The Problems of Using Discourse Markers in Kurdish EFL Undergraduate Students’ Essays

Farhad Majeed Hama Shareef

Email address: farhad.hama@univsul.edu.iq

To cite this article:

Abstract: This study is an attempt to investigate the use of various kinds of discourse markers in Kurdish EFL undergraduate student's essays. Similarly, Kurdish EFL first and third year students usually face difficulties in the use of discourse markers when they write different types of paragraphs and essays. Particularly, they have increasingly made mistakes when they write argumentative essays. This study is divided into two parts. Part A comprises of theoretical background and data analysis for the samples of paragraphs and essays. Part B covers pedagogical implications which include proposing useful and appropriate strategies for academic writing. The major finding is that first years have inability to use all the types of discourse markers whereas third year students have misused and overused most of the types of DMs.

Keywords: Discourse Markers, Types of Discourse Markers, Undergraduate Students' Essays

1. Part A

1.1. Introduction

Halliday (1989) claims that writing requires much effort and judgment as a clarifying act. This is in line with Nunna (1991) who claims that writing is not a simple process of writing words on papers but it is a consequential product of that process. Namely, the capacity for stating thoughts and notions in composing articles in a foreign or second language consistently and precisely is a main accomplishment that native speakers of English never precisely learn it (Celce-Murcia, 2001). In particular, for those who have not learnt the language skills required to interpret their thoughts into a comprehensible text, writing might be challenging. Recently, several studies have been conducted on how EFL and ESL students truly compose and what difficulties they face in their own writing (Chen, 2007; Wu,2006; Crewe,1990). One of the writing problems amongst English language learners is using discourse markers (DMs) in different texts correctly. ‘DMs are linguistic devices which create a cohesive and meaningful text’ McCarthy and Carter (1991). It is thought that Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners’ have problems in using DMs and composing descriptive and argumentative essays. This essay will mainly focus on the problems of using simple and complex DMs. These points will be included in the arguments. Firstly, DMs will be discussed in terms of coherence and cohesion. Secondly, previous problems will be presented based on literature on DMs. Thirdly, The general problems of teaching and learning writing will be another debate. Furthermore, essays will be analyzed to show DMs problems. Finally, pedagogical implications will propose to teach DMs in Kurdish EFL settings appropriately.

1.2. Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion are the two crucial textual elements that have been identified as seminal characteristics of ‘good’ writing (Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Halliday, 2000). Coherence and cohesion are vital to student’s demonstration of ideas. In a discourse position, an analysis of cohesion makes a beneficial quantity of the efficiency and measure of the written texts. In other words, many researchers have conducted studies since the publication of Cohesion in English (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Halliday and Hassan state that one of the main linguistic systems of text establishment is cohesion (p.ii). Cohesion denotes the existence or lack of clear cues in the texts that help the audience to follow the notions and discover the meaning within the text. Winter (1994, p.94) also states that textual cohesion affects the relations between clauses at a macro-level. It is thought that DMs are part of grammatical cohesion to join the clauses or sentences together (Richard, Platt and Platt, 1987). Cohesion difficulties occur in learners’ writing
because of the overuse and misuse of DMs. This is in line with Wikborg’s (1990) research, who claims that Swedish learners frequently presented cohesion problems in composing writings because of confusing and misusing sentence linking devices. DMs, as linguistic terms, are employed to link parts of a paragraph in order to make coherent (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, p.4).

1.3. Previous Literature on DMs

Discourse is primarily concerned with written and spoken communication. These are two elements which learners face to formulate different types of discourse (McCarthy, 1991, p.8). Therefore, written discourse could be dealt with through its formation and process. Holland and Lewis (1996, pp. i-ii) state that the texts should be organized and structured from the first sentence to the end. The sequence of the text is recognized by the clearance amongst clauses, which is determined by the ‘lexical and grammatical choices of language’ (Holland and Lewis, 1996, p.29). Thus, several studies have been conducted to indicate the problems of using DMs in written texts. For example, Jalilifar (2008) show that elaborative DMs are more frequently used in descriptive compositions among Iranian EFL learners. Liu and Briane (2005) also found that undergraduate Chinese learners use more additive ‘and’, ‘also’ and ‘or’ DMs than other types. In addition, the largest percentage of the total number of reference and conjunctions also found in learner’s writing (Johns, 1980; Liu and Briane, 2005; Zhang, 2005). These results also showed that the poor quality of writing occurs because of overusing or misusing DMs (e.g. Zhang, 2000). However, some researchers revealed positive relationships between the number of cohesive devices and good writing (Field and Oi, 1992). Additionally, there are some other studies which dealt with the complications of using discourse markers in students’ writing (Field and Yip, 1992; Johns, 1984; Johnson, 1992; Steffensen and Cheng, 1996).

