



Saudi EFL Teachers' Perception of the Use of Discourse Markers in Developing Writing Skills of Adult Learners

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Abstract

Considering the importance of Discourse Markers (DMs) in EFL writing, this study aims to find out how the teachers teaching adult EFL learners in Saudi Arabia perceive the use of DMs in developing writing skills of their students. The quantitative research tool used in this study is an adapted form of the survey originally developed by Fung (2011). The responses to the survey have been analyzed by comparing the native-nonnative teachers' perceptions and male-female teachers' perceptions. The major research finding is that all the EFL teachers attach great value to the use and teaching of DMs, yet they feel forced to teach only those few DMs which are part of the textbooks and in which the students would be tested. Major recommendation is that all important DMs should be incorporated in the syllabus and made part of the assessment to make EFL adult Saudi learners proficient in writing skills.

Keywords: discourse markers; Saudi EFL teachers; writing skills; quantitative tool

INTRODUCTION

Writing, as one of the important means for communication, is very important in English language learning particularly in academic scenario in the universities. EFL learners in different parts of the world need to be trained to write well so as to be able to communicate with English speaking people and to cope with their academic requirements. They find it hard to produce discourse that may meet the standard of discourse created by their native counterparts. It is very important that the EFL learners are made aware of various sub-skills of writing or components of writing that may help them write well. In order to achieve this purpose, the EFL teachers need to be very clear minded and they must approach teaching writing in a systematic way

presenting the sub-skills of writing such as the effective use of DMs to their EFL learners.

There must be a strong realization not only among the students but also the teachers that writing is the ultimate end in the four skills in language learning viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing, and it should be paid more attention keeping in view the academic needs of the learners. Although mastery of vocabulary and grammar rules is important to write correct sentences, yet it is not enough to help learners produce meaningful sentences unless it is paralleled with knowledge of how discourse in English is created with coherence and cohesion and with all pragmatic cares and cautions. In this regard, discourse markers are an important part of writing because they help in building up an effective discourse. They are a set of words which mark transition points in communication; facilitate the construction of a mental representation of the events described by the discourse apart from creating cohesiveness, coherence and meaning in a text (Louwerse & Mitchell, 2003). They can show the connection between what a speaker/writer says and what has already been said or what is going to be said; they can indicate what speakers/writers think about what they are saying or what others have said. Discourse is natural spoken or written language in context, especially when complete texts are considered (Rahimi, 2011).

The research study on Discourse Markers (DMs) is not new in the field of linguistics especially in Discourse Analysis of speech. However, their study in writing in ELT (English Language Teaching), ESP (English for Specific Purposes), EGP (English for General Purposes), EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) has been quite scarce. "Words like *well*, *oh*, and *you know* have long been observed and studied in spontaneous speech. With the proliferation of on-line dialogues, such as instant messaging between friends or back and-forth postings at websites there are increasing opportunities to observe them in spontaneous writing" (Fox Tree, 2015) p-64. Discourse markers in spontaneous writing may play similar roles to those observed in speaking (Fox Tree, 2010). They are also called as discourse particles and discourse operators (Schourup, 1999). Schourup, (1999) opines, "An extensive body of pragmatic and linguistic research deals with a functionally related group of expressions often referred to as discourse markers" (p. 227). Words such as now, well, so, and then, are called DM. They serve as signalling words that establish a relationship between the pending message and the previous one (Fraser, 1990). Discourse markers have been associated with speakers' expressions of emotions or attitudes (Diani, 2010) which are generally associated with speaking. What is rarely acknowledged is that attitudes can be expected in all forms of communication, and there is a strong reason to predict that attitude expression are more likely to occur in written communication to make up for the lack of audiovisual and paralinguistic information. Walther et al., (2005) in their study found out that the written communicators used words to make up for information normally unavailable nonverbally.

Discourse Markers are indispensable part of any human language. They are important because of their high frequency in daily language use. Regarding the value and

importance of DMs, Schourup (1999, p. 228) comments, "Since the 1970s, interest in DMs has increased commensurately with growing interest in the production and comprehension of extended discourse and, more generally, in pragmatic and contextual of utterance interpretation..... research on DMs and similar phenomena has expanded continually throughout the 1980s and 1990s.... not only in pragmatic and discourse analytical research but also in studies of language acquisition and language pedagogy, and in research on sociolinguistic topics ranging from gender variation to code switching". Based on various studies in the field of DMs, due to their ambiguity in core meaning and their important roles in the text, they have to be recognized precisely in L2 text by the students in order to grasp the underlying meaning of the sentence or a piece of spoken discourse (Fraser, 1990; Schourup, 1999).

