



Discourse Markers in Spoken English: A Study of Iraqi University Students' Conversations

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the use of discourse markers in conversations among Iraqi undergraduate students, focusing on their functions and impact on communication. The study analyzes 30 dialogues, totaling 291 turns, derived from oral interviews where participants express their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of online social networks. The findings reveal that discourse markers significantly enhance politeness in student conversations, with a categorization into five functions: elaborative, causality, reformulation, contrast and inferential markers. The data shows that elaborative discourse markers are used most frequently and that their usage correlates positively with the students' proficiency in English. These results suggest that an understanding of discourse markers can improve communication effectiveness in English for Foreign Language (EFL) students, allowing them to use these markers more skillfully and creatively in their interactions. The study underscores the importance of discourse markers in facilitating coherent and polite conversation, advocating for their inclusion in EFL teaching methods to enhance students' communicative competence.

Keywords

Discourse markers, communication, English proficiency, polite expression.



علامات الخطاب في اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة: دراسة في محادثات طلبة الجامعات العراقية

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المستخلص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة استخدام علامات الخطاب في المحادثات بين طلبة الجامعات العراقية، مع التركيز على وظائفها وتأثيرها على التواصل. تحلل الدراسة ثلاثين حوارًا، بإجمالي ٢٩١ دور للكلام، منتقاة من مقابلات شفوية عبّر فيها المشاركون عن آرائهم حول مزايا وعيوب شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي الإلكترونية. تكشف النتائج أن علامات الخطاب تُعزز بشكل ملحوظ اللباقة في محادثات الطلبة، مع تصنيفها إلى خمس وظائف: التوضيح، السببية، وإعادة الصياغة و التباين و الاستدلال. تُظهر البيانات أن علامات الخطاب التوضيحية هي الأكثر استخدامًا، وأن استخدامها يرتبط إيجابيًا بمستوى إتقان الطلبة للغة الإنجليزية. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن فهم علامات الخطاب يُمكن أن يُحسن فعالية التواصل لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مما يسمح لهم باستخدام هذه العلامات بمهارة وإبداع أكبر في تفاعلاتهم. تؤكد الدراسة على أهمية علامات الخطاب في تسهيل المحادثات المتناسكة والمهذبة، وتدعو إلى إدراجها في أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتعزيز الكفاءة التواصلية لدى الطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

علامات الخطاب، التواصل، إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية، التعبير المهذب.



1. Introduction

English has become the international language of communication and higher education in most non-English-speaking countries. Iraq is no exception. More than fifteen higher learning institutions have opened their doors since 2003 to teach Iraqi students Mathematics, Medicine, Economics, Literature, and other majors in English. Apart from foreign universities that have opened branches in Iraq, many universities, through cooperation with foreign institutions, are offering joint-degree programs where students receive diplomas from partner universities in addition to their local certificates. English is thus vital in Iraq both for teaching purposes and for building personal and professional relationships, yet Iraqi learners of English still encounter difficulty in the execution of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). In particular, they are still lagging behind in speaking even after years of exposure to theoretical knowledge about phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and semantics in high schools and universities.

Language is a very important medium for national and international communication, and English is an international vehicle to convey knowledge, express ideas, and share feelings. Speaking English fluently and accurately has become indispensable in Iraq, since it is the only way to keep up with the new and international trends. To be really fluent in spoken English, one must strive for better speaking skills and competence. Speaking is a complex process which consists of many interrelated sub-skills such as phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and pragmatics. Discourse markers (e.g. okay, anyway, right, you know) can hardly be regarded as an independent language skill but certainly represent an important aspect of fluency and conversation management. They are not yet fully understood, receive little attention in either research or teaching, and are regarded merely as fillers, hesitations or indicators of high fluency among learners. As a result, they still constitute a gap that needs to be bridged.

