Use of Discourse Markers in ESL Undergraduates' Expository Essay Writing among Undergraduates in a Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT: *Discourse markers (DMs) enhance unhindered flow of ideas and their relatedness in sentences and paragraphs. However, lack or misuse of DMs could lead to misinterpretation of ideas and information. This study therefore assessed the use of discourse makers as used in expository essay among undergraduates in a Nigerian university. The study employed survey research design using quantitative method. The paper examined i) the DMs used in expository essay by the participants ii) the variants of DMs frequently used in expository essay among the participants and iii) the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essay. The sample of the study consisted of 182 undergraduates selected through purposive sampling technique. Two instruments were used for the study: a close-ended questionnaire and an expository essay test were used in gathering data. The data were analysed quantitatively using frequency of occurrence of DMs and percentages. Findings revealed that in total, 41 DMs were used. Elaborative Markers ("and" and "also") followed by Temporal Markers ("firstly", "secondly" and "thirdly") are the most frequently used DMs. Among other constraints to the use of DMs in expository essay were lack of knowledge of broad pool of the varieties of DMs/inadequate linguistic repertoire of DMs; confusion about the appropriate DMs to convey idea; and lack of knowledge on the importance of DMs in essays. The study concludes that students experienced certain constraints in the use of DMs that placed limitations on their use of DMs. This study recommended that the problems could be tackled by creating awareness among the students on the contents and application of DMs and that various texts and contexts where linguistic items like DMs are used should be discussed in the classroom to see how they are used.*

KEYWORDS: discourse markers, expository essay, undergraduates, cohesion, coherence

INTRODUCTION

There are different types of essay writing that are needed to be mastered by university students. One of the essays is expository essay. Expository essay is the type of essay that explains, enlightens, educates or gives information about a topic to the readers. In expository writings, students are required to provide facts, explore ideas, evaluate evidence, define conditions, elaborate on the main idea, and state their arguments on the idea in a coherent manner that could be suitable for publication in a local/national/international magazines or delivered as a speech (Ezeokoli & Igubor, 2016; Rika, et al., 2020; Olagbaju, 2021). Most of the writings such as taking notes, scientific reports, academic essays, magazine articles and other write ups are expository in nature. The organizational structure of an expository essay often follows a logical arrangement of ideas according to different structures. Ezeokoli and Igubor (2016) give the following as types of expository text structures: description, sequence, causation (cause/effect), problem/solution, and compare/contrast. While Soles (2010) cited in Rika, et al. (2020) highlights six types of organization patterns in developing expository essay; process analysis, cause and effect essay, comparison/ contrast essay, analysis/ interpretation essay, problem/solution essay, and details and examples essay.

The process of writing requires a lot from writers, at times, it could be a challenging task for both native and non-native speakers. Proficient writers put some factors into consideration to make write ups clear, fluent, and pass across intended ideas appropriately. According to Daif-Allah and Albesher (2013) in language teaching, writing skill remains the most difficult and complex aspect to tackle because of the four main stages students have to pass through which are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. To write effectively, attention should be given to the process of writing which has different components and activities of writing that would help learners master the skills of writing. Unlike the finished product which focuses on learners imitating, manipulating, copying and transforming forms of writing supplied by teachers as models.

Raimes (1983, p. 6) cited in Dülger (2007, pp.259-260) gives a guiding analysis of the factors that contribute significant role in the production of a written text as follows: 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); ix) the writer's process: getting ideas, getting started, writing drafts, revising etc.

A proficient writer goes beyond writing at the sentence level to larger chunks of paragraphs and then to larger units of discourse, to achieve this, the use of coherence and cohesion devices called

discourse markers is needed. DMs help to change words and sentences into a mental map, which shows how each part intertwine (Manan & Raslee, 2017). Lack of DMs might not have serious grammatical effects and could carry little weight semantically, yet it would make the interaction awkward, unnatural, impolite, unfriendly or dictatorial (Manan & Raslee, 2017). DMs belong to the pragmatic class, they are lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases (Martínez, 2004). These DMs are expressions of language which do not specify idea or suppositions in the process of human language communication, but can play a role in discourse organization (Xiuhao, 2022).