For an English-learner, it would be difficult to write a well-structured composition if (s)he did not have a good knowledge of discourse, even if (s)he had a good command of vocabulary and grammar. There is dire research need to analyze the development of discourse competence in teaching of English language skills in general and teaching of writing skill to EFL adult learners in particular. It is a general observation that while teaching writing to the undergraduate adult EFL learners in countries like Saudi Arabia, most of the teachers strive to develop their writing skills at the level of sentences and short guided paragraph instead of taking it to the discourse level. Many researchers have observed that the development of grammar, vocabulary and writing mechanics are much valued and emphasized while DMs are either underused or misused (Modhish, 2012; Daif-Allah et al, 2013). In addition, the researchers, while teaching writing to Preparatory Year Program students, found many problems in the logical organization of ideas in their writing due to poor or inadequate use of discourse markers.

Thus the researchers found that little is known about the use of DMs in the EFL contexts like Saudi Arabia. They also found that looking into how DMs were perceived and treated by the teachers, males vs. females and natives vs. non-natives was an interesting area of investigation in Applied Linguistics. Accordingly, the present study attempts to fill this research gap through investigating the teaching of DMs by EFL teachers so as to provide a diagnosis for a problem in the teaching of writing that teachers and learners encounter.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

On the basis of years of teaching experience dealing with adult EFL learners, the researchers felt the need to have the reflection on the factors hindering the smooth and satisfactory development of writing skills in the EFL adult learners. It was an alarming observation that not only the learners but most of the teachers were found to be unaware of important feature of Discourse Markers in developing communicative competence in the learners. There is dire need not only to create awareness among the teachers and the taught about the effective use and significance of DMs but also to explore the differences of perception among the native, non-native, males and female teachers towards the DMs in teaching English language in general and in developing writing skills in particular.

Thus the present study seeks answers to the following research questions:

- I. How do EFL teachers perceive the use of Discourse Markers in teaching English to Saudi EFL adult learners?
- II. How do the native and non-native EFL teachers resemble / differ in their perception of the importance of DMs in teaching English to EFL learners?
- III. How do the male and female EFL teachers resemble / differ in their perception of the importance of DMs in teaching English to EFL learners?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Before the development of the process approach to writing, researchers saw writing as a product, and thought that the most important component of good writing was linguistic knowledge rather than linguistic skill. Young (1978) defined the product or traditional approach to writing as 'the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); and so on' (cited in Matsuda, 2003, p.70). It is called the 'product' approach because its aim was to produce correct texts (Richards, 1990). According to Pincas (1982), it concentrates on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. Other researchers believe that the product approach to writing concentrates mainly on helping students to learn grammatical rules and how to avoid errors and mistakes. Badger and White (2000, p.154) mention that 'product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language'. Thus there is a need to bring into consideration the process approach to prepare proficient discourse creators.

Developing writing skills of adult EFL learners is the major challenge for the language teachers. Modhish (2012) believes that writing is a demanding task for foreign language learners. In particular, writing academic essays seem to be problematic for EFL learners because writers need to pay more attention and focus. EFL learners need to be aware of the different components of writing that would assist them to write effectively and teachers are advised to focus on the process of writing more than the finished product since various operations and strategies applied during the completion of a writing task became important (Assadi, 2012). This enhances the importance of focusing on the features like DMs and paying greater attention to them in an effort to develop the desired competence in the learners.

EFL writing teachers need to be very vigilant so that the learners produce clear, fluent, and effective drafts. Knowledge about the discourse Markers (DMs), amongst other things, must be used to improve writing skill (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31). To reach this end objective, they should be made to focus on the following important aspects of writing (Raimes, 1983, p. 6): i) Syntax: Sentence structure, sentence boundaries; ii) Content: Relevance, clarity, originality, logic, etc.; iii) Grammar: Rules for verbs, agreement, articles, pronouns, etc.; iv) Mechanism: Handwriting, spelling, punctuation, etc.; v) Organization: Paragraphs, topic and support, cohesion and unity; vi) Word choice:

Vocabulary, idiom, tone; vii) Purpose: The reason for writing; viii) Audience: The reader/s; viv) The writer's process: Getting ideas, getting started, writing drafts, revising etc. All these aspects of writing are very necessary for producing an academic essay but the most important aspect of writing is cohesion that refers to using transition words correctly and to build right relationships between ideas. This establishes the significance of DMs in the development of effective writing skills in the learners. According to Dulgera (p. 268), 'coherent composition gives the reader the opportunity to follow the writer's words from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph easily'.