In spoken conversation, all speakers intuitively manage what the next speaker will do, how long the speaker will take turn and when to take or give a turn, etc. Discourse markers do not contribute propositional meaning, and they are not grammatically mandatory. Before, between and after the form-based processes of joining a new talk or a new text, speakers manage the conversation with talk. This regulating activity modulates turn-exchange and guides the direction of talk in progress. Discourse markers, along with other non-verbal signals (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, and posture) perform the regulative activity. речи на английском и спэкинг (Setiyawan & Lestari, 2017)



1.1. Background

In the fields of linguistics and language education, discourse markers (DMs) have been widely studied in many spoken contexts, and much attention has been paid to language learners' use of DMs. However, discourse markers in classroom interaction remain under-researched, especially in the context of Iraqi learners of English as a foreign language (Ali Basendouh, 2019). Moreover, the Iraqi students' conversations about language learning and use and their reflections on classroom English have not been previously analysed. To obtain insights into these under-researched aspects of their spoken interaction, a study was undertaken of English conversations produced among Iraqi university students of English. The language performances were recorded and transcribed, and a range of DMs and associated information was coded systematically.

Conversations among university students constitute an important site for understanding how learners construct and maintain social relations and personal identities in the process of learning a foreign language. Students engage with complex issues, reflect on contemporary topics, and explore what it means to be a citizen of Iraq and a member of a global village. They express opinions and adult-like perspectives on motivation and learning that merit academic attention. For many students, English is the most frequently used foreign language from pre-university education onwards, and whatever they have learnt in class and extra-curriculum activities continues to be of prime importance in their lives.

1.2. Problem Statement

Discourse markers have gained attention in linguistic research since the early 1970s due to their semantic and pragmatic roles in an utterance. As cohesive textual devices, they establish relationships between utterances, phrases, and ideas, ensuring communicative effectiveness. Discourse markers play a significant role in refining other-language speech, as they constitute an aspect of pragmatic competence directly observable in conversational exchanges. Part of linguistic development, discourse markers enable clearer expressions of speakers' opinions and thoughts, thereby bolstering communicative goals. Among discourse markers, less attention has been paid to spoken English than to written texts, despite extensive use of conversational speech in academic environments.

The present study investigates spoken English conversations at University of Thi-Qar, Iraq, focusing on non-English-major students_ discourse markers, and enabling the first exploration of such features in Iraqi university students. Advanced English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students' spoken



English was examined to inform this study_ scope and shed light on the role of discourse markers in a shared environment. Spoken English discourse markers in spontaneous dialogue have been categorized according to Fraser (Shan & Chu, 2025).

1.3. Research Objectives

1. To identify the **types** of spoken English discourse markers used by Iraqi university students.
2. To examine the **functions** these discourse markers perform in informal student conversations.
3. To describe how Iraqi EFL students use discourse markers in **natural, private communication** with peers.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What types of discourse markers are used by Iraqi university students in everyday conversations?
2. What pragmatic functions do these discourse markers perform?
3. How frequently do students use discourse markers in informal spoken English?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The expected contribution of this study lies in the description of a pragmatic marker employed by Iraqi university students in English language interactions. Khachaturian (2022) indicates that discourse markers remain an understudied phenomenon in second language settings, particularly among learner groups with limited exposure to the target language. Discourse markers have not been investigated in the conversations of Iraqi learners of English. Participants in the present study make use of a range of discourse markers drawn from English in their informal interactions, but they have a limited understanding of their functions and application. The significance of this research provides initial insights into a pragmatic resource that merits further exploration in curricular development and pedagogy. They also highlight the need for greater attention in English-language instruction to the pragmatic dimension of social interaction and to linguistic resources that can support the modulation of relational meanings among interlocutors.



2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Discourse Markers

Discourse markers (DMs) have attracted considerable attention in pragmatics and discourse analysis because they are essential elements of spoken interaction. Schiffrin (1987) defines discourse markers as linguistic expressions that connect segments of discourse and help speakers organize conversation. Rather than contributing propositional meaning, they operate at the pragmatic level by guiding the listener's interpretation of an utterance. Similarly, Fraser (1999) explains that discourse markers are lexical expressions such as well, so, but, and because that signal the relationship between the current utterance and the preceding discourse. Brinton (1996) believes that discourse markers also act as pragmatic markers in the sense that they play a role of organizing text and acting as interpersonal cues to aid speakers in remaining coherent and in regulating the course of social interaction. They occur particularly in speech since spontaneous talk involves real-time planning. Another point that Aijmer (2002) makes is the fact that discourse markers are an expression of attitude by a speaker and are used to understand the intention of a speaker. Hence discourse markers are not elements of grammar, but they are communicatively essential units of natural conversation.

