

Markers in Select Electronic Essays of English Language Students

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v3i4.587>

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ABSTRACT

This study ascertained specific discourse markers used under the categories of contrastive, elaborative and inferential in the selected electronic essays of freshmen Bachelor of Arts in BA English Language students of a government run university in Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines. It pinpointed the discourse markers that are used incorrectly by the freshmen students in their writings. Using a qualitative research design, the data were sourced from the sixty-two students' electronic essays, enrolled in the History of the English Language course during the first semester of academic year 2021-2022. The essays were described, analyzed and interpreted using the framework on discourse markers developed by Fraser in 2009. Results showed that the students used restricted set of contrastive ("but" and "however"), elaborative ("and" and "furthermore"), and inferential ("because (of/this)" and "so (that)") discourse markers (DMs). Furthermore, multiple incorrectly used DMs were also found as caused by misused, unnecessary, non-functional, and ungrammatical DMs. As use of discourse markers seemed restricted among the language students, the researchers found a gap of familiarization with other discourse markers and their functions among them, hence, limiting them to use common discourse markers (e.g. but, and, so that etc.). Moreover, students are also still incognizant with the basic functions and categorization of discourse markers which somehow affect the quality of their electronic essay outputs.

KEYWORDS

lexical markers; lexical expressions; language proficiency; electronic essays; writing errors.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one macro skill that needs to be developed among university students. Proficiency in writing can lead to academic success. Few keys to good writing are language effectiveness and proper organization. Good writing likewise is characterized by focus, unity, development, correctness and coherence. A text must have a single main idea with unified, elaborated supporting ideas; must integrate a correct language syntax, and must have coherent sentences and paragraphs. The latter being the most important characteristics of good writing (Ferdanes and Fatimah, 2021). Coherence is an essential quality in writing as it can stick and logically flow ideas within the text. It is also a way that makes a composition sensible to its readers by allowing them to easily read and absorb the writer's thoughts (Putri Anggraini, 2019). And in order to achieve coherence in a text,

discourse markers are vital tools to exemplify this quality in chase of a good and effective writing.

Abbreviated as “DMs,” discourse markers are lexical expressions and a sub-section of pragmatic markers that indicate a connection between discourse segment which serves them, and the preceding discourse segment (Fraser, 2009). Through these lexical expressions, DMs, as having a job of obtaining cohesion, contribute to the coherence of writings through logically connecting syntactic and semantic relationships of its individual sentences or passages. In the quest for language proficiency and in improving writing in English as a Second Language (ESL), discourse markers have made its way into the pool of research interests.

As part of a linguistic knowledge, language researchers have seen DMs as a necessity to be mastered and acquired by ESL students in a sense that these markers escalate the level of their excellence or effectiveness in writing and provide vivid understanding on their compositions (Sherly, 2020). With this, DMs fulfill and embody this knowledge and is considered for language fluency in terms of writing.

On the other hand, student’s essay is one of the corpora that most studies were used in studying discourse markers. Essay is a brief academic composition and has always been viewed as an ambiguous writing activity by students. As this writing task requires one's cognition and excellent command of a language, specifically English (Saraspe and Abocejo, 2020; Trazo and Abocejo, 2019), a better awareness on discourse markers may ease its complexity as what has been stressing out by some studies that proficiency on these lexical markers can increase the ability of the students to produce writing compositions effectively (Muhyidin, 2020).

Corollary to the purpose of this study, the researchers are highly interested to study discourse markers as these are important linguistic knowledge that students need to be aware of (Alkhazraji, 2019; Ni'mah, 2019). Moreover, there are limited studies done in discourse markers contextualized in Filipinos' English essays, specifically at the university undergraduate level. Albeit, there have been accounts on DMs in the Philippines which focused on research papers (Ramos, 2010), presidential speeches (Bantawig, 2019), computer-mediated communication (Palacio and Gustilo, 2016) and Filipino language essays (Sambrano 2019). Other than this, as the country's Higher Education moved to flexible learning, a remote pedagogical approach that delivers flexible modes of teaching and learning (CHED, 2020). Due to COVID-19 pandemic, undergraduates’ essays are now bound to be submit electronically.

