course. The teachers in this study taught EFL academic writing but varied in their qualifications and years of teaching experience. In Phase 1, all the teachers who participated in classroom observations, interviews, and writing tasks were female and taught at one university.

All observed teachers in this study were teaching final-year EFL students enrolled in a module titled Argumentative Writing. This module is a core component of the academic writing curriculum in Saudi universities and is specifically designed to develop students' ability to construct coherent and persuasive arguments in English. All participating teachers followed the same prescribed course textbook, also titled Argumentative Writing, which serves as the primary instructional material for the module. The textbook includes multiple lessons focused on building arguments, structuring essays, and developing logical coherence all of which are closely tied to the use of MD markers. Upon reviewing the textbook content, it became evident that MD markers were present in the form of exercises aimed at using linking words to connect sentences correctly. However, these activities were framed more as grammar tasks rather than as writing-based instruction. For example, students were often asked to insert appropriate markers to complete sentence structures, but there was little emphasis on how MD markers function to guide reader interpretation or enhance writer and reader interaction in extended pieces of writing. Given the nature and aims of the module, as well as the inclusion of MD markers-related exercises in the textbook, it was a reasonable expectation that explicit instruction on metadiscourse would be observed during teaching and feedback sessions.

In contrast, in Phase 2, the online questionnaire was completed by both male and female EFL academic writing teachers from multiple universities.

### **3.7 Sampling**

Sampling referred to the methods that the researcher used to obtain a group of participants that could be representative of the whole population sample for the study's purposes (Saunders et al., 2013). The participants in this study were non-native EFL teachers who taught academic writing to EFL students at the university level in Saudi Arabia. Phase one included only female participants, as the Saudi education system required that males and females be taught separately. As this study used mixed methods, the sampling methods

differed. There were two main types of non-probability sampling techniques: purposive and convenience sampling (Cohen et al., 2018), which were used in phase one and phase two of this study, respectively.

In the first, qualitative phase, the researcher used the purposive sampling procedure to choose suitable participants according to the research study criteria. Purposive sampling was “used to select respondents that were most likely to yield appropriate and useful information” (Kelly et al., 2010, p. 317). Purposive sampling helped the researcher gain an in-depth understanding and choose the participants that were most suitable for the study (Bryman, 2015). According to Dörnyei (2007), there were nine strategies for purposive sampling, depending on the research topic. For this study, I employed three purposive sampling strategies: homogeneous, typical, and convenience, to ensure the participants were suitable for addressing the research questions (Dörnyei, 2007). The homogeneous strategy involved selecting participants with shared characteristics, such as teaching academic writing at the university level and being non-native EFL teachers. However, to capture a broader range of perspectives, I also ensured diversity in years of teaching experience, including both experienced and less experienced teachers. This approach, while introducing heterogeneity in terms of teaching experience, allowed for a balanced exploration of varied expertise levels, enriching the study with a wider spectrum of insights.

The ‘typical’ strategy focused on participants who were representative of the research focus (Dörnyei, 2007). Accordingly, I selected 10 EFL teachers who taught academic writing at the university level, ensuring they represented the target group of educators relevant to this study. The convenience strategy was used to recruit the 10 EFL academic writing teachers from a specific university in Riyadh who agreed to participate. This approach was advantageous in terms of saving time, money, and effort (Dörnyei, 2007). Although each teacher was observed only once, the teacher sample was relatively homogeneous. All participating teachers were

female, had similar educational qualifications in English language teaching, and were delivering the same final-year Argumentative Writing module using the same textbook. Given the focus of the module on academic argumentation, it would be reasonable to expect that features such as MD markers would be explicitly addressed as part of the teaching content. This consistency helped to reduce variation across classrooms and supports the validity of comparing their practices despite the single-observation limitation. See Table 3.2 below for detailed background information about the participants, including their qualifications and teaching experience.

**Table. 3.2**  
*Participants' background information*

NO.	Pseudonyms	Qualification	Qualification Information	Teaching Experience
1	Mona	PhD	Language and education, from UK	13 years
2	Alaa	PhD	Language and education, from UK	1 year
3	Laila	PhD	Linguistics, from UK	8 years
4	Julia	PhD	Linguistics, from UK	4 years
5	Yusraa	MA	TESOL, from USA	8 years
6	Noaf	PhD	Language and education, from UK	4 years
7	Amal	MA	TESOL, from New Zealand	5 years
8	Samar	PhD	Linguistics, from Australia	3 years
9	Haifa	PhD	TESOL, from UK	2 years
10	Norah	MA	TESOL, from USA	2 years

In the second, quantitative phase, the main aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through a larger sample, without aiming to generalise the findings. Therefore, the suitable sampling method for this phase was non-probability convenience sampling. According to Dörnyei (2007), convenience or opportunity sampling could be considered a convenience strategy and might include a purposeful strategy as well. This method allowed the

researcher to access participants who were available and willing to participate, ensuring the study's purposes and aims were met efficiently (Dörnyei, 2007). According to Dörnyei and Csizér (2012), in second language acquisition research, convenience sampling was considered the most appropriate method for questionnaires and surveys in quantitative research because it offered a practical way to recruit participants within the constraints of time, location, and accessibility. In educational contexts, such constraints often included limited availability of participants, institutional permissions, and geographic restrictions, making convenience sampling a practical and effective choice.

### **3.8 Research Methods**

#### ***Class Observation***

Classroom teaching observation was considered the most common tool in educational research (Scourfield, 2019). Generally speaking, observation often provides the researcher with rich and actual information about the research topic (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2015). Gerber et al. (2016) added that in the learning and education setting, observation was an essential method that offered the researcher critical insights into what occurred in the classroom, including any processes used. According to Allwright (2014), observation in a language classroom held significant value for the researcher, as it allowed them to be close to the participants and see every single move in the classroom, such as the teacher's behaviour, class activities, strategies, and lesson content.

In addition, Barendsen and Henze (2019) pointed out that the observation of classroom teaching was the most suitable tool for investigating language teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Therefore, in this study, observation was used to address Research Question 1: How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing? During the observation, the following areas of focus were investigated to provide a deeper understanding of classroom practices related to MD markers:



- a. How do teachers teach MD markers?
- b. What are the strategies that teachers use to teach MD markers?
- c. How do teachers correct students' errors concerning MD markers?

In this study, the observation schedule was developed by the researcher, drawing on key studies that had explored EFL academic writing instruction, EFL classroom observation, and the use of MD markers in EFL writing research. These studies included Bhatti et al. (2018), Burgin and Daniel (2017), Dörnyei (2007), Hyland and Tse (2004), and Sari (2019). According to Dörnyei (2007), classroom observation in EFL contexts encompassed various aspects, such as classroom organisation, presentation, interactions, and content knowledge.

Semi-structured and non-participant observations were used in this study, as the researcher did not take part in any classroom activities. Semi-structured observations allowed for the recording of events in the classroom by taking notes and using audio and video recordings (Creswell, 2014). While completing a checklist or writing notes during observations could have been exhaustive and risked missing critical information, audio recording was particularly effective in ensuring that all classroom activities were accurately documented (Myers & Avison, 2002). Classroom observations were documented using semi-structured observation schedules and audio recordings in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. These observations were conducted in EFL writing classes at the university. A total of 10 EFL argumentative academic writing classes, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, were observed.

Several challenges were anticipated during classroom observations, such as whether teachers and students would behave as they normally would, given the presence of a researcher (Creswell, 2014). To minimise this, both teachers and students were informed that the purpose of the observations was not to evaluate performance but to gain insights into how academic writing was being taught. Additionally, I positioned myself at the back of the classroom to

minimise disruptions and help participants feel more comfortable. These observations also informed the development of other research instruments, such as interview and questionnaire questions. Although each teacher was observed only once, this does not represent a significant limitation due to the homogeneity of the teacher sample and teaching context. All participating teachers held postgraduate qualifications either a Master's or PhD in the field of EFL, and were teaching the same course level using the same module content and assessment rubric. The module itself explicitly focuses on teaching argumentative writing and includes specific learning outcomes related to the effective use of MD markers. Because of this standardised curriculum and assessment design, all teachers were working toward the same pedagogical goals. As a result, their teaching practices were naturally aligned, and observing them once provided a reliable representation of their approach. It is therefore unlikely that additional observations would have revealed substantially different practices, since the instructional context, expectations, and teaching objectives were consistent across the sample.

The observation schedule (see Appendix C 2) was designed to examine the teachers' content knowledge of MD markers, their teaching practices, and teaching strategies in the classroom. The schedule documented how teachers used MD markers in teaching argumentative writing, encouraged students to use them, and explained MD markers' features and meanings. Additionally, the observation schedule captured the types of MD markers used during instruction. More detail will be explained in the pilot study section 3.9.2 and the main study section 3.10.1.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

The interview is one of the most commonly used tools in qualitative research because it helps provide detailed and deep insights into participants' experiences (Yin, 2016). The interview is described as a conversation where information and views are shared between the researcher and participants, making it an important method for exploring complex topics

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview is useful in qualitative research with a small sample size, as it allows for a thorough understanding of individual perspectives (Choy, 2014).

There are three main types of interviews often used in qualitative research: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews are preferred because they offer a balance between flexibility and organisation. They allow the researcher and participants some freedom to expand on questions, explain ideas, or change the order of topics while still covering a set list of key areas with all interviewees (Bryman, 2015). In contrast, structured interviews follow a fixed set of questions, and unstructured interviews are completely open-ended, which may lead to differences in what is discussed with each participant. Semi-structured interviews are particularly valuable as they let participants share their feelings, opinions, and ideas in detail, giving the researcher a better understanding of their context (Wellington, 2015).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to address Research Question 2:

2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?

2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?

2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide by adapting elements from previous studies focused on teaching academic writing and MD markers, including those by Alharbi (2019), Alshammari (2018), Cohen et al. (2018), and Javadi-Safa (2018). Following interview preparation guidelines, the researcher emphasised maintaining focus on the primary research questions and incorporating flexibility in questioning to allow participants to elaborate on their responses (Cohen et al., 2018).

While previous interview guides were reviewed as a foundation, the final main and sub-questions were specifically designed to meet the unique objectives of this study. The interview questions explored teachers' experiences in teaching academic writing, their perceptions of the importance of MD markers in argumentative writing quality, and their views on students' writing outcomes. In this study, the ten EFL academic writing teachers who had participated in the classroom observations were also interviewed. Conducting interviews after observations rather than before helped ensure that teachers' classroom behaviours remained unaffected by interview content, thus providing a more accurate representation of their typical practices (Dörnyei, 2007).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in English, as all participants were English teachers in higher education and were therefore expected to have relatively high levels of English proficiency. The researcher clarified or paraphrased any questions as needed to ensure understanding. Each interview began with introductory questions about the teachers' backgrounds, followed by main questions that delved into their knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs regarding MD markers in EFL academic writing (see Appendix D). Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, followed by a 30-minute writing session by the teachers. For further details, see the pilot study section 3.9.2 and the main study section 3.10.1. All interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate data analysis.

The researcher anticipated several challenges, including the time-consuming nature of interviews, which could affect data collection (Robson, 2002). Flexibility was maintained to allow for adjusting or omitting questions based on interviewees' responses (Bryman, 2015). Another potential issue was the risk that participants might not fully disclose their views or give prepared answers, either due to sharing interview questions with colleagues or withholding sensitive insights (Bryman, 2015). To mitigate this, the researcher employed strategies to foster openness, such as creating a comfortable and non-judgemental environment,

ensuring confidentiality, and gently probing for more detailed responses when needed (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

### ***Writing samples: students' writing***

When investigating L2 writing, collecting actual writing samples is crucial for data analysis, particularly when the focus is on how writing is taught and assessed rather than just the writing itself (Taylor et al., 2016). Writing samples provide a clear understanding of the impact of teaching practices on students' writing. Ransdell and Barbier (2002) emphasised that writing samples in L2 research help researchers gain insights into students' writing performance and offer authentic data for analysis.

In this study, writing samples were collected to explore how EFL teachers identified and addressed strengths and weaknesses in students' writing, particularly in their use of MD markers. These samples also shed light on the alignment between teachers' teaching methods, feedback practices, and their knowledge of MD markers. A total of 100 student writing samples were collected from the same 10 teachers whose classes were observed and who were later interviewed. Each teacher provided 10 argumentative writing samples from their students. To ensure a range of samples, teachers were instructed to randomly select from their already marked assignments, including work from both higher- and lower-performing students. These samples were handed over after the classroom observations and before the interviews.

By collecting samples from students with varying proficiency levels, this study ensured a diverse dataset that represented a wide range of writing abilities across the observed classes. The analysis of these samples provided valuable insights into how teachers gave feedback on students' use of MD markers, identifying and correcting errors while highlighting patterns in teaching and assessment practices. This approach further complemented the data obtained from classroom observations and teacher interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between instructional strategies and student outcomes.

In the main study, the student writing samples were analysed using the same institutional marking rubric that had originally been used by the teachers. This rubric focused on key aspects of argumentative writing, especially text coherence, organisation, and the use of MD markers. Although all the teachers had already marked the students' work, they had not written the marks on the scripts. Because my study focuses on MD markers, I re-marked the writing samples using the same rubric, but I only focused on the band that assessed coherence and organisation. This part of the rubric included specific points related to how well students used MD markers to link ideas and organise their writing clearly.

The rubric (see Appendix M) was based on well-known writing assessment approaches and was influenced by Hyland's (2005) model of MD markers, as well as ideas from genre-based writing instruction. It looked at how students built their arguments, used linking phrases, and included words like hedges and boosters to guide the reader. To make sure my re-marking was accurate and fair, it was reviewed by two experienced EFL writing teachers. The use of this rubric matched the ideas discussed in Chapter 2, where writing is seen not just as correct grammar, but as a way of clearly communicating ideas to the reader. This helped connect the analysis of the writing samples to the theories introduced earlier in the thesis.

## **Quantitative Data Collection**

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is considered an instrument that can help the researcher gather a large amount of information in a short time (Punch, 2013). An online questionnaire was used in this study to reach a substantial number of participants in different universities efficiently and quickly (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Furthermore, collecting data through an online tool protects the researcher from risks such as data loss or manual entry errors (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

Despite the advantages of using online questionnaires, there are some potential drawbacks the researcher may encounter. These include issues such as the clarity of the questions, whether participants complete the questionnaire without interruptions, or whether they rely on external sources when answering (Bryman, 2015). Additionally, it is difficult to ensure that participants read all the questions thoroughly or complete the questionnaire independently, without assistance from others (Bryman, 2015). However, these disadvantages could also apply to paper-based questionnaires that were not completed in the researcher's presence.

In the second phase, this study distributed an online questionnaire to address the research questions exploring teachers' beliefs, as well as their stated practices for teaching MD markers in academic writing. The questionnaire items were developed by reviewing studies on EFL teachers' knowledge and issues related to MD markers in academic writing, as discussed in the literature review. These relevant studies helped to shape and organise the questionnaire items. Additionally, the questionnaire items were modified based on the findings from Phase 1 data collection. Since Phase 1 involved a small sample, Phase 2 aimed to gather approximately 150 questionnaire responses to determine how far the findings from Phase 1 extended to other teachers in the same context.

The questionnaire was constructed with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (5 points). According to Chomeya (2010), a 5-point Likert scale is useful because it is quicker and simpler to complete than longer scales (See Appendix F 2). A Likert scale simplifies the questionnaire by allowing participants to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with statements quickly, making it easier to complete in a short time with minimal effort (Joshi et al., 2015). The estimated time for participants to complete the questionnaire was approximately 25 minutes. For further details, see the pilot study section 3.9.3 and the main study section 3.10.2.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is recommended to investigate any weaknesses and strengths in the planned research instruments before the actual study is conducted (Dillman, 2000). Using a pilot study helps researchers identify areas for improvement, such as modifying unclear questions or refining data collection methods. According to Hertzog (2008), a pilot study also helps researchers estimate the time required for data collection, which aids in effectively managing interviews and observations in preparation for the main study.

The pilot study for this research was conducted in August and September of 2022. To ensure accessibility for classroom observations and interviews with participants, I selected a university close to my location. This facilitated easier scheduling and coordination of the pilot study activities. However, to prevent any potential bias, I avoided selecting universities where I had previously worked. The information sheet and consent form for the pilot study were sent to the Dean of the English Department at a Saudi university. After receiving formal approval from the Dean, I contacted various teachers to invite them to participate in the pilot study (see Appendix A1 and A2). Two EFL academic writing teachers, along with their students, agreed to participate. Both the teachers and their students received the information sheet and provided their signed consent (see Appendix B).

#### **3.9.1 Participants**

The sample size in a pilot study is often recommended to be around 10–20% of the total actual study sample size (Baker, 1994). Accordingly, two EFL academic writing lecturers from one Saudi university participated in the pilot study. Their teaching was observed, they participated in interviews, and they completed a questionnaire face-to-face. The purpose of piloting the questionnaire face-to-face was to check the clarity of the questions by asking the participants if any items were unclear or required further clarification before distributing the online questionnaire to other participants.



The participants in this pilot study included third- and fourth-year EFL students from the English department. These academic levels were selected because, according to Saudi university policies, students in English departments undertake a four-year programme. The first two years consist of a preparatory phase focused on intensive English language study. Upon completing this phase, students are required to take English proficiency exams, such as IELTS, and must achieve a minimum score of 5.5 or B2 to continue their studies. In their third and fourth years, students specialise in one of three areas: linguistics, translation, or English literature. Regardless of their chosen specialisation, students are required to write assignments of at least 2,000 words for their modules. In their final year, they must also complete a research project. Additionally, during their third and fourth years, students take a compulsory module entitled Advanced Academic Writing, which aims to enhance their academic writing skills, particularly in terms of coherence and argumentation in academic assignments. The pilot study participants were chosen because academic writing formed a significant part of their education. None of the participants from the pilot study were included in the main study.

In this research, the pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability, validity, and practicability of the study's instruments, including in-class observations, interviews, questionnaires, and writing samples. Both the main study and the pilot study aimed to collect data about L2 writing teachers' understanding of MD markers and their beliefs regarding teaching and learning with MD markers. This piloting helped to better manage the time and process involved in reaching the participants and addressing potential challenges for the main study. Furthermore, the pilot study revealed that significant amendments were required for most of the study's instruments, including modifying the questions and adjusting the methods of data analysis. The next section discusses the piloting of all the research instruments in more detail.

### **3.9.2 Piloting the Qualitative Data Instruments**

#### ***Observations***

In this pilot study, I observed four academic writing classes. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the first two observations in August 2022 were conducted online, as the academic term in Saudi Arabia had not yet resumed in person. These online classes featured two different academic writing teachers and their students, who were at various university levels but were all enrolled in the academic writing module as part of their programme requirements.

The main purpose of these online class observations was to assess the suitability of the proposed class observation forms. Neither form proved entirely suitable, as some items were unnecessary, important aspects of the lessons that required recording were missing, and the forms' structure made them difficult to use during observations. The initial observation forms used during piloting included two separate schedules: one for observing general teaching practices and the other for tracking the number of MD markers used (see Appendix C 1).

Using two separate schedules disrupted my note-taking because I needed two sheets of paper and had to constantly switch between them. To address this, I developed a new, combined observation schedule that included all necessary observation aspects in a single form. This revised schedule was not simply a combination of the two initial forms; it was carefully refined to enhance note-taking and focus on key teaching practices related to MD markers. The new schedule included specific items to observe, such as the teacher's discussion of arguments, the writer's voice, and reader awareness in academic writing. It also tracked instructional practices involving the explanation, illustration, and correction of MD marker use. Additionally, columns were added to record the use of resources or class activities, detailed observation notes, and time stamps to systematically capture significant observations. This amended form provided a more structured and holistic assessment of teachers' knowledge and practices in

teaching MD markers in EFL academic writing, ultimately aligning more closely with the study's research questions.

In September 2022, I observed two face-to-face classes. The students were in their fourth year of study, enrolled in an Advanced Academic Writing module, and were expected to write a research project of around 8,000 words by the end of the academic year. I confirmed that the module curriculum required learners to develop skills in writing academic arguments. The lecturers were teaching academic writing, and both held master's degrees in teaching English as a foreign language (TOEFL). Each class lasted approximately 60 minutes. At this stage, I piloted the previously amended class observation form, focusing mainly on teachers' knowledge of MD markers in teaching academic writing. The observation form was structured to document any MD markers that were illustrated or mentioned in class to assess whether MD markers were being taught as part of the writing curriculum. Investigating whether teachers emphasised the use of MD markers in building arguments was crucial, as these markers contribute to the coherence, clarity, and persuasiveness of academic writing. Understanding teachers' approaches to MD markers revealed the extent to which students were being given the tools needed to construct well-structured and effective arguments, which are essential skills in academic writing.

The amended observation form proved useful and provided me with rich data about how teachers taught academic writing in terms of building arguments, organising text, and responding to students' errors. For the observation schedule, (see Appendix C 2). The audio recordings of these observations helped me complete any missed details or verify notes as needed.

### ***Interview***

Firstly, the semi-structured interview questions and probe questions were piloted with two teachers to check the interview elements, such as the suitability, order, and organisation of

the questions, as well as the time, place, and recording of the interviews, and to check if there was any feedback from the teachers about any ambiguous parts of the interview. This piloting showed the importance of some changes that needed to be made to improve the flow of the interview questions and to replace some questions with more appropriate ones. All the modifications were made based on the participants' responses and after reviewing the research questions.

The amended interview schedule included five parts: introduction, teaching academic writing, MD markers, students' writing, and conclusion. However, the main changes were made to sections where I had originally asked teachers for their feedback on examples of their students' writing and when I asked teachers to write an essay of about 250 words at the end of the interview. The goal of this writing task was to assess the teachers' own academic writing skills and their use of MD markers. However, I found that teachers did not feel comfortable with this task. Both teachers said they did not have enough time to provide feedback for all their students and felt the task was too much to do during the interview. Additionally, the feedback they gave was not detailed enough to provide useful data for the study. Because of this, I decided to remove this part of the interview from the main study.

Another issue arose during the essay-writing task. One of the teachers tried to write the essay but stopped after 30 minutes, apologising for not being able to complete it. I felt this element would prevent the research from gaining reliable and meaningful data, as only proficient teachers would likely agree to participate in this part of the interview. Possible solutions were discussed with my supervisors, and we decided to delete this question and instead show interviewees a writing sample and ask them questions about it as a more indirect way to explore teachers' knowledge about the use of MD markers. Therefore, I created a writing sample and added a question to the interview section concerned with students' writing as follows: "The following is an example of academic writing. Can you please answer some

questions?”. The writing sample was developed by me and reviewed using Hyland’s (2004) model for MD markers. It was also reviewed by an English writing expert to ensure its suitability for assessing teachers’ knowledge of MD markers. The sample comprised four paragraphs: an introduction, two main body paragraphs, and a conclusion. In one main body paragraph, a few MD markers e.g., *firstly* or *finally* were used to organise the text, while the second paragraph included both correct and incorrect MD markers e.g., *alternatively*, *perhaps* or *some might say* to assess teachers’ ability to recognise and evaluate their usage. The responses gathered from teachers on this sample are analysed in Chapter Five, providing insights into their awareness, and understanding of MD markers in structuring arguments within academic writing.

Other changes were made to resolve issues with the flow and clarity of the questions that I identified during the interview. For example, I originally asked participants about how they taught argumentative writing before asking them how they defined arguments in academic writing. The amended interview guide was reviewed, and the validity of the questions about the research questions and their relevance to the research topic was checked with an EFL lecturer (see Appendix D). After these amendments, I re-piloted the interview with two lecturers to check all the interview questions again. The interviews were audio-recorded, as audio recording allowed me to review the participants’ answers multiple times and check transcripts for accuracy. Both participants provided detailed answers about how they taught academic writing, their beliefs about what improves academic writing, and how they corrected students’ errors. They also freely shared their opinions on the prepared writing sample and answered all the other questions.

### ***Students' Writing Samples***

During the pilot study, it was challenging to obtain enough student writing samples due to the early stage of the academic year. However, I was able to collect several student writing

tasks, which were submitted through the university's Virtual Learning Environment. These tasks included academic paragraphs and essays written on various topics assigned by their teachers. I randomly selected six writing samples for qualitative analysis during the pilot study (see Appendix E). These samples were used to test and refine qualitative data analysis methods before applying them to the main study.

The writing tasks included short quizzes and assignments given to students as part of their regular coursework. These quizzes consisted of academic writing exercises where students practised developing arguments and structuring their ideas. This allowed me to assess the effectiveness of the analysis approach and ensure the suitability of the selected methods for exploring MD marker use in students' writing.

### **3.9.3 Piloting the Questionnaire**

The online questionnaire was piloted in a face-to-face setting with three L2 teachers to check its quality, estimate the time required for completion, and assess teachers' answers, as well as to identify any ambiguous questions or wording. While the teachers completed the questionnaire using an online format, they were physically present with the researcher during the piloting process. This allowed the researcher to observe their reactions and clarify any confusion directly. Through this process, I found that the open-ended questions in Part A of the questionnaire were not very useful because most of the teachers provided only brief responses, which did not yield substantial data. Only one teacher provided detailed answers, but she admitted that she had searched online for suitable responses while completing the questionnaire. This highlighted a limitation: teachers could still search for answers online, even during piloting. Although I did not implement any specific measures to prevent this during the pilot phase, this insight prompted me to revise the questionnaire format to reduce reliance on external sources. As a result, the questionnaire was amended to focus on measuring the EFL teachers' knowledge of MD markers in Part A, and changes were made to replace open-ended

questions with multiple-choice options. These amendments were intended to encourage teachers to rely on their knowledge and minimise the possibility of searching for answers externally.

The amended questionnaire Part A contained 12 questions: 11 questions with multiple-choice options and one open-ended question. The first three questions asked about the teachers' knowledge of the meaning of 'argument' in academic writing. The rest of the questions examined the teachers' knowledge about the meaning, use, and functions of different MD markers. All the questions were based on open-ended responses from the pilot study. These multiple-choice questions explored the teachers' knowledge about MD markers directly by requiring them to choose what they believed was the correct answer. It should be noted that question number five was the only open-ended question in the amended questionnaire. However, the teachers' answers were expected to be short, as the question asked teachers to write as much as they could about the MD markers they knew. This question was critical for understanding which MD markers EFL teachers could identify based on their knowledge and for identifying areas of knowledge that were never mentioned. The questions in Part A were developed with a variety of options of the same structure and length to avoid any obvious answers. The purpose of these questions was to explore EFL writing teachers' knowledge of the use of MD markers in academic writing.

The statements in Part B, which investigated the teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning with MD markers, were amended based on pilot study participants' feedback and a review by two EFL experts. For example, one of the participants asked, "Do you mean all L2 students or my students?" To clarify, I replaced the phrase "L2 students" with "my students" to make the meaning more specific. Another amendment involved changing "argumentative academic writing" to "build arguments in academic writing" because some teachers were confused about whether I meant "how to write arguments in academic writing"

or the “argumentative writing genre” (i.e., types and processes). Since my study focused on the use of MD markers in building arguments in academic writing rather than the argumentative writing genre itself, the statements were revised to use the phrase “build arguments in academic writing” for greater clarity.

All amendments were discussed with my supervisors and two EFL teachers to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. After the validity was confirmed, the questionnaire link was distributed to different Saudi universities to collect enough responses (at least 20). For the questionnaire consent form please see Appendix G. The pilot study received 23 responses, which were analysed to identify areas for improvement and refine the questionnaire further. Based on these responses, several specific refinements were made. For example, some multiple-choice questions were rephrased to make the options more distinct and reduce ambiguity. Additionally, the order of the questions was adjusted to improve the logical flow and reduce any confusion participants might have experienced. Feedback also indicated that some questions in Part B required clarification, particularly regarding terminology, so phrases like "academic writing" and "argument development" were replaced with simpler, more familiar terms. These changes were intended to enhance clarity and ensure the questionnaire effectively captured the teachers' knowledge and perceptions about MD markers. The responses from the pilot study were not included in the main study. Please see Appendix F for the initial questionnaire before the pilot study and Appendix F 1 for the amended questionnaire used in the pilot study.

### ***Validity***

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the class observation form, semi-structured interview guide, and questionnaire were reviewed by my supervisors and two experts in L2 educational research in Saudi Arabia. This review aimed to confirm the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each tool for addressing the research questions. Based on the



experts' feedback, initial modifications were made to all instruments, which were then resubmitted for a second review to confirm that all necessary amendments had been addressed.

For the questionnaire, this process included revisions to ensure that each item effectively measured teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their perceptions regarding their teaching practices. The experts assessed face validity and the clarity of terms to confirm that the questionnaire could elicit accurate responses. Following final adjustments based on this feedback, the validated questionnaire was piloted more broadly to refine practical aspects such as completion time and question clarity.

Similarly, qualitative instruments such as the observation form and interview guide were piloted and refined based on both expert feedback and practical observations. Final versions of each tool were reviewed with supervisors and experts to ensure they were comprehensive and well-suited to the study's objectives. The amended and validated instruments were subsequently administered to participants in the main study, with pilot data excluded from the final analysis.

### ***Reliability or Trustworthiness***

For the qualitative data, I used the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985), which are more suitable for qualitative research than the concept of reliability. These criteria helped ensure that the findings were accurate, clear, and based on evidence. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the data, I asked two L2 experts to review all findings from class observations and interviews. They carefully checked the way the data was organised, how the themes were identified, and whether anything was unclear or needed improvement. This process was conducted for both the pilot and main studies to ensure that the analysis was thorough and reliable at every stage. Their feedback was very helpful in ensuring the results were accurate and fair.

The reliability of a quantitative instrument illustrates “how far a particular test, procedure or tool, such as a questionnaire, will produce similar results in different circumstances, assuming that no other factors are altered” (Murphy & Yelder, 2010, pp. 2–3). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998) stated that the reliability of quantitative results can be achieved by checking internal consistency reliability. In this case, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was used to evaluate internal consistency. If the value of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is 0.6 or higher, it is considered acceptable in terms of reliability (Hinton et al., 2014). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was therefore used to assess the internal consistency of the 24 statements in the amended questionnaire, which was completed by the 23 teachers in the second phase of the pilot study.

#### ***Reliability check – Part A (multiple choice questions)***

Part A of the questionnaire, as outlined in Appendix F 1, was the version used during the pilot study to assess teachers' knowledge of MD markers. It contained 12 questions, including one open-ended question (question five) and 11 multiple-choice questions. Question five, the only open-ended question, was reviewed for relevance and clarity by two experts in L2 educational research. These experts evaluated whether the question aligned with the study objectives and checked for consistency in participant responses, ensuring it could reliably elicit comparable data across different respondents.

The remaining 11 questions were multiple-choice items, each with a varying number of options, including one or more correct answers. For example, question one had five options, two of which were correct, while question twelve had three options with only one correct answer. These multiple-choice questions functioned as a quiz to assess participants' knowledge about MD markers, with correct options scored as 1 point and incorrect options scored as zero.

To assess the internal consistency of these items in the pilot study, I calculated Cronbach's alpha. The initial result showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .57, which was below the acceptable threshold. To improve reliability, I examined individual items and

removed those that negatively impacted the overall alpha score. After removing items Q4A1, Q6, Q2A3, Q3A2, Q1A4, Q8, and A5, the Cronbach's alpha increased to an acceptable level of .70 (Hinton et al., 2014), indicating improved reliability in measuring teachers' knowledge of MD markers.

### ***Reliability check – Part B (Views scale)***

The initial examination revealed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was .51, which is considered low (Hinton et al., 2014). Following this, I removed items that the analysis indicated were reducing the Cronbach's alpha below .51. This meant that items 18, 14, 7, and 17 were removed, leaving 20 items and achieving an acceptable Cronbach's alpha level of .70 (Hinton et al., 2014). However, upon reviewing statements 17 and 18, I found that they were important to the questionnaire but required clarification.

For statement 17, "I believe that in academic writing, arguments should involve the use of markers such as 'I', 'me', or 'mine' for making explicit references to the author," I revised it to "I believe that in academic writing, writers can use 'I' or 'me' for making explicit references to the author." Similarly, statement 18, "I believe that in academic writing, arguments should build interactions with the readers," was revised to "I believe that in academic writing, the writer should think about the readers" (see Appendix F 2 for the updated version of the questionnaire after reliability was checked).

## **3.10 Data Analysis Procedures for The Main Study**

### **3.10.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

There are several approaches to analysing qualitative data (Creswell, 2002), many of which share similar main principles. For this study, thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the qualitative data, which included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and writing samples. Thematic analysis is widely regarded for its flexibility and suitability for exploring patterns within qualitative data, particularly for novice researchers (Braun et al.,

2019). This method allowed for the identification of key themes related to EFL teachers' knowledge and practices regarding MD markers in argumentative writing. My approach to coding and theme generation was hybrid, combining both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) strategies. This process also included consultation with two EFL academics and my supervisors, whose feedback helped shape and rename codes to reflect the pedagogical models of writing reviewed in Chapter 2. These models, particularly Williams' (2003) and Hyland's (2005), significantly influenced the thematic framework, ensuring the final themes were grounded in both empirical evidence and theoretical foundations.

The data collected from observations, interviews, and writing samples were transcribed and coded using NVivo software for the data analysis. The thematic analysis followed Braun et al.'s (2019) six-step framework, detailed below:

1. Familiarisation with the Data: I began by transcribing all interviews and classroom observations verbatim. During this stage, I also read student writing samples and interview transcripts multiple times. I noted early patterns such as repetition of terms like *"textbook doesn't mention it"* or *"I teach what's in the curriculum only"*, which hinted at external constraints influencing pedagogical practices.
2. Generating Initial Codes: the process of generating initial codes followed a line-by-line analysis of the qualitative data interview transcripts, observation field notes, and student writing samples. Codes were generated both inductively, emerging directly from the data, and deductively, guided by pre-existing concepts in the literature, particularly models of writing instruction and Hyland's (2004) MD markers framework. This hybrid approach allowed for a rich and theory-informed coding process.

For example, during one classroom observation (Chapter 4), a teacher remarked:

*“I just tell them to put ‘firstly’, then ‘secondly’. It helps them organise their ideas.”*

This was initially coded as “reliance on basic transitions” and “instructions”, reflecting how teachers often associated the teaching of cohesion with the use of fixed, surface-level connectives. These codes were later grouped under the theme “Teachers’ Strategies”, particularly aligning with the genre-based writing model’s emphasis on the structural staging of texts.

Similarly, an interviewee stated:

*“We don’t focus on the reader... I don’t think they understand who they are writing to.”*

This was coded as “lack of audience awareness”, a term that aligns with the interactional function of MD markers, particularly engagement markers (Hyland, 2005). This code later contributed to the theme “Teachers’ Guidelines – Thinking of Readers” (Chapter 4), showing how teachers themselves recognised the absence of reader-oriented instruction.

Codes often evolved through comparison across sources. For instance, from multiple interviews and classroom observations, I noticed repetition of terms such as *“we follow the book,” “time is short,”* and *“not part of the syllabus.”* These were coded respectively as “curriculum dependence”, “time pressure”, and “instructional exclusion”, and later synthesised into the theme “Teacher-Related Issues” (Chapter 5).

3. Searching for Themes: Once the data were coded, I grouped similar codes into broader themes. This involved organising the codes from different data sources into common themes that reflected the L2 teachers' practices and perceptions regarding MD markers.
4. Reviewing Themes: In this stage, I reviewed the identified themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. This was crucial to ensure that the themes were coherent and that they appropriately captured the key aspects of the teachers' knowledge and instructional practices.

5. Defining and Naming Themes: Theme naming was influenced by both the data and the literature. For instance, the theme "Organising for Coherence" reflects terminology from the genre-based approach in writing models discussed in Chapter 2. Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, with its emphasis on staged and structured writing influenced the grouping of codes that focused on sequencing, coherence, and textual logic.
6. Producing the Report: Finally, I integrated the themes into a comprehensive findings report, using direct quotes and examples from the data to support the analysis. This narrative formed the basis of the detailed analysis presented in the relevant Findings chapters.

This organised approach ensured a thorough examination of the qualitative data from multiple sources. More detailed insights and analysis of these findings are explained in the Findings chapters, Chapters 4 and 5.

### **3.10.2 Quantitative Data Analysis (Questionnaire)**

Quantitative data were collected through an online questionnaire designed to explore L2 teachers' knowledge and perceptions about teaching and learning with MD markers in academic writing. The questionnaire was organised into two sections. The first section focused on demographic information, including English qualifications and teaching experience. Collecting this demographic information was essential for contextualising the findings, as it helped establish how participants' professional qualifications and experience influenced their knowledge of and perceptions of MD markers. For confidentiality, each participant was assigned an ID number to ensure anonymity.

As outlined in Section 3.10.2, the second section of the questionnaire was split into two parts: Part A featured a knowledge test to assess teachers' understanding of MD markers, while Part B contained statements related to teaching and learning MD markers, using a Likert scale

to measure participants' perceptions and beliefs. The data collected were analysed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29, a widely used tool in social sciences for quantitative analysis (Bryman, 2015). In addition to calculating basic statistics to identify trends and patterns in participants' responses, further analyses were carried out to explore relationships between different factors. For example, I checked whether teachers' knowledge and perceptions about MD markers were linked to their teaching experience or English qualifications. Correlation tests were used to investigate connections between participants' scores on the knowledge test (Part A) and their responses to the statements in Part B. Frequencies for each question and tables were also created to show how participants responded to the questions in both parts of the questionnaire. These additional analyses helped to better understand how teachers' backgrounds and beliefs influenced their knowledge and teaching practices related to MD markers. More details about these analyses are provided in Chapter 5.

In addition, responses to the open-ended questions were quantified using frequency counts to identify common patterns, specifically the types of metadiscourse markers mentioned by participants. This analysis helped reveal which categories of MD markers (e.g., interactive or interactional) were most frequently recognised and how participants described their use in academic writing.

While SPSS primarily provided descriptive statistics to summarise trends and patterns, additional inferential tests were conducted to explore relationships between variables, such as the connection between teaching experience and participants' knowledge of MD markers. This quantitative phase went beyond simple descriptions by examining these relationships, offering deeper insights into how different factors influenced teachers' knowledge and beliefs about MD markers. These analyses complemented the qualitative findings by broadening the overall

understanding of the data. More details about the analysis of the questionnaire data are provided in Chapter 5.

### **3.11 Quality and Rigour of The Study**

#### **Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Instruments**

In every study, an important task is for a researcher to verify the quality of the instruments. Additionally, given that qualitative methods differ from quantitative approaches, the strategies for validating such quality also vary. For qualitative methods, Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested a model that involves the use of four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Krefting (1991) stated, “these strategies are important to researchers in designing ways of increasing the rigour of their qualitative studies and also for readers to use as a means of assessing the value of the findings of qualitative research” (p. 215).

**Credibility:** This criterion relates to the internal validity of a study, encompassing how data were collected, participants selected, the research process conducted, and the data analysed (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To enhance internal validity, Merriam (1998) proposed several strategies, including triangulation and member checks. In this study, the researcher employed these methods to strengthen the credibility of the findings. First, member checks were conducted after observations and interviews to ensure that the data accurately reflected the participants' responses and experiences, rather than the researcher's interpretations. Second, triangulation was achieved by using multiple methods and processes for data collection and analysis, thereby enhancing the strength and reliability of the study's conclusions.

**Transferability:** This criterion refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalised to another context (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). As explained by Graneheim and Lundman (2004), a researcher can inform readers about a study's transferability, but it is up to



the readers to decide whether the results can be applied to another context. In this study, transferability was maximised by using a clear description of the study context, sampling, data collection process and data analysis (Krefting, 1991). These measures were also expected to enhance the trustworthiness of the research (Krefting, 1991).

**Dependability:** This criterion pertains to the replicability of the methods used to derive research findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). As Krefting (1991) asserts, a researcher must clearly describe how the results of a study were obtained to allow readers to assess the replicability of these methods in similar contexts. Strategies to maximise dependability in research include daily journaling and the code-recode procedure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this study, the researcher maintained a daily journal to document all information gathered during the data collection and analysis phases. Additionally, a code-recode process was employed during the qualitative data analysis of observations, interviews, and responses to open-ended questionnaire questions, whereby data coding was repeated to compare and verify the consistency of the results (Krefting, 1991).

**Confirmability:** This criterion concerns the confidence that a study's findings are unbiased and accurately reflect the participants' remarks and experiences (Tobin & Begley, 2004). To minimise bias or subjectivity in data collection, the researcher employed strategies such as providing clear descriptions, maintaining a daily journal, and using triangulation to cross-verify data sources (Krefting, 1991). These methods ensured that the findings were based on the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's interpretations.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics establish the standards of conduct for researchers and impose ethical principles to ensure the protection of participants' dignity, rights, and welfare. According to Poth (2020), mixed-methods research heightens ethical considerations due to the following factors:

- The integration of different designs and data collection points.
- The use of more intensive data collection methods.
- The compressed time period within which research is conducted.

In qualitative research, ethics are particularly important due to the direct and often personal engagement with participants, which involves exploring their experiences, opinions, and behaviours in depth. This approach requires researchers to build and maintain trust, as participants may share sensitive or private information. The detailed and narrative nature of qualitative data can make it more identifiable, increasing the responsibility of the researcher to protect participant identities and privacy. Additionally, the interpretation of qualitative data is inherently subjective, making it essential to follow ethical standards rigorously to avoid misrepresenting participants' voices and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Ethical considerations are therefore vital at every stage of the research process, from participant recruitment and data collection to analysis and reporting, to ensure the study respects participants' rights and maintains credibility.

To ensure compliance with ethical principles as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the researcher employed several strategies:

1. Obtaining detailed informed consent: Participants were fully informed of the research aims and objectives, procedures, expectations, confidentiality, privacy, their rights, and the benefits of participating. The researcher's role and sample questions were also clearly explained.
2. Adhering to ethical standards: The researcher strictly followed the guidelines set by the Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee, which included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, securely storing data, and minimising risks to participants. These measures ensured the study was conducted ethically and responsibly.

3. Building respectful relationships: A respectful and professional relationship was established between the researcher and participants.
4. Ensuring honesty and transparency: The research was conducted with integrity, ensuring that the findings were robust and trustworthy.
5. Defining data collection boundaries: Clear boundaries were set for data collection, and these were communicated to participants to ensure mutual understanding.

For this study, ethical approval was obtained by the university's guidelines for data collection and analysis (see Appendix I). Participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form before their participation (see Appendix J).

### **3.13 Procedures**

The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, with careful consideration of ethical guidelines to ensure informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. In line with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018), every effort was made to protect participants' identities and well-being throughout the research process. Key ethical concerns, including informed consent, privacy, and voluntary participation, were addressed to uphold the integrity of the study.

For the qualitative phase of the study, I contacted the deans of English departments at various universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, via email. These emails included an information sheet and consent form explaining the study's purpose and requirements (see Appendix A1). From the responses, I purposively selected 10 female EFL academic writing teachers who agreed to participate, along with their students. All participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time without consequence, and that their data would remain confidential. Each participant was assigned an ID number for

anonymity, and pseudonyms were used during transcription and in all subsequent reporting to protect their identities (see Appendix J).

In the quantitative phase, which involved a broader sample, I expanded the participant pool to include both male and female EFL academic writing teachers from universities across Saudi Arabia. Again, I reached out to the deans, who distributed the information sheet, consent form, and an online questionnaire link to their writing teachers (see Appendix G). This phase aimed to gather data from approximately 150 EFL teachers to explore their perceptions and knowledge of MD markers in academic writing. Participants varied in terms of their teaching experience and qualifications, which enriched the variety of responses.

To minimise disruption to participants, interviews were scheduled at times convenient to them, and participants were informed about the use of voice recording and asked to provide their consent for it. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly maintained, as participants chose their pseudonyms, which were used in the data analysis and final reporting. By following these procedures, the study ensured that participants' rights were respected and that the ethical standards of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were upheld.

### **3.14 Limitations**

Despite careful planning and consideration, this study was subject to several limitations. First, the use of purposive sampling, while intentional for selecting participants with relevant experience, was a non-probability design and may have led to sampling bias. This was particularly evident in phase one of the research, which included only female participants, potentially limiting the generalisability of the findings across both genders in Saudi Arabian universities.