Likewise, Fung and Carter (2007) have asserted that the use of DMs is growing as they are being used frequently in written texts by both native and non-native users of the language. Discourse markers mastery nearing the native speakers' competence is desirable and possible. If learners are exposed to interesting and comprehensible input in standardized English whether it is BE (British English) or AE (American English), they can assimilate and acquire this feature consciously or unconsciously. It is probably a prevalent misconception that DMs are required at an advanced level and there is no need to try to attain the native speakers' mastery in their use. Like all other linguistic features, DMs also should be paid attention right from the beginning so that the academic purposes of the learners continue to remain in the focus right from the beginning till the attainment of the required proficiency.

DMs are also seen as linguistic expression such as "now, well, so, which signal a sequential relationship between the current basic message and previous discourse (Fraser, 1998: 302). According to Carter and McCarthy (2006), DMs are words and phrases which function to link segments of the discourse to one another in ways which reflect choices of monitoring, organization and management exercised by the speaker or the writer. Similarly, Carter (2007) defines DMs as "intra-sentential and supra-sentential linguistic units which fulfil a largely non-propositional and connective function at the level of discourse, (p. 411)." Swan (2005) adds that DMs are words and expressions used to show how discourse is constructed.

In writing, discourse makers (DMs) play an important role in connecting the sentences as well as paragraphs effectively, in showing the logical or semantic relations between the previous information and the following one. These also facilitate readers' interpretation of the whole discourse effectively (Kalajahi, 2012). Dergisi (2010) assumes that speakers or writers make the context more accessible to listeners or readers and constrain their interpretation of message through using DMs in communication. Accordingly, awareness of the use and practicality of DMs can immensely contribute to the overall quality of the discourse created by English language learners. Rahimi (2011) rightly points out that DMs constitute an essential component of communicative competence in the sense that they help learners produce fluent and meaningful discourse in English.

With consideration of the problems surrounding the use of DMs and of the demand of creating meaningful and coherent discourse, the researchers surveyed and reviewed a

number of studies (Assadi, 2012; Rahimi, 2011; Yu, 2008; Carter & Fung, 2007) that investigated the use of DMs by ESL/EFL students in different contexts. Some others go a step ahead and compare the gender differences in the use of DMs in different contexts or skills. Almost all these researches focus mainly on the use of DMs by the subjects in their particular context. However, there are a few researches that focus on the pedagogical significance of DMs (Trillo, 2002; Fung & Carter, 2007) and very few on the teachers' attitude towards the importance of the DMs in teaching English (Fung, 2011). Trill (2002) compared the use of discourse markers by native and non-native children and adults and found that non-native speakers failed to acquire the appropriate markers that the scaffold adults' speech, and concluded that non-native speakers were deprived of many pragmatic resources in their L2 learning process, demonstrating the urgent need to bring the consistent teaching of pragmatic markers to language instruction. Yu (2008) concluded in his research that the appropriate use of DMs can improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Fung and Carter (2007) compared DMs output between native speakers and L2 learners and found the use of DMs as useful interactional endeavours to structure and organize learners' speech in class for both native and non-native speakers. Kalajahi & Abdullah (2012) explored the attitudes of Iranian post graduate students towards the use of DMs in their writing and found them to be well aware of the importance of DMs in coherent writing but they did not have sufficient knowledge to use and choose them appropriately. Hellerman and Vergum (2007) explored the interaction between 17 adult English learners with no previous formal instruction in the language in class and found that there were certain discourse markers used, which were not explicitly taught earlier. They concluded that language and culture must be taught together in an EFL classroom.