Discourse Markers show relationship of cause and effect, addition, contrast, transition, sequence, enumeration and numerous other relationships during discussions, writing and answering of essay questions but the misuse of these DMs could distort the sequential order and connection of ideas in passages, thesis, and write-ups (Adeyemi, 2018). DMs are helpful to give specific information to figure out the correlative ideas of a piece of writing. Without DMs in a text, clues provided in the text would lack clarity occasioned by the absence of coherence. This could be problematic for the readers as they will have to take their time to study and interpret the notions of the writer as well as consider the implied cohesive clues. Warna, et al. (2019) posit that cohesion is one of the important features of writing that permeates all forms of writing yet, students who are either first language or second language users of English language have difficulties in using cohesive devices.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) cited in Warna, et al. (2019) explain that cohesion is the "relation of meaning that exists within text" and "it occurs when the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another." Halliday and Hasan (1976) categorise cohesive devices into five: reference, substitution, ellipse, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Reference is made up of personal reference or pronominal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference. The act of replacing an item with another is called substitution, while ellipse means giving insufficient attention to an item. What differentiates conjunctive cohesion from other connective elements such as reference, substitution, or ellipsis is that it indicates how the writer wants the reader to link what has been previously discussed in the text with what is about to be discussed rather than requesting the reader to search for missing facts in the text (Kamal & Noori, 2015). There are four different forms of conjunctive cohesion which enable holding between sentences: i. additive (likewise, for instance, and, besides, furthermore, similarly, in addition, or, also, by contrast) ii. adversative (nevertheless, at any rate, however, instead, yet, but, on the other hand, as a matter of fact) iii. causal (because, for this reason, it follows, so, under the circumstances, for, consequently) iv. temporal/continuatives (anyway, of course, after all, now, surely, well). Lexical

cohesion is divided into two: repetition and collocation. Repetition includes repeated items, synonyms or close synonyms, higher or general words while collocation is connecting the lexical items together in a range of texts. Conjunctive cohesion can occur in and between sentences. Conjunctive cohesion deals with the use of formal markers, called discourse markers (DMs), to connect sentences, clauses and paragraphs to each other.

Cohesion in English has to do with various elements which generate logical, well organized and united texts and outline contexts in wider forms of spoken or written language. These gluing elements are called cohesive devices. Cohesion is important because it gives smoothness to sentences that stick together to a number of sentences so that it indicates how relationship based on the meaning of words constitute lexical and syntactic features. The use of cohesion helps learners compose meaningful sentences through linguistic features that connect all sentences. Appropriate use of cohesive devices help learners become fluent writers and excellent readers.
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Although the appropriate use of DMs foster the quality of a text but do not alter the meaning of the sentence and can be regarded as empty meaning words or phrases (Kamal & Noori, 2015); but the absence or misuse could change the intended message of the writer or speaker (Alkhawaja et al, 2022). In the breakdown of language in use, the use of DMs would not limit the representation of linguist forms irrespective of the subject or use they are meant for in human matters. Ma (2012) states that DMs are "linguistic, paralinguistic, or nonverbal elements that signal relations between units of talk by virtue of their syntactic and semantic properties and by virtue of their sequential relations as initial or terminal brackets demarcating discourse units."

DMs are essential building blocks in a text needed in the construction of coherence and cohesion in creating a meaningful discourse in language communication (spoken and written). To comprehend discourse and its workings, it is essential to note different elements which impart the generation of discourse such as discourse markers or text markers. DMs are essential elements in encoding and decoding of information by speakers and hearers. DMs "guide the hearer's interpretation process through the specification of certain properties of the context and the contextual effects; more specifically, these elements constrain the relevant context for the interpretation of an utterance, reinforcing some inferences or eliminating other possible ones and thus help process the information" (Martínez, 2009). Manan and Raslee (2017) posit that DMs play important roles in effective communication, structured and technical writing, easy interpretation of speech and text, comprehension of concepts and improvement of the four the language skills. The benefits of DMs are not limited to the pedagogy of English language but also other content

areas and disciplines. Jalilifar (2008, p.118) notes that there exists a significant relationship between grammar and discourse markers. The relationship is likened to be the:

> relationship between train and rail. Coal is morphology, skeleton of train is syntax, chains that join the compartments together are semantics, waiters are vocabulary items, passengers are readers, the person who is leading the train is writer, and the rail is DMs. If all parts of train work well, then the train is able to move on the rail, and if the person who is leading the train knows the interpretation of signs along the rails, then he is able to keep the train on the right track.

