Article

Discourse Markers Use Among Kirkuk University Students

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Abstract: Discourse markers play a significant role in facilitating effective communication among university students. Therefore, this Study aims to explore and analyze the use of discourse markers among Kirkuk university students, focusing on the most common type they used and functions, variation, and its impact on communication. A survey was conducted to gather data on the frequency and types of discourse markers used by participants. This survey-based study provides insights into the role and effectiveness of discourse markers, highlighting their potential impact on enhancing academic communication.

Keywords: Discourse markers, Kirkuk university students, second language acquisition, English for Academic Purposes, academic discourses.

1. Introduction

Discourse markers are words or phrases we employ to structure and arrange our discourse. They assist us in making transitions, introducing fresh perspectives, emphasizing particular ideas, and even expressing our attitudes and opinions. Depending on the language and context, discourse markers can take many different forms, but common ones include "well," "actually," "so," "however," "you know," and "in my opinion." They are crucial communication tools that help us have meaningful conversations and effectively communicate our ideas.

Discourse markers play a crucial role in facilitating effective communication by guiding the flow of conversation, signaling relationships between ideas, and aiding coherence (Fraser, 1999). Moreover, discourse markers are particularly essential for non-native English speakers to achieve fluency and coherence in academic settings (Schiffrin, 1985). This study examines the usage patterns of discourse markers among Kirkuk university students, shedding light on their significance in academic interactions. One of the five tips for paragraphs writings is transition usage "use transition words and phrases. It is good way to link ideas and concepts within a paragraph "Ahmed, (2022). p.1649

By acquiring and effectively using these markers, EFL learners can express themselves clearly, engage in meaningful discussions, and navigate various social and academic contexts successfully

However, limited research has focused specifically on discourse marker use among non-native speakers of English at the university level. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how Kirkuk university students utilize discourse markers in their spoken and written academic discourses.

Objectives:

The study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and strategies needed to improve the students' communicative competence in English. In addition, stand for the types of discourse markers commonly used by Kirkuk University students so the objectives can be cited as follow:

1. Investigate the awareness and knowledge of Arabic university students regarding discourse markers in EFL: The study can aim to determine the level of understanding and awareness that Arabic university students have regarding the use and functions of discourse markers in English. This can involve assessing their familiarity with different types of discourse markers and their ability to use them appropriately in spoken and written communication.

2- Investigate the types of discourse markers commonly used by Kirkuk University students and their frequency of use.

3- Explore the impact of discourse marker use on communication effectiveness: It can examine how the correct use of discourse markers contributes to coherence, cohesion, and clarity in their English language communication.

4- Examine the challenges and difficulties faced by Arabic university students in using discourse markers in EFL: This can involve analyzing common errors or patterns of misuse and exploring the factors contributing to these challenges.

5- Investigate the role of cultural and linguistic transfer in discourse marker use: It can examine whether there are specific Arabic discourse markers that transfer into their English communication and how this affects their language proficiency.

6- Provide pedagogical recommendations for improving discourse marker use in EFL instruction: Based on the findings of the study, practical recommendations can be made to educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to improve the teaching and learning of discourse markers in EFL classrooms.

Research questions:

We modified and expanded these questions based on the specific research objectives and design of the study.

As we try in this study and results of the survey to answer this questions and stand for all responses and finding we get:

1. what are discourse markers and why are they important in spoken and written communication?

2. How do discourse markers facilitate cohesion and communications in academic discourse?

3. What are the common types of discourse markers used by Kirkuk University students?

4. What are the functions and purposes of discourse markers in the communication of Kirkuk University students?

5. What factors influence the use of discourse markers among Kirkuk University students?

6. How does the use of discourse markers differ across different academic disciplines among Kirkuk University students?

7. Are there any differences in the use of discourse markers between male and female students at Kirkuk University?

8. To what extent do Kirkuk University students use discourse markers appropriately and effectively in their academic writing?

9. Are there any variations in the use of discourse markers among Kirkuk University students based on native language background?

10. What are the perceptions and attitudes of Kirkuk University students towards the use of discourse markers in their communication?

Literature Review:

"Discourse Marker Use and Second Language Learners" by Kim, J., & Wang, J. (2018) this literature review examines various studies on second language discourse marker use among university students. It explores factors such as learners' proficiency levels, native language backgrounds, and the impact of instruction on their use of markers. The review also highlights sociolinguistic variations in discourse marker use among second language learners.