Second, the mixed methods approach, though valuable for providing a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, introduced additional complexity in terms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Balancing qualitative and quantitative data required a

high level of expertise, and the integration of both strands increased the difficulty in drawing clear conclusions.

Finally, as this study represented an initial exploration of EFL teachers' knowledge and practices regarding MD markers in academic writing at the university level, it was limited in scope. Further research is needed to examine this topic across other educational contexts, such as secondary or primary education, and to investigate more diverse teaching strategies or potential interventions aimed at improving MD instruction. These limitations are acknowledged to provide a transparent account of the study's boundaries. A more detailed discussion of their implications and recommendations for future research is provided in the Conclusion chapter.

### **3.15 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research methodology used to explore Saudi EFL teachers' knowledge and practices regarding MD markers in academic writing. It summarised the mixed methods design, detailing the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including interviews, observations, writing samples, and questionnaires. The use of NVivo software for qualitative data analysis was also discussed. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study were addressed. The next chapters will present the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases, providing key insights into teachers' knowledge and practices.

## CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings related to Research Question 1, which explores how EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing. The findings are based on classroom observations, as described in Section 3.8 of the Methodology chapter. The data were analysed using a thematic approach, explained in Section 3.10.1, to organise the observations into themes, sub-themes, and codes. This chapter focuses solely on the observations of 10 EFL teachers, each teaching argumentative writing to final-year students at the same university. The teachers' qualifications and teaching experience are summarised in Table 4.1 below. The findings highlight the teaching strategies and classroom activities observed.

**Table. 4.1**  
*Participants background information*

NO.	Pseudonyms	Qualification	Qualification information	Teaching experience
1	Mona	PhD	Language and education from UK	13 years
2	Alaa	PhD	Language and education from UK	1 year
3	Laila	PhD	Linguistic from UK	8 years
4	Julia	PhD	Linguistic from UK	4 years
5	Yusraa	MA	TESOL from USA	8 years
6	Noaf	PhD	Language and education from UK	4 years
7	Amal	MA	TESOL from New Zealand	5 years
8	Samar	PhD	Linguistic from Australia	3 years
9	Haifa	PhD	TESOL from UK	2 years
10	Norah	MA	TESOL from USA	2 years

## **Research Question**

1. How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?

## **4.2 Observation findings**

The study aimed to explore research question 1: How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing? It involved observing 10 academic writing classes to see how teachers taught argumentative writing. For each class, a specific form was utilised to collect information (see Appendix C 2). The data were analysed using two approaches: first, a deductive approach was employed to examine how teachers used MD markers in their teaching, and second, an inductive approach was applied to gather other relevant information without a predefined focus. Observations were conducted in 10 academic writing classes, with one session observed per teacher.

The thematic analysis started with developing initial codes based on the researcher's review of relevant literature, teaching practices, observed classroom activities, and research questions. The literature review helped identify ideas and frameworks for teaching MD markers in argumentative writing. Codes were adjusted to represent key aspects of teachers' instructional strategies and practices. Observational data were carefully reviewed, and codes were applied to highlight key patterns. As described in Section 3.10.1 of the Methodology chapter, a detailed codebook was created with clear definitions, examples, and categories for each code. Two EFL lecturers with doctoral qualifications reviewed the codebook to ensure the analysis was reliable. Any differences were discussed and resolved together. For the examples of the NVivo analysis example, the initial codebook and class observation checklist (see Appendix K). This process, guided by the literature and teamwork, ensured that the findings reflected the teaching practices observed in the study.

After coding, two main themes with their respective sub-themes emerged from the data: teachers' strategies and teachers' guidelines. Both themes focused on the integration of MD markers into classroom teaching. The teachers' strategies theme examined the various approaches teachers used to teach argumentative academic writing, including whether these strategies incorporated MD markers. In contrast, the teachers' guidelines theme explored how teachers guided students on the role and importance of MD markers in academic writing. It is worth noting that MD markers were rarely addressed during observations, with only one teacher, Norah, discussing the use of MD markers in academic writing. The possible factors influencing Norah's unique approach, including her study, training, or teaching experiences, are discussed further in the findings chapter in section 5.3. The table 4.2 below provides an overview of the themes and sub-themes identified during the analysis.

**Table. 4.2**  
*Generated Codes, Emerging Themes, and Definitions of Observation*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Code definition and quote example
Teachers' strategies	Writing process	Pre- writing	A teacher's pre-writing strategy involves introducing various techniques to help students generate ideas, organise thoughts, and plan their writing before they begin drafting. This can include teaching students' methods such as brainstorming and outlining. e.g., <i>"It is important to make brainstorming and write a plan before writing"</i> .
		During writing	When the teacher points to the skills or techniques that can be used to during writing process, such as sentence structure, paragraph structure, word choice and gathering information. The teacher illustrated, "essay in academic writing should contain three parts introduction, body, and conclusion.
		After writing	When the teacher points to after writing techniques that can be used to help students revise and edit their final draft, such as proofreading, revising and check grammar, punctuation, and spelling. e.g., <i>"Revising is the step in that you correct the mistake that you have done at the drafting stage such as spelling, and grammar"</i> .
	Classroom activity	Class discussion	When the teacher facilitates a conversation with students on a specific topic and encourages students to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. There were some questions about the essay such as what is meant about the conclusion, what is the meaning of summary" "discuss what the meaning of synonyms words is.



Teachers' guidelines	MD markers use.	Teaching resources	Refers to the material or resource that the teacher uses to in the class, such as books, technology aids and lecture slides. The teachers presented to the students a table that they can use as a check list to review their text and check their writing coherence.
		Feedback	When the teacher request from the students to provide feedback to their peers on their written work. The teacher asked students to check classmates' errors".
		Organising the text	When the teacher discusses the use of MD markers in organising the text. e.g., <i>"In reviewing stage, you can discover your mistakes and check your text organisation and rewrite your text again"</i> .
		Text coherence	When the teacher discusses the use of MD markers to make the text more coherent and clearer. e.g., <i>"To gain the coherence in your text you have start each paragraph with the idea that you will discuss"</i> .
		Think of readers	Refers to the concept of considering the audience or readers when writing, in order to create a more effective and engaging text. e.g., <i>"Your paragraph is important to explain what you want to say to the readers"</i> .
		The writer's voice	Refer to the writer opinion and interact with the readers in their written text. e.g., <i>"Your opinion should not be by used I every time you can give your opinion through evidence and examples."</i>

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#### 4.2.1 Teachers' strategies

The first primary theme examined the strategies employed by teachers in teaching EFL argumentative academic writing, with minimal emphasis on explicitly integrating MD markers into instruction. Two sub-themes emerged from this analysis: the writing process itself and the specific classroom activities used to support it. As outlined in the literature review in Chapter Two, the writing process contains eight stages (Williams, 2003). However, findings from this study revealed that teachers in the observed classes primarily followed a three-stage approach: ***prewriting, during writing, and after writing*** to teach writing. It is important to note that while these stages were employed, the teaching of MD markers within these stages was rare. Each sub-theme is explained in more detail below.

#### **4.2.1.1 Writing process**

##### ***Prewriting***

In this study, the teachers primarily encouraged students to generate ideas or structure their essays into three main sections: introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion before starting their writing. However, while focusing on these aspects of the prewriting stage, none of the teachers instructed the students to be aware of the difference between argumentative writing and other writing genres, nor did they prompt students to consider their readers, develop their arguments, or understand how to construct these arguments effectively. For example, Haifa emphasised brainstorming, guiding students to list ideas they wanted to discuss before starting their writing. The teacher focused on preparing ideas but did not extend into the organisation or sequencing of these ideas, leaving the structuring of arguments for later stages.

The teachers emphasised that reading about the topic was an effective way to generate ideas for the target essay. For instance, Mona encouraged students to begin by reading introductory material on the topic and summarising key points to establish a foundational understanding. This process was followed by drafting an outline that identified key ideas to include in their writing. Similarly, Samar implemented a reading-based strategy aimed at helping students adopt a clear perspective on the topic. She guided students to reflect on their stance after engaging with the reading materials, encouraging them to articulate their position early in the prewriting phase. This approach aimed to deepen their engagement with the subject matter and foster critical thinking. Furthermore, Samar stressed the importance of students revisiting their writing plans multiple times during the prewriting process, shifting their focus beyond simply listing ideas to refining their perspective on the topic. However, her method did not extend to activities that explicitly taught the structuring of arguments or encouraged consideration of the readers' needs.

Another distinct approach within prewriting was a focus on the structural organisation of the essay. Amal guided her students to plan the main sections of their essays (introduction, body, and conclusion) before writing. Her instruction was focused on the sequence and purpose of each section, with the introduction providing an overview and thesis statement, the body developing single topics in separate paragraphs, and the conclusion summarising the topic without adding new information. Amal's approach was highly structured but did not address specific prewriting techniques such as brainstorming or outlining, suggesting that her emphasis was on format rather than idea development.

Overall, while teachers employed various prewriting techniques, a common pattern was observed in the limited practical application of these techniques within classroom settings. None of the teachers directly engaged students in practising prewriting tasks, such as brainstorming or outlining exercises, nor did they introduce MD markers as tools for planning and structuring arguments.

### ***During Writing***

During the writing stage, teachers implemented various strategies aimed at structuring students' argumentative writing. Several teachers, including Amal, Noaf, Laila, Samar, and Haifa, guided students to organise their texts into distinct sections: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion to improve coherence and flow. Teachers stressed that each section served specific purposes within the argumentative structure, underscoring the need for students to address these during the writing process. However, the teachers showed inconsistencies in their guidance on the purpose of each section in argumentative writing. For example, while Laila, Samar, and Haifa emphasised the introduction as essential for setting the paper's tone and presenting strong arguments, Noaf advised students against expressing personal opinions or taking a stance on the topic in the introduction. These differing approaches highlighted a

lack of shared understanding among the teachers regarding the specific role of each section in structuring an effective argumentative essay.

In guiding body paragraphs, most teachers emphasised the need to present one idea per paragraph, supported by examples and evidence to strengthen the argument. Despite this focus, no teacher provided explicit instruction on constructing a body paragraph's internal structure, leaving students to figure out how to organise their ideas clearly and build strong arguments on their own. Mona, for instance, advised her students to use their own words to avoid plagiarism but did not explain cohesive paragraph structuring or argumentation techniques. Similarly, while all teachers directed students to conclude their essays with a summary of key points, they did not integrate strategies to support argument closure or overall coherence.

Julia encouraged students to use the present tense instead of the past tense where appropriate to enhance clarity in their writing. Similarly, Laila encouraged her students to focus on expressing their thoughts and opinions freely without worrying about grammatical mistakes. For instance, Laila told her students, "Write what you feel, write your opinion, do not be scared about your sentences and do not be shy to express your opinion." However, while Laila encouraged her students to express their ideas confidently, she did not provide guidance on how to write or discuss their opinions effectively. Her focus remained on encouraging free expression without addressing the structure of arguments or how to build arguments.

Overall, the teachers' strategies during the writing stage showed varied emphases. While Julia focused on grammatical accuracy to improve clarity, other teachers, such as Laila, concentrated on fostering student confidence to express ideas freely. These differences in approach reflect contrasting priorities among teachers in addressing either correctness or self-expression. However, critical elements of argumentative writing, such as building cohesion within paragraphs, guiding reader engagement, and using MD markers for clarity, were generally not covered in their teaching methods.

### *After-writing*

Teachers consistently emphasised the importance of organising academic writing and highlighted the need to review text after completing the draft. Their shared focus during this stage remained on revising ideas and identifying surface-level mistakes, such as spelling and grammar, rather than improving the clarity or coherence of the writing. For example, Yusraa specifically encouraged her students to correct spelling and grammar errors after drafting, emphasising surface-level accuracy. Similarly, Samar advised her students to review their work based on their initial plans and notes, using a checklist of “common writing errors” and cautioning them against writing “long sentences.” These instances illustrate how teachers predominantly guided students to fix basic errors, aligning with the broader observation that revision practices often targeted surface issues. However, this focus on error correction left deeper aspects of argumentative writing, such as developing logical flow and enhancing coherence, largely unaddressed.

Norah reinforced the value of revision by explaining that through reviewing, students could identify and correct mistakes, thereby improving their final submissions. However, Noaf suggested that students disregard punctuation in drafts, focusing on it only in the final version. This difference in focus nevertheless highlighted an underlying limitation: while teachers encouraged revision, they primarily targeted surface errors rather than addressing the structural and logical coherence that remains essential for effective argumentative writing. Moreover, the teachers frequently instructed students to revise their sentences for grammatical accuracy and avoid long sentences, reflecting an emphasis on sentence-level correctness rather than paragraph-level coherence or argument structure. Observations confirmed that the teachers did not consistently teach students to use MD markers, which are critical for establishing coherence and guiding readers through complex arguments. For instance, several teachers stressed

revising for grammar but did not discuss how MD markers could link ideas logically across paragraphs.

#### **4.2.1.2 Classroom activities**

In the second sub-theme, I aimed to explore the activities used by teachers in argumentative academic writing classrooms. These activities included classroom discussions, exercises, tasks, and feedback. Based on the observation data, three codes were associated with this sub-theme: *class discussions, teaching resources, and feedback*. While many teachers frequently employed a lecture-style approach, it is important to note that a dialogic element often complemented this, as oral responses were encouraged by both teachers and students. However, these interactions tended to focus on verbal exchanges rather than written applications directly related to the writing task. This suggests that although the teaching approach included some level of dialogue, it primarily focused on teacher-led instruction with limited opportunities for students to engage in practical, written exercises. Further details will be discussed below.

##### ***Class discussions***

While many classes followed a lecture-based format, teachers sometimes interacted with their students through some class discussions. These discussions often were about exam preparation and strategies for achieving high marks. For example, Julia asked her students how they could improve their scores, and students responded with some suggestions like avoiding grammar mistakes, writing enough word count, and using academic vocabulary. Julia added to her students' answers the importance of considering both sides of an argument agreeing and disagreeing when writing essays to achieve better results.

Teachers discussed with their students the agreement and disagreement in spoken activities rather than through written exercises. For example, Mona asked her students to find examples of agreement and disagreement in a written text. After reading the text for about 20

minutes, students shared brief responses, such as, In paragraph 3, there is agreement, and in paragraph 4, there is disagreement. Mona then asked follow-up questions like, What are the reasons for the agreement and disagreement?. Students answered the teacher by reading short sentences aloud from the written text to support their answers, but the activity stopped at identifying these points and did not cover how to organise them in written arguments. Mona reminded her students that in exams, they needed to present both sides of an issue. Similarly, in Alaa's class, students explained their agreement or disagreement about online learning topics. For instance, one student mentioned that online classes gave her more flexibility. While these discussions encouraged students to explore both agreement and disagreement perspectives, there was no teaching or writing practice on how to write these points in a structured essay.

In another example, Julia encouraged students to share their views on "women driving." Students gave examples such as "*I agree with women driving because it allows us to work more freely.*" Julia encouraged students to think about different points of view and discuss agreement and disagreement. However, she did not show the students how to organise their opinions in writing. the teacher focused on identifying and generating agreement and disagreement sentences but did not explain how to structure these sentences in their writing.

The teachers also discussed common mistakes that could lead to losing marks in exams. For instance, Mona highlighted some issues, such as grammar mistakes, using informal language, and plagiarism. Mona asked her students about "academic style meaning", and the students suggested it was about avoiding informal language. Mona explained that academic style refers to structured paragraphs, proper referencing, and citations. The teachers focused on directing students to avoid mistakes and use formal language but did not address how to make their writing more organised and coherent. Some teachers also encouraged the use of better vocabulary. For example, Amal talked about using synonyms to avoid repeating the same

words. However, she did not explain the importance of MD markers, which help connect ideas and make arguments easier to follow.

Finally, the teachers talked about the structure of essays, stressing the importance of an introduction, body, and conclusion. For example, Laila asked her students what they understood by the term "conclusion." Students answered that it is the last part of the essay. Laila emphasised that essays must include all three sections but did not explain how to write each section. All the teachers focused on the importance of having these sections but were not shown how to write these sections in well-organised or coherent text.

### ***Teaching resources***

The teachers' practices were examined through their use of teaching resources, showing a strong reliance on the course workbook as the main teaching tool. All 10 teachers used the same workbook because they worked at the same university, and it was required by the Saudi education system, with all textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. While this ensured that the teaching materials were the same across classes and provided a clear structure for lessons, it may have limited students' chances to explore different viewpoints or develop more advanced analytical skills for argumentative academic writing.

Some teachers supplemented the workbook with alternative resources, such as PowerPoint slides and worksheets, although these were used sparingly. For instance, Norah displayed a checklist table via PowerPoint, covering grammar, spelling, and writing format and structure as part of a coherence review tool. While this resource introduced essential structural checks, Norah's approach was limited to surface-level coherence, omitting guidance on achieving more coherence through meaningful MD markers.

Similarly, Amal presented a slide outlining the sequential steps for research writing, from topic selection to final copy preparation:



Step one: choose a topic, Step two: Narrow the topic, Step three: search for sources, Step four: Reading and taking notes, Step five: Making the outline, Step six: Making the bibliography, Step seven: writing the first draft, Step eight: citation, Step nine: writing the final copy.

Amal encouraged students to familiarise themselves with each step and revisit them throughout the writing process. However, she did not explain the significance of each stage or discuss specific techniques, such as the use of MD markers, which are crucial for structuring arguments, organising content, and refining clarity in drafts. The teacher focused on a procedural overview without engaging students in any writing techniques or practised on how to build arguments and enhance the logical flow of the written text.

Another teaching aid involved using a written text on the whiteboard as an example of argumentative writing. Mona and Yusraa asked students to read essays on topics like healthy eating and online education and identify the author's stance by highlighting specific sentences. In comparison, Amal used an article about language learning strategies and asked students to paraphrase the information in their own words for use in their essays. Students had 20 minutes to complete the task and shared their responses orally, with one student paraphrasing "*Learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take to achieve a learning goal*" into "*Learning strategies are the strategies that students need to use to learn a new language.*" Amal acknowledged the answers with "good" and "thank you" but provided no further guidance or feedback. While the teacher's method introduced additional materials, it remained focusing on specific tasks rather than teaching or practice on skills like argument development or coherence.

### ***Feedback***

The observed feedback strategies were primarily focused on error correction, with peer feedback and not teachers' feedback as the only feedback method employed across all ten class

observations. This approach was mostly controlled by students, with teachers facilitating but not actively reviewing the students' feedback. For instance, Mona instructed her students to write opinions on a lesson topic, "online education" and then exchange these opinions with their classmates. Each student read and provided feedback on a peer's work, yet they did not share this feedback with the teacher. The teacher's follow-up was limited to confirming task completion, with no further inquiry into the types or content of feedback exchanged. While this approach adopted independent peer review, it also missed learning opportunities as the teacher did not explain how to write these opinions in argumentation and critical writing.

Similarly, Laila's peer feedback activity focused on sentence structure, specifically guiding students to identify and shorten long sentences in their peers' writing. While this task encouraged students to consider sentence length, it remained at a surface level, addressing individual sentences rather than the coherence of ideas or flow of arguments. Here, the teacher's role was largely practical, instructing students on when to start and end the activity without further involvement in evaluating the feedback provided. Although this hands-off approach promoted independent learning, it lacked structured guidance that could have helped students critically engage with content beyond grammatical or structural issues.

This focus on peer feedback, which was primarily student-driven, extended to other classes but remained limited in scope. For example, Noaf directed her students to exchange homework essays and identify grammatical and spelling mistakes in their peers' writing. While this activity mirrored the hands-off approach observed in other classes, it continued to prioritise surface-level concerns such as grammar and spelling rather than addressing deeper elements like coherence or the development of arguments. The lack of teacher input or structured follow-up discussions meant that students received little support in understanding how to improve the overall quality of their writing. Although peer feedback had the possibility to encourage

collaboration and critical thinking, the narrow emphasis on error correction decreased its effectiveness and missed opportunities to practice writing argumentative text.

#### **4.2.2 Teacher's guidelines**

This theme examined how teachers advised students on the use of MD markers to help them organise their texts and build persuasive arguments. It focused on how MD markers were incorporated into teaching practices to support key writing elements such as text organisation, coherence, writer's voice, and consideration of the reader's perspective. These elements are addressed through specific codes: organising the text, text coherence, thinking of readers and the writer's voice. Each of these codes will be explored in detail in the following sections.

##### ***Organising the text***

The role of MD markers in organising text was recognised by all teachers as a fundamental tool for enhancing students' writing skills. Teachers agreed that structuring writing improves clarity and overall quality. However, their approach to teaching text organisation primarily centred on visual and formal aspects such as formatting and sectioning rather than content coherence and logical flow within the text. This narrow focus may limit students' ability to develop more sophisticated skills in argument construction and reader engagement, which are essential for effective academic writing.

A common focus among the teachers was using academic formatting styles, such as APA or Harvard, as the main method for organising text. For example, Mona instructed her students to use APA style for headings, citations, and references, while Noaf noted the importance of using citations: "*Using citation in the text is important to organise the text*". The teachers emphasised that using the APA style correctly would contribute to text organisation. However, this may confuse students, as the APA style mainly concerns paper formatting rather than improving text coherence and structure for readers. By focusing on formatting

conventions, teachers may accidentally divert attention from the deeper elements of writing, such as the logical connections and transitions necessary for argumentative coherence.

Teachers did encourage students to maintain a single idea per paragraph, with Mona, Laila, and Yusraa advising against rapid shifts between topics within a paragraph. Similarly, Alaa recommended that students list their ideas and assign each to a separate paragraph to promote clarity. While these suggestions support basic organisational skills, there was little guidance on using MD markers to create smooth transitions or to connect ideas effectively across paragraphs. Without explicit instruction on employing MD markers to enhance cohesion, students may struggle to achieve a logical progression of ideas, which is critical for the readability and persuasiveness of academic writing.

The review stage offered further insights into teachers' organisational guidance, although it remained limited in scope. Teachers such as Noaf emphasised the importance of removing irrelevant sentences, and Amal underscored the necessity of a strong thesis statement to anchor the main ideas of the text. While these strategies can help clarify a student's argument, they stop short of addressing how MD markers can be used to establish coherence across the text. Only Norah mentioned the use of MD markers during the review stage, advising students to apply connective and transition words selectively. As mentioned previously, the teacher stressed to not use some MD markers such as *never* or *always* and to avoid pronouns in the text as they refer to the informal language, according to the teacher. However, her guidance lacked specific examples and did not explore how different MD markers could serve organisational purposes, leaving students without techniques for writing practices.

In summary, although the teachers might recognise the importance of organisational structure, they did not sufficiently address how MD markers could support logical flow and reader engagement.

### ***Text coherence***

Text coherence, defined as the logical flow of ideas that enables readers to follow an argument smoothly, is a crucial aspect of academic writing. MD markers, such as *however*, *therefore*, and *in addition*, play a key role in achieving this flow by connecting sentences and paragraphs, clarifying relationships between ideas, and highlighting key concepts. While teachers demonstrated an awareness of the importance of text coherence, their instructional focus often centred on sentence-level clarity, with limited guidance on using MD markers to build cohesive arguments.

Teachers frequently advised students to write short, clear sentences and avoid long, complex ones. Laila, for instance, stated, “*Check your long sentences, do not write long sentences*” explaining that lengthy sentences often reduce coherence and make ideas less clear. Teachers noted that students tended to combine multiple ideas or opinions in a single sentence, which could confuse readers. They also highlighted that long sentences were more likely to contain grammatical errors, making them harder to correct. Additionally, long sentences were said to make the text less engaging for readers. While this focus on sentence length helped students maintain clarity and reduce errors, it did not address how to effectively link ideas across sentences and paragraphs to achieve overall text coherence.

Teachers also emphasised the importance of structuring paragraphs around a single main idea. Samar, for example, advised, “*To gain the coherence in your text, you have to start each paragraph with the idea that you will discuss*” underscoring the need for focus and consistency within paragraphs. Similarly, Noaf stated, “*There is no coherence if you include irrelevant ideas or parts; each section should focus on one main topic.*” These approaches highlighted the value of clarity and organisation within paragraphs, reinforcing that a clear central idea supports textual coherence.

Other teachers highlighted the importance of the sources that the students use to collect more information to support their ideas in their written text. Most of the teachers pointed out that reading is the main source that helps students collect the information to support their text and make it more coherent. For example, Alaa highlighted that choosing well-known authors helps students to read useful information that helps them in their writing and make their text more coherent. Similarly, Yusraa explained that the reason behind text coherence is the good choice of reading sources. The teachers stressed that text coherence must discuss the issue, problems, reasons and solutions, and to find this information it is important to find good reading resources. While they highlighted that extensive reading augments writing coherence, it alone is not sufficient. While reading provides a wealth of information, students must also learn to structure their text coherently.

Grammatical correctness was frequently emphasised by teachers as a key factor in achieving text coherence. Julia, for example, stressed that using correct grammar and appropriate tense significantly enhances coherence, stating, “*Make your sentences in correct grammar structure to make your text more coherent.*” Similarly, Norah encouraged her students to use tools like Microsoft Word to identify grammar and spelling mistakes, promoting technology as a practical resource for improving writing accuracy. However, while grammar was highlighted, the teachers acknowledged that grammatical accuracy alone does not ensure a cohesive text.

Both Amal and Norah also advised students to avoid abbreviations in their academic writing to maintain clarity and formality. Additionally, Norah provided further guidelines, such as avoiding words like *all*, *always*, *must*, *never*, and *every*, as well as pronouns like *we*, *them* and *you*. She explained that these words and pronouns are unsuitable for academic writing because they introduce generalisations or informality. For instance, terms like *always* or *never* which is often inaccurate in academic contexts. Similarly, pronouns like *we* and *you* were

discouraged for being too informal and inconsistent with the objective tone required in academic writing.

Although Norah mentioned the role of MD markers in achieving coherence, she did not provide further explanation on how students could effectively use these markers or suggest alternative strategies to improve text structure and clarity. Overall, detailed guidance on utilising MD markers for coherence was lacking. While there were opportunities for teachers to offer writing practices on these MD markers, their attention primarily focused on ensuring clarity of meaning rather than exploring how sentences and ideas could be connected to build cohesive arguments.

### ***Thinking of readers***

MD markers have a significant role in enabling writers to interact with readers by guiding them through complex arguments and highlighting relationships between ideas. Based on observations, most teachers acknowledged the importance of considering the reader's perspective in academic writing. They stressed the careful selection of words and the construction of persuasive arguments supported by credible sources as essential strategies to engage readers. Teachers emphasised that capturing the reader's interest and conveying information accurately could be achieved by expanding on relevant information, presenting examples, and crafting a clear, concise writing style. However, this focus on surface-level aspects, such as word choice and sourcing, overlooked the deeper function of MD markers as tools to structure arguments and facilitate reader engagement.

While teachers highlighted the importance of clarity and brevity, advising students to avoid long citations or overly complex sentences, they did not provide guidance on the use of MD markers to create logical coherence. For instance, Laila cautioned against ambiguous sentences that might confuse readers and advised students to select words that encourage readers to continue reading. Similarly, Haifa suggested using "hooks" or "shocking

sentences” to capture attention, while Amal stated, *“Do not write short letters, for example, the word TESOL not everyone knows what it means you have to write it in whole explanation as teaching English for non-speakers.”* Noaf also emphasised the choice of suitable words in writing, stating, *“Don’t make your sentence very general because the readers might not understand what you want to say; for example, ‘SMOKING’ contains many topics therefore you have to be very specific such as talk about the dangerous of smoking.”* These strategies, while helpful for clarity, emphasised accessible language over the use of MD markers to build cohesion. However, the teachers linked the clarity of the text to the choice of simple words and did not discuss the logical flow of arguments, or the reader engagement in academic writing.

In addition to word choice, teachers emphasised the importance of sourcing relevant and reliable information to enhance persuasiveness. Alaa and Norah advised students to consider their sources carefully, suggesting that varied examples and strong evidence would improve a reader’s understanding and make the argument more convincing. For example, Alaa said, *“Think about the resource that the reader will read, give the readers more examples and think how to persuade your readers through information, it is very important.”* Julia, Yusraa, and Amal further suggested that students expand their research to build a stronger base of facts and evidence to enhance the text’s request. Mona and Noaf underscored the importance of including a reference list, allowing readers to verify sources and gain a deeper understanding of the topic. However, their focus was on the source selection rather than on structuring arguments through MD markers.

Writing a clear claim was another approach suggested by some teachers to facilitate reader engagement. Mona stressed the importance of stating the claim clearly within a paragraph, viewing it as a guiding point for readers. Amal similarly encouraged students to construct strong claims, aiming to persuade readers to align with the presented argument. Noaf and Amal further recommended that students choose argument topics with clear opposing sides



to facilitate persuasive claims. Samar emphasised the importance of clarity, stating, “*If you did not write your claim the readers would not understand the topic.*” Laila and Julia also advised students on positioning claims within the text, suggesting the introduction or conclusion sections as suitable locations to make the argument more accessible to readers. However, teachers focused on claim clarity and placement without addressing how MD markers could support the claim’s impact through connections to supporting points. This omission may have limited students’ ability to use MD markers to emphasise their claims within the argument.

Overall, while teachers acknowledged the importance of engaging readers through suitable word choices, trustworthy information, and clear claims, they did not explicitly teach students how to structure arguments using MD markers.

### ***The writer’s voice***

The teachers were aware of the importance of establishing a writer’s voice in academic texts, frequently encouraging students to articulate their perspectives with confidence. This emphasis on voice was evident through various recommendations and instructions given to students, urging them to convey their personal positions and points of view on topics. Mona, for instance, prompted students with the question, “*What is your position?*” underscoring the importance of identifying and expressing one’s position as part of academic writing. She encouraged students to reflect on why a topic mattered to them personally, thus fostering a sense of ownership over their viewpoints. Similarly, Haifa reinforced this reflective approach, stating, “*It is good to ask yourself what, who, where, and why to understand your topic and to what extent you agree.*” By advising students to question their perspectives, Haifa promoted a deeper engagement with the subject matter, encouraging students to critically assess their views.

Teachers also highlighted the need for confidence when expressing opinions, guiding students towards taking a definitive stance. For example, Yusraa advised students to

confidently share their perceptions, or points of view, towards a topic, supporting the importance of self-confident expression in academic writing. Likewise, Laila supported this approach by assigning a topic on healthy food as homework, asking students to consider their likes and dislikes and to “*express their feelings freely*” in their writing. Samar further reinforced this concept by explaining that opinion represented a writer’s beliefs and viewpoints and advising students to be assured in explaining why they agreed or disagreed with the topic. This approach highlighted the teachers' shared focus on helping students develop a strong, individual perspective in their writing.

The teachers emphasised research and reading as essential for developing a strong writer’s voice. Teachers encouraged students to explore all aspects of a topic to develop comprehensive and substantiated viewpoints. For instance, Alaa and Laila advised students to read widely on their topics to strengthen their position before writing. This guidance reflected an instructional focus on grounding one’s voice in extensive research, ensuring that informed perspectives supported opinions. Yusraa, Amal, and Noaf similarly underscored the connection between informed opinion and trustworthy sources, explaining that students’ viewpoints should be drawn from varied resources, such as books, articles, and trustworthy online sources. Noaf explained this concept by defining ‘*writer’s voice*’ as encompassing a writer’s assumptions and hypotheses, further explaining that writers needed to explore various hypotheses to articulate a nuanced position. The teacher pointed out that this focus on reading and information synthesis as essential to opinion formation indicated an instructional emphasis on the role of well-informed perspectives in academic writing.

Some teachers, including Mona, Alaa, and Amal, offered guidance on how to structure and express a writer’s voice in academic texts. They recommended that the topic sentence be considered as an appropriate place for writers to convey their stance. Amal advised students to brainstorm multiple perspectives, including both agreeable and disagreeable positions, as part

of their exploration of the topic. Haifa further emphasised that opinions should be substantiated with clear reasons, instructing students to provide justifications for why they agreed or disagreed with the topic. Teachers also cautioned students on common mistakes when expressing opinions, with Samar advising that opinions should not be framed as questions and Norah instructing students to avoid the pronoun *I* in academic writing. Norah explained that opinions could be effectively communicated by discussing evidence and examples without relying on a personal pronoun. Although these instructions were mainly verbal, the teachers' focus on developing a writer's voice showed their awareness of its importance in engaging readers through individual perspectives. By encouraging students to assert their positions confidently, support opinions with evidence, and structure their voice in topic sentences, teachers aimed to foster a strong sense of identity and critical engagement in student writing. However, none of the teachers incorporated writing practice or provided instruction on constructing arguments in the classroom.

In summary, the findings revealed a varied approach among EFL teachers, with an emphasis on sentence-level clarity and structure over cohesive argument development through MD markers. While strategies such as pre-writing and structured feedback were common, explicit instruction on MD markers was largely absent. This indicates a focus on surface-level accuracy rather than deeper argumentative skills. The following chapter will explore the second research question, investigating teachers' stated practices, influencing factors, and perceptions on teaching MD markers, using insights from interviews and questionnaires.

## CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

### 5.1 introduction

This chapter presents the findings related to the second research question and its three sub-questions:

2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?

2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?

2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

To address these questions comprehensively, the mixed-methods approach employed in this study combined qualitative data collected through interviews with the observed teachers and quantitative data obtained through an online questionnaire distributed to a broader sample of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. This approach ensured a detailed understanding of teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices regarding the use of MD markers in argumentative academic writing.

This chapter is divided into two sections: the interview findings, which provide an in-depth qualitative perspective on the experiences and practices of the observed teachers, and the questionnaire findings, which offer a broader quantitative understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions across various institutions. Notably, the third sub-question (2.2) is addressed through insights from both the interview data and the questionnaire results.

The aim of this section is to explore EFL teachers' stated awareness of the significance of MD markers in academic writing and their approaches to teaching them. Importantly, the goal here is not to simply describe their classroom actions but to critically analyse their

justifications and perspectives on teaching MD markers. The interviews provided insight into teachers' self-reported awareness of MD markers, their teaching strategies, and the factors influencing their choices. To preserve authenticity and accuracy, participants' words have been reproduced verbatim in this section, including grammatical or linguistic errors where they occur.

Specifically, the interviews examined whether teachers were aware of their limited focus on teaching MD markers, whether they included MD markers in other classes and their opinions about the importance of MD markers in academic writing. Teachers who did not teach MD markers were asked to explain their reasons, providing a deeper understanding of their practices and challenges. This analysis goes beyond description, focusing on how teachers justified their decisions and the underlying perceptions driving their approaches.

The interviews also helped develop a questionnaire to gather broader insights into teachers' perceptions and practices concerning the teaching and learning of MD markers. These findings will be discussed in the second part of this chapter in section 5.4.

During the semi-structured interview, the participating teachers were asked about four key areas: 1. **Academic Writing Experiences and Learning:** Teachers reflected on their own experiences as learners and writers of academic texts and how these experiences influenced their teaching practices; 2. **Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing:** Teachers described the methods they used to help students develop structured, coherent, and argumentative writing skills; 3. **MD Markers in Teaching and Learning:** Teachers discussed their understanding of MD markers' roles in coherence, reader engagement, and argumentation. They shared whether they taught MD markers explicitly or implicitly, their perceptions of students' understanding and use of MD markers, and the challenges of teaching this concept; 4. **Examination of Students' Writing:** Teachers explained how they assessed students' use of

MD markers, including the criteria they used, their feedback methods, and strategies for helping students improve.

At the end of the interview, all teachers reviewed a 250-word writing sample on online education, identifying and evaluating MD markers (see Appendix D). This exercise explored their awareness of MD markers, their instructional approaches, and the challenges their students faced in learning to use MD markers effectively.

After transcribing the interviews and becoming familiar with the data, the researcher began analysing the interviews to identify themes associated with the research questions. The researcher used a deductive approach to complement the aims of the interview questions. For more details on the data analysis process, see **Methodology Chapter 3, Sections 3.8 and 3.10.1**. For examples of the NVivo analysis example, the initial codebook and the teachers' interview transcript (see Appendix L). After this initial analysis, the researcher worked with a PhD student in EFL to further examine the analysis, ensuring that it was clear and easily understandable. The next step involved a review from the researcher's supervisors, which resulted in modifications and agreements to the naming of themes and the selection of examples for the coding framework. This collaborative and iterative approach significantly improved the refinement of the analysis, leveraging the diverse feedback and insights from varied academic perspectives.

Based on the data gathered from the interviews, two primary themes were identified: **Teachers' understanding of MD markers and how they teach them**, and **Teachers' perceptions about the teaching and learning of MD markers**. As part of the interview process, teachers were shown a 250-word essay sample that included mistakes in the use of MD markers. This exercise was done during the final stage of the interviews to see how teachers identified and responded to these mistakes. The analysis of teachers' responses to this writing sample is included in the discussion of each sub-theme, providing a detailed look at

their feedback and teaching methods. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the main themes, their sub-themes, and associated codes.

**Table. 5.1**  
*Interviews' Themes, Codes and codes' Definitions*

Themes	Sub themes	Codes	Code definition
Teachers' understanding of MD markers and how they teach them	MD markers feature in academic writing	Text coherence	How well the different parts of the text connect and flow together to make it understandable and logical.
		Writer's voice	The unique style and tone of the writer that comes through in their writing, reflecting their individuality and perspective.
		Interact with the readers.	How the writer engages with the audience or readers, creating a sense of connection or interaction through the text.
	Teaching MD markers	Argument writing teaching strategies.	The specific methods and approaches teachers use to teach students how to construct and present persuasive arguments in their writing.
		Teacher's feedback	The comments, suggestions, and guidance provided by a teacher to a student on their written work to help them improve their writing skills and understanding or mistakes corrections.
Teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning MD markers	Teacher-related issues.	Writing proficiency	The level of skill and ability that teachers possess in their own writing, indicating how well they can write effectively.
		Textbook	Challenges or concerns that teachers face related to the use, availability, or suitability of textbooks in their teaching.
		Time constraints	Difficulties or limitations teachers encounter due to a lack of time for lesson planning, instruction, or other teaching-related tasks.
	Learner-related issues.	Students' English level	Refers to the proficiency or skill level of students in the English language.
		Students' motivation	Describes the interest, and willingness of students to engage in learning and participate actively in educational activities.

### **5.2.1 Teachers' understanding of MD markers and how they teach them**

This main theme encompassed two sub-themes: the features of MD markers in academic writing and the teaching of MD markers. These sub-themes draw together key insights into teachers' knowledge about the primary functions of MD markers, including writing coherence, the writer's voice, and interaction with readers. Additionally, the research explored teachers' reflections on their methods for teaching academic writing, with particular attention to their approaches to argumentative writing and feedback practices. The following section explains each sub-theme in further detail.

#### **5.2.1.1 MD markers feature in academic writing.**

MD markers are essential in academic writing for enhancing coherence and organising ideas. These markers help transition between sentences and paragraphs, making the text clearer and more logical. However, few teachers appeared to be aware of the benefits of using MD markers to enhance the quality and coherence of academic writing.

##### ***Text coherence***

Coherence is important in academic writing as it makes ideas more comprehensible by ensuring they logically follow from one another. This aspect significantly enhances the quality of the writer's work, making it understandable for the readers. Conversely, organising text in academic writing involves structuring the entire document, including headings and sections. Although coherence is a significant factor in academic writing, it was noted from the interview data that most teachers likened coherence to the concept of text organisation. This suggested a limited understanding among some teachers, mixing the concept of coherence which involves the logical flow of ideas with the structural arrangement of headings and sections.

During the interviews, teachers were asked, "*What do you think makes a text more coherent?*" Several responses revealed a predominant focus on structural features. For example, Mona and Yusraa highlighted that using headings to label sections such as



introductions and conclusions helped make the text “more organised and coherent.” Similarly, Norah suggested that coherence could be achieved by organising paragraphs with clear topic sentences and concluding summaries. These responses emphasised the importance of structural organisation in achieving clarity and a well-structured essay.

This focus on structural features aligns closely with patterns observed in their teaching practices, where teachers emphasised the importance of task completion and essay structure. For instance, their lessons often centred on ensuring students could produce essays with clear sections, likely driven by the need to prepare students for exams. Teachers expressed concerns that students might struggle to complete the essay within the word limit or fail to follow the expected format, resulting in an emphasis on structural clarity and organisational techniques. While these strategies are practical for exam preparation, they reveal a procedural approach to teaching coherence that prioritises formatting over fostering deeper skills, such as logical connections between ideas or engaging readers through cohesive writing.

Several teachers recommended strategies such as structuring one idea per paragraph and using pre-writing plans to maintain coherence, emphasising structural organisation over the logical flow of ideas throughout the text. For instance, Haifa emphasised organising ideas with examples and evidence, while Julia and Noaf suggested planning and mind mapping as ways to organise ideas systematically. Noaf specifically recommended “listing ideas” to maintain focus within paragraphs, while Laila associated coherence with “the clarity of language and academic vocabulary.” This indicated that the teachers’ strategies here reflected an emphasis on surface-level clarity rather than on the connective techniques needed for building coherence across ideas and sections.

Although some teachers were aware that using MD markers could enhance sentence organisation, their application of these markers remained somewhat limited. For instance, Alaa explained that using conjunctions helps transition from one idea to another in written text, and

Amal noted that students had learned conjunctions and should apply them correctly to link their ideas. Norah further expanded, describing MD markers as signal words used to order text and transition from one paragraph to another, explaining how they could transition from general to specific topics to improve text quality:

*The signal words, such as first or second to explain to open and close every sentence and paragraphs are related to one another. So for example introduce the topic well in paragraph number one and then another paragraph to another paragraph. Move from general to specific. So the way paragraphs are interrelated and the way sentences are coherence with one another, using the signal words. It makes a lot of difference.*

The teachers focused primarily on the use of MD markers to transition between sentences. However, there was a noticeable absence of explicit discussion on how these markers could enhance the clarity of the text. In the interviews, I asked the teachers, “*Can you explain the importance of using these words in academic writing; however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree?*” The responses primarily focused on the organisational role of these markers rather than their functional application in achieving textual coherence. This indicated that the teachers did not prioritise how MD markers could enhance logical flow or connect ideas in argumentative academic writing.

At the end of the interview stage, a writing sample was provided to the teachers, who were asked about the importance and the function of utilising conjunction words, including *however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree* and other markers in academic writing. Seven of the teachers (Alaa, Julia, Yusraa, Noaf, Amal, Haifa and Norah) responded by emphasising the role of these words in organising the text. For example, Yusraa answered “these markers are used to organise the text; for example, the marker first means that there is a second thing, and this organises the text”. Similarly, Amal focused on these markers in assessing students' writing, while Norah emphasised that the use of these markers is important for the writer to

produce organised and good-quality written text. Other teachers viewed conjunctions as tools for achieving grammatical correctness; for example, Mona and Julia noted that students should ensure their grammar is correct to write these markers in the right place.

Overall, most teachers acknowledged the structural role of MD markers but viewed them mainly as tools for grammatical accuracy rather than for enhancing coherence. This limited perspective suggested that teachers underutilised MD markers' potential to promote logical flow and engage readers by linking arguments and clarifying ideas. While they recognised the organisational value of MD markers, they often overlooked their functional importance in achieving coherent, reader-focused academic writing.

### ***Writer's voice***

In argumentative academic writing, the concept of "writer's voice" refers to the ability to express opinions and arguments clearly and persuasively. Most of the teachers in the interviews linked this concept directly to the expression of personal viewpoints when asked, "Do you think students can express their opinions in their academic writing? Why or how?". However, responses revealed that students often hesitated to share their opinions, with six out of ten teachers observing that students did not incorporate their voices in their academic writing. Mona noted that her students shared opinions about movies when requested but had avoided doing so for academic assignments. This might indicate that students were familiar with expressing opinions on general topics, such as movies, which they may discuss with friends or family, but lacked practice in applying the same skill to academic topics. Similarly, Haifa and Norah reported that students rarely expressed their views unless directly encouraged, with Haifa stressing the need for more training to build this skill. This reluctance to share viewpoints suggests an underlying challenge in fostering a sense of independent voice within academic contexts.