Electronic essay is a written form of essay that uses electronic word processing application such as Microsoft Word and transmitted through the internet (Woods-Grooves et al., 2018). This indeed intensifies the researchers' interests to probe discourse markers on this new platform as this can be seen as an emerging research phenomenon in developing student's writing competency (Cuñado and Abocejo, 2018) given of today's remote educational system. Most studies on DMs have been conducted in student's traditional or physical essays where this study hopes to contribute a new knowledge of its existing literature. With the discussions, the present study determined and categorized discourse markers using the taxonomy developed by Fraser in 2009.

RESEARCH METHODS

This is a descriptive qualitative study that investigated discourse markers in the electronic essays of freshmen Bachelor of Arts in English Language (BAEL) in a government-run university in the Philippines who were enrolled in the History of the English Language during the first semester of academic year 2021-2022. Given the consent from the college

department, the said electronic essays, as data of the study, were sourced by the researchers in coordination with the subject teacher. The freshmen students were asked to write two essays with the topics related to their course and regardless of writing genre. Furthermore, they were asked also to submit it in a form of word document thru google drive.

Out of 193 submitted electronic essays, only 62 were qualified for analysis since the outputs manifested five percent similarity index in Turnitin software as part of the study's selection of data. In this way, researchers were certain that the essays were originally written and not plagiarized considering the remote learning set-up of the university.

After having the qualified electronic essays, the researchers then used descriptive analysis with narrative description in analyzing the data. The researchers treated the data with utmost confidentiality, anonymity and without falsification or fabrication to uphold research ethics.

The essays were read thoroughly by the researchers focusing on organization, logic, and proper use of discourse markers. The discourse markers used in the electronic essays were identified, tallied, and classified according to the taxonomy developed by Fraser in 2009 as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Fraser's (2009) Taxonomy on Discourse Markers

Elaborative (for adding/supporting information from the Segment 1)	Contrastive (for comparison of two segments)	Inferential (for summation of the Segment 1)
<i>Ex. and, moreover, also, furthermore, as well as etc.</i>	<i>Ex. in contrast, nevertheless, however, but etc.</i>	<i>Ex. in conclusion, therefore, as a result etc.</i>

After the analysis, the results were submitted to Language teacher experts who attained at least a master's degree in English/Applied Linguistics for extensive validation on the researchers' findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse markers used in selected electronic essays

Succeeding discussions highlight the discourse markers evident in the identified essays per category. As articulated in the preceding chapter, discourse markers are a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic categories of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions in terms of grammatical function. The first category discussed underscores its relation to concepts denial and contrast, with modifications directly or indirectly with the prior segments.

Contrastive discourse markers

Contrastive discourse markers (CDMs) signal contradiction between S1 and S2 (Fraser, 2009). This category highlights the definitive explanation of the adjacent statement which varies from the explanation of the main statement. In simple parlance, CDMs are markers employed to show contrast in a direct manner between discourse segments.

Table 2. Contrastive DMs Identified in the Students' Electronic Essays

Contrastive	Frequency of Occurrence in the Essays
but	50
However	14
despite	5

aside from	5
(even)though	4
but still/rather	3
Although	3
on the other hand	3
if ever	2
While	2
Meanwhile	1
Yet	1
apart from that	1
Unlike	1
in spite of	1

Of the total corpus, fifteen (15) contrastive DMs emerged. A detailed examination of the total individual occurrences of each of the CDMs reveals that “*but*,” with an overall frequency of 50 and “*however*” with an overall frequency of 14 are the most commonly used CDM in the electronic essays.

To further elaborate this, below are the excerpts which illustrate the use of the said contrastive discourse markers in the students’ electronic essays.

