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Problems in Using English Written Discourse Markers

by Libyan EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

This qualitative and quantitative study investigates English written Discourse Markers and how they are used by Libyan EFL undergraduate students at The Faculty of Education in Misrata. What this study takes into consideration is that well-formed and meaningful sentences are not the only necessary factors for creating understandable writing. It is how sentences and phrases are connected logically to ensure that text units and ideas make sense together. In this study, Discourse Markers are tools of achieving coherence and means of establishing relations across written segments for connecting ideas among units of discourse. Discourse Markers are drawn from various grammatical classes. However, their significant role is not only to relate text segments, but also to signal the writer's intended meaning and attitude, and guide text-readers' interpretation all through the text.

The aim of this study is to investigate the problems in using Discourse Markers by Libyan EFL undergraduate students. More clearly, to find out what the appropriate and inappropriate markers are used and what the main reasons are behind misusing them. To this end, the study takes the academic settings (i.e. the environment of where the students are exposed to) as its source of data. It identifies, classifies and analyzes Discourse Markers in 40 essays by adopting an analytical framework of Fraser's (1999) taxonomy. The findings show a considerable confusion of the use of Discourse Markers by Libyan EFL undergraduate students. The markers used indicate students lack of awareness and understanding of the distinctive functions of such expressions in written discourse. This calls for improving the Libyan EFL undergraduate students' discourse competence.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. 0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the whole thesis. It involves several aspects including an overview of the research topic, research objectives and a clear description of the problem examined herein. In addition, the significance of the study regarding its position in the academic discourse and the research questions are highlighted. This chapter also provides an elaboration on the context of the study by describing the nature of the academic environment in which this study was carried out. Finally, an outline of the overall study is viewed.

1. 1 Overview of the Research Topic

Norrish (1983) states that writing is the most challenging skill in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). As far as the academic writing is concerned, EFL learners need to transform their ideas and thoughts into an understandable piece of writing. The challenge is how such ideas are delivered across sentences and phrases of the target language. Owing to the fact that language is a system of communication (Goldstein, Bruce, Vanhorn, Francis and Neath, 2011), EFL learners need to realize certain key elements in order to achieve the communicative goals of writing. The writing skill, as Nunan (1991) suggests, is not only writing words and well-formed sentences on papers. The writing skill is the ability to use strings of well-formed sentences in a logical sequence. It is concerned with how the overall structure of a certain text is coherently constructed. Therefore, the text is understandable and coherent when the readers are able to perceive and interpret what the writer brings to the text.

Regarding EFL undergraduate students, with which the current study is concerned, students at this level should be able to create a long piece of writing and present ideas in a logical order. The academic writing, thus, is about much more than just active writing. It is not simply a skill. Rather, it is a group of skills involving critical thinking, creating a convincing argument and good research skills. For that reason, EFL undergraduate students need to make their writing as comprehensible as possible. Accordingly, their writing should be coherent in a way the parts and segments of texts are connected logically. The connection, however, cannot be achieved unless the reader's attention is hooked by reinforcing his curiosity to follow the flow of discourse from the beginning to the end. One way to do this is by relating the sentence back to the previous sentence. This insures that each paragraph is unified around a single idea and the whole ideas of the text make sense together. One type of the connective devices that relate the parts of a text are Discourse Markers (DMs).

To my knowledge, there has been no research conducted on English written DMs as significant pragmatic ties in the Libyan context. In order to fill this gap, the current study investigates DMs from a discourse perspective in Libyan EFL undergraduate students' writing.

This study focuses on how third semester undergraduate students at The Faculty of Education use DMs as *in contrast, however, therefore, for this reason, nevertheless* and *thus* in their essay writing. DMs as one tool of other various tools of achieving coherence are considered by linguists as means of establishing relationships across discourse segments. They also connect ideas among units of discourse. DMs, thus, tie sentences which they represent with the preceding ones (Fraser, 1999). In addition, they create a kind

of linkage between the writer, reader and the meaning of the text (Hoey, 1983). Learners of EFL may find these kinds of linguistic expressions difficult to decode due to the cross language variation in operating stretches of discourse. In Arabic, for instance, the overuse of the additive marker *wa* (i.e. the equivalent English marker *and*) is considerably natural and acceptable. In contrast, that is not the case in English, as the overuse of the additive marker *and* sounds unacceptable. However, the absence of DMs in texts “would be judged `unnatural`, `awkward`, `disjoined`, `impolite`, `unfriendly` or dogmatic within the communicative context” (Brinton, 1996; p. 35). Therefore, the misuse of DMs creates non-native like texts and may breakdown communication as pointed out by (Fraser 1990). Consequently, the appropriate use of such linguistic expressions by EFL learners guides them to the bases of well-structured writing and fluent speaking alike. Several studies proved a correlation between the appropriate use of DMs by EFL learners and their writing quality (Intraprawat and Steffensen, 1995; Jalilifar, 2008; Jin, 2001; Kalajahi, 2015 and Shareef, 2015). Accordingly, the current study attempts to investigate the problems that Libyan undergraduate students face in using DMs in their writing and the reasons behind such problems.

1. 2 Research Problem

The misuse of DMs affects the writing quality of and comprehension of the reader respectively. As discussed in the previous section that the lack of knowledge in using the DMs within texts makes it impossible to construct coherent and cohesive EFL writing. Because of the fact that curriculum in Libya is exam-oriented (Orafi & Borg, 2009), students pay most of their attention to develop their abilities in terms of grammar and vocabulary. For that reason, some EFL undergraduate students, in Libya, are able to write

well-formed and meaningful sentences but fail to combine these sentences into larger chunks of texts. It is possible to say that such fail might be due to the fact that Libyan students` discourse competence has not been improved. Thus, examining the learners` performance of using DMs in their writing is needed.

1. 3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the difficulties encountered by the Libyan EFL undergraduate students in using DMs in terms of appropriateness. Moreover, it attempts to find out whether third semester students at The Faculty of Education are aware of the functions of DMs. This study also aims to find answers for why students face such difficulties in their essay writing.

1. 4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study might be helpful in the field of learning EFL. The increasing demand for learning English language calls for the need for more efficient and effective learning strategies. Accordingly, considering the use of written DMs by EFL learners presents a comprehensible understanding of how Libyan EFL undergraduate students logically relate between propositions and ideas of the text. It also provides valuable data for the development of the discourse and pragmatic knowledge for EFL learners.

The outcome of this study sheds light on the discourse competence not only for undergraduate English language students but also for English language teachers. It might be also helpful for text studies in general.

1. 5 Research Questions

The researcher suggests that misusing discourse markers and lack of awareness of their function would not make EFL students able to write understandable essays. This discussion raises the following research questions:

1. What are the problems in using English DMs by Libyan EFL undergraduate students in their writing?
2. Are Libyan EFL undergraduate students aware of the function of DMs ?
3. What are the reasons behind the inappropriate use of DMs by the Libyan EFL undergraduate students if there are any?

1. 6 Context of the Study

English language is the only foreign language taught in the Libyan public schools. It is first introduced as a school subject in the fifth grade of Basic Education (i.e., primary, preparatory stages), thereafter, it is taught at the age of 15 for three years of Intermediate Education (i.e., secondary stage). English is also taught to students who have enrolled in the English departments at the university. Participants of the current study are the students of the third semester in English, at The Faculty of Education of Misurata University. The concern of the English language department is on the study of the four language skills through learning about the language such as literature, linguistics and applied linguistics. In addition, the third semester is the first learning course where the students are taught to write various types of essays. Moreover, students at the third semester are expected to write the three essay components, i.e. an introduction, body paragraph and a conclusion.

It is noteworthy that writing essays requires different types of writing styles, for instance, argumentative and expressive writings. Students are also expected to deal with the expression of ideas and express their opinion on various topics. Thus, it is important to take into account the quality of their academic writing ability at this stage in particular.

1. 7 Overview of the Study

By presenting an overview of the current study, this section provides an outline of the structure of the study. The study is divided into six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis, discussions and conclusion. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study; its research topic, problem, objectives, significance, questions and context. Chapter Two presents the Literature Review and provides an overview of what is meant by Discourse Analysis and its relation to language teaching and learning in general and written discourse in particular. The chapter also provides a theoretical framework for identifying and analyzing Discourse Markers as means of creating coherence and cohesion. Besides, a review of the previous studies of Discourse Markers in EFL context is provided. Chapter Three presents the methodology for data collection and analysis and how the overall plan is used. It also presents the analytical model used in the study. Chapter Four presents data analysis and results. It shows that the analysis is based on describing the functions of the used DMs. It also analyzes the supporting data involved in the research. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the analyzed data by answering the stated research questions in the study. Finally, Chapter Six provides a conclusion of the study by presenting the findings and pedagogical implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2. 0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature pertinent to English written Discourse Markers and their relation to the quality of usage by learners of EFL. In this chapter a brief introduction to Discourse Analysis and its importance in the field of language teaching and learning will be presented. The nature of written discourse and its key elements in coherence and cohesion will also be presented. In addition, this chapter reviews the definitions and theoretical background of Discourse Markers. Some of the previous studies that have been conducted to investigate the use of Discourse Markers by EFL learners will also be discussed. Accordingly, the relevant studies will be discussed in order to position the present study regarding the others.

2. 1 A Brief Introduction to Discourse Analysis

A discourse is a set of statements which form an object (Parker, 1992). The statements could be written or verbal exchanges between people. The statements help individuals to give explanations about how a social reality is constructed (Robles, 2012). The term *discourse* is treated in different ways according to different perspectives. Van Dijk (1989) defined *a discourse* as a set of communicative social interactions, spoken or written, such as conversations, meetings, interviews, letters, contracts and poetry. The discourse analyst asserts that when people speak or write they do not do so by accident, rather, they have a social target in mind. A discourse, therefore, involves large linguistic units which are

higher than the level of a small linguistic element. Moreover, it includes the use of language in an interactional situation between people.

Thinking through what discourses do and how they operate, regarding the earlier mentioned senses, leads to think about what discourse analysis is? What is the theory behind analyzing discourses? The notion of Discourse Analysis (DA) has been an active research from different perspectives among linguists. According to Brown and Yule (1983), McCarthy (1991) discourse analysis is mainly concerned with language in use. It is worth mentioning that the use of language includes the two forms of practicing the language, written and spoken forms. McCarthy (1991) emphasizes that the relationship between the language and its context is the main concern in analyzing discourse.

In the early stages of DA research, in the fifties, the grammarian Zellig Harris (1952) published an article titled as 'Discourse Analysis'. The author came up with an approach which is concerned with the structure of the linguistic elements in lengthy texts. The main focus of his approach is the relation between the text and its social environment. Ten years later, a British linguist named John Austin (1962) published a book called 'How to do things with words'. The author outlined 'the speech acts theory' in his book and suggests that speech acts are not describing, rather, they are doing things. He comments that words, for example, commands 'come here!' or when the judge in a court says 'guilty' are not describing, they are doing something else. Such words are commanding and judging. Therefore, they are doing things. However, listeners are able to interpret the speech acts they hear due to the linkage they establish between the linguistic form and the activity used in a particular situation or context. The command word, for example, 'come here' is only meaningful if it is used in its context communicatively. This view is supported by

Levinson (1983) who adopted the pragmatic theory in analyzing discourse. He focused on the study of meaning in context which was his prior account for analyzing and understanding discourse.

There is a range of discourse linguists who wrote about DA in view of the social sciences in particular. Searle (1969) and Grice (1975), for instance, examined discourse regarding the social life. They focus on analyzing discourse in language use as a form of social activities. Grice (1975) came up with an approach based on 'speech act theory'. The author was interested in investigating the formulation of participants' conversational maxims. He asserts that there are certain conversational maxims observed when people talk, quantity (what the speaker says should be brief and informative), quality (what the speaker says should be truthful with adequate evidence, and does make sense to the receiver), relevance (what the speaker says should fit in the receiver's real world knowledge) and manner (what the speaker says should be appropriate in terms of understanding, clarity and consistency). These maxims are considered as roles that people play when they communicate.