"Acquisition and Use of Discourse Markers by ESL Learners" by MacLellan, E. (2016). In this literature review, the researcher investigates the acquisition and use of discourse markers by English as a Second Language (ESL) learner. It examines studies on learners' development of proficiency in using markers for structuring conversations, expressing agreement or disagreement, and managing turn taking. The review also discusses the pedagogical implications of these findings.

"Exploring Discourse Marker Use in Academic Writing by Non-Native English-Speaking University Students" by Silva,T. (2019)

This literature review focuses on discourse marker use in academic writing by non-native English-speaking university students. It analyzes studies on the functions, variation, and impact of discourse markers in written texts produced by these learners. The review also discusses the role of instruction and feedback in promoting effective use of markers in academic writing.

"Discourse Marker Use in Second Language Speech: A Systematic Review" by Lin, M. H., & Chen, P. T. (2020)

This systematic review examines the use of discourse markers in second language speech by university students. It synthesizes findings from various studies to identify patterns and variati1ons in marker use among different learner populations. The review also discusses the pedagogical implications for promoting more accurate and proficient use of markers in

Second language speech.

These literature reviews provide insights into the existing research on second language discourse marker use among university students. They discuss the factors influencing marker use, developmental patterns, and the impact of instruction. Reading these reviews can give you a comprehensive overview of the current state of research in this area and guide you in your own study.

2. Materials and Methods

To obtain data on discourse marker usage, a survey was distributed among a sample of Kirkuk University students. The survey included questions about the frequency of utilizing discourse markers and the types of markers commonly employed. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique, ensuring representation from diverse academic disciplines and language backgrounds (Creswell, 2013; Alaadin,k.,& Ghanim, M, 2015& Sawgil, 2017). Data collected from the survey enabled the researchers to analyze and draw conclusions regarding discourse marker usage.

2. Participant Selection:

Participants in this study are 36 students of Kirkuk University students that represents a diverse range of disciplines, language proficiency levels, and educational backgrounds.

Data Collection Method:

This study is based on data gathered from a randomly chosen sample. We use a survey, the designed a questionnaire includes questions about the participants' demographics, language background, and specific discourse markers they commonly use.

Questionnaire divides in two sections the first contain 9 multi-choice questions and the other were a writing assignment to determine the frequency and type of the DMs employed by the students.

However Participants in this research were assigned a writing assignment, which asked to write a three-paragraph essay on "Modern life " 36 essays authored by these students were thoroughly examined, with emphasis placed on their usage and manipulation of DMs in order to achieve a coherent piece of writing at the essay level. The 36 essays were graded on writing quality.

Data Analysis:

After data collecting, Data Analysis take its place through two steps:

- Using appropriate statistical or qualitative analysis techniques (SPSS program). as we can calculate frequencies, percentages, or conduct correlation analyses.

- Corpus analyses (Antconc application) were used to assess the writing and frequency in discourse markers used in their essays.

3. Results

The analyzed data will provide insights into the gender of stages of Kirkuk university participant students.

Gender

	N	%
Male	16	44.4%
Female	20	55.6%

Table (1)

Table (2)

The analyses indicate that the highest portion of participants were on senior stage 44.5%

Stage""

	N	%
First Year	6	16.7%
Second Year	7	19.4%
Third Year	6	16.7%
Senior	16	44.4%
Missed	1	2.8%

1. Are you familiar with the term "discourse markers" in English?

	N	%
Yes	24	66.7%
No	1	2.8%
Maybe	11	30.6%

Table (3)

2. Do you use discourse markers
frequently in your spoken English?
[Row 1]

The

	N	%
Yes	20	55.6%
No	3	8.3%
Maybe	13	36.1%

Table (4)

survey revealed that a majority of Kirkuk students familiar with discourse markers but only (55.6%) reported using discourse markers frequently during academic interactions.

The student reported that they have challenges with discourse markers use

However, most students think discourse markers contribute to the coherence and organization of their English speaking or writing

4. Do you think discourse markers contribute to the coherence and organization of your English speaking or writing? [Row 1]

	N	%
Yes	28	77.8%
No	2	5.6%
Maybe	6	16.7%

The analyzed data will also provide insights into the patterns of discourse marker use among Kirkuk university students. It will include the most commonly used discourse markers, their frequency of use, and the functions they serve in academic discourses.