2.2. Discourse Markers Classification

Scientists have come up with various categories of discourse markers. Schiffrin (1987) organizes them into the categories by their discourse functions, such as, markers of response (yeah), elaboration (and), contrast (but), and causality (because). Fraser (1999) gives a practical classification which includes the contrastive markers (however, but), the markers elaborative (and, also), the markers inferential (so, therefore), the markers of quotation (admit, claim), the markers of reformulation (to put it simply, in other words), the markers of exemplification (for instance, such as) and the markers of topic-change (by the way) .

As Aijmer (2013) also mentions, discourse markers may reflect the position of the speaker, management of the topic, and turn-taking. Well is one such marker used in spoken English where the marker usually introduces a reply and so is usually used to introduce the end or continuation of an idea in a speech. Findings of conversations data were also provided by other researchers like Cheng and Liao (2018), who discovered that use of common labels like because, yeah, and first are frequent in the conversations of students. These markers are also distributed socially, speakers with close interpersonal relationships use more discourse



markers as an indication of shared understanding and solidarity (Fung and Carter, 2007).

2.3. Discourse Markers roles in a conversation

Discourse markers have a number of communicative functions. To begin with, they help to bring about coherence through linking ideas and indicating logical connections between utterances (Fraser, 1999). Second, they assist speakers to control turn taking and sustain the conversation (Muller, 2005). As an example, indicators like well and you know can indicate hesitation, strategizing or a change in subject.

Also, discourse markers have interpersonal roles. They are polite, diffuse disagreement and convey expression of the speaker (Brinton, 1996). According to Aijmer (2002), the signs of support and participation of the listener may be represented by the use of markers like yeah or okay. Spontaneous conversations thus have more discourse markers as compared to structured or formal speech since speakers use them to bargain meaning in the moment (Muller, 2005). The present study is on Discourse Markers in the speech of EFL learners.

Studies show that second language learners tend to learn to use discourse markers inappropriately. Learners might have vocabulary and grammar, but often they do not have pragmatic competence (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Hellermann and Vergun (2007) discovered that ESL learners who had only started their learning used significantly lower discourse markers as compared to native speakers thus making them have less interactive conversations.

The use of discourse markers is also influenced by cross linguistic influence. The learners are likely to carry through patterns of their first language to the target language thus creating non-native discourse patterns (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Research in Arabic-English situations shows that Arabic and English systems of discourse markers are distinct in terms of adversative and simultaneous ones (World English Journal et al., 2019). Cultural communication styles lead to some of the markers being overused or used under-utilized. However, EFL students manage to gradually build a collection of the discourse markers as their communicative competence advances (Muller, 2005). Cheng and Liao (2018) also noted that the occurrence of discourse markers is higher in spontaneous conversation than in a structured one, which suggests that ordinary communication promotes the growth of pragmatics.



2.4. Research Gap

Though discourse markers have existed in the pragmatics and applied linguistics areas, the majority of the past researches have been directed to the conversational behavior of native speakers (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999; Aijmer, 2002). Research studies have been conducted to investigate the roles and categories of discourse markers in English dialogue, but relatively less studies have been conducted to examine how EFL learners use them in conversation especially in the context of naturally occurring conversation (Muller, 2005).

Moreover, numerous EFL discourse marker studies are based either on classroom tasks or scripted speaking tasks as opposed to real peer conversations. These contexts might be inadequate indicators of the spontaneous pragmatic competence of learners since when speech is structured the number of discourse markers is usually less than in the context of natural communication (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007). In addition, the cross-linguistic influence has already been recognized in terms of contributing to the discourse markers usage (Kasper and Rose, 2002), but there has been a lack of focus on the Arabic learners in the university conversational context.