Julia thought her students hesitated because of a limited vocabulary, which she felt made it hard for them to express their ideas confidently. This perspective highlights a potential gap in language support that may be necessary to help students develop their voice in writing. Additionally, Noaf and Amal observed that students focused more on grades and passing the module than on improving the quality of their writing. This emphasis on grades rather than building a strong argument suggests that students may see academic writing as a task to finish rather than a chance for critical thinking, which could limit the authenticity of their voice. In contrast, Alaa, Laila, Yusraa, and Samar observed that their students were encouraged to express opinions as part of the assignment criteria. Samar, in particular, had high expectations, expecting her students to express their thoughts clearly in all assignments. This contrast between teachers who encouraged self-expression and those with lower expectations suggests that teacher beliefs significantly influence student outcomes in developing a writer's voice.

The findings revealed differences in teachers' approaches to developing student voices. Teachers like Samar, Alaa, Laila, and Yusraa actively encouraged students to share their opinions, which seemed to help them become more confident in their writing. In contrast, Julia linked students' hesitation to limited vocabulary, while Noaf and Amal observed that a focus on grades often stopped students from developing a personal voice. These findings suggested that clear encouragement and high expectations from teachers helped student

ts build confidence, whereas an emphasis on grades or task completion limited the depth and individuality of their arguments.

### ***Interacting with the readers***

In argumentative academic writing, interacting with readers is essential for enhancing clarity, understanding, and engagement. Many teachers in this study said that such interaction could be achieved by supporting ideas with examples, evidence, and stories to help readers understand the topic. For example, Alaa and Laila emphasised that students should improve readers' understanding by providing relevant evidence, suggestions, and detailed descriptions. Norah highlighted the importance of extensive reading to give students the examples and evidence needed to present persuasive arguments. However, Mona observed that for her undergraduate students, writing with a reader-centred perspective was challenging. She explained that she would be satisfied with receiving a basic 250-word response, even if it did not consider the readers' perspective. This focus on students delivering content focusing on completing the task over guiding readers through arguments showed a clear weakness in students' ability to connect with their audience. Teachers seemed to see reader interaction mainly as a way to add information rather than structuring their arguments to engage and inform readers effectively.

Teachers also emphasised the importance of considering the reader's background, such as age, gender, interests, or academic field when constructing arguments. For example, Samar encouraged her students to think about the readers' background to figure out what the readers "need to know" to be persuaded. She explained that this would help students provide clearer and more detailed information that would make their writing more engaging and useful for the audience. However, Haifa noted that discussing the reader's perspective with students was challenging because they often lacked a deep understanding of the topic. Consequently, some

teachers admitted that they struggled to include this aspect effectively in their teaching due to students' limited topic knowledge.

Some teachers viewed reader engagement as dependent on the writing genre. For instance, Julia noted that engaging readers was critical for research papers but less relevant for short student assignments, while Amal believed that brief assignments with simple language did not require audience consideration. Similarly, Noaf observed that engaging readers was less important in students' first drafts. On the other hand, Yusraa explained that many students prioritised pleasing their teacher over engaging readers, as the teacher was often the only assessor and audience. While this could be interpreted as a form of reader engagement, it was primarily focused on meeting the teacher's expectations rather than developing skills to engage a broader audience.

In response to a writing sample provided during the interview, teachers praised the quality of reader engagement in the sample, specifically through the use of conjunctions that improved comprehension and structure. Norah appreciated the sample's clarity, noting that it avoided confusing the reader, while other teachers commended the use of markers to guide readers through the argument, enhancing their understanding of the writer's reasoning and supporting examples. However, despite recognising the benefits of interacting with the readers in the sample, teachers expressed doubt that their students could achieve similar levels of MD marker usage. Norah observed that her students used only basic MD markers and typically did so only under the threat of receiving lower marks.

In conclusion, while teachers generally acknowledged the importance of engaging readers, they seemed to view it primarily as a means of adding information rather than using structural techniques to guide readers through arguments. The lack of emphasis on MD markers as tools for reader interaction, both before and after seeing the sample, highlighted a potential gap in instructional focus.

#### **5.2.1.2 Teaching MD markers.**

The section will discuss the second sub-theme that revolves around what teachers said about teaching MD markers. The focus will be on exploring teachers' comments about strategies for teaching argumentative writing and providing feedback to students. Unlike the previous sub-theme that looked at teachers' understanding, this one examines how teachers reported that they applied this understanding in their teaching based on their interview responses. More information about this sub-theme will be provided below by discussing its codes in more detail.

##### ***Argument writing teaching strategies.***

During the interview, the teachers were asked, "What do you focus on when teaching writing arguments in academic writing? Can you explain how students build strong arguments with the readers in academic writing?" These questions aimed to reveal teachers' awareness of the importance of MD markers in academic writing, the strategies they used, and whether they provided explicit explanations for teaching or not teaching MD markers. This line of inquiry differed from classroom observations, as the interviews focused specifically on teachers' perceptions and intentions regarding MD markers.

The responses indicated that teachers' strategies often centred on technical aspects of writing rather than the interactive nature of argumentative writing. For example, some teachers, including Julia, Laila, and Mona, emphasised teaching writing structure with a focus on grammar, tense accuracy, and sentence construction. They believed that clear grammar and concise sentences enhanced academic writing. In contrast, Alaa highlighted the importance of idea generation as a starting point, stating, "*I always encourage them to think out-of-the-box. So, they need to know first of all about the topic they will write about and then in a vocabulary, for sure good grammar and good language*". This perspective illustrated an effort to go beyond technical skills, encouraging creativity and content knowledge. Haifa added to this view by

stressing the importance of teaching paragraph structure to improve coherence, focusing on essay organisation from the introduction to the conclusion. This suggested that while teachers valued clarity, they may have given less attention to developing students' argumentative depth and reader engagement.

Teachers acknowledged the importance of encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives when writing arguments, but their methods varied. Samar, for example, motivated students to reflect on their own stance by asking questions such as, "What do you think? Do you agree? Why is this topic important? How can you investigate this topic? What are its advantages and disadvantages?". These questions aimed to stimulate critical thinking and helped students create an outline and clarify their personal position on the topic, laying a foundation for engaging with their readers. Similarly, Yusraa and Noaf encouraged students to reflect on their own claims and reasons before writing, with Noaf specifically noting that understanding their stance on the issue was essential for constructing an argument. These strategies reflected a broader awareness among some teachers of the importance of self-reflection in building arguments, which could foster a more interactive relationship between writer and reader.

Another key insight was the teachers' recognition of background knowledge as essential for argumentation. Norah, for example, engaged students in discussions about the topic, but noted that they needed sufficient knowledge to discuss their position effectively. Julia similarly encouraged students to relate arguments to real-life experiences, using related examples: "*If you go to your mom and you try to convince her, you know, she has her own opinion and your dad has his own opinion. So you need to adjust both opinions and then after that after adjusting their concerns, you give them your own opinion*". The teacher believed that linking arguments to familiar experiences could enhance students' understanding and confidence. However, the need for substantial background knowledge highlighted a challenge,



as students who lacked content knowledge may struggle to engage in meaningful argumentation.

Some teachers sought to create a comfortable environment that supported students in expressing their views. For instance, Laila incorporated technology, such as the Padlet website, into her teaching, allowing students to post their opinions and read peer responses. This method provided a platform for students to voice their thoughts openly, potentially strengthening their argumentation skills by exposing them to diverse viewpoints. Similarly, Noaf included free writing activities at the end of class, where students could write without fear of grades or feedback. She believed that this relaxed setting allowed students to express themselves more authentically. Samar extended this approach by making daily free writing and group discussions a regular part of her lessons. She explained that this practice helped students improve their writing skills and develop their voices through peer interaction and frequent opportunities for self-expression.

The teachers gave more detailed responses after reading the writing sample. In this section of the interview, the teachers were asked how they taught MD markers such as “however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree.” Their answers showed different approaches. Some teachers, including Mona, Laila, and Julia, said they used the module workbook to teach MD markers, explaining that it included exercises for this purpose. This use of the workbook matched what was seen during lessons, where teachers often used workbook activities instead of creating their own class exercises. These findings suggest that while the workbook gave structure to the lessons, it reduced the chances for students to actively practice and explore MD markers in more meaningful ways.

The meaning of MD markers was one of the main teaching strategies reported by the teachers. For example, Yusraa explained that MD markers were “academic words” and focused on teaching the meaning of individual markers to ensure students understood their definitions.

Similarly, Noaf believed that understanding the meaning of specific markers helped students choose the correct word in their writing. In contrast, other teachers, such as Amal, Samar, Haifa, and Norah, emphasised teaching the functional use of MD markers as tools to link sentences and ideas within an argument. For instance, Amal and Haifa believed that providing strong examples or models helped students use MD markers correctly, reducing errors in their writing. Norah suggested that teaching these markers gradually over time would improve students' comprehension of how they function in connecting ideas.

Samar extended this perspective by highlighting the strategic use of MD markers to suit the content. She explained,

*If you're talking about a process you should use firstly, finally, for example. If you're talking about a group of related ideas, you should use alternative words like in addition, moreover. And you have to use alternatives and you don't keep just using moreover or and and and you have to exchange between them.*

Her focus on using synonyms to avoid repetition demonstrated her awareness of linguistic variety, though it risked weakening the argument if alternatives were not chosen carefully. Overall, these responses suggested that while teachers understood the structural and functional roles of MD markers, they tended to view them primarily as language tools rather than tools for helping readers navigate complex arguments effectively.

### ***Teachers' feedback***

Feedback on students' writing is an aspect of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge that allows teachers to help students improve their future writing. At the interview, the teachers were asked: "What is your focus when you give students feedback on their academic writing?". This question aimed to explore whether teachers understood the importance of providing feedback on students' use of MD markers, which are critical in structuring arguments and engaging readers. When students receive specific feedback on MD markers, they can become

more aware of these tools, potentially improving their academic writing. Conversely, a lack of feedback on MD markers could hinder students' development of coherent and reader-oriented texts.

Most teachers reported that they focused primarily on grammar, spelling, and sentence structure. This emphasis suggested a focus on language accuracy over deeper engagement with content and argumentation. For instance, Yusraa pointed out by focusing on the meaning and content of students' texts, particularly for students who were non-native English speakers, believing that meaning should take priority over minor errors. This approach reflects an awareness of the challenges faced by EFL students, but it contrasts with other teachers who expected advanced grammatical proficiency from English department students, seeing correct grammar as essential for quality writing. Teachers like Samar and Alaa expressed concerns that frequent grammatical errors could interfere with meaning, highlighting an underlying assumption that linguistic accuracy is foundational to effective communication.

Some of the teachers highlighted that they focused on evaluating students' understanding of the assignment requirement or the research question. For example, Mona, Alaa, Laila, and Norah said that they focused on the students' understanding of the writing questions and their comprehension of the topic. The teachers were concerned about the students' ability to discuss the research or essay topic effectively and whether they drew on relevant journal articles or sources directly related to the topic. In addition, the teachers indicated that they focused on checking students' understanding of the topic through their discussion of their ideas in the written text. For example, Mona and Laila explained that their feedback focused on students' use of strong ideas in their writing.

Teachers also provided feedback on text organisation, focusing on clear structure and coherence. Mona, Laila, and Amal encouraged students to structure their ideas logically within paragraphs, while Noaf and Norah highlighted the importance of clarity in sentences and the

relevance of examples. This feedback on coherence and structure aligns with academic writing standards, but it also reflects a functional approach to organisation. Although teachers valued coherence, their feedback seemed focused on sentence clarity and paragraph organisation rather than the broader coherence achieved through the effective use of MD markers. A few teachers talked about the importance of MD markers in both teaching and assessing argumentative writing. Mona, Noaf, and Norah said that MD markers were important for organising text and making it clear. Mona's focus on MD markers seemed to come from the module rubric, which required their assessment. This showed that external evaluation rules, rather than a full understanding of MD markers' role in argumentation, influenced her attention to these features.

Noaf and Norah both said that regular feedback was important to help students use MD markers, as students might not pay attention to them without guidance. Noaf's teaching was especially shaped by her experience studying in the UK, where she felt unprepared to use MD markers. She said, "I did not want my students to blame me after they graduated, as I blamed my teachers when I studied my master's in the UK and found myself having no idea about MD markers." This shows how teachers' past experiences affected their teaching, pushing them to address gaps they had faced during their studies. However, not all teachers who studied in the UK gave the same attention to MD markers. For example, Julia also studied in the UK, but her teaching focused more on general coherence and organisation rather than specifically teaching MD markers. This suggests that studying in the UK alone did not always lead to a stronger focus on MD markers. Instead, personal experiences and feelings about what was missing in their own education seemed to play a bigger role. For Noaf, feeling unprepared during her master's degree motivated her to focus more on MD markers. However, during my observation, she did not discuss the importance of MD markers in building argumentative writing in her class teaching.

### **5.2.2 Teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning MD markers**

This section addresses Research Question 2.3: What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers? The aim is to explore the challenges and factors influencing teachers' practices and perceptions in teaching MD markers in academic writing. Insights from the data revealed two main sub-themes: teacher-related issues and learner-related issues. These themes shed light on how teachers' practices, perceptions, and experiences, as well as student-related challenges, impact the effective teaching and learning of MD markers.

#### **5.2.2.1 Teacher-related issues**

During the interviews, teachers were asked about their perceptions of teaching MD markers and the issues they faced in teaching academic writing. One sub-theme that emerged was teacher-related issues. Teachers were also asked about their strategies for improving academic writing and suggestions for enhancing both the teaching of academic writing and teacher proficiency. Three main challenges were identified: their writing proficiency, the suitability of textbooks, and time constraints. These factors are closely related to the teachers' perceptions about teaching MD markers, which will be explored in more detail below.

##### ***Writing proficiency***

The teachers reflected on their language backgrounds, noting that their English skills were initially limited because English was their second language. While they reported that their general English proficiency improved during university, they continued to struggle with academic writing. For example, Julia, who grew up speaking both Arabic and English due to her mother's English background, admitted that her academic writing skills were weak even during her university years. Although the teachers completed their undergraduate studies in English departments, they felt their academic writing skills were not adequately addressed. It

was only during their postgraduate studies that they fully realised the extent of these weaknesses.

All the interviewed teachers completed their MA degrees, and some also earned PhDs, in English-speaking countries, which made them more aware of the challenges they faced in academic writing. Studying in an English-speaking environment helped improve their general language skills, but it also showed specific gaps in their academic writing abilities. Being surrounded by native English speakers and experiencing higher expectations for academic writing made these gaps more obvious as they worked to meet the demands of advanced academic tasks.

This experience showed clear differences in how academic writing is taught in Saudi Arabia compared to English-speaking countries. All the teachers said that writing instruction abroad was more thorough and taken more seriously than in Saudi Arabia. They explained that their undergraduate education in Saudi Arabia gave little feedback on writing quality or coherence and mostly focused on completing basic assignments. Haifa said, *"During our undergraduate studies, our teachers were more focused on explaining characters in literature rather than improving our writing skills."* Similarly, Mona stated, *"In my undergraduate academic writing course, the emphasis from our teachers was on producing a 250-word piece on a given topic rather than ensuring coherence in writing."*

Their MA programmes in English-speaking countries further highlighted the importance of academic writing skills, prompting some teachers to seek additional support. Haifa shared, *"When I started my master's, I realised I needed an academic writing course to succeed."* This statement indicates that the transition to an English-speaking academic environment required a level of writing proficiency they had not previously attained. Julia similarly acknowledged feeling "embarrassed" about her writing quality despite her proficiency in English. Even with advanced degrees, some teachers continued to feel

inadequately prepared in academic writing. For example, Noaf, despite holding a PhD from the UK and teaching academic writing at the university level for three years, admitted to still struggling with writing a strong introduction:

*To this day writing an introduction is an effort, can you imagine that I have my PhD and still writing an introduction I cannot recall something that I studied that really think that I think that it really has affected me or that I can say that I really know how to write a really good introduction.*

Noaf's reflection highlights a key issue: even advanced qualifications did not fully provide EFL teachers with the academic writing skills they needed to feel confident. Similarly, Haifa admitted that her writing was still weak, which she attributed to the influence of Arabic on her thinking when writing in English. She explained that she often thought in Arabic while composing English academic texts, leading to frequent corrections to make her writing fit English rules. Haifa also observed that her students faced similar challenges, especially with pronouns, as they tended to apply Arabic grammar rules instead of English ones. In Arabic, pronouns are often embedded within verbs and indicate gender and number, whereas in English, pronouns are separate words e.g., *he*, *she*, or *it* and are not part of the verb. Arabic pronouns also follow different grammatical patterns for agreement with nouns and verbs, which can lead to mistakes when writing in English. For example, students might add unnecessary gender references or struggle to match pronouns with the subject correctly in English. Additionally, Laila shared that she continued to improve her academic writing skills by preparing lessons for her students. She noted that this process helped her develop her own skills alongside her students. This suggests that EFL writing teachers need to continue learning and improving their writing abilities to enhance their teaching.

### ***Textbook***

The teachers held different views on the suitability of the academic writing textbook for EFL students, revealing differing perspectives on its effectiveness for teaching writing skills. One group found the textbook generally suitable for the students' level. For example, Mona and Noaf expressed the view that the textbook was well-matched to the needs of EFL academic writing. Mona described the textbook as appropriate in both content and difficulty, citing its variety of lessons and rich reading topics, which provided students with a foundation of information before writing. This perspective suggested that some teachers valued the textbook's content diversity and believed that it facilitated content familiarity, an essential component for non-native English speakers engaging in academic writing. However, Laila offered a slightly more critical perspective within this group. While she acknowledged the textbook's value in covering diverse topics, she believed it fell short in terms of practical exercises. She noted that the textbook lacked sufficient exercises or quizzes, which would have allowed her students to apply writing concepts more effectively. Laila's feedback implied a challenge for teachers who needed to supplement textbook content with additional activities to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and writing practice.

The second group of teachers expressed the view that the textbook did not meet the needs of university-level academic writing instruction, highlighting a mismatch between the textbook's content and the skills required for effective academic writing. Julia, for instance, commented that the textbook lacked the essential information necessary for students to engage with academic writing topics, leading her to provide her students with supplementary materials. She explained:

*The textbook doesn't have enough information about the writing topic. So, I tried in class to discuss with my students what global warming means. Thus, at least they can have some ideas about what global warming is because these topics are really new to them. How they*



*write a paragraph and even in speaking, they can't express their ideas because of this issue. I think their textbook is not enough.*

However, Julia's approach primarily involved explaining the meaning of the writing topics rather than helping students practice their writing skills or learn how to construct argumentative essays. Similarly, Alaa and Haifa identified the textbook's content as too complex, emphasising the need for teacher training to help manage these challenging topics effectively. Haifa further elaborated that she had not received any formal training in teaching writing, even though she had been assigned to teach it for three years. As she explained, "*As you know, here in Saudi, none of the EFL teachers, even those who hold PhDs, studied how to teach writing.*" Haifa's experience underscored a systemic issue within the educational system, where teaching writing is often assigned to any English language graduate, regardless of their background in academic writing instruction. She indicated that her approach relied on following the textbook's contents and drawing on her own experiences as a student.

The teachers reported feeling pressured to cover all units in the textbook, which limited their ability to prioritise writing practice. This focus on covering content rather than developing skills highlights a broader issue in the curriculum, where strictly following the textbook can limit opportunities for students to engage in meaningful writing exercises. The volume of topics within the textbook covering subjects such as sports, education, health, and general knowledge suggested an emphasis on broad reading comprehension rather than focused writing skills. Consequently, teachers found themselves constrained by the textbook's structure, as they were unable to offer sufficient time for writing exercises. Noaf's feedback further underscored the challenges presented by the textbook, specifically regarding its lack of support for practising MD markers in argumentative writing. She indicated that the textbook provided little assistance in creating activities to help students use MD markers effectively, which are essential for constructing logical arguments and ensuring coherence in academic writing.

### ***Time constraints***

Teachers face numerous responsibilities beyond their classroom duties, including writing exam papers, conducting departmental research, managing academic calendars, and handling other administrative tasks. These additional obligations often limit the time available for classroom preparation and effective teaching. Several teachers highlighted how time constraints impacted their ability to focus on teaching writing skills. Julia, for instance, explained that the university's three-term academic calendar increased the pressure to complete the module on time. She noted that the short academic term, combined with the need to manage mid-term and final exams, left little room for writing practice or checking students' work. As she put it, completing exams often took priority over conducting writing activities in class. Similarly, Laila emphasised that the allocated class time was insufficient to assign meaningful writing activities.

This lack of time also affected teachers' ability to provide personalised feedback. Yusraa reported that there was no time in the academic year to offer face-to-face feedback to students. Norah observed that the limited class time prevented her students from sufficiently practising the target tasks. Although she noted her students' weaknesses in using MD markers, she explained that she could not apply much time to teaching them because students were expected to have already mastered these skills by their final year. The short academic calendar further exacerbated this issue, as she felt pressure to cover the entire syllabus, leaving little flexibility to address students' gaps in understanding.

These reflections underscore a broader issue within institutional structures: the competing demands placed on teachers can negatively impact both teaching quality and student outcomes. The pressure to prioritise content coverage over skill development, combined with administrative responsibilities, suggests a need for systemic changes to support teachers more effectively. Extra tasks assigned to teachers can impact their teaching focus and time

management. For instance, Noaf, who was selected as a programme leader that year, also taught academic writing. She mentioned that she struggled to find sufficient time to prepare her lessons for the students. She explained that the workload and department management obligations at the university affected her teaching preparation, and sometimes she felt that her students were not receiving enough instruction. The teacher indicated that time constraints and additional responsibilities reduced the time available for instructional tasks, which may have limited the effectiveness of their teaching.

#### **5.2.2.2 Learner-related issues.**

The second sub-theme addresses learner-related issues, as perceived by teachers. It reveals that teachers commonly identified two key issues: students' English proficiency levels and motivation among students. This sub-theme will be discussed in more detail below.

##### ***Students' English level***

Teachers observed that students' varying proficiency levels significantly impacted their academic writing quality, particularly in argumentative tasks. Mona, Yossra, Laila, and Samar highlighted that many students tended to use informal English, often mimicking the language style they used in social media or casual chats with friends. This informal style negatively affected their grammar, spelling, and coherence in academic contexts. For example, Samar noted that her students frequently made grammar mistakes such as using double subjects, a pattern influenced by their first language. She explained, "*My students commonly write 'Norah she said that'*" which is a result of the double subject usage in Arabic. This observation underscores how native language interference can persist in students' writing, affecting their ability to meet academic standards.

Poor text organisation was another issue identified in students' writing. For example, Julia observed that students often combined multiple ideas into a single paragraph or repeated the same ideas across different sections of their essays. She pointed out that this was because

of the lack of planning, explaining that students tended to write informally without organising their thoughts. Similarly, teachers noted that while students were taught conjunction words, their use of linking words was either absent or overly simplistic. For example, Noaf mentioned that her students rarely used linking words to connect sentences, while Amal noted that students often used them incorrectly. Samar and Haifa pointed out that students relied on basic markers such as *first*, *second*, and *finally* but lacked familiarity with more advanced markers essential for building strong arguments. This limited use of linking words further weakened the logical flow and coherence of their writing.

Amal said that these issues were partly due to students' heavy academic workloads. She explained that students often focused on studying for mid-term exams and quizzes in other modules instead of reviewing their writing homework, leaving little time to improve their academic writing skills. Similarly, Norah, who worked in the student writing centre, observed that the centre was often empty, with students rarely attending to get help or practise their writing. According to Norah, the student writing centre is part of the university's student support services located in the library. It offers individual and group sessions, academic writing courses, and lessons. The centre also provides help with proofreading and improving writing skills, and all its services are free and optional for students. However, Norah noted that, despite advertisements at the university, no students attended the centre or its workshops during the year. She indicated that this lack of engagement with available support was a barrier to students developing the skills needed to improve their academic writing.

### ***Students' motivation***

Teachers observed that many EFL students lacked motivation to engage in academic writing, which negatively affected their learning outcomes and writing quality. Mona noted that although academic writing was a compulsory module, students often viewed it as boring and just another task to complete. She explained that this attitude was due to the heavy demands

of other modules, which students found more difficult and time-consuming. Teachers believed that students thought academic writing was easy to pass or felt they needed to improve their writing skills or practise in class. Similarly, Amal and Alaa observed that students were less active in class and viewed academic writing as less important compared to the other modules. Joulia and Haifa added that students often focused on other courses and showed little interest in teacher feedback, further slowing their progress. Haifa noted that students often worked on assignments for other modules, leaving little time to practise or review their writing tasks. This lack of engagement was also noted by Norah, as mentioned previously, who reported that students rarely took the opportunity to attend writing support sessions or workshops offered by the university.

The lack of motivation often resulted in minimal effort on writing tasks. Teachers reported that students mainly focused on passing the module rather than improving their skills. Many students ignored key assessment criteria, such as coherence and argumentative structure, and instead aimed to meet only basic requirements, like word counts. Amal explained that her students preferred to be "spoon-fed" information, avoiding the effort needed to understand and apply the principles of academic writing. Haifa added that students avoided challenging tasks that required critical thinking or planning, instead choosing to write in ways that required less effort. Teachers also explained that students' perception of academic writing as an easy module may have contributed to their lack of motivation. While teachers stressed the importance of coherence, cohesion, and clear arguments, they observed that students tended to ignore these aspects unless they were included in assessments. This highlighted a mismatch between what teachers considered important in academic writing and what students thought was necessary to complete the module.

### **5.3 Interview Summary and Differences in Teachers' Approaches to MD Markers**

The findings revealed clear differences in how teachers approached the teaching of MD markers. Julia and Norah were the only two teachers who directly referred to MD markers in their teaching, which might have been influenced by their educational backgrounds, personal experiences, and levels of teaching experience.

Julia described her personal journey as a bilingual speaker who grew up using both English and Arabic at home. Despite her advanced speaking skills, Julia realised during her postgraduate studies in the UK that her academic writing needed significant improvement. She stated that the feedback she received during her master's and PhD studies helped her understand the importance of clarity, structure, and coherence, which are closely related to MD markers. In her classes, Julia encouraged students to organise their ideas and structure their writing to improve coherence. She frequently discussed argumentative structures and encouraged students to consider multiple perspectives when forming their arguments. However, Julia did not teach in detail how to build arguments or explicitly explain the use of MD markers to link ideas and improve coherence. Observations showed that her guidance was broad and focused more on general organisation than on the specific use of MD markers. When given a writing sample with MD marker errors, Julia did not identify these mistakes, which suggested limited attention to the detailed use of MD markers in her teaching.

Norah's approach to MD markers was more explicit compared to other teachers, partly due to her experience working in a writing centre. This role gave her deeper insight into students' writing abilities and common mistakes, such as issues with coherence and MD markers. After completing her bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia, Norah studied English for six months in the US and later earned a master's degree in TESOL. During her master's studies, critical feedback on her writing helped her develop a stronger understanding of writing strategies, which included MD markers. Norah was the only teacher who explicitly mentioned

MD markers during her classroom teaching. She incorporated MD markers in her feedback sessions, focusing on helping students organise their ideas and improve coherence. However, like Julia, she did not teach students how MD markers could be used to build arguments or make the writing more engaging for readers. Observations revealed that her teaching primarily addressed organising ideas and fixing surface-level coherence issues. Additionally, when given a writing sample with MD marker errors, Norah, like Julia, did not notice these mistakes, reflecting a lack of focus on the detailed application of MD markers. Both teachers, along with others in the interviews and observations, viewed MD markers primarily as tools to organise ideas rather than as features for building arguments or engaging readers.

#### **5.4 Quantitative Findings (Online Questionnaire)**

The interviews were carried out to understand the observed teachers' views and practices, especially their use or lack of use of MD markers in teaching. These interviews provided insights into why teachers may not focus on MD markers and helped shape the design of the questionnaire. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to build on the findings from the interviews and observations by collecting information from a larger group of EFL academic writing teachers across Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire aimed to find out if the patterns and ideas from the interviews were common among other teachers. It focused on EFL teachers who teach final-year English department students, helping to see if the earlier findings applied to a wider group and if there were any differences in teachers' beliefs and practices.

The questionnaire asked participants about their beliefs regarding MD markers, specifically in the context of teaching academic writing to final-year English language students. Part B included statements on students' needs, such as building arguments, organising text, and achieving coherence, as well as teachers' views on the importance of incorporating elements like the writer's voice, audience awareness, and broader teaching priorities beyond grammar and spelling.

Additionally, the questionnaire included in Part (A) a brief quiz to assess teachers' knowledge of argumentative writing and the functions of MD markers. This aimed to explore whether there was a potential relationship between teachers' knowledge levels and their beliefs. Research suggests that teaching experience often influences the development of teachers' beliefs about teaching. For example, Melketo (2012) highlights that more experienced teachers tend to have more established views about teaching and learning. However, the interviews provided limited evidence of a strong link between teaching experience and beliefs about MD markers. One notable exception was Norah, who, despite having only two years of teaching experience and an MA, demonstrated a greater awareness of the importance of MD markers in argumentative writing than some of her more experienced peers. For instance, she explicitly discussed how MD markers could help students structure their ideas and improve coherence. This finding suggests that factors beyond teaching experience such as individual educational experiences, exposure to professional feedback, or specific teaching roles like her work in a writing centre may play a significant role in shaping teachers' beliefs about MD markers.

Given the small number of teachers involved in the observation and interview phases, it was challenging to comprehensively explore the association between experience and perceptions. To address this, the questionnaire collected data on respondents' teaching experience to determine whether a larger sample might reveal any significant associations. By combining insights from interviews, observations, and the questionnaire, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of MD marker instruction in university-level EFL academic writing courses in Saudi Arabia, highlighting areas for improvement and the need for focused training.

This section presents the quantitative findings from the questionnaire, focusing on Research Question 2.2: What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and



learning of MD markers? The findings are drawn from a larger sample of EFL teachers, providing broader insights into their perceptions and practices.

**The questionnaire comprised two main sections:**

1-Demographic Information: This section collected data on the teachers' highest qualifications and teaching experience

2- Knowledge and beliefs about MD Markers:

Part A: Included nine multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question to assess the teachers' subject knowledge regarding the use of MD markers in academic writing. Questions addressed topics such as the definition of argumentative writing and the functions of various MD markers.

Part B: Consisted of 22 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) to gauge the teachers' perceptions and beliefs about teaching and learning MD markers in EFL academic writing. This part focused on the teachers' views on their students' academic writing abilities and needs, as well as their beliefs about the importance of teaching argumentative writing.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. The analysis included tests for reliability, principal components factor analysis, checks for normality, and non-parametric tests to ensure the robustness and validity of the findings. These quantitative insights aim to support and enrich the qualitative data, comprehensively understanding EFL teachers' beliefs and practices related to MD markers in academic writing.

**5.4.1 Reliability of the questionnaire**

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the responses collected through the questionnaire over time (Bordens & Abbott, 2018). It is a critical quality indicator that ensures the research findings are not only replicable but also accurate and dependable (Taherdoost, 2016). A reliable questionnaire accurately measures what it intends to measure consistently

across different contexts and populations (Taherdoost, 2016). Without maximising reliability, the research outcomes may be questioned, leading to a loss of credibility in the study. Moreover, reliability testing, such as internal consistency, helps in identifying and correcting errors, ambiguities, and inconsistencies in the questionnaire, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the research (Rattray & Jones, 2007). Cronbach's Alpha is a key measure for evaluating internal consistency in both multiple-answer and Likert scale questionnaires. It assesses how well items correlate within a questionnaire, ensuring consistent measurement across different responses. In addition, Pesudovs et al. (2007) stated that multiple-choice questionnaires are often used to measure knowledge and suggested using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of these questionnaire items. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of part A and part B of the questionnaire.

Part B achieved an alpha coefficient of .94, which exceeds the widely accepted threshold of .7 for internal consistency (Taber, 2018), indicating a high level of reliability. This result confirms that the Likert scale items effectively capture the constructs they were designed to measure, namely teachers' perceptions and beliefs about teaching and learning MD markers in EFL academic writing. This strong internal consistency underscores the suitability of the questionnaire for further analysis.

Part A included multiple-choice questions designed to assess teachers' subject knowledge regarding MD markers in argumentative academic writing. Initially, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was disappointingly low at .46. To enhance this measure of internal consistency, question number 10 was omitted based on recommendations derived from the Cronbach's alpha analysis (see Table 5.2). This modification resulted in an increased alpha value of .58. Although this revised coefficient remains below the conventional acceptability level of .7, it is important to note, as Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) argue, that in the context of second language research, particularly for multiple-answer questionnaire tests, a lower

Cronbach's alpha value may be considered acceptable. Furthermore, Part A functions as a supporting element for Part B of the questionnaire, enabling the researcher to examine the potential correlation between teachers' knowledge about MD markers in argumentative academic writing and their perceptions about learning and teaching MD markers.

**Table 5.2**  
*Item-Total Statistics for Questionnaire Part A*

Question	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
(Q1) Which of the following are elements of argument in academic writing? (Please select all choices that apply)"	3.31	1.74	.26	.41
(Q2) Effective ways a writer can interact with the readers in the written text are through:	3.35	1.63	.36	.37
(Q3) Which of the following are essential for argumentative writing?	3.37	1.69	.34	.38
(Q5) Using these words (first, to conclude, note above, finally) in the written text helps to:	3.07	1.58	.35	.37
(Q6) Which of the following are used to present the writer's attitude and position toward a topic? (Please select all choices that apply)	3.69	1.96	.10	.47
(Q7) Which of the following words can be used to give certainty to the writer's message?	3.40	1.87	.12	.47
(Q8) The word "namely" is used in academic writing to introduce detailed information or to redefine a term. Which of the following words\ phrases can be used too for that purpose? (Please select a...	3.37	1.90	.27	.42
(Q9) What are the functions of "basically" in this sentence?	3.51	1.91	.25	.43
(Q10) Is the following statement correct or incorrect?	3.43	2.06	-.11	.58

#### **5.4.2 Teachers' subject knowledge about MD markers: Questionnaire part (A)**

The eight multiple-choice questions served three purposes. First, they aimed to explore the teachers' understanding of what argumentative writing means, as assessed through

questions 1, 2, and 3. Second, questions 6 and 7 focused on evaluating the teachers' knowledge of interactive markers, which are used to organise text. Third, questions 5, 8, and 9 examined the teachers' understanding of interactional markers, which are used to convey arguments and engage with readers. Each question was worth one point, contributing to a total maximum of eight points. While some questions contained a single correct answer, others had multiple correct responses; however, only one point was allocated per question. In instances of multiple correct answers, the single point was evenly divided among the correct responses, ensuring that each question's total contribution did not exceed one point. At the same time, the open-ended question in the questionnaire quiz asked participants to list examples of MD markers, aiming to assess the teachers' knowledge of MD markers. To systematically evaluate the responses to this question, the researcher employed a scoring system that classified answers according to the range and complexity of the conjunctions provided. Consequently, a three-level system was established for scoring: High Level: Participants demonstrate extensive knowledge by providing complex conjunction examples. Medium Level: Participants demonstrate a moderate range of conjunctions. Low Level: Participants list only the common conjunctions such as *and*, or *but*. The determined conjunctions level was guided by a structured rubric, developed from an extensive review of second language proficiency literature, particularly drawing on Connor and Mbaye (2002) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2010). This rubric classified responses into three proficiency levels based on the complexity of the MD markers listed. In addition, irrelevant responses were classified as incorrect.

The analysis of the eight multiple-choice questions highlights notable gaps in teachers' knowledge regarding argumentative writing and their understanding of interactive and interactional MD markers. None of the participants achieved the maximum score, with the highest score being 6.66 out of 8. The mean score of 3.43, significantly below the maximum, indicates a limited level of subject knowledge about MD markers among the teachers. The

standard deviation of 1.44, approximately 42% of the mean, suggests moderate variability in the teachers' responses, reflecting differing levels of understanding across participants.

McKenna (2019) argued that multiple-choice questions often fail to reflect practical knowledge, as higher scores may sometimes result from guessing or test-taking strategies rather than a deep understanding of the material. However, in this study, the relatively low scores suggest the opposite: the teachers' practical knowledge of MD markers may be even more limited than these results indicate. This finding reinforces the need for professional development to address these gaps and enable teachers to effectively teach MD markers as part of academic writing instruction. The low performance also aligns with earlier findings from the interviews, where teachers expressed uncertainty regarding the use and teaching of MD markers, particularly their functions in argumentative writing.

The participants in this study comprised 150 EFL writing teachers working with final-year English department students across various regions in Saudi Arabia. The key demographics collected included their teaching experience, qualifications, and familiarity with MD markers. These teachers completed a questionnaire designed to assess their knowledge and perceptions of MD markers in academic writing.

Teachers appeared to have a greater understanding of interactive markers compared to interactional markers, as shown in the analysis of responses to Question 5 (Table 5.3). Question 5, which tested the function of interactive markers such as 'first' and 'finally', was answered correctly by 111 participants out of 150, indicating that a majority demonstrated familiarity with organising text using these markers. Conversely, Question 6 (Table 5.4), which assessed knowledge of interactional markers used to convey the writer's stance, had only 18 correct responses. This highlights a notable gap in teachers' knowledge of interactional MD markers.

**Table 5.3**

(Q5) Using these words (first, to conclude, note above, finally) in the written text helps to:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Incorrect	39	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Correct	111	74.0	74.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5.4**

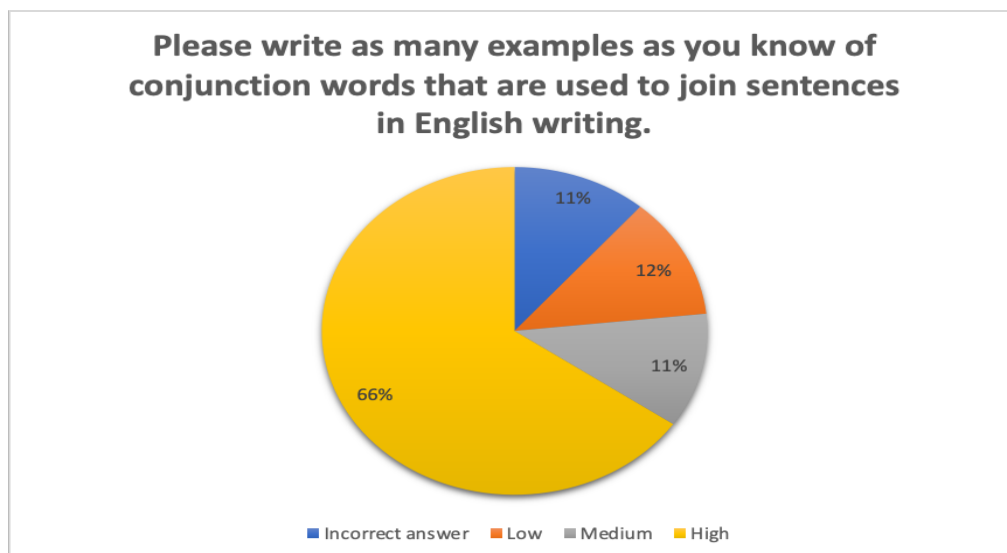
(Q6) Which of the following are used to present the writer's attitude and position toward a topic? (Please select all choices that apply)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Incorrect	132	88.0	88.0	88.0
	Correct	18	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Figure 5.1 illustrates the teachers' answers to the open-ended Question 4, which examined teachers' ability to provide examples of MD markers and whether they could give high-level or common MD markers. This question was asked to determine the teachers' knowledge about different MD markers, especially considering some teachers in the interviews expressed the view that MD markers are grammatical words only.

**Figure 5.1**

Open-ended question number 4, analysis result.



More than half of the participants demonstrated a high proficiency level by offering advanced and complex examples of MD markers. However, 34% of the responses indicated medium or low levels of MD markers knowledge, and a few answers were incorrect, showing variability in the participants' understanding. Overall, while most of the teachers' responses indicated a high level of knowledge regarding the types of MD markers, their understanding of the meaning and function of these markers, as assessed through the multiple-choice questions, was limited. This highlights the need to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge of MD markers to enhance their ability to teach them effectively and address students' errors.

#### **5.4.3 Factor Validity for Questionnaire Part B**

To ensure the construct validity of the questionnaire, principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted using SPSS 29. The purpose was to see if the questionnaire successfully measured EFL writing teachers' views about MD markers, their students' writing skills and needs, and teachers teaching methods. PCA also helped organise the data into smaller, more meaningful groups to make it easier to understand. This was important to ensure the questionnaire focused on MD markers and argumentative academic writing that aimed to answer the research question 2.3.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure showed a value of 0.82, which is above the recommended value of 0.6. This means the data was good for PCA (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ( $\chi^2 (231) = 1405.25, p < .001$ ), showing that the items in the questionnaire were connected enough for PCA (Field, 2018). A Promax rotation was used because it allows the groups of items to be related, which fits with education research. PCA split the items into three main groups, shown in Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5**  
*Pattern Matrix*

Item	Component 3	Component 2	Component 1
1. My students need to learn how to build arguments in their			.87
2. My students need to learn how to organise a written text.			.93
3. My students need to learn the words and phrases that are			.82
4. My students need to learn how create coherence in their			.94
5. My students can make argumentative statements in their		.88	
6. My students can use words that help to organise their		.79	
7. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure		.66	
8.r My students' arguments in their academic writing are	.12	-.51	-.50
9. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in		.95	
10. My students can use different words to join the meaning		.91	
11. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to		.87	
12. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing	.73		
13. English academic writing should express accurately the	.75		
14. Academic writing teachers should encourage their EFL	.71		
15. I belief in academic writing arguments should involve	.83		
16. I belief in academic writing arguments should build	.90		
17.The writer's voice should be reflected in English	.83		
18. In academic writing the writer should use words or	.91		
19. In academic writing the writer should refer to source	.84		
20. Arguments in academic writing should help readers	.81		
21. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus	.83		
22. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills	.71		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.  
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The first component, called "Students' needs," showed what teachers thought their students needed to learn to improve their EFL argumentative writing, like building arguments and making their writing more coherent. The second component, "Students' ability," included teachers' opinions about their students' skills, like using words to organise their writing and making arguments. The third component, "What teachers should do," focused on what teachers thought their role should be, such as helping students think about their readers while writing. Table 5.6 shows the relationships between these three groups.



**Table 5.6**  
*Component Correlation Matrix*

<b>component</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
1	1.00	.42	.65
2	.42	1.00	.47
3	.65	.47	1.00

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

The reliability of the components was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Components 1 and 3 had high reliability, as shown in Table 5.7. Component 2 initially had lower reliability, but this improved after removing Item 8, as detailed in Tables 5.7 and 5.8. This adjustment ensured that the items in component 2 worked together more consistently. Overall, the PCA confirmed that the questionnaire was a strong tool for exploring the study's focus on MD markers and argumentative academic writing. These findings provided confidence in the questionnaire's ability to gather meaningful and reliable data.

**Table 5.7**  
*Reliability Statistics*

<b>Components N</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
Components 1	.94	4
Components 2	.78	7
Components 2 (after deleting one item)	.93	6
Components 3	.95	11

**Table 5.8**  
*Item-Total Statistics for Components 2*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
5. My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.	19.75	19.62	.79	.69
6. My students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.	19.63	20.72	.79	.70
7. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.	19.53	21.24	.66	.72
8.r My students' arguments in their academic writing are weak.	20.79	38.10	-.66	.93
9. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.	19.69	20.34	.79	.69
10. My students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.	19.67	20.36	.79	.70
11. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.	19.62	20.06	.80	.69

#### 5.4.4 The Statistical Description of Questionnaire Part B

This section describes the responses to Questionnaire Part B, which explored teachers' views on Students' Needs, Students' Ability, and What Teachers Should Do. These components provide important insights into EFL argumentative writing teaching and learning. The results are summarised in Table 5.9 and Table 5.10.

The Students' Needs component items revealed strong agreement among teachers on helping students develop fundamental academic writing skills. Average scores ranged from 3.83 (My students need to learn how to build arguments in their academic writing) to 4.03 (My students need to learn how to organise a written text). Teachers rated organising a written text as the most important skill within this category (Table 5.9). When the mean scores of all items in this component are combined and divided by four, the overall mean is 3.95, indicating a high level of importance placed on this aspect by the respondents.