Halliday (1973) presented an approach, i.e. 'the functional approach', in analyzing the social functions of language and thematic informational structure of discourse. This approach is more concerned with what language does than on how its structure is formed. Language according to Halliday is a set of meaningful choices which is informed by the social structure. This approach emphasizes that the function of language is mainly to get things done and the function of conveying ideas and thoughts comes after. This view is similar to the *speech act theory's* which is discussed above. The two perspectives treat any utterance as allocating a speech function (demanding and offering information or action).

Reviewing the relationship between discourse analysis and the social function of language brings us to observe how people use language in the context they are using it. For instance, a situation where friends might have a conversation in a restaurant and they do things with language. That would be language in use which is related to a particular situation. DA, thus, looks at what happens when language is used in communication. It tries to specify features of various types of language use. Language use according to DA, therefore, is governed by certain rules in which the produced language is successfully interpreted and the communicative situation is successfully achieved. The combination between the language use (who says, what to say, when to say it and how they say it) and the context in which the language is used are the main focus of DA.

2. 2 Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching and Learning

As reviewed in the previous section, Discourse Analysis is concerned with language in use where the successful interpretation of the language is achieved in a communicative situation. Therefore, it reflects our social reality in life (Gee, 2005). It is about how the participants get things done in a conversation, how they describe a certain situation and what they use in a certain setting or conversation. For instance, how doctors convey the bad news to their patients or how teachers convey certain ideas to their students in classroom setting. Patients or students, in turn, shape their responses depending on how such messages are conveyed in a communicative situation (context).

Since the main function of language is communication (Jakobson, 1960), and the main aspect in classroom setting is also communication, there is a functional relation between Discourse Analysis and language teaching and learning. The question that might be asked

is what are the practical ways that language teachers can implement to make effective use of the language? Before 1970, the pedagogical objectives of the traditional viewpoint was to rely on teaching grammar and vocabulary as in Grammar Translation, Audio-Lingual and Direct methods. However, these traditional methods failed to provide language learners fluency and accuracy experience of the taught language. Learning a language “does not mean to understand, speak read and write sentences, it means to know how sentences are used to communicate effect” (Widdowson, 1979a, p. 1). As a result there has been considerable interest in promoting classroom discourse for language learning and teaching. Second language learners do not only need to perceive the given vocabulary, phonology and grammatical rules of the target language. They also need to be exposed to the highest linguistic levels of language systematicity (Riggenbach, 1999). Therefore, language teaching should be shaped in a way that learners can interact inside the classroom settings to improve their knowledge of discourse and sociocultural competence of the second language. Douglas (2001) asserts that the absence of such knowledge might make learners rely on their first language`s discourse and sociocultural competence which probably lead them to difficulties in communication. In addition, that might make language learners unable to use the language in real life situations and fail to interpret the received discourse. For that reason, Discourse Analysis, in the field of language teaching and learning, aims to develop learners` discourse skills and improve their pragmatic awareness of how the actual use of the language is achieved.

According to language learning, students should be encouraged by their teachers to study the language by themselves, making the language use promote the interaction inside the classroom and making them discourse analysts (MacCarthy and Carter, 1994). Therefore,

the communication between teacher-student and student-student interaction needs to be the main aspect inside the language classes. That is central to language teaching, thus, it is central to language learning. For instance, managing groups of students, classroom activities, tasks and all sorts of practicing are organized through communication and that is an important thing on the curriculum (Van Lier, 1996). It is important in providing language teachers a clear understanding on learners' language achievement in terms of production and development. Accordingly, classroom interaction is considered as a tool for mediating and assisting learning (Walsh, 2006). That means, if language teachers are aware of how classroom communication and interaction positively operate inside the classes, and how the target language is used, their learners become better at handling discourse which, in turn, serve better learning.

DA sees language as elements strung together in relationships. The analysis goes beyond the level of the sentence. Thus, discourse analysis is concerned with how speakers (in conversations) or writers (within texts) use strings of sentences, clauses, phrases, utterances together in order to make their spoken or written discourse understandable. It is "to see language as a dynamic, social, interactive phenomenon—whether between speaker and listener, or writer and reader" (Crystal, 1987) as cited in (Mohamshaban, 2012, p. 4). In this case, receivers of the produced discourse need to interpret the given discourse depending on what the writer or speaker brings to the produced texts and the context in which it occurs or is used. A successful discourse, written or spoken, accounts for how ideas and thoughts are connected together in order to enhance the production of the intended messages.

It can be concluded that DA has a significant role in language teaching and learning. The significance relies on how the field of DA treats language as a tool for communicating ideas, thoughts, information and all different types of messages between the users of the language. DA is concerned with presenting the target language in association with its use in different contexts. For example, vocabulary and grammar should not be presented in isolation. In other words, language use does not only mean to memorize certain words and grammatical rules. It is not only a matter of producing well formed sentences. Language use is how to use such aspects when speakers/writers need to communicate with their receivers of the language, readers/listeners, in a real life situation. If language learners are aware of the functional properties of the used linguistic elements in discourse, that would facilitate their perception of the taught language in terms of production and interpretation.

In literature, there is an assumption that the term ‘discourse’ is concerned with analyzing the spoken form of texts, whereas the term ‘text’ is concerned with the traditional meaning which is the written form of texts (Stubbs, 1983) and (Coulthard, 1985). Nevertheless, there are other discourse analysts who champion the view that *text* is concerned with written and spoken stretches of language (Halliday and Hassan, 1976). However, in the present study, the concept *discourse* is used to refer to any utterance which is meaningful. It refers to written and spoken forms that people perform in a communicative situation. Whereas *text* refers to series of segments either written or spoken which have the property of a semantic and syntactic connectedness and a logical sequence order. Owing to the aims and purposes of this research, written discourse will be discussed in details in the following section.

2.3 Written Discourse

Basically, written discourse is different from spoken discourse. Because of the fact that discourse is a combination between language and context, and it is a communicative situation between participants (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 2004), the characteristic distinction of discourse forms (written and spoken) are considered. Such distinction is observed in terms of the 'context' and 'genre' (Nunan, 1993). When we compare the features of a produced discourse between a writer and speaker, there is probably a noticeable difference. It seems that the way of writing a certain idea is different from the way of saying it. The distinction might be related to how the idea is conveyed in different circumstances. For example, by saying something, the receiver is present, but in writing, the receiver is not. The intended message, which is produced by the sender, thus, is formed according to whom it is sent to, a listener or reader. In other words, forming the message might be governed by the absence and presence of the receiver. For instance, the writer has the chance to think what and how to convey his message. He also has the chance to evaluate, modify and reconstruct his writing. Therefore, the interaction might be different yet the impact on the produced discourse might be different too. In terms of face-to-face interaction, the message could be conveyed by using one word or probably by using some paralinguistic features, such as gestures, facial expressions, clear and modified voice (Edmondson, 2015). In writing, on the other hand, one can assume that the writer is the only person who interacts with the texts during the production process. In this case, the author or writer might need to think about the reader. He/she might need also to play the role of the writer and the role of the reader in order to convince himself as if he/she is the person who reads his/her own ideas.

On a different note, Nunan (1993) states that spoken and written discourse are similar to each other in their function of providing information to receivers of discourse. In contrast, Brown and Yule (1983) assume that there is a distinction between spoken and written discourse in terms of function. They assert that spoken discourse has an interactional function (communication), whereas, written discourse has a transactional function (documenting information and ideas). On the other hand, MacCarthy (1991) comments that the distinction relates to certain grammatical regularities shaping both of them. It is possible to disagree with the claim that spoken and written discourse differ in terms of the interactional and transactional functions. As some forms of writing, as in e-mail and internet chat messages, share similar linguistic means and properties as in spoken messages. Besides, the two forms of discourse are not only similar in the function of providing information, both are used for the sake of communication between people according to the situation they are used for. As discussed above, the settings of writing differ from the settings of speaking. Therefore, the situation in writing is different from speaking in terms of context. Accordingly, Written and spoken discourse are different in terms of the rules that are adopted in using them.

DA treats language as a unified structure. The analysis goes beyond the level of the isolated sentences. In terms of syntax and semantics the focus is on structure and meaning of well-formed sentences and phrases. However, syntax and semantics are considered in analyzing discourses. The regularities that shape our discourse are based on the way we use the lexical and grammatical forms of the language. In regard to written discourse, which is the focus of this research, the organization of the grammatical structure of texts is more important for written than for spoken discourse. DA in terms of written discourse,

therefore, accounts for well-formed written units of texts. It focuses on ‘how the structuring of sentences has implications for units such as paragraphs, and for the progression of whole text’ and “how the grammar of English offers a limited set of options for creating surface links” (McCarthy, 1991; p. 25). That means, there is a relationship between the text segments based on grammar. Such a surface link plays the role of the grammatical connection in linking the segments to one another in order to create a well-structured and organized text, as illustrated in the following example:

(1) A: Have you found your keys?

B: No, but I will (find my keys) one day.

C: In this case, you need to get new ones (keys).

The items *find my keys* are omitted in (1B). This omission is understood from the surrounding context in the preceded segment (1A). If *I will one day* in (1B) is used separately, that will not make sense to the reader. The other item that shows a connection between the segments in the above text is the item *ones* in (1C) which substitutes the word *keys* to avoid the repetition of unnecessary items and create a link between (1A), (1B) and (1C). *In this case* in (1C) is another linking device. This device is usually used in sentence initial positions to create a link between the sentence where it is occurred and the preceding one.

Text linkers are categorized under the name of *grammatical* and *lexical cohesive devices*. These linking devices and their types will be further discussed in the following subsection.

2. 4 Coherence and Cohesion in Written Discourse

Transforming thoughts and ideas into written discourse calls for certain norms or principles to guarantee a successful communicative representation. Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 202) assert that “a text is written within a certain context, aimed at specific readers”. The authors explain that “the writer’s purpose is realized with the structure and lexis used” (p. 203). Therefore, writers need to organize the text units in a certain way to help readers perceive the intended ideas clearly. Emphasizing the role of structure and lexis is emphasizing the grammatical and lexical items that have the property in establishing *coherent* writing. Moreover, the writer needs to think about the readers. He/she needs to think how to use such grammatical and lexical items in his/her writing in a way that meets the communicative purposes. The misuse of these devices in any piece of writing might make it meaningless and ambiguous to readers. The writer needs to think of to whom his/her writing is introduced to. Text writing should fit a certain context which is shared by the reader to insure the intended interpretation.

Chomsky (1965) asserts that humans are able to produce an infinite number of well-formed grammatical sentences. Discourse analysis, however, sees/considers that generating a random set of sentences does not result in coherent discourse. What results in a coherent discourse, Van Dijk (1977) stated, is the connectivity “between the propositions expressed by composite sentence and sequences of those sentences” (p.95). Van Dijk (1977) defines coherence as a semantic relationship of interpreting one sentence relating to the interpretation of the other sentences. It is possible to say, here, that writing a text is not only dependent on how its sentences are grammatically well formed. Writing a text accounts for how such sentences are presented smoothly one idea follows the previous one

in a logical sequence. A coherent text, therefore, is concerned with the organization of the whole content and its structure.

Reinhart (1980) comments that coherence is the property of the semantic and pragmatic relation between text propositions, and between text and context. He also suggests some standards in order to make a text coherent: consistency, connectedness and relevance. This view is supported by Schiffrin (1987) who agrees that coherence provides a connection between discourse structure, meaning and action. Thus a text is coherent if it helps its reader to create a set of relations between its structural parts (the grammatical structure at the text level), the meaning (the facts presented in text; the semantic level) and the situational context (the pragmatic level). This mixture of relations helps the reader to realize and perceive the overall structure. It is possible to recognize that such a viewpoint claims that the interpretation of a text relies on the presence of certain factors which enable text-readers construct the writer's intentions and thoughts of the text.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) a text is coherent "with respect to the context of situation, and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore, cohesive" (p. 23). That means, the association between the shared world of text structure and the reader ensures the intended interpretation, therefore, ensures coherence. If we suppose that a writer, for example, presents a piece of writing about mathematics to students of geography, that might not make sense to them. The text ideas do not match students' background knowledge, therefore, they might not be able to establish the intended interpretation. That interpretation cannot be achieved even if the text structure is well organized and cohesively connected. Thus, according to Halliday and Hasan, the situational context is the major factor in the interpretation process. It builds the way to

coherence. And coherence, in turn, builds the way to cohesion. This view agrees with Reinhart (1980) and Schiffrin`s (1987) claim on the role of the situational context of text in achieving coherence. They treat discourse as a social action with association to the role of the cohesive relations in discourse.