Even in the context of EFL in Saudi Arabia, the research shows the limited use of discourse markers by the EFL learners in their writing. Daif-Allah and Albasher (2013), in their research on the use of DMs in paragraph writing carried out on the PYP EFL learners, found out that the Saudi EFL learners used very limited number of DMs in their writing far beyond the ratio needed to make any written paragraph easy to understand. Moreover, there was found no development in students' use of DMs as they moved from level one to level two. The researchers suggested that the writing instructors needed to appreciate the importance of developing their students' ability to use DMs as a means of improving their writing fluency. Modhish (2012) in his research on Arab EFL learners' use of DMs in their composition writing concluded that DMs were not given the due importance they deserved by writing instructors and EFL teachers in general. These researches raise a question on teachers' competence in DMs and the value they attach to the teaching of DMs to their students in teaching EFL, specially writing.

There has not been any significant research carried out on how the teachers perceive the importance and use of DMs in writing. Fung (2011) studied Hong Kong teachers' attitudes towards English discourse marker and found out that DMs remained a relatively unexplored area of discourse analysis; and where markers were focused as a teaching point, that was often those associated with written texts that were presented,

while those that occurred frequently in natural conversations were not taught systematically.

The present research is an effort to bridge the gap and to study the value the EFL teachers give to the use and teaching of DMs in their writing classes. It also explores how the native and non-native teachers in Saudi EFL context differ in their perception of DMs in teaching English to EFL learners. Another area focused on is to see if there is any gender-based difference in their perception. In order to reach the conclusions, the researchers followed a modified form of Fung's (2011) survey, and took into consideration the different factors surrounding the DMs in teaching writing skills to EFL adult learners such as Pedagogic Value of DMs, Identification with the Native Speaker Norm, Pragmatic Value of DMs, Indispensable Value of DMs and Prioritizing Teaching of DMs for Receptive Purposes.

RESEARCH METHOD

Since the researchers aim to find Saudi EFL teachers' perception of the use of DMs of EFL classroom, it was decided to take a quantitative approach to collect data for this purpose. Questionnaire distributed was originally developed by Fung 2011 and adopted by the researchers to serve the research purposes. The original questionnaire by Fung (2011) focused on speaking and listening skills. However, the researchers modified questionnaire to investigate in depth the respondents' perceptions of the use of DMs in writing skill. Major categories of DMs such as DMs for Adding a Point, DMs for Cause and Effect, DMs for Sequencing, DMs for Repetition, DMs for Generalization, DMs for Illustration, DMs for Conceding, DMs for Summarization, DMs for Comparison, DMs for Attitude Expression, DMs for Contrast, Disagreement and Qualifying, DMs for Emphasis, DMs for Expressing Earlier Time and DMs for Expressing Later Time along with examples were added in the beginning of the questionnaire with a view to create awareness among the teachers and thereby getting accurate and valid responses to the questionnaire items (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire consisted of five categories and each one contained five items. The categories covered various perceptions of EFL teachers towards DMs in teaching writing to adult EFL learners.

In Fung's (2011) study, the questionnaires were monitored and trailed by 20 ELT practitioners from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and England who offered comments from an insider's point of view and these practitioners provided feedback on the strengths and shortcomings of the overall questionnaire design. Similarly, in this study, three PhD scholars were involved to help carefully examine the modified version of the questionnaire. In the light of their comments, the researchers in this study revised the questionnaire of 25 items before questionnaire administration. The reviewers of the questionnaire were concerned with the following important sides: clarity, redundancy, repetitions of ideas, coherence, and suggestions about the items to be added or deleted. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. This scale is appropriate for use with closed-ended items that include 'a characteristic statement', and where respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they 'agree' or 'disagree' with it by making one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (Dornyei, 2007).

According to Karavas–Doukas (1996), *Likert* scale is beneficial to collect teachers' opinions. The questions were pre-coded from 5-1. A high score reflects a strong endorsement of an attitude statement, while a low score reflects a weak endorsement. The internal reliability of the tool is checked by finding Cronbach's alpha coefficient first for each variable separately and then for the whole questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.80 to 0.89 in the following way:

Statements 1-5	Pedagogical Value ($\alpha = 0.895829$)
Statements 6-10	Native Speaker Norm ($\alpha = 0.889111$)
Statements 11-15	Pragmatic Value ($\alpha=0.855877$)
Statements 16-20	Dispensable Value ($\alpha=0.804558$)
Statements 21-25	Prioritizing for receptive purpose ($\alpha=0.867643$)
The Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire is 0.937854 that shows great internal reliability.	

