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## THE USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' LITERARY ESSAYS



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### ABSTRACT:

**T**he paper investigates the use of discourse markers from the perspective of contrastive rhetoric. The aim is to identify the similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers as used by non-native speakers of English (henceforth NNS) represented by Iraqi(EFL), Hong Kong(ESL) and native speakers (henceforth NS) American university students. The students in the current research are all about the same age range, i.e., 18–22. The study attempts to reveal the frequency and the relative frequency of the types and tokens of discourse markers and whether non-native speakers use them appropriately or not. With this comparison, we want to study which of the three groups use discourse markers more frequently, the reasons for their overuse, less use or even misuse of these markers.

The three language corpora which are utilized in the present study are as the following. The first consists of essays collected from native American speakers of English, the second consists of ESL from Hong Kong, and the third includes essays written by Iraqi EFL learners enrolled at the university of Kerbala.

The findings show that Iraq EFL learners tend to overuse certain discourse markers (henceforth DMs), namely additives, and place them in initial position. In addition, they underuse some others such as the adversatives "however". The factor of transfer from L1 stands behind this result. Native speakers make lesser use of DMs in comparison to non-native speakers, but with a larger variety of tokens which tend to be placed in different positions. ESL Hong Kong learners come in between.

**KEYWORDS:** tokens of discourse markers and whether non-native speakers, three language corpora.

### INTRODUCTION

One aspect of creating and maintaining cohesion in text is the use of sentence connectors often called discourse markers (henceforth DMs). DMs are defined as lexical expressions which connect independent sentences / clauses into a coherent discourse. David Crystal (1985:65-66) uses the term conjuncts which are defined as words used in the grammatical classification of words and morphemes to link linguistic units. For example, the underlined words below are examples of DMs.

1 -The parliament decided to continue with its interrogations. However, the prime minister left London in the midnight flight.

In the example, the word however shows a contrast relation between the two sentences. If the word however is not there, then the connection between the two sentences seems vague though grammatical. Consider the next example:

2-The parliament decided to continue with its interrogations. The prime minister left London in the midnight flight.

The importance of discourse markers can be noticed when we replace each DM with another. Therefore, a new meaning is created.

3-The parliament decided to continue with its interrogations. Therefore, the prime minister left London in the midnight flight.

Considerable attention is given to DMs by text analysts and applied. They are defined as style sensitive devices of textual cohesion referring the way speakers and writers arrange information in the discourse, and the constraints that control this process (Altenberg, 1986:13).

Other studies on sentence relatedness have shown that DMs can be used to “help readers to recognize how texts are organized, and how different parts of the text are connected to each other functionally and semantically”.

Some other studies have shown that EFL learners face difficulties in the use of DMs in their writing. Such studies are the works of Bacha and Hanania (1980), Khalil (1989), Khuwaileh and Shoumali (2000), Hinkel (2001), Fakhra (2009), and Abu Sharkh (2012) among others. The present study aims to investigate the use of DMs in literary essays written by three groups of students of different backgrounds. These are Iraqi EFL, Hong Kong ESL, and native speakers of English from America.

The present work puts some questions and it attempts to find answers to them.

1. What are the differences and similarities in the use of DMs in the essays written by Iraqi EFL learners, Hong Kong ESL learners and American native speakers of English?
2. What is the overall frequency of occurrence of DMs among the above groups?
3. What is the preferred position of DMs for by Iraqi, Hong Kong and American university students?
4. What is the frequency of each semantic category for each group?
5. Do NNs overuse or underuse DMs?
6. What are the conclusions and recommendations that will be drawn from the results?

The present study hypothesizes that there is a major difference in the use of DMs between NS and NNS' literary essays in that there is an excessive use of DMs by NNS. This result can be explained in relation learner's linguistic knowledge, mother tongue interference and the degree of student's interaction with the texts.

The data of this study consists of essays written by students from Iraq, Hong Kong, and the United States. These three groups came from different institutions: US university in the U.S.A.; City University of Hong Kong in China; and the University of Kerbala in Iraq. Students were asked to read the Hemingway's famous short story “Cat in the Rain” and then write critical essays about it according to their view points. The three instructors in these universities established an acquaintance with each other and planned that their students to read the same short story, write an essay to it, and then send them to the instructor. The students in the three universities received the same instructions from their instructors, such as

- 1) Read the story *Cat in the Rain*. and
- 2) Write a 400 word essay to it.