According to the earlier studies with an Arabic-English format, there is evidence of a significant divergence between Arabic and English system of discourse markers, particularly when it comes to relations of adversity and simultaneous relations. Nevertheless, there is an overall paucity of empirical studies which analyze small-group student conversation and evaluate the role of social familiarity on the use of discourse markers. Thus, it is necessary to do additional research on the application of discourse markers by university EFL students in real conversational interactions and the ways their use is manifested as a measure of pragmatic competence. The present study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing naturally occurring conversations among university students and identifying the types and functions of discourse markers used in peer interaction.

Research has shown that linguistic definition of discourse markers remains elusive to date. Nevertheless, Fraser (1999, p. 931) defined discourse markers in an expansive way as expressions 'that do not change the truth condition of the proposition that they are associated with and that do not fit naturally into the standard grammatical framework of syntactically-based category'. They display a pragmatic meaning rather than establishing a novel propositional meaning and are primarily used in spoken rather than written contexts (Alsaawi, 2022).



Discourse markers play a pivotal role in successful communication such that misunderstanding created may make communication impossible. Speaking is the primary vehicle for daily communication; hence spoken discourse markers in conversation constitutes the core area in the study of discourse markers. A myriad of studies on discourse markers have been conducted on first language speakers while studies examining the presence, type and frequency of their use among Second Language Students on English conversations are scant.





3. Methodology

The data for this study comprise recorded conversations of 30 students from one university in Thi-Qar during their free time outside the classroom. Their native language is Iraqi Arabic, and they study English as a foreign language. Accordingly, their proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is B1. The students are randomly selected from the English Department, College of Education, and are of both genders and from different levels of study. Thirty dialogues were recorded on a digital voice recorder during casual conversations and the conversations were video recorded. The students had been studying together for one year at university level. Audio recorded conversations were of 48 minutes duration. The general aim of the recordings is to examine the characteristics and the use of discourse markers by EFL students during casual conversation in English, in order to analyse their individual needs and give them more assistance to improving their spoken language.

The data were collected from 30 Iraqi students. The selection of such a number of students stemmed from three central criteria: (1) the students' mother tongue is Arabic; (2) they study English as a foreign language at the university; and (3) they have a minimum of one year of formal instruction in the English department after taking the equivalence test to enter the college. These criteria ensure that any discourse markers analysed in their spoken English constitute a genuine measurement of the effect of English on their native language, thus the processing of these important types of markers would be likely to exhibit similar cross-linguistic phenomena (Setiyawan & Lestari, 2017). Data were transcribed due to the presence of complex aural features which cannot be accounted for in a straightforward manner. According to the aforementioned criteria, 30 recorded conversations were selected from the vast amount of speech data collected.

The current study adopts a qualitative and quantitative approach employing content analysis. Surveys were firstly administered to establish a systematic understanding of students' overall discourse marker usage. All 30 participants were required to complete them prior to the extensive speech data collecting phase. Conversations were conducted with fellow students in free time outside the classroom containing casual English discourse. Narrative accounts from students concerning their personal experiences were also solicited. Both audio alone and video-audio recordings were adopted as modes of data collection.



3.1. Research Design

Communication patterns in directed conversations were analysed using qualitative discourse-analysis techniques. Discourse markers mark text boundaries in spoken discourse. The analysis of a corpus of conversations among senior students attending an Iraqi university offers insight into the nature and function of these markers when they communicate in English studied within a framework of discourse analysis of speech communication focused on its socio-cultural and pragmatic aspects (Setiyawan & Lestari, 2017). Discourse markers have been classified into five types, with accompanying illustrative categories and subcategories. Of particular interest is their role as common and/or short utterances that play an important part in negotiating a conversation within small groups when two or more speakers share the same culture and language.

Discourse markers fulfil different functions and are not restricted to transitional, connective, or organisational roles; rather, they can signal shifts in information and attitudes. The definition adopted here extends to all common utterances and predefined phrases having a similar form and function when examining spoken communication. Direct languages in the same sociolinguistic area exhibit no differences in this regard, differing rather in the speakers' views, gender, education, or social context. Even though the present approach could lead to the conclusion that English on a global basis contains no specific or social varieties. The discourse-markers distribution, type, and cultural representation provide some evidence of social and sociocultural behaviour within a geographically and linguistically limited area considered in the analysis.

