# A STUDY OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN EFL STUDENTS' COMPARISON AND CONTRAST TEXT

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***Abstract.*** *This research was to find out: (1) the types of discourse markers used by the EFL students in comparison and contrast text and (2) the functions of discourse markers used by the EFL students in comparison and contrast text. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The respondents of this research was the second grade of EFL students; the total students was 30 students. The research data were collected by using an instrument namely writing activity. The writing consisted by comparison and contrast text. The data were analyzed qualitatively. The first important finding from this research was about the types of DMs used by the students' in three kinds of different text, there are 30 types of DMs used by the students in the comparison and compare text and the second important finding was there are four category of functions used by the students in writing activity, they were contrastive markers, inferential markers, elaborative markers, and additional subclasses markers. Despite the fact that DMs can create a smooth talk or make the conversation more natural, the students should be able to use DMs wisely in term of fluency and coherence measured in the students' writing.*

***Key words:*** *Discourse Markers (DMs); Students' English Writing; Comparison and contrast text*

***Abstrak.*** *Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk menemukan: (1) jenis pemarkah wacana yang digunakan oleh siswa dalam penulisan teks perbandingan dan perbedaan dan (2) fungsi dari pemarkah wacana yang ada dalam penulisan teks perbandingan dan perbedaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskripsi kualitatif. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas dua dengan jumlah siswa ada 30 siswa. Data dalam penelitian ini diambil dengan menggunakan sebuah instrumen yang bernama kegiatan menulis. Dalam kegiatan menulis ini menggunakan teks perbandingan dan perbedaan, Data yang terkumpul dari kegiatan menulis ini kemudian akan di analisa secara kualitatif. Hal penting pertama yang telah ditemukan dalam penelitian ini adalah jenis pemarkah wacana yang digunakan oleh siswa dalam tiga jenis teks yang berbeda, bahwa ada 30 jenis pemarkah wacana dalam teks perbandingan dan perbedaan, Hal penting kedua yang telah ditemukan dalam penelitian ini adalah ada empat fungsi pemarkah wacana yang digunakan oleh siswa dalam kegiatan menulis, yaitu pemarkah perbedaan, pemarkah kesimpulan, pemarkah uraian, dan yang terakhir adalah pemarkah tambahan. Meskipun kenyataannya bahwa pemarkah wacana dapat membuat percakapan itu menjadi halus atau membuat percakapannya menjadi lebih lazim seperti kebiasaan, siswa seharusnya juga dapat menggunakan pemarkah wacana dengan bijak dalam kelancaran dan memperhatikan hubungan satu kata dengan kata lain dalam tulisan mereka.*

***Kata Kunci:*** *Discourse Markers (DMs); Penulisan Bahasa Inggris Siswa; dan teks perbandingan dan perbedaan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Discourse Markers (henceforth DMs) have been studied from various research perspective in the field of linguistics (Jucker and Ziv, 1998; Fraser, 1999; Müller, 2004) and contributed in developing of DMs in teaching and learning process. The novelty of this research investigate the DMs emerging in students' writing. In Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (1995), the DMs can be seen as a signpost which constrains the interpretation process and the concomitant background selection. Discourse markers as the binding elements of a text in creating a meaningful discourse have been viewed from different dimensions in language studies. Brown and Yule (1983) defined discourse as "the analysis of language in use" believed that such an outlook could not restrict the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions they serve in human affairs. Hatch (1992:1) defined discourse analysis as the study of language communication, spoken and written. To understand discourse and its scope, it is necessary to identify different elements which contribute to the creation of discourse. One of the elements referred to in different literatures is text markers or discourse markers.

DMs play an important role in a text's cohesion and coherence. The writer of this paper can assume that discourse markers have some relationship with a discourse's cohesion, texture and coherence (Aidinlou and Mehr, 2012). Then the researcher can put forward a hypothesis: in order to make their English writing more cohesive and more coherent, besides reference, substitution and ellipsis, students are also very likely to use discourse markers in their essays. If this is true, teacher should be clear about how their students use discourse markers and how they use discourse markers correctly and appropriately. Knowing that, teachers can take positive and effective steps when they teach English writing. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between teaching discourse markers and enhancement.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The researcher formulates the following research questions:

1. What are the types of discourse markers used in the students' writing?
2. What are the functions of discourse markers used in the students' writing?

## OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

According to the problem statements above the objectives of the research are to find out:
1. The types of discourse markers used by the students in writing.
2. The functions of discourse markers used by the students in writing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies as previous findings are listed briefly as follows:
Rum (2014) in his research "Analyzing the discourse markers by students' in IELTS speaking practice in ELC education Makassar" employed four types of discourse markers appearing with several different function were *like, well, you know, okay and actually*. He revealed new DMs in his research, *how to say* is considered as clarification marker when speaker feels hesitant towards the given words that is uttered before how to say is placed. At the end of his research, he concluded that DMs are words or phrase in which speaker employ to coordinate what they want to say, when, to whom and how during conversation. Comparing to my research, if his research focused on the speaking practice, I focused on differently skill, they are the types of DMs, the application of DMs and the functions of DMs in students' writing. When we link DMs and writing skill is not just talking about the grammatical but also we have to consider about the coherence and the cohesive of the writing.

Sharndama and Yakubu (2013) in their research "An analysis of discourse markers in academic report writing: pedagogical implications" analyzed the weaknesses and strengths of the students" usage of discourse markers enables the teacher to prepare accordingly. The teacher may group the students based on their strength and weakness. In this case, team teaching could be very effective. The teaching of academic report writing should therefore be a combined effort of the subject specialist and ELT teacher since the blending of the two would create balance. The role of discourse markers in creating coherent text therefore is undisputed.

Regarding to my research, it is a common information that the role of DMs in creating the coherent text is undisputed, because by considering of its role, the students can improve their ability in constructing a good writing, but in this case there is a different between our research that in my research I would not group the students based on their weaknesses and strengths in using DMs.

**The Types of Discourse Markers**
Distinguishing DMs from whether they refer to a textual segment between sentences or discourse segment in structure, Fraser (1999: 946) categorized DMs into two major types as follows:

1) Discourse markers which relate messages
There are three main subclasses in the first class. The first class refers to DMs that signal that the explicit interpretation of S2 contrasts with an interpretation of S1. Fraser labels such DMs **Contrastive Markers**. This group includes, distinguished by subtleties of meaning:
a. but, yet, on the other hand, as a matter of fact,
b. however, (al)though, even, though, even though,
c. in contrast (with/to this/that), whereas,
d. in comparison (with/to this/that),
e. on the contrary, contrary to this/that, in contrast to,
f. conversely,
g. instead (of (doing) this/that), rather (than (doing) this/that), than,
h. on the other hand,
i. despite (doing) this/that, in spite of (doing) this/that, nevertheless, nonetheless, still,
j. alternatively,

A second subclass of DMs relating aspects of S2 and S1 messages signal a quasi-parallel relationship between S2 and S1. This subclass of DMs is referred to as **elaborative markers** and includes:
a. and, or, like, such like, as well as
b. above all, also, besides, better yet, for another thing, furthermore, in addition, moreover, more to the point, on top of it all, too, to cap it all off, what is more,
c. I mean, in particular, namely, parenthetically, that is (to say),
d. analogously, correspondingly, equally, likewise, similarly,

e. be that as it may, or, otherwise, that said, well,
f. by the same taken,
g. equally, first, second, like, such like, like that,
h. for example, for instance,
i. in particular.

A third subclass is made up of DMs which signal that S2 is to be taken as a conclusion based on S1. Within this group which Fraser (1999: 948) labels **inferential markers**, we have:
a. so, now, well, anyway, surely,
b. of course, may, must,
c. accordingly, as a consequence, as a logical conclusion, as a conclusion, as a result, because of this/that, consequently, for this/that reason, it can be concluded that, therefore, thus, hence, accordingly, according to, therefore,
d. in this/that case, under these/those conditions, then,
e. all things considered,
f. after all.

Finally, Fraser (1999) distinguishes some **additional subclasses (temporal DMs)**: a group of DMs which specifies that provides a reason for the content presented in S1. In this group we find:
a. if, under the circumstances, it follows, consequently, that,
b. because, for this/that reason, since, then, after, before, that, while,
c. eventually, finally, first, meantime, meanwhile.

2) Discourse markers which relate topics
e.g. back to my original point, before I forget, by the way etc.

Apparently, conjunction is related to the entire environment of a text. The conjunctive elements (discourse markers) "presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse (Halliday, 1976: 226)." Not only giving cohesion to a text, they also cohere two sentences together.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research used a descriptive qualitative method to collect and describe the data. According to Gay, et al. (2006), a descriptive method determines and describes the way

things are. This type of design relates to collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative and visual data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest. The purposes of qualitative research broad in scope and centre around promoting a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon, such as environment, a process, or even a believe.

**FINDING**
**The Types of DMs Used by the Students and Their Functions in the Comparison and Contrast Text**

> *And myself have five best friends are four and one male. I'm friends with them* *since****** *the entry in MAN 3 Makassar.*
>
> (Taken from student's writing no 7 , page 101)

Analysis 1:
The DM *Since* as Additional subclasses Markers. The use of *since* in this writing for

Based on the students' writing, there were quite a number data of the types and the functions of discourse markers in students' writing activity in the comparison and contrast text.

