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**Investigating the Use of Discourse Markers in Essays among EFL
Learners with High and Low Reading Comprehension Abilities
A Case of Second Year LMD Students of English at Abdelhafid
Boussouf University Centre (Mila)**

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Fatima's Dedication

It is my genuine gratefulness and warmest regard that i dedicate this work to the soul of my father "Rabah". Although he is no longer of this world, his memories continue to regulate my life.

To my mother "Khadidja" whose support and encouragement contributed the most to the fulfillment of this modest work . Thank you for all your support, no matter what.

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To all who are dear to me.

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and your motivational words,*

*To my dearest brothers "Mouad" and "Ammar" thanks for standing by me, to my
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Abstract

Numerous previous studies have vindicated by evidence the sturdy relation between reading and writing. However, relatively few were conducted to examine the relation between the use of Discourse Markers (hereafter DMs) in written discourse from a reading comprehension abilities standpoint. The present dissertation attempts to investigate the use of DMs in essays among EFL learners with high and low reading comprehension abilities. Principally, it aims to shed light on the correlation between the appropriate use of DMs in written compositions and reading comprehension abilities. To this end, both of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are utilised. To answer the first question, 25 second year EFL learners at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre (Mila) sat for two reading and writing tests. Additionally, a qualitative analysis with reference to Fraser's taxonomy of DMs together with a teachers' interview are conducted to answer the second question of this research. The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between reading and writing ($r = .52$). Moreover, the results reveal that there is a strong positive correlation between the appropriate use of DMs in essays and high reading comprehension abilities ($r = .77$), whereas there is a weak positive correlation between the appropriate use of DMs and low reading comprehension abilities ($r = .06$). In addition, the results show that most EFL learners' modest use of DMs is principally inappropriate. The two former correlations provide further evidence for the strong deductive relation between the appropriate use of DMs and high reading comprehension abilities. The latter correlation suggests further research to figure out what other variables would justify the weak positive relation between the appropriate use of DMs and low reading comprehension abilities.

List of Abbreviations

CDs: Cohesive Devices

CDMs: Contrastive Discourse Markers

DMs: Discourse Markers

EDMs: Elaborative Discourse Markers

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

IDMs: Inferential Discourse Markers

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

S1: Segment 1

S2: Segment2

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Vicious Circle of the Weak Reader	38
Figure 2. The Vicious Circle of the Good Reader.....	38
Figure 3. The Reading Hypothesis.....	47
Figure 4. The Distribution of Students' Scores in Reading Comprehension and DMs Use within Essays.....	50
Figure 5. Line of the Best Fit between Students' Scores in Reading Comprehension and DMs Use within Essays.....	51

List of Tables

Table 1. The Most Frequent Order for Complex Themes.....	28
Table 2. Tests of Normality of Scores.....	51
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Scores in Reading Comprehension and DMs Use.....	54
Table 4. Correlation between DMs Use in Essays and Reading Comprehension Abilities.....	55
Table 5. Correlation between the Appropriate Use of DMs and Reading Comprehension Abilities (High and Low).....	56
Table 6. Frequency and Variety of Students' Use of DMs in their Essays	57

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgement.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
List of Abbreviations.....	V
List of Figures.....	VI
List of Tables.....	VII
Table of Contents.....	VIII

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the Problem.....	1
2. Aims of the Study.....	2
3. Research Questions	2
4. Hypotheses.....	3
5. Research Methodology.....	3
6. Structure of the dissertation.....	4

CHAPTER ONE

Discourse Markers in Essays

Introduction	5
1. The Writing Skill	5
1.1. Definition of Writing	5
1.2. Features of Good Essays	6
1.2.1. Purpose	7
1.2.2. Audience	7
1.2.3. Clarity	7
1.2.4. Coherence	8
2. Connectives as Textual Metadiscourse Features	8
3. Cohesion and Coherence	10
3.1. Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion	10
3.1.1. Grammatical Cohesion	10
3.1.1.1. Reference	11
3.1.1.2. Substitution	12
3.1.1.3. Ellipsis	12
3.1.1.4. Conjunction	13

3.1.2. Lexical Cohesion	14
3.1.2.1. Reiteration	15
3.1.2.2. Collocation	15
3.2. Global and Local Coherence	15
3.3. The Role of Connectives in Maintaining Coherence	17
4. Problems Encountered by EFL learners when writing Essays	18
5. Discourse Markers	21
5.1. Definition and Evolution of Discourse Markers	21
5.2. Functional Classes of Discourse Markers	24
5.3. Discourse Markers and Thematic Organization	26
6. EFL learners' use of Discourse Markers in Writing	29
6.1. Factors that Affect Learners' Choices of DMs	29
6.2. Reasons behind EFL Learners' Misuse of DMs	31
Conclusion	33

CHAPTER TWO

Written Discourse Interpretation within Reading

Introduction.....	34
1. The Reading Skill.....	34
1.1. Definition of Reading.....	35
1.2. Types of Reading.....	35
1.2.1. Extensive Reading.....	36
1.2.2. Intensive Reading.....	36
1.3. Good and Poor Readers.....	37
1.4. Components of Reading.....	38
1.4.1. Phonemic Awareness.....	38
1.4.2. Decoding.....	38
1.4.3. Reading Fluency.....	39
1.4.4. Vocabulary.....	39
1.4.5. Reading Comprehension.....	39
2. Levels of reading comprehension.....	40
2.1. Literal Comprehension.....	40
2.2. Inferential Comprehension.....	41
2.3. Evaluative Comprehension.....	41
2. Reading as a Cognitive Process to Decode Written Texts.....	42
3. Techniques to Promote Active Reading.....	44
3.1. The Top-Down Process.....	44
3.2. The Bottom-Up Process.....	45
4. Reading to Promote the Use of Discourse Markers.....	45
Conclusion.....	47

CHAPTER THREE

Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction.....	48
1. Sample.....	48
2. Research Design.....	49
3. Data Collection Procedures and Analysis.....	52
3.1. Reading Comprehension Tests.....	52
3.2. Writing Skill Tests.....	53
4. Results.....	53
5. Discussion of Results.....	58
6. Research Implications.....	62
6.1. Implications for Teachers.....	63
6.2. Implications for Students.....	63
6.3. Implications for Further Research.....	64
7. Limitations of the study.....	64
Conclusion.....	65
General Conclusion.....	66
Bibliography.....	68

Appendices.....	75
Appendix 01: Reading Test 1.....	75
Appendix 02: Reading Test 2.....	82
Appendix 03: Writing Test 1.....	89
Appendix 04: Writing Test 2.....	90
Appendix 05: Writing Rubrics.....	91
Appendix 06: Rubrics' Table of Students' Appropriate Use of DMs.....	93
Appendix 07: Teachers' Interview.....	94
Appendix 08: Teachers' Interview Analysis.....	97
ملخص.....	103

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the Research Problem

It is believed that writing contributes enormously to the development as well as clarification of cognitive thinking. This skill is widely regarded as one of the most complex skills to acquire. In EFL settings, writing has been a perennial problem to a large number of learners. Despite the various difficulties that these learners face, one special area that has drawn many researchers' attention is essay coherence achievement. The latter is generally associated with the good command of cohesion devices. Within this respect, the study of discourse markers (henceforth, DMs), which are considered as one main type of cohesive devices, has received a considerable attention in the field of composition studies.