The essays were exchanged by three instructors for study and analysis. (For more detail, see Corrigan and Chiad, 1914:48).

In the present study, the data represent a very small part extracted from the original larger corpus. For the purpose of this study, the number of the essays is reduced to approximately 12 for each group (native and



non-native) : that is , 12 argumentative essays of 4,674 words written by Iraqi EFL undergraduate students, 12 argumentative essays of 4,674 written by Hong Kong students , and 12 argumentative essays of 11,846 words written by American students. These essays were studied and analysed carefully in terms of the length of texts , that is, the number of words and paragraphs , and the types and tokens of DMs.

The study begins with a review to relevant literature which is meant to establish a background for the analysis. Additionally, an analytical scheme is chosen according to the classification of DMs illustrated by Halliday and Hassan .The analysis of DMs in the three corpora then follows . A general comparison based on the results is given and a discussion is given in the light of the findings. The study ends with some implications in teaching DMs and suggestions for further research.

## 2.LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of DMs as connectors ascribe to them certain semantic functions. They make meta-references to the discourse itself , in addition they show its structure to listeners and readers. Different classification of DMs have been given . While a text is a semantic unit , the categorization of DMs depending on text and discourse studies are reliable, because their meanings can be seen clearly in the wider context (See Omran , 1999: 11).The models of classification are discussed .They are Quirk et al (1972,1985) , Halliday and Hassan Framework (1976), Warner (1985 ),and Fraser (1997), and Hyland and Tse (2004).

Quirk et al (1972,1985) discuss DMs by using the term conjuncts within adverbials, beside adjuncts , disjuncts, and subjuncts.

Unlike adjuncts, conjuncts cannot be the focus of a cleft sentence , cannot be the basis of contrast in interrogative and negative constructions , cannot be focused by subjuncts, and cannot come within the scope of predication, pro-form and ellipsis.

Like disjuncts, conjuncts take a superordinate role as compared to other clause elements. Yet, conjuncts have some features which are specific to them. In other words, and have the function of joining independent units to a single unit. It is necessary to search outside the unit in which they appear to understand their meanings (p.632). The unit may be very small , such as a phrase, sentence or paragraph or larger, such parts of a text, for example:

*4-The candidate is a very kind teacher. In addition, he is a broadcaster of some experience.*

*5- The candidate is a very kind , successful and in addition popular teacher.*

It is common for some conjuncts have adjunct usage , such as “ also, again, altogether, besides, better, else, further , likewise , overall , still , then”. How to function as conjunct specific is virtually restricted to the initial position in the sentence, otherwise it is difficult to indicate the difference (p.632).

*6-There are two things that we can do to reduce pollution . First , we can stop using our cars for short trips, Second, we should conserve energy by turning off lights, computer when we do not use them .*

*7- There are two things that we can do to reduce pollution . I will say first , we can stop using our cars for short trips. I will say second, we should conserve energy by turning off lights, computer when we do not use them.*

In cases where a conjunct has no adjunct usage such as “ furthermore, however , moreover, nevertheless , therefore , etc.”, it not impossible to interpret it as an adjunct even if they come in the medial position, for example:

*8-However, he does not like parties.*

*9-He , however, does not like parties.*

*10- He does not like parties, however.*

Furthermore, some disjuncts, such as “actually, in short, as a matter of fact, briefly, etc.” have the

function of conjuncts when they come sentence initially as this place gives them the cohesive power. However, when they come at the end of a sentence, they function as sentence disjuncts. In other words, disjuncts should come at the beginning of the sentence to be used as connectives, otherwise they as disjuncts proper, (Quirk, et al 1972:675), for example.

11- *I wasn't given the job. Actually, I was rejected.*

12- *I wasn't given the job. I was rejected, actually.*

**Quirk et al. (1972, 1985) gives seven meanings of DMs in addition to their subclasses as the following :**

- a. listing
  - enumerative
  - additive
    - equative
    - reinforcing
- b. summative
- c. appositive
- d. resultative
- e. inferential
- f. contrastive
  - reformulatory
  - replacive
  - anithetic
  - concessive
- g. transitional
  - discorsal
  - transitional

#### **Figure 1 from Quirk et al. (1972, 1985) Meanings of DMs**

Halliday and Hassan (1976:249) refer to DMs by using the terms conjunctives/ conjunctions as they are coordinate extended to operate between sentences. A conjunction is a semantic relation used to show "the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before" (ibid, 227). Thus, endophoric – anaphoric function is achieved by them. They have the cohesive creating function as text forming devices. They are not structural representation of the logico-semantic relations. (Halliday in Van Dijk and Petofi, 1977:51 - 187) and (Halliday, 1985:325).