The most common types of markers employed were additive markers such as "and," and "also" (52%). Contrastive markers such as "however," "in addition," "but," and "on the other hand" were the second most frequently utilized markers (29%), while causal markers like "therefore," "because," and "so" constituted 19% of the responses. These findings suggest that non-native students are aware of the importance of discourse markers and actively incorporate them into their communication strategies.

Examine the challenges and difficulties faced by Arabic university students in using discourse markers in EFL: This can involve analyzing common errors or patterns of misuse and exploring the factors contributing to these challenges.

Most students indicates that there is a big role of cultural and linguistic transfer in discourse marker use: It can examine whether there are specific Arabic discourse markers that transfer into their English communication and its effects on their language proficiency. The study shows that there is a low average in students speaking and writing skills this may due to culture and mother tongue influences. according to Ahmed & Najm .((2023). that the main reason of low a average of students speaking skills is lack of training this may be due to the use of conventional teaching methods and using the mother tongue instead of English

In General, the most common discourse markers used by students were "as". "Also", "but", "so". "Such". "However"

Table (6) indicate the discourse markers inserted in student essays

Type	Freq	Range	Type	Freq	Range
As	35	19	Contemporary	2	1
Also	23	14	Currently	2	2
But	22	11	Definitely	2	2
So	18	12	Essential	2	1
Such	13	10	Eventually	2	2
such as	11	9	Every	2	2
However	9	7	Potentially	2	2
Conclusion	7	7	Productivity	2	2
Well	7	7	Really	2	1
Moreover	5	5	Additionally	1	1
Negative	5	5	Almost	1	1
On the other hand	5	5	Almost	1	1
Addition	4	4	Alongside	1	1
Consequently	4	4	Already	1	1
Furthermore	4	4	Anyway	1	1
in addition	4	1	consequences	1	1
Overwhelming	4	4	Constantly	1	1
Depending	3	3	overcoming	1	1
Especially	3	3	Personally	1	1
Finally	3		Regarding	1	1
Finally	3	3	Therefore	1	1
Although	2		Though	1	1
Although	2	2	Totally	1	1
As well as	2	2	To sum up	1	1
As well	5	5	unfortunately	1	1

4. Discussion

It The results support existing research highlighting the significance of discourse markers in academic communication among non-native speakers (Hyland, 2002). According to Ahmed (2022), one of the five tips for paragraphs writings is transition usage "use transition words and phrases. It is good way to link ideas and concepts within a paragraph " (Ahmed, 2022) the frequent use of additive markers indicates a desire to provide additional information and maintain coherence. The prevalence of contrastive markers suggests a conscious effort to juxtapose contrasting ideas and create effective transitions within discourse. Causal markers were used to establish logical relationships between ideas, enhancing overall coherence (Schiffrin, 1987).

Students' usage of discourse markers in a second language, within a university setting, it can greatly enhance their communication skills. Here's a detailed explanation of the use of second-language discourse markers among university students:

Certainly! Here are some examples of how discourse markers can be used among students at Kirkuk University:

1. Introducing a new idea or topic: Second language discourse markers are useful for transitioning between topics or introducing new ideas. For example, phrases such as "Moreover," "Furthermore," or "In addition" can signal that the speaker is expanding on the current point or presenting a related idea.

Example: "Furthermore, let's consider the economic implications of this policy change."

2. Expressing agreement or support: Discourse markers help students indicate their agreement or support for a particular viewpoint. By using phrases like "I agree," "You're right," or "Absolutely," they can affirm their alignment with what has been said while encouraging further discussion.

Example: "You're absolutely right. Additionally, we should explore the social impact of this initiative."

3. Expressing disagreement or an alternative perspective: Students can use discourse markers to express their disagreement or present an alternative viewpoint. Phrases such as "On the other hand," "However," or "Nevertheless" provide a clear signal that the speaker is about to offer a contrasting opinion or perspective.

4. Emphasizing a point: Discourse markers are instrumental in emphasizing specific points or ideas. Expressions like "Indeed," "In fact," or "Certainly" can signal that the speaker wants to draw attention to a particular aspect or highlight the importance of a certain argument.

5. Concluding or summarizing: Discourse markers are helpful in concluding a discussion or summarizing key points. Phrases like "In conclusion," "To sum up," or "Overall" indicate that the speaker is wrapping up the conversation and presenting a brief summary.