Research has consistently shown that EFL learners lack general understanding of what DMs are, and what functional values they have (Ahmad, 2010; Shareef, 2015; Darweesh & Kadim, 2016). Despite the breadth of the research conducted on DMs, it seems that too little attention has been paid to examine the use of DMs within written discourse in relation to reading comprehension abilities. It is generally accepted that reading and writing are the two cornerstones of academic success. Many researchers like McCarthy (1991) and Brown & Yule (1983) argue that reading and writing are two intertwined skills. Thus, the proper use of DMs could be justifiably tracked in reading comprehension abilities.

Central to the entire discipline of text comprehension is the issue of reading comprehension abilities. Factually, EFL learners are of different reading comprehension abilities. Therefore, the apparent inability of a large portion of them to produce coherent discourse can be explained from this perspective, instead the long

traditional focus on practice as manifest in text analyses and explicit instruction. Basically, reading comprehension is defined as “the process of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences” (Woolley, 2011, p. 15). This cognitive process plays no doubt a fundamental function in text understanding. In fact, it is closely linked to the ways text recipients decode written messages to form mental representations.

2. Aim of the Study

Basing on the intricate relationship between reading and writing at both the linguistic and cognitive levels, the present study seeks to find out about the relationship between Algerian EFL students’ use of DMs in the course of writing coherent essays and their reading comprehension abilities. Due to the difficulty of conducting a research design that allows for the examination of the impact of reading extensively or intensively on the efficient use of DMs within EFL students’ essays, our research attempts to explore the extent to which these two variables are associated.

3. Research Questions

This study is an attempt to address the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between students’ appropriate use of discourse markers within their essays and their reading comprehension abilities?
2. To what extent do students in our sample use discourse markers appropriately in their essays?

4. Hypotheses

In order to answer the research questions, we hypothesize that:

1. There is a relationship between students' use of discourse markers in their essays and their reading comprehension abilities.
2. It is assumed that students use discourse markers appropriately while writing essays.

5. Research Methodology

This study is set to investigate the correlation between reading comprehension abilities and the use of discourse markers in essays. A correlation research, as the name suggests, is not principally meant to establish any causal relationship between the two investigated variables. Rather, it targets the nature of the relationship and the extent to which one variable correlates with the other. Furthermore, it aims at exploring the extent to which students employ diversified discourse markers to achieve coherence while writing essays.

In order to gather the necessary data for the study, the study has relied on both quantitative and qualitative research tools. To report on students' reading comprehension abilities and discourse markers use, two tests were designed mainly by adapting some samples of the IELTS which is one of the most trusted English testing systems in the world. These tests were administered for a group of second year EFL students within a relatively short time interval. On the other hand, a qualitative analysis of students' essays with reference to Fraser's taxonomy of DMs was conducted to verify the diversity and correctness of DMs use within essays. Additionally, an interview was conducted with a group of written expression teachers at the department of foreign languages (Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre) in

order to corroborate the findings obtained from the qualitative analysis of students' essays. The collected qualitative data was informative during the initial stage of the research in the sense that it highlighted the most inappropriately used discourse markers in essays among EFL learners.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of three main chapters. The first two chapters are devoted to lay out the theoretical foundations of the research, whereas the third one is concerned with data collection methods and analysis.

The first chapter which is entitled "Discourse Markers in Essays" draws upon the importance of the writing skill, and the necessity of coherence maintenance by means of discourse markers. In addition, it sheds light on EFL learners' reasons behind the misuse of some frequently used discourse markers in essays.

The second chapter entitled "Written Discourse Interpretation within Reading" deals with the role of reading in understanding written discourse. It provides a general definition, types and fundamental components of reading, levels of reading comprehension; in addition, it suggests some reading strategies to encourage active reading.

The final chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of findings of reading and writing tests, qualitative analysis of students' essays with reference to Fraser's taxonomy of DMs and teachers' interview, through which we can test the validity of the hypotheses. By the end of the chapter, some implications and recommendations are offered for teachers, students, and for future research in this area.

Chapter One

Discourse Markers in Essays

Introduction

This chapter explores the use of discourse markers in written texts. It sheds light on the writing skill as it provides definition, features of good essays, the importance of coherence and cohesion in essays and some of the most common problems encountered by EFL learners that impede good essay writing. Then, it highlights the role of discourse markers in essay building as it provides definition and evolution, functional classes, the role of metadiscourse and thematic structure in sentence building and some reasons behind the use and the misuse of these logical connectors by EFL learners. The chapter ends up with establishing the role of discourse markers in coherent essay composition at the level students' essays.

1. The Writing Skill

Basically, the writing skill is a central skill within formal language acquisition. This skill has largely grabbed the attention of many researchers who provided different definitions accordingly.

1.1. Definition of Writing

Writing demands physical and mental activities in order to provide clear paragraphs to the reader. From this perspective, Nunan (2003) defines writing as

both a physical and mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and

organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader (Nunan, 2003; as cited in Afrin, 2016, p. 105).

Additionally, Harmer (2004, p. 4) perceives the process of writing as “...the stages a writer goes through in order to produce something in its final written form”. Besides, Ahmed (2010, p. 212) explains that “EFL writing is a multidimensional process composed of cognitive activity affected by a number of linguistic and contextual factors; EFL linguistic proficiency, instructional, psychological, socio-cultural, and socio-political issues”. Alternatively, writing is perceived as a way of contacting between the writer and the reader. In this line, Dwivedi & Chakravarthy (2015, p. 28) see writing as “a form of communication where the writer has normally someone other than himself or herself to whom s/he intends to communicate”.

1.2. Features of Good Essays

Writing is a necessary skill in the area of language learning. It enables learners to express their thoughts in a formal, academic way. Many EFL learners fail to cope with the requirements of written tasks eventhough they share some background knowledge about the topic under discussion. One major cause of this would be the unfamiliarity with some features of good essays. In fact, grammatical accuracy and lexical density are fundamental to essay composition. However, there are some other features of good essays like purpose, audience, clarity and coherence that if EFL learners bear in mind while writing, they can achieve remarkable progress in their essays.

1.2.1. Purpose

The purpose of writing rotates around the writer's reasons behind the generated ideas. The writer generally aims at informing, persuading or entertaining the reader. Identifying essay purpose is what keeps writers alert to the main idea discussed in the text. Harmer (2004) acknowledges that identifying writing purpose is of paramount importance as "this will influence not only the type of text they wish to produce, but also the language they use, and the information they choose to include"(p. 4-5).

1.2.2. Audience

During the process of writing, good writers usually keep the target readers in mind. Generally, the corresponding audience is the group of people you want to educate or persuade. Having a specific writing topic is important, but identifying your audience is of equal importance as well. Indeed, this has a direct effect on good essay building. When the audience is known to the writer, this lays an emphasis "not only on the shape of the writing (how it is laid out, how the paragraphs are structured, etc.), but also the choice of language- whether for example it is formal or informal in tone" (Harmer, 2004, p. 5).

1.2.3. Clarity

The clarity feature entails providing an easy-to understand content. Writers should provide a content that facilitates the grasp of the intended meanings through a number of techniques like writing in the active voice, avoiding the excessive use of subordinate clauses, using parallel structures (use of words, phrases to express the same idea), eliminating unclear noun references, and eliminating wordiness and

repetition (Slawson, Whitton, & Wiemelt, 2010, p. 299-301). These techniques facilitate the readers' task of digesting the main ideas discussed in the essay by eliminating any sort of ambiguous ideas or vague language.