The use and problems of DMs among Kurdish undergraduate EFL learners possibly have cohesion problems in essay writing. This is in line with Wikborg’s (1990) research, who claims that Swedish learners frequently presented cohesion problems in composing writings because of confusing and misusing sentence linking devices. DMs, as linguistic terms, are employed to link parts of a paragraph in order to make coherent (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, p.4).

1.4. The Theoretical Framework

The classification of DMs basically depends on Fraser’s (1999) taxonomy of DMs in this assignment. This taxonomy can be seen as the most comprehensive list of DMs for the classification of written discourse. Based on Fraser’s (1999), DMs are defined as lexical, pragmatic terms which are mainly stressed from the grammatical classes of connectors, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. Each DM signals a connection between the interpretation or explanation of the segments or parts of a sentence they present. DM clarification is conveyed in the context linguistically and conceptually (Rahimi, 2011, p. 71). There are six categories and subcategories based on Fraser’s model (1999).

1. Conclusive: in Conclusion, in sum, to sum up, finally, lastly, in summary, etc.
2. Reason: Because, because of, since, owing to, due to, etc.
3. Elaborative DMs: And, also, moreover, in addition, additionally, as well as, etc.
4. Contrastive DMs: but, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, although, etc.
5. Inferential: Therefore, thus, as consequence, consequently, hence, so, as a result, etc.
6. Exemplifier: for example, for instance, such as, etc.

1.5. Data Collection and Procedure

In order to present the problems of using DMs among undergraduate Kurdish EFL learners in writing essays, 10 students in the department of English participated in the research. Among them were first and third year students equally (5 first and 5 third year students). The third-year students were asked to write five argumentative essays on two multiple choice topics such as ‘advantages and disadvantages of public transport’ and ‘advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones’. The five first-year students were asked to write descriptive essays on ‘Sulaimani or a place in Sulaimani’. The titles were chosen from IELTS and student subject books in the English department.

1.6. Analyzing DM Problems in Descriptive Essays

1.6.1. Sample 1

I usually go to Lovan restaurant and it is my favourite restaurant. This restaurant is very good since it has all kinds of delicious food and make Iranian food. My brother and I go to that restaurant and we order Swrmqabze. This restaurant has nice waiter and waitress. They serve customers warmly. (6) I think this restaurant has beautiful and fresh place and also western food and it has cheap meals for customers.

In sample (1) grammatical mistakes, short sentences and incoherent pieces of writing occur. In sentence number six, ‘and’ is used wrongly to link phrases and complete sentence. It should be used to link the phrases. This essay lacks other DMs. The overuse of ‘and’ makes the text unnatural. It also seems that the writer translated the ideas from Kurdishish to English.

1.6.2. Sample 2

Sarchmar is a nice place in sulaimani. It has beautiful parks and nice places. This place is famous on sulaimani for

visitors. There are facilities and barbecue places. (4) People visit Sranhar in weather and night times. My family and I sometimes stay for the whole night there since there are some wonderful hotels. I remember we stayed one night and we could find any hotels. I believe it is a nice place in Kurdistan.

In sample (2) the overuse of ‘and’ appears very often. The fourth sentence expresses a causative effect incorrectly. Thus, the correct DM that should be used to show this causative is ‘because of’. The idea does not follow naturally. There are also some grammatical mistakes.

1.6.3. Sample 3

Sulaimnai is a very nice city in the world. Many people live in Sulaimaini because it is big and popular in Iraq especially in Kurdistan, and some people are not interested in living in Sulaimani. Arab minorities leave their own places in the South of Iraq and try to find a place in Sulaimani, it also is nice and convenient for all. People get bent when it is hot and cold in summer and winter. (6) But, Kurdishish people still love this city because of its history and famous noblemen.