3.2. Participants

Thirty Iraqi university students participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 years. Participants were selected based on their proficiency in English (intermediate to upper-intermediate level) and their willingness to engage in out-of-class conversation. The students conversed freely on the topics of their choice for approximately 48 minutes in natural, informal conditions. Conversations were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for analysis.

3.3. Interview

The second method used to collect data involved interviews. An interview has been defined as "a spoken exchange in which one participant asks questions and the other provides information". This indicates that the role of the interviewer is crucial in steering the discussion towards the research objectives. The interview method



employed in this research could be designated as a ‘semi-structured interview’, which is “based on the use of the interview guide” containing “a list of questions and/or topics to be covered.”

The researcher devised a set of questions for the interview and conducted a pilot study with the purpose of trying out the questions. This pilot study helped the researcher to refine the interview questions, but the wording of the questions remained largely intact, as trial participants had not asked for clarifications or further elaborations. The interview was conducted face-to-face for two reasons. First, this helped the respondents to express their views freely, leading to more comprehensive responses. Second, it contributed to maintaining a friendly atmosphere, which further encouraged the participants to disclose their thoughts on the topic under discussion. In short, despite the limited number of participants, an interview was deemed suitable to provide insights into the use of discourse markers in language practice by Iraqi university students studying English as a foreign language.

3.4. Data Collection

The data were collected through various means, including audio recordings, detailed researcher observations, comprehensive field notes that included relevant remarks connected to the gathered data, and a structured interview process. All of these activities were conducted during thirty distinct sessions of informal conversation among the same selected group of students. These 30 casual conversations spanned a duration of 48 minutes and were entirely naturally occurring, meaning they were neither prompted nor initiated by the researcher in any way. The initial session, which set the stage for the subsequent conversations, involved a pre-test targeting the participants’ use of discourse markers, providing a baseline for analysis (Davis and Brown2024).

The recordings from all the conversations, in combination with the commentary notes and the audio collected during the pre-test, constituted the primary source of valuable data for this study. From this extensive collection, each one meticulously accompanied by a transcription, was then made for in-depth analysis. The researcher undertook the task of coding, re-analyzing, and annotating all of the recordings of the selected conversations, in addition to the transcripts and comments provided. This process involved documenting the identity of each speaker, thoroughly cataloging the discourse markers utilized by all the participants, analyzing the contextual factors surrounding them, and delving into the detailed discourse functions of the various markers used throughout these interactions (Ali Basendouh, 2019).



4. Data Analysis

Discourse markers that were used by 30 interlocutors in English were carefully examined in the current study. The total number of minutes that the dialogues took was significant 48 minutes and a total of 72 different types of discourse markers were deployed in the discussions. This resulted in a calculation of frequency of discourse markers created of one marker every 40 seconds of conversation. The close analysis proved that, on average, every single speaker generated 2.4 markers in their interactions (Swain and King2022).

The results of this study revealed that despite the fact that the research participants had an impressive degree of English proficiency, their discourse markers usage was considerably limited and constrained in the course of their conversations. Moreover, the work with the vast amount of literature on the discourse markers by different researchers has proved such behavioural patterns in both English and other languages. The extremely low prevalence of such indicators in the current study testifies to a burning need to make such linguistic instruments explicit in curriculum development. This way, the students would be in a position to gain more control and command in passing their messages on in a smooth, effective, and accurate manner during conversations. Their introduction into educational frameworks would significantly contribute to the development of students' pragmatic competence, an area that has unfortunately suffered from a lack of focus and attention in the current curriculum. By addressing this gap, educators can better equip students with essential communicative skills for their future interactions in both academic and real-world contexts (Templeton et al.2022).