Conjunctive adverbs, such as "however, therefore, nevertheless, moreover, etc." are the familiar examples of conjunctive expressions. Halliday and Hassan's taxonomy of explicit markers of conjunctives is exemplified into four types: additive, adversative, causal and temporal.

**1-Additive :** This relation is a text forming component of the semantic system. That is, the relation is a semantic one and expressed by the following conjunctives "similarly, and, or, furthermore, in addition, additionally, by the way, that is, for instance, thus, etc." See the example below:

13- *John is an excellent engineer. And Alice is an excellent teacher.*

**2-Adversative :** the meaning of this relation is "contrary to the expectation". It is possible to derive the expectation from the context of what is said or from the communicative process. The markers of adversative relation are "but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, I mean, at least, etc." See the example below:

14- *John is an excellent engineer. However, Alice is even better.*

**3-Causal :** This relation covers such notions as reason, result, and purpose. Some markers are used to express this relation, such as "so, consequently, for, for this reason, on this basis, by this, hence, by this respect, etc." See the example below:

15- *John is an excellent engineer. So Alice is lucky to have him in her company.*

**4-Temporal:** This relation expresses the idea of sequence in successive sentences. The very relation is simply exemplified by the word “then”. Additionally, a sentence may be temporally cohesive not only when it stands in time relation to the presupposed sentence, but also when it indicates the terminal of a process or some processes. Some markers are used to indicate this relation, such as “then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last, etc.” See the example below::

16- *John is a man of many trades. For example, he is an excellent teacher and supervisor.*

The four meanings of conjunctive relation have counterparts within sentences expressed by hypotactic structure such as (beside, although, because, after) respectively. Yet, the system of options for cohesion and hypotactic structure is different. Conjunctives are not structural relations that link parts of a sentence, such as modification, subordination, transitivity structures. In the sentence, its parts hang together by virtue of its structure, and therefore show texture. Yet text does not stop at the level of sentence, but it goes beyond it. Cohesive ties between sentences are more prominent than the sentence because they are the only source of texture. (Ibid : 6-9)

A functional distinction is made for all the four types of conjunctive relations: namely, “external” and “internal”. The following examples illustrate the distinction.

17- a. He was never happy here. So, he is traveling to the country side.

b. He better gets some relief.

-So he is traveling to the country side.

( for more details, see ibid, 240)

Example (a) shows the meaning that “because he was not happy. So he is traveling” where there is a causal relationship between the two events”. On the other hand, the example in (b) is within the communicative process. The meaning is “because you mention that he better gets some relief, I conclude that he is traveling to country side.

**Warner(1985)** tries to provide a sample of English DMs in terms of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties. The semantic of DMs puts forward the claim that semantic description is sufficient enough to define the members of each proposed connective class. To that end, Warner is mainly interested in showing that a text is one level of linguistic organization. This level has sentences as its constituents.

In this model, the category of DMs is a more inclusive than conjuncts because it contains conjunctions, such as “but, and, etc.” beside conjuncts. Warner’s taxonomy consists of seven major classes. They are: “conjunction, causation, example, conditional exclusion, hedge and comparison, and alternation”. The drawback of this study is that it is based on a small group of data which makes it difficult to generalize.

Fraser (1997:2) uses the term DMs for this group of connectives. They are particular meaning distinctions used to make a connection between two sequences, S1 and S2. DMs can be classified according to their co-occurrence and placement restrictions.

He defines them as “a class of lexical expressions that signal the relationship between the interpretation of the signal they introduce, S2 and the prior segment, S1. They have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual.” (Ibid, 1999:831). In his earlier work, For Fraser (1996) DMs are a subclass of “commentary pragmatic markers” and they are necessary for the creation of coherence in a text as they establish coherence relationships between its units. Fraser (1999:188) distinguished four types of relationships of DMs: contrastive, elaborative, inferential, and topic-change markers.

1. Contrastive like “but, however, still, yet, etc.” signal a relationship of contrast to the preceding utterance.
2. Elaborative like “and, above all, in other words, etc.” are used as a refinement to the preceding discourse.
3. Inferential like “therefore, thus, after all, etc.” are used to signal a conclusion to the preceding discourse.
4. Topic-change markers like “by the way, before I forget, etc.” are used to depart from a certain topic.