The sample for the survey comprised forty native teachers including 20 males and 20 females and forty non-native teachers including 20 males and 20 females, teaching EFL in Qassim University and King AbdulAziz University.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This part presents the quantitative findings from the responses to questionnaires from the teachers in Preparatory Year Program at Qassim University and King Abdul Aziz University. The respondents were categorized into native vs. non-native and male vs. female teachers. The respondents for this survey were selected by using non-random sampling. The survey was sent to 50 teachers engaged in teaching English to the Saudi students in PYP at Qassim University and King Abdul Aziz University. However, later, for the convenience of data analysis, on the basis of the demographic information of the teachers, the responses were tabulated and analysed in two phases: a) first the responses of 20 native teachers and 20 non-native teachers were compared and analysed, b) then, the responses of 20 male teachers and 20 female teachers were compared and analysed.

The survey intended to help the researchers reach the perceptions of the teachers' expectations while teaching Discourse Markers. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) confidence interval and Test hypotheses. The researchers used a calculation by using different equation to the small samples mentioned above and then applied it to the target population (natives & non-natives, males & females). Furthermore, the researchers used Test Hypothesis to confirm the validity of the study. Test hypothesis is about a theoretical quality whose value is unknown. This hypothesis about the population quantity has been tested by means of a sample quantity which is calculated from the observations composing a sample. This process of making a decision about theoretical population quantity on basis of observed samples quantity is known as statistical inference.

Data Analysis

This section presents an analysis of the data collected on the survey. The analysis has been carried out in three parts. First of all, an overall picture is presented as to how all the respondents perceive the use of DMs in EFL teaching. Second, the analysis reflects a comparison between the male and female teachers, of their perceptions of the utility and importance of DMs in EFL teaching. Finally, the perceptions of native and non-native teachers about the use of DMs in EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia have been compared. All discussion in this regard has been carried out with the help of statistical analyses like descriptive statistics and t-test for the five variables.

Table 1. Overall Teachers' Attitude towards DMs

No. of items	Mean	Standard Deviation
25	3.85	0.7

The table 1 shows that the Saudi EFL teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of DMs in EFL teaching. They are quite aware of the importance of DMs in bringing cohesion in their students' writing. The results evince that the teachers consider it important to teach DMs to their students. However, the earlier researches on the use of DMs by the Saudi students in their writings (Daif-Allah et al, 2013; Modhish, 2012) showed a disappointing picture- students did not use DMs effectively and their writing quality was poor as well. Considering this contrast, when the subject teachers were approached and inquired, most of the teachers were of the view that they taught their students writing mainly at the level of sentence and short guided paragraph instead of discourse level, according to the syllabus and examination requirement. Therefore, they, though knew the importance of DMs in effective writing, could not teach this important component of writing to their students the way it should be taught.

The table below shows the percentages of the responses towards all variables.

Table 2. Percentages of the Responses to Five Variables

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pedagogical Value	48%	49%	3%	0%	0%
Native Speaker Norm	10%	51%	29.50%	9.50%	0%
Pragmatic Value	29%	65%	6%	0%	0%
Dispensable Value	19%	65%	9.50%	6%	0.50%
Prioritizing for Receptive Purpose	16%	58.50%	20.50%	4%	1%

The table 2 shows that the majority of the teachers are well aware of the importance of DMs in writing and so in teaching them to their students in their EFL classes. It also shows that a few teachers have certain reservations about the native speaker norm and prioritizing of receptive purpose for DMs in teaching writing in their EFL classes. It evinces that they realize the importance of DMs in writing and want their students to be able to write cohesively using DMs but are not very enthusiastic about making them use DMs the way the native speakers use in their writing. It seems that they realize that if

the learners are able to use DMs effectively to make their writing cohesive and coherent it would be a big achievement, and trying to enable them to use DMs like the native speakers would be too unrealistic an aim to achieve. Moreover, they understand that DMs are very important in writing; however, they do not want to prioritize it for the purpose of receptive skills.