Before elaborating any further, it would be necessary to put in plain words what cohesion and cohesive devices are as adopted in literature. Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide the following categories of cohesive devices:

Table 1. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classification of cohesive devices

Cohesive Devices	
Grammatical Cohesion Devices	
Reference: referring items to something else within the text.	pronominal: e.g. <i>he, her, they, it, their</i> demonstrative: e.g. <i>this, that, those, these, here</i> comparative: e.g. <i>same, similar, such</i>
Ellipsis: the omission of unnecessary items in the text because they are understood by the receiver or the situational context.	nominal: deleting nouns, e.g. <i>I bought the brown bag.</i> <i>She bought the black.</i> verbal: deleting verbs, e.g. <i>I've got my watch fixed in the shop</i> <i>but Fatima`s watch at home.</i> clausal: deleting clauses, e.g. <i>A: Can I say something? B: <u>Sure.</u></i>
Substitution: replacing a string of words by one word.	nominal: <i>She made a big cake and I made a small <u>one.</u></i> verbal: <i>They asked me to tidy up the room, and I actually <u>did.</u></i>
Conjunction: connecting two separate sentences.	additive: e.g. <i>and, or, moreover</i> adversative: e.g. <i>however, but</i> causal: e.g. <i>thus, so</i> temporal: e.g. <i>after that, then</i>
Lexical Cohesion Devices	
Collocation: the co-occurrence of some items together.	e.g. <i>black and white, salt and pepper, ladies and gentlemen</i>
Synonymy: items that have similar meanings in different forms.	e.g. <i>sad/unhappy, sick/ill/unwell</i>

Hyponymy: items are semantically included within the domain of another item in a general-specific relation.	e.g. <i>furniture: chair, sofa, cupboard, coffee table</i>
Reiteration: repeating the same item in a later part of utterance.	e.g. <i>Coffee is extremely high in antioxidants. However, coffee disrupt sleep.</i>

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), “cohesion refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking something with what has gone before. That linking is achieved through relations in meaning” (p.10). Moreover, cohesion relations operate across sentences and “may be found just as well within a sentence” (p.8). It is possible to say that using cohesive links is not needed within the sentence as it is often the case within the text. That is because the power of the grammatical structure of the sentence insures the required cohesive property among its parts. Whereas such property cannot be found at the text bound unless certain devices are inserted. This means, any text should involve the property of cohesion in order to link its segments in discourse. The link between the segments of a text also accounts for the semantic considerations of the used entities. To illustrate how cohesive ties operate across sentences, and how the connection is achieved through the semantic relations here is an example:

(2) Dust off the black computer. Put it on my bedside table.

The pronoun *it* refers back to *the black computer*. In this case, the second sentence cannot be understood unless it refers back to the first one. Thus, cohesion operates beyond the level of the sentence. In addition, if another pronoun is used instead of *it*, for example *him*, in this case, the text does not make sense as the entity *computer* in the first sentence requires the pronoun *it* to fit its meaning in the following sentence. There is no relation in

meaning between *him* and *computer* in order to refer to each other in the text. Therefore, the cohesive relation cannot be achieved.

On the other hand, cohesive devices in a text might not be a sufficient factor in creating coherent texts (Brown & Yule, 1986). The following example is a group of sentences connected by some cohesive devices but lack coherency:

(3) My mum asked me to drink plenty of water. Water is what my grandma uses in the kitchen. The kitchen is my favorite place in our house. Buying a house is a dream nowadays. Nowadays rhymes with downplays.

Obviously, this text contains some formal cohesive ties across its segments, but fails to underlie an overt coherent linkage between its propositions. The sentences do not represent an explicit unified idea as there is no logical sequence to explain the relationships between them. Therefore, the above example cannot be considered as a coherent text. To this end, a text might make sense to its writer but he/she should make sure that it makes sense to its readers alike.

On the other hand, Enkvist (1978) claims that there is a possibility where a text can be coherent without the existence of cohesive ties. Similarly, Brown and Yule (1983) agree that the reader is able to perceive and interpret the text content whether there are apparent cohesive devices or not. Brown and Yule (1983) also emphasize that cohesion does not necessarily lead to coherence. It is the harmony between the message and the shared world which makes a text understandable. This viewpoint is also supported by Carrell (1982). Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that a text which lacks cohesive links, such as the example below, cannot be coherent.

(4) Twist, twirl. The bun is secured. Thanks to the clever bobby pins.

The reader of this text might not be able to make a logical connection between its segments. He/she might be able to do so if he/she recognizes the relation between *bun* and *bobby pins*. If this text is presented or said inside a classroom or in a restaurant, it will not make sense. However, it is only coherent and understandable if it is presented to hairdressers. They will definitely understand that this text is about hairstyles. Thus, coherence is not the same for everyone in the case of missing cohesive links. This issue could be more problematic if such texts are presented to non-native speakers of the target language. Learners of English as a foreign language, for example, might find these types of texts difficult to decode.

Schiffrin (1987) describes cohesive ties as clues of discourse which help people perceive the messages during conversations. She emphasizes that coherence depends upon the sender's ability of using such ties, on the one hand, and the receiver's ability of mapping those ties in order to interpret the intended message on the other hand. McCarthy (1991; p.26) has the same definition of cohesive links. He defines them as "clues or signals to how the text should be read", and, "they create links across sentences boundaries and pair and chain together items that are related" (p. 27). In addition, he asserts that "cohesion is only a guide to coherence" (p. 26) since such cohesion ties are clues but they are not absolute. However, MacCarthy has a different view to Schiffrin's regarding the coherent property. He explains that when a text involves the use of the pronoun *it*, there is more than one interpretation to which non-human entity *it* refers to. Therefore, "coherence is something created by the reader in the act of reading the text" (p. 26). It is possible to argue that coherence is not only built by the reader. It is the writer's responsibility at the first place to create understandable and logical writing. The writer should think about the readers of his

writing when references are used. Doing so, helps in creating proper relations among the parts of the text during the reading process. Consequently, readers are able to create coherence only if the writing is logically structured, cohesively connected and relevant to the situational context. Thus, coherence is built by both, the writer and reader.

The literature shows the different perspectives in defining coherence and cohesion and their relation to each other. This study treats coherence as the relationship between the ideas within the text, whereas cohesion as the explicit semantic relationship between the sentences at the surface structure of the text. The function of coherence and cohesion in achieving a successful communication of a discourse is complementary. The absence of cohesive links in any piece of writing affects its interpretation and disturbs the communicative goal of the discourse, thus, coherence is not achieved. Such links play a significant role in establishing relations between the propositions, and between all parts of the text.

Regarding the writing skill of EFL context, the absence or misuse of cohesive links might lead to incoherent and less qualified writing. Such links need to be considered during the academic writing programs. To this end, there is a focus in the current research on one type of these cohesive links. They are *discourse markers* whose role is not only signaling semantic relations among text segments, but also signaling social relations, plans, attitudes and intentions. This is what will be reviewed in the following section.

2. 5 Discourse Markers: Theories and Analysis

In this section, a review of literature on DMs and their theories of analysis will be presented and discussed. This review will be helpful to find out a proper method for

examining such items regarding the English language learning in the Libyan context and to locate the present research regarding other related research.

The study of discourse markers (DMs) has increased since the 1970s in terms of the pragmatic level of language use. Such linguistic items as *however, therefore, in addition, so, in contrast, nevertheless, besides, consequently, but* and *moreover* create textual cohesion within texts (Halliday and Hassan, 1976). The increased interest in exploring DMs in the linguistic field has considerably improved in the last two decades considering the valuable role of using discourse connectives among sentences at the text level. For this reason, language in communication is not only words, sounds and sentences, rather, it is the way how all these components are presented in a logical form. One of the factors that guarantee such form are discourse markers. They contribute to the enhancement of language production and interpretation.

Linguists define the concept *discourse markers* differently depending upon their own different perspectives. There is a variety of discourse markers` labels in the literature including, sentence connectives Halliday and Hasan (1976), discourse markers (Fraser, 1999), pragmatic expressions (Erman, 1992), discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987), operators (Ariel, 1994; Redeker, 1990, 1991), discourse particles (Schorup, 1985), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1988; Schiffin, 1987), semantic conjunctions (Quirk et al., 1985) as cited in (Fraser, 1999). This study, however, adopts the term *discourse markers* because it is more general and very related to the subject matter from the level of discourse.

Halliday and Hsaan`s (1976) research on cohesion in English language has influenced other researchers to explore DMs. Consequently, DMs as a new area of investigation are considered as the outcome of the earlier empirical studies on coherence and cohesion. However, there are other influential works that led other research to the study of DMs. Schiffrin (1987) and Fraser (1990), for example, are two of the prominent discourse analysts whose work influenced other research with respect to DMs` classifications and descriptions. Fraser (1999) states that “the study of DMs has turned into a growth industry in linguistics” (p.932). Taboada (2006) also emphasizes the role of DMs. He asserts that DMs, as means of signaling coherent relations, are the most studied markers. This reveals how important the role of DMs is in establishing cohesive relations within texts and their role in creating coherence. The great demand on the study on DMs, therefore, proves the relevance of DMs` impact to the practical use of language.

Zwicky (1985) names DMs as *discourse markers* and asserts that such expressions occur at the initial position of discourse to signal continuation of conversation. He expresses that they are used in spoken discourse when speakers make pauses or change the intonation peaks during the conversation. Zwicky (1985), however, sees DMs as morphologically complex and syntactically deposed from their context, but they have a pragmatic function in discourse. Therefore, the author classifies the forms of DMs as being words or group of words whose syntactic function is separate from their segments they relate. Zwicky generalizes that DMs have pragmatic functions in discourse. Nevertheless, his study does not contribute to a clear distinction of DMs in forming a unified class.

Schiffrin (1987) investigated spoken discourse markers only: *you know, I mean* (clauses), *so, but, and, because* (conjunctions), *well, oh* (particles) and *then, now* (time

deictic). She treats DMs as “sequentially-dependent units of discourse” (p. 304). Her model based on Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) approach which is known as Schiffrin’s coherence model. Schiffrin (1987) states that DMs “signal relations between units of talk by virtue of their syntactic and semantic properties and by virtue of their sequential relations” (p. 40). According to her viewpoint, DMs bracket sentences, speech acts and even tones. DMs “provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk” (p. 41). She suggests that wherever a DM is used by the speaker, it adds coherence to discourse. Moreover, every discourse marker has a conceptual core meaning which is related to the meaning of something already known in the real world. The DMs that Schiffrin studied are involved in the unstructured informal conversations between participants and they do not constitute a linguistic class in discourse. Since the *conceptual core meaning* indicates that DMs have a set of semantic features (referring meaning in discourse). It is possible to argue that DMs of the same category (contrastive, elaborative or inferential markers) do not signal the same semantic features when they occur in different linguistic environments. But they can establish discourse relations among segments as DMs do. Consider the examples of the contrastive markers *but* and *in contrast*:

- (5) a. A: His mother did not buy him a car. B: *But* she bought him a car.
- b. A: Your car is too small. B: *But* mine is big.
- c. A: His mother did not buy him a car. B: **In contrast*, she bought him a car.
- d. A: Your car is small. B: *In contrast*, mine is big.