Distinguishing DMs from whether they refer to a textual segment between sentences or discourse segment in structure, Fraser (1999: 946) categorized DMs into four types, they are elaborative, contrastive, inferential, and additional subclasses markers.

**a.    Extract 1 (DM since)**

providing a reason for the content that he/she is talking about. It is given an explanation for the previous sentence.

**b.    Extract 2 (DMs furthermore, so, and therefore)**

> *Furthermore**, the city is more developed. There are much more department, stores, supermarket, shopping centers, etc. There are similarities and also differences. So****, I think life in the hometown is better in terms of health than in the city. But life in the city is better in terms of technology. So, both have advantage and disadvantages of each, therefore**** we can't determine which is better than both of them.*
>
> (Taken from student's writing no  8 , page  102)

Analysis 2:
The DM *Furthermore* as Elaborative Markers. This category of DM is used for relating between one sentences to the next sentence. And the relation of the sentences should be quasi-parallel. The student used this DM add information to what has been said. The usage of

these words is much more elegant than just making a list or using the conjunction 'and'.

The DMs *So* and *Therefore* as Inferential Markers. They are used to indicate a relation of premise and conclusion. They used to take a conclusion after giving some explanation before.

**c.    Extract 3 (DM even)**

> *Residents in the hometown are very friendly and probably a lot more than the residents of the city are very much but more to be stoic. Employment options in the city has far more appeal in the hometown. Even** many setter's from the hometown who come looking for work in the city.*
>
> (Taken from student's writing no  9  , page 103 )

Analysis 3:
The DM *Even* as Contrastive Markers. It shows that the use of DM *even* in the writing is when

the sentence is contra with the next sentence, when the sentences has different interpretation.

**d.   Extract 4 (DM though)**

> *Therefore it is fun when living in the village **though\*\*** much of modern things but we can still feel the atmosphere cozy and beautiful natural cool.*
>
> (Taken from student's writing no 12 , page  106)

Analysis 4:
The DM *Though* as Contrastive Markers. The student use DM *though* in his writing to contra between the first sentence with the next sentence.

**e.   Extract 5 (DM in addition)**

> *Disadvantages of living in the city is difficulty of obtaining employment. **In addition\*** to the progress of technology is still very difficult in some places.*
>
> (Taken from student's writing no 15  , page  109)

Analysis 5:
The DM *In addition* as Elaborative Markers. It means that we use this DM when we want add some information in our written to support the previous sentence.

## DISCUSSION

As the research findings showed that a good writing is not only grammatical, but also cohesive and coherent. Discourse markers have main role in cohesion of text, and should hold a central place in writing teaching. Nobody cannot say discourse markers are decisive for English writing, but anybody cannot deny they have great effect on the cohesion and coherence of writing. In the Extract 1 to extract 14 in the comparison and compare text have showed the production of DMs in students' English writing. The production of coherent discourse is DMs signals a relationship between discourse units, i.e. utterances, longer spans of text, even between the text and the extra-linguistic context. The option of DMs refers to the fact that they are almost always syntactically optional, i.e. they can removed without altering the grammaticality of the host sentence (Degand, 2010). This does not mean that DMs have no function whatever in the utterances they occur in. A slight improvement has been detected in writing ability. On the basis of the findings of this paper it is concluded that instruction of discourse markers can be one of basic process in developing of writing ability, and learners profit from it and use it in an efficient way. An interactive process that requires speakers to draw upon several different types of communicative knowledge-cognitive, expressive, social, textual that complement more code-based grammatical knowledge of sound, form, and meaning (Schiffrin, 1992). Discourse markers mention not only about linguistic properties ( e.g. semantic and pragmatic meaning ), but also about the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of those who use them ,because the functions of markers are so broad, and all analyses of markers can teach about their roles in discourse Basing decisions about marker status on data analysis has an important consequences.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings discussed in the prior chapter, some conclusions could be drawn to get the insight to which could be name DMs. The researcher revealed that the students of MAN 3 Makassar employed some types of DMs appearing with several different functions. The analysis told us that due to lack of discourse markers or misuse of discourse markers the students' spoken become less cohesive and less coherent. Discourse markers tell us not only about the linguistic properties of a set of frequently used expressions, and the organization of social interactions and situations in which they are used, but also about the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of those who use them. Because the

functions of markers are so broad, any and all analyses of markers even those focusing on only a relatively narrow aspect of their meaning or a small portion of their uses can teach us something about their role in discourse (Schiffrin, 1987: 67). Total DMs used by the students in three kinds text was 40 DMs which is have different functions that is calculated into 30 DMs in the comparison and compare text from extract 1 to extract 14, as shown in table data display.

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