Five different classes of discourse markers were used: markers of elaboration (e.g. "in fact"), markers of causality (e.g. "because"), markers of reformulation (e.g. "rather"), markers of contrast (e.g. "although") and markers of inferential (e.g. "therefore"). All 30 speakers produced at least one or two markers belonging to the class of elaboration, which was in fact the most widespread choice. The option "in fact" served as a linguistic choice that allowed speakers to signal additional information previous in the discourse and to indicate information that could reasonably be presumed to already be held by the interlocutor. Other markers were produced, but by fewer speakers: one speaker used "in other words" to indicate that clarification was being produced. The use of that marker signalled to interlocutors that precision in the previous message was not absolute, even if the extra information was related in content (Edwards, 2024). Below are some samples of the turns uttered by the participants:



1. ...; **furthermore**, it makes the far places or countries nearer. (elaborative)
2. **In fact**, it wastes time. (elaborative)
3. **In addition**, there is no privacy sometimes. (elaborative)
4. **Also**, none can keep his special information 100% safe. (elaborative)
5. **Moreover**, world news can be known rapidly. (elaborative)
6. **In addition to**, people could have chances to work by such a means of communication. (elaborative)
7. University students can search for the sources of information **since** the network is available. (causality)
8. Some parents prevent their sons and daughters from it **because** they want to avoid fake and wrong websites. (causality)
9. ...; **in other words**, they have good and bad goals. (reformulation)
- 10.... **although** they know the media is a modern orientation. (contrast)
- 11.**Therefore**, we can benefit from the internet in so many fields in life. (inferential)

The low occurrence rate and limited range of choices furthermore support the assertion that a cohort with intermediate English proficiency displays even more restricted use of discourse markers and other pragmatic devices. Table (1) below shows these results:

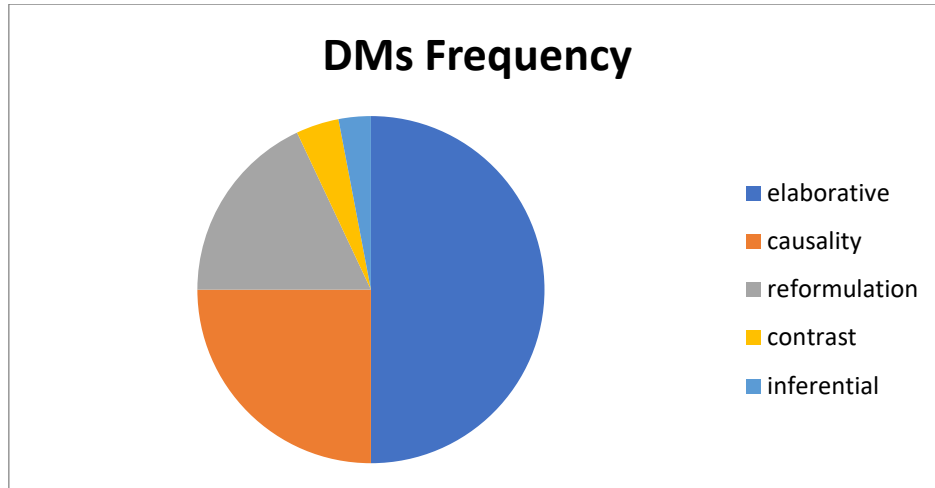
Discourse Markers	Frequency	%
elaborative	36	50
causality	19	25
reformulation	13	18
contrast	3	4
inferential	2	3
total	72	100

Table (1): Discourse Markers Frequency

As Table (1) above illustrates, elaborative DMs are used 36 times out of 72 constituting 50%. Such markers add substance to messages that are more than correct at the content level, and the limited use of them by the present cohort further confirms that the equivalent curriculum fails to address a key dimension of appropriate language use. From other hand, causality DMs occur 19 times comprising 25%. Lesser than, reformulation DMs are made use of 13 times forming 18%; meanwhile, contrast and inferential DMs are accentuated just 3 and 2 times constituting 4% and 3% respectively. These DMs, which are employed during conversation, assist speakers and listeners in navigating what might otherwise be complex



structures or lengthy stretches of talk. Finding ways to convey involved stances, link complex stretches of talk, and partition contributions and turns of talk, interlocutors encode linguistic resources as overt signals or cues that help others negotiate longer stretches of talk what have been termed complex, involved, or continuous units and constructional sequences, respectively. The chart hereunder clarifies the point further:



Markers can also be used to prepare recipients for pending information, and they can indicate the evolving state of a given exchange. Using conversation analytic transcription conventions, the present study defines discourse markers as those forms that assist parties in organising, negotiating, and clarifying an ongoing sequence of talk and therefore delineate and signal a stretch of discourse. It assigns all instances of a finite variety of potentially useful forms identified in the corpus to this general class. (Ädel, 2023)

The analysis of the collected conversations followed two main principles of conversation analysis outlined by Psathas (1995): first, any segment that was not a quiet pause for at least two consecutive seconds was included; second, only those segments in which speakers used markers were coded.