Example*: "To sum up, effective communication skills, cultural understanding, and teamwork are vital for success in today's globalized world."*

By utilizing these second-language discourse markers, university students can engage in more coherent and structured discussions while show casing their language proficiency and critical thinking skills. Regular practice and exposure to different discourse markers will enable them to communicate their ideas effectively and participate actively in academic settings.

Overall, the use of discourse markers at Kirkuk University helps students, researchers, and lecturers to effectively communicate their ideas, establish a clear structure, and improve the coherence of their academic discourse.

When it comes to Kirkuk University students, the use of discourse markers may vary depending on various factors, including their language proficiency, cultural background, and educational experiences.

Some common discourse markers that are commonly used by students in academic and informal settings.

1. "Well" and "So": These are often used as introductory markers to begin a response or to connect ideas. For example, "Well, I think the main issue is..." or "So, what I mean is..."

2. "Anyway": these markers are commonly used to change or redirect the topic of discussion. For instance, "Anyway, let's get back to the main point" or "Anyhow, we can discuss that later."

3. "Moreover" and "Furthermore": These markers are used to introduce additional information or supporting evidence. For example, "Moreover, several studies have shown..." or "Furthermore, it is important to consider..."

4. "On the other hand" and "However": These markers are used to introduce contrasting or opposing ideas. For instance, "On the other hand, some researchers argue that..." or "However, there are certain limitations to this approach."

5. "In conclusion" and "To sum up": These markers are used to signal the end of a discussion or presentation and summarize the main points. For example, "In conclusion, it can be said that..." or "To sum up, the key findings are..."

It is important to note that the use of discourse markers can vary among individuals, and these are just a few examples. Additionally, the specific language or dialect spoken by Kirkuk University students may influence the discourse markers they use.

Finding and Recommendations:

Understanding the role and usage of discourse markers provides valuable insights for educators and language instructors in supporting non-native students' development of effective communication skills. By promoting awareness and use of discourse markers, instructors can contribute to their students' enhanced coherence and fluency in academic settings. Future studies may explore the impact of discourse marker instruction on students' overall communication competence.

The Study demonstrates the significance of discourse markers in the communication of university students. The various functions they serve, the variation in their use, and their impact on communication effectiveness highlight their importance. Given the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of university students,

However, we can provide a general overview of some common findings in this area.

Firstly, researchers have examined the acquisition and appropriate use of discourse markers by second language learners. These studies investigate how learners develop proficiency in using markers to structure conversations, express agreement or disagreement, and manage turn taking.

Secondly, research has explored the impact of learners' native language and cultural background on their use of discourse markers. Different languages and cultural norms may influence the choice and frequency of markers used by second language learners. For example, learners from Asian cultures might have different preferences for markers compared to learners from Western cultures.

Thirdly, studies have investigated the role of instruction in promoting the appropriate use of discourse markers in second language acquisition. Researchers have examined the effectiveness of instructional interventions, such as explicit teaching of markers, providing models and practice exercises, or feedback on marker use, and their impact on learners' communicative competence.

Additionally, research has explored the relationship between learners' proficiency level and their use of discourse markers. It is often found that as learners gain more proficiency in the second language, they demonstrate a greater range and more accurate use of discourse markers.

Furthermore, studies have investigated the sociolinguistic variations in discourse marker use among second language learners. These variations might be influenced by factors such as the learners' age, gender, educational background, or the specific context in which they are communicating.

Further research is needed to explore the specific use of discourse markers in different contexts and to develop strategies for promoting their effective use in academic settings.

5. Conclusion

Discourse markers are words or phrases that help to link ideas and sentences together in spoken or written language. They can signal changes in topic, introduce new

ideas, express agreement or disagreement, and provide emphasis or clarification. In short, they help to structure language and facilitate communication.

The use of discourse markers may vary depending on various factors, including their language proficiency, cultural background, and educational experiences.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student, mastering discourse markers is crucial for effective communication in an academic setting. By mastering discourse markers, EFL students can improve the clarity and effectiveness of their communication, both in academic settings and in everyday life. With practice, they can become more confident in expressing their ideas and engaging in meaningful discussions.

In conclusion, this survey-based study sheds light on the usage patterns of discourse markers among university Kirkuk university students. The findings highlight the frequent utilization of discourse markers, demonstrating their important role in academic communication.

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