1.2.4. Coherence

A piece of writing is considered coherent if the reader absorbs the ideas seamlessly all along the passage. "For a text to have coherence it needs to have some kind of internal logic which the reader can follow with or without the use of prominent cohesive devices" (Harmer, 2004, p.24). Writers use a number of textual features to ease the reader's task in attaining the essay's theme. Among these features, writers rely on logical order, repetition of key words and use of transitional words and phrases. From a reader perspective, coherence is viewed as "the outcome of a dialogue between the text and its listener or reader" (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 7). No wonder then that good writers pay attention to the significance of maintaining coherence in essays, as they want to bridge the gap of comprehension between the essay and its consumers.

2. Connectives as Textual Metadiscourse Features

Metadiscourse is a fundamental concept that is firmly linked to the study of discourse. It is defined as "the range of devices writers use to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.156). Factually, the overwhelming effect of connectives (as a key metadiscourse feature) in maintaining text coherence is a central aspect to the comprehension of the propositional content of any given stretch of language.

Metadiscourse is basically the sum of two major types: textual metadiscourse (also known as organizational, text-maintenance), and interpersonal metadiscourse (also known as expressive, attitudinal, or interactional metadiscourse). This definition highlights the role of metadiscourse in establishing a solid relationship between writers and the target audience. To highlight the functional aspect of metadiscourse, Hyland & Tse (2004, p. 159) point out three key principles that assist the identification of metadiscourse:

-Metadiscourse is distinct from the propositional aspect of discourse;

-The term metadiscourse refers to those aspects of the text that embody writer-reader interactions;

-Metadiscourse distinguishes relations which are external from those which are internal.

These key principles justify the importance of connectives, among other textual metadiscourse features, in maintaining coherence. Connectives (primarily DMs) are non-propositional cues used to establish logical relations between text segments. Such links are internal to any discourse as they establish logical connections between text segments not connections outside the text itself. Furthermore, DMs pave the ground for the writer to generate expectations about a reader's comprehension of the intended message by the insertion of a particular linking word with regard to the reader's background knowledge. For example, in the following sentence: *In contrast to western culture, Asian societies put an emphasis on an interdependent view of self and collectivism*, the writer is aware of the differences between the two cultures; moreover, s/he expects the reader to generate a concession relation between the two clauses signaled by placing the DM "in contrast to" at the beginning of the clause.

Overall, discourse markers are key features of metadiscourse that increase comprehension potential for readers who benefit from the background knowledge to grasp the intended meanings. Hyland & Tse (2004) summarize the vital importance of metadiscourse in academic writing as they acknowledge that “metadiscourse is recognized as an important means of facilitating communication, supporting a writer’s position and building a relationship with an audience.” (p. 159).

3. Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and coherence are two fundamental concepts in the study of text and discourse; both of which texts seem to be meaningful, comprehensible and unified with respect to the context of situation.

3.1 Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion

Basically, cohesion is defined as “the grammatical and lexical elements on the surface of a text which can form connections between parts of the text” (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 7). Linguistically, the choice of lexis in written discourse has a direct effect on text quality. Then, it would be reasonable to assume that cohesive ties contribute to the unity and originality of the communicative aspect of linguistic messages (Tanskanen, 2006, p. 8). Writers opt for a wide range of cohesive devices to secure the logical flow of ideas that is revealed through the linguistic representation. Then, cohesion, be it grammatical or lexical, is a central feature of essay writing.

3.1.1. Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion is “[the] grammatical connections between individual clauses and utterances” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 35). Grammatical cohesion falls into four

categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. In what follows is a definition of each type followed by examples.

3.1.1.1. Reference

Halliday and Hassan (1976) describe reference as “the relation between an element of the text and something else by reference to which it is interpreted in the given instance” (p. 308). To put it simply, reference is a personal, demonstrative or comparative expression that is used to refer to something other than the word for their interpretation. For example, *this is a fine hall you have here. I’m proud to be lecturing in it*. The pronoun “it” refers back to “the fine hall”. Thus, readers are expected to activate their background knowledge to understand the deliberate message accurately.

Reference is then of two key types namely: exophora and endophora. First, exophora is reference made outside the text; it has a close relation with the situational context. Second, endophora is reference made inside the text (textual) (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 32). Endophora is further divided into: anaphora which is by definition referring backward in the text, and cataphora which is referring forward in the text (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 192).

Types of co-reference relation

a. *exophora*: Look at that. (*that* =[the sun])

b. *endophora* :

(i) anaphoric - Look at the sun. It's going down quickly.

(*It* refers back to *the sun*.)

(ii) cataphoric - It's going down quickly, the sun.

(*It* refers forwards to *the sun*.) (Brown and Yule, 1983, p. 193)

3.1.1.2. Substitution

Substitution is “the replacement of one item by another” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 88). For example, *this is a fine hall you have here. I’ve never lectured in a finer one*. In this example, *one* substitutes for *fine hall*. Substitutes can be: nominal (one, ones, some), verbal (do) or clausal (so, not).

3.1.1.3. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is “the omission of elements normally required by the grammar which the speaker/writer assumes are obvious from the context and therefore need not be raised” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 43). For example, *this is a fine hall you have here. I have never lectured in a finer*.

Many researchers agreed that substitution and ellipsis can be grouped together under the same category, since it is safe to refer to ellipsis as “substitution by zero” or the replacement of one item by nothing. Ellipsis can be: nominal, verbal or clausal.

1. Nominal ellipsis often involves omission of a noun headword:

Eg1. Nelly liked the green tiles; myself I preferred the blue (McCarthy, 1991, p. 43).

2. Verbal ellipsis: ellipsis within the verbal group

Eg2. What have you been doing?-Swimming (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, p. 167).

3. Clausal ellipsis: individual clause elements may be omitted; especially common are subject-pronoun omissions ('doesn't matter', 'hope so', 'sorry, can't help you', etc.), or whole stretches of clausal components may also be omitted:

Eg3. He said he would take early retirement as soon as he could and he has
(McCarthy, 1991, p. 44).

3.1.1.4. Conjunction

Conjunctions are "[those] words and phrases[which] are used to indicate a specific connection between different parts of a text" (Salkie, 1995, p. 75). In other words, a conjunction is a cohesive device that links text segments together. These links are used to establish logical connections that justify the relation between the forgoing segment and the ongoing one. Thus, in order to understand the linguistic point, the reader is not supposed to go backward or forward. Instead, reliance on these links suggests a textual sequence and indicates connections between what is to follow and what has gone before (McCarthy, 1991, p. 64).

Because conjunctions establish a respectful number of logical relations between the different parts of the text, it seems reasonable to acknowledge that they are of different grammatical classes. Halliday and Hassan (1976) assume that conjunctions are of three kinds:

1. Simple adverbs ('coordinating conjunctions'), eg: *but, so, then, next*
Simple adverbs in *-ly*, eg: *accordingly, subsequently, actually*
Compound adverbs in *there-* and *where-*, eg: *therefore, thereupon, whereat*
2. Other compound adverbs, eg: *furthermore, nevertheless, anyway, instead, besides*
Prepositional phrases, eg: *on the contrary, as a result, in addition*
3. Prepositional expressions with *that* or other reference item, the latter being (i) optional, eg: *as a result of that, instead of that, in addition to that*, or (ii) obligatory, eg: *in spite of that, because of that*. (p. 231).

Semantically speaking, connectives are generally grouped under four focal classes, namely: additive, adversative, causal and temporal.