Excerpt 1

“Hence, in this case, there is a need of studying; studying not only on how to become an effective speaker, but also on the side of language itself.” (Electronic Essay 044, Paragraph 1, Sentence 5)

Excerpt 2

“As a learner in this 21st century world, I could tell how dominant English language is. It is used in different forms of reaching out one another among people across the globe. But as time passes by the questions that ‘will English remain a dominant language after 50 years?100 years?’ keeps bugging me.” (Electronic Essay 049, Paragraph 4, Sentence 3)

Excerpt 3

“American English or <AmE> and British English or <BrE> are very similar that you can easily understand them both without taking special language classes. However, they have a handful differences which makes each one of them unique from each other.” (Electronic Essay 047, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2)

Excerpt 4

“Major theories and studies have already emerged about writing systems one of it was the Mesopotamian cuneiform script. However, some of them remained undeciphered.” (Electronic Essay 061, Paragraph 3, Sentence, 2)

As shown in Excerpts 1, 2, 3 and 4, it clearly shows that English language majors relied heavily on contrastive discourse markers “*but*” and “*however*” to signal contradiction between or before a discourse segment. Generally, *but* and *however* are often used interchangeably to mean ‘yet’, but they are punctuated differently because *however* in this context is a conjunctive adverb, (also known as an adverbial conjunct) not a conjunction.

The researchers have found out that the DM “*but*” appeared to be the most employed contrastive DM accounted for a frequency of 50, followed by contrastive DM “*however*” with a frequency of 14. The excessive reliance on the contrastive DMs “*but*” and “*however*” were also reported by Ali and Mahadin, (2016) who found out that the markers

under the contrastive category (“but” and “however”) are the most commonly used by the students of English at the University of Jordan in their written discourse. As concluded in the study cited, the student-writers employ a limited repertoire of discourse markers due to the unfamiliarity with other markers that fall under the contrastive classification of DMs.

Elaborative discourse markers (EDMs)

As Fraser (2009) emphasized, elaborative discourse markers or EDMs signal the elucidation of the preceding segment (S2) from the introducing segment (S1). It stipulates that the information provided in the discourse segments that hosts them is an expansion on the information represented in the previous segments. “Above all” in “(You must study hard. Above all, you must not fail school exams)” demonstrates the use of EDMs. In the electronic essays analyzed by the researchers, it was found that the most common elaborative discourse markers used by the students are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Elaborative DMs Identified in the Students’ Electronic Essays

Elaborative Markers	Frequency of Occurrence in the Essays
And	42
Furthermore	6
for example	5
as well as	4
Then	4
in addition	4
Also	3
Moreover	3
Or	3
in this/that/other case	3
in fact	2
First	2
Lastly	2
With regards to	1
For instance	1
Besides	1
Or Technically speaking	1
As long as	1
Next	1
As time goes by	1
Secondly	1
In other words	1
From this	1
For a fact	1
Altogether	1
Clearly	1
From this point on	1
After all	1
Now	1
Similarly	1
Most importantly	1
First and foremost	1
And then	1
With this	1

Through this	1
Well at last	1
According to	1

Of the total corpus, thirty-six (36) elaborative DMs emerged. A detailed examination of the total individual occurrences of each of the EDMs reveals that “*and*,” with an overall frequency of 42, followed by “*furthermore*” with an overall frequency of 6 are the most commonly used EDMs in their electronic essays.

Below are the excerpts which illustrate the use of the said elaborative discourse markers in the English Language Majors’ electronic essays.