The results show that the total number of turns counted during analysis was 291. Across all conversations produced by Iraqi university students, the speakers were found to produce 9.7 turns each, in which they used discourse markers. Such turns ranged from one to three different DMs per turn. The analysis indicates a tendency among speakers to produce a higher number of turns without using any markers. The number of turns which features two DMs is the highest among all the DMs. Only turns without a DM production features a number of turns comparable to turns produced with multiple DMs. Overall, such a result corroborates Rahimi study which states that DMs are not commonly seen in student conversations. It also stands in contrast with the results of Ramesh and Murthy (2017) regarding students in Indian universities.



5. Data Discussion

Discourse markers are distinctive linguistic elements that serve to regulate the flow, coherence, and overall structure of conversation. These markers are prevalent in everyday conversational exchanges, where they facilitate the management of social interaction and negotiate the relationships between participants involved in the dialogue. Like other speech acts, discourse markers elicit specific responses from conversationalists, and these responses are highly context dependent. Through the careful and judicious use of indicators such as “well,” “you know,” “I mean,” and many others, speakers proficiently signal information, provide commentary on meaning, and frame or reference the content of an utterance. Discourse markers that were used by 30 interlocutors in English were carefully examined in the current study. The total number of minutes that the dialogues took was significant 48 minutes and a total of 72 different types of discourse markers were deployed in the discussions. This resulted in a calculation of frequency of discourse markers created of one marker every 40 seconds of conversation on average. The close analysis proved that, on average, every single speaker generated 2.4 markers in their interactions (Swain and King2022).

The results of this study revealed that despite the fact that the research participants had an impressive degree of English proficiency, their discourse markers usage was considerably unlimited and constrained in the course of their conversations. These results are quite commensurate with those of earlier researches, which had found that discourse markers were constructed more commonly by Arabic-Hijazi speakers than in English. Moreover, the work with the vast amount of literature on the discourse markers by different researchers has proved such behavioural patterns in both English and other languages. The extremely low prevalence of such indicators in the current study testifies to a burning need to make such linguistic instruments explicit in curriculum development.

This way, the students would be in a position to gain more control and command in passing their messages on in a smooth, effective, and accurate manner during conversations. A closer and more comprehensive investigation into their actual use in conversational contexts can provide a much clearer picture and understanding, thus contributing significantly to the expansion of the overall understanding of discourse markers and cementing their role as an essential component of effective communication in various social and educational settings.



6. Conclusion

Discourse markers may be defined as words or phrases that provide connections to preceding and succeeding discourse segments. Such connections can signal the speaker's communicative intention or add other types of information such as what they are thinking. Connections of this kind are necessary for producing fluent and coherent discourse.

Thi-Qar University students studying English enacted past and current conversations with English-speaking friends spanning a range of topics, analysed for a corpus comprising a collection of recordings totalling 48 minutes. The students were recorded as they simulated past and ongoing conversations in session 1; concurrently, oral interviews were completed and an English language test was undertaken. An initial analysis of the discourse markers produced and particular angles yet to be investigated was published prior to the analysis here, which examines the functions of the discourse markers employed.

Due to the nature of the corpus analysis, opportunities to test the proposed sample turnover limit were missed; nevertheless, the qualitative examination identifies relevant dimensions and rationales, highlighting the high number of discourse markers alongside high proficiency in a foreign language. To sum up, elaborative DMs are used 36 times comprising 50% out of 72. Successively, causality DMs occur 19 times constituting 25%; reformulation DMs are made use of 13 times rating 18%; meanwhile, contrast and inferential DMs are accentuated just 3 and 2 times constituting 4% and 3% respectively. An appreciation for the significant presence of discourse markers in the corpus remains endeavoured, contributing to the aim of determining whether an excessive use of the available resources leads to a more mischief-driven tone and/or obscures content delivery.



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