1. Additive conjunctions: they are connectives that “simply introduce new information” (Salkie, 1995, p. 77). These are words like: *and, or also, in addition, furthermore, besides, similarly, likewise, by contrast, for instance*
2. Adversative conjunctions: they are conjunctions that “indicate that what follows is in some sense opposed to, or contrasted with, what has come before” (Salkie, 1995, p. 77). These are words like: *but, yet, however, instead, on the other hand, nevertheless at any rate, as a matter of fact*
3. Causal conjunctions: they are conjunctions that “indicate that two chunks of text are related as cause and effect” (Salkie, 1995, p. 77). These are words like: *so, consequently, it follows, for, because, under the circumstances, for this reason;*
4. Temporal conjunctions: these are conjunctions that indicate that “the relation between the theses of the two successive sentences ...may be simply one of sequence in time: the one is subsequent to the other” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 261). These are expressions like: *then, next, afterwards, after that, then, at the same time, simultaneously, earlier, previously, finally, eventually*

3.1.2. Lexical Cohesion

By definition, lexical cohesion is “the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 274). The choice of lexis is central to text designers. In fact, it is not only a stylistic feature of texts, but it also contributes to the well grasp of the anticipated meaning. Writers opt for a number of

the different types of lexical cohesion including reiteration and collocation in order to maintain ideas' unity and clarity.

3.1.2.1. Reiteration

Reiteration is “a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item, at one end of the scale; the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item, at the other end of the scale; and a number of things in between- the use of a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 278). Thus, reiteration takes a number of syntactical forms including: synonyms, near-synonyms, and superordinates to represent the same elements. For example, *Henry's bought himself a Jaguar. He practically lives in the car.* In this example, the word *car* refers back to *Jaguar*, the latter that it is a more general class to the word *car* (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 278).

3.1.2.2. Collocation

Collocation is “[a form of]cohesion that is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 284). To illustrate, *Why does this little boy wriggle all the time? Girls don't wriggle.* In this example, the words *boys* and *girls* are mutually exclusive categories that one clarifies the other even though they are not synonyms.

3.2. Global and Local Coherence

Obviously, a well-structured text depends not only on cohesive relationships among its parts, but what is equally important is coherence to be achieved. Van Dijk perceives coherence as “semantic property of discourses, based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to interpretation for other sentences” (1977, p.

93). Coherence is perceived as what links the reader and the text. In this vein, Thornbury (2005, p. 36) believes that “Coherence results from the interaction between the reader and the text”. Similarly, Tanskanen points out that “coherence resides not in the text, but is rather the outcome of dialogue between the text and its listener or reader” (2006, p. 7). Not so far, Martin argues that coherence “is the process whereby a reading position is naturalized by texts for listeners/readers” (2001, p. 35). In addition to that, Storrer emphasizes that “Authors should design a text in such a way the addressee may detect the relationships linking individual text constituents and thus may build a coherent mental model of the text’s content” (2002, p. 1). To put it simply, coherence is maintained when the reader comes across the logical relatedness of sentences and the achieved harmony in the flow of the ideas in the corresponding text.

More specifically, many scholars distinguish between two levels of coherence: local coherence and global coherence. The former refers according to van Dijk to “relations between sentences of a textual sequence” while the latter is defined as “whole sets of sentences, e.g. for the discourse as a whole” (n. d. p. 52). Storrer (2002) believes that local coherence is among adjacent segments of the text. On the other hand, global coherence “defines the linkage of text constituents, as it is mediated by the global theme addressed in the document, as well as by its rhetorical function in a larger context” (2002, p. 4). Beaugrand (1999, as cited in Abbas, 2009, p. 2-4) points out that “local coherence strategies establish meaning connections between successive sentences in a text or between constituents of sentence.” whereas “global coherence strategies determine the meaning of fragments of a text or of the whole”.

To sum up, the concept of coherence is required to organize a piece of writing. More importantly, it is recommended that EFL learners pay great attention to maintaining the two levels of coherence, local and global, in order to secure the successful transition of the right knowledge of text in the reader's mind.

3.3. The Role of Connectives in Maintaining Coherence

The relation between coherence and cohesion is assumed to be a relation of maintenance. Factually, cohesion is regarded as the writer's property, while coherence is the reader's property since s/he is the part who decodes text constituents to figure out a mental representation of text's content (Storrer, 2002, p. 3). Thus cohesive ties tend to bridge the gap between writers and readers as they clear up miscomprehension of relations between text constituents.

Although connectives are not enough to make a text connected (lexical cohesion is necessary as well), they sharply contribute to text's global coherence by means of maintaining the propositional meaning of the text. Connectives, especially conjuncts, are used to express smooth transitions between adjacent sentences. Any logical operator, be it additive, adversative, causative or temporal, tend to be the writer's choice to combine clauses together or even to link longer stretches of language like paragraphs. On the other hand, coherence is the outcome of a writer's cohesive representation of text constituents. Both of local and global coherence supply to text comprehension. Local coherence entails logical connections of the present information with the preceding context (one to three sentences), while global coherence involves the recall of information that appeared earlier in the text with the current one (O'Brein & Albrecht, 1993, p. 1061). Coherence, whether it is local or global, has a direct relation with cohesion. The latter that Halliday and Hassan termed

“texture” can achieve a surface structure by means of cohesive ties, among which conjunctions make a focal part. Thus, a cohesive text is the writer’s linguistic representation of the propositional meanings s/he intends to deliver to the reader. To illustrate, a narrative text is made explicit to the reader by means of temporal discourse markers. “Topically continuous text, instead of randomly switching between topics, will usually discuss and elaborate a given, global topic as long as possible before carefully introducing the next topic” (Storrer, 2002, p. 8). As such, the use of temporal connectives like: *firstly, secondly, finally, then, previously, eventually...*etc guide the reader to understand the logical relations between text sentences partially and to generate the chronological flow of events all along the text wholly.

Thus, connectives play a major role in the maintenance of local coherence, which in turn contributes substantially to global coherence. Tanskanen (2006) summarizes the role of cohesion (henceforth connectives) in maintaining coherence as he says “There is an interplay between them[coherence and cohesion] in that the presence of cohesive devices in a text facilitates the task of recognizing its coherence” (p. 21).

4. Problems Encountered by EFL Learners when Writing

Globally, writing is a fundamental skill for EFL learners to ensure academic success. However, many students consider it as a challenging, if not a difficult skill. Several studies have been conducted to explore which problems face EFL learners when developing the writing skill.

Among the difficulties learners may face when writing in English are problems associated with capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and spelling. These

problems are addressed in a study conducted by Mohammad and Hazarika (2016). The outcomes of the study reveal that students unconsciously commit mistakes in capitalization when writing. They also prove that learners have serious problems with punctuation, and they lack knowledge of the basic rules of punctuation. Furthermore, the findings of the study point to a poor level in grammar use as students tend to use ungrammatical structures when writing their paragraphs. Besides, students' L1 negatively affects the way learners spell some sounds; this impact appears clearly in the confusion of spelling certain sounds in English like "p" and "b". Beside these problems, the study sheds light on some other students' problems with writing such as the inappropriate selection of prepositions, and the misuse of the perfect tenses and the perfect continuous tenses (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016, p. 112-114).

Another study was conducted by Ibnian (2017) to explore the main difficulties encountered by Jordanian EFL learners when writing essays, in The World Islamic Sciences and Education University. Ibnian's study shows that the main issue that EFL learners face while writing essays is the lack of ideas. In addition, incorrect use of mechanics of writing like spelling, punctuation, quotation, and capitalization is considered as a major problem encountered by the students. The study also reveals some other difficulties such as lack of clear assessment instruments, time restriction, unsuitable methods of teaching writing, vocabulary restriction, topic inappropriateness, lack of materials for consulting, grammar difficulties, and finally lack of teacher's help (Ibnian, 2017, p. 204-205).