Excerpt 5

“I will say that just like the beautiful sunrise of the sun, English language will continue to rise and will shine brightly to give direction to the world. And I believe that one day, the English language will be the reason for us to create a better and brighter world.”(Electronic Essay 049, Paragraph 8, Sentence 2)

Excerpt 6

“The English language comprises many distinct origins, dialects, accents, and variants, and it would not be the vibrant language that it is now if it had not undergone every change throughout the last fifteen centuries.” (Electronic Essay 04, Paragraph 3, Sentence 4)

Excerpt 7

“Old English was also the widest context in Europe back in 449 AD. It’s the very first language in literature that the Angles used in Making their literatures. Furthermore, Old English is important because its pave way to great literatures such as the epic Beowulf which is probably the best-known masterpiece of Old English and the Anglo-Saxons chronicle which contains the very important events that had happened in the English history and various magnificent sermons.” (Electronic Essay 010, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1)

Excerpt 8

“The Northumbrian dialect is spoken in the north and south of England’s east coast, the Messiah dialect is spoken in central England, the Kent dialect is spoken in southeast England, and the West Saxon dialect is spoken in the south and southwest. These four dialects are distinct, but they are related in several ways. Furthermore, these four languages were used to communicate during the Old English era.” (Electronic Essay 015, Paragraph 2, Sentence 5)

As shown in Excerpt 5, 6, 7 and 8, the elaborative discourse marker “*and*” and “*furthermore*” are likely the most basic DM to utilize by the English language majors when the aim at hand is to elaborate on the information represented in the previous segments and to provide an additional-advancing notion as well as to express relationship of the first textual part by the second. The results indicate that the students mainly relied on the elaborative DM “*and*” to express elaboration between the introducing segment and the preceding section as what Fraser (2009) described on his taxonomy. These findings are consistent with earlier researches that suggest elaborative DMs “*and*” are the most commonly employed discourse markers (Dumlao and Wilang, 2019) and DM “*furthermore*” in the study of Karimahet al. (2021) with the research on the use of such marker in thesis proposals which revealed that four EDMs commonly used are moreover, *and*, *furthermore* and in addition.

Inferential discourse markers

Inferential discourse markers as explicated by Fraser (2009), is a category of DMs that serve the function of inferring between discourse segments. In a nutshell, inferential discourse markers are markers employed to signal that the preceding statement is, at some point, consequential to some subsequent statement. As found in the electronic essays analyzed by the researchers, the following are the most common inferential discourse markers used by the students in the submitted electronic essays.

Table 3. Inferential DMs Identified in the Students’ Electronic Essays

Inferential	Frequency of Occurrence in the Essays
because (of)	24
so (that)	15
Hence	6
Since	6
as a result	6
Therefore	6
Thus	5
in conclusion	4
in that/this way	2
to summarize	3
in general	2
Consequently	2
and so	2
as a generalization	1
taking all stated into account	1
to sum it up	1
in order	1
Finally	1
in that case	1

Of the total corpus, twenty (20) inferential DMs emerged. A detailed examination of the total individual occurrences of each of the IDMs reveals that “*because (of/this)*,” with an overall frequency of 24 and “*so (that)*” with an overall frequency of 15 are the most commonly used IDMs in their electronic essays.

To further elaborate this, below are the excerpts which illustrates the use of the said inferential discourse markers in the students’ electronic essays.

Excerpt 9

“Is language changing? Yes of course language changes for a several reason because generation by generation new pronunciation develop, new words are invented.” (Electronic Essay 08, Paragraph 1, Sentence 2)

Excerpt 10

“Improving it would be helpful because it could help you communicate not just with the Japanese people, but with the other tourists in Japan who came from other parts of the globe.” (Electronic Essay 24, Paragraph 1, Sentence 5)

Excerpt 11

“Knowing English increases your chances of getting opportunities, so many young generation showing interest in learning English language.” (Electronic Essay 056, Paragraph 3, Sentence 1)

Excerpt 12

“It shows that they should be imitated because they are the indigenous people while we are in the womb of our mothers, they are the ones who continue to fight for the independence of the Philippines. So, we have our own language that must be respected.” (Electronic Essay 059, Paragraph 2, Sentence 5)

Excerpts 9, 10, 11 and 12 clearly shows that inferential markers “*so (that)*” and “*because (of/this)*” are the most frequent class of discourse markers employed by the writers to signal a connection of inference between statements. *Because* is actually a subordinating grammatical conjunction which basically introduces clauses of cause and reason. Grammarians say that *because* has a straightforward job to do in the English language. It is one of several words and phrases used to introduce a “clause of purpose.” A clause beginning with *because* answers the question “Why?” and that clause is automatically subordinate to an independent clause. The use of this marker does not entail the use of comma. So far, this has been observed in the sample essays of the students as shown in excerpt 9.