The contrastive marker *but* represents different logical coherent relations in both examples of (5a) and (5b). Whereas the contrastive marker *in contrast* does not represent a logical coherent relation in (5c) as the contrastive marker *but* does in (5a). However, it represents

a logical coherent relation in (5d). That means, the contrastive marker *but* represents a different coherent relation to the marker *in contrast*. Both markers do not have the same degree of contrasting. Moreover, the core meaning of the marker *but* does not operate as the same in both linguistic environments. There is no explicit characteristic distinction of DMs to determine such items among other linguistic expressions. Therefore, it is not possible to describe DMs as having a conceptual core meaning in discourse. However, Schiffrin`s model does not establish a reliable foundation in investigating and identifying DMs in written texts as her model is more relevant to the study of DMs in spoken context.

Redeker (1991) labels DMs as *discourse operators*. She defines a discourse operator as a word or phrase whose primary function is providing the receiver of message a certain linkage of the upcoming discourse with the immediate context. The philosopher provides two categories of DMs: the pragmatic structure and ideational structure categories. She disagrees with Schiffrin (1987) regarding the concept ‘core meaning’ as a feature of discourse markers. Redeken (1991) argues that “the core meaning should specify the marker`s intrinsic contribution to the semantic representation that will constrain the contextual interpretation of the utterance” (p. 1164). This view differs from Schiffrin`s view. Redeken (1991) claims that DMs do not indicate concepts or add meanings, rather, their contribution to discourse is to shape the receiver`s inferences according to the sender`s choices of usage. It is possible to argue that Redeker in this approach has not e defined DMs under a unified class on their own. Instead, he emphasizes that DMs as means of establishing coherence should be combined with other connective devices that have similar properties in discourse.

Blakemore (1987) investigated DMs and named them *discourse connectives*. Her approach is based on the relevance theory whose main focus is investigating the cognitive process. This theory adopts certain restrictions on the inferential processes regarding the interpretation of discourse. Consequently, DMs according to Blackmore (1987) have procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning. This view opposes the view of coherence approach. She claims that discourse markers as *because*, *likewise* and *before* constrain the relevant context by encouraging certain inferential processes and excluding the irrelevant ones, accordingly, the message is interpreted. This claim is further supported by Wilson and Sperber (2002) as cited in the website of The Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard University (n. d.). However, Blackmore (2002) extended her research on DMs and characterized them under the term ‘discourse markers’. She emphasizes that such expressions “must be analyzed in terms of what they indicate or mark rather than what they describe” (p. 1). The relevance theory champions the view that people use language in order to communicate with each other. For that reason, the process of communication requires more than involving the literal meaning of words, phrases or sentences. The relevance theory emphasizes how meanings are used in context to convey messages (the pragmatic perspective). This theory treats DMs not only as means of relating segments of discourse but also creating inferences towards the sender’s thoughts and intentions. This view makes it clear that DMs do not refer their conceptual meaning (semantic features) to segments they relate, rather, their meaning guides the receiver’s inferences during the interpretation process. The following examples prove that claim:

(6) a. She is not fat. Her jacket is a size 44.

b. She is not fat. *Therefore*, her jacket is a size 44.

c. She is not fat. *After all*, her jacket is a size 44.

In example (6b) the DM *therefore* provides an inference that the first sentence *she is not fat* is evidence for the claim *her jacket is a size 44*. Whereas in example (6c) the DM *after all* provides an inference that the first sentence *she is not fat* is a conclusion comes from the evidence *her jacket is a size 44*. It is noteworthy that the absence of DMs as in example (6a) makes it ambiguous as the two interpretations are possible.

Accordingly, this theory can be considered as a valid theory in investigating DMs because it provides clear explanations for all different linguistic environments of DMs in English language. Nevertheless, Blackmore`s model does not provide a straightforward definition to DMs. Rather, her work on DMs is entirely centralized on the distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning of DMs. Moreover, DMs according to this model, do not constitute a linguistic coherent class in discourse. For that reason, there is a need for the current study to find more suitable theoretical framework in order to identify DMs in written texts.

By the same token, Fraser (1999) adopted a functional approach based on the pragmatic perspective in analyzing DMs. The author explores what DMs are, which grammatical class they belong to, and how DMs are identified among the other linguistic elements in texts. He agrees with Blackmore (1992) that DMs “have a core meaning which is procedural not conceptual” (Fraser 1999; p. 950). In this case, Fraser means by using the concept *procedural core meaning* that the linguistic and procedural interpretation of a DM is negotiated by the context in which it occurs (in a similar way as discussed in relevance theory perspective). Moreover, Fraser (1999) argues that DMs do not only have textual coherent function, unlike the coherence approach view, but also provide an indication of

the sender's intention. Accordingly, he came up with the *grammatical-pragmatic approach*. This approach classifies DMs as “expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, or prepositional phrases”, and they “do not constitute a separate syntactic category” (p. 946-963). The author emphasizes that DMs relate some aspects of the message they introduce (S2) with the prior sentence (S1) in terms of interpreting units of discourse. In addition, Fraser (1999) generalized a canonical form as <S1. DM+S2>. Under these conditions, Fraser's approach as a more consistent and developed version of the Blackmore's (2002) perspective, can be considered as an ideal approach for identifying and analyzing DMs in written discourse. Regarding the grammatical status of DMs, this approach precisely identifies which are DMs and which are not by adopting the canonical form <S1. DM+S2>. Let us consider the following example:

- (7) a. The ice cream has melted away *because of* the hot weather.
b. It was hot. *Because of that*, the ice cream has melted away.

According to the grammatical-pragmatic approach, *because of* in example (7a) is not a DM. Whereas in example (7b) *because of that* is a DM. This is because of the fact that DMs relate two (or more) separate messages in discourse. In example (7b), there are two sentences which are logically related to each other. The marker *because of that* in S2 signals a separate message by providing a conclusion for the evidence in S1. In contrast, in example (7a) the marker *because of* does not signal a separate message as there is only one sentence and the marker is just a conjunctive element within the sentence bound. Therefore, it does not fit the canonical form <S1. DM+S2> as it does in example (7b).

It is noteworthy that this approach asserts that DMs do not just occur at the initial position of the sentences they introduce. There are certain types of DMs which may occur in the middle or at the end of the sentence. The following examples prove that:

(8) a. Leila did not eat the cake. *But*, she devoured it.

b. Writing a dissertation is not an easy task. Revising it, *however*, is a real nightmare.

c. I really liked the coffee you made. It was so hot, *though*.

The other property according to this approach is that a DM does not only relate the sentence it introduces to the immediate prior sentence. The following example illustrates that a DM can relate the sentence it introduces with several preceding ones.

(9) First, you need to get some water. Second, dip your towel in it. Third, wipe off your face. *Nevertheless*, none of these steps are necessary for you.

A DM may also relate the sentence it introduces with the following ones. Consider the following example:

(10) Making tasty pizza needs you to carefully consider certain tips. *In particular*, sifting the self raising flour several times. Measuring the dried yeast precisely. Preparing fresh homemade tomato sauce.

There are two main classes of discourse markers according to Fraser`s (1999) taxonomy:

DMs which relate some aspects of the message in sentence 2 (S2) with sentence 1 (S1).

1. Contrastive DMs: *but, on the other hand, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, instead of that/this, on the contrary, despite that/this, in spite of that/this, still.*

2. Elaborative DMs: *and, moreover, otherwise, more to the point, for another thing, correspondingly, besides, furthermore, that is to say, or, that said, namely, also, above all, such as, for instance, for example.*

3. Inferential DMs: *so, thus, therefore, of course, accordingly, as a sequence, as a logical conclusion, in this/that case, because of this/that, all things considered, then, for this/that reason, since, because (of), due to, owing to, after all, as a conclusion, in sum, to sum up.*

DMs which relate topics (topic change markers):

with regards to, back to the main topic, by the way, just to update you, before I forget, while I think of it, on a different note.

The grammatical-pragmatic approach provides more practical and applicable explanations in identifying and analyzing DMs than other approaches that are discussed so far. For that reason, it will be adopted in the current research as a theoretical framework in identifying and analyzing DMs in the written essays by Libyan undergraduate students in order to better serve the purposes and aims of this study.

2. 6 Studies on the Use of DMs by EFL Students

A study conducted by Intraprawat and Steffensen (1995) analyzed persuasive essays written by English language learners. The results show the essays that received good ratings the ones that achieved with a great variety of DMs. Another study carried out by Jalilifar (2008) investigated DMs in descriptive compositions of Iranian undergraduate students. The participants were selected from junior, senior and MA students majoring in teaching EFL. The study shows the use of DMs vary across student grade levels. Besides, the relationship between the quality of students' composition writing and the use of well-functioned DMs was direct and positive. However, the findings reveal that less

experienced students overuse a certain type of DMs in their writing which leads to less cohesive texts. Whereas the more experienced students use DMs more coherently regarding their right context. On the other hand, Kalajahi (2015) examined DMs to assess the quality of writing argumentative essays by Malaysian English language students. The results demonstrate that there is a weak negative relationship between the quality of writing and the frequent use of DMs. It proves that the quality of students' writing requires great awareness on the part of the teacher to focus not only on the quantity but also on the quality and the accurate use of DMs. Findings of Kalajahi (2015) support Jalilifar's (2008) findings that the learners' knowledge of DMs has an impact on the quality of their writing ability. That means, the focus should be on the quality more than the quantity in terms of achieving coherent writing.

Importantly, some studies reveal that the problems of using DMs by EFL students were due to the influence of their L1. For example, Jin (2001) found that Japanese and Chinese learners of English language transfer their L1 knowledge of DMs into English. The researcher justifies that the underuse of DMs by learners is attributed to the inappropriate explanations provided by their instructors. Following Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy, Ting (2003) examined Chinese tertiary EFL students' compositions. The study revealed that the use of adversative and additive markers was less appropriate among other DMs' categories. By the same token, Lai (2008) used the same taxonomy of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) in his study. The qualitative findings of the study showed that proficient and non-proficient students used DMs appropriately. Whereas the quantitative findings showed that the non-proficient students used more markers than the proficient students in their writings.

Regarding investigating English DMs in the Arabic context, Kadhim (2016) conducted a study to investigate problems in using DMs by Iraqi EFL learners from a semantic perspective. He adopted Halliday and Hasan`s (1976) classification in examining DMs under the label of *conjunctions*. His study treats DMs as having certain meanings for creating cohesion at the surface structure of the text. The findings show that EFL learners are not able to differentiate between the semantic relations of contrastive markers. In addition, they restrict the use of DMs to certain types only.

Furthermore, Modhish (2012) analyzed DMs following Frasesr`s (1999) taxonomy. The study investigated DMs in essays written by Yamani EFL learners. It reveals that learners overuse the elaborative DMs such as *and* and *also*. The researcher justifies that the overuse of these two markers “indicates that learners are not aware of the existence of the other elaborative markers or they are reluctant to use them due to fear of making errors” (p. 59). He also found that the use of topic relating markers enhances the writing quality of the learners.

A similar study in a similar environment and taxonomy carried out by Yehia (2015). The study shows similar results regarding the most frequently utilized DMs in learners` writing. She claims that the reason behind the overuse of elaborative markers by EFL learners “could be attributed to first language interference” (p. 229). The study also reveals that male students have better writing achievement than female students due to their proficiency in mastering DMs.

Unlike the previous studies, Shareef (2015) carried out a qualitative analysis in examining the problems of using written DMs by EFL undergraduate students rather than

their frequency of usage. He used Fraser's taxonomy (1999) to analyze written DMs by Kurdish EFL undergraduate students. The results show that first year students are not able to master all types of DMs appropriately. Whereas the third year students were aware of using different types of DMs. It is possible to argue that Shareef (2015) analyzed essays that students are asked to write particularly for the study. On this condition, that procedure might be unreliable due to the factors affecting students' performance. One of the factors, for instance, students may overuse DMs in their essays, because they know the purpose of the study in advance.