Hyland and Tse (2004:156–177) define DMs as interpersonal and textual markers mainly aimed to persuade the reader..

As far as the textual markers are concerned, they are divided into seven types.

**1-logical markers,**

- A.Additive , "also, moreover,etc."
- B-Adversative "however,but,etc"
- C. Conclusive , "finally , in short, etc"
- D. Causatives , "because , so,etc."
- 2-Sequencers," firstly, secondly,etc."
- 3. Reminders," as....said , etc."
- 4. Topicalisers," now"
- 5. Code glosses," in other words,that is , etc."
- 6. Illocutionary markers , "I back up this idea, I hope to persuade , etc."
- 7.Announcement refer to future sections

**Interpersonal discourse markers are:**

- 1. hedge " perhaps, maybe" ,
- 2. certainty , " of course , undoubtedly, in fact,naturally, ,you know,etc"
- 3. attributors , "as the Minister indicated"
- 4. attitude , " must, have to, surprisingly, it is difficult, imposible, I believe , etc."
- 5.commentaries like rhetorical questions , for example " is this the right behavior?, direct appeal , such as "dear listeners, you , etc." , and personalizations such as "I, we, etc."

In general, semantic classification of given by Halliday and Hassan(1976) has been chosen in this study as it has the strength of being more sensitive to the varieties and social than any other classification.

**3.Forms and position of DMs****DMs have different forms and positions that can be explained in the following :**

- 1)Preposition, such as (in the first place , in addition , etc.)
- 2) infinitival phrases , such as (to conclude , to sum up , etc.)
- 3-adeverbs , such as ( subsequently , accordingly , etc.)
- 4-compound adverbs , such as ( therefore , nevertheless , etc ) and
- 5-a whole clause , such as ( one may add , that is to say , etc.)

As for the position , DMs can appear in a variety of positions .Theses possible positions are identified below (Chalker , 1984 : 89, and Quirk et al , 1985 : 490).

1-Initial position(I) : Conjuncts in this position precede any clause element in the sequence, that is , before the subject ; as seen in the following example :

*18-He is a afraid of the dark .And therefore , he believes in ghosts .*

b.Medial position (M) comes between the subject and the auxiliary verb or between the subject and the main verb in the sentence, as in the example below.

*19-New roads , however/though , devour land .The road lobby say a by-pass would benefit town .The conservationists , on the one hand , say the cost to the countryside and villages is great .*

c-End Position (E) : In this position , conjuncts follow all obligatory elements and the position of obligatory adverbials .The final element of the sentence may be an object , or an obligatory adverbial as in :

*20-He refused to pay for the book .But the paid, at the same time, for the car .*

*21-Punctuation is needed in compositional skills .Sentences are difficult to understand if punctuation marks are lifted , though .*

(See Omran , 1999:11)

**4. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This work investigates the use of DMs by Iraqi EFL learners, Hong Kong ESL and American English native

speakers.. Although the number initially was varied among three corpora, yet they were equalized in terms of their number to consist of 12 essays for each corpus. The essays were part of a project of reader response done together with Dr. Corrigan, an American teacher at City University of Hong Kong in China. The focus of that project was on how this theory could guide students to compose and reflect their views to themselves and to the students of other countries (Corrigan and Chiad, 2014:44). The present research does not focus on the quality of written essays but rather on the use of DMs by university students.

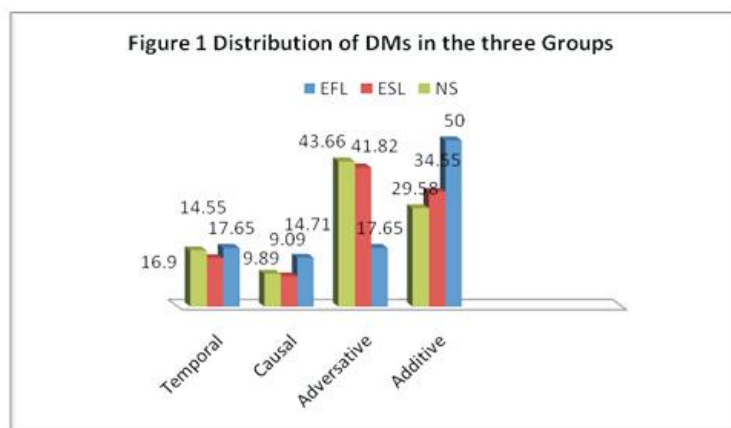
The analysis starts with counting the frequency of occurrence of DMs and then investigates the types of DMs used in each corpus. Then, it checks if the DMs are overused or underused by EFL and ESL according to NS norm. Findings are discussed in relation to research questions listed above to see if they are answered or not. This makes the discussion and interpretation easy to follow by the reader.