The findings of the study reveal that inferential DM “*because (of/this)*” was the most commonly used by English majors in their electronic essays with a frequency of 24 followed by the inferential marker “*so (that)*” with a frequency of 15. This result proved that the English language majors employed a restricted set of inferential markers as it is used in accordance with their means of elaborating a cause or purpose.

Errors in the use of discourse markers in selected electronic essays

Out of 62 qualified electronic essays, the researchers found out some incorrect discourse markers used by the students. Guided by the basic functions of DMs highlighted from Fraser's (2009) taxonomy and validations done by external experts, a total number of 12 inaccurate DMs were determined and then categorized based on their underlying themes.

The errors noted in the use of discourse markers from the electronic essays of the students were described along the concepts of Misuse, Unnecessary, Wrong Relation, and Syntactic Error as to elaborate further these DMs that were incorrectly used in the essays.

Misused/Overused marker

“*Despite this*”, “*but*” and “*first and foremost*” were identified as incorrect discourse markers in students’ selected electronic essays due to its “misuse” in signaling the semantic relationship of their respective segments (sentences or subordinating clauses). To further elucidate this inaccuracy, below are excerpts of the two misused DMs together with its substantive discussions.

Excerpt 1.

“With the Normans in the seat of power, French was now spoken in the royal court; this included any official document produced during this time period. Despite this, Norman French was only spoken by royals and noble families...” (Electronic Essay 01, Paragraph 3, Sentence 2).

The discourse marker, “*despite this*” in Excerpt 1 technically does not signal a semantic relationship between the two segments or sentences. This marker falls under Contrastive

Discourse Marker category which aims to show explicit or implicit contrast from the succeeding segment (Segment 2) to the prior segment (Segment 1). In the excerpt itself, Segment 2 (*Norman French was only spoken by royals and noble families...*) in which the DM was found, is viewed as a further elaboration of the Segment 1 (*With the Normans in the seat of power, French was now spoken in the royal court; this included any official document produced during this time period.*) Thus, an elaborative marker should be used instead of the contrastive “despite this” which contradict to the semantic relation of the respective segments and can be inferred as a “misused” discourse marker.

Excerpt 2.

“...we move to a place that are not familiar to us specifically the language they are using but as time goes by we are adapting the language they are using and probably it added to our vocabulary.” (Electronic Essay 08, Paragraph 1, Last sentence).

In here, the discourse marker “*but*” does not also conform to its function of signaling contrastive ideas on the segments—basically the sentence clauses—which tend to misuse this particular marker. “*But*” is classified under the umbrella of CDMs in which if thoroughly analyzed, distorts the semantic relationship of the two segments or clauses. The segment 2 or the subordinating clause 2 (*time goes by we are adapting the language they are using and probably it added to our vocabulary*) in which this DM was found, is an elucidation of the idea on the segment 1 or the independent clause 1 (*...we move to a place that are not familiar to us specifically the language they are using*). Hence, again this particular discourse marker used in a wrong way and instead of using a contrastive “*but*”, an elaborative marker should either be used.

At this point, Excerpts 1 and 2 undeniably showed incorrect discourse markers due to its misuse. This finding supports the findings of previous studies (Al-khazraji, 2019; Syahabuddin and Zikra, 2020; Ni'mah, 2019; Mumbi and Simwinda, 2018) which exhibited that students tend to misuse DMs thereby resulting to neglect these markers' real functions.