Table 3. A Comparison of Male and Female EFL Teachers' Responses on the Survey

Variables	Male teachers		Female Teachers		cal t-value	t-critical	df	confidence interval
	Means	Standard Deviations	Means	Standard Deviations				
Pedagogical Value	4.7	0.470162	4.2	0.542897	3.113499	2.021	38	0.05
Native Speaker Norm	3.65	0.825578	3.58	0.7971	0.27279	2.021	38	0.05
Pragmatic Value	4.36	0.607324	4.1	0.470162	1.513914	2.021	38	0.05
Dispensable Value	4.04	0.857413	3.88	0.669328	0.65783	2.021	38	0.05
Prioritizing for Receptive Purpose	3.85	0.875094	3.84	0.691604	0.040095	2.021	38	0.05

Table 3 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions regarding the five factors related to the use of DMs in EFL teaching. Both male and female teachers have almost the same mean scores for their perception about the pedagogical value, native speaker norm, pragmatic value and dispensable value of DMs, and prioritizing them for receptive purpose. It also shows that all the respondents give more value to the pedagogical, pragmatic and dispensable value of the DMs in EFL teaching. The results indicate that gender has almost nothing to do with teachers' perceptions about the importance of the use of DMs in EFL teaching. The t-test also reinforces these results and shows the calculated t-value lower than the critical t-value = 2.021 for almost all variables except for the pedagogical value of DMs. The higher calculated t-value, i.e. 3.113499, shows that H_0 is rejected. Therefore, H_1 , i.e. the respondents have differences in their perception of the pedagogical value of DMs in EFL teaching. However, the mean scores of the responses of both male and female respondents show that both have a very positive attitude towards the pedagogical value of the DMs in EFL teaching. The difference is only in the magnitude of the positivity they show.

Table 4 also shows statistically no significant difference between native and non-native teachers' perceptions regarding the five factors related to the use of DMs in EFL teaching. Both native and non-native teachers have almost the same mean scores for their perception about the pedagogical value, native speaker norm, pragmatic value and dispensable value of DMs, and prioritizing them for receptive purpose. The results indicate that native-non-native divide has nothing to do with teachers' perceptions about the importance of the use of DMs in EFL teaching. The t-test also reinforces these

results and shows the calculated t-value lower than the critical t-value = 2.021 for all variables.

Table 4. A Comparison of Native and Non-Native EFL Teachers' Responses on the Survey

Variables	Native teachers		Non-Native Teachers		Cal t-value	t-critical	df	confidence interval
	Means	St. Deviations	Means	St. Deviations				
Pedagogical Value	4.16	0.777581	4.32	0.596128	-0.7303	2.021	38	0.05
Native Speaker Norm	3.58	0.7971	3.54	0.851253	0.153393	2.021	38	0.05
Pragmatic Value	4.16	0.556682	4.08	0.574548	0.447214	2.021	38	0.05
Dispensable Value	3.54	0.899356	3.9	0.746924	-1.37713	2.021	38	0.05
Prioritizing for Receptive Purpose	3.52	0.801052	3.7	0.852242	-0.68825	2.021	38	0.05

The comparison of the mean scores of the responses of both native and non-native respondents show that both have a positive attitude towards the all the factors related to the use of DMs in EFL teaching. However, it also indicates that all the teacher respondents have a very high positive attitude towards the pedagogical and pragmatic value of DMs in EFL teaching. The table also shows that the native teachers, in comparison to the non-native teachers, have more positive attitude towards native speaker norm and the pragmatic value of DMs, whereas non-native teachers, though show positive attitude towards all the factors, yet, in comparison to the native teachers, show higher mean scores for pedagogical value, dispensable value and prioritizing for receptive purpose of the use of DMs in EFL classes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Saudi EFL teachers teaching writing to adult EFL learners, in general, perceive DMs to be an essential component of effective free-flowing writing. Moreover, there is no significant gender-based/ native-nonnative-divide difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the importance of the use of DMs in EFL setup in Saudi Arabia. All male, female, native and non-native teachers teaching EFL in Saudi Arab are well aware of the importance of DMs in writing and want their students to be able to write cohesively using DMs. However, they also realize that by teaching DMs to the Saudi students, they should not expect them to be able to equal the native speakers in their writing. Moreover, they consider DMs essential for effective writing; however, they do not want to prioritize teaching of DMs for the purpose of receptive skills. It is also concluded that gender and native-non-native divide in the context of teaching EFL in Saudi Arab have almost nothing to do with teachers' perceptions about the importance of the use of DMs in EFL teaching. All the teacher respondents seem to know the pedagogical and pragmatic value of DMs in EFL teaching and try to practice the same in their classes. However, the native teachers, in comparison to the non-native