Responses to the Students' Ability component items displayed greater variability (Table 5.9). Teachers' perceptions of students' abilities ranged from an average of 3.36 (My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing) to 3.58 (My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text). When the mean scores of all six items (Items 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11) are combined and divided, the overall mean for this component is 3.47, indicating moderate agreement among teachers regarding students' abilities. While some teachers agreed that students had the ability to organise their writing, others remained neutral or disagreed, reflecting diverse perspectives on students' writing capabilities.

The What Teachers Should Do component had an overall mean score of 3.78, indicating that teachers placed significant value on their role in supporting students' academic writing development. Average scores for individual items ranged from 3.59 (Arguments should involve markers such as 'I, me, mine') to 3.93 (EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills like organising ideas and creating arguments).

**Table 5.9**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire Items in Part B*

Component	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Component 1: Students' Need	1. My students need to learn how to build arguments in their academic writing.	3.83	1.309
	2. My students need to learn how to organise a written text.	4.03	1.129
	3. My students need to learn the words and phrases that are used to make arguments in a written text.	3.99	1.138
	4. My students need to learn how to create coherence in their academic writing.	3.99	1.132
Component 2: Students' Ability	5. My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.	3.36	1.26
	6. My students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.	3.49	1.134
	7. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.	3.58	1.211
	9. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.	3.43	1.178
	10. My students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.	3.44	1.179
	11. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.	3.49	1.197

Component 3: What Teachers Should Do	12. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing as it is important for students' university studies.	3.73	1.209
	13. English academic writing should express accurately the writer's perspective.	3.71	1.012
	14. Academic writing teachers should encourage their EFL students to think about the readers at the time of writing.	3.87	1.021
	15. I believe in academic writing arguments should involve the use of markers such as I, me, or mine for making explicit references to the author.	3.59	1.056
	16. I believe in academic writing arguments should build interactions with the readers.	3.75	0.996
	17. The writer's voice should be reflected in English academic writing.	3.77	1.018
	18. In academic writing the writer should use words or phrases that refer to information in other parts of the text or cross-refer tables and figures.	3.79	1.005
	19. In academic writing the writer should refer to source information from other parts of the texts.	3.86	1.023
	20. Arguments in academic writing should help readers understand various ideas, which are presented in the text.	3.9	0.975
	21. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus on how students argue with the reader in their writing.	3.72	1.024
	22. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills beyond spelling or grammar.	3.93	1.079

The items with which the most respondents agreed or disagreed strongly (Table 5.10) showed important results across components. Within the Students' Needs component, the most agreed-upon item was "My students need to learn how to organise a written text," showing its importance as a basic skill in academic writing. For the Students' Ability component, the strongest agreement was with "My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text," showing that students often focused on grammar rather than the overall flow of their writing. Meanwhile, in the What Teachers Should Do component, the item "Arguments in academic writing should help readers understand various ideas" received the strongest agreement or disagreement, highlighting teachers' shared belief in the importance of clear communication in academic writing. This matched the overall focus in this component on helping students think about the readers and write arguments in a structured way. Among the other items, "EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills like organising ideas and creating arguments" had the highest mean score in this component, further showing the importance teachers placed on clear, logical structure in writing. In

contrast, "Arguments should involve markers such as ‘I, me, mine’" received less agreement, showing mixed views on the use of self-referential markers in academic writing. Overall, the focus across all components Students’ Needs, Students’ Ability, and What Teachers Should Do highlighted the importance of clear communication and good organisation in academic writing. While teachers agreed on these key areas, there were differences in their views and opinions regarding how to approach these skills.

**Table 5.10**

*Frequency Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Items in Part B*

Component	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Component 1: Students' Needs	1. My students need to learn how to build arguments in their academic writing.	14	13	20	41	62
	2. My students need to learn how to organise a written text.	9	8	15	56	62
	3. My students need to learn the words and phrases that are used to make arguments in a written text.	9	10	13	59	59
	4. My students need to learn how to create coherence in their academic writing.	8	10	18	53	61
Component 2: Students' Ability	5. My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.	17	20	35	48	30
	6. My students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.	8	24	34	55	29
	7. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.	11	20	28	53	38
	9. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.	12	21	36	53	28
	10. My students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.	11	22	37	50	30
	11. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.	11	21	35	49	34
Component 3: What Teachers Should Do	12. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing as it is important for students’ university studies.	12	15	18	62	43
	13. English academic writing should express accurately the writer’s perspective.	7	12	26	77	28
	14. Academic writing teachers should encourage their EFL students to think about the readers at the time of writing.	9	4	23	76	38
	15. I believe in academic writing arguments should involve the use of markers such as I, me, or mine for making explicit references to the author.	10	10	36	69	25
	16. I believe in academic writing arguments should build interactions with the readers.	10	2	31	79	28

17. The writer's voice should be reflected in English academic writing.	8	6	32	70	34
18. In academic writing the writer should use words or phrases that refer to information in other parts of the text or cross-refer tables and figures.	8	6	28	75	33
19. In academic writing the writer should refer to source information from other parts of the texts.	10	3	21	80	36
20. Arguments in academic writing should help readers understand various ideas, which are presented in the text.	7	6	19	81	37
21. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus on how students argue with the reader in their writing.	9	8	27	78	28
22. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills beyond spelling or grammar.	8	9	17	67	49

#### **5.4.5 The correlation between teachers' MD knowledge test, and their beliefs about students' needs, students' abilities, and what teachers should do**

Spearman's nonparametric correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships among teachers' MD marker knowledge, their beliefs about students' needs, students' abilities, and appropriate instructional practices, given the ordinal nature of the data from Part B of the questionnaire. According to Plonsky and Oswald (2014), correlation coefficients in L2 research are interpreted as small if they are close to .25, medium if around .40, and large if approximately .60.

The correlations shown in Table 5.11 highlight the strength of the relationships between teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their beliefs. The significant positive correlation between teachers' MD marker knowledge and their beliefs about students' needs ( $r = .461, p < .001$ ) indicates a medium-strength connection. This means that teachers with greater knowledge of MD markers were more likely to believe that it is important for students to improve their argumentative academic writing skills, such as organising ideas, building arguments, and writing clearly and coherently.

The correlation between teachers' MD marker knowledge and their perceptions of students' abilities ( $r = -.102, p = .216$ ) was not statistically significant. This indicated that there was no meaningful relationship between teachers' knowledge of MD markers and how they

viewed their students' writing abilities. In this context, it seems that teachers' understanding of MD markers did not strongly influence their perceptions of students' current skill levels. In contrast, the correlation between teachers' MD marker knowledge and their beliefs about what teachers should do in their instruction ( $r = .197, p = .015$ ) was small but statistically significant. This suggested that teachers with greater MD marker knowledge were slightly more likely to recognise the importance of focusing on teaching argumentative writing features. Specifically, they acknowledged the need to guide students in building strong arguments and engaging effectively with their readers. Table 5.11 below provides a summary of these correlations and their significance levels.

**Table 5.11**

*Spearman's Rho Correlations Among Teachers' Knowledge, Students' Needs and Abilities, and Teachers Teaching*

			Teachers' MD markers knowledge	Students' needs	Students ' ability	What teachers should do
Spearman's rho	Teachers' MD markers knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.461**	-.102	.197*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001	.216	.015
		N	150	150	150	150
	Students' needs	Correlation Coefficient	.461**	1.000	.364*	.477**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	<.001
		N	150	150	150	150
	Students' ability	Correlation Coefficient	-.102	.364**	1.000	.322**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	<.001	.	<.001
		N	150	150	150	150
	What teachers should do	Correlation Coefficient	.197*	.477**	.322*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	<.001	<.001	.
		N	150	150	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 5.4.6 Non-parametric test for part B three components (students' needs, students' ability and what the teachers should do).

Questionnaire Part B was a 21-item scale designed to investigate teachers' perceptions and beliefs about learning and teaching MD markers in academic writing. To explore whether differences existed in the responses of participants with varying years of teaching experience, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric method used to identify significant differences among independent groups when the data is ordinal or not normally distributed.

The Kruskal-Wallis test focused on determining whether significant differences existed in teachers' perceptions of three components: students' needs, students' abilities, and what teachers should do. While the test is effective in identifying the presence of differences, it does not provide insights into the specific content or nature of those differences. Thus, this analysis primarily examined whether significant differences in perceptions occurred across teaching experience categories (0–3 years, 4–10 years, and more than 10 years).

Table 5.12 highlights how teachers' perceptions differed across experience categories. Teachers with 0–3 years of experience consistently reported higher mean ranks across all components, regardless of their smaller group size compared to the 4–10 years category. This suggests that less experienced teachers may view students' needs, abilities, and instructional responsibilities differently from their more experienced counterparts.

**Table 5.12**  
*Kruskal-Wallis Test: Ranks*

Component	How long is your experience in teaching English?	N	Mean Rank
Students' needs	0-3 years	55	80.10
	4–10 years	61	69.34
	More than 10 years	34	79.12
	Total	150	
Students' ability	0-3 years	55	92.98
	4–10 years	61	72.24



	More than 10 years	34	53.07
	Total	150	
What teachers should do	0-3 years	55	80.55
	4–10 years	61	77.01
	More than 10 years	34	64.62
	Total	150	

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test are displayed in Table 5.13. The analysis revealed statistically non-significant differences in teachers' perceptions of students' needs and what teachers should do across the experience groups. This suggests that teachers' beliefs about these aspects remained consistent regardless of their length of teaching experience. However, there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions of students' abilities, indicating that teaching experience influenced how teachers viewed their students' capabilities.

**Table 5.13**

*Test Statistics: Kruskal-Wallis Test*

	<b>Students' needs</b>	<b>Students' ability</b>	<b>What teachers should do</b>
<i>Kruskal-Wallis H</i>	2.14	18.45	2.97
<i>df</i>	2	2	2
<i>Asymp. Sig.</i>	.34	<.001	.23

*a. Kruskal Wallis Test*

*b. Grouping Variable: How long is your experience in teaching English?*

Since the Kruskal-Wallis test identified a significant difference in perceptions of students' abilities, a follow-up Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine which groups contributed to this difference. Given the multiple pairwise comparisons, the Bonferroni correction was applied to reduce the likelihood of Type I errors. This adjustment involved dividing the alpha level (.05) by the number of comparisons, resulting in a revised significance threshold of .0167 ( $.05/3 = .017$ ).

The results, as shown in Table 5.14, revealed that teachers with 0–3 years of experience had significantly higher mean ranks compared to those with 4–10 years and those with more than 10 years of experience. Specifically, less experienced teachers perceived their students as more capable of performing various academic writing tasks, such as making argumentative

statements, organising text, expressing attitudes, and using cohesive devices. However, no significant differences were observed between teachers with 4–10 years and those with more than 10 years of experience.

These findings suggest that teachers with less experience may view their students as more capable of producing argumentative writing compared to their more experienced counterparts. This perception could stem from newer teachers focusing on students' apparent capabilities or having a more optimistic outlook on students' potential. In contrast, teachers with more experience may be more critical or better at identifying gaps in students' skills, which might influence their perceptions of students' academic writing abilities.

**Table 5.14**

*Mann-Whitney U Test Ranks for Students' Ability by Teachers' Experience in Teaching English*

<b>Mann-Whitney U test: Ranks</b>	<b>How long is your experience in teaching English?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
<b>Students' ability</b>	0-3 years	55	67.40	3707.00
	4-10 years	61	50.48	3079.00
<b>Total</b>		116		
	0-3 years	55	53.58	2947.00
	More than 10 years	34	31.12	1058.00
<b>Total</b>		89		
	4-10 years	61	52.76	3218.50
	More than 10 years	34	39.46	1341.50
<b>Total</b>		95		

To explore which aspect of teachers' beliefs was most emphasised in the context of EFL argumentative writing teaching and learning, a Friedman test was conducted. This test compared the relative importance of three components: students' ability, students' needs, and what teachers should do. The aim was to identify which areas teachers prioritised most, helping address the research questions.

The results, summarised in Table 5.16, showed statistically significant differences in the rankings of these components,  $p < .001$ . Teachers gave the highest rank to students' ability (Mean Rank=2.28), followed by what teachers should do (Mean Rank=1.92), and then

students' needs, which received the lowest rank (Mean Rank=1.80) as shown in Table 5.15. The findings indicate that teachers focused more on observable aspects of students' current writing skills than on broader needs or their own teaching strategies. This may be because students' abilities are easier to assess and evaluate, while addressing students' needs and reflecting on teaching practices require deeper thought and longer-term observation.

**Table 5.15**  
*Friedman test: Ranks*

Component	Mean Rank
Students' ability	2.28
Students' needs	1.80
What teachers should do	1.92

**Table 5.16**  
*Friedman Test Statistics*

N	150
Chi-Square	22.50
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

a. Friedman Test

To further explore the differences between the questionnaire components, a post-hoc Wilcoxon Signed Rank test with Bonferroni correction was conducted. This test allowed for pairwise comparisons of the rankings after the Friedman test identified a significant difference. The analysis focused on three categories: "Students' ability," "Students' needs," and "What teachers should do," which represented key aspects of EFL argumentative writing teaching and learning. These categories corresponded to specific questionnaire items: 1–4 for "Students' needs," 5–11 for "Students' ability," and 12–22 for "What teachers should do."

The statistical description of questionnaire responses, as discussed in Section 5.4.4, provided important context for these findings. Teachers strongly agreed on the importance of addressing "Students' needs," such as helping students organise their writing and create

coherence. However, their views on "Students' ability" were more varied, with mixed opinions about students' skills, such as making arguments and using cohesive devices. For "What teachers should do," responses showed strong agreement, highlighting the value teachers placed on their role in supporting students' academic writing development. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test are presented in Table 5.17

**Table 5.17**  
*Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Ranks*

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
Students' ability - Students' needs	Negative Ranks	73 <sup>a</sup>	65.42	4776.00
	Positive Ranks	38 <sup>b</sup>	37.89	1440.00
	Ties	39 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	150		
What teachers should do - Students' needs	Negative Ranks	90 <sup>d</sup>	64.35	5791.50
	Positive Ranks	40 <sup>e</sup>	68.09	2723.50
	Ties	20 <sup>f</sup>		
	Total	150		
What teachers should do - Students' ability	Negative Ranks	54 <sup>g</sup>	57.15	3086.00
	Positive Ranks	80 <sup>h</sup>	74.49	5959.00
	Ties	16 <sup>i</sup>		
	Total	150		

- a. Students' ability < Students' needs
- b. Students' ability > Students' needs
- c. Students' ability = Students' needs
- d. What teachers should do < Students' needs
- e. What teachers should do > Students' needs
- f. What teachers should do = Students' needs
- g. What teachers should do < Students' ability
- h. What teachers should do > Students' ability
- i. What teachers should do = Students' ability

The test statistics are summarised in Table 5.18. These results showed that "Students' ability" received the highest rank, followed by "What teachers should do," and finally "Students' needs," which was rated the lowest.

**Table 5.18**  
*Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test*

	Students' ability - Students' needs	What teachers should do - Students' needs	What teachers should do - Students' ability
Z	-4.910 <sup>b</sup>	-3.565 <sup>b</sup>	-3.190 <sup>c</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.001

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test  
b. Based on positive ranks.  
c. Based on negative ranks.

These findings indicated that teachers focused more on students' current academic writing skills, such as making arguments and ensuring cohesion, which are more immediate and measurable. In comparison, "What teachers should do" received a slightly lower ranking, possibly because aligning teaching practices with both short-term and long-term student needs required more effort and time. "Students' needs" ranked the lowest, reflecting the challenge of addressing these broader and less tangible aspects, such as developing coherence and organisation, in a practical teaching setting. These results offer valuable insights into how teachers allocated their attention and effort in the context of EFL argumentative writing. The focus appeared to be on measurable and observable aspects of student performance rather than on addressing long-term developmental needs or reflecting on teaching strategies.

### **5.5 Summary for RQ2: EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching MD Markers**

The findings from both the interviews and the questionnaire showed that EFL teachers believed teaching MD markers was important for helping students improve their academic writing. Teachers agreed that MD markers help students organise their writing, create logical arguments, and make their text clearer and easier to follow. This belief was strongly reflected in the questionnaire, where teachers agreed with statements about the importance of teaching MD markers. However, the findings also revealed gaps in students' knowledge of MD markers. Teachers said students struggled to use more advanced MD markers, such as those needed to

structure arguments (interactive markers) and connect with readers (interactional markers). This was seen in the questionnaire responses and supported by the interviews, where teachers mentioned the challenges, students faced in using these markers effectively.

While the interviews showed that teachers recognised the importance of writing that is organised and coherent, none of them directly linked MD markers to teaching argumentative writing or encouraging students to think about their readers. The questionnaire also revealed that teachers' knowledge about the functions of MD markers was limited, as shown by low scores on questions assessing their understanding of these markers. In summary, the results highlighted the need to improve teachers' understanding of MD markers and their use in teaching. While teachers agreed on the value of MD markers, more focus is needed on teaching how to use them to build arguments and engage with readers effectively. The next section will look at how teachers provide feedback on students' writing and the strategies they use to improve students' use of MD markers.

## **CHAPTER SIX FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the third research question: How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing? To explore this, the researcher collected writing samples from 100 students, selecting ten students from each of the ten teachers who had already participated in interviews and classroom observations. The ten teachers were asked to randomly choose ten writing samples from their students, ensuring a representation of varying proficiency levels, including high, moderate, and low competencies. These writing samples were drawn from students enrolled in academic writing classes in the final year of the English department, where the use of English academic writing was required for all assignments. The collected samples consisted of diverse formats, including essays, emails, and reports, providing a comprehensive view of how students applied MD markers in different academic contexts.

The researcher analysed students' writing samples using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The analysis involved categorising the data and identifying the types and frequency of MD markers in students' writing. Since the writing samples were already in written form, the analysis began with the researcher becoming familiar with the data. At this stage, the researcher highlighted, labelled, and made notes in the margins of the writing samples. These initial observations were then used to sort the writing samples into categories by matching patterns in the text with established groups of MD markers. The categories were used to create codes and clear descriptions for each group to ensure consistency during the analysis. This approach was applied to explore the types of MD markers students used, as well as their misuse. The researcher also highlighted any teacher feedback or comments within the samples to understand the messages being conveyed to the students.

It was noted that the collected student samples had not been graded or given total marks. As a result, the researcher assessed the writing samples based on criteria for text organisation and coherence, while ignoring grammar and spelling mistakes. This assessment used the same university marking rubric that teachers had used. The rubric includes four levels of performance, with detailed descriptions for each level covering aspects like logical structure, clarity, and flow (see Appendix M). This approach aimed to find out if the students' use of MD markers was linked to higher scores in their writing samples.

All categories, along with their associated samples, were submitted for review by two peer reviewers and EFL lecturers at a Saudi university. The researcher and peer reviewers collaboratively examined overlaps in categories, text assessment, codes, and themes, making necessary adjustments through discussion. The analysis was revised several times to ensure the researcher and reviewers reached full agreement. This careful review process aimed to avoid mistakes and ensure all data were included. Table 6.1 below shows the themes of MD markers, and the sub-themes identified from the students' writing and teachers' feedback.

**Table 6.1**  
*Generated Codes, Themes, and Definitions of Writing Samples*

Theme	Sub theme	Code	Codes definition
MD markers	Students' writing	Frequently used MD markers	Identifies the frequently employed MD markers in students' writing
		How MD markers are used	Identifies the way that the students write MD markers in their text.
	Teachers' feedback	Absence of feedback	Refers to the students' samples that did not contain any feedback or comment by the teachers.
		Indirect feedback	Describes feedback from teachers that is more implicit, often requiring students to conclude suggestions or improvements.
		Direct feedback	Refers to the written feedback given by teachers that corrects students' errors or general comment to improve their text.



## **6.2 MD markers**

The students' writing samples were analysed to examine two main aspects: the use of MD markers and the teachers' feedback. The dataset consisted of 89 essays (each approximately 250 words), along with six reports and five emails. However, only the essays were included in the analysis. The reports and emails were excluded because their brevity and sentence structures did not align with the academic writing standards outlined in the rubric designed for longer essays. As a result, 89 essays were analysed to ensure consistency and relevance to the study's objectives.

### **6.2.1 Students' writing**

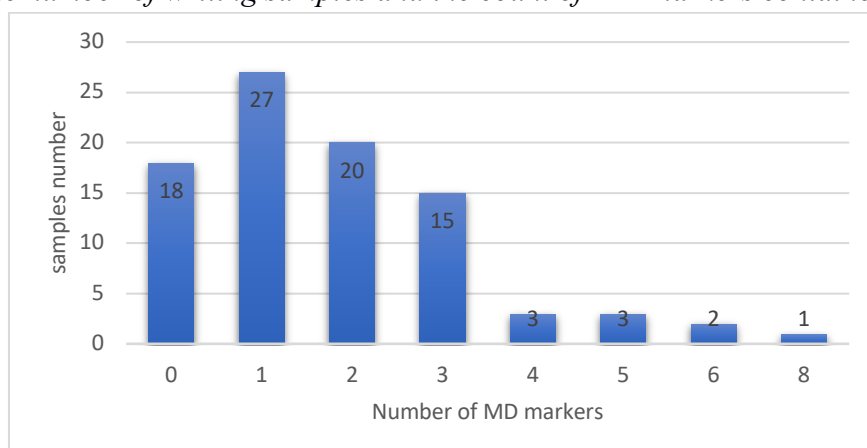
The first sub-theme focused on investigating MD markers in students' writing. This first round of analysis aimed to explore the frequency of MD markers in students' writing. It looked at the number of times MD markers were used in each example and identified the ones that students used most often in their written text. Similarly, another aspect of the analysis examined how students utilised MD markers to organise their text, construct arguments, or achieve other specific objectives.

#### ***Use of MD markers***

The initial code examined the use of MD markers in students' writing, focusing on how frequently these markers appeared in the writing samples. Among the 89 essays analysed, 18 samples did not include any MD markers, while 27 samples contained only a single MD marker, specifically a conclusion marker, which appeared exclusively in the conclusion section of the essays. The remaining 44 essays included more than two MD markers, distributed across different sections of the text. Figure 6.1 illustrates the number of MD markers used across the 89 essays.

**Figure 6.1**

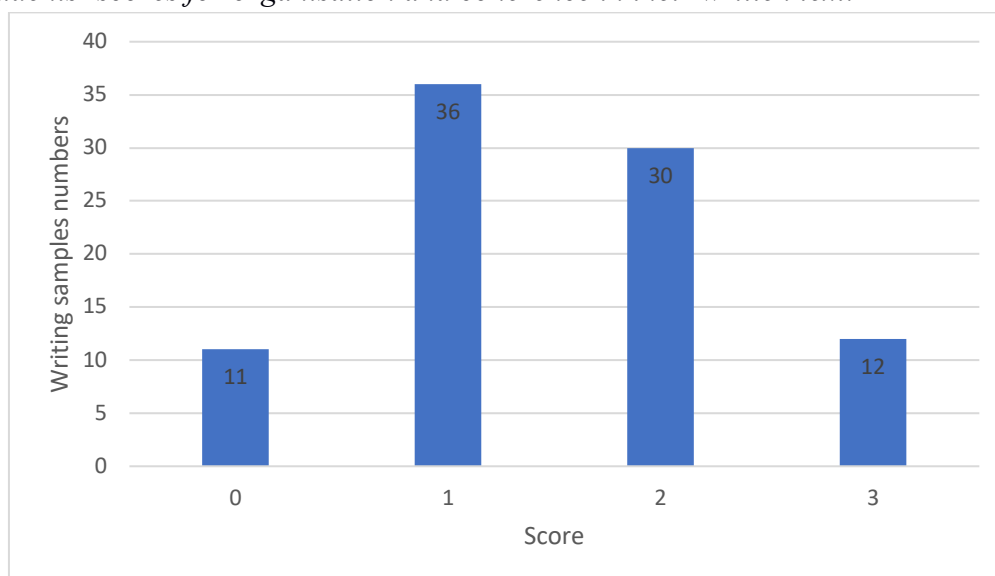
*The number of writing samples and the count of MD markers contained within them.*



One student used eight MD markers in her essay, which was the highest, while 18 students did not use any MD markers in their writing. The students' writing was also evaluated based on the text's organisation and coherence. The evaluation revealed that none of the students achieved the highest score of four out of four. However, the distribution of scores showed that a greater number of students scored one or zero compared to those who scored two or three. This highlights a general struggle among students to effectively organise their text and achieve coherence. The bar chart below illustrates the distribution of different scores for organisation/coherence.

**Figure 6.2**

*Students' scores for organisation and coherence in their written text.*



The use of MD markers appeared to improve the coherence and organisation of the text in the samples that utilised them, compared to those that did not or used only one. Overall, the organisation/coherence scores were low, with a mean total score of 1.43. Writing samples that scored zero were particularly impacted by a lack of MD markers, which affected their text organisation and clarity. Most of these samples were characterised by weak argumentation and contained descriptive, short sentences such as:

I like my friend. My friend good in everything. We play all time. My friend with me since I child. My friend help me and listen to me. I like play with her. She is always support me. I wish we have busniss together.

The example mentioned above is from a student's writing sample which required them to write about friendship. The student failed to construct any compelling arguments. The sentences were vague and repetitive, particularly in emphasising the enjoyment of playing with a friend. Similarly, 40% of the samples that received a score of one did not use MD markers at all or used only one in their conclusion. However, the text organisation and coherence scores were raised when the students used more than two MD markers. This suggests that students who frequently used MD markers were more aware of text organisation and coherence than those who used them less.

Across the 89 essays, there were 159 instances of MD marker use, covering 15 different MD markers. The table 6.2 below illustrates the MD markers and how many times they were used in the students' writing samples.

**Table 6.2**  
*MD markers' type and number of uses in students' writing.*

MD markers	Number of instances of use in writing samples	Category of MD marker
In conclusion	28	Frame markers
For example	22	Code glosses
For instance	16	Code glosses
In the end	15	Frame markers
Finally	14	Frame markers
Firstly	11	Frame markers
Such as	10	Code glosses
To sum up	8	Frame markers
To conclude	6	Frame markers
On the other hand	6	Transition Markers
In addition	6	Transition Markers
In my opinion	6	Code glosses
Secondly	5	Frame markers
However	4	Transition Markers
Furthermore	2	Transition Markers

The most common markers that were used in the students' writing samples were “frame markers” that refer to the text section. The marker *in conclusion* was used in 28 different writing samples once in each sample. In addition, the students used other frame markers to draw the readers' attention to their conclusion section; for example, the markers *in the end*, *finally*, *to sum up* and *to conclude*. This type of MD marker was typically used in the conclusion section of student writing. The students also used other *frame markers* to refer to other writing sections such as *firstly* and *secondly*. Here, the students indicated the first body paragraph and the second paragraph. In total, Frame markers were used 87 times out of 159 which is about 55% of the MD markers that were used in the students' writing. This could indicate that the students felt confident in using conclusion markers, perhaps because they were likely to be certain that this was the final part of their essay. In addition, this aligns with the teachers' interview data when the teachers stated that the students often used common MD markers.

The second most common type of marker was “code glosses”, which aim to help readers grasp the meaning of ideational material. The most frequently used "code glosses"

marker was *for example*, appearing 22 times across eight students' samples. This indicates that some students used this marker multiple times in their short essays. In three of the samples, students used *for example* three times in a single body paragraph and did not use other markers that serve the same function, such as *for instance*. However, some samples used other “code glosses” markers including *for instance* and *such as*. The students used these markers to give examples to their readers or add other meanings to their text. In total, “code glosses” markers were used 54 times, which represents 34% of the markers in the students' writing.

The third and final common marker type used was the “transition Markers” which are used to connect and guide the flow of ideas. These comprised *on the other hand*, *in addition*, *however* and *furthermore*. In total, the students used “Transition Markers” 18 times, only 11% of the total number. In other words, markers that were used to organise ideas for the readers were used to a limited extent by students. In general, the most commonly used markers in students' writing were “Frame markers” (55%), “Code glosses” (34%), and “Transition Markers” (11%). All these markers were interactive, and there was no use of interactional markers such as hedges, booster attitudes or engagement. This implies that students needed to improve their understanding of how to interact and argue with their readers in their writing.

### ***How MD markers are used***

The second coding approach used to analyse students' writing focused on grouping the purposes of MD markers and identifying whether they were used correctly or incorrectly. This involved labelling examples of MD marker use and organising them into themes to better understand how students applied them in their writing.

According to the data, the students used frame markers that referred to their conclusion correctly as they used them in their conclusion section only. In contrast, the other frame markers that refer to other stages in the text such as: *firstly*, and *secondly* were not used correctly. The students used the marker *firstly* 11 times in their essays, while *secondly* was only

used five times. Five students used *firstly* to indicate their first body paragraph and *secondly* to indicate their second body paragraph. However, six students used *firstly* as the first word in their first body paragraph but did not indicate the use of any markers for their second body paragraph. This means that six students used the marker *firstly* incorrectly. The following example illustrates one student's use of the marker *firstly*:

*Firstly, many people prefer watching movies instead of reading books. Movies are famous because they let us live in a fantasy world. There are many types of movies and the most popular ones are horror, romance, and comedy. The Horror movies are movies intended to scare the viewer, The main stories of horror movies often involve the protagonist and some forces against him like evil character or monster. The romance movies are romantic love stories and it often explores the theme of love at first sight. Comedies movies make us laugh all the time and takes us away from the real world.*

*Watching movies with friends or family is help to spend more time together with family. It help enjoy the movie and share happy time and feelings. People like talk about the film and share experience and make memories together. Many friends like to go together to watch movie as an activity.*

In the previous example, the student appeared to understand the significance of using MD markers. However, she failed to direct the readers to her second body paragraph or her second argument, which could negatively impact the clarity and coherence of her writing. As a result, her academic writing and argument may have suffered, affecting her ability to effectively communicate with her readers.

Regarding the second marker category, “glosses”, the students used these markers to provide readers with additional information and examples to better understand the target message, idea, or opinion through varied wording or illustrations. The students used “gloss markers” 54 times, and while most were applied correctly, a few examples showed overuse or

inappropriate use. For instance, the marker *for example* was used 22 times and was always applied correctly. However, some students overused *for example* repeating it multiple times within the same essay instead of using synonyms. For instance, one student used *for example* three times in a single paragraph.

*Cyprus is a small island, Which makes transportation easy. For example, we went from one city to another by motorcycle, it was a nice experience. We went everywhere Walking rarely by taxi. I liked the resorts in Cyprus . There are many different resorts is Cyprus that help you to relax and enjoy your vacation, For example, the staff are very friendly, every resorts has a spa, private pool, and a breakfast buffet. The beaches there are beautiful they have different kinds of beaches. For example, there are relaxing beaches that you can relax in due to the soothing songs and the quiet atmosphere. There are also the beaches that has water games and loud music, where you can go to have fun and enjoy.*

This means that the student might have a lack of knowledge about other markers that give the same meaning or feature as *for example*. The marker *such as* was used 10 times correctly and none of the students used *such as* more than one time in their writing. This might mean that some of the students know about the importance of using MD markers in their academic writing therefore they were careful to use different markers that give the same meaning instead of repeating the same marker. In contrast, there was incorrect use of other code gloss markers *for instance* and *in my opinion*. The students used *For instance* 16 times and there were three incorrect uses. Three of the students used *For instance* while there were no extra meanings or examples included in their writing. For example, one of the students used *for instance* to state general facts rather than providing a specific example as she wrote: “The reading is important to improve language skills. Reading is important to improve information. For instance, reading and writing all important. writing need to read more and more”.

The other incorrect use occurred when two of the students used the marker for *instance* as a first word in their body paragraph, such as in this example:

*When you go to a library, to buy new books, you will not be going to buy the first book your eyes sees. You have to look for book types and which type you most likely going to buy from it. Books have a lot of genres, like science fiction, self-help, and science. The genres I'll list in this passage are, fantasy fiction, mystery, and drama.*

*For instance, the first genre is fantasy fiction. Fantasy fiction is a genre of books that contains an unrealistic story and even unrealistic settings. The place and the time sometimes could be real. But other than that, everything else is nothing. The story can be about characters who have superpowers, or something keeps them different from the other, or most of the time is based on another Such as use italics universe. For example, Harry potter's novels, by the author J.K Rowling. She's a famous writer, and she got awards for Harry Potter novels.*

*In the above student's essay example, the student's body paragraph began with the marker For instance but no specific example followed.*

The marker *in my opinion* was used six times, and five of those were used correctly. According to the observation data, the teacher Noaf encouraged her students to write their opinions by including a conclusion sentence in each paragraph with a solution, judgement, or personal opinion. This might explain why four out of the six samples using *in my opinion* came from Noaf's class. All these students used *in my opinion* correctly, placing it as the last sentence of their body paragraphs, as advised by their teacher. In contrast, one student used the marker incorrectly in their conclusion as she wrote: "*For conclusion, in my opinion, that's why we need to choose good strategies while studying. Strategies can be more effective, useful, and helps to remember more information for a long time.*"



The problem with this usage is that the phrase *for conclusion* and *in my opinion* are used together unnecessarily, making the sentence repetitive. Additionally, while the marker *in my opinion* was included, the statement did not present a clear or strong opinion. This student was from teacher Julia's class, who stated during the observation: "In the conclusion is the part that students can convince the readers through write their opinion" and added, "you should write about the two opinions not only be in one side of the topic to gain more mark." Therefore, it is likely that the student used the marker *in my opinion* to gain marks without fully understanding how to use it correctly in an academic argument.

In the transition markers category, the students used different transition markers 18 times, with the majority being applied correctly. Markers such as *in addition* and *furthermore* were consistently used appropriately, indicating a clear understanding of their purpose. However, there were examples of incorrect use. For instance, the marker *however* was used four times, of which three were correct and one was misplaced. One student wrote:

My family decided to set a plan to go to Turkey in the summer vacation, and I have some money, so I could enjoy everything and money would not be a problem. However, we booked ticket and travelled to Turkey. In our way I chose to set next the window.

The marker *However* is generally used to indicate a contrast or contradiction between two clauses. Yet, in this instance, the student's use of *However* seems misplaced, as there is no previous statement that it contrasts with this sentence. This suggest that the student might misunderstanding of the marker's purpose. Additionally, the marker *on the other hand*, was used six times, but all six were incorrect. None of the students paired it with *on the one hand*, which is needed to make the sentence balanced and clear. Without this pairing, the writing became harder to follow the meaning. These examples show that while students understood some markers well, they had trouble using others correctly, especially when the meaning or structure was more complicated.

The 159 MD markers found in the students' writing samples were all interactive markers, with no instances of interactional markers. Interactive markers were used to organise the text for readers. In contrast, interactional markers, which are essential for building arguments and engaging directly with the readers through written text, were absent. This suggests that students relied heavily on interactive markers to organise their writing but lacked the knowledge or skill to use interactional markers to construct persuasive arguments and express their opinions effectively.

Although all the teachers observed and interviewed had stressed the importance of students writing arguments and opinions to persuade readers, this emphasis alone did not appear sufficient for students to use interactional markers appropriately. The absence of these markers indicated a gap in their understanding and application, which had impacted the clarity and coherence of their writing. Teacher Haifa commented in her interview: "Honestly, I don't think that my students use a lot of them, they do use linking words such as firstly, secondly, thirdly". This statement reflected a possible reason for the lack of interactional markers: students appeared to have a basic understanding of MD markers but not the deeper knowledge required to use them for more complex argumentative purposes.

Therefore, while teachers had stressed the importance of writing arguments, additional strategies, such as explicit instruction and practice with interactional markers, might have been necessary to help students apply these markers effectively. Without such targeted support, students seemed to rely solely on interactive markers, which had limited the overall persuasiveness and coherence of their texts.

### **6.3 Teachers' feedback**

The second sub-theme explored how teachers responded to students' writing. In this context, students' proficiency levels were not a determining factor, as teachers' feedback was considered necessary for all students, regardless of their level, to support correction or

improvement. The previous analysis showed a range of mistakes in students' use and misuse of MD markers, particularly interactional markers, which are important for helping students build arguments and engage with readers. Therefore, it was important to examine how teachers responded to these issues through their feedback on students' writing, specifically regarding MD marker use.

Based on the data, three types of feedback were identified: absence of feedback, indirect feedback, and direct feedback, all of which related to the use or misuse of MD markers. Direct feedback refers to instances where the teacher provided the correct form or solution to the students. In contrast, indirect feedback involves pointing out mistakes without explicitly offering the correct answer, requiring students to identify and correct the issue themselves. The table 6.3 below summarises the frequency of each feedback type and the number of essays where no feedback was provided in each teacher's class.

**Table 6.3**  
*Frequency of Different Feedback Types by Teachers in students' essays*

<b>Teacher's Class</b>	<b>Indirect Feedback</b>	<b>Direct Feedback</b>	<b>No Feedback</b>	<b>Total Feedback</b>	<b>Essays Analysed</b>
Mona	4	3	3	7	10
Alaa	2	2	3	4	7
Laila	3	4	3	7	10
Julia	3	5	2	8	10
Yusraa	6	3	1	9	10
Noaf	3	3	4	6	10
Amal	2	0	3	2	5
Samar	4	2	1	6	7
Haifa	5	3	2	8	10
Norah	4	5	1	9	10
<b>Total</b>	36	30	23	66	89

Table 6.3 shows that 66 out of 89 essays received feedback, while 23 had no feedback. Teachers like Norah and Yusraa provided feedback on nearly all essays in their classes, whereas Amal gave feedback on only 2 out of 5 essays. Direct feedback was more common

than indirect feedback in some classes, such as Julia's and Norah's. In interviews, both teachers highlighted the importance of providing clear feedback. Norah emphasised her use of the rubric to guide students in text organisation and argumentation. Julia similarly noted her focus on correcting specific mistakes to help students understand and improve their writing. These practices may explain why both teachers provided more direct feedback compared to others. In contrast, teachers like Amal focused more on grammar and sentence structure, but the MD markers were rarely addressed.

### ***Absence of feedback***

All teachers confirmed that they had finished marking the students' writing samples provided to the researcher. However, 23 out of the 89 writing samples did not include any feedback from the teachers.

In the interview, all the teachers highlighted the importance of feedback to improve the students' writing. In addition, the teachers commented that there was a rubric that they had to follow while marking their students' writing (see Appendix M). Furthermore, Amal stated in the interview about the importance of the feedback for the use of conjunctions in the students' writing "It is very important and actually it is part of the Rubric, while marking students' writing". She added:

*To be honest, we teach them these conjunctions in general and we expect that the students will use them correctly but they do not use them or use them wrongly. So I found myself only focus on their grammar it is rare to correct these words because my students did not use them. And honestly these words usually studied in grammar lessons not in writing class so students focus that these words in grammar not in academic writing.*

This could be considered an acknowledgement from the teacher that she did not give feedback according to the use of the MD marker. Similarly, Alaa stated in the interview said:

*First I focus on the task achievement. If they understand the question and they fully answer this question. And then I focus on the language, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure. As well the sentences should be correct like they need to use the correct word order in each sentence like subject, verb etc.*

The writing samples data revealed that three samples of her class did not contain any feedback from her. In contrast, Yusraa said:

*I'm teaching academic writing and another modules in English department. so I do not really give lots of feedback concerning their writing because it is not their first language that they are actually studying. So I am trying to focus on the meaning of their writing.*

Most of Yusraa's writing class samples had feedback, with only one sample missing feedback. Similarly, Norah's class had feedback on almost all samples, with just one sample without feedback. During the interview, Norah explained that she followed the rubric closely when giving feedback to her students. While all ten teachers highlighted the importance of giving feedback during the interviews, the data showed that at least one writing sample from each teacher's class did not contain any feedback. For instance, as shown in Table 6.3, some classes had multiple essays without feedback, such as Amal's class, where three out of five essays received no feedback.

Several of the students' essays were around 250 words and covered several topics such as education, business, jobs, health, and sports. These essays generally followed a standard structure with an introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion. However, the students did not use MD markers to effectively organise their texts or construct arguments effectively. Instead, they focused on following the essay format without employing markers to guide the readers. Additionally, none of the teachers provided feedback on the use of MD markers, text organisation, or coherence. For instance, one student from Noaf's class wrote an essay about working in a company. The introduction briefly defined what a company is, the body paragraph

outlined the advantages of working in one, and the conclusion summarised the topic. Despite opportunities to use MD markers to improve coherence and organisation, the student did not include any. The original text from the student's body paragraph reads:

*“Work in a company is like everyone doing their part to make things work smoothly.  
everyone does their work this to help the company move and grow.*

*People in company need to talk to each other and make meeting. This share ideas and  
updates workers in the meetings and makes sure everyone is on the updating. It help  
workers make things done on time is important. When everyone finishes their tasks on  
schedule, the company works well. It is important to face the challenges is also important.  
This challenges might happen in work or out side. working in a company will give more  
experience. Many good project is come from good company and this because they have  
good workers.*

*I hope in my future to work for the company”.*

In the example above the student could have included markers such as *Additionally* to introduce ideas like “It is important to help workers get things done on time,” or the marker *Moreover* to link statements like “These challenges might happen in work or outside.” These markers would have improved coherence, facilitate the text logical flow, and enhanced the text's readability. Unfortunately, the lack of MD markers resulted in reduced clarity and organisation in the essay, but the teacher did not provide any feedback to address these issues.

### ***Indirect feedback***

Each essay was categorised based on whether it received indirect feedback, direct feedback, or no feedback, as shown in Table 6.3. Out of the 89 essay writing samples, 36 essays contained indirect feedback from teachers. Indirect feedback was provided through the use of symbols such as a cross sign (X), a circle, or the underlining of words or sentences to indicate mistakes. Some teachers also used abbreviations such as GR (grammar), SP (spelling), and

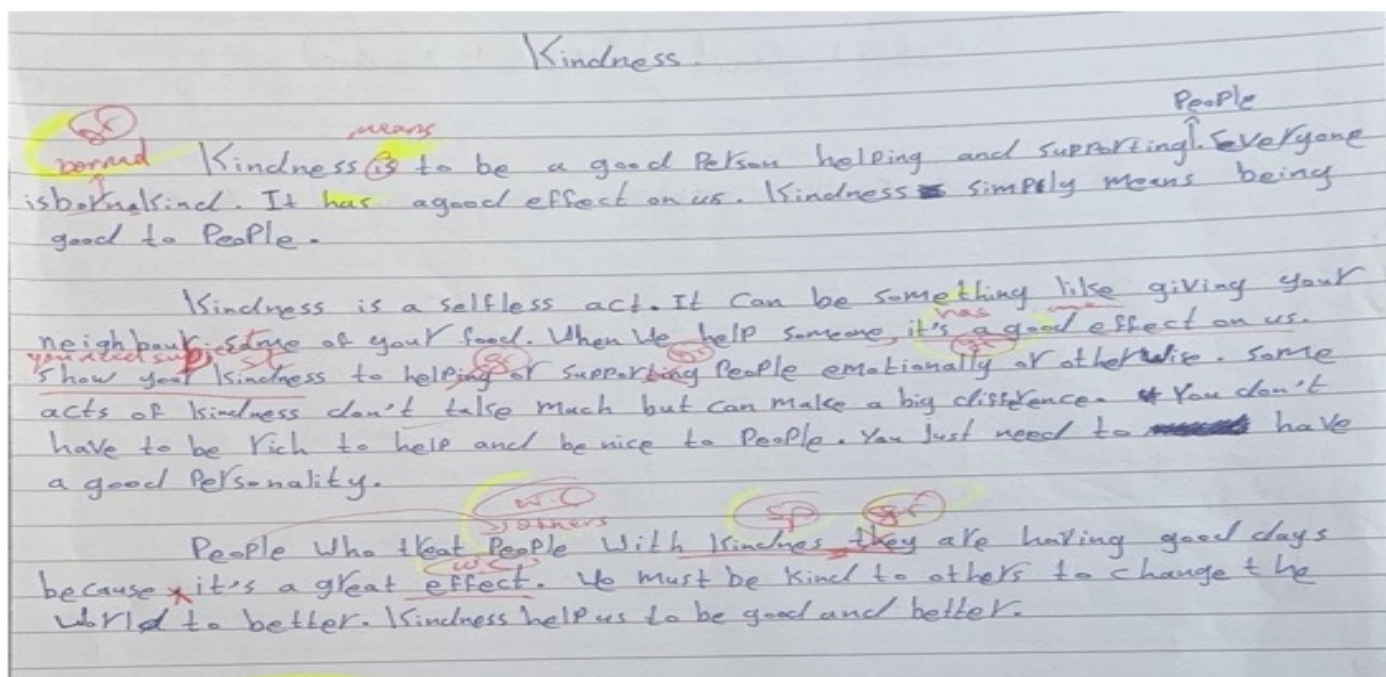
PUN (punctuation) to refer to errors without providing the correct answer. The analysis of these essays showed that teachers mainly focused their indirect feedback on grammar and spelling mistakes. While indirect feedback helped address surface-level errors, it rarely extended to deeper issues like text organisation, coherence, or the use of MD markers, which are essential for guiding readers and building arguments.