In sample (3) ‘and’ is used semantically wrongly at the beginning of the fourth clause because it does not express a contrastive meaning. ‘However’ should have been used. In sentence (6) the position of ‘but’ is semantically inappropriate. So, it should not have been used. In short sentences grammatical mistakes also occur.

1.6.4. Sample 4

Freedom Park is a wonderful place in Sulaimani. It has lots of trees and flowers. There are also green areas for relaxation. My younger sister and I often visit Freedom Park at weekends. This park is good for all people since it is in the city centre. There are also some facilities for children such as games city. People disagree with some other facilities such as astrolieks and parking areas. (6) Frankly speaking, the government and relevant authorities attempt to renew and rebuild some parts in this park.

In sample (4) The students use a few DMs to connect short sentences. However, it seems easy for the audience to understand the clauses. In sentence number (6) frankly speaking is semantically wrong here because it does not express a contrastive idea. ‘Nevertheless’ or ‘however’ should have been used.

1.6.5. Sample 5

My favourite park is Public Park. It is a first established park in Sulaimanai. This park has big spaces for parking cars. I really enjoyed when I visit it. (3) It is not very far from our house but it takes five minutes on foot. There are also two small sport areas for football players. This encourages people to visit this park and watch football matches. (6) People because held wedding and birthday parties in this park happily because there are some green areas.

In sample (5) there are some grammatical mistakes with having short sentences and in the third sentence ‘but’ seems to be wrong because it does not prompt a contrast with the previous clause. Therefore, ‘and’ should have been used. In the sixth sentence ‘because’ does not also appear to initiate a logic clause to represent a cause-and-result relationship.

1.7. Analyzing Functions of DMs in Argumentative Essays

1.7.1. Sample 1

This essay will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone which is one of the inventions of this era. Mobile phone invented of the 20th century. In Japan, the first commercial mobile phone begun in 1979. As a result, it becomes one successful communication device.

The mobile phone has some advantages and disadvantages. It has restyled the way of life because of several reasons. (6) And, it provides communication for people wherever they want. Second thing, people can take it to everywhere since it is handy and easy to use. (8) However, allowing user to access through internet. It has also many functions like calendar, making notes, alarm clock and calculator. In addition, in customer’s point of view, it obvious that mobile phone assist people in business a lot such as, make schedule of working and keep in touch with their companies, owing a mobile phone can solve many issues and hold most of information around the world.

(13) But, a number of disadvantages can be identified. Professor Bengt (2008) claimed that radiation activate the brain’s stress system,” making people more alert and more focused, and decreases ability to wind down and fall asleep”. Moreover, if mobile phones break, people will lose all information. People cannot talk underground and in places because the reception is poor in some areas. Another drawback is that people often use the mobile phones while they are driving and this can cause accidents. Finally, this device also pushes people separate from each other. Beside this, it sometimes disturbs people on their works and studies.

(14) [ ], however mobile phones have brought convenience and comfort to the way the people with others but People should be restrictive with using mobile phones. The relevant authorities and phone companies must issue new rules and regulation to the disadvantages and advice people on using mobile phones safely particularly for teenagers and children who are under 16 years old. It often said that this device may be able to take over computers. In the future, people expect different, something fresh and more high tech than their old mobile phones.

In sample (1) at the beginning of sentence number (6), ‘And’ seems to be inappropriate to express an elaborative meaning. ‘Firstly’ should have been used to initiate a logical start. At the beginning of sentence number (8), ‘However’ does not elaborate a new sentence. ‘Secondly’ should have been used to elaborate a new sentence instead. In sentence number ‘13’ ‘but’ does not initiate a new paragraph appropriately. ‘However’ or ‘nevertheless’ should have been used to begin the new paragraph. In number (14) it is necessary to use a conclusive DM.

1.7.2. Sample 2

Public transport has increased rapidly in the last hundred
Public transport is generally efficient since a bus or train can carry many people. However, they are not always full particularly in the evening. A third issue concerns speed. Buses stop regularly and it is necessary to the destination. However, bus lanes help the bus to go quickly. In addition, there is no parking problem.

Finally, there is a question of comfort. Public transport may be dirty and crowded. But this is not always the case. (4) Additionally, at night it can be unpleasant to wait at the bus stop.