There are different classifications of DMs according to different scholars but Fraser (2004, 1999) classifies DMs into:

a) Contrastive Markers (CDMs) such as in contrast (with/to this/that), in spite of (doing) this/that, conversely, despite (doing) this/that, but, alternatively, however, (al)though, whereas, in comparison (with/to this/that), on the contrary, contrary to this/that, instead (of (doing) this/that), rather (than (doing) this/that), on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, even though, while, unlike, despite, but also.

b) Elaborative Markers (EDMs) such as above all, in particular, for example, also, equally, by the same token, and, 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, I mean, in particular, namely, parenthetically, that is (to say), analogously, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, likewise, similarly, be that as it may, or, otherwise, that said, well, and even, in this way, as well, as well as, according to me, besides that, I mean, in my opinion, I think, it means, in addition, that is why.

c) Inferential markers/Implicative Markers (IDMs) such as a conclusion, as a consequence, so, all things considered, therefore, after all, hence, accordingly, then, of course, as a logical conclusion, as a result, because of this/that, consequently, for this/that reason, it can be concluded that, thus, in this/that case, under these/those conditions, all things considered, so that, so, in short, in summary, furthermore, we can conclude, and then, as a conclusion.

d) Temporal Markers (TDM) such as meantime, before, as soon as, finally, first, eventually, meanwhile, after, first of all, second, third, the first, the second, the third, the last one, in the end.

e) Causative Marker such as after all, because, for this/that reason, due to, since, next.

f) Topic Relating Markers such as back to my original point, before I forget, by the way, incidentally, just to update you, on a different note, speaking of X, that reminds me, to change to topic, to return to my point, while I think of you, with regards to.

According to the function performed by DMs, Dülger (2007) enumerates a list of DMs as follows:

i) Focusing and linking: with reference to, speaking/talking of/about, regarding, as regards, with regard to, with respect to, in regard to, as to, as for

ii) Contrasts:

a) Direct contrast: however, nevertheless, mind you, yet/still/in spite of, conversely, in contrast/in contrast to

b) Concession and counter argument: it is true, of course, if, may, but, however, even so, nevertheless, nonetheless, all the same, still

c) Contradicting: on the contrary

d) Balancing contrasting points: while, on the other hand, whereas

e) Dismissal of previous discourse: anyway, at least, at any rate

iii) Similarity: similarly, in the same way, likewise, by the same token

iv) Change of subject: by the way, incidentally, right, now, O.K

v) Structuring: first(ly), first of all, second(ly), third(ly), lastly, finally, to begin with, to start with, in the first/second/third place, for one thing, for another thing

vi) Adding: moreover, furthermore, in addition, as well as that, on top of that, another thing, what is more, besides, in any case, also

vii) Generalizing: on the whole, in general, in all/most/many/some cases, broadly speaking, by and large, to a great extent, apart from, except for.

viii) Exemplification: for instance, for example, in particular, such as, e.g.

ix) Logical consequence: thus, hence, accordingly, therefore, as a result, consequently, so, then, that's why

x) Making things clear/softening and correcting: I mean, actually, that is to say, in other words, I think, I feel, I reckon, I guess, in my view/opinion, apparently, so to speak, more or less, sort of, kind of, well, really, at least, I am afraid, I suppose

xi) Gaining time: let me see, let's see, well, you know, I don't know, I mean, kind of, sort of

xii) Showing one's attitude to what one is saying: honestly, frankly, no doubt

xiii) Persuading: after all, look, no doubt

ix) Referring to the other person's expectations: actually, in fact, as a matter of fact, to tell the truth, well

x) Summing up: in conclusion, to sum up, briefly, in brief, in short, in summary

Observation and experience have revealed that ESL learners' communicative competence and write ups; such as essay, academic reports, letters, compositions, comprehension passages etc. seem to be bereft of two indispensable aspects; coherence and cohesion. A write up is said to be coherent if it makes a whole lot of meaning and its elements relate and connect to one another through the use of cohesive devices such as referents, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesions. When writing goes beyond the sentence level, using cohesive devices only is not sufficient to make the text coherent but the introduction of discourse markers are needed to add to the coherence of a text just as cohesive devices act. The problems students encounter with the use of DMs have negatively impacted their spoken and written conversations. Some learners circumvent DMs while some apply them inappropriately. These problems could be attributed to some deficiencies in teaching writing in schools such as: i) teaching writing at the level of sentence and short guided paragraph without recourse to discourse level; ii) vocabulary and writing mechanics are mainly targeted, developed and emphasized in English language classrooms iii) DMs are sidelined which has led to illogical organization of ideas in students' writings, iv) inadequate use of discourse markers, v) unawareness of the application DMs in students writing (Daif-Allah & Albesher, 2013). Manan and Raslee (2017) note that the focus of ESL teachers has been on the teaching of grammatical forms, and overlooking other important aspects of written discourse such as coherence and cohesion.

