



# The Power of TBLL Through Discourse Markers In Transforming EFL Students' English Writing: Unlocking The Potential For Fluency And Coherence

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the transformative potential of Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) in enhancing the English writing proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, with a particular focus on the role of discourse markers in promoting fluency and coherence. English writing proficiency is a fundamental skill for EFL students, and research suggests that TBLL can be an effective pedagogical approach to develop this skill. In this re-search, 30 EFL students participated in a structured TBLL program that incorporated discourse markers to improve their writing abilities. The study employed descriptive qualitative methods design to find out the genres of discourse markers used by the EFL students in their text. The incorporation of discourse markers in EFL students' English writing empowers them to create more fluent and coherent compositions. These markers promote better organization and logical flow within texts, resulting in enhanced reader comprehension. Through the conscious utilization of discourse markers, EFL students can refine their writing skills, ultimately achieving fluency, coherence, and effective communication in the English language. It is imperative for educators and learners alike to recognize the transformative potential of discourse markers and integrate them strategically into the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language.

**Keywords:** *Discourse markers, EFL students' English writing, TBLL*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is a coveted skill in today's globalized world, particularly for those for whom it is not their first language. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, the ability to communicate effectively in English, both verbally and in writing, is a gateway to educational and professional opportunities. Among the various components of language learning, the mastery of English writing stands out as a crucial and multifaceted challenge.

This article delves into the dynamic and evolving realm of language education, specifically focusing on Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) as a potential pedagogical approach. Language acquisition is most effective when it aligns with real-life communicative tasks, and TBLL is designed to do just that. In this research, the emphasis is placed on the utilization of discourse markers within the TBLL framework to enhance the writing proficiency of EFL students.

Discourse markers, often regarded as linguistic signposts, hold the potential to greatly impact the fluency and coherence of written compositions, offering a bridge between ideas and facilitating smoother transitions between sentences and paragraphs.

This study seeks to explore the transformational power of TBLL and the strategic use of discourse markers in reshaping the landscape of EFL students' English writing. The aim is to unravel the nuanced dynamics that make this combination effective in unlocking the potential for fluency and coherence in written expression. By delving into the intersection of TBLL, discourse markers, and EFL writing, this research not only contributes to the pedagogical understanding of language education but also underscores a promising approach for educators seeking to empower their students with the skills required to excel in English writing in an increasingly interconnected world.

English proficiency is not solely about vocabulary and grammar but also about the ability to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions with clarity and cohesion

in the writ-ten form. Effective written communication is a skill that transcends the classroom, extending its relevance to various academic, professional, and personal contexts. It is a skill that EFL students often grapple with, and instructors continually seek innova-tive approaches to address this challenge.

Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), a pedagogical approach rooted in authen-tic and meaningful language use, has gained prominence for its ability to facilitate language acquisition in contextually relevant ways. This approach centres on practical tasks and activities that require students to use language as a tool for communication. In the context of English writing, TBLL encourages students to engage with the lan-guage in a purposeful and task-oriented manner.

Within the framework of TBLL, the incorporation of discourse markers takes cen-tre stage. Discourse markers, also known as transition words or connectives, serve as linguistic bridges that guide readers through a text, establishing connections between ideas and enhancing overall coherence. By strategically employing discourse markers, students can not only enhance the flow of their compositions but also communicate complex thoughts with precision.

This research embarks on an exploration of the symbiotic relationship between TBLL and discourse markers in the context of EFL writing. By investigating the im-pact of this approach, our aim is to shed light on the potential for profound transfor-mation in students' written English proficiency. This inquiry is not only an academic pursuit but also a practical endeavour that holds promise for educators committed to nurturing the language skills of their EFL students. As the pages unfold, we will jour-ney through the landscape of TBLL and discourse markers, seeking to unlock the doors to fluency and coherence in the realm of EFL writing.

The genres of Discourse Markers Distinguishing DMs from whether they refer to a textual segment between sentences or discourse segment in structure, Fraser (1999: categorized DMs into two major varieties as follows: 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 Mark-ers. 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 elabo-rative 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 conclu-sion based on S1. Within this group which Fraser (1999: 948) labels inferential mark-ers, we have: a. So, now, well, anyway, surely, b. Of course, may, must, c. According-ly, 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, fi-nally, first, meantime, meanwhile.

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.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach for data collection and de-scription. As per the definition by Gay et al. (2006), a descriptive method is focused on identifying and elucidating the current state or nature of things. This research de-sign encompasses the collection, analysis, and interpretation of extensive narrative and visual data, aiming to provide profound insights into a specific area of interest. Qualitative research, with its wide-ranging objectives, primarily aims to foster a pro-found comprehension of a particular phenomenon, be it related to the environment, a specific process, or even a set of beliefs.