Public transport is usually safe because the drivers have considerable experience. (4) Additionally, at night it can be unpleasant to wait at the bus stop.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the advantage outweigh the negative points. Without public transport, cities would quickly stop functioning.

In sample (2) ‘additionally’ does not express an elaborative point. ‘However’ or ‘nevertheless’ should have been used instead of ‘additionally’ because the next clause has a contrastive meaning. In number (12) ‘in contrast’ used wrongly. ‘Furthermore’ should have been used instead.

1.7.3. Sample3
There are lots of public transports in Sulaimani. People can benefit from all kinds of transportations. Several advantages and disadvantages the impact of public transport
The advantages can be further divided into some points. Firstly, public transport is suitable for all people in Sulaimani. Secondly, it is cheap and convenient because of several facilities in the buses.

On the other hand, some people are not satisfied with it since it is not available all the time in the bus stops. Next, some buses have not airconditioning. Then, it sometimes takes too much time to arrive in a certain place owing to traffic jams.

In summary, it is believed that public transport has been used by majority of people. However, the government and relevant must be renewed old roads and transportation systems between cities.

In sample (3), ‘However’ is semantically wrong positioned in the sentence (10). ‘therefore’ should have been used. Incoherent and insufficient information occur in most parts.

1.7.4. Sample 4
Many people today think that public transport such as train, plane, taxi are reliable and convenient. Thus, they afford a car and appreciate for these facilities. They also think that public transport has several advantages and drawbacks.

Drawbacks can be showed throughout several ways. First of all, I think public transport is not very convenient in Sulaimani because the buses are old. Second, people can not easily find public garages. Thirdly, public transport is not suitable for disabled people.

In addition, I believe that public transport is good and suitable for every one. Therefore, we can use it every where we want. It is also cheap which is good for poor people.

Public transport is available twenty four hours a day. Moreover, it encourages people to use public transport more frequently.

It can be summarized that public transport can have advantages and disadvantages. However, advantages seem to be more than disadvantages.

In sample (4), this essay seems to be short and incoherent. Most DMs seem to be used in appropriately. It seems lack of coherent and ideas between DMs and clauses.

1.7.5. Sample 5
Nowadays, mobile phones appear to be the most valuable things in our life. We can get benefit from them appropriately. Nevertheless, some disadvantages can be identified.

Mobile phones have some advantages. Firstly, it is handy because it can carry to every where. Secondly, it has many functions such as listening to music, playing games. Thirdly, it can be used for internet facilities. Furthermore, it is suitable to be used in emergencies.

(9) Moreover, several disadvantages can be identified. First, some types of mobiles are expensive. Because of this, most people can not buy and use them. Second, network reception might not be available or suitable in some areas. As a result, we can not communicate adequately. Moreover, it is dangerous to be used while driving.

In summary, people are satisfied with advantages and using mobile phones widely. However, some disadvantages can have negative impact on our life.

In sample (5) ‘moreover’ does not express a contrast or disadvantages of mobile phone at the beginning of a new paragraph. Therefore, ‘nevertheless’ should have been used to express an appropriate meaning.

1.8. Discussion of DM Problems
It can be argued that the third year students use more DMs than the first year students. Additionally, first year students possibly use more elaborative DMs such as ‘and’ and ‘also’. They also use the contrastive DMs ‘but’ and causative DMs such as ‘because’ and ‘since’ more often. This result is also correlated with Fraser (1999) who found that most students frequently used elaborative DMs. Moreover, they are able to use coordinate conjunctions at sentence level. However, Using conjunctions seem to be semantically incorrect because of overusing and misusing first and third year students. This correlated with Field (1994) who confirms that students might overuse and misuse cohesive links. In particular, Yoon (2006) and Milton (2001) revealed the overuse of DMs by foreign English speakers. In terms of cohesion, this is not in line with Haliday and Hasan (1976) who confirm that the ‘and’ relation operates conjunctively, between sentences, to give cohesion to a text- or rather to create a text, by cohering one sentence to another. The sequence of clauses cannot assist the reader to understand the whole meaning of the essays. This is not correlated with McCarthy and Carter (1994) who claimed that the use of typical sequences could assist the audience to understand the relations. These arrangements are described as clause relations (Winter 1977; 1994; Hoey, 1994).
The outcomes of the analysis show some common problems in using DMs. Firstly, most students depend on translating ideas from English into Kurdishish. (According to Kleiner, 1997 cited in JaliliFar, 2008) stated that DMs are composed in writing because of translation from the source to the target language. Kurdish EFL students might not be very familiar with the style, structure of rhetorical conventions of the English language. This is possibly correlated with Fatah (1999) who claimed that the above mentioned features are different from English to another language. Therefore, Leki (1991) states that feature of genres are different from English into another language.