Past studies have shown that L2 learners face problems with DMs such as i) limited number of known acquainted phrases/DMs ii) lack of knowledge of broad pool of DMs iii) underuse of DMs iv) confusion over the appropriate DMs to convey ideas (Karaata, et al., 2012; Ariyanti, 2021; Alkhawaja, et al, 2022); v) neglect of knowledge of DMs in the foreign language teaching curriculum vi) fossilization (Romero-Trillo, 2002); vii) non-equivalent synonymous DMs viii) surface logic ix) misinterpreted relation x) mistranslation problem (Patriana, et al., 2016); xi) lack of knowledge that DMs influence the essays' coherence xii) non-familiarity with the concepts of coherence and cohesion (Surjowati, 2018); xiii) inability to maintain logical sequences in written text (Adeyemi, 2018); xiv) influence of mother tongue.

Teaching of Discourse Markers

Sun (2013) suggests how to teach and learn DMs through the lexical approach, or the chunk learning. Lexical approach is process and routine based which could culminate into creative use through practice and correct guidance. At start, students could: i. pattern practice drills which will provide a way of gaining fluency with certain basic fixed routines; ii. introduce controlled variation in these basic phrases of simple substitution drills; iii. learn to segment and construct new patterns of their own by modeling the analysis done in classroom. Constant students' drill and use of the DMs learnt in their daily speech and writing could help them know the simple and commonly-used DMs. Teachers' input is as well needed. Teachers identify DMs, give explanation of the DMs students have used in their speech and writing, and also correct their unsuitable and incorrect uses of DMs. At this stage, students should read extensively, listen and pay attention to examples they could use as guides and thereafter learn to try them out. Through persistent rehearsal, students are expected to approach an advanced level to learn and know some knowledge about discourse and discourse analysis such as the important cohesion and coherence view in discourse analysis, discourse structure, and discourse style (Sun, 2013). The knowledge of these would enhance students' reading and writing skills and aid their knowledge and use of DMs effectively and effortlessly without intervention

Studies on Discourse Makers

Karaata et al. (2012) investigated how the use of DMs could enhance academic writing through the use of explicit instruction or incidental acquisition. The findings reveal that the combination of these strategies has positive effect on DM acquisition. Alarcon and Morales (2011) understudied the use of grammatical cohesion in students' argumentative essay. The findings show that the most frequently used cohesive device is reference, followed by conjunctions and substitution. Also, there was no significant relationship between the cohesive devices and the quality of writing. Martínez (2009) understudied effects of discourse markers on the reading comprehension of Spanish students of EFL. The study showed that DMs foster reading comprehension in foreign language reading and there was a significant correlation between presence of discourse markers in the text and reading comprehension because the texts with discourse markers were understood better than the texts without discourse markers. Surjowati (2018) examined the use of discourse markers in EFL students' essay writing, the study shows that among the DMs used, the participants are most familiar with elaborative markers and these take 50% from the total DMs found in the essays. One of the reasons given in the study that determine the cohesion and coherence of an essay is that DMs are not taught intensively in writing class.

Ariyanti (2021) examined EFL students' use of transition signals in essay writing. Result from the study reveals that the students lack understanding of when, where, and what type of DMs can be used for certain context. Daif-Allah and Albesher (2013) investigated how preparatory year program students in Qassim University in Saudi used discourse markers in paragraph writings. It was revealed in the findings of the study that the students overused the additive connectors followed by the causative, the contrastive and the illustrative ones. Also, the students' use of writing DMs is too limited due to their poor knowledge of connectors and transition words and the ones that were often used are "and", "in addition", and "for example". The findings also showed that the participants of the study wrote too many simple sentences in their paragraphs in an irregular manner and that their use of DMs did not develop as they advanced in education.

A good number of studies have been carried out on native speakers and non-native speakers' use of DMs. However, in this study, the literature reviewed on DMs were research conducted by foreign authors, little or no research was conducted on the use of DMs in expository essays by students of higher institutions in Nigeria especially in Ekiti State. To fill in this gap, this current study aims at finding the DMs used in the expository essay, variants of DMs which are most frequently used in expository essay and the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essays. To achieve these, the following research questions were raised:

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised:
1. What are the DMs used in the expository essay?