Other problems which hinder EFL learners' writing competence appear at the level of coherence and cohesion. In this respect, a study was conducted by Ahmed (2010) with the aim of investigating cohesion and coherence problems of EFL learners in Helwan Faculty of Education in Egypt. Concerning coherence problems,

Ahmed points out that students' problematic issues are mainly related to writing introductions, the thesis statement, the topic sentence, writing concluding sentences and conclusions, in addition to transition and sequence of ideas. On the other hand, students' problems with cohesion clearly appear in the difficulty of the use of cataphoric and anaphoric reference, ellipsis, substitution, genre related cohesive ties and the overuse of certain cohesive devices. Furthermore, Ahmed mentions some reasons behind coherence and cohesion problems. To begin with, at the psychological level students have some challenges such as lack of motivation and self-confidence toward writing as well as writing anxiety. Secondly, at the teaching level, factors such as teaching work time, limited lecture duration, insufficient teachers' professional development, and teachers' negative attitudes toward teaching essay writing courses are behind students' difficulties in writing English. Thirdly, at the socio-political level, Ahmed claims that the lack of freedom of expressing one's opinion affects negatively the essay writing courses in higher level education and makes the students fear to express their ideas. Finally, socio-cultural contexts, for instance, lack of reading authentic texts and its effects on essay writing development, students prior-knowledge, pre-university learning experiences, Arabic interference in English writing, and proficiency level in English result in challenges for the learners to write effectively (Ahmed, 2010, p. 211-217).

In another study reported by Belkhir and Benyelles (2017), findings are approximately similar to Ahmed's ones. In their research, Belkhir and Benyelles identified Algerian second year FFL learners' essay writing difficulties and their sources. The study shows that EFL learners mainly have problems with coherence, lexis, and cohesion. Moreover, the study reveals that the main sources of these EFL learners' problems can be stated as the following: the lack of reading as the major

source, the low writing practice, and the influence of the first language on the writing in the target language (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017, p. 84).

In conclusion, EFL learners face serious problems in writing essays; these problems can be attributed to several sources. Therefore, careful attention ought to be directed to these issues to guarantee a positive progress in learning English.

5. Discourse Markers

In the last four decades, discourse markers (hereafter DMs) have been extensively studied. Several proposals and articles with different points of view have been written on this subject in the field of text linguistics. These linguistic entities have been investigated under different terms; as examples, coherence markers, lexical markers, discourse operators, discourse connectives, clue words...etc. (Taboada, 2006, p. 572). For most researchers, DMs are expressions that link discourse units; however, there is no clear consensus concerning their definition or the way they function (Fraser, 1999, p. 931).

5.1. Evolution and Definition

Halliday and Hassan's *Cohesion in English* (1976) is one of the earliest works in the field. Although they did not explicitly mention DMs as an independent class, they confirmed that what make a piece of writing a *text* are these cohesive ties in which they establish cohesive and coherence relationships in the text. According to Halliday and Hassan six types of cohesion are differentiated: reference, repetition, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Conjunctions are, furthermore, divided into four major classes which are additive, adversative, causal, and temporal.

The second effort to study DMs is done by Schiffrin. As a leading figure, her work is considered as the first well-detailed attempt in studying DMs. She investigated the semantic and grammatical status of these particles. According to Schiffrin (1987; as cited in Schiffrin 2001, p. 54) “discourse markers, for example, *well, but, oh, and, y’know*, are one group of linguistic items which work in cognitive, expressive, social, and textual areas”. She suggests that DMs could be seen as a part of linguistic expressions derived from different word classes like conjunctions (*and, but, or*), interjections (*oh*), adverbs (*now, then*), and lexicalized phrases (*y’know, i mean*) (Schiffrin 2001, p. 57). According to Schiffrin, DMs help in creating coherent relationships among the discourse units; she points that DMs connect two adjacent parts of discourse (which creates local coherence) and/or link wider structures of discourse (which contributes to global coherence). Furthermore, she stresses the extent to which DMs establish distinctive meanings in discourse (Schiffrin, 2001, p. 57-58).

In a similar vein, Redeker (1991) provided a revision against Schiffrin’s dimension toward DMs. She called them discourse operators. Redeker criticized Schiffrin’s model in analyzing DMs; she claims that “DM suffers from a lack of clarity and consistency in the definitions and the use of theoretical terms and analytical categories” (Redeker, 1991, p. 1139). She defines discourse operators as “... a word or phrase -for instance, a conjunction, adverbial, comment clause, interjection- that is uttered with primary function of bringing to the listener’s attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context” (Redeker, 1991, p. 1168). According to Redeker’s definition, DMs are derived primarily from verbal or non-verbal words and their main function is to make the listener pays attention to a specific connectedness of the next utterance with the

context of previous discourse. In addition to that, she excludes some expressions and does not consider them as discourse operators; these expressions are: clausal indicators of discourse structure e. g. let me tell you a story, the non-anaphoric use of deictic expressions like now, here, today, anaphoric pronouns and noun phrases and any expressions whose scope does not exhaust the utterance (Redeker, 1991, p. 1169). She further proposes to exclude DMs from the conceptualization of discourse coherence as she acknowledges "...to allow for implicit coherence relations and for the simultaneous realization of semantic and pragmatic coherence links irrespective of their being signalled by a DM" (Redeker, 1991, p. 1168).

Blakemore provided an approach dealing with DMs. She labels them discourse connectives. Blakemore (1992; as cited in Fraser, 1999, p. 936) was interested in studying the way DMs establish constraints on implicatures. She believes that "DMs do not have a representational meaning the way lexical expressions like *boy* or *hypothesis* do, but have only a procedural meaning, which consists of instructions about how to manipulate the conceptual representation of the utterance" (Fraser, 1999, p. 936).

Another remarkable effort in studying DMs is conducted by Fraser. Fraser's perspective toward DMs is different from Schiffrin's; he analyzed DMs from a grammatical-pragmatic approach. He states that DMs are one category of lexical expressions essentially derived from syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases (Fraser, 1999, p. 931). He also adds that "with certain exceptions they (DMs) signal a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1" (Fraser, 1999, p. 931). Discourse markers establish a linkage between a part of the discourse sentence they present- which is S2, and another part of previous discourse sentence which is S1 (Fraser,

1999, p. 938). On the other hand, he points out that there are some certain exceptions that should be taken into account. DMs do not always relate two adjacent sentences. They link the sentence they present with not just the previous one, but with many previous sentences, and, of course, the immediate prior one. A discourse marker does not also connect to the preceding sentence but to the one before it. Furthermore, a DM does not just link the sentence it is part of, but also many next ones. A discourse marker appears in the beginning of the sentence it presents, in the middle, or at the end of sentence (Fraser, 1999, p. 938). Discourse markers have procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning. Fraser (1999, p. 944) claims that

An expression with a conceptual meaning specifies a defining set of semantic features, as is the case with *boy and hypothesis*. On the other hand, an expression with a procedural meaning specifies how the segment it introduces is to be interpreted relative to the prior, subject to the constraints mentioned earlier.

He also states that DMs have their certain core meanings, “the DM *so* signals that the following segment is to be interpreted as a conclusion which follows from the prior discourse” (Fraser, 1999, p. 945).

To conclude, DMs are the main interest of so many scholars; though, they have no total agreement on some aspects of these particles. However, they try to analyze them and clarify their functions among the different units of the discourse.