Similar to the previous research, Mahmoud and Ali (2016) examined written DMs by Jordan undergraduate students. They found that intermediate EFL learners used restricted sets of DMs and were less proficient than the advanced EFL learners. The authors claim that there is a relationship between the appropriate use of DMs and EFL learners' proficiency level.

In the Libyan context, Hamed (2014) examined Libyan tertiary students' ability in using conjunctions as ties between sentences rather than within the structure of the sentences. He also analyzed the conjunctions in terms of their semantic function rather than their pragmatic function. The researcher followed Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy in his study. The results show that the adversative conjunctions are the less appropriate ones than other types. The researcher justifies the inappropriate use is due to the L1 negative transfer, the over generalization in L2 and the poor presentation of conjunctions by EFL textbooks.

Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomy that is adopted in Hamed's (2014) study claims that the use of the additive marker *and* creates a text by linking one sentence to another.

The authors also claim that the marker *and* can link a group of elements related to the same argument. It is possible to argue that the findings of some studies, for example, Shareef's study (2015), showed that EFL students overuse the additive markers in their writing which leads to unnatural, incoherent and less understandable writing. Therefore, the description of errors by using Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomy in EFL students' writing might be problematic.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the studies that are related to discourse markers' research. The chapter showed that Fraser's (1999) approach, the grammatical-pragmatic approach, seems a valid model of investigating and analyzing written DMs by Libyan undergraduate students. The grammatical-pragmatic approach classifies DMs as a pragmatic class due to their role in interpreting discourse rather than to their propositional content. It provides a clear distinction of what the items that can be considered as DMs of which that cannot function as DMs. While other theories and approaches, Zwicky (1985), Schiffin (1987), Redeker (1991) and Blakemore (1987), do not provide a straightforward distinction of DMs among other linguistic items in discourse.

The present study adopts a similar analytical model to Shareef's (2015) for analyzing DMs in EFL students' essay writing. However, it is modified to better serve the goals of this research. The current study involves additional supporting data collection instruments, and for more valid results, qualitative and quantitative analysis of DMs in terms of appropriateness is adopted. It differs from Shareef's study (2015) in terms of context and procedure.

The conclusion that one can draw is that the literature of investigating written DMs by undergraduate learners of English in Arabic and non-Arabic context is rich. In spite of the promising findings in the field of investigating DMs, the literature showed that there are scarcities of investigating such markers in the Libyan context in terms of their pragmatic function. Thus, a research gap is worthy of investigation. The next chapter presents the methodology adopted in the current research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodology of data analysis that is used in the current study. The chapter presents the analytical framework used in this research, i.e., the grammatical-pragmatic model of Fraser's (1999) taxonomy. The methodology chapter justifiably clarifies how the sampling of data is conducted and analyzed.

3.1 Analytical Framework

Fraser's (1999) definition and classification is used as the framework of this study. Fraser's taxonomy is considered as the most comprehensive model in identifying and classifying DMs in written texts in terms of function as Shareef (2015) indicates. It provides a clear distinction of what discourse markers are and which are not. This study, therefore, treats any expression, a word or group of words, that contribute to the interpretation of the message by signaling the relation between the segment they introduce and the previous segment(s) their absence does not disturb the propositional content nor the grammatical structure of the segment as DMs (Fraser, 2005).

Since the main objective is investigating problems in using written DMs in terms of function, this research employs a methodology which provides a means to analyze the quality of using such expressions. The use of data triangulation instruments is needed to provide more understanding of the phenomenon in qualitative research (Patton, 1999). In addition, this study took the academic settings as its source of data to explore students' awareness of DMs, how they use them and what the reasons are behind misusing them. To

this end, the adopted data collection tools were selected to analyze DMs in students` writing, to review their instructors` assessment as well as the writing 3 syllabus. Despite the nature of this research of being based on a qualitative analysis by investigating problems in using DMs, a quantitative analysis was adopted to obtain the maximum validation. For that reason, the qualitatively analyzed DMs in students` writing were identified and quantified in terms of their appropriateness.

3. 2 Data Collection

This exploratory research is based on evaluating DMs in EFL essay writing. In order to get the proposed objectives of the current study and to answer the research questions, the analyzed data have been collected by employing different data collection tools. In addition, a consent has been given to the researcher from the English language department at the Faculty of Education.

3. 2. 1 Analyzing Discourse Markers in Students` Writing

This study is mainly based on investigating DMs in students` writings. To this end, 40 essays written by Libyan EFL undergraduate students were collected. Afterwards, DMs were manually identified and analyzed in terms of their function following Fraser`s (1999) taxonomy. The essays were already assessed by the interviewee instructors. In addition, the essays were 100-150 words in length which students already wrote during the Writing 3 course. During the course, the students were asked by their instructors to write essays about topics of their own choice. However, this research did not employ a test type of essay writing to avoid students` performance being subjected to other unpredictable factors, i.e. overusing or under-using DMs.

Depending upon the qualitative analysis of the identified DMs, the appropriate and inappropriate DMs for each category were quantified.

3. 2. 2 Assessment of Students` Writing

Tracing and analyzing the assessment made by the Writing instructors was helpful in order to highlight the areas that the instructors tend to consider most in students` writing. Accordingly, it was possible to find out whether the instructors tend to assess the linguistic features of the texts, such as grammar and lexis, or whether they were also aware of assessing the text unity, coherence, cohesive devices and DMs. That is because the assessment “encourages students to monitor their own work and take responsibility for their own learning” (Sindelar, n.d.). In addition, highlighting the mistakes that students made in writing was considered as the most powerful strategies in improving their learning (Hattie and Timperely, 2007). To this end, this research took this factor as one of the factors that might influence the students` efficiency and awareness in the use of DMs. The instructors` assessment was reviewed regarding the following:

1. Is there a focus on assessing text organization, coherence, cohesion in students` writing or on linguistic features, grammar and spelling?
2. Are the inappropriate DMs assessed in students` writing?

3. 2. 3 Interview

One of the data sources of the study was a semi-structured interview. This type of data collection is helpful to get in-depth understanding. It is also helpful to compare different data with the data already gathered from other tools of data collection (Kumar, 2011). In addition, by adopting this type of tool, the participant is able to understand the questions, as the interviewer has the opportunity to provide extra explanations or reconstruct the

ambiguous ones. Another advantage of collecting data by interviewing is that the participant raises other relevant issues which are not expected (Dawson, 2002). Under those conditions, the researcher interviewed the five writing instructors of the undergraduate students regarding their pedagogical implementation in teaching written DMs. The aim of this semi-structured interview was to find out if the intended implementation of DMs by the instructors (if there is any) is reflected in students' performance. Accordingly, the reasons behind the inappropriate use of DMs by third semester undergraduate students might be explained.

The participants were five Writing instructors in the Faculty of Education at Misrata University. They have more than five-year teaching experience. Four of them were Libyan and one was from a non-Arabic speaking country. The interview was carried out at the end of Autumn-Winter semester in 2016. In this interview, the participants' confidentiality and anonymity were considered and respected.

The following was the list of questions:

1. How do the instructors teach DMs?
2. In what extent are students aware of using DMs in their writing?
3. What are the reasons behind the problems in using DMs, if there are any?

3. 2. 4 Focus Groups

This research adopts focus groups type of data collection. This method is known as *a group interview* or *discussion groups*. It was helpful "for finding information in almost every professional area and academic field" (Kumar. 2011, p. 124). Therefore, the focus

groups method provides the opportunity to clarify issues that certain group of people face during their performance. In addition, the gathered data from this method contribute to more verified findings from surveys (“How to Evaluate EIS”, n. d.). The researcher interviewed the students who already had written the analyzed essays. They were 40 female and male students majoring in English at The Faculty of Education in a semi-structured group interview. They were 20 students in each group. Their ages range between 18-20 and all of them were third semester students who have been learning English as a foreign language for ten years and shared similar linguistic educational backgrounds. In addition, they had Writing courses at the university for three terms; Writing 1, Writing 2 and Writing 3. The main objective of interviewing students was to evaluate their awareness of using DMs. The gathered data from the focus groups were recorded to judge whether students` awareness of using DMs is existed in their actual writing. An agreement on the part of the English language department at The Faculty of Education has been approved beforehand. The following questions were introduced to the students for each group:

1. What do you know about DMs?
2. Do you use DMs in writing?
3. Are you aware of DMs` functions in written texts in terms of coherence and cohesion?

3. 2. 5 Review on Writing 3 Syllabus

This step was a general review of how Writing 3 syllabus of The Faculty of Education at Misrata University was laid out and what goals and objectives that were stated to be tackled during the course. Such review makes it clear to judge whether the Writing 3 syllabus contains items such as discourse markers, coherence and cohesion in written texts. That might also offer explanations on what behind the inappropriate use of written DMs by

Libyan undergraduate students (if there is any). It is noteworthy that the Writing 3 syllabus is authorized by the English Department of The Faculty of Education at Misrata University. It is presented as a leaflet to guide the Writing instructors to the areas that need to be emphasized in class. The syllabus is prepared by Almahdi Alonto and inspired by the books, i.e. *Writers at Work* by Dorothy Zemach, and *Level 1 Fundamentals of Academic Writing* by Linda Butler. The review on the Writing 3 syllabus is conducted in January, 2017.

Unlike the previous studies, the chosen data is not only limited to one source. Because of the purpose of this study, there is a need to use multiple data collection tools in order to articulate the main factors that lead third semester students to encounter such difficulties.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative and quantitative analysis of DMs in the 40 essays written by Libyan undergraduate students of their own choice of topics. In addition, it presents the analysis of supporting data, i.e. interview, focus groups, reviewing the instructors' assessments and writing 3 syllabus, to find out the reasons behind the inappropriate use of these expressions and to validate the outcomes of the analyzed essays.

4.1 Analyzing DMs of Students' Essays

To answer the first question of the study, *what are the appropriate and inappropriate DMs used by Libyan EFL undergraduate students?*, a total of 185 discourse markers of the 40 essays were identified and analyzed following the Fraser's (1999) taxonomy. The written essays show that students had complications in differentiating between the functions of DMs. The elaborative markers, for example, *and* and *also* were used for contrasting ideas. Similarly, the contrastive marker *however* was used for elaborating discourse ideas. The contrastive marker *but* was used to signal inferences rather than contrastive relations. The students also had complications in differentiating between the different relations that the inferential and elaborative markers signal in written texts. For example, *because* was used to establish elaborative relations. It can be observed that students repeated a specific set of written DMs at the expense of the others of the same category, for instance, the elaborative markers *and* and *also*. In contrast, the other markers *in addition*, *furthermore* and *besides* were rarely used in the essays. However, the problem

in using the marker *and* was not only related to its excessive utilization. The major problem, as discussed above, relates to the inappropriate use which wrongly interchanged with the function of the contrastive markers. Furthermore, there was a lack of using DMs where they are needed to fill the relation gap in particular contexts. For instance, there was a lack of using contrastive markers where the context calls for a contrastive relation. Moreover, students tended to use the contrastive marker *but* at the expense of the other contrastive markers and even for starting new paragraphs.

The following samples were selected to show the major problems of employing DMs in students' essays. They were originally handwritten by the students, afterwards, the researcher typed them for the sake of the purposes of the study.

4. 1. 1 Sample 1: *Village Life and City Life*

The life in the village is calm and quiet. People in the village know each other very well. (3) also. the village are very difficult in transportation, education and even medication. (4) unlike people in the city they are unfriendly (4) and they mention distance from other. (5) In addition, the city life consist of a lot of facilities but village life does not.

(6) First, the city life is more comfortable. There are alot of facilities. (8) and people have more opportunities for making money. (9) Also, children living in the city can get good education. (10) However, the school in the city better than in the village. (11) In addition, people in the city have better transport facilities than the village. (12) In short, people can lead a comfortable and enjoyable life in the city. (13) Second, the life in village more easier. (14) Also, the cost for living in the village than in the city. Moreover, the village quieter than the city not only quiet by also the air more fresh than the city. (16) At the end

the life in the village more and more simple than city. Over there are some similarities between both locations with big differences. (18) At the end, I see that living in a village near the city is the best way to combine the benefits of this two lives.