2. What variants of each type of DMs are most frequently used in the expository essay?

3. What are the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essays?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed survey research design using quantitative method. The population of the study comprised all the undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting Part 1 students comprising 182 students of two Departments in the University who offered a course titled: "Communication in English" (GST111). The data were collected from two instruments: an expository essay test with a special attention to the DMs used and a questionnaire. The closed-ended questionnaire was made up of two parts: Part 1 gave the demographic information of the respondents; Part two comprised question items on the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essays and was measured using a four-point-Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (D) and

Strongly Disagree (SD). The DMs used in expository essay test were classification of DMs propounded by Fraser (2004, 1999) namely: elaborative discourse markers, contrastive discourse markers, temporal discourse markers, causative discourse markers, inferential markers, and topic relating markers. The numbers of different categories of DMs used by participants were collated. The data were analysed quantitatively using frequency of occurrence of DMs and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of data for the DMs used in the expository essay, the variants of each type of DMs that are frequently used in expository essay and the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essay are stated as follows:

Table 1: Summary of categories of DMs used by the participants

S/N	Discourse Marker Categories	Discourse markers used by the learners
1	Contrastive Markers	although, but, however, though, nevertheless, despite, in spite, but also, on the other hand, instead of
2	Elaborative Markers	for example, and, also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, or, so, namely, as well as
3	Inferential/Implicative Markers	therefore, hence, then, so, as a conclusion, thus
4	Temporal Markers	finally, firstly, secondly, thirdly, lastly, meanwhile, after, in conclusion, next
5	Causative Marker	because, since, due to
6	Topic Relating Markers	on the topic

The DMs employed by the participants were categorized into six forms as proposed by Fraser (1999) Fraser (2004):

1   Contrastive Markers
2   Elaborative Markers
3   Inferential/Implicative Markers
4   Temporal Markers
5   Causative Marker
6   Topic Relating Markers

It is revealed in Table 1 that the participants made use of 41 DMs which consist of 11 contrastive markers, 11 elaborative markers, 6 inferential/implicative markers, 9 temporal markers, 3 causative markers and 1 topic relating marker was used. Fig. 1 shows DMs according to categories. It was discovered that the participants use Elaborative Markers (31%), followed by Inferential Markers/Implicative Markers (6%), Contrastive Markers (16%), Temporal Markers (39%),

Causative Marker (7%), and Topic Relating Markers (1%). These findings are supported by Manan and Raslee (2017) who found out that the participants used mostly Elaborative Markers (73%), followed by Temporal Markers (13%), Contrastive Markers (8%) and Implicative Markers (6%). However, Alkhawaja et al., (2022) submit that participants in their study did not use any discourse marker to manage their oral presentation. The absence or misuse of these markers in oral presentation would not only affect the flow of the ideas, coherence of speech and organization of facts but might also alter the intended message of the presenter.
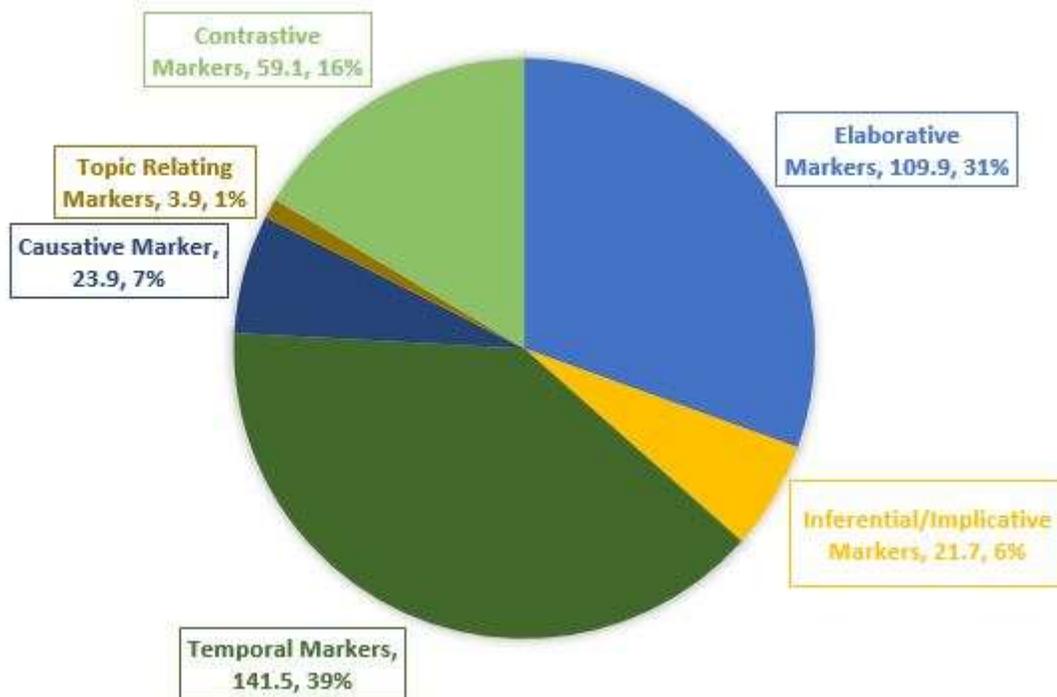