teachers, have more positive attitude towards native speaker norm and the pragmatic value of DMs. Having said all that, the EFL teachers feel bound by many factors like the strict syllabus following policy, challenging breakdown and fixed exam pattern for writing to focus on only a few areas of writing. Thus, they teach only those DMs to their students which are part of the activities in the textbooks and in which the students would be tested. Sadly the result of all this is that the students produce essays or paragraphs of poor quality, which lack cohesion and coherence. Considering the above discussion and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

Firstly, the EFL teachers need to teach a variety of DMs explicitly and implicitly to their learners so that they have an access to a number of DMs to produce cohesive and coherent writings. The teachers should not get rigid about the accuracy in writing and may allow some freedom to the learners to experiment with DMs in their writing.

In order to facilitate the learners in understanding DMs and using them to make writing more coherent, the teachers may consider the contrastive cross-linguistic analysis of both learner and native speaker corpora, and DMs that are represented more or less frequently as compared to a native speaker corpus can be highlighted (Fung and Carter, 2007). Moreover, while discussing the use of DMs in particular context as is given in the prescribed textbook, the teacher may present some other examples from real life situations to illustrate how the same DMs can be used in their free writing.

The teacher training in the use and teaching of DMs in naturally occurring speaking and writing is essential to equip them with skills and to facilitate them in their teaching of DMs to their EFL students. The teachers should also be encouraged to carry out research in the area of linguistic contrastive analysis for teaching DMs to Saudi EFL students effectively.

Secondly, the university administration must change their policy for students' writing examination, and instead of binding the students to memorize a few structures and limited DMs to use in short paragraphs, they should devise such a policy which helps assess the students as discourse creators in their writing. This will, in turn, encourage both teachers and the students to focus more on the discourse markers to practice and produce effective coherent and cohesive writings.

Finally, the syllabus breakdown handed over to the teachers should be flexible to such an extent that it may provide the teachers with some freedom to give time to the presentation and practice of the common DMs needed for effective free writing.

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English Language Research Team

Discourse Markers Questionnaire

Dear Instructors,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate in depth the perceptions of native and non-native English teachers towards the use of Discourse Markers in EFL classroom. Please read the statements in the survey to give your responses. Data collected from this questionnaire will be used for the purpose of research only. Following is the list of DMs for your reflection:

DMs for Adding a Point

and, also, as well as, moreover, too, furthermore, additionally, in addition to, at the same time, again, too, equally important, in addition, likewise, above all, most of all, least of all, and, either...or, neither...nor, nevertheless, to continue,

DMs for Cause and Effect

because, so, therefore, thus, consequently, hence, as a result,

DMs for Sequencing

First, in the first place, at first, once, once upon time, to begin with, at the beginning, starting with, initially, from this point, earlier, second, secondly, in the second place, next, the next time, then, after that, following that, subsequently, on the next occasion, so far, later on, third, in the third place, consequently, last, last of all, at last, at the end, in the end, final finally, to finish, to conclude, in conclusion,

DMs for Repetition

All in all, altogether, in brief, in short, in fact, in particular, that is, in simpler terms, to put it differently, in other words, again, once more, again and again, over and over, to repeat, as stated, that is to say, to retell, to review, to rephrase, to paraphrase, to reconsider, to clarify, to explain, to outline, to summarize

DMs for Generalization

on the whole, in general, generally, as a rule, in most cases, broadly speaking, to some extent, mostly, above all, chiefly, essentially, largely, primarily, usually,

DMs for Illustration

For example, as an example, for instance, in this case, in the case of, to illustrate, as illustrated by, as revealed by, to show, to demonstrate, in particular, such as, namely, for one thing, indeed, in other words, to put it in another way, thus, to explain, suppose that, specifically, to be exact, i.e.,

DMs for Conceding

it is true that, of course, after all, no doubt, naturally, I grant you, it may well be, although this may be true, although, to admit, to confess, to agree, in accord with, I allow, I accept,

DMs for Summarization

To conclude, in conclusion, to close, last of all, finally, to end, to complete, to bring to an end, thus, hence, therefore, as a consequence of, as a result, in short, to sum up, to summarize, to recapitulate, consequently,