In the above sample, the DM *also* is used wrongly in sentence (3). Since the marker *also* do not signal a contrastive relation, the marker *however* should have been used instead. Similarly, in sentence (5) the marker *in addition* is used inappropriately, because it does not express a contrastive relation with the prior sentence. Thus, the marker *Nevertheless* should have been used. The marker *and* in sentence (4) is not needed in the presence of the reference *they*. Likewise, the elaborative DM *and* in sentence (8) is not used correctly. It seems that the marker *for example* is more suitable to give an exemplifier meaning and to introduce a new sentence . In sentence (10), *However* does not express an elaborative meaning. There should have been an additive relation between sentence (9) and sentence (10) instead. The markers *first* and *second* are used correctly. In sentence (16) the marker *At the end* seems inappropriate. Instead, there should have been the marker *third* to ensure the logical sequence of the ideas. Despite the use of various types of DMs in the above essay, it is clear that there is a wrong interchangeable use between the contrastive and elaborative DM in terms of function. Furthermore, the unnatural overuse of *also* and grammatical mistakes occur in this essay.

4. 1. 2 Sample 2: Apple Company

Apple company is one of the well-known company (2) It produces mobiles that have good quality and remarkable shape mobile. (3) Also, this company was founded in 1993 in

America. iPhone 4, iPhone 5 are models of apple`s company and there are many models that are produced via this company.

(5) producing iPhone 4 was a bit difficult for the manufacturer. (6) The reason was from the time **because** there weren`t enough equipment to produce mobiles. **In addition**, the makers weren`t available and not supported from the state.

(8) iPhone 5 is the most popular mobile for people. Buying this model of apple mobiles is not difficult **because** the company was producing many pieces of it. **and** it didn`t face any difficulty in produce this mobile. **Also**, this mobile has a wonderful form and its programs are very smart.

In the above sample, *because* is used wrongly in sentence (6). It does not express an elaborative relation. This essay lacks DMs. In addition, the ideas are not represented in a logical sequence. For example, sentence (3) should have been before sentence (2). A contrastive DM should have been used to initiate the last paragraph. Since the idea is making a comparison between two entities, *iPhone 4* and *iPhone 5*, *in contrast* or *on the other hand* should be used to initiate sentence (8). It seems that this essay is dependent on using the elaborative markers more than the other types.

4. 1. 3 Sample 3: Internet

Is it good or bad? That is the question.

*Internet has many befits that help us with a lot of things. (2) **On the other hand** it cause many damages that in turn cause losses to us, **so** internet has advantages and disadvantages,(4) **but** we have to know how we should use it.*

*Few minutes, a lot of damages. When you use internet most times **of course** you`ll be tired, **because** you`ll hurt your eyes, **and** you`ll have a headache, **and** by staying on the internet you`ll waste a lot of time. **In addition**, the internet helps to spread rumors.*

***On the other hand**, the internet has many benefits. Just by sitting in your place, news come to you. Internet is a perfect way to spread news. You can read all the news from the world through the internet. Another advantage of the internet is to communicate with your friends wherever they are, even if they are in another country. **And** you can get information about everything using internet.*

***In conclusion**, we know that there is many bad things in internet, **so** we have to avoid them, (20) **And** there is many good things, (21) **but** we should know how to properly benefit from the miracle we call the internet.*

In sample (3), the contrastive marker *but* in sentence (4) is used inappropriately. The inferential markers *for that reason* or *in this case* would be more appropriate to signal a conclusion for the justification of the previous sentence(s). The same problem occurs with using *but* in sentence (21). In sentence (20), the marker *and* does not contrast the content of the segment it initiates with the preceded segment(s). *However* or *Nevertheless* should have been used instead. Similar to the previous sample, the excessive use of specific types of DMs and grammatical mistakes occur.

4. 1. 4 Sample 4: Internet

*The internet is very important tech in your life. It helps you to know a lot of thing about the world. **Also**, you can communicate with other people around the world. **Therefore**, internet can be useful in your study, (5) **and** helps you to do your work.*

(6) *The internet can be useful in your study.* (7) *You can use internet in your english study.* (8) **For example**, *use it to your improve your vocabulary, and you can use dictionary. Also you can do your presentations with your classmates in your collage.*

The internet helps you in your work. It is useful for you to learn your job, and to communicate with other companies. (13) **Also**, *it shows you that websites that giving you the aedia of your work.*

(14) *The internet is useful for your life, it makes you more clever and intellegent.* (16) **And** *learning you many thing that you didn` t know.*

This sample shows the overuse of the markers *and* and *also* which make the overall structure of the text incoherent and unnatural. The wrong position of the marker *for example* makes the ideas of the sentences (6), (7) and (8) presented illogically. The marker *for example* should have been used to initiate sentence (7) instead of sentence (8). In addition, there should have been be a conclusive inferential marker to initiate sentence (14), for instance, *as a conclusion, in sum* or *to sum up*. Grammatical mistakes and translating ideas from Arabic to English occur.

4. 1. 5 Sample 5: Healthy Food vs. Junk Food

Along time ago, people ate food that is really safe for their wellness. Now days, most of people in the world are busy. Thus, it`s no secret that people don`t have time to cook at home. That`s why people prefer to eat junk food. (5) **However**, *junk food is too deleicious, healthy food has more benefits.*

(7) *Healthy food has benefits, it`s gives the body its need of nutrients to maintain the body`s health. people who eat healthy food can have low risk of getting some diseases.*

*Junk food is also called 'fast food'. (11) Junk food is danegerous, **because** it`s typically contains high levels of sugar or fat. (12) **That`s why** it`s very dangrous for our health.*

(13) *Food is building every cell in the body **and** resposible for the proper function of whole body. **Therefore**, it`s important to know what is the good food for our body and what is not.*

In this sample, the marker *however* is inappropriate in sentence (5). It does not elaborate the content of the sentence it initiates to the previous sentence. *Besides, in addition* or *furthermore* should have been used. This essay lacks some essential DMs to make it more coherent, cohesive and understandable. For instance, the interpretation of sentence (7) contrasts with the main idea of the previous paragraph. Therefore, the contrastive markers *in contrast, on the contrary* or *in comparison* should have been used to initiate the new paragraph. Moreover, a conclusive inferential marker should have been used to initiate sentence (13) as well. It is noteworthy that there is a lack of using other cohesive devices, such as references. In sentence (11), for example, *it* should have been used to refer back to *junk food* instead of repeating the same expression in the same line.

Back to the main idea, there are some informal DMs used in this essay. *For that reason* or *hence* would be more appropriate than the spoken marker *that`s why*. Grammatical mistakes and misspelling occur.

4. 2 The Quantitative Analysis of DMs in Students` Writing

The overall percentages of DMs are as follows:

Table 2. Amount of appropriate and inappropriate DMs in students` writing

Category	N	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
		%	N	%	N
Elaborative	94	73.4%	69	26.5%	25
Contrastive	32	50%	16	50%	16
Inferential	59	93.2%	55	6.7%	4
Topic Change Markers	0	0%	0	0%	0

In Table 2, the highest frequency of the inappropriate DMs is the contrastive markers (50%), followed by elaborative markers (26.5%) and inferential markers (6.7%). It also shows that the topic change markers have never been used. It is noteworthy that the most frequently used DMs are the elaborative ones and the most appropriate are the inferential ones.

Table 3. Top five appropriate and inappropriate contrastive and elaborative DMs in students` essays.

DM	N	Appropriate		inappropriate	
		N	%	N	%
and	44	24	54.5%	20	45.4%
also	32	30	93.7%	2	6.2%
furthermore	3	3	100%	0	0%
in addition	6	5	83.3%	1	16.6%
for example	6	2	33.3%	4	66.6%
however	8	3	37.5%	5	62.5%
on the other hand	3	2	66.6%	1	33.3%
whereas	3	1	33.3%	2	66.6%
but	13	10	76.9%	3	23%
(al)though	4	0	0%	4	100%

Table 3 provides the contrastive and elaborative DMs which were the most challenging categories used in the 40 essays. The most frequently used elaborative DM is *and* (44), followed by *also* (32). The most inappropriately used elaborative DM is *and* (20 out of 44). The other types of elaborative markers have been rarely used, such as *in addition* (6) times, *for example* (6) times and *furthermore* (3) times in total of 40 essays.

The most frequently used contrastive DM is *but* (13), followed by *however* (8). The marker *however* was less appropriate than the marker *but*. Similarly, the marker *but* was more prevalent in students' essays than other types of contrastive DMs. For example, *however* is used (8) times, *on the other hand* (3) times, *(al)though* (4) times and *whereas* (3) times in total of 40 essays.

In conclusion, these findings answer the first research question in that the students mismatched between DMs' functions in relating text segments.

4. 3 Findings of Supporting Data

This section provides the findings of the supporting data in order to find out why students encountered the problems discussed in the previous section.

4. 3. 1 Interview

This part of data analysis is concerned with interviewing five Writing instructors at The Faculty of Education in a semi-structured interview. It details the overview of the Writing instructors' intended implementation of written DMs in the academic setting, and their students' competence of DMs.

4.3.1.1 Teaching Written DMs in the Academic Setting

Two respondents out of five explained that teaching DMs in terms of their function is dependent upon the level of students` proficiency of EFL in general. According to one participant, *“It`s not applicable indeed to teach students the function of DMs in establishing relations between text ideas particularly at this stage. I think, they are not ready to comprehend such pragmatic property in essay writing. For that reason, I present them as grammatical items or conjunctions that relate the surface structure of the text”*.

Another participant explained that students` proficiency in grammar directly relates to using DMs in terms of their coherent and cohesive functions. *“I think, in order to implicate DMs as grammatical cohesive devices, first, we as teachers need to focus on improving students` proficiency in grammar. Accordingly, students will be ready to realize how such markers operate in texts. The majority of undergraduate students, that I`m teaching, have difficulties in grammar and sentence structure. That`s why, the emphasis on teaching DMs is not that great”*.

Nevertheless, one of the participants out of five showed considerable awareness of teaching written DMs to his EFL undergraduate students.

“I focus on teaching DMs that establish coherent functions and cohesive links in the text. I provide my students some examples of how written DMs operate among the sentences. However, I prefer demonstrating the simple primary DMs of each category. Because, some polysyllabic and phrase type of DMs are quite challenging for the students”.

The previous participant, obviously, restricted teaching written DMs to a limited set of types. That means, the other types of DMs were neglected. As a result, the variation of using such expressions was not involved in his teaching strategy.

4. 3. 1. 2 Instructors` Views on Their Students` Competence of Written DMs

The participant instructors who expressed that they do not focus on teaching DMs in terms of their coherent function observed that the majority of students misuse them in their writing. That could be due to several reasons. According to one respondent, *“Students with low-grammatical proficiency misuse DMs in their writing. In contrast, students with high-grammatical proficiency show their awareness of using DMs in their writing”*.

One of the interviewees explained that students treat DMs the same way they treat new vocabulary. That is why they misuse them. According to one of the interviewee, *“Students misuse DMs in their writing because they memorize them as being new vocabulary. For that reason, when they need to use them, they get confused to choose the appropriate ones to fit the right context”*.

Regarding the above view, it is clear that EFL third semester students at The Faculty of Education were not aware of the pragmatic function of DMs. If students memorize such expressions and treat them as isolated words from their context, that might lead them to work on the sentence level rather than the text level (Ferris & Hedgecock, 1998).

The interviewed instructor who emphasized teaching DMs expressed that some students are aware of using them. Whereas the others underuse them in their writing. The interviewee explained, *“Some students underuse DMs in their writing due to the meaning problems. They do not know the meaning of these expressions. Therefore, they avoid using*

them to not commit mistakes in their writing which is expected to be assessed by their teachers”.