Thirdly, therefore, Kurdish students might not be able to produce essays because the construction of a comprehensible essay of discourse is a collaborative procedure that involves speakers and/or writers to pay attention to various kinds of communicative information in addition to the grammatical knowledge (Sanders and Noordman, 2001). Kurdish Students might not have such kinds of communicative and grammatical knowledge and capability of showing personal, social identities, actions and to establish interpersonal between discourse contributors in a piece of writing. Moreover, misusing DMs is partly related to grammar knowledge. (Frasar, 1988 and Lichtenberk, 1991) mention grammar as an important point to shape discourse between the existing utterance and the prior knowledge and assist students to use a strategic approach to arrange DMs sequentially. The essays show that students have a lack of prior knowledge. This feature will not allow the reader to interact with text (Ahmad, 2010).

Additionally, writing anxiety might be another problem in making a coherent piece of writing, Cheng (2002) claims that writing anxiety affects students’ incentive and attainment negatively. Finally, a lack of formal teaching approaches of cohesive devices, particularly DMs, might be another problem.

2. Part B

2.1. Pedagogical Implications

The analysis of Kurdish EFL learners’ problems in writing, particularly in using various types of DMs, can make more available awareness on the errors than need remedial work. Every error might be a starting point for Kurdish teachers and to put emphasis on the areas that essentially require strengthening. Kurdish EFL teachers should not waste time and effort on teaching areas which have slight difficulties to the students (Hasan, 2010). For instance, it is obvious in this analysis of the essays that some of the mistakes of various types of DMs necessitate more attention than others. Additionally, some other grammatical mistakes and inadequacy occur in the essay samples generally. Teachers should be aware of these problems and provide the essential steps to check the minor problematic areas as mentioned earlier. Based on previous studies, researchers have proposed pedagogical implications and recommendations to solve the problems in writing; especially in teaching cohesive devices such as references, conjunctions and other types of DMs (e.g. Hasan, 2010; Rahimi, 2011; Khalil, 1989).

Based on the DMs analysis in descriptive and argumentative essays, it can be argued that Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners have problems in various types of DMs. In particular, first year students are not able to use all kinds of DMs in descriptive essays while third year students have more consciousness in using various types of DMs. However, third year students still have complications in using and placing some types of DMs such as ‘however’. Therefore, this could lead to a proposal of effective approaches for teaching DMs appropriately in order to reduce students’ errors and improve teaching techniques for writing. The two proposed approaches of teaching writing are process and genre based approaches. The former will let the students to go through the planning, drafting, revising and editing stages and the latter will also help students to become familiar with various purposes of genres (Raimes cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002, p.308). These two approaches will enable students to use DMs in their own essays, step by step, appropriately.

In order to apply these approaches and steps, some suggestions and required strategies should be presented for adequate use of DMs. Firstly, it is necessary for Kurdish EFL learners to be aware of the difficulties of using all kinds of DMs in their own writing. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to think about the arguments first and then choose the appropriate linkers to connect the ideas and clauses. Inappropriate or more cohesive devices will not make a coherent text (Carrell, 1982). Thus, teachers should remind their students to have a well-adjusted standpoint in the use of DMs. Teachers should make explicit instructions to the learners that overusing or misusing DMs will not enable them to compose a cohesive essay. Therefore, students should be selective in choosing DMs to arrange clauses and sentences logically. This also assists the reader to understand the meaning of texts (Lee, 2002). Secondly, Kurdish EFL learners should be encouraged to read various texts to enrich their understanding of implicit relations. Heller (1995) and Hirvella (2004) indicate that integrating reading into writing is necessary. Reading texts could also be helpful for students to understand better and prompt the use of DMs and vocabularies efficiently in reading and writing. This could help students to be more conscious of coherence and cohesion since it is difficult to learn coherence throughout teaching only (Connor, 1990; Johns, 1990). However, it is possibly suggested that teachers should pay more attention to cohesion and coherence because Kurdish EFL learners seem to study the basic procedures of writing such as writing a thesis statement, paragrapthing and topic sentences (Hassan, 2010). Thirdly, teachers should heighten students’ consciousness of structural modeling of writings (Thurston and Candlin, 1998, Yoon, 2008). It might be helpful for students to comprehend model texts and identify the elements of the texts such as pronouns, demonstratives, and particularly DMs. These types of reading will enable
students to increase vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, teachers should have a wide range of activities in the classroom to reduce the lack of opportunity to write essays such as peer reviews and group discussions on ideas of writing essays.