### 1- What is the frequency of occurrence of DMs?

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentages of DMs in general and in each corpus in particular. The overall number of DMs in the whole corpus is 160 (0.78% of the total number of words). The most frequent category of DMs in the whole material is "adversative" which accounts for 60 instances (37.5%), then "additive" with 57 instances (35.62%), then comes "temporal" with 26 (16.26%), and finally is "causal" with 17 occurrences (10.62%).

Next, if we look at each group's use of DMs, different patterns can be observed: in NS group, the frequency decreases in the order of adversative, additive, temporal, and causal. An exact pattern is found in ESL group. Another opposite pattern is noticed in EFL group, that is, the highest frequency is found in the additive, and temporal type, and then the frequency goes down in the order of adversative, and lastly, causal.

The results show a contrast between NS and EFL in terms of their use of DMs. The EFL writers' essays rely heavily on additive DMs to arrange and organize their ideas, used mainly to add and lists the main points of the discussion. The NS writings, on the other hand, use more adversative DMs to develop their critical essays more logically.



To find out the overall occurrences of DMs in EFL, ESL, and NS, the total number of words in each group is calculated. It appears that the total number of words in EFL is 4,674 and the number of DMs is 34. Therefore, the percentage of their frequency is 0.73%. In ESL, the number of words is 4,235, and the number of DMs is 55, therefore the percentage is 1.30%. In NS, the number of words is 11,846, and the total number of DMs is 71, therefore the percentage of DMs is 0.60%. This result illustrates one of the differences between NNS and NS writers in that ESL learners and to a lesser degree EFL tend to use a greater number of DMs than NS. This variation in the use of DMs is related to the length of the essays. Native English writers tend to write longer essays than the other two groups.

The question why there is such a difference is related to two explanations put by Crewe (1990). The first is that non-native speakers show logical relatedness in their essays when there is no need for it. Another point might be related to EFL in the main place and to ESL to a lesser extent which is that the much use of DMs might be



explained by their intention to hide the poor writing style by blind application of DMs and their want to control the weak area by much use of discourse superficial connectors.

### 3.The frequency of each semantic category in NNS and NS.

When looking at the table again, the following points are noticeable.

**1) Additive :** Overall , this is the second frequent category in the whole material of the study .It has 57 occurrences (35.62%).A tendency toward this relation is observed in EFL .There are 17 DMs (50%) used to show the additive meaning and the most frequent of which is the simple additives like “also” and “finally” with 4 occurrences each and a percentage of 11.76% , followed by the DM “and”. In ESL group, 19 additives are noticed with (34.55%).The most frequent markers are “also” which has 5 occurrences (9.09%), and “and” which has 3 occurrences (5.45%).

In NS, the additives make up 21 frequency of occurrence (29.58%).The most frequent is “and” with 7 occurrences (9.86%), and “the first” comes with 3 occurrences (4.23%). See the examples below.

22-her husband was busy in reading magazine or doing thing alone without sharing his wife with him . Also he wasn't allowed to his wife to make any change in her shape, because he wasn't like such these.(EFL corpus)

23-In holidays, people supposed to rest.Also, holidays are often treated as reconciliations to most couples who have bumpy past or relationships.(ESL corpus)

24- I had to reread the line (to make sure I wasn't hallucinating) and let the “get” echo within my mind—let alone the “kitty.” And as the story continues her attitude begins to regress as well.(NS corpus)

**2. Adversative :**the analysis shows this relation is the highest among other relations in the material as a whole having 60 occurrences (37.5%). The DMs “however” and “but” predominate in whole data which points out to the fact that a higher functional load is expressed by them .“But” mostly functions as a cooperative “sharing device” and confirmative (Quirk, 1955:178).

In NS corpus, the adversative relation is the highest, 31 frequency of occurrence (43.66 % ) ,which seem to be important in argumentative writing.The concessive 'however' predominates in this corpus having 11 occurrences (15.49%) ,and “ but” having 8 occurrences (11.27% ) , among other DMs. On the other hand , ESL corpus makes up 23 occurrences (41.82%). The most frequent of which is “ but” with 6 occurrences (10.91%), and “ however ” with 5 occurrences ( 9.09% ). In EFL , this relation has the least frequency 6 occurrences (17.68%) mostly by “but” which has 5 occurrences , and one occurrence is for “however”.