DMs for Comparison

As, as well as, like, in much the same way, resembling, parallel to, same as, identically, of little difference, equally, matching, also, exactly, similarly, similar to, in comparison, in relation to

DMs for Attitude Expression

Frankly, honestly, I think, I suppose, after all, no doubt, I'm afraid, actually, as a matter of fact, to tell the truth, unfortunately, I believe, in my opinion, To be truthful,

DMs for Contrast, Disagreement and Qualifying

Though, although, and yet, but, despite, despite this fact, in spite of, even so, for all that, however, in contrast, by contrast, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, in one way, in another way, although this may be true, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, yet, to differ from, a striking difference, another distinction, otherwise, after all, instead, unlike, opposite, to oppose, in opposition to, versus, against, while it is true,

DMs for Emphasis

Above all, after all, indeed, as a matter of fact, the main issue is, chiefly, especially, actually, the most significant, the chief characteristic, the major point, the most necessary, extremely, to emphasize, to highlight, to stress, by all means, undoubtedly, more importantly, most important of all, most of all, moreover, furthermore, significantly, without a doubt, certainly, to be sure, surely, absolutely, obviously, more and more, of major interest, to culminate, in truth, the climax of, to add to that, without question, unquestionably, as a result, probability

DMs for Expressing Earlier Time

before, earlier, previously, formerly, recently, not long ago, at present, presently, currently, now, by now, until, today, immediately, simultaneously, at the same time, during, all the while, in the future yesterday,, tomorrow, henceforth, after, after a short time, after a while, soon, later, later on, following, the following week,

DMs for Expressing Later Time

Suddenly, all at once, instantly, immediately, quickly, directly, soon, as soon as, just then, when, sometimes, some of the time, in the meantime, occasionally, rarely, seldom, infrequently, temporarily, periodically, gradually, eventually, little by little, slowly, while, meanwhile, always, all of the time, without exception, at the same time, repeatedly, often, frequently, generally, usually, as long as, never, not at all

We will highly appreciate your sincere cooperation.

Name /----- Gender /----- Nationality /-----

Qualification /-----Experience of English language teaching /-----

Category	Survey Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pedagogic value of DMs	i. DMs are not merely small words in conversation and it is worth the time to teach them in writing courses.					
	ii. DMs are important features in writing and these have teaching value.					
	iii. It is necessary to develop linguistic awareness of DMs in writing classrooms.					
	iv. Students should be helped to exploit DMs to improve their writing skills.					
	v. DMs carry specific meaning and there is much teaching value.					
Identification with the native speaker norm	i. It is realistic to require students to use DMs like native writers of English.					
	ii. It is justifiable to teach students to use DMs like native writers of English.					
	iii. Students should be taught how native writers use DMs.					
	iv. The British way of using DMs should serve as a model for					

	students.						
	v. The American way of using DMs should serve as a model for students.						
Pragmatic value of DMs	i. DMs should be presented as an important part of writing skill in the materials the teachers use.						
	ii. Knowledge of DMs helps process information in writing.						
	iii. DMs can display the writers' attitude.						
	iv. The sequence of the writers' mental thoughts can be displayed clearly through DMs.						
	v. Students can benefit in public examinations, especially in writing essays, if they know what DMs are.						
Indispensable value of DMs	i. Without DMs, the students' essays are not coherent and interpretable.						
	ii. Examiners cannot understand the students' essays using other linguistic clues without referring to the DMs.						
	iii. DMs help to orientate the writers to the overall idea, structure and sequence in writing.						
	iv. It is not an effective writing strategy for writers to focus closely on the key words in writing without referring to DMs.						
	v. DMs help to signal relationships between ideas in writing.						
Prioritizing teaching of DMs for receptive purposes	i. Teachers should always highlight DMs in writing lessons.						
	ii. While teaching English to adult learners, we should prioritize teaching DMs mainly to develop writing skills.						
	iii. DMs as an aspect of writing skill should be delayed until awareness of DMs as reading or listening skills have been grasped.						
	iv. DMs as a linguistic device to develop writing skills should be integrated with other language skills in teaching English to adult learners.						
	v. It is not too ambitious to expect students to learn to use DMs effectively in writing in Preparatory Year Program.						