After analyzing the essays, it can be observed that most students still work on sentence level. Previous studies have also shown that EFL and ESL students widely concentrate on the word, phrases and sentences level more than the discourse and written consistency (Bamberg; 1984; Ferris and Hedgecock, 1998). Most Kurdish EFL undergraduate students are able to compose single grammatical sentences but they might not focus on the meaning of sentence parts. Some researchers claimed that many EFL and ESL students think that ‘their only sense of security comes from what they have learned about grammar’ (Leki, 1996, p.34). It can be argued that teachers should have some kinds of strategies to alter learners’ attention from sentence-level grammar to practicing features of discourse in written contexts such as structuring texts and propositional unity (Basturkmen, 2012).

It is thought that Kurdish EFL teachers can change their students’ attention to discourse features. In order to solve the problems of DMs in essay writing, teachers should work on the macrostructure of the essays. (Hoey, 1983; Martin and Rothery, 1986) claims that macrostructure plays an important role for readers and writers to comprehend functions and categories of the texts. Kurdish EFL teachers can teach the students the essay features and its communication purpose throughout this aspect of coherence. For example, argumentative essays can be taught as a problem-solution or advantages and disadvantages pattern. This step will help students to link and arrange ideas tightly. Secondly, organized information will help readers to understand how the subject topic is progressed (Winter, 1994, p.49). This aspect will assist Kurdish EFL students to arrange information and ideas in essays logically based on the topic. As a consequence, the relationships between clauses clarify the meaning of the essays and solve cohesion problems (Hassun, 2010). This point possibly justifies and elaborates the arguments in the text coherently. It seems that Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners might not be able to justify and exemplify the arguments because of insufficient topic and language knowledge. Furthermore, cohesive devices are a useful set of linkers that make communication between the reader and writer (McCarthy, 1991). Kurdish EFL learners might feel ambiguity in using these devices in their essays. This difficulty could vary from descriptive to argumentative essays. It can be worthwhile to propose some useful strategies based on the above mentioned arguments to improve discourse features, especially using kinds of DMs in two types of essays in light of their problems in using simple and complex DMs. These strategies are based on Basturkmen (2002) designed strategies to teach cohesion and cohesive devices in EFL learners in Hong Kong and advanced students. The strategies are connected with Kurdish EFL learners because they have high level undergraduate students.

2.2. The Employment of Materials and Strategies to Teach DMs in Two Types of Essay Writing

2.2.1. Introductory Activities

This could be a good point for teachers to introduce the importance of DMs and coherence throughout the introduction of the topic and encourage students’ interests in writing essays. There are several activities for the teachers to utilize such as describing a current event or retelling a story. Teachers can focus on the macrostructure to finish these activities, and then students can participate and structure the information of the story or an event from a sentence to a paragraph. This presentation of information will help students to be conscious of the circulation of information in the texts. This way will help students to understand the meaning and the usage of DMs to link two clauses and compose more coherent essays.