Fig. 1: DMs used according to categories

Table 2. Variants of mostly used DMs in expository essay

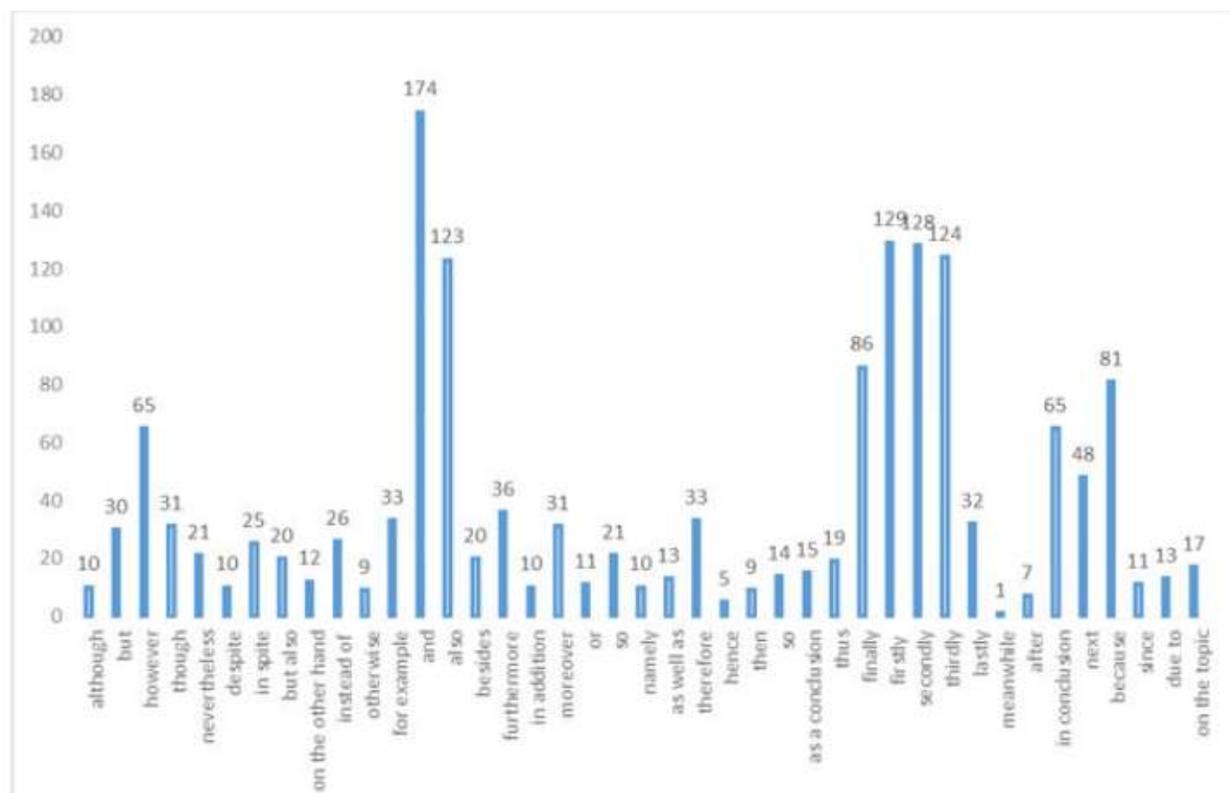| S/N	Types of DMs	Variants of DMs	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Contrastive Markers	although	10	18.2%
		but	30	54.6%
		however	65	118.3%
		though	31	56.4%
		nevertheless	21	38.2%
		despite	10	18.2%
		in spite	25	45.5%
		but also	20	36.4%
		on the other hand	12	21.8%
		instead of	26	47.3%
		otherwise	9	16.4%
2	Elaborative Markers	for example	33	60.1%
		and	174	316.7%
		also	123	223.9%
		besides	20	36.4%
		furthermore	36	65.5%
		in addition	10	18.2%
		moreover	31	56.4%
		or	11	20.0%
		so	21	38.2%
		namely	10	18.2%
		as well as	13	23.7%
3	Inferential/Implicative Markers	therefore	33	60.1%
		hence	5	9.1%
		then	9	16.4%
		so	14	25.5%
		as a conclusion	15	27.3%
		thus	19	34.6%
4	Temporal Markers	finally	86	38.2%
		firstly	129	234.8%
		secondly	128	232.9%
		thirdly	124	225.7%
		lastly	32	58.2%
		meanwhile	1	1.8%
		after	7	3.6%
		in conclusion	65	118.3%
		next	48	87.4%
5	Causative Markers	because	81	147.4%
		since	11	20.0%
		due to	13	23.7%
6	Topic Relating Markers	on the topic	17	3.6%