5.2. Functional Classes of Discourse Markers

The scope of DMs takes the ongoing segment and the foregoing segment as the two extreme boundaries. As such, these logical connectors contribute directly to

the local structure of any written discourse. Basically, the classification of these links was one of the prime interests of many researchers who provided different classifications with respect to the ongoing changes in the field of discourse analysis. To begin with, DMs are generally of three main grammatical classes, namely: conjunctions(*and, but, or, nor, so, yet, although, whereas, unless, while...*), adverbials(*anyway, besides, consequently, furthermore, still, however...*), and propositional phrases(*above all, after all, as a consequence(of that), as a conclusion, as a result(of that), on the contrary, on the other hand, in other words, rather than that, regardless of that...*)(Fraser, 2009, p. 303).

Halliday and Hassan (1976) provided a comprehensive classification of DMs which they grouped under the category of conjunctions. According to them, these links which they termed “cohesive ties” can be grouped under four main classes: Additive: *and, or, furthermore, similarly, in addition*; Adversative: *but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless*; Causal: *so, consequently, for this reason, it follows from this*; and Temporal: *then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last*.

In a similar vein, and given the fact that DMs are of procedural meaning, Fraser (2009) suggested a three-type division in terms of the corresponding functional class of each. First, Contrastive Markers (CDMs), where a CDM signals a direct or indirect contrast between S1 and S2 (*but, alternatively, although, contrariwise, contrary to expectations, conversely, despite (this/that), even so , however, in spite of (this/that), in comparison (with this / that), in contrast (to this/that), instead (of this / that), nevertheless , nonetheless , (this/that point), notwithstanding , on the other hand , on the contrary , rather (than this/that), regardless (of this/that), still , though , whereas , yet ...*). Second, Elaborative Markers(EDMs), where an EDM signals an elaboration in S2 to the information contained in S1 (*and , above all, after*

all, also, alternatively, analogously, besides, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, for example, for instance, further (more) , in addition, in other words, in particular, likewise, more accurately, more importantly, more precisely, more to the point, moreover, on that basis, on top of it all, or, otherwise, rather, similarly ,...). Third, Inferential Markers (IDMs), where an IDM signals that S1 provides a basis for inferring S2 (*so, all things considered, as a conclusion, as a consequence (of this/that), as a result (of this/that), because (of this/that), consequently, for this/ that reason, hence, it follows that, accordingly, in this/that/any case, on this/that condition, on these/those grounds, then, therefore, thus)* (Fraser, 2009, p. 300-301).

In sum, given the blurred nature of what DMs exactly are, the classification of these cohesive ties may lead to multiplicity. Researchers provided a number of functional classes on the basis of what meaning each DM has propositional, procedural, or conceptual.

5.3. Discourse Markers and Thematic Organization

Language is a flexible tool upon which users heavily rely to verbalize their thoughts. Shifting from one language to another, the structures vary accordingly. For example, the English language is a language that permits for the representation of the same propositional meaning in a number of structural patterns (declarative, interrogative, imperative...etc). Factually, when attempting to write essays, most EFL learners unconsciously assimilate structures of L1 and L2; this might sound problematic especially if the two structures are naturally distinct. Yet, it is highly recommended for EFL learners to pay great attention to the overall way that target language users shape their thoughts verbally.

The structural representation of discourse is the writers' chosen way to help the reader decode any intended message; therefore, what a writer chooses to start with is critically important. The thematic organization is an important concept in essay building; it helps learners divide each sentence into two main adjacency pairs that stand together. A Theme is then "the element that serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context"; on the other hand, the Rheme is "the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed" (Halliday, 2014, p. 89). The theme, taking the front position of the clause, is then of different functional categories. It can be: topical, interpersonal and textual. Textual theme can take one of two forms either continuative or conjunction. Textual continuative is "one of a small set of words that signals a move in the discourse: a response, in a dialogue, or a new move to the next point if the same speaker is continuing" (Halliday, 2014, p. 107). Generally, the most common continuatives are: *yes, no, well, oh, now*. On the other hand, a conjunction is a "word or group that either links (paratactic) or binds (hypotactic) the clause in which it occurs structurally to another clause" (Halliday, 2014, p. 107). Some common conjunctions are (paratactic) *and, or, nor, either, neither, but, yet, so, then, for*; (hypotactic) *when, while, before, after, until, because, if, although, unless, since, that, whether, to, by, with, despite, as, even if, in case, supposing (that), assuming (that), given that, provided (that), so that to, as to, in order to, in the event that, in spite of the fact that* (Halliday, 2014, p. 108). So the way information is structured in a given stretch of language is not usually a systematic process. Sometimes, writers opt for some non-propositional words that precede even the subject; yet, these take the front position of the sentence and most of them are discourse markers. The following table,

extracted from McCarthy (1991, p.58), summarizes the different classes a theme can be part of.

Table 1. The Most Frequent Order for Complex Themes (adapted from Halliday 1985; 53-4)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Textual</i>	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Ideational</i>
<i>Example</i>	<i>moreover</i>	<i>frankly</i>	<i>Joe Smith...</i>
	<i>likewise</i>	<i>obviously</i>	<i>burglars....</i>
	<i>for instance</i>	<i>personally</i>	<i>I.....</i>

“A conjunction occurs in first position and has the whole sentence as its domain” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 233). Connectives (henceforth DMs) have a number of syntactic features among which Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik (1985) assumes “clause coordinators are restricted to clause initial position” (p. 921). These are conjuncts like *and*, *or*, and *but*. Thus, as the following examples show, the DM *and* can only make part of the textual theme in any given clause.

John plays the guitar, ***and*** his sister plays the piano.

*John plays the guitar; his sister ***and*** plays the piano. (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 921).

Therefore, discourse markers play a major role in sentence comprehension; in fact, they simply stand for the logical explanation of the coexisting relation between sentence clauses. To illustrate, a sentence that starts with the causative marker “because” will immediately give readers the impression that the theme of the sentence carries the meaning of cause; this would help them conclude the need for a

clause that demonstrates an effect function. However, the same discourse marker when placed in the mid of the sentence, then it takes part of the given information; thus, the emphasis would shift to the first part of the sentence - that is the theme.

To conclude, DMs play a major role in understanding sentences. Thus, the appropriate placement of these markers with regard to thematic organization would alert language producers to the stretch of language they wish to give prominence to. Alternatively, this would increase the quality of their essays which would then look more coherent, accurate and meaningful.

6. EFL Learners' Use of Discourse Markers in Writing

It is generally agreed that DMs play a crucial role in establishing cohesive and coherent relationships among different parts of the text. Moreover, these particles have a great role in increasing EFL learners' reading speed and comprehension (Ang, 2014, p. 46). Notably, many EFL learners ignore this fact and tend to write paragraphs and essays without paying attention to their importance; therefore, they end up producing incoherent essays eventhough they have a good informational package about the topic under discussion. Indeed, several factors influence students' choices of DMs as well as their inappropriate use.

6.1 Factors that Affect Learners' Choices of DMs

During the process of writing, some factors have a major influence on EFL learners' choice of DMs. First, teachers' instruction about DMs is considered as a major factor that affects students' selection of DMs. Feng (2010) and Aidinlou & Mehr (2012) demonstrate in their studies that teachers ignore teaching DMs as important elements while teaching writing. Additionally, the results of their studies

show that sufficient knowledge about DMs makes learners write more cohesive texts. Furthermore, Aidinlou & Mehr (2012) emphasize the necessity of teaching cohesive markers explicitly to the learners in order to increase their awareness about their position within written texts. At the same time, Ghasemi (2013) points out in his study that it is necessary to remind the learners that the proper quantity of cohesive devices beside the way they use them are equally important to make their writing better (Feng, 2010, p. 301; Aidinlou & Mehr, 2012, p. 12-15; Ghasemi, 2013, p. 1620).