In addition to grammar and spelling, some teachers provided indirect feedback on text structure and formatting. For example, Alaa used the (X) symbol to indicate that students should leave a blank line between paragraphs to improve readability. Similarly, other teachers used (X) to highlight the need for proper indentation at the beginning of each paragraph, which some students had overlooked. Certain teachers also underlined or circled essay titles to emphasise the importance of capitalising them correctly. This suggests that many teachers prioritised formatting issues, such as titles, paragraph spacing, and indentation. However, organising text effectively for readers also requires the use of MD markers, which guide readers and enhance coherence.

Some essays lacked any MD markers, yet teachers provided indirect feedback focused on grammar and spelling only. In other words, no indirect feedback was given on the use or absence of MD markers despite their potential to improve text organisation and argument construction. For instance, in the figure 6.3 below one student from Amal's class wrote an essay defining kindness in three short sentences, explained its advantages in one body paragraph, and concluded with three brief sentences. While this essay lacked MD markers to organise ideas, the teacher's feedback only addressed grammar and spelling errors.

**Figure 6.3**

*Teacher's indirect feedback example.*



It is noteworthy that teachers did not provide indirect feedback aimed at identifying or correcting errors related to the use of MD markers in student writing. Instead, their attention was primarily directed toward surface-level issues like spelling and grammar. However, integrating MD markers into student writing would enhance coherence and make the text easier to follow. While indirect feedback does not offer detailed instructions for correction, it draws students' attention to mistakes, encouraging them to reflect on their errors and improve their work.

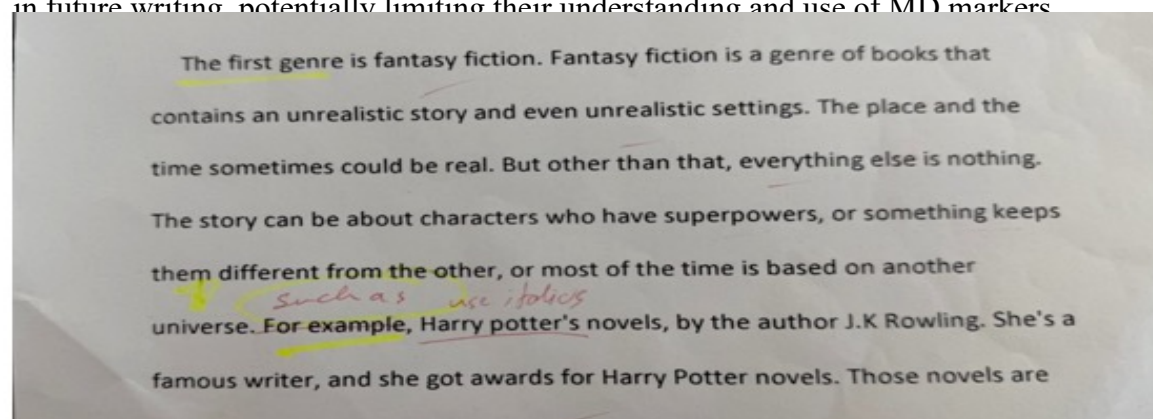
### ***Direct feedback***

The phrase "direct feedback" refers to the written comments provided by teachers on students' written text. This feedback aims to address specific errors or provide guidance to help improve students' writing skills. According to the data, 30 student writing samples contained direct feedback from their teachers. The samples were analysed to determine whether any feedback specifically addressed the use or misuse of MD markers.



According to the data analysed, Julia, Norah, and Laila were the three teachers who provided the most direct written feedback on their students' writing. However, there was no direct feedback from any samples belonging to Amal's class (see Table 6.3). Most teachers who provided direct feedback focused on correcting grammar and spelling errors. For instance, some teachers simply wrote the correct verb or spelling to address errors. In other cases, teachers provided comments on grammar and spelling mistakes without explicitly offering the correct version. For example, feedback included remarks like "Where is the verb?", "Work on your punctuation and spelling," or "This is an incomplete sentence, check verbs." While these comments highlight the type of error, they do not provide students with the correct version, leaving it up to the students to identify and correct their mistakes. This approach resembles indirect feedback in that it guides students to their errors without directly resolving them. Furthermore, these comments primarily address sentence-level issues rather than the overall coherence or organisation of the writing.

Among all the feedback provided, only Yusraa addressed MD markers directly. In one case (see Figure 6.4), she replaced "for example" with "such as" in a student's writing. However, she did not explain why "such as" was more appropriate. This lack of clarification could lead to confusion, as students may not understand the functional differences between these markers. Without clear guidance, they might struggle to apply this feedback effectively in future writing, potentially limiting their understanding and use of MD markers.



In summary, all 30 samples contained written feedback related to grammar and spelling errors. However, only one sample included feedback on MD markers, which was emphasis on surface-level corrections and not about the text coherence or organisation.

The second type of written feedback consisted of teachers' general comments on the students' essay writing. Clarity and text coherence were neglected in most of the teachers' written feedback. However, seven samples contained some teachers' comments that could be considered related to the importance of using MD markers to improve text organisation and argument to the readers. For example, Julia provided comments on the coherence of two students' writing. For instance, one student wrote, "*I am so proud of our country for making a big event like this that made the world talk about.*" and the teacher wrote a comment for her: "*Not clear; you did not explain why, give more details*". This comment emphasised the lack of supporting examples or elaboration, which impacted the student's ability to develop their argument rather than solely focusing on coherence. However, Julia did not provide specific examples of what details to include, which might have left the student confused about how to improve clarity and strengthen the argument. Similarly, Noaf commented on another student's work, suggesting the inclusion of more examples to support the ideas and improve text coherence. In addition, Mona wrote a comment to one of her students "*where is your opinion?*". This might indicate that the teacher was aware of the importance of arguing with the readers through writing the opinion. In addition, at the bottom of the essay's paper, Laila wrote a comment to her student "*Your essay is not organised in presenting the examples*". This comment indicates that the teacher understood the importance of text organisation but did not provide specific guidance on how the student could improve. However, none of the teachers in their written comments highlighted the use of MD markers in the students' writing.

#### **6.4 Summary of Findings on Teachers' Feedback and Use of MD Markers**

This chapter addressed the third research question: How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing? Analysis of 89 essays revealed students primarily used interactive MD markers, with interactional markers absent. Teachers focused on grammar and formatting issues, with limited feedback on MD markers. Three types of feedback were identified: direct, indirect, and no feedback, with little emphasis on higher-order skills like coherence and argumentation. These findings highlight the need for more targeted instruction and feedback.

The next chapter will discuss the findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6, integrating them with the study's framework and literature to explore their implications.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

### 7.1 introduction

This chapter brings together the key findings of the study and discusses the results in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. The main aim of this study was to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and teaching practices about using metadiscourse (MD) markers in teaching argumentative academic writing at the university level in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through teacher surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student writing samples.

The chapter is organised to address each research question (RQ) step by step. First, the findings related to RQ1, which looks at how EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers in argumentative writing, are discussed. Next, the chapter covers RQ2, which examines how aware EFL teachers are of the importance of MD markers and what they say about their teaching practices and beliefs. Finally, the findings for RQ3, which focuses on how EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in student writing, are analysed. The discussion combines insights from the data with ideas from the literature to highlight the implications for teaching and teacher development.

### **7.2 Q1: How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing?**

To answer this research question, the researcher observed the teaching practices of EFL teachers in their writing classrooms. The research focused on several aspects of the teachers' approaches, including their instructional methods, the guidelines provided to students, and the emphasis placed on teaching argumentative academic writing. The primary aim was to determine whether the teachers emphasised the importance of using MD markers to enhance writing comprehension. Therefore, this section begins with a discussion of the findings that

belong to the teachers' strategies in teaching writing, classroom activities and the guidelines for writing that the teachers gave to their students. Hence, it draws on the lesson observation data presented in Chapter 4.

### 7.2.1 The teachers' strategies for teaching writing

This study revealed that while the teachers demonstrated aspects of both the process and genre-based approaches to teaching writing, their practices were largely limited to structural elements of the argumentative essay, such as the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. This limited focus aligns partially with the genre-based approach (Badger & White, 2000), which emphasises text structure. However, essential components of the genre-based approach, such as audience engagement and argument construction, were underexplored, reflecting an incomplete application of the model.

The **genre-based** approach is particularly suitable for teaching argumentative writing, as it aims to prepare students with the strategies necessary for writing in specific genres. In line with this, the teachers in this study focused on ensuring that students followed structural conventions, such as organising their writing into clear sections with distinct purposes. This matches the common teaching approach in argumentative essays, where students are taught to structure their work with an introduction presenting the thesis, a body developing the arguments, and a conclusion summarising the discussion. However, this focus on structure was mainly surface-level, with little evidence of strategies to help students engage critically with the reader or develop persuasive, argumentative dialogue, both of which are key aspects of the genre.

One of the key objectives of argumentative writing is to engage the reader in a dialogue by presenting well-structured and persuasive arguments. However, this aspect was rarely addressed in the observed classrooms. For example, while some teachers emphasised the importance of presenting ideas logically within paragraphs, they did not teach students how to use MD markers to guide readers through their arguments or enhance the coherence and flow

of the text. This gap in practice suggests that implementing the genre-based approach in these classrooms was incomplete, focusing heavily on form and neglecting communicative functions. According to Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, this reflected a lack of reflective knowledge and knowledge of learners, which were critical for helping students understand the communicative purpose of argumentative writing. Teachers needed to combine these types of knowledge to create a more dialogic and engaging approach to instruction, such as guiding students to use MD markers to enhance coherence and reader interaction.

In the context of EFL students, audience engagement is particularly important for argumentative writing. Hyland (2003) emphasised that argumentative texts are fundamentally reader-centred; they must not only present a clear stance but also create a dialogic interaction with the reader. Teachers generally did not encourage students to reflect on how their writing might be interpreted by a reader or how linguistic choices such as MDMs shape that interaction. The data show that this limited attention to audience is linked to gaps in teacher pedagogical knowledge rather than student ability. As such, this study contributes to our understanding of how teachers' incomplete grasp of genre pedagogy impacts the depth and scope of writing instruction in EFL contexts, and where professional learning interventions should be focused.

The **process approach** involves multiple stages, including prewriting, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, and publishing (Badger & White, 2000; Javadi-Safa, 2018). In this approach, teachers guide their students and provide feedback throughout these stages, focusing on the development of the text rather than just the final product (Badger & White, 2000; Carkin, 2005; Williams, 2003). Various studies in L2 writing research have looked at how writers create texts and suggested models with five to eight stages (e.g., Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018; Becker, 2006; Leki, 1995; Mu, 2005; Sasaki, 2000; Zimmermann, 2000). For example, Becker (2006) carried out a study with L2 writers and found that effective writers plan, generate, and improve ideas in an organised way. They use strategies like organising

thoughts during prewriting and checking for clarity during revising. This focus on step-by-step mental strategies could help address the gaps observed in this study, where teachers did not teach specific techniques like using MD markers to make arguments clearer and improve how ideas flow. If teachers better understood how these mental processes work, they might teach writing differently, including methods to strengthen arguments and make writing more connected. Similarly, Abas and Abd Aziz (2018) suggested a simpler five-stage model for classroom use, combining "pausing and reading" into one stage and "revising and editing" into another. Their model simplifies the process into prewriting, planning, drafting, pausing and reading, and revising and editing. This approach is easier to use in classrooms and gives teachers and students clear steps to follow. However, in this study, the teachers further reduced these stages into three broad phases: prewriting, during writing, and after writing. These findings contribute to the growing recognition that teacher education should include focused training on how discourse features like MD markers function across different stages of the writing process. To better understand the limitations in teachers' strategies, this discussion examines the three key stages of writing prewriting, during-writing, and after-writing and their implementation in the observed classrooms.

### ***Prewriting stage***

The prewriting stage of the writing process typically involves brainstorming, listing ideas, and understanding the writer's perspective (Becker, 2006). This stage is crucial for generating content and organising thoughts before drafting. According to Abas and Abd Aziz's writing model (2018), the prewriting stage focuses on generating ideas and creating an outline. The subsequent planning stage builds on this by encouraging writers to think about their audience, the message they wish to convey, and the organisation of their text. This distinction shows how the writing process builds step by step, starting with initial ideas and moving towards more structured considerations of arguments and audience.

In this study, the teachers primarily addressed brainstorming and outlining during the prewriting stage, aligning partially with Abas and Abd Aziz's (2018) model. For instance, they informed students about the importance of brainstorming to generate ideas and create an outline related to the essay topic. However, the teachers did not include activities to help students connect more deeply with their ideas, such as writing simple sentences, examining arguments, or considering their audience carefully. While Samar was the only teacher to emphasise the importance of considering the writer's position before beginning to write, none of the teachers, including Samar, guided students on how to develop and articulate their positions effectively. This limited focus suggests that the teachers' practices combined elements of the prewriting and planning stages into a single phase, leaving the reflective and audience-focused aspects of planning underexplored. In addition, it might be impacted by the teachers' belief that their students have less knowledge about the topic, and they are not sure if their students know or have read about the topic. This was clear when some teachers stated that they would be happy if they received 250 words from their students. Similar patterns have been found in other studies in similar contexts. For example, Hyland (2003) studied EFL writing instruction in Asian classrooms and found that teachers often concentrated on surface-level features like grammar and organisation instead of deeper aspects like making arguments more persuasive or connecting with readers. Similarly, Sasaki (2000) observed that teachers' focus on structure left fewer opportunities for students to think critically and engage with their audience. These findings show that in many EFL contexts, teachers tend to focus on structure rather than helping students develop skills to write persuasively and communicate their ideas clearly.

The implications of these findings are important. By combining the prewriting and planning stages, teachers may have limited students' ability to create clear, audience-focused arguments. While generating ideas is important, without guidance on refining these ideas and understanding their purpose, students may find it difficult to write strong argumentative texts.



Future teaching practices should address this issue by clearly separating prewriting from planning and encouraging students to think carefully about their audience, their position, and the best way to organise their arguments. Without clear instruction on refining ideas or considering communication goals, students may struggle to organise their arguments effectively or connect with their readers. More importantly, this study contributes to the understanding that teacher professional learning must include training on how to use prewriting not just for content generation, but as a tool for rhetorical framing.

### ***During the writing stage***

According to the literature, the during-writing stage includes several steps, such as drafting, pausing, and reading (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018; Becker, 2006; Leki, 1995; Mu, 2005; Sasaki, 2000; Williams, 2003; Zimmermann, 2000). These steps are essential for improving arguments, maintaining clarity, and effectively engaging the audience. For example, Williams (2003) explained that pausing and reading during writing helps students organise their ideas logically and check the clarity of their arguments. Similarly, Abas and Abd Aziz (2018) emphasised that pausing and reading are key to exploring the writer's perspective and improving audience connection. However, in this study, most of the teachers compressed the during-writing stage into a single drafting phase. They encouraged students to focus on these essay sections: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion, ensuring that each part served its structural purpose effectively. While this emphasis on structure aligns with some aspects of Williams's (2003) model, the teachers limited their guidance to the use of ideas generated during the prewriting stage.

As discussed above, in this study, none of the teachers explicitly advised students to pause or read through their writing during this stage, missing opportunities to enhance logical flow and clarity. The absence of clear instruction on pausing and reading

reflects a gap in the teachers' CK about the writing process. CK here refers to the teachers' understanding of how reflective practices, such as pausing and reading, help improve arguments, organise ideas, and connect with the audience effectively. Without a strong understanding of these practices, the teachers were unable to integrate them into their teaching strategies (PCK). This limitation likely affected students' ability to evaluate their arguments critically and make improvements during the writing stage. Several other reasons might explain this gap in the teachers' practices, apart from their lack of PCK. One possible reason is time limits in classroom settings, which are a common challenge in EFL teaching (Javadi-Safa, 2018). The teachers in this study seemed to focus more on structural parts of essay writing, such as ensuring that each section met formal requirements, rather than spending time on reflective activities like revising and improving arguments. This is supported by previous research. Hyland (2003) found that when teachers face time pressure, they often pay more attention to structural rules and less to helping students develop their persuasive and communicative skills. Similarly, Sasaki (2000) showed that writing practices focused mainly on structure can limit students' ability to think critically and improve their arguments. These findings suggest that both teachers' and learners' approaches may overlook the deeper skills needed for effective argumentative writing.

The implications of these findings are significant. By skipping the pausing and reading phases, teachers missed an opportunity to help students refine their arguments and engage more effectively with their audience. These stages are particularly critical for argumentative writing, where students must balance logical coherence with persuasive engagement. Without pausing to reflect on their writing, students are less likely to critically evaluate their positions, leading to weaker arguments and reduced clarity in their essays. To address this gap, future teaching methods should include pausing and reading as part of the writing process, even in time-limited settings. For example, teachers could use short peer review sessions or guided self-assessment

activities during class to encourage students to pause and reflect on their work. These practices would align with models like Williams (2003) and Abas and Abd Aziz (2018), helping students improve both the structure and effectiveness of their writing.

### *After-writing*

In this study, the after-writing stage primarily focused on the critical role of organising and reviewing academic texts after the first draft was completed. Teachers emphasised revising ideas and correcting surface-level errors, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. They also highlighted the importance of reviewing writing according to students' initial plans, notes, and ideas before final submission. This approach aligns with studies on the writing process, which emphasise the value of revising texts to enhance coherence, clarity, and consistency through proofreading and reviewing ideas (Leki, 1995; Mu, 2005; Sasaki, 2000; Williams, 2003; Zimmermann, 2000). However, the focus of the observed teachers was primarily on language features and surface-level corrections, with little attention to deeper aspects of text coherence and argumentative clarity. Key elements, such as the use of MD markers, which play a critical role in structuring arguments and guiding readers through the text, were notably absent from their instruction.

The after-writing stage is the final opportunity for students to read, edit, organise, and rewrite their text with a focus on the reader. At this stage, revising arguments, improving coherence, and ensuring clarity are essential for producing high-quality writing. However, none of the teachers explicitly taught the importance of using MD markers to support these goals. The findings align with broader research, which emphasises that teaching argumentative writing should go beyond structural rules to include strategies for engaging readers and presenting arguments clearly and effectively (Hyland, 2003). By focusing too heavily on structure, the teachers in this study missed important opportunities to address the deeper skills needed for strong argumentative essays. This is especially critical in EFL contexts, where

students often face both language and cognitive challenges in academic writing. The implications of these findings are significant. Without explicit instruction on key elements such as audience awareness and argumentation strategies, students are unlikely to develop the skills needed to produce effective argumentative essays. This raises the need for a more balanced approach to teaching argumentative writing, one that integrates structural guidance with strategies for developing arguments and engaging readers.

These findings reflect wider patterns reported in other EFL teaching contexts. For instance, Amiryousefi and Rasekh (2010) noted that many EFL teachers do not receive enough training on how to teach MD markers effectively. Similarly, Kaya and Sofu (2020) found that when teachers provided explicit instruction on MD markers, students produced clearer and more persuasive writing. These findings suggest that neglecting MD markers in writing instruction can result in student texts that lack coherence, clarity, and engagement key qualities for effective academic communication. The lack of emphasis on MD markers in this study may reflect broader challenges in EFL contexts, where teachers often focus on surface-level corrections due to constraints such as limited time or student proficiency levels. This gap in teaching practices limited students' ability to develop well-structured, persuasive argumentative essays, particularly in terms of reader engagement and logical flow.

The lack of focus on MD markers in the revision process, as seen in this study, suggests that teachers might not fully understand their importance in argumentative writing. Ädel (2017) conducted a study in Swedish L2 classrooms and found that teachers often focused on grammar corrections rather than teaching how MD markers can make writing more engaging and persuasive. Similarly, Bogdanović and Mirović (2018) studied Serbian EFL learners and found that teachers rarely discussed MD markers in feedback, which made students' arguments weaker and their writing less organised. Both studies show that teachers need to learn how to teach MD markers clearly, as they are crucial for making writing persuasive and logical. This

lack of awareness could have led teachers to deliver simplified lessons where pausing and reading, revising and editing are omitted, hence reducing opportunities for students to engage more deeply with the repeated steps of improving their writing. The lack of emphasis on MD markers in this study highlights gaps in teachers' CK and PCK. CK, in this case, refers to teachers' understanding of the language and features that support effective argumentative writing, such as MD markers, text clarity, and the ability to connect with the reader. PCK refers to their ability to turn this understanding into teaching strategies that help students use these features in their writing. Observations and interviews showed that key aspects of argumentative writing, such as developing the writer's voice, creating reader-focused arguments, and using MD markers, were often missed, especially during the prewriting and after-writing stages. Instead, teachers mainly focused on generating ideas, fixing basic errors, and ensuring correct formatting.

While these findings suggest that some teachers may not fully understand how to incorporate MD markers effectively into their lessons, an alternative explanation could also be considered. Teachers may have prioritised surface-level corrections and structural guidance because they believed these aspects were more critical for their learners within the specific context of this study. For example, students' proficiency levels or classroom time constraints might have influenced teachers' decisions to focus on tangible outcomes, such as eliminating grammatical errors and improving structural accuracy, rather than more complex rhetorical features like MD markers. This aligns with findings by Yan (2005) and Sasaki (2000), who observed that EFL teachers often adapt their focus based on perceived student needs and classroom realities.

The implications of these findings highlight the need for professional development opportunities to enhance teachers' CK and PCK in argumentative writing, particularly regarding the effective use of MD markers. By providing teachers with the tools and strategies

to integrate MD markers into the writing process, students could benefit from improved clarity, coherence, and persuasive power in their academic texts.

### **7.2.2 Classroom activities**

The findings revealed that the teachers mainly employed a lecture-style approach, relying heavily on traditional resources such as textbooks and PowerPoint slides. These resources served as visual aids but often lacked interactivity, primarily displaying content rather than facilitating active engagement with argumentative writing skills. For example, PowerPoint slides often mirrored textbook material, providing structure but little opportunity for critical or creative engagement. While such approaches may provide students with organisational clarity, they fail to address greater writing skills, such as constructing persuasive arguments or engaging readers. This instructional pattern suggests that teachers may not have developed the pedagogical skills necessary to integrate rhetorical awareness into classroom activities, which is a key insight into their limited understanding of MD markers. These findings align with Ho and Li's (2018) claim that explicit instruction in genre, such as building arguments and engaging readers, is crucial for EFL students to write clear and effective essays.

The gap between discussion and application represents a missed chance to build students' argumentative writing skills. Active learning theory, highlighted by Bean and Melzer (2021), supports using practical activities where students apply concepts to their own writing. In this case, classroom discussions should be followed by writing tasks that encourage students to draft, revise, and improve their arguments. For example, after discussing agreement and disagreement, students could practise structuring these arguments in essays, using MD markers to guide readers through their reasoning. This supports Borg's (2006) indication of the importance of teachers' knowledge about the suitable class activities that help students' learning. However, in this study, no writing practices were observed.

Although some moments of classroom dialogue were observed, these were often limited to discussions about exam strategies, such as avoiding grammar errors and achieving

the correct word count. Occasionally, teachers encouraged students to consider opposing viewpoints by orally expressing agreement or disagreement with specific ideas. For example, students responded with brief sentences such as, “*I agree because it helps us save time,*” or “*I disagree because it’s not effective for all subjects.*” While these activities fostered oral argumentation skills, they remained disconnected from written tasks. No follow-up exercises were observed to guide students in structuring these oral arguments into coherent written paragraphs.

Teachers showed an understanding of the importance of structuring the written text. Discussions often focused on the need for a clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. For example, Laila stressed the importance of including all three sections, asking students, “*What do you understand by ‘conclusion’?*” Students correctly identified it as the final part of an essay. However, this guidance mainly focused on where sections should go rather than how to write them effectively. Similarly, teachers emphasised the use of academic vocabulary and avoided informal language but did not offer support on deeper aspects of argumentation, such as engaging the audience or addressing counterarguments. This could belong to the students’ level, as the students in this study were final-year undergraduate students, which might explain why the teachers did not use many writing class activities. The teachers might have believed that students were already taught about the importance of considering their readers or that the students at this level could practise their writing independently. However, many researchers have emphasised the importance of teachers’ knowledge about their learners’ needs (Abd Rahman et al., 2010; Turner-Bisset, 2001).

Feedback practices in the observed classrooms were primarily limited to peer review activities, which focused on identifying surface-level errors such as grammar and spelling mistakes. For example, students were often tasked with exchanging essays and correcting each other’s long sentences or grammatical errors. While these activities fostered collaboration and

independent learning, they lacked teacher involvement or guidance on addressing higher-order concerns, such as coherence, argument development, or audience engagement. Effective feedback should go beyond error correction to address the rhetorical and structural elements of writing. For instance, teachers could model feedback that highlights the use of MD markers to improve logical flow or the need for stronger evidence to support arguments. Without this guidance, students may miss opportunities to refine their writing and develop critical skills essential for argumentative essays. The literature supports this gap: Amiryousefi and Rasekh (2010) and Kaya and Sofu (2020) both emphasise the importance of teachers' feedback in helping students improve coherence and reader engagement in their writing.

By not addressing these elements, the observed feedback practices failed to fully support students in crafting persuasive and cohesive essays. In addition, the teachers in this study did not give enough feedback on students' writing samples, which indicates that the teachers placed less focus or lacked awareness of the importance of teachers' feedback on students' writing.

### **7.2.3 Teachers' instruction and guidelines**

The primary purpose of MD markers is to organise text and interact with readers, which is critical for improving coherence and clarity in argumentative writing. The findings revealed that while teachers were aware of the importance of text organisation, coherence, writer's voice, and reader engagement, their instruction reflected gaps in their PCK rather than a lack of CK. Specifically, while teachers appeared to understand the general value of these elements, they lacked the pedagogical strategies to explicitly teach MD markers and guide students in constructing cohesive and persuasive argumentative texts. The following discussion explores these gaps in light of the literature.

#### ***Text Organisation and Coherence***

The findings revealed that teachers recognised the importance of text organisation and coherence in argumentative writing. However, their instructional focus was heavily towards



structural elements, such as formatting styles (e.g., APA) and sentence-level corrections, rather than the deeper rhetorical tools necessary to construct cohesive and persuasive arguments. Teachers, such as Mona and Noaf, placed significant emphasis on APA formatting for citations and references as a way to organise text, reflecting a limited understanding of the organisation that prioritised surface-level elements over content coherence. While these aspects contributed to clarity, they did not address the critical use of MD markers to ensure logical connections and smooth transitions within and between paragraphs.

Teachers also emphasised paragraph-level organisation, promoting a “one idea per paragraph” approach and stressing the use of topic sentences to clarify each paragraph’s main point. While these practices aligned with basic organisational principles, they did not include teaching how paragraphs should connect to form a clear and logical argument. As Hyland (2010) and Vande Kopple (2012) pointed out, MD markers such as transitions *however* or *therefore* and connectors *in addition* or *on the other hand* are essential for linking ideas and helping the reader follow the text. However, only one teacher, Norah, recognised the importance of MD markers, and her instruction was limited to discouraging certain markers e.g., *always*, *never*, and *all* without providing clear alternatives or explaining their roles. This limited and sometimes incorrect guidance highlighted gaps in teachers’ CK about MD markers and their PCK for teaching coherence.

Additionally, the observed emphasis on short, grammatically correct sentences as a strategy for achieving coherence demonstrated a narrow approach that prioritised linguistic accuracy over the structural and rhetorical qualities of writing. While shorter sentences may reduce grammatical errors, they are insufficient for achieving the logical flow and textual cohesion needed in argumentative writing. Teachers’ suggestions, such as starting paragraphs with topic sentences or relying on reading sources to gather evidence, remained basic and procedural. They failed to incorporate the crucial role of MD markers in building a logical

progression of ideas. Kaya and Sofu (2020) revealed that students who were taught MD markers explicitly showed significant improvements in their ability to organise their writing, create logical connections between ideas, and develop coherent arguments. This evidence underscores the importance of integrating explicit instruction on MD markers into classroom practices, as it directly impacts students' ability to produce well-organised and persuasive academic texts. The absence of detailed guidance on MD markers in the classroom represented a missed opportunity to address deeper levels of text coherence. Teachers' efforts to organise text remained focused on structural elements, leaving students with limited strategies for achieving coherence.

### ***Reader Engagement and Writer's Voice***

The findings revealed that teachers recognised the importance of considering readers and constructing a writer's voice, often encouraging students to present clear claims and persuasive arguments supported by credible sources. For instance, some teachers emphasised the importance of expanding research to provide examples and facts that enhance persuasiveness. However, this focus on surface-level aspects, such as word choice and sourcing, overlooked the deeper role of MD markers in structuring arguments and engaging readers. As Hyland (2019) and Al-Khazraji (2019) argue, MD markers are essential tools for establishing writer-reader relationships, enabling writers to guide readers through complex arguments and highlight connections between ideas.

For example, Haifa encouraged students to use "hooks" to capture readers' attention, and Mona advised students to write clear claims to serve as guiding points for readers. While these strategies are important for clarity, they do not address how MD markers can enhance reader engagement by signalling logical transitions, emphasising key points, or clarifying relationships between ideas. Hyland (2010) demonstrated that students who effectively used

MD markers to engage readers achieved higher levels of coherence and persuasiveness, yet this aspect of writing was not explicitly taught by the observed teachers.

The findings also showed a focus on using credible sources to engage readers. Teachers encouraged students to reference reliable sources and include citations to support their arguments, reflecting an emphasis on academic standards. While this approach aligns with good practices for argumentative writing, it does not address the strategies needed to link evidence to claims effectively. Nur et al. (2021) conducted an empirical study analysing the use of MD markers in research article abstracts written by non-native English authors. Their findings demonstrated that insufficient use of MD markers can make it difficult for writers to connect evidence and arguments effectively, potentially weakening the overall impact of their writing. This gap suggests that while teachers encouraged critical content, they lacked the instructional knowledge to help students weave this content into cohesive and persuasive prose using appropriate MD markers features.

The observed teachers focused on improving linguistic accuracy, such as grammatical correctness and sentence clarity, to help students build a solid foundation for their writing. For example, Julia and Laila encouraged students to write short, simple sentences to make their writing clearer. While this approach reduces errors and improves readability, it does not address more advanced aspects like the use of MD markers, which are important for creating a smooth flow and linking ideas logically. Al-Khazraji (2019) found that while focusing on simple sentences can improve clarity, it may also result in arguments that lack connection and feel disjointed. To help students produce stronger and more persuasive texts, teaching sentence clarity should also include instruction on MD markers, which help guide readers through the argument and show how ideas are connected.

The findings also suggest that teachers may lack sufficient CK and PCK to teach MD markers effectively. For example, Norah's warning against certain markers, such as *always* and

*must* reflects an incomplete understanding of their functions and potential benefits. Müller (2011) emphasised the need for EFL teachers to understand the linguistic and rhetorical roles of MD markers to provide effective instruction. The findings underscore the need for a more integrated approach to teaching argumentative writing, one that combines structural organisation with rhetorical strategies. Explicit instruction on MD markers should be prioritised, as they play a crucial role in linking ideas, engaging readers, and constructing cohesive arguments. Studies like Kaya and Sofu (2020) and Vande Kopple (2012) demonstrate the effectiveness of teaching MD markers in improving EFL students' writing proficiency, coherence, and persuasiveness. Moreover, professional development initiatives should aim to enhance teachers' CK and PCK regarding MD markers and their applications in academic writing. Workshops and training sessions could focus on practical strategies for teaching coherence, such as using MD markers to signal transitions, highlight contrasts, and emphasise key points. By equipping teachers with these tools, students would be better prepared to meet the demands of academic writing and develop arguments that are both coherent and engaging.

### **7.3. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?**

Chapter 5 addressed the second research question along with its three sub-questions:

2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers?

2.1 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers?

2.2. What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?

2.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?

3. How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?

These questions were explored through interviews and then expanded to a broader sample using an online questionnaire. The interviews offered insights into teachers'

knowledge, awareness, and teaching practices regarding MD markers in argumentative writing. Teachers were asked about their methods and perceptions to determine whether they had alternative strategies beyond their observed practices or recognised gaps in their teaching of MD markers.

The questionnaire aimed to confirm and generalise the findings from the interviews to a larger sample of teachers across Saudi Arabia. A Likert scale questionnaire examined teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning argumentative writing, while a short quiz tested their knowledge of MD markers. This approach provided both a detailed and wider understanding of teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and professional development needs.

Both interviews and questionnaires examined the teachers' knowledge about MD markers. However, the interviewed teachers were asked more about their actual teaching to gain explanations for or further insights into their teaching of argumentative academic writing specifically regarding building arguments and interacting with the readers. The section below will provide a more detailed discussion of the findings related to the ten teachers' knowledge and awareness in connection with the existing literature.

### **7.3.1 Teachers' Content and Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

This section examines the teachers' CK and PCK in relation to their understanding and teaching of MD markers. CK refers to the teachers' understanding of MD markers as tools for clear and effective writing, while PCK involves their ability to use this knowledge to teach students how to apply MD markers in their writing. The findings reveal key gaps in both CK and PCK, which impact the teachers' ability to help students use MD markers to construct cohesive, persuasive, and reader-focused arguments.

#### ***Content knowledge***

The findings revealed that while teachers in this study recognised the importance of argumentative writing and could differentiate it from other genres, their understanding of MD

markers as key tools for effective communication was limited. This aligned with Hyland's (2003) genre-based approach, which emphasises the significance of genre-specific features in academic writing. However, the finding of this study suggested that the teachers primarily viewed coherence in terms of structural organisation, such as dividing an essay into introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions, rather than as a cohesive flow of ideas or an interaction between the writer and the reader.

The teachers in this study, when asked to explain the functions of MD markers in writing, mostly focused on their grammatical or text-organising roles during interviews. For example, they identified MD markers such as *first* and *however* as tools for organising paragraphs but rarely acknowledged their role in enabling writers to engage readers or present their stance (Hyland, 2005). Similarly, the questionnaire results showed a difference in teachers' knowledge according to the type of MD marker: while 74% of participants successfully identified interactive markers for text organisation, only 12% correctly identified interactional markers, which are essential for building arguments and engaging readers. This gap in understanding how MD markers contribute to effective communication aligns with Kaivanpanah et al.'s (2021) findings. Their study revealed that teachers often prioritised structural aspects of academic writing, such as grammar and text organisation, while paying less attention to tools like MD markers. Similarly, Peng and Zheng (2021) investigated Chinese university students' use of MD markers in their BA thesis discussion sections. They found that students rarely utilised interactional markers, which are crucial for expressing opinions and engaging readers, likely reflecting gaps in how these features were taught. These findings supported Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, which highlighted the importance of teachers' CK and ongoing training to address gaps in teaching writing skills. Therefore, this study aligns with Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, which highlighted the importance of teachers' CK and the role of professional development in enhancing their understanding of key subject areas. In this

context, improving teachers' understanding of MD markers through professional development could strengthen their ability to teach these features effectively, ultimately improving students' writing clarity and engagement.

The study also found that teachers struggled to link coherence with reader engagement, an essential element in argumentative writing (Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010). Teachers often associated coherence with surface-level clarity, such as grammatical correctness and sentence structure, rather than with helping readers follow logical arguments. For example, in the interviews, teachers frequently emphasised the structural and grammatical roles of MD markers, such as organising paragraphs or ensuring correct transitions, but rarely mentioned their importance in fostering interaction between the writer and the reader. Similarly, the questionnaire results revealed a similar pattern: while most teachers correctly identified interactive MD markers (74%) for organising text, only a small proportion (12%) recognised the use of interactional markers, which are crucial for engaging readers and presenting arguments effectively. This gap shows that teachers' limited focus on interactional MD markers may have made it harder for them to help students write in a way that is both clear and convincing.

The quantitative findings support the interview data that while teachers had a basic understanding of interactive MD markers, their knowledge of interactional markers which are important for engaging readers and building strong arguments was much weaker. The Likert-scale questionnaire, contained a brief quiz, provided insights into the teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their beliefs about their importance. Results showed that most teachers had a stronger familiarity with basic interactive markers e.g., *first* or *finally* but struggled with the more advanced interactional markers essential for developing persuasive and reader-focused arguments. This gap suggests a lack of teachers' CK, which could be addressed through targeted professional development.

The findings underscored a need for professional development programmes that address MD markers' communicative and interactional roles in writing. Teachers in this study reported that they had not received training specifically designed for teaching argumentative writing or MD markers. This aligned with Borg's (2006) argument that EFL teachers need to regularly update their teaching and subject knowledge to meet evolving educational needs. Without adequate professional development, teachers are likely to continue focusing on technical aspects of MD markers, rather than their role in enhancing logical flow and reader engagement. Moreover, the study revealed that teachers' limited knowledge of MD markers was influenced by their own learning experiences. Some teachers admitted they only became aware of the importance of MD markers during their postgraduate studies and often felt unprepared to use them effectively. For example, one teacher, Samar, reflected that their struggles during their master's programme highlighted the importance of MD markers, which motivated them to include these features in their teaching. However, Samar noted that their efforts were limited to providing basic examples of MD markers, such as transitions and connectors, without deeper instruction on their communicative roles. This suggests that while their personal experience raised awareness, it did not fully translate into comprehensive teaching strategies, highlighting the need for targeted professional development to address these gaps.

The lack of teacher knowledge about MD markers had serious effects on students' academic writing. MD markers were widely known to be important for creating clear, convincing, and well-connected texts (Hyland, 2005; Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010). However, the findings of this study showed that students were not taught enough about how to use them effectively, especially interactional markers that helped develop arguments and connect with readers. This may have been because teachers focused more on grammar and structure rather



than on how MD markers could link ideas and make writing more engaging. This limited understanding made it harder for teachers to help students create well-organised and persuasive arguments. Similar issues were found in Alharbi's (2019) research on Saudi EFL teachers, which showed that not having enough training in writing often led to teachers focusing too much on grammar and structure instead of helping students improve their communication and argument skills. Providing teachers with better training could help them offer more complete guidance and improve students' academic writing.

### ***Teachers' PCK***

This study's findings align with broader research highlighting challenges in students' argumentative writing, particularly regarding the use of MD markers to make writing clear and logical. For example, Korau and Aliyu (2020) studied Nigerian undergraduate students' persuasive essays and found that students often struggled to use MD markers properly. This limited their ability to create arguments that were logical and easy to follow. The researchers explained this difficulty as being caused by a lack of teaching about MD markers as tools to connect ideas and organise arguments. In a different setting, Milenković (2020) investigated L2 writing among university students in Serbia, focusing on how aware students were of their writing practices. The study showed that students thought they were better at writing than they actually were, particularly in creating connected and persuasive arguments. This suggested that students were not taught enough about how to use MD markers to make their writing more organised and engaging for readers. This study supports this suggestion, as the teachers in this study did not focus on the use of MD markers in argumentative writing, either in their class teaching or in their feedback on students' writing.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers' limited knowledge about MD markers contributed to these issues. While it was not possible to directly link teachers' knowledge to students' performance, evidence from teacher interviews and questionnaires showed gaps in

how teachers approached writing instruction. For example, many teachers focused on surface-level aspects of writing, such as grammar and organising paragraphs, but did not teach students how to use MD markers to connect ideas or engage readers effectively. This matches findings from Alharbi's (2019) research on Saudi EFL teachers, which showed that many teachers placed too much emphasis on grammar and basic organisation rather than helping students improve their communication skills through better use of MD markers. This aligns with Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, which emphasised that effective teaching relies on strong PCK teachers' ability to combine their subject knowledge with pedagogical strategies designed to students' needs. The gaps observed in teachers' instruction highlight a lack of integration between their CK about MD markers and the pedagogical skills required to teach these features in ways that enhance students' argumentative writing.

As identified in this study, none of the participating teachers reported receiving formal training in teaching argumentative writing or MD markers. This aligns with findings in the literature that highlight a general lack of professional development opportunities for EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia (Alharbi, 2019). Teachers primarily depended on their own learning experiences, with some reporting that their postgraduate studies highlighted gaps in their academic writing abilities. This dependence on personal experiences rather than structured training may limit the development of teaching practices specifically aimed at improving students' use of MD markers. The findings suggest that providing professional development focusing on writing pedagogy, particularly on MD markers, could address these gaps.

Notably, two teachers, Norah and Samar, encouraged their students to use synonyms to make their texts appear more academic. However, while this approach showed some effort to enhance students' academic writing, the teachers did not provide clear explanations of which words to use, their specific functions, or how to incorporate them effectively into writing. This lack of detailed instruction meant that the guidance remained surface-level and did not fully

address the role of MD markers in improving coherence and reader engagement. Norah, who worked in an academic writing centre, mentioned that her role there had provided her with informal opportunities to refine her teaching practices. The contrast between Norah and Samar, who at least made some effort to enhance students' writing practices, and their peers, who did not implement similar strategies, underscores the importance of structured support to improve PCK for teaching academic writing. As Borg (2006) suggests, continuous professional development tailored to teachers' needs is crucial for equipping them with the knowledge and skills required to teach writing more effectively.

The interviews revealed that some teachers believed their students were advanced in English because they completed all their coursework and assignments in English within the EFL department. This belief, rooted in assumptions about students' proficiency, may have contributed to a reduced emphasis on teaching argumentative writing explicitly. However, this perception reflects teachers' beliefs about students' needs rather than their PCK. The distinction is critical: while beliefs about student capabilities influence teaching practices, PCK refers specifically to the integration of subject matter knowledge with teaching strategies. Moreover, the students' writing samples clearly showed that they needed help in using MD markers effectively in their writing. Despite this, the teachers did not take steps to address the issue. This lack of action might also be linked to the teachers' belief that students at the undergraduate level do not need this type of argumentative skill development. Such beliefs can strongly affect teaching practices. As Borg (2006) highlights, improving teachers' understanding of their learners is important to addressing such gaps and helping teachers develop better teaching strategies. The study further underscores the importance of integrating more practical and targeted writing exercises into the curriculum, along with tailored professional development for teachers. By addressing gaps in teachers' CK and PCK,

institutions can better prepare both teachers and students to meet higher standards of academic writing.

In conclusion, this study revealed significant gaps in EFL teachers' knowledge and awareness of MD markers, particularly their communicative and interactional functions. While teachers recognised the importance of MD markers in structuring texts, they often failed to address their role in engaging readers and constructing persuasive arguments.

### **7.3.2 What do EFL teachers state about their actual teaching of MD markers? And What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers?**

In addressing the second sub-question, teachers were asked about their perceptions of MD markers and the reasons for incorporating or excluding them in their teaching practices. The findings revealed that while many teachers acknowledged the importance of MD markers for enhancing students' argumentative writing, their teaching practices varied significantly. For instance, teachers focused more on markers that supported organisational clarity, such as those aiding text coherence, while giving less attention to markers that helped engage readers and convey the writer's stance effectively.

#### ***Perceptions regarding the teaching of MD markers***

The interviews revealed that teachers generally held positive views regarding the role of MD markers in improving students' writing quality. Teachers recognised that MD markers enhance text organisation and clarity, facilitating better reader comprehension. However, some teachers prioritised helping students address assignment questions and meet word count requirements over fostering a nuanced understanding and use of MD markers. This aligns with Al-Khazraji's (2019) findings, which highlighted that L2 learners often misuse MD markers by focusing on isolated words rather than ensuring overall text coherence. Similarly, teachers

in this study observed that while students attempted to use MD markers, their incorrect application often disrupted the logical flow of ideas, weakening text clarity and coherence.