Fig. 2: A bar chart showing the frequency count of variants of each type of DMs used

Fig. 2 shows the summary of all DMs used by the participants in this study. Of all the various DMs used, 11 Contrastive DMs were used. They are: although, but, however, though, nevertheless, despite, in spite, but also, on the other hand, instead of, otherwise, but the most frequently employed is however with 118.3% while the least employed is otherwise with 16.4%. For Elaborative Markers, 11 Elaborative DMs were used. They are: for example, and, also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, or, so, namely, as well as but the most frequently used are (and, 316%) and (also 223.9%) while the least used are (in addition 18.2%) and (namely 18.2%). For Inferential/Implicative Markers, DMs such as therefore, hence, then, so, as a conclusion, thus were employed but not frequent. For Temporal Markers, DMs such as finally, firstly, secondly, thirdly, lastly, meanwhile, after, in conclusion, next were employed but the most frequently used are firstly (234.8%), secondly (232.9%) and thirdly (225.7%) while the least used is meanwhile (1.8%). For Causative Markers, DMs used are because, since, due to but these DMs are not frequently used. For Topic Relating Markers, the only employed DM is 'on the topic' but was not frequently used by the participants.

Summarising Table 2, it is discovered that Elaborative Markers ("and" and "also") followed by Temporal Markers (firstly, secondly and thirdly) are the most frequently used. The findings are in consonance with Martínez (2004) who examined discourse markers in the expository writing of Spanish university students. The study shows that students' compositions had several DMs with certain types of DMs frequently used than others. The largest percentage of DMs employed was elaborative markers, followed by contrastive markers, then causative markers, thereafter, inferential markers, lastly topic relating markers. The study further shows that the limited use of inferential and topic relating markers could be termed to be a weak area which requires more attention in teaching English as a foreign language. In another study, Ariyanti (2021) found out that 42% of the students are less active users of transition signals and unfortunately 8% of the students have none of transition signals used on their essays. In addition, from all types of transition signals used in students' essay writing, the transition signals which appears to be dominant is compare and contrast transition signals. Also, 27% of the students made use of time order transition signals i.e. the first, the second, the third, the last, secondly, next, and lastly to make the ideas of their essay flow.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essay

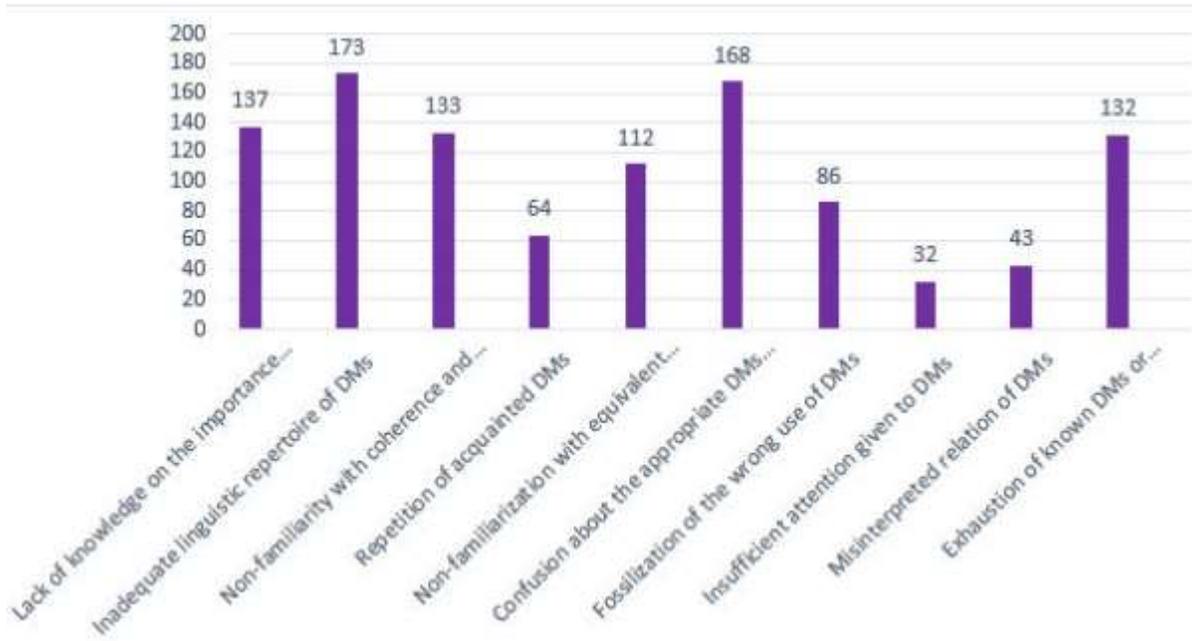| S/N	Constraints	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of knowledge on the importance of DMs in essays	137	249.3%
2	Lack of knowledge of broad pool of the varieties of DMs/ Inadequate linguistic repertoire of DMs	173	314.9%
3	Non-familiarity with coherence and cohesion in essays	133	242.1%
4	Repetition of acquainted DMs	64	116.5%
5	Non-familiarization with equivalent DMs in essays	112	203.8%
6	Confusion about the appropriate DMs to convey ideas	168	305.8%
7	Fossilization of the wrong use of DMs	86	156.5%
8	Insufficient attention given to teaching/learning of DMs in the ESL teaching curriculum	32	58.2%
9	Misinterpreted relation of DMs	43	77.4%
10	Exhaustion of known DMs or acquainted phrases	132	240.2%