2.2.2. Explicit Teaching

It has been noted that most Kurdish EFL undergraduate students have problems in using DMs appropriately and precisely, especially complex discourse markers such as ‘additionally’, ‘however’, ‘as a result’, etc. Therefore, explicit teaching or instruction of DMs with sentence samplesought to be provided by the writing lectures for students rather than accumulated consciousness through learning (AL-Jarf, 2001; Reichelt, 2001). This is vital for Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners since they don’t have much time to practice or access to English. Additionally, teachers can work on simple and authentic texts. For example, Kurdish EFL students can scrutinize different kinds of essays such as problem solving or general specific structure and then reorder untidy sentences and clauses throughout teaching macrostructure patterning. Moreover, students can also work on their short paragraphs and other texts with peers to show the effectiveness of DMs in their own writing and other texts. For example, students can show and negotiate the meaning and the use of various types of DMs. The teacher can finally select a sample from students’ writing and stress the use and importance of employing DMs in two different kinds of essays. For instance, the teacher can show how ‘however’ is used appropriately in descriptive and argumentative essays (Braine and Liu, 2005, p.635). These steps will help students to evade overusing and underusing DMs.

2.2.3. Students Hand-outs

Teachers can give hand-outs on specific topics with the aim of comprehending coherence and cohesion. Teachers can also explain DMs and illustrate with examples in this stage. For example, students can understand the meaning of the macrostructure in descriptive essays by giving them a typical example of the same essay. This example will help students to understand the primitive notes on the topic and descriptive notes on the problem – solution, general- specific, argument or counter argument structure. For instance, the teachers can also describe a problem faced during his / her visit to the market based on the above mentioned patterns. This is in line with Hoey’s (1983) ‘problem solution pattern, consisting of a
situation (In which there is a problem) and a problem (within the situation, requiring a response)’. Another hand-outs also necessary to afford explicit explanations about textual and interpretive markers. These two hand-outs can help students to use various DMs to arrange and connect the clauses and ideas logically.

2.2.4. Raising Awareness of Patterns

This aspect will be useful for students to become aware of coherence and cohesion in varieties of genres, especially samples of descriptive or argumentative essays. This fits with Coffin (2003) suggests that teachers should raise awareness of students on how ‘how argument essays function in different discipline areas’. The teacher can provide samples of essays and bring them to the class. Then, students can work on various essays and discuss them with peers or individually. Next, the teacher can lead the debate and discuss patterns in the essays and explains how one part belongs to another. This will possibly help students to understand the arrangement of simple and complex sentences. This way will finally be advantageous for students to suggest and understand the appropriate DMs used to relate ideas such as DMs for cause – consequence patterns like consequently (Holland and Lewis, 1996, p. 29).

2.2.5. Reformulating

This strategy shows an important part of the nature of sentences which presents the logical meaning of a stream of ideas in essay (Mezo, 2001). This strategy will help students to reformulate ideas, sentences, and join the parts of a sentence coherently. In this aspect, teachers can give the students jumbled sentences and ask them to reorganize the sentences into a meaningful essay or text. This strategy will be very helpful for students to learn about the meaning and the function of DMs in different types of essays.

2.2.6. Creating Essays

Applying the above mentioned steps will prepare Kurdish EFL undergraduate students to create and compose their own essays creatively. Creating a coherent and cohesive piece of writing will possibly assist students to arrange ideas properly. As a consequence, the audience can understand the student’s message clearly. To accomplish this strategy, Kurdish EFL teachers should provide the students with the topic of familiar essays according to the level of students and the frames to fulfil the necessary ideas related to the pattern of the essays such as problem solving or general-specific. MacCarthy and Carter (1994) suggested the use of blank frames. Moreover, Kurdish EFL learners can also work on their own essays to do revising and editing in order to know how clauses are related by DMs. The teachers can work with the students to give feedback on the first draft and revise the first draft appropriately.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this assignment is about a certain feature of written discourse. It highlights how Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners use DMs in their own essays. It also demonstrates that Kurdish EFL learners have an awareness of using DMs in their writing but they might not have enough knowledge to choose them suitably. In particular, first year students do not have capacity to use all kinds of DMs. It is also presented that this problem could be a result of various reasons such as inappropriate pedagogical implication, insufficient knowledge, resource books, teachers and learners. The argument would further show the problems of using DMs such as overusing, and misusing. Thus, through the qualitative analysis of students’ essays some suggestions and approaches have been proposed to teach writing and DMs. Additionally, some proper strategies have been mentioned throughout in order to decrease students’ errors, and raise students’ awareness of using DMs in writing two kinds of essays.

References


Farhad Majeed Hama Shareef: The Problems of Using Discourse Markers in Kurdish EFL Undergraduate Students’ Essays