Some teachers questioned the relevance of emphasising MD markers in undergraduate assignments, suggesting that these tools might hold greater importance in advanced academic contexts, such as postgraduate research. This perspective underscores the broader challenges EFL students face in mastering argumentative writing. Moreover, teachers reflected on their struggles with academic writing during their MA studies, emphasising the need to address such skills earlier in students' educational journeys. This finding is consistent with Alharbi's (2021) study, which revealed that Saudi postgraduate students in the UK demonstrated limited use of MD markers, indicating that these challenges continue at higher academic levels. Similarly, Ho and Li's (2018) research revealed a strong association between the effective use of MD markers and higher essay scores, reinforcing the critical role of MD markers in producing quality academic writing. These insights point to a critical implication: teachers' current perceptions of MD marker instruction are heavily shaped by their own academic experiences, reinforcing the need for earlier and more structured training on these tools.

The questionnaire included a 21-item scale designed to evaluate teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning of MD markers in academic writing. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) identified three key dimensions: students' needs, students' abilities, and teachers' instructional practices. The findings revealed a small but positive correlation between teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their beliefs about instructional practices. However, the questionnaire did not provide clear evidence about how this knowledge translated into classroom practices, leaving the gap between understanding and practical application unclear. This observation aligns with broader research suggesting that content knowledge alone is not sufficient for effective teaching without strong PCK. Shulman (1986) explained that PCK combines subject knowledge with the ability to teach it effectively and adapt it to students'

needs. Without this, teachers with good subject knowledge may still struggle to teach successfully. This study highlights the need for training to help teachers use MD markers effectively in their lessons, ensuring that their knowledge benefits student outcomes.

Interestingly, one teacher, Norah, who had only two years of teaching experience, demonstrated a particularly strong ability to connect content knowledge with practical teaching strategies for MD markers during the interviews and classroom observation. This raised questions about whether her ability could be attributed to factors beyond her teaching experience. Norah's background provided possible insights into her advanced approach. As a recent graduate of a master's program, she was actively working on her PhD proposal and exploring opportunities to pursue doctoral studies in the UK and the USA. This focus on academic writing for her own research likely contributed to her heightened awareness of the importance of MD markers and how to incorporate them into teaching. These additional factors highlighted the complexity of linking teaching experience alone to effective instructional practices. While statistical tests in this study revealed no significant differences in teachers' beliefs about MD marker instruction across varying levels of experience, Norah's example suggested that personal academic pursuits and exposure to advanced writing practices may have played a critical role in shaping her ability to effectively teach MD markers. This finding aligned with Borg's (2006) argument that teachers' ongoing engagement with academic writing and professional development could significantly enhance their teaching practices.

The questionnaire findings showed widespread agreement among teachers about the importance of teaching text organisation, involving readers, building arguments, and using MD markers in argumentative writing instruction. Over 75% of teachers said they valued MD markers for improving students' academic writing skills, regardless of how many years they had been teaching. However, the issues of limited professional training opportunities and lack of time to focus on MD markers were not directly covered in the questionnaire. Instead, these

challenges came up during interviews, where teachers shared their experiences and struggles with teaching practices. For example, several teachers mentioned in the interviews that they often did not have access to specialised training or workshops on MD markers, which made them feel less confident about teaching these tools effectively. Additionally, this study emphasised the importance of self-learning for EFL teachers. Teachers in this study noted that their own previous education did not include argumentative writing, which is a significant issue affecting their CK and PCK. This aligns with Turner-Bisset's (1999) model of teachers' knowledge, which illustrates how gaps in knowledge can impact teaching practices.

### ***Students' Learning Needs***

This section examines teachers' perceptions of students' academic writing needs, particularly regarding the use of MD markers in undergraduate writing. While some teachers in the interviews believed that MD markers were unnecessary at the undergraduate level and more suited for postgraduate academic tasks, this perspective conflicts with the findings from the questionnaire. Over 70% of teachers recognised the importance of preparing students with skills to build arguments, organise texts, and achieve coherence in their academic writing. These responses, while focusing on general academic writing skills, suggest that MD markers are important tools for achieving these goals.

In contrast to the positive outcomes reported in studies like Kaya and Sofu (2020), the teachers in this study lacked the teaching knowledge and resources to provide clear MD marker instruction. While they understood the importance of MD markers, their teaching mainly focused on basic features, such as grammar and structure, and relied on assumptions about students' skills and readiness for advanced writing. This gap in practical teaching methods reduced students' chances to create clear and convincing texts. The findings also showed that some teachers thought their students were skilled enough in writing because they could complete assignments in English for other subjects. However, this belief often led to less focus

on teaching important elements like MD markers. Without clear teaching, students found it hard to write well-connected and persuasive arguments needed for academic success. This reflected Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, which underscored that teachers' ability to bridge the gap between their content knowledge and students' learning needs depended on their PCK. Without strong PCK, teachers in this study appeared to struggle to recognise the specific challenges students faced with MD markers and adapt their teaching methods accordingly.

The questionnaire also revealed a medium-strength positive connection between teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their views about students' learning needs. Teachers with stronger content knowledge were better at identifying specific challenges students faced in making their writing clear and well-organised. This supports the idea that good content knowledge helps teachers notice gaps in students' skills and adjust their teaching plans to meet those needs (Shulman, 1987). However, the findings showed that teachers often did not fully understand how much students already knew or how ready they were to learn more advanced writing skills. Turner-Bisset's (1999) model stressed the importance of recognising what students already know as a starting point for effective teaching. Teachers who struggled to see how much knowledge students already had about MD markers were less able to design lessons that helped students build on their current skills. As a result, students missed chances to learn how to use MD markers to organise their writing and make it more connected.

The study found no significant differences in teachers' perceptions of students' academic writing needs based on their years of teaching experience. This suggests that teaching experience alone does not strongly influence how teachers perceive or address students' challenges in academic writing. Instead, CK about MD markers appears to play a more decisive role in shaping these perceptions. This finding mirrors previous research that highlights the importance of PCK in enabling teachers to identify and respond effectively to students' learning needs (Kaya & Sofu, 2020).



The implications of these findings are significant. While students must develop broader academic writing competencies such as argumentation and coherence, the ability to use MD markers effectively is equally critical for achieving these goals. Teachers who dismiss the relevance of MD markers at the undergraduate level may inadvertently overlook an essential component of academic writing. Explicit instruction in MD markers, integrated into undergraduate curricula, could help bridge this gap and equip students with the tools they need to construct persuasive and coherent arguments. Strengthening teachers' knowledge of MD markers, regardless of their teaching experience, is also crucial to ensure they can provide targeted support for developing these skills. Developing proficiency in MD markers should not be delayed until postgraduate levels, as these skills are foundational for achieving coherence, reader engagement, and argumentation in academic writing.

### ***Students' Abilities***

The findings of this study showed a mixed view in teachers' perceptions of their undergraduate students' abilities in argumentative writing. While some teachers believed that their students were advanced in English, they also noticed clear weaknesses in key aspects of argumentative writing. For instance, during the interviews, Haifa pointed out that her students' writing was often descriptive and informal, influenced by "movie-style" English, rather than the structured and formal style expected in academic texts. This difference highlights that, despite their general English proficiency, students struggled with important parts of argumentative writing, such as organising ideas logically and keeping the reader engaged. These challenges match those found in earlier research. Alharbi (2021), for example, found that EFL students often failed to use MD markers effectively, resulting in disorganised and less convincing writing. Similarly, Kaya and Sofu (2020) and Milenković (2020) found that EFL students had trouble with coherence and engaging their readers, often because they did not fully understand how to use MD markers correctly. This shows a gap between students' general

language skills and the specific skills needed for effective academic argumentation. Addressing this gap will require teaching strategies that help students to focus more on building stronger arguments, organising ideas and making their writing more persuasive in academic settings.

Teachers' views about students' abilities seemed to change based on their teaching experience, as shown in the questionnaire findings. Teachers with more years of teaching experience were more critical of students' writing abilities, likely because they had worked with a wider range of students and understood the challenges of academic writing better. On the other hand, less experienced teachers had more positive views about students' abilities, possibly because they had seen fewer examples of student work and had lower expectations for advanced academic writing. The questionnaire results did not show a clear connection between teachers' knowledge of MD markers and their opinions about students' abilities. Instead, teaching experience seemed to have a stronger influence on how teachers judged student performance. More experienced teachers were noticing the gaps in students' organisation, coherence, and use of MD markers more than less experienced teachers, which matches findings from Kaya and Sofu's (2020) study. Their research also found that experienced teachers were more skilled at identifying issues like weak connections between ideas in student writing.

The findings underline the need to support teachers in recognising and addressing students' challenges in academic writing. While teachers' perceptions of student abilities are shaped by their knowledge and experience, these perceptions influence their instructional strategies and priorities. The literature highlights the importance of preparing teachers with the tools and strategies needed to improve students' writing outcomes (Alharbi, 2021; Ho & Li, 2018;). Integrating such training into professional development programmes could enable teachers to better address students' difficulties in using MD markers effectively. Additionally, these findings emphasise the importance of incorporating explicit instruction on MD markers

into undergraduate writing curricula. By focusing on practical applications, such as helping students understand how to use MD markers to structure arguments and connect with readers, teachers can support students in overcoming their struggles with coherence and engagement. This approach would address the challenges identified in this study and help improve the overall quality of academic writing at the undergraduate level.

### **7.3.3 What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers?**

The findings from this study provided valuable insights into the academic writing skills of teachers whose first language (L1) is not English. Despite their advanced degrees and experience teaching academic writing at the university level, these teachers reported ongoing difficulties in improving their academic writing. Many linked these challenges to the influence of their L1 and a lack of focused training. These observations are similar to earlier research (Alghammas, 2020; Alharbi, 2019; Almalki, 2020), which shows that EFL teachers often struggle due to limited practice with advanced writing skills. The influence of L1 was highlighted as an important factor, particularly in shaping teachers' approaches to writing and their ability to meet the style and structure expectations of academic English.

Teachers observed that although English instruction begins earlier in Saudi Arabia starting at age seven compared to age 12 fifteen years ago this shift has not led to significant improvements in academic writing proficiency. While students have made progress in general language skills, they, along with teachers, continue to face challenges in mastering complex tasks such as argumentative and critical writing. This observation aligns with Alharbi's (2019) findings that academic writing often receives insufficient attention in Saudi EFL curricula. Additionally, several teachers reflected that they only fully recognised the importance of academic writing when faced with the high standards of overseas educational institutions. These experiences highlighted the gaps in their earlier preparation, particularly in meeting

advanced assessment requirements. Such reflections underscore the need for university-level curricula in Saudi Arabia to adopt more focused and improved assessment practices to promote the development of academic writing skills from an earlier stage.

The influence of L1 on academic writing was a common theme in the interviews. Teachers explained how thinking in Arabic while writing in English often led to structural and grammatical mistakes in students' writing (?). Haifa, for example, shared how these challenges shaped her teaching, leading her to stress to students the need to avoid directly translating from Arabic to English. This reflects Alghammas's (2020) findings, which show how L1 structures can impact coherence and grammar in L2 writing. Haifa also pointed out specific issues, such as pronoun usage mistakes, arising from differences between Arabic and English grammar rules. These observations highlight the importance of teaching strategies that address L1-related challenges, especially by building students' awareness of how linguistic differences can influence their writing.

The study also revealed that even teachers with advanced qualifications continued to face challenges in their academic writing proficiency. For instance, Noaf, a PhD holder in Second Language Education, acknowledged difficulties in writing effective introductions. Teachers' self-knowledge is important in improving both their CK and PCK (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2008). Therefore, this study highlights the importance of teachers' awareness of their need to improve their CK and PCK, which might be enhanced through professional development in the area of linguistic knowledge and skills. This finding aligns with Almalki (2020), who stressed the importance of ongoing training opportunities for EFL teachers to enhance their academic writing skills, even after reaching advanced levels of education.

Beyond language-related challenges, teachers pointed to practical issues that made their academic writing development and instruction more difficult. Limitations in the design and content of academic writing textbooks were frequently mentioned, as was the impact of time

pressures on their ability to focus on writing instruction. These issues suggest that addressing academic writing challenges requires not only improvements in teacher training but also systemic changes to resources and schedules to support both teachers and students effectively.

### ***Textbook for teaching argumentative writing***

The findings from this study shed light on teachers' different opinions about the academic writing textbook used for teaching argumentative writing. Some teachers, like Mona and Noaf, believed the textbook was suitable for their students' academic level. They appreciated the variety of lessons and reading topics included in the textbook, which they felt provided a good starting point for students to develop their writing. However, they also mentioned the need for additional exercises and quizzes to give students more chances to practice argumentative and critical writing skills. These views align with Alqahtani and Abdelhalim's (2020) observation that while textbooks often provide essential theoretical content, their real value depends on including practical activities that encourage active learning and skill-building.

On the other hand, some teachers found the textbook lacking in key areas, saying it was not clear or detailed enough to effectively support academic writing instruction. They pointed out that it failed to address important elements like the proper use of MD markers, which are essential for creating logical and persuasive texts. One teacher, for instance, specifically noted the absence of clear instructions on MD markers, which made it harder for students to learn how to make their writing coherent and engaging. This issue highlights a major challenge for both teachers and students, as the textbook does not fully meet the specific needs of teaching academic writing.

These differing opinions among teachers highlight the importance of using textbooks that are not only accurate and informative but also clear and practical. Alqahtani and Abdelhalim (2020) examined EFL academic writing materials and found that many textbooks

lacked sufficient support for teaching key features like MD markers, which are essential for enhancing students' writing skills. Their study suggested that revising textbooks to include clearer explanations and more engaging activities could help address the challenges of teaching argumentative writing in EFL contexts. This evidence underscores the need for better instructional resources tailored to the specific needs of EFL learners and teachers.

In this study, while some teachers appreciated the textbook's variety of lessons and reading topics as a foundation for student learning, others felt it lacked essential components, such as detailed guidance on MD markers. This gap in content and practical activities highlights the need for textbooks that balance theoretical information with engaging, skill-building exercises. Revising such resources to address these gaps could better support EFL teachers and students in developing key academic writing skills, particularly in coherence and argumentation.

### ***Impact of Time Constraints***

The findings of this study highlighted that all participating teachers faced significant challenges in incorporating writing practice into their lessons due to time constraints. Teachers expressed concerns about the limited academic calendar and the pressure to cover all module content within the allotted time. With only one 60-minute writing class per week, they found it difficult to allocate sufficient time for meaningful practice, providing feedback, and addressing students' individual needs in academic writing development. These concerns align with Almalki (2020) findings, which describe the broader structural challenges in Saudi education, including inflexible schedules and a lack of focus on practical skills like writing.

Although teachers largely recognised their inability to implement writing-focused activities to time limitations, it is essential to consider whether time is the sole or primary constraint. Time challenges are widely acknowledged across educational contexts (Abkar Alkodimi & Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal, 2021). However, other factors, such as teachers'

PCK, their teaching strategies, and the arranging of certain curriculum components over others, may also play a role. For example, Ferris et al. (2011) found that teacher training programs often fail to prepare teachers with strategies for balancing writing activities within constrained schedules, leaving them unable to provide the meaningful feedback necessary for writing development. In this regard, the study contributes to understanding that time constraints alone do not account for the lack of focus on MD markers or deeper writing skills teachers; also require training in how to maximise limited time through strategic lesson design and integrated writing tasks.

In addition to teaching time constraints, teachers reported that their additional responsibilities, such as preparing exam materials, conducting research, and managing administrative tasks, further compounded their challenges. While these duties are time-intensive, they are not unique to Saudi EFL teachers; teachers worldwide face similar workloads. However, as Al-Qahtani (2005) noted, not giving enough importance to academic writing in Saudi curricula further limits opportunities to develop these skills, making time constraints even more noticeable. This highlights the need for systemic changes to address both structural and cultural barriers to writing instruction.

The absence of regular writing activities and opportunities for face-to-face feedback restricts students' engagement in the critical processes of drafting, revising, and refining their argumentative writing. Research by Hyland (2005) emphasises that writing proficiency develops through practice and structured feedback. Without these opportunities, students are less likely to develop the coherence, organisation, and critical thinking skills required for academic writing. Teachers in this study acknowledged this gap, recognising the need for structured and consistent writing practice to support their students' development. Similarly, Zakaria and Malik (2018) stress the importance of planning and structured activities in

improving academic writing outcomes, highlighting that effective lesson planning could mitigate some of the challenges posed by limited classroom time.

To address these challenges, systemic changes are necessary. First, academic calendars and schedules should be reconsidered to allow more time for writing-focused instruction. Second, writing practice could be integrated into other areas of the curriculum, ensuring that students engage with academic writing across multiple contexts. Third, professional development initiatives should equip teachers with time management strategies and practical methods for embedding writing instruction into their existing lessons. Training could also focus on enabling teachers to use their available time more efficiently while balancing their multiple responsibilities, as recommended by Shi and Chen (2020).

Overall, solving the problem of limited time needs both group and personal efforts. While teachers' jobs and schedules are tough, it is important to focus on making academic writing a key part of learning English as a foreign language. By understanding and solving these problems as a whole, educational institutions can better support teachers and students, helping students improve their academic writing skills.

### ***Student factors***

This study highlighted significant challenges faced by teachers in addressing students' English proficiency levels and their motivation in academic writing courses. Teachers in the interviews consistently reported that variations in students' language abilities posed a major difficulty in the classroom. They noted that many students relied on informal English styles, influenced by casual communication methods such as social media and chat applications. This reliance often resulted in grammar and spelling errors, as well as writing that lacked coherence and academic rigour. Such challenges appear to reflect broader trends in EFL writing instruction. For instance, Ferris et al. (2011) observed that EFL teachers often prioritised surface-level corrections, such as grammar and spelling, potentially because these issues are



more immediate and visible. However, this focus on surface errors may limit attention to deeper structural problems, such as developing coherence, logical flow, and argumentation in writing.

The findings of this study revealed that students' use of their L1 influenced their English writing, often leading to challenges in coherence and clarity. Teachers highlighted that Arabic language patterns occasionally interfered with students' ability to write logically in English. This aligned with Yoon's (2021) findings, which showed that L1 significantly affected students' use of MD markers. Similarly, Taweel (2020) and Alshammari (2018) noted that Saudi EFL students' reliance on Arabic linguistic structures often resulted in either overuse or underuse of MD markers, further impacting the organisation of their writing. Similar challenges were reported in other EFL contexts. For instance, Bogdanovic and Mirovic (2018), in their study on young researchers writing in English as a second language (ESL), found that differences between students' L1 and English posed difficulties in mastering MD markers, often leading to poorly organised texts. Their research, which focused on Serbian university students transitioning to advanced academic writing in English, emphasised the role of L1 interference in shaping students' ability to structure arguments effectively. This highlighted the need for targeted teaching strategies that addressed such linguistic influences, enabling students to develop clearer and more organised writing.

In this study, teachers observed that many students saw academic writing as just a task required to pass their coursework, rather than a chance to improve their skills. According to teachers, this lack of motivation often led students to focus on meeting minimum requirements instead of fully engaging with the writing process. Similarly, Tavakoli and Amirian (2012) found that low levels of interest in writing activities greatly slowed students' progress, showing how important motivation is for success in academic writing. Teachers in this study also noted that this lack of motivation affected not only individual students but also the overall atmosphere in the classroom. Students often showed little interest in activities, avoided workshops, and

rarely engaged with feedback on their writing. In the teachers' view, this lack of participation made it harder to create an active and collaborative learning environment. Teachers expressed concern that these attitudes made it challenging to use effective teaching strategies.

Lee and Yuan (2021) provided insights into how motivation could be improved through better teaching practices. Their study on L2 writing teachers highlighted that using interesting and relevant teaching materials can increase student motivation. They found that when teachers connected writing tasks to students' academic or career goals, students were more likely to see writing as useful and important for their future. The study also showed that experienced teachers adjust their teaching materials to match students' needs and interests, helping to create a more engaging learning environment. These findings show the importance of linking writing tasks to real-life applications to encourage greater participation and better learning outcomes, especially in EFL contexts. To address these challenges, teachers in this study suggested that course content should better match students' interests and future goals. Including real-world uses of writing, using topics that connect with students, and showing the clear benefits of writing skills could boost motivation. Chuang and Yan (2022) highlighted the value of practical and useful writing tasks in helping students stay engaged and achieve better results, especially in argumentative writing. Teachers in this study agreed, suggesting that making writing activities more relevant to students' lives could help overcome motivational challenges.

In summary, this study revealed that students' L1 backgrounds and low motivation were perceived by teachers as key factors affecting their academic writing performance. Addressing these challenges requires targeted instructional strategies and thoughtfully designed course content. As Hyland (2005), Tavakoli and Amirian (2012), and Lee and Yuan (2021) emphasised, culturally informed, engaging, and structured approaches are essential for fostering academic writing skills among EFL learners. These findings highlight the need for

continued efforts to support teachers in overcoming these barriers and enhancing students' writing proficiency.

#### **7.4 Question 3: How do EFL teachers identify and correct the use of MD markers in students' writing?**

Chapter Six focused on the students' use of MD markers and the feedback provided by teachers on their writing. The findings revealed two critical points: students rarely used MD markers, and teachers provided minimal corrective feedback on their use, instead focusing on grammar mistakes and structural issues. The following sections will explore these findings in greater detail.

##### **7.4.1 Teachers' Feedback about the use of MD Markers**

This section focuses on teachers' feedback regarding students' use of MD markers in writing, analysing its alignment with pedagogical expectations and comparing it to existing research on feedback practices in EFL contexts.

##### ***Lack of Feedback on MD Markers***

The findings revealed that nearly a quarter of the student essays lacked any form of feedback from teachers. Moreover, 18 essays did not include MD markers, and no corrective feedback was provided to address this omission. While teachers emphasised the importance of feedback during interviews, several expressed doubts about students' willingness to engage with their comments, which may explain the observed absence of feedback. This highlights a significant gap between the teachers' stated awareness of feedback's importance and their practical application in the classroom.

This result aligns with findings by Alhumaid (2023) and Alharbi (2019), who identified similar issues in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia, where teachers primarily focused on surface-level errors like grammar and spelling while overlooking deeper issues such as coherence and the use of MD markers. The literature consistently underscores that the lack of feedback on

MD markers limits students' ability to organise their texts and construct strong arguments (Hyland, 2004). In contrast, studies such as Sanchez and Borg (2014) demonstrate that clear and explicit feedback on MD markers significantly improves students' academic writing.

Indirect feedback appeared in nearly half of the writing samples but was limited to surface-level issues such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Teachers often used symbols like crosses, underlining, or abbreviations (e.g., GR for grammar and SP for spelling), but no feedback specifically addressed the absence or misuse of MD markers. This mirrors findings from Alhumaid (2023) and Alghammas (2020), who noted a common practice among Saudi EFL teachers of prioritising grammatical corrections over structural and organisational elements. This surface-level focus constrains the development of students' academic writing, as it neglects the tools necessary for organising arguments and guiding readers. By comparison, Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) showed that feedback on MD markers, combined with grammar corrections, leads to significant improvements in writing clarity and coherence. This shows that the issue may not be with the feedback itself, but with what teachers choose to focus on.

Direct feedback was found in 30 writing samples but was similarly limited to grammar and spelling corrections. Only one instance addressed MD markers, where a teacher suggested replacing *for example* with *such as*. However, this feedback was incorrect, as both markers were contextually appropriate. This reflects a possible gap in the teacher's CK of MD markers, as noted by Bogdanović and Mirović (2018). The findings resonate with Turner-Bisset's (1999) model, which emphasises the importance of both CK and PCK for effective teaching. Teachers in the study may possess a basic understanding of MD markers but lack the pedagogical skills to apply this knowledge effectively.

### ***Absence of Interactional Markers***

The findings revealed that students only used interactive MD markers, with no evidence of interactional markers in their writing. Interactional markers, such as hedges, boosters, and

engagement markers, are important for building arguments and engaging readers but were completely absent. This shows that teaching in these classrooms focused more on structure than on creating arguments or connecting with readers.

None of the teachers gave feedback on the absence of interactional markers during classroom observations or interviews. This lack of attention highlights a significant gap in teaching priorities and feedback practices. Teachers focused on basic features like grammar and structure but ignored more advanced aspects of academic writing. These findings are consistent with Alharbi (2021), who found that Saudi postgraduate students rarely used interactional markers, leading to weaker arguments and limited reader engagement. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2005) suggested that cultural habits in Arabic academic writing, which often focus on giving information rather than making arguments, might explain why interactional markers are not used.

Research by Hyland (2004) and Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) shows that teaching interactional markers explicitly helps students write stronger arguments and connect better with readers. The lack of such teaching in this study suggests a missed opportunity to improve students' writing. Addressing this gap requires targeted teacher training to improve both subject knowledge and teaching methods. Studies like Kaya and Sofu (2020) show that training programmes can help teachers give better feedback on both basic and advanced writing skills. Including MD markers in grading rubrics, as suggested by Hyland (2010), could also encourage both teachers and students to focus more on these tools.

#### **7.4.2 Students' use of MD markers**

The findings showed that students mainly used interactive MD markers, especially frame markers, which made up 55% of all MD markers used. These markers, like *in conclusion* and *finally* were mostly found in the conclusion sections of essays. This suggests that students were more confident using these markers to end their essays but did not know how to use

similar tools effectively in other sections, like introductions or body paragraphs. “Code glosses” which made up 34% of the MD markers used, were the second most common type. These markers, including *for example* and *such as* help explain or add examples to the text. While their frequent use shows that students understood their basic purpose, some overused them or applied them incorrectly, such as repeating *for example* multiple times in one paragraph. This shows that students had only a basic understanding of how to use these tools in their writing.

The heavy reliance on interactive markers matches findings from Binmahboob (2022) and Althiyabi et al. (2022), who observed that Saudi EFL writers focus on markers that organise their writing but ignore those that engage readers. Similarly, Daif-Allah and Albeshir (2013) noted that Saudi students often follow simple patterns in their writing, focusing more on meeting basic expectations than on improving the overall quality of their arguments. This focus on simpler tools highlights a larger issue in teaching, where students are trained to focus on structure but not on making their writing more engaging or convincing. The complete absence of interactional MD markers, such as hedges, boosters, and engagement markers, is a critical gap in students' writing. Without these tools, students' arguments are less persuasive, and their writing fails to engage readers. Cultural habits in Arabic academic writing, which often focus more on delivering information than on making arguments, may partly explain this issue, as suggested by Al-Qahtani (2005).

These findings suggest several important steps for teaching. First, students' reliance on frame markers in conclusions shows that they understand how to end their essays but lack the skills to organise other sections effectively. Teachers should show students how to use MD markers throughout their writing to improve clarity and flow. Second, the absence of interactional markers shows a gap in both teaching and feedback. Teachers need better training to help students use these markers to build arguments and connect with readers. Studies like

Kaya and Sofu (2020) show that targeted training helps teachers guide students in using these tools effectively. Adding MD markers to grading rubrics, as suggested by Hyland (2010), could also encourage both teachers and students to focus on these tools. Teachers should also provide more feedback on MD markers, rather than focusing only on grammar and spelling. Explicit teaching and feedback on MD markers can help students use them more effectively, improving the overall quality of their writing.

This discussion chapter has integrated the study's findings with relevant literature to explore key gaps in teacher practices and pedagogical approaches to MD marker use in EFL writing instruction. By critically examining cultural influences and inconsistencies in feedback practices, the chapter highlights the pressing need for tailored professional development and culturally responsive strategies. Rather than refining theoretical models such as Hyland's (2005), the findings reinforce the importance of teachers understanding and applying such models to support coherent and reader-oriented writing. In doing so, this study contributes to advancing the pedagogical application of metadiscourse frameworks in EFL teaching contexts.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of EFL writing teachers in teaching MD markers within argumentative writing at Saudi Arabian universities. Specifically, the research examined teachers' teaching practices in argumentative writing, their knowledge and awareness of the MD markers, and the challenges they face in integrating MD markers into their lessons. This chapter synthesises the key findings from the research, provides recommendations for policy and practice, discusses the contributions of the study, and offers suggestions for future research.

### **8.2 Key Findings**

The findings of this study, discussed in detail in the Findings and Discussion chapters, provide insight into EFL writing teachers' knowledge, practices, and challenges related to teaching MD markers in Saudi Arabia. The first Research Question asked: How do EFL teachers approach the teaching of MD markers while teaching argumentative writing? The study found that teachers mostly focused on the basics of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, and organising essays, rather than on teaching MD markers. Teachers encouraged students to write 250 words on a given topic, concentrating on building vocabulary and generating ideas. However, little attention was given to MD markers, which are important for making writing flow smoothly and helping readers follow arguments. Teachers tended to focus on fixing grammar mistakes and other surface-level issues, but they paid less attention to teaching the skills that make arguments clear and persuasive through the use of MD markers.

The second Research Question considered: To what extent are EFL teachers aware of the importance of MD markers? The study showed that teachers had different levels of knowledge about MD markers. Many teachers did not fully understand the different types of



MD markers or how they help make arguments clear and guide readers. Some teachers had a basic understanding of how to make writing organised and clear, but their knowledge about MD markers as a way to improve academic writing was limited.

Sub-question 2.1: What do EFL teachers say about how they teach MD markers?

Teachers' answers showed mixed levels of awareness. Some teachers said they understood how MD markers could help students write better arguments, but they rarely included them in their lessons. Most teachers did not teach MD markers directly or give detailed feedback. Instead, they focused on correcting grammar and sentence structure, without helping students understand how MD markers could improve the flow and quality of their writing.

Sub-question 2.2: What perceptions do EFL teachers hold regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers? Teachers had different views about the importance of MD markers. Some believed they were important for helping students write better essays, but others saw them as less important than grammar or sentence structure. This belief often led teachers to skip teaching MD markers, thinking students would pick them up on their own. Many teachers also said that students struggled to use MD markers because they had difficulty with basic English skills, so teachers focused more on simpler writing tasks.

Sub-question 2.3: What reasons do teachers give to explain their perceptions and practices regarding the use of MD markers? Several factors were found to influence how teachers viewed and taught MD markers: The study identified several important factors that influenced how teachers understood and taught MD markers, based on both interviews and questionnaire responses. Many teachers especially those interviewed had only a basic understanding of how MD markers work in academic writing and how they help improve argumentation. This lack of understanding was also clear in the questionnaire results, which showed differences in how much teachers knew about the types of MD markers and how to

use them effectively. Teachers with stronger teaching skills, as shown in their responses, were more likely to include MD markers in their lessons. However, other challenges made teaching MD markers difficult. Both the interviewed teachers and those who completed the questionnaires mentioned issues such as not having enough time, strict lesson plans, and textbooks that did not include enough information about MD markers. Additionally, many teachers said they had not received enough training on how to teach MD markers, which made it harder for them to include these skills in their lessons. These findings show that gaps in knowledge, teaching skills, and support from schools created difficulties for teachers, underlining the need for more training and better resources to improve how MD markers are taught in EFL classrooms.

Third Research Question: How do EFL teachers identify and correct students' use of MD markers? The study found that teachers rarely gave feedback specifically on MD markers. Instead, they mostly corrected grammar, spelling, and sentence structure. There was little focus on helping students improve the flow of their writing or use MD markers effectively. This suggests that many teachers lack the knowledge and resources needed to teach MD markers and help students use them correctly. It also highlights the need for better training programmes to support teachers in this area.

### **8.3 Contributions**

This study makes several important contributions to the field of EFL writing instruction, focusing on the role of MD markers in argumentative writing within Saudi Arabian universities. By investigating the practices, understanding, and challenges faced by EFL teachers, this research provides insights that address key gaps both in Saudi Arabia and globally. The findings improve our understanding of how MD markers help students create clear and well-organised writing, offering important lessons for teacher training, curriculum design, and education policy.

To the best of my knowledge, this study is one of the first to explore how EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia teach MD markers, how much they know about these markers, and the challenges they face when teaching them. While most previous research in EFL writing has focused on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, this study highlights the often-overlooked role of MD markers in helping students create smooth, logical arguments that guide the reader. MD markers, such as transitions and connectors, are essential for making essays coherent and engaging. By bringing attention to this area, the study fills a gap in the research and provides a deeper understanding of how writing instruction can be improved to better support students.

One major contribution of this research is its identification of gaps in teachers' CK and PCK about MD markers. Many teachers did not fully understand how MD markers help with argumentation or how to teach them effectively. These gaps were evident in their teaching practices, as most teachers focused on basic writing elements like grammar and sentence structure while paying less attention to skills like organising arguments and guiding the reader through a text. By pointing out these gaps, the study provides valuable evidence for the need to strengthen teachers' understanding of MD markers and their teaching approaches.

The study also highlights several challenges that prevent teachers from focusing on MD markers in their lessons. Time constraints, strict teaching schedules, and limited resources were found to be significant barriers. Many teachers explained that their textbooks did not include enough examples or activities related to MD markers, which made it harder for them to include these in their teaching. Additionally, the lack of professional development opportunities meant that teachers often relied on their own understanding, which was not always enough. These findings show the need for better support for teachers to help them address all aspects of academic writing, including MD markers.

From a teacher training perspective, this study highlights the need for training programmes that specifically address the teaching of MD markers. Current teacher training often focuses on general teaching methods or grammar instruction but does not include enough guidance on teaching skills like MD markers. This research suggests that teacher education should include workshops or training sessions that help teachers learn about MD markers and how to teach them in practical ways. For example, teachers could be trained to use classroom activities that help students practise MD markers, such as writing exercises, peer reviews, or discussions about how to make writing more logical and clearer. Providing such training would better prepare teachers to help their students write essays that are well-organised and convincing.

Another important contribution of this research is its suggestions for improving the EFL curriculum. The study found that many textbooks and materials do not include enough content about MD markers, which leaves students without the tools they need to write clear and logical essays. This study supports revising the curriculum to include specific lessons and activities that focus on MD markers. For example, textbooks could provide model essays with highlighted MD markers to show students how these markers make writing easier to follow. Exercises could then guide students in practising these skills in their own essays. These changes would help students develop the skills they need to improve the flow and organisation of their writing.

The study also provides important insights into the specific challenges faced by EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, such as heavy workloads, large class sizes, and limited access to resources and training. These challenges are not unique to Saudi Arabia but are shared by many EFL teachers in other countries. By identifying these issues, the research offers useful information for policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers who want to improve the quality of EFL writing instruction. Addressing these challenges is also essential

for achieving the broader goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to improve the quality of education and prepare students for success in a global environment.

Although the study focuses on Saudi Arabia, its findings are also relevant to EFL teaching in other countries. Many EFL contexts face similar challenges, such as focusing on grammar and vocabulary while neglecting important skills like coherence and argumentation. The insights from this research can help improve teacher training and curriculum design in other parts of the world, contributing to global efforts to make academic writing instruction more effective. For instance, the recommendations from this study could be adapted to develop training programmes for teachers in similar educational systems.

Finally, this research has made an important contribution to my personal and professional development. Conducting this study has improved my understanding of the challenges of teaching argumentative writing and the key role MD markers play in helping students write better essays. These lessons will improve my teaching practices and help me better support my students in the future. The findings have also inspired me to explore further research on teacher training and writing instruction, allowing me to contribute to ongoing efforts to improve EFL education both in Saudi Arabia and globally.

#### **8.4 Recommendations**

Firstly, the findings of this study show a clear need for training programmes to help EFL teachers improve their knowledge and skills in teaching MD markers. These programmes should include practical and easy-to-understand training where teachers learn how to identify, explain, and check MD markers in student writing. For example, workshops could show teachers how to teach MD markers in the classroom and how to use them to make writing more organised and clear. These programmes should be available to both new and experienced teachers so that all teachers can apply these skills in their lessons.

Secondly, teacher training programmes in Saudi Arabia should include lessons on how to teach MD markers as part of academic writing. These lessons should teach teachers the importance of MD markers, how they are used, and ways to teach them to students. For example, teachers in training could practise by looking at examples of essays that use MD markers and creating simple activities to teach students about them. This would prepare new teachers to help students with basic writing issues, like grammar and spelling, as well as more advanced skills, like organising ideas and building arguments. Including this training would ensure that new teachers are ready to teach writing more effectively.

Thirdly, textbooks and teaching materials should be updated to focus more on MD markers and how they are used. These materials should include clear explanations of MD markers, examples of how they work in writing, and exercises for students to practise. For instance, textbooks could provide activities where students identify MD markers in a paragraph or rewrite sentences using these markers to improve the flow. Teachers could also be given guides to help them teach MD markers and give useful feedback to students. Updating these materials would make it easier for both teachers and students to include MD markers in writing lessons.

Additionally, this study shows that teachers face challenges like limited time and a lack of useful resources. To address these problems, the Ministry of Education (MOE) should ensure that teachers have enough time in their schedules to focus on teaching advanced writing skills, including MD markers. Schools and universities should also provide more tools, such as online resources, example lesson plans, and teacher support groups, to help teachers improve their lessons. These steps would make it easier for teachers to focus on teaching MD markers effectively.

Finally, it is important to raise awareness about the role of MD markers in writing. Schools and universities could organise workshops or training sessions to help teachers and

students understand how MD markers make writing more logical and easy to read. For example, national education events could include sessions about the benefits of using MD markers in writing tasks. New teachers should also receive guidance on how to teach MD markers during their early training. These steps would help teachers and students understand the value of MD markers and encourage their use in classrooms.

In conclusion, these recommendations aim to improve teacher training, update teaching materials, and provide better support for writing lessons. By following these suggestions, schools and education leaders in Saudi Arabia can help teachers improve their lessons and support students in writing clearer, more organised, and more effective essays. These changes would not only help students in Saudi Arabia but could also serve as a model for improving writing education in other countries with similar challenges.

### **8.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

While this study provides valuable insights into the teaching of MD markers in EFL writing classrooms in Saudi Arabia, several limitations need to be acknowledged to ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings. These limitations also highlight areas for future research.

#### **1. Focus on Teachers' Perspectives**

This study primarily focused on teachers' perspectives regarding the teaching and learning of MD markers, relying on interviews and classroom observations as the main data collection methods. Although these methods provided rich qualitative data and detailed insights into teachers' practices, the exclusion of students' perspectives is a notable limitation. Understanding students' experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding MD marker instruction could have offered a more holistic view of the teaching-learning process. For example, students' feedback might have revealed whether instructional strategies align with their learning needs or how they perceive the role of MD markers in improving their writing.

**Future Research:** Future studies should include students' perspectives through surveys, focus groups, or individual interviews. This would allow researchers to triangulate data from both teachers and students, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of MD marker instruction and its impact on student outcomes.

## **2. Time Constraints in Classroom Observations**

The classroom observation component of this study was limited to a specific number of sessions per teacher. This limitation may have affected the ability to capture a full picture of teaching practices, as instructional methods and strategies often vary based on factors such as lesson content, curriculum pacing, the academic calendar, or external pressures like upcoming assessments. A longer observation period might have revealed a wider range of teaching behaviours and allowed for an exploration of how consistent or adaptable teaching strategies are over time.

**Future Research:** Future studies could address this limitation by extending the observation period to include more lessons or tracking teachers' practices over an entire academic term or year. This approach would provide deeper insights into how MD markers are taught in different contexts, such as during exam preparation or project-based learning activities.

## **3. Limited Contextual Scope**

The study was conducted within a specific geographical and cultural context EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabian universities. While this context provided valuable data about the challenges and practices unique to this region, it may not fully represent how MD markers are taught in other educational settings, either within Saudi Arabia (e.g., high schools) or in different countries with varying EFL policies and curricula.

**Future Research:** Comparative studies could explore how MD markers are taught in other regions or educational levels, such as high schools or vocational colleges. Research that



compares teaching practices across different countries or cultural contexts would also be valuable, particularly in identifying common challenges and best practices that can inform global EFL writing pedagogy.

#### **4. Focus on Qualitative Data**

This study relied heavily on qualitative methods, which provided detailed and contextualised insights into teachers' practices and perceptions. However, the relative absence of quantitative data limits the generalisability of the findings. Quantitative approaches, such as surveys or large-scale assessments, could have added breadth to the study by providing statistical evidence to support or contrast the qualitative findings.

**Future Research:** Future research should incorporate mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative data. For example, large-scale surveys could be used to measure the prevalence of certain teaching strategies or the level of teachers' knowledge about MD markers, complementing the depth provided by qualitative data.

#### **5. Lack of Focus on Long-Term Impact**

This study focused on the immediate practices and perceptions of teachers but did not investigate the long-term impact of MD marker instruction on student writing development. For example, it remains unclear whether teaching MD markers leads to sustained improvements in students' writing skills over time or whether additional support is needed for students to apply these skills consistently.

**Future Research:** Longitudinal studies could track the progress of students who receive instruction on MD markers, examining how their writing develops over multiple semesters or years. Such studies could also explore whether improvements in using MD markers translate into better performance in academic or professional writing tasks.

Reflections on My PhD Journey

## **8.6 Reflections on My PhD Journey**

As I near the end of this important chapter in my life, I reflect on the experiences that have shaped me during this journey. Completing this PhD has been a challenging yet rewarding process, teaching me many lessons that will guide me in the future.

On an academic level, this journey helped me develop new skills in research and critical thinking. I learned how to design a study, analyse data, and connect theories with real-world teaching challenges. Studying the issues faced by teachers gave me a better understanding of their needs and the factors that affect their work. This experience has strengthened my ability to think deeply about educational practices and how they can be improved.

On a personal and professional level, I have gained confidence in my ability to support and guide teachers. This research has shown me the importance of helping teachers improve their practices and supporting them in their roles. It has also taught me how to take a thoughtful and flexible approach to problem-solving.

Throughout this journey, I have learned to stay focused and determined, even when things were difficult. Working through each stage of the research process taught me patience and perseverance. These qualities will help me in my future work as I continue to explore ways to improve teaching and learning. Finally, this PhD has inspired me to keep learning and contributing to the field of education. I see this thesis as the beginning of a lifelong journey to help teachers and students by addressing key challenges in education. I hope the insights from this research will lead to positive changes that benefit schools and classrooms.

In summary, while this journey has been demanding, it has also been incredibly fulfilling. I am grateful for the knowledge and skills I have gained and look forward to using them to make a meaningful difference in the future.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A 1

### The Dean information sheet and consent form for the pilot and main study

Institute of Education



#### Information sheet and consent form (phase one)

##### *College Dean Information Sheet*

**Research project:** Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.

**Researcher and Supervisors:** Professor Suzanne Graham; Dr. Kari Sahan (supervisors); Sarah Alrashdi (researcher).

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

I am writing to invite the EFL academic writing teachers at your college to take part in a research study about Teaching EFL academic writing: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs and classroom practices.

#### **What is this study?**

This research forms the basis of a PhD project, which I am undertaking at the Institute of Education, University of Reading in the UK. The study aims to explore EFL academic writing teachers' knowledge and classroom practices.

#### **Why is this college being invited to participate?**

Your college is being invited to take part because it teaches EFL writing at university level.

#### **What will happen if you take part?**

Subject to your agreement, participation in this study will involve classroom observation, teacher interviews and analysis of some writing. Ten EFL writing teachers and their classes will be selected for observation, in order to give insights into a range of classes. Observation of classes will be conducted once for a maximum of 45 minutes for each teacher. These classroom observations will be documented via semi-structured notes and will be audio-recorded in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. The observation would not make any judgement of teachers' teaching or students' performance but would be used to give the researcher insights into how teachers teach academic writing. Students' writing samples will be collected (from approximately 10 students) for each teacher, with students' consent.

Teachers will be asked to participate in an individual face-to-face **interview** (approximately 75-minutes long) at a time convenient for them. In the interview, they will be asked about teaching academic writing and their views on learning and teaching argumentative academic writing. At the end of the interview, they will be asked to **write 250 words** of academic English on a general topic that will be given to them. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for research analysis purposes only and will not be shared with anyone.

#### **Do my teachers and students have to take part?**

The participation is entirely voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and at any stage without any explanation by contacting the researcher on [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk). If any student does not agree to the observation of a lesson, the researcher will sit where they cannot see the student and will not record any information about the student.

#### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

There are no risks associated with taking part in this study. The information provided by the participants will be kept strictly confidential and will only be seen by the researcher. It will not be possible to identify you, the teachers, the students, or the university in any published report resulting from this study, and information about individuals will not be shared with the university. I anticipate that the findings from this study will be useful for helping EFL teachers and students to improve their academic writing knowledge.

#### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research records for this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking participants or the university to the study will be involved in any report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by the pseudonym in all records. The records will be stored securely in password-

protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data including interview audio recordings will be destroyed after the end of the research. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk), or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares, and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at <https://ico.org.uk>

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

#### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

#### **What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

#### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Suzanne Graham, at the University of Reading, Tel.: +44 (0) 118 378 2684, Email: [s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk)

#### **Where can I get more information?**

If you would like more information, please contact me, Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

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I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this study. If you do, please complete the attached Consent Form and return it to me, Sarah Alrashdi, at the above email address.

**Yours faithfully**  
**Sarah Alrashdi**

<b>Name, position and contact address of Researcher</b>	<b>Name, position and contact address of Supervisors</b>
<b>Sarah Alrashdi</b>  <i>Phone:</i> - <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk">s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk</a>	<b>Dr Suzanne Graham</b>  <i>Phone:</i> +44 (0) 118 378 2684 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk">s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk</a>  <b>Dr Kari Sahan</b> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk">k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk</a>

**Research Project: Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Please complete and return this form to: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

*College Dean Consent Form*

Please tick as appropriate:

1. I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it. ☐
2. I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered. ☐
3. I consent to the involvement of my college in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet. ☐
4. I consent to the observation of lessons. ☐
5. I consent to the audio-recording of lessons. ☐
6. I consent to teacher participation in audio-recorded interviews. ☐
7. I consent to the sampling of students' written work. ☐

Name of College Dean: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the college: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A 2

### Approval for the pilot study

المملكة العربية السعودية  
جامعة حائل

الرقم :  
التاريخ : ١٤٤٤/٢/١٧  
المشروعات:  
الموضوع: طلب تسهيل مهمة باحثة سارة  
الرشدي

جامعة حائل  
University of Hail

سعادة عميد كلية الآداب والفنون

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

تهديكم عمادة البحث العلمي بجامعة حائل أطيب التحايا ، نرفق لسعادتكم طلب الباحثة/ سارة الرشدي - طالبة مبتعثة لدراسة الدكتوراه في اللغة والتربية بجامعة ريدينج ، إنجلترا - والتي تأمل فيه تسهيل مهمتها لجمع بعض البيانات حول مشروعها البحثي لمرحلة الدكتوراه بعنوان "تصور أستاذة الجامعات ومعلمي اللغة حول تدريس مهارات الكتابة وحول تجربتهم خلال السنوات الأولى من ممارسة تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية". لذا آمل من سعادتكم التكرم بالنظر في طلب الباحثة/ سارة الرشدي (جوال ٠٥٦٩٨٧٧٢١٤) حسب الإجراءات النظامية المتبعة لديكم.

ولسعادتكم وافر التحية والتقدير ...

عميد البحث العلمي



## Appendix B

### The teachers and students' information sheet and consent form for the pilot study

Institute of Education



#### *Information sheet and consent form (Pilot study phase one)*

##### Teacher Information Sheet

**Research project:** Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.

**Researcher and Supervisors:** Professor Suzanne Graham; Dr. Kari Sahan (supervisors); Sarah Alrashdi (researcher).

I am a PhD student of Education at University of Reading, UK. I am writing to invite you to take part in this pilot study. Before you decide whether to participate in this pilot study, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

##### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of this study is to understand the challenges in learning and teaching EFL academic writing at university level. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help improve learning and teaching of EFL academic writing. The research is part of my PhD study at the University of Reading.

##### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to take part because you are an EFL writing teacher at university level.

##### **What will happen if you take part?**

If you agree to take part in the research, you will be invited to:

- Allow the researcher to undertake one teaching classroom **observation** for a maximum of 45 minutes. This classroom observation will be documented via semi-structured notes and will be audio-recorded in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. The observation would not make any judgment of your teaching but would be used to give the researcher insights into how you teach academic writing.
- Participate in an individual face-to-face **interview** (approximately 75-minutes long) at a time convenient for you. In the interview, you will be asked about teaching academic writing and your views on learning and teaching argumentative academic writing. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to **write 250 words** of academic English on a general topic that will be given to you. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for research analysis purposes only and will not be shared with anyone.
- In addition, complete a **questionnaire** about teaching academic writing, taking approximately 35 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be completed face-to-face with the researcher, who will ask you some questions about its clarity after you have completed it.

##### **Do you have to take part?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and at any stage without any explanation by contacting the researcher at [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk). If any student does not agree to the observation of a lesson, the researcher will sit where they cannot see the student and will not record any information about the student.

##### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The information given by the participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and the supervisors of the researcher. The participants' names will be assigned as a unique (ID) without mentioning their names. Information about participants will not be shared with their employees or with the ministry of higher education in Saudi Arabia. Any records of this study will be kept private. I anticipate that the findings of this study will be useful for EFL teachers and students in teaching and learning EFL academic writing and curriculum development departments.

##### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research records for this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking participants or the university to the study will be involved in any report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by the pseudonym in all records. The records will be stored securely in password-

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protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data including interview audio recordings will be destroyed after the end of the research. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk), or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares, and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at <https://ico.org.uk>

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

#### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

#### **What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

#### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Suzanne Graham, at the University of Reading, Tel.: +44 (0) 118 378 2684, Email: [s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk)

#### **Where can I get more information?**

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If you would like more information, please contact me, Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this study. If you do, please complete the attached Consent Form and return it to me, Sarah Alrashdi, at the above email address.

**Yours faithfully**  
**Sarah Alrashdi**

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	Name, position and contact address of Supervisors
<b>Sarah Alrashdi</b>  <i>Phone:</i> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk">s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk</a>	<b>Dr Suzanne Graham</b>  <i>Phone:</i> +44 (0) 118 378 2684 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk">s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk</a>  <b>Dr Kari Sahan</b> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk">k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk</a>

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**Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Please complete and return this form to: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

***Teacher consent form (Pilot study)***

*Please tick as appropriate*

- 1 I have read the information sheet about the project and received a copy of it. ☐
- 2 I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered. ☐
- 3 I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and that this will be without detriment. ☐
- 4 I understand that I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information provided by me. ☐
- 5 I understand that any information I provide for this research could be used for the purpose of academic publication, academic conferences, or seminar presentations. ☐
- 6 I am aware that the information I give will be treated as confidential. ☐
- 7 I agree to a classroom observation of my teaching ☐
- 8 I agree to the use of audio-recording in that observation ☐
- 9 I agree to take part in an interview. ☐
- 10 I agree to complete the questionnaire and answer questions on it ☐
- 11 I agree to the audio-recording of that interview. ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information sheet and consent form (phase one)

### *Student Information Sheet*

**Research project:** Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.

**Researcher and Supervisors:** Professor Suzanne Graham; Dr. Kari Sahan (supervisors); Sarah Alrashdi (researcher).

I am a PhD student of Education at University of Reading, UK. I am writing to invite you to take part in this study. Before you decide whether to participate in this study, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of this study is to understand the challenges in learning and teaching EFL academic writing at university level. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help improve learning and teaching of EFL academic writing. The research is part of my PhD study at the University of Reading.

#### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to take part because you are studying EFL academic writing at university. Your participation will help the researcher to explore more about students' learning and teaching needs in EFL academic writing.

#### **What will happen if you take part?**

The participation in this study will involve a classroom **observation** for a maximum of 45 minutes. This classroom observation will be documented via semi-structured notes and will be audio-recorded in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. The observations will focus on the teacher. The researcher will also collect one **sample of your English writing** (from approximately 10 students). Neither class observation nor writing samples will make any judgement of your learning or performance.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and at any stage without any explanation by contacting the researcher at [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk). If any student does not agree to the observation of a lesson, the researcher will sit where they cannot see the student and will not record any information about the student.

#### **What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part?**

There are no anticipated disadvantages in taking part in the study. Taking part or not will not influence your college grades in any way, and information will not be shared with individual teachers. You may find it useful to reflect on how you develop your English writing skills, and the study will provide useful information for the teaching of writing in the Saudi context.

#### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research records for this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking participants or the university to the study will be involved in any report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by the pseudonym in all records. The records will be stored securely in password-protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data will be destroyed after the end of the research. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study

Updated November 2021

will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk), or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares, and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at <https://ico.org.uk>

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

#### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

#### **What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

#### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Suzanne Graham, at the University of Reading, Tel.: +44 (0) 118 378 2684, Email: [s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk)

#### **Where can I get more information?**

If you would like more information, please contact me, Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this study. If you do, please complete the attached Consent Form and return it to me, Sarah Alrashdi, at the above email address.

**Yours faithfully**  
**Sarah Alrashdi**

Updated November 2021

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	Name, position and contact address of Supervisors
<p><b>Sarah Alrashdi</b></p> <p><i>Phone:</i></p> <p><i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk">s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Dr Suzanne Graham</b></p> <p><i>Phone:</i> +44 (0) 118 378 2684</p> <p><i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk">s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk</a></p> <p><b>Dr Kari Sahan</b></p> <p><i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk">k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk</a></p>

**Research Project: Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Please complete and return this form to: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

*Student consent form*

*Please tick as appropriate*

1. I have read the information sheet about the project and received a copy of it. ☐
2. I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered. ☐
3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and that this will be without detriment. ☐
4. I understand that I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information provided by me. ☐
5. I understand that any information I provide for this research could be used for the purpose of academic publication, academic conferences, or seminar presentations. ☐
6. I am aware that the information I give will be treated as confidential. ☐
7. I consent for classes I am involved in to be observed. ☐
8. I consent for classes I am involved in to be audio-recorded. ☐
9. I consent to a sample of my English writing being passed on to the researcher. ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C 1

### Classroom observation checklist (Before the pilot study)

Date and time: .....Class: .....: Number of observations: .....

Practices in classroom	Technique used (if any)	Metadiscourse terms used	Number of times term is used	Time spent on practice	Resources	Comments
The teacher gives guided examples of argumentative writing.						
The teacher discusses the writer's voice in argumentative writing.						
The teacher mentions metadiscourse features when teaching argumentative writing.						
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse for organising the text.						
The teacher provides feedback on students' writing.						
The teacher corrects students' errors with respect to argumentative writing.						
The teacher discusses meaning of argumentative writing with students.						
Any other observations.						

Metadiscourse markers category	Metadiscourse terms used	Number of times used	Type of Resource	Technique used (if any)	Time spent on MD category	Comments
Interactive						
Interactional						

## Appendix C 2

### Classroom observation checklist (The amended that used in the pilot and Main study)

Date: ..... time: ..... Class: ..... : Number of observations: ..... Number of students: .....

Practices in classroom	Yes	No	Resources  Or class activity if any	Time	Observation Note and Extracts
The teacher discusses the arguments in academic writing.					
The teacher discusses the writer's voice or opinion in academic writing.					
The teacher encourages students to think about the readers during write their arguments.					
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers for organising the text.					
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers to improve the coherence of the arguments in the academic writing.					
The teacher illustrates how to build arguments through the use metadiscourse markers.					
The teacher corrects students' errors with respect to the use of metadiscourse markers.					



## Appendix D

### (The amended Semi-Structured Interview Guide for the pilot and main study)

In the interview, I will emphasise what teachers mostly focus on when teaching academic writing. I will investigate their perceptions about teaching English academic writing and how it is important for improving students' writing.

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview number: _____	Highest qualification: _____
Date: _____	Teaching experience: _____

Main Question	Probes and prompts
<b>(1) Introduction</b>	
1. Can you describe how you learned English academic writing?	How did your teachers teach academic writing?
2. Can you talk about your experience with learning academic writing?	How did you improve your academic writing?
<b>(2) Teaching academic writing</b>	
1- How would you define academic writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Is academic writing important for students?</li><li>-Is academic writing important for their academic learning prospects?</li><li>-How does academic writing impact students' higher education?</li><li>-Do you think students are able to express their opinion in their academic writing? why or how?</li><li>-Are there any barriers to teaching academic writing? What are they?</li></ul>
<b>(3) About MD markers</b>	
<p>1-How you define arguments in academic writing?</p> <p>2- Can you tell me what you focus on when teaching argumentative writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How would you describe the importance of the arguments in academic writing?</li><li>-What do you focus on when teaching writing arguments in academic writing?</li><li>-What do you think makes a text more organised and coherent?</li><li>-What makes the text more persuasive? how what words you use to write.</li><li>-Can you explain how students build strong arguments with the readers in academic writing?</li></ul>
<b>(4) Students' writing</b>	

<p>1-Can you tell me about how you deal with students' writing mistakes?</p> <p>2- I have here, an example of academic writing, can you answer some questions?</p>	<p>-What is your focus when you give students feedback on their academic writing?</p> <p>-Which paragraph do you think is better and why?</p> <p>-What do think the student needs to improve this paragraph?</p> <p>-Can you explain the importance of using these words in academic writing; however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree?</p> <p>- To what extent it is important to correct the students' mistakes in regard of use conjunctions words in academic writing?</p> <p>- How do you teach these words?</p>
<p><b>(5) Conclusion</b></p>	
<p>1- Is there anything that would help in teaching academic writing? What is it?</p>	<p>-Do you recommend any training course that might help improve teaching EFL academic writing?</p>

## Sample writing for the interview

**Firstly**, online learning is not suitable for every country. It is expensive, and some students **may** not be able to afford it, as it generally costs more than traditional learning and is not available in every home. **Thus**, some students **may** prefer face-to-face learning. **In addition**, online learning **may** not be suitable for certain subjects, **such as** medicine, that require practical experience in a laboratory setting. **Finally**, online learning does not offer the same levels of physical activity and social interaction as the traditional environment, making it more difficult for children to form friendships.

**However**, the online learning schedule is flexible for both students and teachers, and they **can** attend classes from home, eliminating the need for transport. **Alternatively** (incorrect), in traditional learning, students **must** pay for transport, which costs both time and money. **Perhaps** (incorrect), the traditional learning environment provides in-class activities, **such as** group work, peer feedback, and communication skills development. **Some might say** (incorrect) that the classroom helps students build relationships with others, though some **may** argue that these activities are not essential for students' learning.

**To sum up**, online learning **can** help school-aged students become more independent learners before they progress to college.

## Appendix E

### Students' writing samples pilot study

#### Students 1

Shahad is my friend and she is a student in my class. Shahd is studying Medical Lab at Taif University and her favorite subjects are Mathematics and English. Shahad is a busy student who wakes up at 5 am every day of the week except for Sunday and studies every evening and has evening lectures Shahd has two classes every morning. She has university skills from 8 am to 9 am, and English from 9:15 am to 11 am In the evening, Shahd studies in her office and in her spare time she continues watching her favorite series or spends her time with her family and friends. Shahd loves designing video clips and I think she is really skilled at it. For example I saw her design for National Day and I liked it Shahd says: My university life is busy, I don't know because I am going through it for the first time or because of the crowded study times and a lot of duties and projects, but I try to arrange my time so as not to neglect my studies, my family and my friends

#### Students 2

Taif is a great city to visit. Among the most prominent climatic characteristics in the Taif Governorate are the moderation of its weather, which shifts between moderation and cold throughout the year, and light rain showers, especially during the summer period. The temperature in it is between 20 to 25 degrees most of the year, and in the winter the temperature drops, especially in the highlands, which are characterized by their rainy seasons and cold showers that turn the place into a spotless plate, shrouded in fog blocks that hug the tops of the tall mountains in a wonderful view.

#### Students 3

Firstly ,The weather is in my city. There are two seasons, winter and summer. In the dry season, the average temperatures range between +26°C and +28°C. In Summer, it is hot from June to August. In winter, it is very cold and it rains. In winter, people like to go outside to camp, barbecue, or drink coffee in the cold weather

#### Students 4

Farasan Islands are islands located in the south of the Red Sea belonging to the Jazan region in the southwest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It consists of several islands, the most important of which are Farasan, Al-Saqeed, Qamah, Damsk, Wedding, Doshak, Kira and Sloba Island. The population of Farasan is estimated at 17,999 according to the 2010 census. Farasan Island is distinguished by its many marine attractions and ancient monuments. It is considered a first-class tourist destination and is not inhabited by many local residents except for tourists who come for the purpose of hiking and luxury

#### Students 5

Abrar is a student in my class and she has a busy schedule. Abrar studies medical laboratories at University and teaches two courses in computer and English. 2\_ Abrar is a busy student who often gets up at 5 am every day of the week and studies every morning. She has a lot of lectures every week 3\_ Abrar has English language lectures every morning from Monday to Wednesday starting at 11:00 AM and ending at 3:00 PM 4\_ She has two remote lectures on Sunday. The English language lecture starts from 2 pm until 4 pm and also a lecture in medical biology from 5 pm until 9 pm. 5\_ On Friday and Saturday she goes for a vacation with her family

#### Students 6

Saudi Arabia 1- Saudi Arabia is an Arab country. It is the largest country in the Middle East by area. It is located specifically in the southwest of the continent of Asia and forms the largest part of the Arabian Peninsula, with an area of about two million kilometers. Then 2- Population is 34.81 million. Next 3- The capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is Riyadh 4- Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of crude oil in the world. 5- It is the largest country in the Middle East in terms of area and the 13th in the world. 6- The camel market in Riyadh is one of the largest markets in the world. 7- The percentage of Muslims in Saudi Arabia is the highest in the world .

## Appendix F

### Questionnaire ( The initial Before the Pilot study)

#### I. Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

Male ☐

Female ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

2. What is your highest qualification in English? Please tick one option.

Bachelor ☐

Masters ☐

PhD ☐

3. How long have you been teaching English?

Less than one year ☐

1–3 years ☐

4–6 years ☐

7–10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

4. How often do you use the English language in your writing?

Daily ☐

Weekly ☐

Once a month ☐

Rarely ☐

5. When do you mostly use English writing? You can tick more than one item.

Writing research articles ☐

Daily teaching ☐

Assessing papers ☐

Emails and letters ☐

Other (please state): \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. Questionnaire

Academic writing is distinctive, especially when it involves argumentation. Organising the words, presenting arguments, and analysing written text entails specific knowledge. This study involves analysing EFL teachers' knowledge and practices in relation to academic writing. The following sections ask you questions about argumentative writing and how you might use it. Some questions ask you to write some sentences in English or to use your knowledge about English. Please answer these as honestly as you can – your answers will not be judged in any way and will be analysed purely to help us get a picture of how academic writing is taught in Saudi Arabia.

### Part A

1. Can you explain what argumentative academic writing is? Please write your answer here:

.....  
.....

2. Can you explain, in a few steps, how you teach argumentative writing to EFL students? Please write your answer here

.....  
.....

3. Please use the following words to write meaningful sentences:  
For example:

**Likewise:** Math was hard for me in high school. Likewise, it is hard in college.

Such as: \_\_\_\_\_

Finally: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree: \_\_\_\_\_

In brief: \_\_\_\_\_

Unfortunately: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please give examples of conjunction words that are used to join sentences in English.

.....

## Part B

We would now like to find out a little more about your views on teaching and learning English academic writing. Again, please answer as honestly as you can – there are no right or wrong answers.

Please read the statements below and for each one circle one number to show how far you agree with it.

The statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EFL students need to learn how to write argumentative writing.					
2. EFL students need to learn how to organise a written text.					
3. EFL students need to learn the words and phrases that are used to make arguments in a written text.					
4. EFL students need to learn how create coherence in their academic writing.					
5. EFL students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.					
6. EFL students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.					
7. EFL students' common errors in academic writing are spelling and grammar only.					
8. EFL students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.					
9. EFL students' arguments in their academic writing are weak.					
10. EFL students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.					
11. EFL students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.					
12. EFL students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.					
13. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing as it is important for students' university studies.					
14. Lessons on English academic writing should be focused only on grammar and spelling.					
15. English academic writing should express accurately the writer's perspective.					
16. English academic writing should involve thinking about readers at the time of writing.					
17. English academic writing should involve the use of markers such as <i>I</i> , <i>me</i> , or <i>mine</i> for making explicit references to the author.					
18. English academic writers should make explicit references to or build relationships with the readers					
19. The writer's voice should be reflected in English academic writing.					
20. English academic writers should refer to information in other parts of the text or cross-refer tables and figures.					
21. English academic writers should refer to source information from other parts of the texts					
22. English academic writers should help readers understand various ideas, which are presented in the text.					
23. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus on how students argue with the reader in their writing.					
24. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills beyond spelling or grammar.					

## Appendix F 1

Questionnaire (The amended one before Cronbach's Alpha test) using for pilot study.

### I. Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

Male ☐

Female ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

2. What is your highest qualification in English? Please tick one option.

Bachelor's Degree ☐

Master's Degree ☐

PhD's Degree ☐

3. How long have you been teaching English?

Less than one year ☐

1–3 years ☐

4–6 years ☐

7–10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

4. How often do you use the English language in your writing?

Daily ☐

Weekly ☐

Once a month ☐

Rarely ☐

5. When do you mostly use English writing? You can tick more than one item.

Writing research articles ☐

Daily teaching ☐

Assessing papers ☐

Emails and letters ☐

Other (please state): \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. Questionnaire

Academic writing is distinctive, especially when it involves argumentation. Organising the words, presenting arguments, and analysing written text entails specific knowledge. This study explores knowledge and practices about academic writing among teachers of university EFL students.

The following sections ask you questions about academic writing. Please answer these as honestly as you can – your answers will not be judged in any way and will be analysed purely to help us get a picture of how EFL academic writing is taught at university in Saudi Arabia. Please select ‘I do not know’ if you cannot answer any question, rather than guessing.

### Part A

1. Which of the following are elements of argument in academic writing?

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Presenting other opinions (correct).
- b. Presenting the definition and explanation of the topic.
- c. Evaluating different points of view (correct).
- d. Being against other opinions.
- e. I do not know.

2. To build an argument in academic writing students need to focus on the use of:

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Correct grammar and spelling.
- b. A wide range of vocabulary relative to the topic.
- c. Evidence and claims concerning the topic (correct).
- d. A hook sentence that makes the text interesting.
- e. I do not know.

3. Effective ways a writer can interact with the readers in the written text are through:

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Argumentative sentences that discuss the idea (correct).
- b. Involving the reader through the pronoun “you” (correct).
- c. Providing a list of reading appendices for the readers.
- d. Using conjunctions words that organize the text (correct).
- e. I do not know.

4. Which of the following are essential for argumentative writing?

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Using emotional expression to present the arguments.
- b. The coherence of the written text (correct).
- c. Using references and citations in the written text.
- d. Using conjunctions that link the sentences in a persuasive way (correct).
- e. I do not know.



5. Please write as many examples as you know of conjunction words that are used to join sentences in English writing.

.....  
.....

6. Using these words (*but, however*) in the written text helps to:

(Please select one answer)

- a. To compare ideas (correct).
- b. To provide examples.
- c. To organise ideas.
- d. I do not know.

7. Using these words (*first, to conclude, note above, finally*) in the written text helps to:

(Please select one answer)

- a. Compare the ideas.
- b. Support the ideas.
- c. Organize the ideas (correct).
- d. I do not know.

8. Which of the following are used to present the writer's attitude and position toward a topic?  
(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Alternatively.
- b. In other words.
- c. Unfortunately (correct).
- d. Moreover.
- e. I agree (correct).
- f. I do not know.

9. Which of the following words can be used to give certainty to the writer's message?

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. For example.
- b. Definitely (correct).
- c. Nonetheless.
- d. In fact (correct).
- e. Moreover.
- F. None of the above.
- g. I do not know.

10. The word “*namely*” is used in academic writing to introduce detailed information or to redefine a term. Which of the following words\ phrases can be used too for that purpose? (Please select all choices that apply)

- a. For example (correct).
- b. In other words (correct).
- c. Nonetheless.
- d. Such as (correct).
- e. Kinds of.
- f. I do not know.

11. What are the functions of “basically” in this sentence?

He had a bad headache, sore throat, and he had lost his sense of smell. Basically, he is very tired.  
(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Obvious information.
- b. Summary of ideas (correct).
- c. Considering all the points.
- d. Going back to something previously mentioned.
- e. The most important point (correct).
- f. I do not know.

12. Is the following statement correct or incorrect?

In academic writing the writers use the verbs “argue” and “suggest” to express their uncertainty about a claim.

- a. Correct (correct).
- b. Incorrect.
- c. I do not know.

## Part B

We would now like to find out a little more about your views on teaching and learning English academic writing for Students of English language department who are in their third or fourth year of study. Again, please answer as honestly as you can – there are no right or wrong answers.

Please read the statements below and for each one circle one number to show how far you agree with it.

The statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
1. My students need to learn how to build arguments in their academic writing.					
2. My students need to learn how to organise a written text.					
3. My students need to learn the words and phrases that are used to make arguments in a written text.					
4. My students need to learn how create coherence in their academic writing.					
5. My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.					
6. My students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.					
7. My students' common errors in academic writing are spelling and grammar only.					
8. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.					
9. My students' arguments in their academic writing are weak.					
10. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.					
11. My students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.					
12. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.					
13. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing as it is important for students' university studies.					
14. Lessons on English academic writing should be focused only on grammar and spelling.					
15. English academic writing should express accurately the writer's perspective.					
16. Academic writing teachers should encourage their EFL students to think about the readers at the time of writing.					
17. I belief in academic writing writers can use I, or me for making explicit references to the author.					
18. I belief in academic writing the writer should think about the readers.					
19. The writer's voice should be reflected in academic writing.					
20. In academic writing the writer should use words or phrases that refer to information in other parts of the text or cross-refer tables and figures.					
21. In academic writing the writer should refer to source information from other parts of the texts.					
22. Arguments in academic writing should help readers understand various ideas, which are presented in the text.					
23. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus on how students argue with the reader in their writing.					
24. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills beyond spelling or grammar.					

## Appendix F 2

**Questionnaire (The amended one After Cronbach's Alpha test) and for the main study**

### **I. Demographic Information**

1. What is your gender?

Male ☐

Female ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

2. What is your highest qualification in English? Please tick one option.

Bachelor's Degree ☐

Master's Degree ☐

PhD's Degree ☐

3. How long have you been teaching English?

Less than one year ☐

1–3 years ☐

4–6 years ☐

7–10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

4. How often do you use the English language in your writing?

Daily ☐

Weekly ☐

Once a month ☐

Rarely ☐

5. When do you mostly use English writing? You can tick more than one item.

Writing research articles ☐

Daily teaching ☐

Assessing papers ☐

Emails and letters ☐

Other (please state): \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. Questionnaire

Academic writing is distinctive, especially when it involves argumentation. Organising the words, presenting arguments, and analysing written text entails specific knowledge. This study explores knowledge and practices about academic writing among teachers of university EFL students.

The following sections ask you questions about academic writing. Please answer these as honestly as your answers will not be judged in any way and will be analysed purely to help us get a picture of how EFL academic writing is taught at university in Saudi Arabia. Please select 'I do not know' if you cannot answer any question, rather than guessing.

### Part A

1. Which of the following are elements of argument in academic writing?

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Presenting other opinions (correct).
- b. Presenting the definition and explanation of the topic.
- c. Evaluating different points of view (correct).
- d. I do not know.

2. Effective ways a writer can interact with the readers in the written text are through:

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Argumentative sentences that discuss the idea (correct).
- b. Providing a list of reading appendices for the readers.
- c. Using conjunctions words that organize the text (correct).
- d. I do not know.

3. Which of the following are essential for argumentative writing?

(Please select all choices that apply)

- b. The coherence of the written text (correct).
- c. Using references and citations in the written text.
- d. Using conjunctions that link the sentences in a persuasive way (correct).
- e. I do not know.

4. Please write as many examples as you know of conjunction words that are used to join sentences in English writing.

.....

5. Using these words (*first, to conclude, note above, finally*) in the written text helps to:  
(Please select one answer)

- a. Compare the ideas.
- b. Support the ideas.
- c. Organize the ideas (correct).
- d. I do not know.

6. Which of the following are used to present the writer's attitude and position toward a topic? (Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Alternatively.
- b. In other words.
- c. Unfortunately (correct).
- d. Moreover.
- f. I do not know.

7. Which of the following words can be used to give certainty to the writer's message?  
(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. For example.
- b. Definitely (correct).
- c. Nonetheless.
- d. In fact (correct).
- e. Moreover.
- F. None of the above.
- g. I do not know.

8. The word "*namely*" is used in academic writing to introduce detailed information or to redefine a term. Which of the following words\ phrases can be used too for that purpose?  
(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. For example (correct).
- b. In other words (correct).
- c. Nonetheless.
- d. Such as (correct).
- e. Kinds of.
- f. I do not know.

9. What are the functions of "basically" in this sentence?

He had a bad headache, sore throat, and he had lost his sense of smell. Basically, he is very tired.

(Please select all choices that apply)

- a. Obvious information.
- b. Summary of ideas (correct).
- c. Considering all the points.
- d. Going back to something previously mentioned.
- e. The most important point (correct).
- f. I do not know.

10. Is the following statement correct or incorrect?

In academic writing the writers use the verbs “argue” and “suggest” to express their uncertainty about a claim.

- a. Correct (correct).
- b. Incorrect.
- c. I do not know.

## Part B

We would now like to find out a little more about your views on teaching and learning English academic writing for Students of English language department who are in their third or fourth year of study. Again, please answer as honestly as you can – there are no right or wrong answers.

Please read the statements below and for each one circle one number to show how far you agree with it.

The statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
1. My students need to learn how to build arguments in their academic writing.					
2. My students need to learn how to organise a written text.					
3. My students need to learn the words and phrases that are used to make arguments in a written text.					
4. My students need to learn how create coherence in their academic writing.					
5. My students can make argumentative statements in their academic writing.					
6. My students can use words that help to organise their academic writing.					
7. My students focus on grammar and sentence structure more than on the meaning and coherence of the written text.					
8. My students' arguments in their academic writing are weak.					
9. My students can express their attitude towards a topic in their academic writing.					
10. My students can use different words to join the meaning of sentences.					
11. My students can use expressions that explicitly refer to themselves in their writing.					
12. EFL teachers should focus on teaching academic writing as it is important for students' university studies.					
13. English academic writing should express accurately the writer's perspective.					
14. Academic writing teachers should encourage their EFL students to think about the readers at the time of writing.					
15. I believe that in academic writing, writers can use 'I' or 'me' for making explicit references to the author.					
16. I believe that in academic writing, the writer should think about the readers.					
17. The writer's voice should be reflected in academic writing.					
18. In academic writing the writer should use words or phrases that refer to information in other parts of the text or cross-refer tables and figures.					
19. In academic writing the writer should refer to source information from other parts of the texts.					
20. Arguments in academic writing should help readers understand various ideas, which are presented in the text.					
21. EFL teachers of academic English writing should focus on how students argue with the reader in their writing.					
22. EFL teachers should focus on improving writing skills beyond spelling or grammar.					



## Appendix G

### Online questionnaire consent form for the pilot and the main study

Institute of Education



#### ***QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMATION AND CONSENT (Phase Two)***

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project titled *Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices*. The project is funded by Saudi Ministry of Education and is led by Sarah Alrashdi, a PhD student, under the supervision of Professor Suzanne Graham and Dr. Kari Sahan at the Institute of Education, University of Reading.

The aim of this study is to understand the challenges in learning and teaching EFL academic writing at the university level. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help improve learning and teaching of EFL academic writing.

This questionnaire is being used to gather information from EFL teachers about their perspectives regarding argumentative academic writing teaching and EFL students' learning needs.

As you are an EFL writing teacher, I would like to invite you to take part in this research project. It is entirely up to you whether you take part and there will be no repercussions if you choose not to, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. However, if you do so after completing the questionnaire, we will not be able to discard your data as responses will be anonymous.

This online questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is being conducted via a secure questionnaire platform and any data collected will be held securely and in strict confidence for the purposes of the research questionnaire only. Participants will be assigned a unique number whilst the study is undertaken, and no participant names will be required. The data gathered will be confidential and your response will be used for research and analysis purposes only. It may also be presented at national and international conferences and published in written articles. The results of the study will not be presented in a way that will identify you.

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request. By completing this survey, you are consenting to your participation in this research study.

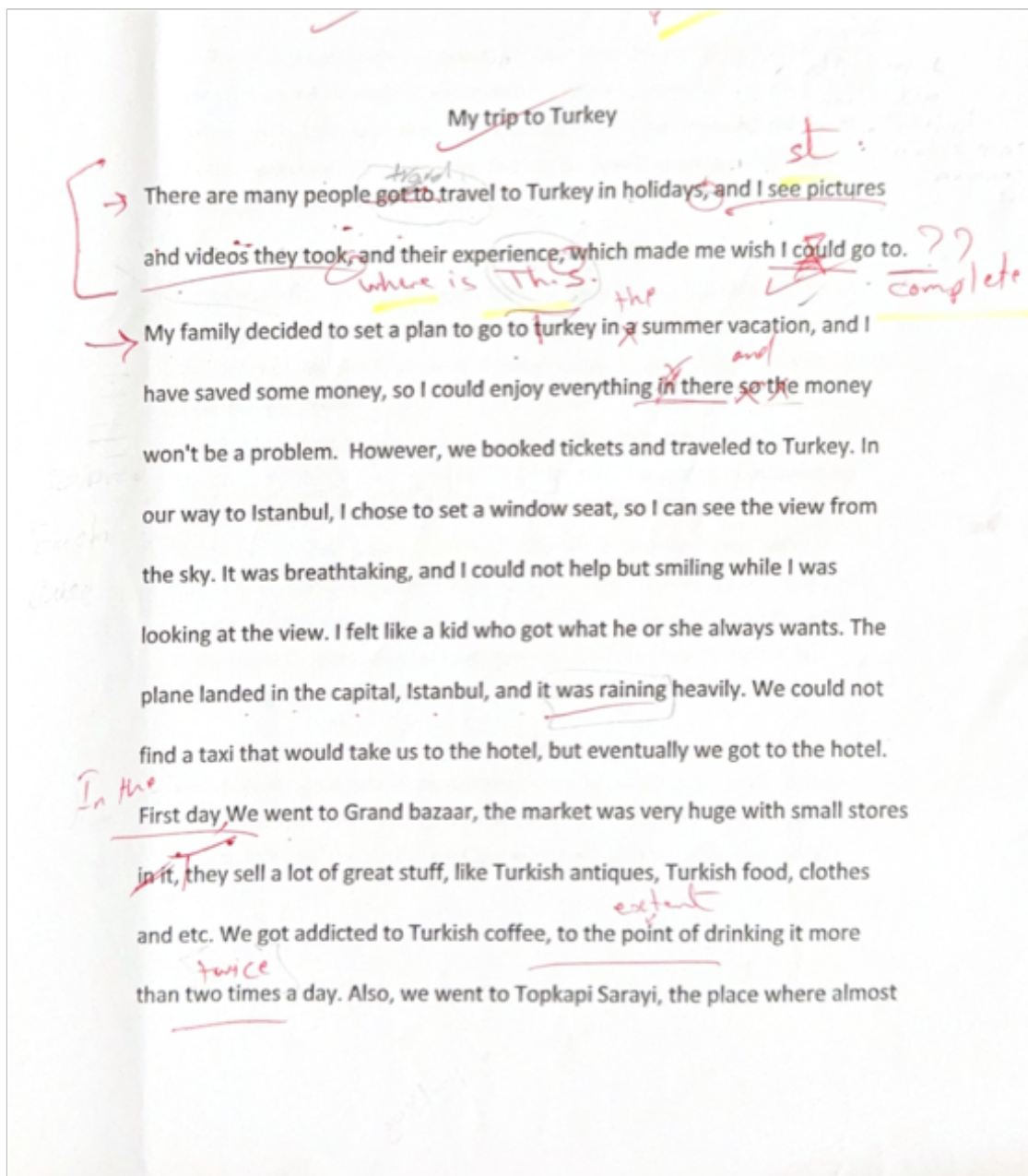
If you would like more information, please contact me, i.e. Sarah Alrashdi, by E-mail on [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

If you have any queries regarding protection of your personal data, please contact [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk).

After reading the above information, if you are happy to complete the questionnaire, please click on this link:.....

## Appendix H

Three examples of students' writing sample from the main study data



## Movies

The main concept of movies is to convey a message about life and world issues.

Everyone can find something interesting to watch. There are many types of movies, such as crime, fantasy, and comedy movies.

Watching a movie either at a movie theatre or on your couch does not matter.

Which type do you want to watch? looking for a way to escape reality. Unrealistic settings and wide imagination are mostly found in fantasy movies. Furthermore, crime movies are about police men's chasing a criminal or a detective searching for a piece of evidence. Finally, comedy films are full of a sense of humour, which makes them the best choice for family gathering nights. "Comedies are light-hearted dramas" like they always say.

To sum up, the movies industry is about storytelling. They can reflect many life situations in deep meaning. Pick the one that suits you and enjoy your time.

### Proposal from Value City Furniture

We are a global furniture company. We have many business branches in different countries around the world. It was opened in 1990 as a partnership with two different companies. In 1998, recognizing the expanding requests, we created a separate business dedicated to furniture sales. To make the furnishing process easy and satisfying, we advise you to deal with us.

We are distinguished from other companies with a particular feature. The feature is the presence of specialized designers. If the customer has a specific idea of a design in his mind, we will design it for him. The designers themselves will communicate with the customers directly to take all the details regarding the wanted design, which will make the deal between the customer and the company clear and comfortable. Before discussing the design, we are going to figure out the kind of service that fit your budgets. After that, we will make the appropriate plan. The process of designing will start immediately after receiving the order from the customer. The customer's order will go through three stages: first, it will be manufactured in our factory with the designers themselves monitoring the process. After that, the furniture will be shipped in a way that will keep it safe from any damages. The customer can track the progress of the delivery online. When the furniture arrive, we will be responsible for the installation progress. The whole process will take approximately 3 months.

Our company focuses on producing products of high quality, while taking the customer's economic state in consideration. That way, there will not be any barriers to stop the customer from creating his dream piece. We are really enthusiastic about working with you. You can call our Customer Care Center if you need any further details.



## Appendix I

### The ethical approval

Institute of Education



#### Ethical Approval Form A (version November 2021)

Please tick one:

Staff: ☐

PhD: ☒

EdD: ☐

Name of applicant(s): Sarah Alrashdi

Title of project: **Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Name of supervisor (s) (for student projects): Dr. Suzanne Graham and Dr. Kari Sahan

**Please complete the form below.**

Have you prepared an information sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that	YES	NO	N.A.
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	X		
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	X		
c) gives a full, fair, and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	X		
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	X		
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	X		
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention, and disposal	X		
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	X		
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	X		
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email. If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included, and their name provided	X		
j) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants			X
k) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: "This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct."	X		
l) includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request."	X		
<b>Please answer the following questions:</b>	YES	NO	N.A.
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on Blackboard to ensure this).	X		
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to 1)?	X		
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		X	
4) Staff Only – Have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx">http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx</a> )			
<b>For all student projects, please tick N.A. and complete the Data Protection Declaration form (which is included in this document) and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.</b>			
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form (included below with this ethics application)?	X		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	X		

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7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?			X
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			X
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?			X
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data <sup>1</sup> , or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	X		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			X
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?	X		
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?	X		
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?	X		
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.	X		
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		X	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of school (or authorised head of department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			X
<b>If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below</b>			

- Complete either **Section A** or **Section B** below with details of your research project.
  - Complete a **Risk Assessment**.
  - Sign the form in **Section C**.
  - For all student projects, complete a **Data Protection Declaration form**.
  - Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, and ALL all research instruments which may include tests, questionnaires, and interview schedules, ; and for staff, : append evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g., screen shot/copy of certificate).
  - Email the completed form, as a **single** document, to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.
- Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

<b>Section A:</b> My research goes beyond the "accepted custom and practice of teaching" but I consider that this project has <b>no</b> significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Error!</b> <b>Bookmark not defined.</b>
Please state the total number of participants who will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils, etc. <b>For the pilot study</b> Up to 2 EFL university academic writing teachers for interview and observation schedule, and up to 15 EFL university academic writing teachers for the questionnaire. <b>For the main study</b> Up to 150 EFL university academic writing teachers will be involved in the online questionnaire. Up to 10 EFL university academic writing teachers and their students (approximately 300) for the other aspects of the study. Of these students, approximately 100 (10 per teacher) will provide writing samples. In up to 500 words, provide a succinct description of the aims and methods (participants, instruments, and procedures) of the project, noting the following: 1. Title of project: <b>Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.</b> 2. Purpose of project and academic rationale: <b>The purpose of this study is to explore Saudi EFL academic writing teachers' knowledge about the use of metadiscourse and their practices and perceptions with regards to teaching argumentative academic writing.</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.  
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<p>3. Brief description of methods and measurements: <b>The researcher will adopt a mixed-method approach. The data will be collected in two phases.</b></p> <p><b>Phase one:</b> The researcher will choose up to 10 EFL university academic writing teachers and their students (approximately 300). Of these students, approximately 100 (10 per teacher) will provide writing samples. The EFL writing teachers will be involved in one classroom observation each (maximum 45 minutes) and one interview. They will also pass on to the researcher writing samples from 10 of their students. The interview will be approximately 75 minutes long (45 minutes interview and 30 minutes for essay writing) and face-to-face at a time convenient for teachers. It will ask teachers about teaching academic writing and their views on learning and teaching argumentative academic writing. The teachers will also be asked to write 250 words in English at the end of the interview.</p> <p><b>Phase two:</b> This will involve an online questionnaire in Microsoft Forms. The researcher will send the study information sheet and consent form to different deans of English colleges associated with various universities in Saudi Arabia. The deans will send the questionnaire link to the EFL writing teachers at the university. The questionnaire items pertain to teacher knowledge, beliefs, and practices with regards to EFL academic writing.</p> <p>4. Participants: Recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria</p> <p><b>Phase one:</b> The convenience sample of participants will be all-female EFL teachers who teach academic writing at university level, and also include their students. The researcher will send the study information sheet and consent form to different deans of English colleges associated with various women's universities in Saudi Arabia. The researcher will make it clear that participation is completely voluntary. The class observation would be for around 45 minutes without any judgement of the teachers or students and the interview will take approximately 75 minutes of their time. It will be conducted at a place and time specified by the participants at their convenience. Both EFL teachers and students will be provided with the study information sheet and the consent form.</p> <p><b>Phase two:</b> The participants will be female or male EFL teachers who teach academic writing at university level, and they will be invited to respond to the online questionnaire via email. The researcher will send the study information sheet and consent form to different deans of English colleges associated with various universities in Saudi Arabia. The deans will send the questionnaire link to the EFL writing teachers at the university.</p> <p>For the pilot study, convenience sampling will be used. Universities known to the researcher will be contacted to recruit up to 2 EFL university academic writing teachers to pilot the interview and observation schedule, and up to 15 EFL university academic writing teachers for the questionnaire.</p> <p>5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms wherever necessary)</p> <p><b>Participants will be given an information sheet providing them full details of what kind of participation will be required, and asked to provide informed consent (see Information Sheet and Consent Form).</b></p> <p>6. A clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them.</p> <p><b>The ethical considerations raised by this project are about keeping the confidentiality and anonymity of data. The researcher will inform the participants about the data security measures taken and explain to them their rights of confidentiality and unconditional withdrawal at any stage of the study. They will also be reassured that no information about them will be shared with their employing University (in the case of teachers); students whose classes will be observed and whose work will be sampled will be assured that no judgements will be made about the involvement in the study and their grades will not be affected.</b></p> <p>7. Estimated start date and duration of project:</p> <p><b>The estimated start date of the pilot study will be August 2022, after receiving ethical approval and gaining confirmation of registration. The main study and the start date for data collection will be November 2022. The data collection is anticipated to take approximately 8 weeks, but it might be longer in case something unpredictable happens.</b></p>	
<p><b>Section B:</b> I believe this project <b>may</b> have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please state the total number of participants who will be involved in the project and provide a breakdown of how many there are in each category, e.g. teachers, parents, pupils, etc.</p>	
<p>In up to 500 words, provide a succinct description of the aims and methods (participants, instruments, and procedures) of the project.</p> <p>1. Title of project</p> <p>2. Purpose of project and academic rationale</p>	

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3. Brief description of methods and measurements
4. Participants: Recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria
5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms wherever necessary)
6. A clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them
7. Estimated start date and duration of project

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

Brief outline of Work/activity:	In this mixed method study the researcher will collect the data within two phases. Phase one will include classroom observation, writing samples, and interviews for up to 10 EFL academic writing teachers. The second phase the data will be collected through the online questionnaire.	
Where will data be collected?	Phase one: the universities located in Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia, who accept to be involved in the study. Phase two: different universities in Saudi Arabia.	
Significant hazards:	None identified. The classroom observation will be held during normal teaching time without any interruption. The interviews will take a suitable place for the task according to what the teacher is comfortable with. Audio recording devices will be loaned from the university and have the necessary safety checks. If there is any Covid outbreak the researcher will use online, interview, online observation and will collect the writing samples through emails.	
Who might be exposed to hazards?	N/A	
Existing control measures:	The universities' rooms and premises fall within the Health & Safety committee responsibilities of universities.	
Are risks adequately controlled:	yes	
If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:

**Section C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT**

**Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.**

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: Sarah Alrashdi Date: 13/06/2022

**STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE**

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: Anthony Zhang Date: 13/06/2022

(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative) \*

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\* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

## Information Management and Policy Services

### Data Protection Declaration for Ethical Approval (PhD/EdD projects)

This document can be used to provide assurances to your ethics committee where confirmation of data protection training and awareness is required for ethical approval.