## 3. FINDING

The genre of Discourse Markers Employed by Students and Their Roles in Argu-mentative Texts From an analysis of the students' written work, a substantial amount of data concerning the various types and roles of discourse markers in their argumen-tative writing

emerged. Fraser (1999: 946) classifies discourse markers into four dis-tinct categories, differentiating them based on whether they pertain to the inter-sentential level or the broader discourse structure. These categories include elabora-tive, contrastive, inferential, and additional subtypes of markers.

a. Extract 1 (DMs furthermore, so, and therefore)

*Furthermore*, the city is more developed. There are much more department stores, supermarkets, shopping centers, etc. a lot of concert, theaters, social activities are put in order in city, but they don't happen in my hometown a lot. The weather in winters, isn't too cold. It doesn't show a lot but in my hometown is cold in winters.

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 1: Regarding Elaborative Markers, this subset of DMs serves the purpose of establishing connections between consecutive sentences. It's important to note that the relationship between these sentences should exhibit a quasi-parallel structure. Students employ these DMs to supplement and expand upon the information presented in the preceding sentence. Their use adds an element of elegance to the narrative, sur-passing the mere enumeration of facts or reliance on the conjunction 'and'.

In the case of Inferential Markers, DMs like 'So' and 'Therefore' are utilized to sig-nal a relationship between a premise and its subsequent conclusion. These markers come into play when a conclusion is drawn after providing some explanatory context.

b. Extract 2 (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 letter's from the hometown who come looking for work in the city.

(Taken from student's writing no 9 , page 103 )

Analysis 2:

Considered as Contrastive Markers, the use of the DM 'Even' in writing becomes evident when there is a contrast between one sentence and the following one, typically when these sentences bear distinct interpretations.

c. Extract 3 (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 3:

Regarded as Contrastive Markers, 'Though' is employed by the student in their writing to introduce a contrast between the initial sentence and the subsequent one.

d. Extract 4 (DM in addition)

There are many disadvantages of living in the hometown and live in the city. 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. Unlike the hometown, shift of living in the city is the associate live everywhere lots going on diversions.

(Taken from student's writing no 15 , page 109 )

Analysis 4:

When utilized as Elaborative Markers, 'In addition' serves the purpose of adding supplementary information to support the preceding sentence in our writing.

e. Extract 5 (DMs hmm, yes and although)

Do you have any friend? And whether male or female friend? *Hmm...* I think all the people who live in this earth has a many friend. *Yes*, I will tell you about my friend. I have many friends and of course you will also have a friend.

I think I prefer to have female friends, than male friends, because female friends had the same feeling with me as a woman also and knowing what we feel. *Although* friendship in general from for the same reasons of support and companionship.

(Taken from student's writing no 17 , page 111 )

Analysis 5:

The DMs 'Hmm..' and 'Yes' function as Elaborative Markers by providing additional information to augment the previous statement. Their usage contributes to a more refined expression compared to mere listing or reliance on the conjunction 'and'.

On the other hand, 'Although' serves as a Contrastive Marker, typically employed to introduce two contrasting ideas.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The research findings underscore the significance of effective writing, which ex-tends beyond mere grammatical correctness to include cohesion and coherence. Dis-course markers play a central role in text cohesion and, therefore, should hold a prom-inent position in writing instruction. While it's not accurate to claim that discourse markers are the sole determinants of English writing quality, it is undeniable that they exert a significant influence on text cohesion and coherence.

The analysis conducted across Extracts 1 to 5, comparing and contrasting texts, re-veals the prominent use of discourse markers in students' English writing. The pres-ence of coherent discourse in these markers signifies their ability to establish connec-tions between various discourse units, such as utterances, longer text spans, and even the text's relationship with its extralinguistic context.

It is essential to note that discourse markers are typically syntactically optional, meaning they can be removed without affecting the grammatical correctness of the host sentence (Degand, 2010). However, this should not be misconstrued as a lack of function. Discourse markers still serve a purpose within the utterances they appear in, albeit subtly.

The incremental progress observed in writing ability underscores the potential ben-efits of including instruction on discourse markers in the development of writing skills. This approach is an interactive process that necessitates the integration of vari-ous forms of communicative knowledge, encompassing cognitive, expressive, social, and textual aspects, which

complement traditional grammatical knowledge related to sound, form, and meaning (Schiffirin, 1992).

Discourse markers provide insights not only into linguistic properties, such as se-mantic and pragmatic meaning but also into the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of their users. Given the breadth of their functions, analyzing these markers offers a comprehensive understanding of their roles in discourse. Thus, making decisions about the status of markers based on data analysis carries significant implications.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Drawing insights from the findings discussed in the preceding chapter, we can arrive at certain conclusions concerning the use of Discourse Markers (DMs). It was observed that students employed various types of DMs, each serving distinct functions. The analysis shed light on the fact that a lack of appropriate discourse markers or their improper use led to reduced cohesion and coherence in the students' speech.

Discourse markers offer valuable insights, extending beyond mere linguistic properties, to encompass the structuring of social interactions and the context in which they are employed. Furthermore, they provide valuable cues regarding the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of the individuals who utilize them. Given the extensive range of functions that these markers serve, any analysis, even those concentrating on a narrow facet of their meaning or a limited subset of their applications, contributes to our understanding of their role in discourse.

In the three different text types examined, the total number of DMs used by the students amounted to 40, each serving distinct functions. Specifically, when considering the comparison and contrast text spanning from Extract 1 to Extract 5, the data reveals the utilization of 30 DMs, as displayed in the table.

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