It can be concluded regarding the overall interview that the Writing instructors had little emphasis on teaching DMs in terms of their pragmatic function. Most of the instructors concentrated on the impact of students` proficiency level of grammar on teaching DMs. On the other hand, one of the instructors was aware of teaching the pragmatic value of DMs, but he restricted the markers to a certain set of types.

4. 3. 2 Focus Groups

This tool is concerned with interviewing Libyan undergraduate students in groups. The participants were asked about their experience in using DMs. Students tried to give meanings of every single DM that the researcher provided during the discussion. However, students were not aware of the pragmatic function of written DMs in relating text ideas, signaling the writer`s intentions in texts. The students only expressed their experiences of DMs` grammatical function as being sentence modifiers.

On a different note, the students expressed that the short duration of writing is problematic. They explained that writing is a complicated task and needs to go through several stages. They suggested that the expected time for the writing task needs to be expanded.

4. 3. 3 The Instructors` Assessment of the Students` Writing

By reviewing the instructors` assessment of students` writing, it is crystal clear that the attention is mostly paid to assessing the basic writing procedures. For instance, it focuses

on assessing students` ability in writing introduction paragraph, thesis statement, topic and paragraph sentences. In addition, there is a focus on marking and assessing grammatical and spelling mistakes. Despite the problems that students faced in using written DMs, their instructors did not seem aware of such problems in terms of assessment. The inappropriate DMs have not been assessed or marked explicitly in students` writing. It is worth mentioning that the assessment was formative where the feedback given to students on the areas of their weaknesses during the course. It is not a summative assessment where the overall performance is scored.

It can be concluded that students have not been reminded on the part of their Writing instructors to heighten their awareness of using written DMs.

4. 3. 4 Revision of Writing 3 Syllabus

The Writing 3 syllabus focuses on enabling students to write the three basic essay components, i.e. an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. This area of attention is intended to encourage students manage the advanced-levels of academic writing courses, such as, writing research papers in Writing 4 course.

At the end of the third semester, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of various essay writing. They are also expected to express their opinion on various topics and cultivate autonomous writing and note-taking.

Regarding the content topics of the Writing 3 syllabus, there is a considerable emphasis on enabling students on how to write problem-solution essays. That is to identify a problem and come up with possible solutions. In addition, there is a focus on enabling students to write comparison-contrast essays to point out similarities or differences

between two things and stating their own preference. There is also a considerable emphasis on how to write argumentative essays. For example, to enable students demonstrate valid arguments with supporting facts and counter arguments to make opinions credible.

Despite the fact that the Writing 3 syllabus focuses on enabling students to write various types of essays, it does not emphasize the role of coherence and cohesion in essay writing. Essay writing requires the ability of making ideas coherently and logically related. It also requires the use of different types of cohesive devices, such as DMs, to communicate perspectives, plans, intentions and attitudes to guarantee the successful communicative acts. In one of the topics of the Writing 3 syllabus, there is a focus on enabling Libyan EFL students to write comparison-contrast essays. But, there is no focus on the role of using contrastive DMs to point out differences between various entities. In other words, the syllabus does not lay emphasis on contrastive relations across sentences.

In conclusion, through the quantitative and qualitative analyses, it can be observed that there is a relationship between the students` use of DMs and how those expressions are presented in class. These findings, therefore, answer the third research question in that the lack of emphases of DMs by the Writing instructors, their assessment and the Writing 3 syllabus are behind the problems in using DMs. Those problems and the reasons behind them will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussions

5.0 Introduction

Depending on the findings of this study, this chapter provides discussions regarding the problems that third semester undergraduate students faced in using written DMs. As a result, the reasons behind the problems in using DMs are also discussed.

5.1 Problems in Using Written DMs

According to the qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed data, it can be observed that third semester undergraduate students were not aware of the functions of DMs. It is evident that students were not capable of differentiating between the distinctive functions of DMs, which in turn made their writing less coherent and cohesive. Under those conditions, the findings of this study support the prediction of Fraser's (1999) model, i.e. the grammatical-pragmatic model, that DMs have a procedural core meaning as their function is to contribute to the interpretation of the text.

It is also noticed that the contrastive markers were the most inappropriately used in their writing, followed by the elaborative ones. On the other hand, the inferential markers, regarding the quantitative analysis, were not challenging for the students. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Hamed (2014) and Kahdim (2016).

As shown in Table 3, the use of DMs were restricted to a certain set of each type, particularly, *and*, *also* (elaborative), *so*, *because* (inferential) and *but* (contrastive). This indicates that the high percentage of the appropriate use of inferential markers is attributed

to the appropriate use of only two markers in 40 essays. Thus, students were not capable of using the other inferential markers. For that reason, they overused these two at the expense of the others. This finding is in agreement with Mahadin and Ali (2016) finding who reported that EFL students tended to use *so* and *because* to signal inferential relations in their writing.

Regarding the elaborative markers, students overused this type of DMs. However, the use of elaborative markers in general might be needed more than the other types of DMs for elaborating ideas in all different essay types of writing. But the problem might be articulated as the following: restricting the use of the elaborative markers to certain markers, i.e. *and* and *also*; neglecting their counterparts of the same category particularly the conclusive ones; the inappropriate use of *and* (it was used to signal contrastive and inferential relations). These findings indicate that students were not aware nor capable of using a varied set of elaborative markers. As a result, incoherent and unnatural writing occurred.

It is interesting that the quantitative analysis reveals that the marker *also* had a higher rate of appropriateness than the marker *and* in students' essays. It is more likely that students' first language competence influenced their ability of using the marker *and*. In Arabic, the marker *wa* (i.e. the equivalent English elaborative marker *and*) and the marker *aidan* (i.e. the equivalent English elaborative marker *also*) are not used as the same. The former can be used in different contexts because it has various pragmatic functions in the Arabic discourse whereas the latter is not used very often. In English, that is not the case for the marker *and* and *also* (Alazzawie, 2014). In other words, the overuse of *wa* in Arabic is considerably natural and acceptable whereas the overuse of the marker *aidan* is

not. As a result, the marker *also* has not been negatively influenced by the students' first language as the marker *and* has.

Along the same lines, students had difficulties in using contrastive markers in their essays. In fact, the contrastive markers were the most problematic ones among the other types. On the one hand, contrastive markers were the least used, as it is noticed that students did not employ them where needed. On the other hand, those markers were the most inappropriate ones according to the quantitative results. Students used them to signal elaborative and inferential relations between segments. This finding is in agreement with what is revealed in Hamed's (2014) study of Libyan EFL students writing. But what is not in agreement with Hamed's (2014) finding is that the marker *(al)though*, followed by *whereas* and *however* in the current study were the most problematic contrastive markers. In contrast, in Hamed's (2014) study, the marker *on the other hand* was the most problematic contrastive marker.

It is noteworthy that the marker *but* was the most appropriate contrastive marker used. However, the problem in using the marker *but* relates to being the most prevalent contrastive marker in the 40 essays. In other words, students used *but* at the expense of other contrastive markers. Accordingly, it seems that students were not aware of the function of the other markers of the same type.

More importantly, the polysyllabic markers, such as *however*, *whereas*, *nevertheless*, *besides* and the phrasal ones, such as *in addition*, *for example*, *as a conclusion*, *for that reason* and *in comparison* were challenging for the students. That means, such markers were difficult to recall and appropriately use by the students. In contrast, the students did

better in using and recalling the monosyllabic markers, such as *but*, *also* and *so*, (*and* is excluded because of the first language interference). This makes it possible to estimate that Libyan undergraduate students have a weak discourse competence of using a large variety of DMs. That in turn leads us to assert that Libyan EFL students have a low EFL writing proficiency level. The previous studies reveal that students of low EFL writing proficiency tend to use simple markers, such as *also*, *so*, *and* and *but* whereas students of higher EFL writing proficiency are capable of using a large variety of DMs (Jalilifar, 2008; Mahadin and Ali, 2016).

It can be concluded as a further note that students' essays lack the use of other cohesive devices, such as ellipsis, substitutions. In addition, they tended to overuse the marker *and* for generating sentences instead of constructing new ones by using proper references. Thus, it seems that the overall EFL discourse competence of Libyan EFL undergraduate students is weak.

5. 2 Reasons Behind the Problems in Using DMs

The discussions in the previous sections make it clear that the inappropriate use of DMs could be attributed to several reasons.

First, students depend on translating their ideas from Arabic to English during the writing process. On the one hand, they kept repeating a particular set of DMs, i.e. *and*, *also*. On the other hand, they tried to use the easy expressions for elaborating ideas and thoughts as they do in Arabic. Such repetition negatively affected the quality of their writing and made it less coherent and difficult to interpret. This correlates the finding of Yehia (2015).

Second, the disability in connecting strings of sentences together seems to be due to the poor grammar in students' writing. In fact, this is in agreement with one of their teachers' view. She explained that "*Students with low-grammatical proficiency misuse DMs in writing*". That is in line with Jalilifar's (2008) and Shareef's (2015) findings. The authors found that EFL students were not able to use well-functioned DMs due to their unqualified grammatical competence. That made them fail to communicate their intended messages. The findings also support the Lichtenberk's (1991) claim that "grammar shapes discourse, and discourse, in return, shapes grammars" (p. 78). Therefore, there is a strong relationship between mastering DMs and mastering grammar.

Third, Libyan undergraduate students used DMs inappropriately because they memorized their meanings without adequate knowledge of the pragmatic function of each marker and how they operate in discourse. For that reason, during the interview they were able to give the meaning of every single marker the researcher presented. But in real practice the qualitative and quantitative results show that they were not able to use them properly within texts. This result supports Fraser (1999) prediction that DMs have procedural core meaning in discourse. The choice of DMs is context-dependant. Since DMs do not have a certain set of semantic features, memorizing their meanings would not contribute to the appropriate utilization within texts.

Fourth, Writing instructors of Libyan undergraduate students might not provide their students explicit instructions on the role of DMs. They might not either demonstrate the role of DMs in establishing coherence in written discourse. Accordingly, during the writing process, students tended to implicate simple monosyllabic markers and avoided the phrasal and polysyllabic ones. That is because they were afraid of committing mistakes.

Fifth, the Writing instructors were not aware of assessing DMs in Libyan EFL undergraduate students' writing. That can be observed through the assessed essay samples. Since teachers' assessment provides students a clear guidance for enhancing their learning and improve their self-awareness and confidence ("Why is feedback", n.d.). It is noteworthy that the emphases was on assessing grammar and spelling at the sentence bound neglecting the evaluation of coherence and cohesion. As a result, students were motivated to work on words, phrases and sentences rather than text unity as revealed by Bamberg's (1984).

Finally, despite the considerable emphasis of the Writing 3 syllabus on enabling Libyan EFL undergraduate students to write various types of essays. The Writing 3 syllabus does not emphasize the role of cohesive devices. Furthermore, the syllabus does not emphasize the role of DMs in establishing coherence and cohesion in essay writing. That might be a central reason of students disability in using such expressions. That is because the major role of the syllabi is to determine what should be taught by teachers, and to shape learners intake (Raine, 2010).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This dissertation attempted to investigate one type of cohesive devices in written discourse. The goal of the present study is to investigate the problems in using DMs by the Libyan EFL third semester undergraduate students. It examined the performance of using those markers in students' essay writing by adopting Fraser's (1999) identification and classification.

It has been evident that Libyan EFL undergraduate students used discourse markers in their writing but they failed to use them properly. Libyan EFL students had difficulties to differentiate between the various functions of discourse markers. They tended to use a simple and restricted set of markers. Moreover, discourse markers have been omitted in the essays where needed in certain contexts. As a result, students' writing quality was negatively affected by such problems.