25- To me, Hemingway's style is minimalistic but conceptually complex. However it's not so minimalistic that I cannot imagine the story, -life—it seemed mundane and bleak. (NS corpus)

26-Selfishness occurs in the bygone days.But technology becoming more advanced and Societies becoming more civilized,the dark side of human being remains. (ESL corpus)

27-His wife tried to be compassionate with the cat but can not. Wife decided to persuade her husband to get rid of the cat But her husband did not agree and it was believed that his mentally ill wife to feel the fear of cats. (EFL corpus)

The word “however” is used in a planned and coherent discourse . It can arise when there is a shift in the presentation of ideas and it also functions as contrastive , and interruptive . The first meaning is expressed like “anyway this may be ” . The latter meaning presents a continuation of the preceding topic and it is often used sentence-initially, while the concessive addition is close to “ anyway ”, “ at any rate ” and “ in any case ”

**3.Causal:** the least frequent category in the material . It has 17 occurrences (10.62%).There are 5 DMs (14.71%) used to indicate the causal meaning in EFL. The most frequent marker is “so” which has 5 occurrences (14.70%). In NS, it makes up 7 occurrences (9.89%), among which is “so” which has 2 occurrences (2.82%). There are 5 occurrences (9.09%) in ESL .The most frequent one is “therefore” which has 3 occurrences (5.45%).See the



examples below.

28- All this due to negligence between couple and lack of understanding of one another. So couple must understand the responsibility of marriage and life to be a stable life. (EFL corpus)

29-If I had written this, I doubt it would have been published and I doubt it would be studied in any literature class. So, there is envy. Since I did not write this story, and it was written by Ernest Hemingway, I know the problem lies with me. (NS corpus)

30-To compensate non-corresponding response previously be beckoning "Singor" back into the covered hotel, she retrieved "the cat in the rain" to her customers. Therefore, it could be suggested that there is class inequality. (ESL corpus)

**4. Temporal:** comes third with 26 (16.26%). There are 6 (17.65%) used to indicate the temporal category. The most prevalent marker is "finally" which makes up 4 occurrences (11.76%). There are 12 (16.19%) occurrences in NS. The most frequent is "then" which has 3 occurrences (4.23%). Finally comes ESL with 8 (14.55%) of them is "meanwhile" and "to conclude" which have 2 occurrences (3.64%) each. Consider the examples below.

31-He asked her to stop complaining and have something to read. Finally the maid brings her a cat other the one she has seen. (EFL corpus)

32-This is how the woman seems to feel about her relationship. Then when the woman is done talking and in the end being let down by her husband a knock comes at the door. (NS corpus).

33- I want it be spring and ..., it shows how she complained irrationally. Meanwhile, when she was muttering, he husband was still sitting on the bed and reading. (ESL corpus)

Categories of DMs	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Total	%
	EFL		ESL		NS			
Additive	17	50	19	34.55	21	29.58	57	35.62
Adversative	6	17.65	23	41.82	31	43.66	60	37.5
Causal	5	14.71	5	9.09	7	9.89	17	10.62
Temporal	6	17.65	8	14.55	12	16.90	26	16.26
Total	34	100	55	100	71	100	160	100

**Table(1) Distribution of DMs in the three Groups**

To account for the number of DMs in the essays in each group, type-token ratio was calculated by dividing the total frequency of occurrence for each DM by the total frequency of DMs in each corpus as shown in Table 2 below. A hypothesis is stated as follows: when there is a low ratio of type token, it will give the indication that there is a lesser use of the types of DMs which appear with a high degree of repetition. On the other hand, a high-type token ratio means that there is a relatively higher variety of DMs with lesser chances of repetition for each DM.

Variety	EFL	ESL	NS
Tokens	34	55	71
Types	23	12	33
Ratio	37.5	41.82	46.49

**Table 2. The variety ratio of DMs in the three Groups**

The results in Table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference in type-token ratio among the three corpora. In EFL, it is 37.5%, while in ESL, it is 41.82%, but in NS, it is 46.49%. The result may be due to the fact that NS uses diverse DMs which consists of more types and a lesser degree of recurrence than the other two groups. On the other hand, EFL consists of lesser types with more chances of repetition of each type, which sheds light on

the fact that EFL learners may not be familiar with various types of DMs that can be freely chosen to develop their argumentative writing as they intend.