Unnecessary/Irrelevant marker

“*But*”, “*thus*”, and “*in this way*” were identified incorrect discourse markers used by the students that imposed irrelevancy and thus, distorted the coherence of their electronic essays.

Excerpt 3.

“In the 14th century, West Germanic language had been the language again in Britain but with such an enormous amount of words being present...” (Electronic Essay 033, Paragraph 1, Sentence 1)

In Excerpt 3, the DM “*but*” is used unnecessarily as the two “supposed” segments or sentence clauses can stand without it. As discussed earlier, this marker is categorized as CDMs that signal a contrast between the ideas of the two segments. With this, analyzing thoroughly the semantic relation of the two clauses, they are not supposed to contrast to each other as they are connected syntactically thus, the DM is irrelevant anymore. To see a clear picture on this, below is the revised and syntactically correct version of the excerpt excluding the discourse marker:

Excerpt 4

“Middle English as we all know had marked to be the middle period in between the Old and thus the trendy English.” (Electronic Essay 033, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2).

The DM, “*thus*” is also semantically unnecessary to use as it falls under Inferential Discourse Marker, a categorization in which it signals an inference from Segment 2 (S2) to Segment 1 (S1). In here, the “supposed” two clauses can undeniably stand without this DM as the Segment 2 or Subordinating Clause 2 (*the trendy English*) does not infer a conclusion to Segment 1 or Independent Clause 1 (*Middle English as we all know had marked to be the middle period in between the Old and*). To see a vivid picture on this, below is the revised and grammatically correct version of the excerpt removing the discourse marker:

“Middle English as we all know had marked to be the middle period in between the Old and the trendy English.”

Excerpt 5

“In the first generation, there were people who continued to consume the products and speak their own language. In this way. They are able to enrich the Filipino language by properly speaking their own language.” (Electronic Essay 059, Paragraph 1, Sentence 20).

Here in Excerpt 5, the discourse marker “*in this way*” shows irrelevancy and syntactical error of the two underlying segments resulting it as an unnecessary discourse marker. In this reasoning, the DM “*in this way*” does not meet the criterion of being a sentence in that passage, making its injection irrelevant and ungrammatical.

On the other hand, supposing that this DM is a part of the “alleged” S2 (*In this way, they are able to enrich the Filipino language by properly speaking their own language*), still this marker fails to signal a semantic relation to S1 (*In the first generation, there were people who continued to consume the products and speak their own language*) as this is considered as an inferential marker which the “alleged” S2 does not share any inference to the S1.

Essentially, Excerpts 3, 4 and 5 indeed displayed unnecessary used of discourse markers which caused syntactical problems of the students’ electronic essays. This result supports with the findings of the studies of Ni’mah (2019) and Mumbi and Simwinga (2018) revealing that students use discourse marker without thinking how this particular marker distracts the logical flow or coherence on their paper thus, making this DM unnecessary if grammar checking is done.

Non-functional (wrong relation) marker

Discourse marker “*but*” and “*and*” were non-functional in use due to its encapsulation on the illogical and semantically unrelated segments, specifically sentence clauses, thus making the passages vague and “hanging” or incomprehensible to its readers.

Excerpt 6.

“Our country is good at speaking English but we are one of the poorest countries in the world.” (Electronic Essay 013, Paragraph 4, Last sentence).

In Excerpt 6, the DM “*but*” is used confusingly as it does not connect to the hosted segment (subordinating clause) semantically. As discussed earlier, this marker is categorized as CDM that signal a contrast of semantic relationship between the two

segments. With this, imposing the main objective of the DM itself, still it does not possibly function as supposed it should be and thus, labelling it as “non-functional” on its hosted segment.

Excerpt 7.

“English is a universal language, and languages are taught them with help of local language” (Electronic Essay 056, Paragraph 5, Sentence 1)

The discourse marker “and” in Excerpt 7 shows also an awkward usage as it does not link semantically to its hosted sentence clause and to its prior one. This elaborative marker, as found in the hosted segment, has a basic function of elucidating an information embedded in the preceding segment. On that basis, talking to what this DM supposedly function in the above excerpt, still it fails to bridge the two sentence clauses due to their vague and unrelated ideas.