Secondly, another influential factor is the effect of L1 on learners' use of DMs. Mohamed & Omer (2000) as well as Ahmed (2010) stress that the cultural differences between Arabic and English languages have direct impact on students' use of cohesive devices. The researchers also believe that Arabic affects the cohesion of the students' writings in English. In addition to that, EFL learners use literal translation and formulaic expressions in their writings (Mohamed & Omer, 2000, p. 45; Ahmed, 2010, p. 218).

Thirdly, the out-of-school activities affect learners' appropriate use of DMs. Vickov states that some activities like: surfing on English websites, learning English outside the classroom, watching English language TV programs, and finally reading literature written in English contribute positively to the appropriate use of DMs (2015, p. 210-214).

Finally, the last factor is the level of students' proficiency. Ali & Mahadin (2016) explain in their study that low proficient learners use more limited and redundant sets of DMs. Moreover, the results reveal that lower level of proficiency may lead to limiting the functions which are treated by DMs, limiting the syntactic

classes from which these markers came, and impacting the diversity of the places that they occupy (Ali & Mahadin, 2016, p. 32).

In short, during the writing process, EFL learners are influenced by several factors that direct their choices of DMs. These factors make their style of writing poor. Eventually, teachers of writing need to consider these factors and help learners to make proper use of DMs in writing.

6.2. Reasons behind EFL Learners' Misuse of DMs

As it was stated earlier, maintaining both cohesion and coherence is equally important while writing. However, a number of problems hinder students' motivation to write cohesive and coherent texts successfully. Interestingly, the misuse of cohesive devices is a vital issue to which many researchers give attention since it directly contributes to essay quality. These researchers highlight several reasons behind the misuse of DMs.

One reason behind the misuse of DMs is that learners employ a limited amount of DMs while writing so as to avoid committing mistakes. Feng (2010) states that many learners use DMs rarely to avoid unexpected mistakes when writing. In other situations, the learners use specific sets of DMs inappropriately and they do not know how to use them. Moreover, Feng (2010) and Ahmed (2010) report similar results in their studies, in which they indicate that many learners overuse certain DMs too frequently and unnecessarily; they often use EDMs (Feng, 2010, p. 302-303; Ahmed, 2010, p. 213).

It seems that the lack of knowledge about the DMs is another reason behind the misuse of DMs. In a study reported by Abdul Rahman (2013), the findings reveal

that students use certain cohesive devices where it is not needed but in other cases they do not use them where they are supposed to. Abdul Rahman also points out that students do not have the same knowledge about all types of DMs; therefore, they use only those they are familiar with because they find them easy to apply. More particularly, according to Shareef's study (2015) and based on Fraser's taxonomy in analyzing the students' essays, the results show that the learners use more elaborative DMs such as "*and*" and "*also*", contrastive DMs such as "*but*", and causative DMs such as "*because*" and "*since*". In the same line, Darweesh & Kadhim (2016) show in their study that the students use the additive conjunctions: "*and in addition* and *moreover*" without their cohesive signification which is adding new or more information. They also cannot differentiate between the semantics of different adversative conjunctions. Furthermore, learners use "*whether*" instead of "*however*" and use "*even*" instead of "*even if*". Moreover, the analysis highlights that the students confuse between the application of the adversative and additive conjunctions, and the application of causal and temporal ones. Finally, learners overuse some contrastive conjunctions like "*nevertheless* and *in contrast*" (Abdul Rahman, 2010, p. 7; Shareef, 2015, p. 233-234; Darweesh & Kadhim, 2016, p. 178).

Last but not least, other reasons behind the misuse of DMs can be summarized as: L1 interference, translation process, and lack of practice. The outcomes of Abdul Rahman (2010), Shareef (2015), and Darweesh & Kadhim (2016) show that EFL learners seem not to be familiar with the stylistic, rhetorical, educational, structural, and cultural conventions of the English language. This problem leads to the negative transfer from their first language into the English language. Another issue is that EFL learners tend to generate and organize their ideas in their first language and then translate them into the English language. Furthermore, researchers argue that the

traditional methods in teaching writing and applying insufficient training to EFL students are causes behind their failure in using DMs (Abdul Rahman, 2010, p.8; Shareef, p. 2015, 234; Darweesh & Kadhim, 2016, p. 178).

To conclude, EFL learners face problems in applying DMs in their essays and many researchers try to identify the different reasons behind this phenomenon. Therefore, varying teaching writing approaches and exposing students to different types of DMs by using comprehensive authentic sources are some solutions to help the students overcome their problems.

Conclusion

In sum, it is worth noting that the notion of discourse markers is closely tied up with coherent essay building. Frequency studies of their importance in written discourse have broadened over the last four decades. Indeed, if mastered, discourse markers, among other cohesive devices, comprise a driving force to boost EFL learners' production of good essays. Notwithstanding that, many students face serious problems with the appropriate use of these particles. Thus, this issue impedes the flow of ideas in the discourse they write.

Chapter Two

Written Discourse Interpretation within Reading

Introduction

Many researchers have had a keen interest in studying the relation between reading and writing. This relation is what contributes to good essay building; consequently, to academic success. Many EFL learners pay little attention to the effect of reading comprehension abilities on the use of discourse markers in essays. Given the compelling nature of reading in enhancing writing abilities, EFL learners should be alert to the discreet use of discourse markers in essays. Thus, the steady exposure to written discourse would raise EFL learners' reading potential to the appropriate use of DMs. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to underscore the role of the reading skill in promoting essay writing abilities at the level of discourse markers. Basically, it tackles the reading skill in relation to the writing skill. Particularly, it presents definition, components and types of reading. In addition, it clarifies some key issues concerning reading comprehension like levels and cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension. Finally, it ends up with some techniques to promote active reading and to motivate the use of DMs in essays.

1. The Reading Skill

Reading is one of the two receptive skills of the linguistic system. As a cognitive process, this skill is a complex yet an active process in which readers are engaged according to the cognitive demands implied by a given task. In the literature, several definitions were provided by different researchers.

1.1. Definition of Reading

Reading is viewed as “a psycholinguistic process because it uses language, in written form, to get the meaning” (Goodman, 1973, p. 4). In the literature, several definitions were associated with the concept of reading in accordance with researchers’ diverse points of view. Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz (1999, p. 38) claim that

reading is not a straightforward process of lifting the words off the page. It is a complex process of a problem solving in which the reader works to make sense of a text not just from the words and sentences on the page but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge evoked by those words and sentences.

Richards & Schmidt (2002) also provide two definitions. The first one is that reading is “perceiving a written text in order to understand its content. This can be done silently (silent reading). The understanding that results is called reading comprehension”. And the second one is: “saying a written text aloud (oral reading); this can be done with or without an understanding of the contents” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 443). Another definition is provided by Mikeladze (2014) who believes that “Reading is transfer of meaning from mind to mind. The reader gets the meaning by reading. In this process the reader, the writer, and the text are involved” (p. 3).

1.2. Types of Reading

Readers vary in the amount of information they digest. Some readers rely only on school reading assignments while others do further readings beyond school

requirements. Thus, two types of reading are distinguished namely: extensive and intensive reading.