ESL is in the middle. These results indicate the EFL sticks to fewer and certain types of DMs in comparison to other two groups. On the other hand, NS use more types of DMs which may suggest that NS corpus contains a greater variation of DMs which is an indicator of good style of writing essays.

## 2. What is the preferred position of DMs?

Table 3 shows that the dominant position which is the sentence-initial position in the three groups, followed by the medial and then the end position. By the initial position, the writer can guide the reader to a particular point of importance. Yet, the actual occurrences for the three groups show a difference in frequencies. DMs are generally used in sentence initial position by EFL sample, which appear with great relative frequency (100%) of total number of DMs in this sample. They appear not to be able to employ DMs in different positions. This frequency is higher than those of ESL and NS. That is, Iraqi EFL tend to use these markers in the initial position. An explanation might be given is that because of the a limited knowledge and less skill of the use of these markers, Iraqi EFL prefer the singleness of their place compared to NS and ESL as well. Native speakers vary the positions of DMs to avoid the tediousness of the single position and show more proficiency, which reflects one of the qualities of good writing/speaking. Except for the initial position, we can see that DMs are higher in NS than the other two groups in the medial and end positions with 7.804% and 2.81% respectively. In ESL, the frequencies are as the following: 96.36% for the initial position, 1.81 for medial and end position each.

Position	EFL	ESL	NS	Total
Initial	34 (100%)	53 (96.36%)	64 (90.41%)	151
Medial	-	1 (1.81%)	5 (7.04%)	6
End	-	1 (1.81%)	2 (2.81%)	3
Total	24	55	71	160

Table 3 Preferred Positions of DM

## 4. DO NNS OVERUSE OR UNDERUSE DMS?

When we look at Table (1), it is noticeable that the additive category is the most prevalent in Iraqi EFL group. The causal relations comes second. This is an indication that there is an overuse of the additives and causal by EFL students in comparison to the American and Hong Kong ESL students. In addition, Iraqi non-native speakers underuses adversatives which are used more frequently in NS 43.66%. ESL use adversatives with slightly lesser frequency as the native speakers 41.82%.

In addition, it is noticeable in the above table that some DMs are overused or underused by nonnative speakers. For example, the Iraqi learners of English overuse the words 'but', 'so', 'also', 'In other words', and 'finally'. An explanation for this phenomenon is related to the learners' interference from Arabic. For instance the word "but" is equivalent to the conjunctive (لكن - lakin), 'so' is similar to the Arabic conjunctive (فـ/ faa) and 'also' is equal to the word (أَيْضًا/ كذلك - 'Aydan/kadhalik). These conjunctives are the main conjunctives that are used in Arabic to join sentences.

In addition, some DMs like (*for instance, therefore, yet*) are overused by Hong Kong students. It was also found that the conjunctive "and" is underused by underused by the ESL sample, while 'or', 'overall', 'the first' are not used by the non-native samples.

It also found that NS frequently use adversative DMs, such as 'however' (15.49%) mainly to show contrast. This DM is generally underused by ESL who instead focus on the use of 'but' to express the adversative relation. This point can be illustrated by making a reference to Hong Kong students' learning background in which they were taught in schools to use particular kinds of DMs in writing. The above use of "but", in addition to "also" and, "therefore" are the DMs that were heavily emphasized in schools. Another point is related to

interference of the mother tongue (Chan, 2004:56) which stands behind the overuse or underuse of certain DMs.

### 5.SOME COMMON MISUSES

The improper use of DMs whether underuse or overuse is demonstrated by Granger and Tyson (1996: 24-25) who confirm that "connectors are difficult to master." The reasons may be related to the inability to differential stylistically individual connectors, insufficient knowledge in using connectors to connect sentences.

Some common errors can be noticed in EFL and ESL groups .

#### 1-English passive voice verb

This pattern of misuse is noticed only in the NNS-EFL group.For example , look at the following example by an Iraqi student:

*34-her husband was busy in reading magazine or doing thing alone without sharing his wife with him . Also he wasn't allowed to his wife to make any change in her shape, because he wasn't like such these.*

In this example, beside other errors, there is an error in the English passive voice verb forms caused by a transfer from Arabic to English because many Arabic learners of English tend to have problems in using passive verb correctly.