Hence, Excerpts 6 and 7 displayed a non-functional discourse marker due to the incomprehensibility of their respective segments. This inference anchors to the empirical evidences found in the studies of Fries (202) and Ni'mah (2019) wherein they unveiled that students inject non or less functional DMs in illogical sentences or clauses on their writings, leaving their readers “hanging” in comprehending.

Syntactic errors

“Besides from that”, “on the other side”, “in a general way” and “to this” were determined as inaccurate due its syntactical error after injecting to its prior segments. Below are the two examples of their excerpts that substantiate their inaccuracy.

Excerpt 8.

“...prehistoric men and women used their bare hands to narrate what they have been through from the past, besides from that, humans would also uses“ Our country is good at speaking English but we are one of the poorest countries in the world.” (Electronic Essay 013, Paragraph 4, Last sentence). *Symbols to describe what it really means...*” (Electronic Essay 020, Paragraph 1, Sentence 1)

In here, the “supposed” discourse marker “besides from that” is a syntactically incorrect in nature as the word “besides” is enough and correct by its syntax to the respective segments. It conforms to the subordinating clause (Segment 2). To give a clear picture on this, below is the revised passage with the grammatically correct discourse marker:

“...prehistoric men and women used their bare hands to narrate what they have been through from the past; besides, humans would also use symbols to describe what it really means...”

On the other hand, “aside from that” can be seen as a suggestion to make the marker syntactically correct. Still it does not bridge the semantic relation of the two segments where such discourse marker is categorized as contrastive and the hosted segment is viewed as an elucidation to the prior one.

Excerpt 9.

“It is also possible to happen that English language will never be acknowledged as a global language anymore if ever countries around the world will successfully convince their people to prioritize using their native language. On the other side,

English may continue being a global language and become the only language in the world...” (Electronic Essay 055, Paragraph 2, Sentence 3)

In the preceding excerpt, the discourse marker “*on the other side*” is syntactically incorrect in use as it pertains to a location of “something” rather than to signal a semantic relation between the segments. This adverbial phrase is syntactically correct if use as a subordinating clause instead of a marker. Moreover, instead of “on the other side”, “on the other hand” can be its replacement as this marker falls under CDM which the segments from the excerpt relate to its basic function.

These identified DMs indeed are syntactically incorrect as a marker thus, distorting the semantic relationship of their segments. Moreover, it can be observed that these syntactically incorrect discourse markers were phrases which can be inferred that phrasal discourse markers are prone to syntactical error. This finding supports to the study of Ramadan (2018) where he arrived a conclusion that students tend to have difficulty in recalling polysyllabic discourse markers or phrasal discourse markers as compared to monosyllabic markers thus, making these markers syntactically incorrect to the accurate syntax of their respective segments.

Putting everything in a nutshell, with the incorrect discourse markers identified that shown some problematic usage from 62 electronic essays of First-year English Language Majors, it may be deduced that students are still unaware about the basic function of every discourse marker that resulted to incorrect and ungrammatical use of these words. This is supported on the conclusions of the previous studies that highlight the important acquisition of the knowledge on discourse markers by the students as it would improve the quality of their written outputs (Riznanda, 2021; Choemue and Bram, 2021; Ni'mah, 2019; Al-khazraji, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students tend to use DMs which are common to them. The researchers then proved that there is a gap of familiarization with other DMs and their functions among the students, thus, limiting them the use of common discourse markers. Concerning the incorrectness of DMs, researchers conclude that students are still incognizant of the basic functions and categorization of discourse markers which affects the quality of essays.

Furthermore, researchers suggest explicit teaching of DMs in the primary years for the students to be equipped with the basics of grammar early on before they are taught how to write essays for good writing that includes appropriate use of DMs.

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