Fig. 3 A bar chart showing the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essay

The results in Table 3 and Figure 3 reveal the constraints to students' use of DMs in expository essay. From the Table, it is shown that lack of knowledge of broad pool of the varieties of DMs/inadequate linguistic repertoire of DMs 173(314.9%); confusion about the appropriate DMs to convey ideas 168(305.8%); lack of knowledge on the importance of DMs in essays 137(249.3%); Non-familiarity with coherence and cohesion in essays 133(242.1%); and exhaustion of known DMs or acquainted phrases 132(240.2%); and non-familiarization with equivalent/synonymous DMs in essays 112(203.8%) are the major barriers to effective use of DMs in expository essay. The findings in the study of Sharndama and Yakubu (2013) support this study that students do not have sufficient knowledge on the functions of DMs such as points or information, contrasting ideas, making emphasis, exemplifying among others. In addition, it was discovered that participants were repeating some DMs because they possess little knowledge of varieties that could be alternated. Also, Romero-Trillo cited in Ma (2002) posits that a general neglect of knowledge of DMs in the foreign language teaching curriculum seems to be a pedagogic reality which has affected students' awareness and use of DMs. These findings are also buttressed by Manan and Raslee (2017) who showed that DMs in ESL learners' paragraph writing did not contribute to better coherence and cohesion in many instances because they had either misused or overused them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that DMs are important in different forms of writing. This study concludes that the inadequacies found in the use of DMs in this study indicates that there is pressing need to create awareness for learners to know that the contents and application of DMs contribute, in no small measure, to the connection and the quality of the spoken/written discourse. To increase and enhance ESL learners' knowledge of DMs in spoken and written conversations, it is important that English language teachers provide clear and detailed information about the merits, role and use of DMs; and emphasize the implication of lack, misuse, overuse, fossilization of DMs may affect the meaning, interpretation and quality of their write ups. It is essential that learners are made to know that learners should not give room for overdependence on DMs in their writing, but give attention to how they could order their thoughts and ideas, sequentially, logically, clearly, convincingly, and purposively. However, it is noteworthy that students and teachers alike should desist from over emphasis of DMs in their speeches/write ups because it could lead to distraction, confusion and poor comprehension of the subject matter. Though, it is not necessary that a significant period of classroom time is given to teaching/learning of DMs, but it is mandatory that awareness is created. This study will increase awareness, knowledge and usage of DMs by students. This will influence their writing, conversation, discussion, and transaction at the local or global level. Although the findings in this study cannot be generalized, however it has shown the importance of DMs instruction in EFL classes and other related instructional situations. It has also shown the most and least used DMs in essay writing and constraints to the use of DMs.

More importantly, the findings have revealed gaps in the use of DMs. The limitations of this study, nevertheless, show other areas of possible future research which could focus on students' use of DMs at the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic levels, the use of DMs in semi-authentic situations, and students' proficiency level and gender to have insights into different uses of DMs. Based on the findings and conclusion in this study, some recommendations were made:

i. for proper understanding of linguistic items like DMs, all hands must be on deck for the creation of awareness of DMs by textbook writers, professional writers and publishers.
ii. various texts and contexts where linguistic items like DMs are used should be discussed in the classroom to see how they are used.
iii. students should be availed the opportunities to learn and make use of linguistic items like DMs in different texts and contexts.
iv. students should be exposed to the broad pool of the varieties of DMs
v. sufficient attention should be given to teaching/learning of DMs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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