2-Missing commas after introductory DM. There are numerous examples found in NNS-EFL group.Look at the following example by an Iraqi student:

*35-He doesn't like the change at all. But of course that is a wrong thing from my opinion*

In the above example, the use of two commas is necessary.One should be placed after the word " but" and the other after the word " of course" to separate them from the main clause. The student here lacks knowledge about the rule of using commas after DMs correctly.

#### 3-Run-on sentences :

Some examples of run-on sentences can be noticed in EFL corpus where more than two independent parts are fused together instead of linking them properly.In the example below, apart from the overuse of the DM "also", the part " also the woman was imprisoned in her room.", needs a period or a semicolon to start another idea.

*36-in this story the cat is just like the lady in many ways both of them lack care and might say ( of love) also the woman was imprisoned in her room and the cat was imprisoned under the table.*

#### 4. Form-related misuse

This type of misuse is found only in the NNS-EFL group in which the students misuse the DM " in other words", by replacing it with the wrong expression " by other word", where the preposition "by" is mixed with "in" , as in the following:

*37-God put it to woman and we usually remind her with her duties. Most of the people, by other word the ignorant people consider the woman not more a weak creature that is created for service only, but the truth that after any great man is a great woman*

#### 5. Use-related misuse

This type of a misuse pattern is found in the NNS-ESL group.It is noticed in the the example below where

there is a misuse in the word "rather" in which the expression "apart from" is a better choice for the writer to add more information.

38-The story, "Cat in the Rain", written by Ernest Hemingway, is mainly about an American couple who spent their time in a hotel. Rather its literal meaning in the story, the use of symbolism is projected by Hemingway in order to convey certain implied meanings.

DMs	ESL	%	EFL	%	NS	%
Also	5	9.09	4	11.76	2	2.82
Meanwhile	2	3.64	-	-	-	-
However	5	9.09	1	2.94	11	15.49
Therefore	3	5.45	-	-	1	1.41
Yet	4	7.27	-	-	2	2.82
To conclude	2	3.64	-	-	-	-
For example	2	3.64	1	2.94	-	-
Instead	2	3.64	-	-	-	-
But	6	10.91	5	14.70	8	11.27
On one hand	2	3.64	-	-	1	1.41
On the other hand	5	9.09	-	-	4	5.63
In a way	2	3.64	-	-	-	-
For instance	2	3.64	2	5.88	-	-
Moreover	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
So	2	3.64	5	14.70	2	2.82
To sum up	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
And	3	5.45	3	8.82	7	9.86
All in all	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
Plus	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
In comparison	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
Then	1	1.82	2	5.88	3	4.23
Again	1	1.82	-	-	1	1.41
Rather	1	1.82	-	-	-	-
Beside	-	-	1	2.94	-	-
Finally	-	-	4	11.76	1	1.41
In fact	-	-	2	5.88	-	-
In other words	-	-	3	8.82	-	-
Now	-	-	1	2.94	-	-
From this	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Of course	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Overall	-	-	-	-	2	2.82
other	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Another /	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
From that point on	-	-	-	-	2	2.82
at first	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
The first	-	-	-	-	3	4.23
The final thing	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Lastly	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
one last thing	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
To begin with	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Along with that	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Regardless	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Initially	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Nonetheless	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Or	-	-	-	-	4	5.63
After all	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Similarly	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Thus	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Hence	-	-	-	-	1	1.41
Total	55		34		71	

Table (4) DMs in the three groups

## 6.CONCLUSIONS

- 1- DMs are used by non-native students of English at a significantly higher frequency rates than those of native speakers.
2. High variety of DMs is found in NS corpus rather than NNS groups , which demonstrates a good writing on the part of the native speakers and a bad writing skill on the part of NNS , in particular EFL Iraqi group.
- 3.The overuse of the DMs in the writings of NNS may be explained by some causes as pointed out by :
  - a. students attempt to show logical relatedness in their writings in cases where there is no need for logicity.
  - b. Students want to overcome their problem by much use of superficial linkers( Crewe,1990).
  - c. Another explanation for this phenomenon is related to the learners' interference from their mother tongues.
4. EFL Iraqi group prefer to use Dms in the initial position for they have no knowledge about their use in other places. However, DMs come in a variety of positions in NS sample and ESL to some extent.
5. Some common errors have been noticed in EFL and ESL groups, such as English passive voice verb, Missing commas after introductory DM, Run-on sentences,Form-related misuse and Use-related misuse.

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