**By signing this declaration, I confirm that:**

- I have read and understood the requirements for data protection within the *Data Protection for Researchers* document located here:  
  
<https://www.reading.ac.uk/imps/-/media/49b402bbe9a74ae59dd8f4f080652123.ashx>
- I have asked for advice on any elements that I am *unclear on* prior to submitting my ethics approval request, either from my supervisor, or the data protection team at: [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk)
- I understand that I am responsible for the secure handling, and protection of, my research data.
- I know who to contact in the event of an information security incident, a data protection complaint or a request made under data subject access rights.

### Researcher to complete

Project / Study Title:

NAME	STUDENT ID NUMBER	DATE
Sarah Alrashdi		13/06/2022

### Supervisor signature

Note for supervisors: Please verify that your student has completed the above actions

NAME	STAFF ID NUMBER	DATE
Suzanne Graham		13/06/2022

Submit your completed signed copy along with the other documents pertaining to the ethics application.

Copies to be retained by ethics committee.

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	IMPS	Annually	IMPS	

## Appendix J

The teachers and students' information sheet and consent form (phase one, main study)

### Teacher Information Sheet

**Research project:** Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.

**Researcher and Supervisors:** Professor Suzanne Graham; Dr. Kari Sahan (supervisors); Sarah Alrashdi (researcher).

I am a PhD student of Education at University of Reading, UK. I am writing to invite you to take part in this study. Before you decide whether to participate in this study, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of this study is to understand the challenges in learning and teaching EFL academic writing at university level. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help improve learning and teaching of EFL academic writing. The research is part of my PhD study at the University of Reading.

#### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to take part because you are an EFL writing teacher at university level.

#### **What will happen if you take part?**

If you agree to take part in the research, you will be invited to:

- Allow the researcher to undertake one teaching classroom **observation** for a maximum of 45 minutes. This classroom observation will be documented via semi-structured notes and will be audio-recorded in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. The observation would not make any judgment of your teaching but would be used to give the researcher insights into how you teach academic writing.

After the observation, you will be asked to give the researcher a **sample of students' writing** with their consent (from approximately 10 students). The researcher will liaise with you regarding the most convenient format for you to pass on these samples.

- Participate in an individual face-to-face **interview** (approximately 75-minutes long) at a time convenient for you. In the interview, you will be asked about teaching academic writing and your views on learning and teaching argumentative academic writing. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to **write 250 words** of academic English on a general topic that will be given to you. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for research analysis purposes only and will not be shared with anyone.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and at any stage without any explanation by contacting the researcher at [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk). If any student does not agree to the observation of a lesson, the researcher will sit where they cannot see the student and will not record any information about the student.

#### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The information given by the participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and the supervisors of the researcher. The participants' names will be assigned as a unique (ID) without mentioning their names. Information about participants will not be shared with their employees or with the ministry of higher education in Saudi Arabia. Any records of this study

will be kept private. I anticipate that the findings of this study will be useful for EFL teachers and students in teaching and learning EFL academic writing and curriculum development departments.

### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research records for this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking participants or the university to the study will be involved in any report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by the pseudonym in all records. The records will be stored securely in password-protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data including interview audio recordings will be destroyed after the end of the research. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk), or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares, and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at <https://ico.org.uk>

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Suzanne Graham, at the University of Reading, Tel.: +44 (0) 118 378 2684, Email: [s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk)

**Where can I get more information?**

If you would like more information, please contact me, Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this study. If you do, please complete the attached Consent Form and return it to me, Sarah Alrashdi, at the above email address.

**Yours faithfully**  
**Sarah Alrashdi**

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	Name, position and contact address of Supervisors
<b>Sarah Alrashdi</b>  <i>Phone:</i> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk">s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk</a>	<b>Dr Suzanne Graham</b>  <i>Phone:</i> +44 (0) 118 378 2684 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk">s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk</a>  <b>Dr Kari Sahan</b> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk">k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk</a>

**Research Project: Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Please complete and return this form to: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

***Teacher consent form***

*Please tick as appropriate*

- 1 I. have read the information sheet about the project and received a copy of it. ☐
- 2.I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.☐
- 3.I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and that this will be without detriment.☐
4. I understand that I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information provided by me. ☐
5. I understand that any information I provide for this research could be used for the purpose of academic publication, academic conferences, or seminar presentations. ☐
6. I am aware that the information I give will be treated as confidential. ☐
7. I agree to a classroom observation of my teaching ☐
8. I agree to the use of audio-recording in that observation ☐
9. I agree to take part in an interview. ☐
10. I agree to the audio-recording of that interview. ☐
11. I agree to supply copies of my students' written work, with their consent. ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Information sheet and consent form (phase one)**  
***Student Information Sheet***

**Research project:** Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.

**Researcher and Supervisors:** Professor Suzanne Graham; Dr. Kari Sahan (supervisors); Sarah Alrashdi (researcher).

I am a PhD student of Education at University of Reading, UK. I am writing to invite you to take part in this study. Before you decide whether to participate in this study, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of this study is to understand the challenges in learning and teaching EFL academic writing at university level. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help improve learning and teaching of EFL academic writing. The research is part of my PhD study at the University of Reading.

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to take part because you are studying EFL academic writing at university. Your participation will help the researcher to explore more about students' learning and teaching needs in EFL academic writing.

**What will happen if you take part?**

The participation in this study will involve a classroom **observation** for a maximum of 45 minutes. This classroom observation will be documented via semi-structured notes and will be audio-recorded in conjunction with a non-participatory approach. The observations will focus on the teacher. The researcher will also collect one **sample of your English writing** (from approximately 10 students). Neither class observation nor writing samples will make any judgement of your learning or performance.

**Do you have to take part?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and at any stage without any explanation by contacting the researcher at [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk). If any student does not agree to the observation of a lesson, the researcher will sit where they cannot see the student and will not record any information about the student.

**What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part?**

There are no anticipated disadvantages in taking part in the study. Taking part or not will not influence your college grades in any way, and information will not be shared with individual teachers. You may find it useful to reflect on how you develop your English writing skills, and the study will provide useful information for the teaching of writing in the Saudi context.

**What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research records for this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking participants or the university to the study will be involved in any report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by the pseudonym in all records. The records will be sorted securely in password-protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data will be destroyed after the end of the research. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at [imps@reading.ac.uk](mailto:imps@reading.ac.uk), or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares, and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Sarah Alrashdi, E-mail: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes. You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at <https://ico.org.uk>

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Suzanne Graham, at the University of Reading, Tel.: +44 (0) 118 378 2684, Email:



s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk

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s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk

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**Yours faithfully**  
**Sarah Alrashdi**

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	Name, position and contact address of Supervisors
<b>Sarah Alrashdi</b>  <i>Phone:</i> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk">s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk</a>	<b>Dr Suzanne Graham</b>  <i>Phone:</i> +44 (0) 118 378 2684 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk">s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk</a>  <b>Dr Kari Sahan</b> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk">k.e.sahan@reading.ac.uk</a>

**Research Project: Teaching EFL academic writing and metadiscourse: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices.**

Please complete and return this form to: [s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.n.j.alrashdi@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

**Student consent form**

*Please tick as appropriate*

1. I have read the information sheet about the project and received a copy of it. ☐
2. I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered. ☐
3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and that this will be without detriment. ☐
4. I understand that I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information provided by me. ☐
5. I understand that any information I provide for this research could be used for the purpose of academic publication, academic conferences, or seminar presentations. ☐
6. I am aware that the information I give will be treated as confidential. ☐
7. I consent for classes I am involved in to be observed. ☐
8. I consent for classes I am involved in to be audio-recorded. ☐
9. I consent to a sample of my English writing being passed on to the researcher. ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix K

### Classroom observation checklist (an example from the main study)

Date: *12-1-2023* time: 12:00 -1:30 pm Class: 4 : Number of observations: ...*I*.....

Number of students: 4

Practices in classroom	Yes	No	Resources Or class activity if any	Time	Observation Note and Extracts
The teacher discusses the arguments in academic writing.	√		The teacher asked students to read some slides on board about “writing errors”	8:00 37:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “check if you make some of these errors, no reference, no citation, no conclusion”.</li> <li>- “This is important to pass important for your assignment, it is very important for me to see you write a citation”.</li> <li>- The teacher asked students: “how you track your research, how you write your assignment. And answered them it is important to know how to write in academic way: which is to follow format style and citation style such as APA or Harvard.</li> <li>- The teacher discussed the academic writing as “it is important to think about what you want to write about and choose academic topic”.</li> </ul>
The teacher discusses the writer's voice or opinion in academic writing.	√		The teacher asked students about how support their opinion	39:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher said “you must have a claim”, “what is your position, what is your support idea”, “Explain why it is important for you” and “what do you think”</li> <li>- The teacher asked the students “what is your opinion”</li> <li>-The teacher pointed that the topic sentence is the place where the writers write their own opinion in “what is your topic sentence, you should write your opinion in the topic sentence”.</li> </ul>
The teacher encourages students to think about the readers during write their arguments.	√		The teacher asked students to reread their text. -Students group discussion	44:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “it is important to tell the reader what your claim is”.</li> <li>- “be sure that you use guidelines for the reader”, here the teacher did not explain what the guideline is.</li> <li>- “your paragraph is important to explain what you want to say to the readers”.</li> <li>- “You must write your citations for the readers; Citation helps readers to read more about your topic”.</li> </ul>
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers for organising the text.		√		39	-The teacher emphasised to the students to edit their writing before submission. “read and reread your draft, check your text, check your idea do not jump from topic to topic”, but there is no any mention about use MD markers
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers to improve the coherence of the arguments in the academic writing.		√	Lecture’s slide	6:00 44:00 50:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-During the class, the teacher illustrated that it is important to think about how to write “a better paragraph” by giving more illustration and examples about the writing topic “as much as you gave more details and examples you will write a better paragraph”.</li> <li>-The teacher said “bad paragraph is not clear it contains plagiarism”, the teacher did not present any MD features that help writer in creating coherence in argumentative writing.</li> </ul>
The teacher illustrates how to build arguments		√	The teacher asked students to read lesson ppt slide	47:00 1:10:00	-The teacher said that “the paragraph is not only write more words it is need meaning and good topic”, but there is no mention about MD feature or function.

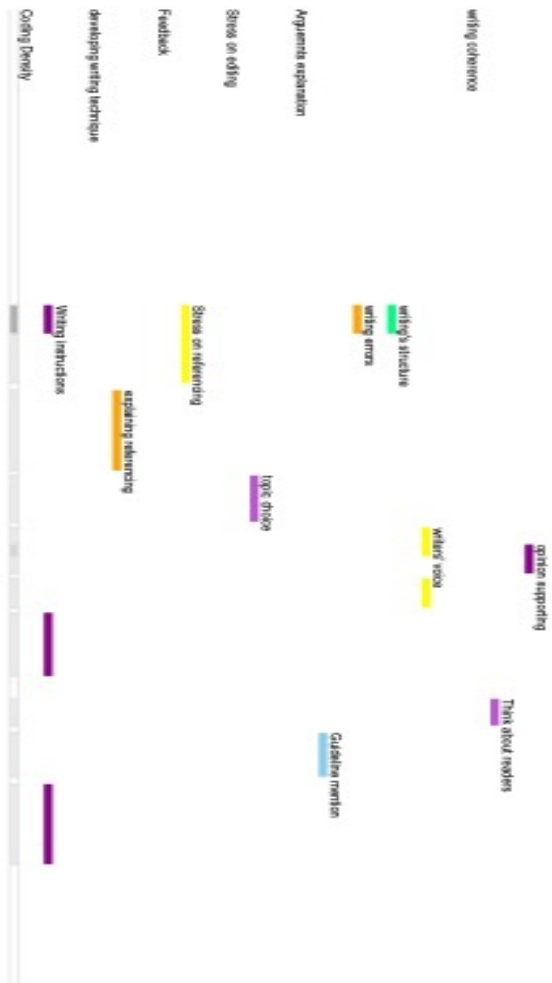
<b>through the use of metadiscourse markers.</b>					- The teacher stress on write claim as a type of argument “you must have a claim” and “explain why this is a claim”.
<b>The teacher corrects students’ errors with respect to the use of metadiscourse markers.</b>		√	- peer feedback	-	-The teacher kept asking students to give explain what plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism and the important of using their own words during paraphrasing but did not mention the use MD markers in the writing.

## Appendix K: an example of NVivo Observation coding from the observation main study

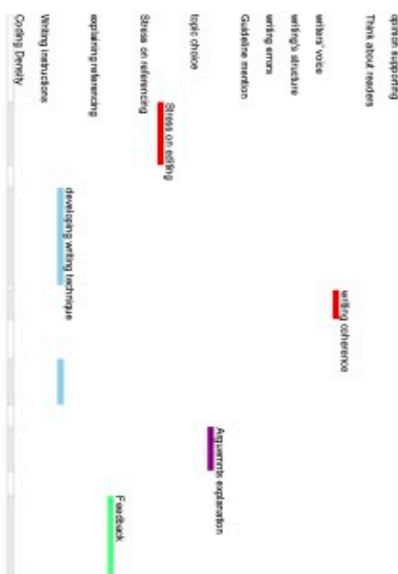
### Classroom observation checklist

Date: 12-1-2023 time: 12:00 -1:30 pm Class: 4 : Number of observations: ...f..... Number of students: 45

Practices in classroom	Yes	No	Resources Or class activity if any	Time	Observation Note and Extracts
The teacher discusses the arguments in academic writing.	✓		The teacher asked students to read some slides on board about "writing errors"	8:00 37:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "check if you make some of these errors, no reference, no citation, no conclusion".</li> <li>- "This is important to pass important for your assignment, it is very important for me to see you write a citation".</li> <li>- The teacher asked students: "how you track your research, how you write your assignment. And answered them it is important to know how to write in academic way: which is to follow format style and citation style such as APA or Harvard.</li> <li>- The teacher discussed the academic writing as "it is important to think about what you want to write about and choose academic topic".</li> </ul>
The teacher discusses the writer's voice or opinion in academic writing.	✓		-The teacher asked students about how support their opinion	39:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher said "you must have a claim", "what is your position, what is your support idea", "Explain why it is important for you" and "what do you think"</li> <li>- The teacher asked the students "what is your opinion"</li> <li>-The teacher pointed that the topic sentence is the place where the writers write their own opinion in "what is your topic sentence, you should write your opinion in the topic sentence".</li> </ul>
The teacher encourages students to think about the readers during write their arguments.	✓		-The teacher asked students to reread their text. -Students group discussion	44:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "It is important to tell the reader what your claim is".</li> <li>- "be sure that you use guidelines for the reader", here the teacher did not explain what the guideline is.</li> <li>- "your paragraph is important to explain what you want to say to the readers".</li> <li>- "You must write your citations for the readers; Citation helps readers to read more about your topic".</li> </ul>



The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers for organising the text.	✓		39	-The teacher emphasised to the students to edit their writing before submission. "read and reread your draft, check your text, check your idea do not jump from topic to topic", but there is no any mention about use MD markers
The teacher explains the use of metadiscourse markers to improve the coherence of the arguments in the academic writing.	✓	Lecture's slide s	6:00 44:00 50:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-During the class, the teacher illustrated that it is important to think about how to write "a better paragraph" by giving more illustration and examples about the writing topic "as much as you gave more details and examples you will write a better paragraph".</li> <li>-The teacher said "bad paragraph is not clear it contains plagiarism", the teacher did not present any MD features that help writer in creating coherence in argumentative writing.</li> </ul>
The teacher illustrates how to build arguments through the use metadiscourse markers.	✓	The teacher asked students to read lesson ppt slide	47:00 1:10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher said that "the paragraph is not only write more words it is need meaning and good topic", but there is no mention about MD feature or function.</li> <li>-The teacher stress on write claim as a type of argument "you must have a claim" and "explain why this is a claim".</li> </ul>
The teacher corrects students' errors with respect to the use of metadiscourse markers.	✓	- peer feedback	-	-The teacher kept asking students to give explain what plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism and the important of using their own words during paraphrasing but did not mention the use MD markers in the writing.



## Appendix K: Observation Initial codebook example

Name	Description	Files	References
Academic writing explanation		6	15
academic writing purposes		1	1
Arguemnts explanation		6	10
Arguments sources		7	10
class activities		4	12
coherence technique		7	15
developing writing technique		8	12
explaining referencing		1	1
Feedback		5	5
Think about readers		9	25
Good writer feature		1	1
Guideline mention		1	1
opinion supporting		7	14
Persuade the reader technique		1	2
prewriting plan		1	2
Pronouns use		1	2
Readers' attention technique		4	6
Readers' needs		4	6
Reading sources		1	4
Stress on editing		5	10
stress on extract ideas		2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Stress on referencing		5	6
stress on topic and thesis sentence		3	5
teacher's role		5	6
text organizing tool		9	18
topic choice		4	8
Writers' confident		1	2
writers' voice		10	16
writing argument		5	8
writing coherence		9	18
MD markers		1	5
writing draft		2	3
writing errors		4	7
Writing instructions		9	27
writing process mention		4	6
writing types		5	6
writing's structure		7	16

## **Appendix L**

### **(Interview transcript example main study)**

Speaker 1

Can you describe how you learned English academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, first I've studied that in the university, so we have a course that teaching the academic writing. That's what we're learning and then how we improve that by writing, writing, writing. So that's, yeah, for me to improve my writing skills.

Speaker 1

How did your teachers teach academic writing?

Speaker 2

I think it's about giving the structure and topics and then he divided us into groups writing the topics and then correcting for each other, and then he correct and give us the feedback for that. For our writing.

Speaker 1

How did you improve your academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, as I told you, it's about writing because I start being a Blogger, so that's helped me to write a lot and my teacher helped me a lot that he keep asking me to write about topics instead of using just writing your diary, start writing the topic. And if this topic is OK, now you need to prepare your introduction, you need to add the thesis and introduction and write your paragraph you need to order your writing by for example by mapping or something like that. So that helped me to organise my ideas when I start to write.

Speaker 1

Is academic writing important for students?

Speaker 2

let's say it's difficult for students, especially if they are demotivated to write. But using big checklists, the group work and mind mapping make it easier for me and for them to prepare and organise their ideas and then publish their work. For example, on padlet or something like that to share with their friends. So we have some fun, but usually it's sometimes it's difficult for the students.



I think academic writing should be more formal. So students need to be prepared using different academic words, more organised. So they will start writing essays, not general paragraphs. So I think this is the main difficult about the language they use and the structure of the writing.

Speaker 1

Is academic writing important for their academic learning prospects?

Speaker 2

Yes, because when students start applying for higher education, they want to travel even for the scholarship, they need to write a thesis proposal and the way they write their writing, they express themselves that the universities will accept them. So they need to be at least, let's say not professional, but at least they be able to write in a good way. So they would be accepted in other universities. Yes, especially if they're learning or their study is in English language, because the way they read their article, their study is in the same academic writing, the same language, so they will not be able to understand the writing and express themselves unless they learn how to write in a good way or in a formal way.

Speaker 1

How does academic writing impact students' higher education?

Speaker 2

You know, the main problem or the common issue these days, students, they use unformal language and abbreviation. So, when they start now their studies, and start writing academic writing, they think they can write the same way they write that they write in their chatting. So here's the problem that we face. Students need to use complete sentences. They need to use different words. Not use abbreviations. So it's important to train them, that it's different from the chatting or social media sites from their studies and their writing Academy. So it's helpful for them because they don't use it in their life unless they studied in the universities or in the language school.

Speaker 1

Do you think students are able to express their opinion in their academic writing? why or how?

Speaker 2

Not all of them, but yes they can. I see in my students writing, those students who keep writing movies, for example reviews, they keep writing or blogging, I notice that the language they use, the way they express their ideas, it's better than those who just have an idea in

their mind and express it in the Arabic way or in the, let's say, social media way abbreviation and let's say informal word or something informal word and something like that.

Speaker 1

Are there any barriers to teaching academic writing? What are they?

Speaker 2

Yes, number1, it's the students who they study in the university, academic writing is a compulsory course, so they forced to study it. So some students are demotivated to learn or they don't want to learn. So you need to keep asking them to memorise the word, to say to understand the structure, to work on the way they write, to express their ideas, even about how to mind map or draft their ideas for the first time. Students do not follow my guide they only want to finish class because they want to leave the class, so they are demotivated and that's the biggest issue here.

Speaker 1

How would you describe the importance of argument in academic writing?

Speaker 2

Well, I think these days it's important because now we have different issues that we need to express themselves and express ourselves in that issue. So the students are not able to argue and express themselves and use the academic way to express their ideas. They will not be able to express themselves later, especially now we have students they want to learn, they want to follow different strategies, different way of argument. They need vocabulary, they need to learn expressions. They need to learn how to respect other ideas. So. All these things need to be learned, They need to apply it.

Speaker 1

What do you focus on when teaching argumentative writing?

Speaker 2

Well, first, it's about the way they need to follow. Draft their ideas, because first you need to think what you want to say. Draft, make notes, then I help them by giving them some expressions they need to express what to say. For example, If you want to interrupt your partner, what do you say? What do you want to start your idea? What do you say if you want to give an opinion, a fact, something like that?. So these structures or expressions will help them to start their ideas. And then also the vocabulary needed for each topic before start the writing, we have the reading so we have new vocabulary, have structures be taught so these

will help them then to give their ideas using some of the vocabulary that they have taken in their reading.

Speaker 1

What do you think? Make a text more organised and coherent?

Speaker 2

I think number 1 is the layout. When they understand the layout that for example in your introduction you need to write the thesis. The thesis are involved in these body paragraphs. Then the conclusion you need to understand how to write the conclusion how to paraphrase your ideas. So if the students understand how to write, how to organise their ideas, it will be easier for them to write a good and coherent essays, I think.

Speaker 1

What makes the text more persuasive? how what words you use to write.

Speaker 2

Maybe the way the expressions, the vocabulary taught and used also the structures and expressions they use it make more persuasive than others.

Speaker 1

Can you explain how students build strong arguments with the readers in academic writing?

Speaker 2

It's about sometimes when we teach students, we give them some structures they need to use or some expression they need to use. So when students start using this word, it's helped them to achieve the goal that we want them to achieve in their essay. So if we wanted to be persuasive, so students start writing or using these expressions. So it is will be help for them to support their idea with that.

Speaker 1

Can you give me example about expression words that you mentioned that they help students in their argumentative and persuasive essay?

Speaker 2

Now I can't, but I can search for you in students' book. Sometimes the use of phrases and students use them to make the text more persuasive. (The teacher took 2 minutes

check students' book to give an examples). For example, in writing construct ideas, sometime students use either to compare between two sentences. Here this lesson about the environment, it was a good topic, so students start talking about how to protect the environment and they have different opinion about it. For example, if I want to talk about climate change and how to help the effect of the climate change so they write sentences with the cause and effect. This to organise their ideas so it make it more clear. Also, when we talk about the transport, like using the public transport or cars. For example, students start using if and unless.

Speaker 1

What is your focus when you give students feedback on their academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, first about organising their ideas how the students write and their ideas. For example, if I ask them to write in a paragraph how the students write the introduction, then the body language and the conclusion. The expressions used there, especially if I'm talking about B1level students. I'm looking for the expressions and the word and vocabulary used by these students, if they will write different sentences that A1 students. Are they talking about the same topic or they misunderstand the point sometimes is they write about different article or different point of view that I did not ask them to write about.

Speaker 1

I have here, an example of academic writing, Can you please read it, and I will ask you a few questions about it? Which paragraph do you think is better and why?

Speaker 2

OK. I think it is B2 students' level of writing. I like the introduction that she entered the introduction, giving opinion that we have this advantage and advantage for the online learning, so we know we understand that we're going to have or read some advantage and disadvantage for the online learning.

Speaker 1

OK, so during your reading there is some words in the blonde style. What do you think the importance of use these words as they are important.

Speaker 2

Yes, we like we ask students actually to start their paragraphs by using these words, for example, to order their ideas by using first next, then after that, this help the readers to know that we are following some steps or to order our ideas. Also to have some words for

contracts sentences, like however or in other words or in contrast, as she wrote. Also, use another instead of using just also word every time, we have also an addition wherever.

Speaker 1

Can you explain the importance of using these words in academic writing; however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree?

Speaker 2

They are about the ideas. We want to tell the reader it's the same idea we add in another information, so we use an addition or we show them that we have a different idea, or we have a contrast idea this through use however, in another word. I have here for example, I'm talking about the pros and the cons, so start talking about the pros and when you say, however, that tell the reader that now I'm talking about the cons.

Speaker 1

To what extent it is important to correct the students' mistakes in regard of use conjunctions words in academic writing?

Speaker 2

It is according to students' level. If they are B2 I correct these mistakes if they are in A level I might not correct these mistakes.

Speaker 1

How do you teach these words?

Speaker 2

It's according as I told you about the text, but usually as I teach now, I'm teaching the unlock book. So what I like with unlocks books that is really start the writing with every single step. So I start with giving them needed vocabulary. For example, talking about the environment, then we have a text to read and then the other reading that it will be a sample for the writing and then we ask them to write sentences and comparing two sentences together. Then we teach them how to write contrast idea, how to have different ideas and link them so we have some vocabulary for that. So before going to write essays, we work on steps. The vocabulary, then teaching these expressions and using them with sentences, so it will be easier to write sentences in the essay.

Speaker 1

Do you recommend any training course that might help improve teaching EFL academic writing?

Speaker 2

Yes, might be weekly writing support course to check the students' writing improvement.

Appendix L: NVivo coding example of one interview from the main study

students' MD markers relations, students' level

teaching barriers, compulsory

teaching arguments strategies, draft, note

organised and coherent, in general

persuasive's tool

importance of argument in academic writing

providing help tools

activities and tools

organised and coherent, layout introduction

teaching strategies to motivate students

feedback's focus ideas organization

MD markers, to organize ideas

example of academic writing, good introduction

teaching arguments strategies, vocabulary, reading

students' academic writing needs

demotivated students

teaching arguments strategies, expression

structure and expression for argue with the readers

feedback's focus expression, vocabulary, logic and student's level

MD markers, inferred with the readers

importance of argument for students

students' opinion express ability

students' writing issues

academic writing importance for further education

MD markers, teaching

teacher's example about the expression to argue with the readers

Coding Density

Interview 1

Speaker 1

Can you describe how you learned English academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, first I've studied that in the university, so we have a course that teaching the academic writing. That's what we're learning and then how we improve that by writing, writing, writing. So that's, yeah, for me to improve my writing skills.

Speaker 1

How did your teachers teach academic writing?

Speaker 2

I think it's about giving the structure and topics and then he divided us into groups writing the topics and then correcting for each other, and then he correct and give us the feedback for that. For our writing.

Speaker 1

How did you improve your academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, as I told you, it's about writing because I start being a Blogger, so that's helped me to write a lot and my teacher helped me a lot that he keep asking me to write about topics instead of using just writing your diary, start writing the topic. And if this topic is OK, now you need to prepare your introduction, you need to add the thesis and introduction and write your paragraph you need to order your writing by for example

that the universities will accept them. So they need to be at least, let's say not professional, but at least they be able to write in a good way. So they would be accepted in other universities. Yes, especially if they're learning or their study is in English language, because the way they read their article, their study is in the same academic writing, the same

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teacher's example about the expression to argue with the readers

Coding Density

writing improvements

previous learning experience

importance for further education

students' MO markers midweek, students level teaching barriers, compulsory teaching arguments strategies, draft, note organisational and coherent, in general persuasiveness tool

importance of argument in academic writing providing help tools activities and tools

organisational and coherent, Layout introduction teaching strategies to motivate students previous learning experience

feedback's focus ideas organization

MO markers, to organize ideas

example of academic writing, good introduction teaching arguments strategies, vocabulary, reading students' academic writing needs

demotivated students

teaching arguments strategies, expression structure and expression for argue with the readers

feedback's focus expression, vocabulary, topic and students' level

MO markers, interact with the readers importance of argument for students

writing improvements

#### Students' writing issues

academic writing importance for further education

MO markers, teaching teachers' example about the expression to argue with the readers

Writing Directly

students' opinion express ability

language, so they will not be able to understand the writing and express themselves unless they learn how to write in a good way or in a formal way.

Speaker 1

How does academic writing impact students' higher education?

Speaker 2

You know, the main problem or the common issue these days, students, they use informal language and abbreviation. So, when they start now their studies, and start writing academic writing, they think they can write the same way they write that they write in their chatting. So here's the problem that we face. Students need to use complete sentences. They need to use different words. Not use abbreviations. So it's important to train them, that it's different from the chatting or social media sites from their studies and their writing Academy. So it's helpful for them because they don't use it in their life unless they studied in the universities or in the language school.

Speaker 1

Do you think students are able to express their opinion in their academic writing? why or how?

Speaker 2

Not all of them, but yes they can. I see in my students writing, those students who keep writing movies, for example reviews, they keep writing or blogging. I notice that the language they use, the way they express their ideas, it's better than those who just have an idea in their mind and express it in the Arabic way or in the, let's say, social media



way abbreviation and let's say informal word or something informal word and something like that.

Speaker 1

Are there any barriers to teaching academic writing? What are they?

Speaker 2

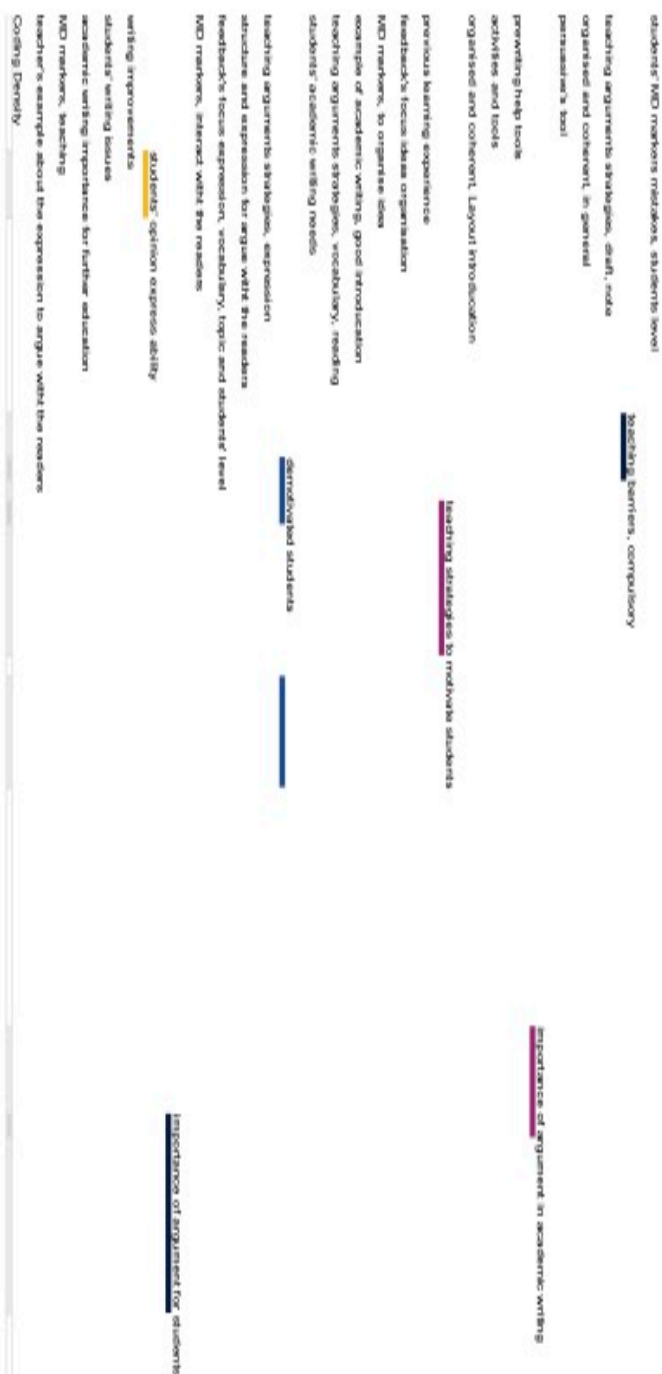
Yes, number1, it's the students who they study in the university, academic writing is a compulsory course, so they forced to study it. So some students are demotivated to learn or they don't want to learn. So you need to keep asking them to memorise the word, to say to understand the structure, to work on the way they write, to express their ideas, even about how to mind map or draft their ideas for the first time. Students do not follow my guide they only want to finish class because they want to leave the class, so they are demotivated and that's the biggest issue here.

Speaker 1

How would you describe the importance of argument in academic writing?

Speaker 2

Well, I think these days it's important because now we have different issues that we need to express ourselves and express ourselves in that issue. So the students are not able to argue and express themselves and use the academic way to express their ideas. They will not be able to express themselves later, especially now we have students they want to learn, they want to follow different strategies, different way of argument. They need vocabulary, they need to learn



expressions. They need to learn how to repeat other ideas. So, all these things need to be learned. They need to apply it.

Speaker 1

What do you focus on when teaching argumentative writing?

Speaker 2

Well, first, it's about the way they need to follow. Draft their ideas, because first you need to think what you want to say. Draft, make notes, then I help them by giving them some expressions they need to express what to say. For example, if you want to interrupt your partner, what do you say? What do you want to start your idea? What do you say if you want to give an opinion, a fact, something like that? So these structures or expressions will help them to start their ideas. And then also the vocabulary needed for each topic before start the writing, we have the reading so we have new vocabulary, have structures be taught so these will help them then to give their ideas using some of the vocabulary that they have taken in their reading.

Speaker 1

What do you think? Make a text more organized and coherent?

Speaker 2

I think number 1 is the layout. When they understand the layout that for example in your introduction you need to write the thesis. The thesis are involved in these body paragraphs. Then the conclusion you need to understand how to write the conclusion how to paraphrase your ideas. So if the students understand how to write, how to organize their ideas, it will be easier for them to write a good and coherent essays, I think.

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Speaker 1

What makes the text more persuasive? how what words you use to write.

Speaker 2

Maybe the way the expressions, the vocabulary taught and used also the structures and expressions they use it make more persuasive than others.

Speaker 1

Can you explain how students build strong arguments with the readers in academic writing?

Speaker 2

It's about sometimes when we teach students, we give them some structures they need to use or some expression they need to use. So when students start using this word, it's helped them to achieve the goal that we want them to achieve in their essay. So if we wanted to be persuasive, so students start writing or using these expressions, so it will be help for them to support their idea with that.

Speaker 1

Can you give me example about expression words that you mentioned that they help students in their argumentative and persuasive essay?

Speaker 2

Now I can't, but I can search for you in students' book. Sometimes the use of phrases and statistics use them to make the text more persuasive. **(The teacher took 2 minutes check material book to give an example).** For example, in writing construct ideas, sometime students

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use either to compare between two sentences. Here this lesson about the environment, it was a good topic, so students start talking about how to protect the environment and they have different opinion about it. For example, if I want to talk about climate change and how to help the effect of the climate change so they write sentences with the cause and effect. This is organize their ideas so it make it more clear. Also, when we talk about the transport, like using the public transport or cars. For example, students start using if and unless.

Speaker 1

What is your focus when you give students feedback on their academic writing?

Speaker 2

OK, first about organizing their ideas how the students write and their ideas. For example, if I ask them to write in a paragraph how the students write the introduction, then the body language and the conclusion. The expressions used there, especially if I'm talking about different statistics. I'm looking for the expressions and the word and vocabulary used by these students. If they will write different sentences that all students. Are they talking about the same topic or they understand the point sometimes is they write about different article or different point of view that I did not ask them to write about.

Speaker 1

I have here, an example of academic writing. Can you please read it, and I will ask you a few questions about it? Which paragraph do you think is better and why?

Speaker 2

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OK, I think it is B2 students' level of writing. I like the introduction that she entered the introduction, giving opinion that we have this advantage and advantage for the online learning, so we know we understand that we're going to have or read some advantage and disadvantage for the online learning.

Speaker 1

OK, so during your reading there is some words in the blonde style. What do you think the importance of use these words as they are important.

Speaker 2

Yes, we do ask students actually to start their paragraphs by using these words, for example, to order their ideas by using first next, then after that, this help the readers to know that we are following some steps or to order our ideas. Also to have some words for contrast sentences, like however or in other words or in contrast, as she wrote. Also, use another instead of using just also word every time, we have also an addition whenever.

Speaker 1

Can you explain the importance of using these words in academic writing: however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree?

Speaker 2

They are about the ideas. She want to tell the reader it's the same idea we add in another information, so we use an addition or we show them that we have a different idea, or we have a contrast idea this through use however, in another word. I have here for example, the talking about

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[illegible]

Speaker 1

Do you recommend any training course that might help improve teaching EFL academic writing?

Speaker 2

Yes, might be weekly writing support course to check the students writing improvement.

[illegible]

the pros and the cons, so start talking about the pros and when you say, however, that tell the reader that now I'm talking about the cons.

Speaker 1

To what extent it is important to correct the students' mistakes in regard of use conjunctions words in academic writing?

Speaker 2

It is according to students' level. If they are B2 I correct these mistakes if they are in A level I might not correct these mistakes.

Soeaker 1

How do you teach these words?

Speaker 2

It's according as I told you about the text, but usually as I teach now, I'm teaching the unlock book. So what I like with unlocks books that is really start the writing with every single step. So I start with giving them needed vocabulary. For example, talking about the environment, then we have a text to read and then the other reading that it will be a sample for the writing and then we ask them to write sentences and comparing two sentences together. Then we teach them how to write contrast idea, how to have different ideas and link them so we have some vocabulary for that. So before going to write essays, we work on steps. The vocabulary, then teaching these expressions and using them with sentences, so it will be easier to write sentences in the essay.

## Appendix L: Interview Initial codebook example

Name	Description	Sources	References
academic writing importance for further education		7	9
academic writing importance for university and students mark		9	16
academic writing meaning		8	9
activities and tools		4	4
argumentative writing meaning		9	9
build strong arguments with the readers		8	10
demotivated students		1	3
example of academic writing MD use		2	2
example of academic writing, conclusion		1	1
example of academic writing, good introduction		2	2
example of academic writing, students' level		3	6
example of academic writing, writer voice		2	2
express opinion techniques		2	2
feedback's focus expression, vocabulary, topic and students' level		2	2
feedback's focus ideas organisation		3	4
importance of argument for students		3	4
importance of argument in academic writing		4	5
MD markers miss use		4	7
MD markers mistakes		7	8
MD markers, addition information		1	1

Name	Description	Sources	References
MD markers, for construct		1	1
MD markers, interact with the readers		6	8
MD markers, teaching		10	11
MD markers, to organise idea		6	8
organised and coherent, in general		10	12
organised and coherent, Layout conclusion		1	1
organised and coherent, Layout introduction		1	1
persuasive's tool		9	10
previous learning experience		10	24
prewriting help tools		2	2
structure and expression for argue with the readers		2	3
students' academic writing needs		2	3
students' MD markers mistakes, students level		8	13
students' opinion express ability		10	13
students' writing issues		9	10
teacher's example about the expression to argue with the readers		4	5
teachers' feedback focus		7	9
teachers' recommendation, writing course		9	9
teaching argument strategies		8	10
teaching arguments strategies, draft, note		1	1
teaching arguments strategies, expression		4	4
teaching arguments strategies, vocabulary, reading		1	1
teaching barriers,		10	11

Name	Description	Sources	References
compulsory			
teaching strategies to motivate students		2	2
writing improvements		8	11



## Appendix M

### The Rubric

#### WRITING RUBRIC – ALL TRACKS

Categories	Band – 1	Band – 0.75	Band – 0.50	Band – 0.25	Band - 0
<b>Impact and Appropriacy:</b> <i>Did the learner include relevant content and a meaningful register about the topic?</i>	All content is FULLY on topic and relevant.  Writing is clearly developed in an appropriate register.	Content is MOSTLY (75%) on topic.  Writing is generally developed in an appropriate register.	Content is PARTIALLY (50%) on topic.  Writing lacks development in the appropriate register.	Content illustrates a lack of understanding of the topic.  Too little communication to assess.	Content is completely off topic. Writing is not relevant to the topic AT ALL.
<b>Task Achievement:</b> <i>Did the learner fully complete the task?</i>	Word count met or exceeded.  All writing instructions and prompts are FULLY answered and task is completed successfully.	Word count met by (75%).  Writing instruction and prompts are MOSTLY (75%) answered and task generally completed.	Word count met by (50%).  Writing instruction and prompts are only PARTIALLY (50%) answered and task not fully completed.	Word count met by (50%).  Writing instruction and prompts are only PARTIALLY (50%) answered and task not fully completed.	Word count irrelevant.  NONE of the writing prompts are answered. Learner demonstrates NO understanding of task.
<b>Organization and Cohesion:</b> <i>Did the learner express her ideas clearly and connect them together effectively?</i>	Content FULLY connects the writing in a logical sequence that exhibits skilful use of transitional words / phrases and ideas.	Content MOSTLY (75%) connects the writing in a logical sequence that exhibits good use of transitional words / phrases and ideas.	Content only PARTIALLY (50%) addresses sequencing in the writing with unclear use of transitional words / phrases and ideas.	Content illustrates a lack of sequencing in the writing that jumps from one idea to the next, with too little connection or use of transitional words / phrases.	Content does not illustrate sequencing of writing, with no use of transitional words / phrases and ideas.
<b>Grammar and Mechanics:</b> <i>Did the learner use a good range of grammar structures, punctuation markers and capitalization accurately?</i>	Content FULLY demonstrates few if any errors in the rules of grammar, punctuation and capitalization taught at this level.  All sentences are well structured and have varied structure and length.	Content MOSTLY (75%) demonstrates few if any errors in the rules of grammar, punctuation and capitalization taught at this level.  Most sentences are well structured and have varied structure and length.	Content only PARTIALLY (50%) demonstrates correct use of the rules of grammar, punctuation and capitalization taught at this level.  Sentences are not well structured.	Content illustrates many inaccuracies in the use of the rules of grammar, punctuation and capitalization taught at this level.  Sentences are difficult to understand.	Content demonstrates no understanding of the rules of grammar, punctuation and capitalization, as well as sentence structure taught at this level.
<b>Vocabulary and Spelling:</b> <i>Did the learner use a good range of vocabulary items and spell them correctly?</i>	Content FULLY uses a wide variety of the vocabulary taught at this level with few errors.  Spelling is consistently correct with very few errors.	Content MOSTLY (75%) uses a wide variety of the vocabulary taught at this level with few errors.  Spelling is standard with some errors.	Content only PARTIALLY (50%) uses the vocabulary taught at this level with consistent errors.  Spelling is inadequate with errors.	Content illustrates a poor range of vocabulary with frequent errors.  Spelling is consistently incorrect with very few errors.	Content demonstrates no understanding of appropriate vocabulary.  Spelling is mostly incorrect and makes the writing unclear and difficult to read.

#### Details on specific assessment issues

1. If students write “off-topic/ no attempt”, they should receive a grade of zero (0) overall.
2. If students write “similar topic”, they should receive fewer marks for BOTH **Impact and Appropriacy** and **Task Achievement**, as they haven't responded to the writing task correctly.
3. If students write about two different topics, one is on-topic and the another is off-topic, they should receive a grade of zero (0) for BOTH **Task Achievement** and **Appropriacy**, while they get marks on the rest against the writing rubric.
4. If students use the prompt itself as a part of their topic sentence, there should be no penalty.

Prepared by: ELI Curriculum Unit

September 18, 2022