It was shown that the academic environment, i.e. the instructors' assessment and teaching of DMs, and the writing 3 syllabus, were the direct reason behind the problems that Libyan EFL students faced in using DMs. The following section provides some of the recommendations of this study.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the discussions in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that teaching DMs and their functions in written discourse should be taken into consideration in the English Writing programs. Writing instructors and Writing syllabus designers in Libya should pay adequate attention to the development of students' discourse competence. DMs'

proficiency would be considerably eased to EFL undergraduate students if the Academic Writing settings consider the following set of suggestions:

1. Writing instructors should put more emphasis on the areas that need to be strengthened. For instance, demonstrating the different functions of all kinds of DMs. Trying to use DMs in their right context rather than encouraging students to memorize them. In addition, the different types of essays, such as argumentative, descriptive and comparative ones should be explicitly taught alongside their required DMs. That is to enable students relate text ideas logically and properly.

2. The Writing instructors also need to put more emphasis on demonstrating and involving the more complex DMs in their teaching strategy. Since the findings revealed that students had difficulties in using polysyllabic and phrasal DMs, and never used the topic change ones. Therefore, explicit instructions of such types of DMs in short authentic paragraphs would be helpful.

3. In terms of assessment, the Writing instructors need to mark the errors that students encountered in their writing to enhance students' awareness and learning. For example, the instructors might need to choose some samples of the essays and try to explicitly correct the errors in class. Besides, stressing the role of DMs to show how they should be used appropriately. Students, in turn, should be asked to revise, edit and reform their own writing according to the provided feedback. That might enable them to know how text segments and ideas are related coherently. Such strategy is important for demonstrating how the nature of logical relations among strings of sentences, clauses, phrases and paragraphs are structured (Mezo, 2001).

4. Syllabus designers should incorporate the role of coherence and cohesive devices, particularly DMs, into Writing syllabi. That is helpful to guide the instructors to what should be taught in class. To achieve that purpose, simple and familiar topics according to the students` level should be involved. Such simple topics encourage students comprehend how essay parts relate and belong to each other. Moreover, the Writing syllabi should raise the instructors` awareness of the importance of the pragmatic and discourse competence to students. This strategy can be accomplished by encouraging students on extensive reading of the target language. Since the exposure to the target language through reading helps students to improve their writing proficiency (Donaghy, 2016).

6. 2 Suggestions for Further Studies

There are many issues discussed in the current research which require further investigations. The first one that need to be tackled is examining students` writing quality in relation to various types of cohesive devices i.e. the grammatical and the lexical cohesive devices. Since the current study show the lack of using such devices by Libyan EFL students, it is necessary to carry out further research on DMs alongside other cohesive devices with regard to the influence of students` mother tongue.

Finally, It would be interesting to continue this line of research taking other factors into account. For example, examining the relationship between students` recognition of DMs in reading comprehension and their performance in writing. All these factors and various areas of investigations might help us know more about Libyan EFL learners` ability in using such linguistic expressions.

6.3 Limitations

This study has a number of limitations: the most obvious is that the investigation is restricted to third semester students; the duration of the research which makes it difficult to trace the awareness of using DMs by students in the whole eight academic semesters. Regarding the limitations of the analyzed essays themselves, some essays do not have the same quantity of words due to the individual differences between the participants. However, the used data collection tools are very well established and served their purpose.

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Appendix 1

Table 4. The total percentage of appropriate and inappropriate of the most used contrastive DMs in students` writing.

Contrastive DMs	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
	N	%	N	%
but	10	76.9	3	23
however	3	37.5	5	62.5
on the other hand	2	66.6	1	33.3
whereas	1	33.3	2	66.6
on the contrary	0	0	1	100

Table 5. The total percentage of appropriate and inappropriate of the most used elaborative DMs in students` writing.

Elaborative DMs	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
	N	%	N	%
and	24	54.5	20	45.4
also	30	93.7	2	6.2
in addition	5	83.3	1	16.6
furthermore	3	100	0	0
for example	2	100	0	0

Table 6. The total percentage of appropriate and inappropriate of the most used inferential DMs in students` writing.

Inferential DMs	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
	N	%	N	%
because	19	95	1	5
so	11	91.6	1	8.3
therefore	5	100	0	0
in conclusion	3	100	0	0
for that reason	3	100	0	0

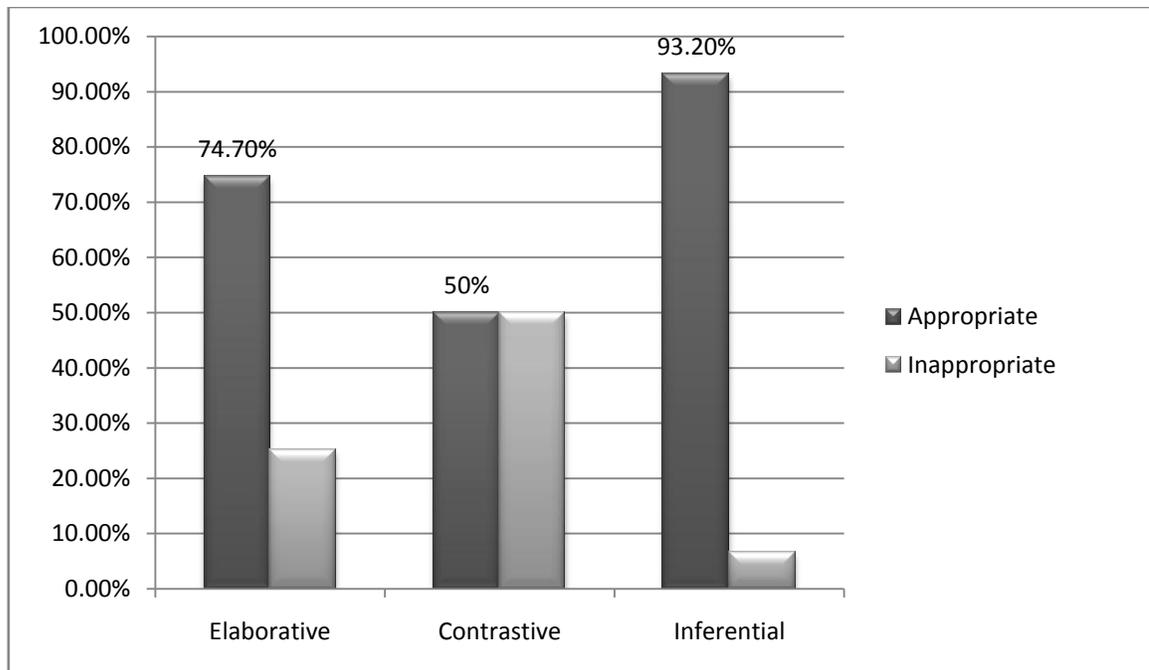
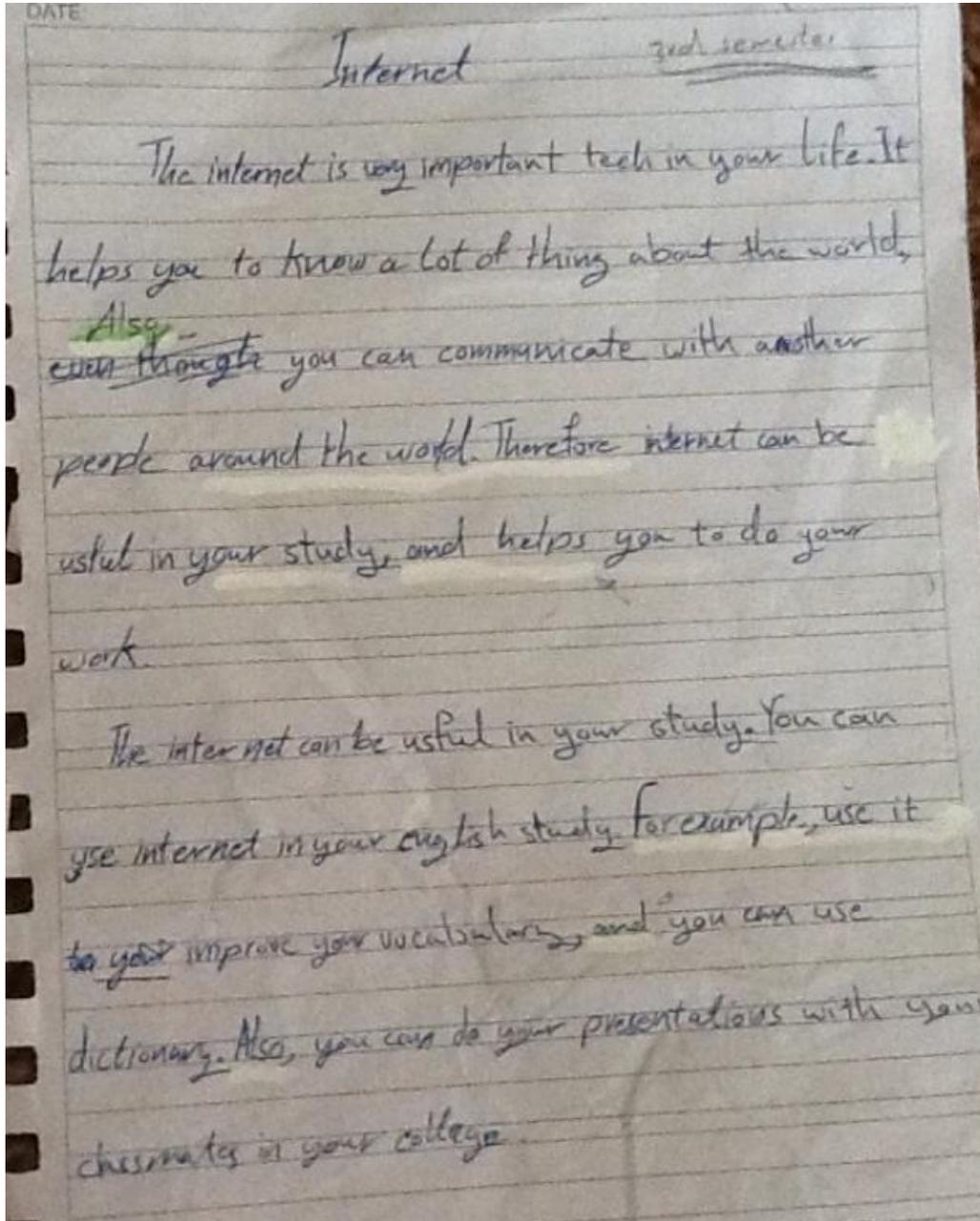


Figure 1. The total percentage of appropriate and inappropriate DMs in students' writing.

Appendix 2

The essay samples by Libyan EFL undergraduate students.



DATE

The internet helps you in your work. It is useful for you to learn your job, and to communicate with other companies. Also it shows you that websites that giving you the media of your work.

The internet is useful for your life, it makes you ~~you~~ more clever and intelligent. and learning you many thing that you didn't know.

Jan 3 2017

Healthy Food vs. Junk Food

Along time ago, people ate food that is really safe for their wellness. Now days, most of people in the world are busy. Thus, it's no secret that people don't have time to cook at home. That's why people prefer to eat junk food. However, junk food is too delectious, healthy food has more benefits.

Healthy food has benefits, it's gives the body its need of nutrients to maintain the body's health. people

who eat healthy food can have low risk of getting

some diseases.

Junk food is also called "fast food". Junk food is dangerous, because it's typically contains high levels of sugar or fat.

That's why it's very dangerous for our health.

Food is building every cell in the body and ^{the} responsible for the proper function of ~~the~~ whole body.

Therefore, it's important to know what is the good food for our body and what is not.

Ways of learning

You can change the world by learning.

~~The~~ learning is very important in the life.

Everyone has to learn to make their life

better and start to make knowledge. There

are different sources to learn, such as:

learn from internet ; from life

and from other people.

1 Learning from internet is helpful. you can

save ~~save~~ the time and save your money, so

you can set and learn without moving from

place to place. Also, you can join ~~file~~

online classes. learn from internet ^{is important} ~~ver~~
is interesting.

2 Learning from other people? you can
share your thoughts and your culture specially
if you living abroad. you can learn ^{from} ~~experience~~
of older people.

3 lessons of life make you strong which make
personality improve, and ^{dealing with}
difficult-situation.

— The learning has alot of sources, we
can learn from internet or by other people
and from life.