1.2.1. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading refers to reading which takes place outside of classroom. It is reading for pleasure as many students like to read books, novels, or magazines...etc. Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, & Pincas (1980) look at extensive reading as an overall reading in which the purpose is to read generally without paying attention to particular details (p. 219). Interestingly, extensive reading is a good way to enlarge learners' vocabulary repertoire. According to Richards & Schmidt (2002, p. 193-194), "extensive reading means reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading". Similarly, Day (2003, p. 1) assumes that EFL learners who read extensively become fluent readers, expand their vocabulary and become good writers. He also points out that extensive reading helps the students to develop oral fluency (listening and speaking). Finally, learners, who are extensive readers, build positive attitudes toward reading and get motivated to learn the foreign language.

1.2.2. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading takes place in the classroom settings under the supervision of the teacher. According to Broughton et al. (1980, p. 211) intensive reading is "a close reading of relatively short texts to derive maximum value from them". Reading intensively involves reading specific texts in order to generate understandings. In this respect, Nuttall (2005, p. 38) assumes that "intensive reading involves approaching the text or a task under the guidance of a teacher who forces the student to focus on

text. The aim is to arrive at an understanding, not only of what the text means, but of how the meaning is produced”. Similarly, Mikeladze (2014, p. 11) asserts that “Intensive reading approach deals with short texts under a teacher’s guidance for detailed understanding”.

1.3. Good and Poor Readers

Taylor, Wade, & Yekovich believe that “Good readers appear to differ from poor readers in the product of their reading, in their understanding of what is read, and the process by which understanding is generated”(1985, p. 567). They also emphasize that struggling readers’ word identification abilities are not efficiently progressed. Furthermore, good readers “make efficient use of short-term memory by effectively bringing to bear the prior knowledge of the world and of language and discourse in both written and spoken form” (1985, p.567). Other characteristics of poor and good readers are at the level of the techniques they use while reading. Within this perspective, Kleiman writes that,

good readers can use written texts in many ways. They can skim for main points or scan for particular information. They can read quickly or slowly, carefully or curiously, silently or aloud. They can read for gist or for detail, to proof read or to memorize. (Kleiman, 1982, p. 4)

In contrast, poor readers might be deficient in some reading aspects; “they might be deficient in one or more of the general cognitive processes, such as perceptual discrimination, short-term memory storage or long-term memory access” (Kleiman, 1982, p. 4). Nuttall (2005) summarizes the characteristics of both of good and poor readers in the following figure.

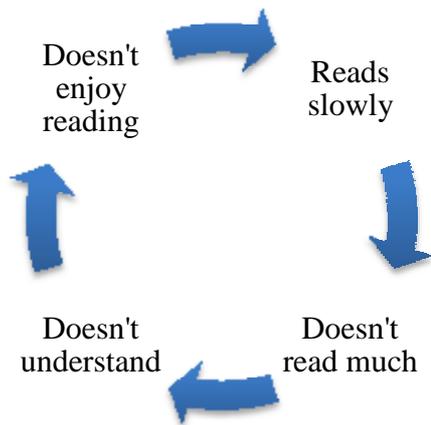


Figure 1. The Vicious Circle of the Weak Reader

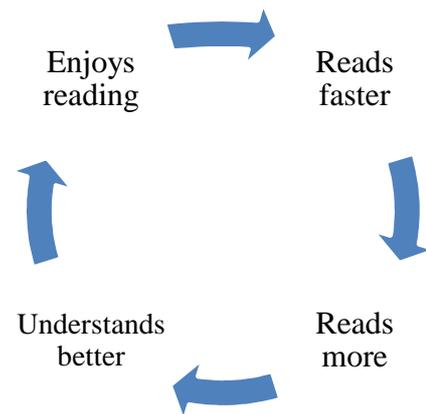


Figure 2. The Vicious Circle of the Good Reader (Nuttall, 2005, p. 127)

1.4. Components of Reading

Reading has five essential components that make up the whole reading process which is the comprehension of written texts. These components are: Phonemic awareness, Decoding, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension

1.4.1. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness refers to the ability of detecting and manipulating individual speech sounds within words. Readers with good phonemic awareness realize and differentiate the sounds of different words they deal with. This ability is important for the development of accurate decoding skills (McShane, 2005, p. 2).

1.4.2. Decoding

Decoding refers to the ability of identifying a word which involves using letter-sound correspondences to recognize words in print. This skill is fundamental to

enable readers read fluently in order to understand what they read adequately (McShane, 2005, p. 40).

1.4.3. Reading Fluency

Fluent reading means rapid, effective, and accurate word identification. Additionally, fluent readers realize how to group words in phrases and know where to pause and what to emphasize. Fluency is essential for reading comprehension. In this sense, fluent readers pay more attention to the meaning of the text rather than wasting much time on decoding information (McShane, 2005, p. 49).

1.4.4. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the knowledge of word meanings. It refers to the words we currently employ and understand. Reading vocabulary is the store of organized and grasped words. Vocabulary is vital to reading comprehension too. Readers cannot interpret a writer's message if they do not understand the meanings of most words in the text (McShane, 2005, p. 59)

1.4.5. Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is all what the reading process is about. Reading comprehension is the process by which a reader constructs meaning by using the message in the text and his/her own prior knowledge. The four previous components serve readers to have high comprehension ability. This ability helps readers to make sense of what they read. (McShane, 2005, p. 71-74).

2. Levels of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is viewed as a core component of the reading skill. Basically, it involves readers in a process of extracting meaning from text (Basaraba, Yovanoff, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2013, p. 351). In the process of reading, readers go through some pre-determined levels of comprehension all along the continuum of complexity. Different cognitive demands are imposed on the reader by the different levels; thus, this requires varying levels of interaction with the text (Basaraba et al, 2013, p. 352). As such, readers first engage in tasks with word-level comprehension, and then they engage in deeper interactions with the text. The three components of reading comprehension namely literal, inferential and evaluative comprise the focal loop around which reading rotates.

2.1. Literal Comprehension

Literal comprehension “requires that a student be able to extract information that is explicitly stated in the passage” (Basaraba et al, 2013, p. 352). This level is very important for comprehension as it aids students become aware of locating words and phrases that appear in the text; thus, it provides the foundation for more advanced comprehension. It mostly depends on the ability to know literal meanings of words and to understand meaning created by the combination of words into prepositions and sentences. Literal comprehension is the sum of two main components: recall, which is “the ability to provide an idea”; and recognition, which is “the ability to recognize whether specific information is provided by the text” (Basaraba et al, 2013, p.353).

Literal meaning is mostly synonymous to the recall of background knowledge of the reader; yet, a deeper understanding of text’s message entails going beyond the surface-level understanding to reach levels that are more complex.

2.2. Inferential Comprehension

Lah and Hashim (2014, p.668) define inferential comprehension as “the ability of students interpreting meaning. Students are able to summarize, interpret, and make a generalization, a conclusion, and a prediction”. In inferential comprehension tasks, readers need essentially to go beyond being acquainted with facts obtained from the text to establishing direct interaction with the text by making inferences about text meanings(Basaraba et al, 2013, p. 354).These inferences reflect students’ ability to summarize, draw conclusions, make predictions and interpretations(Lah & Hashim, 2014, p. 668). Inferences are then made by constructing relationships between objects, events, and details along the passage. According to Basaraba et al (2013) inferences made by readers can be grouped under two main sub-classes namely text-based inferences and knowledge based inferences. On the one hand, Text-based inferences are inferences based on text familiarity, which are required to establish both local and global coherence in the text; on the other hand, knowledge-based inferences are those based on the reader’s knowledge to relate between events and persons described in the text.

The inferential level of reading comprehension is a higher level of comprehension that engages readers in tasks requiring more than a literal understanding of the text; yet, a more complex level requires students to evaluate what is being read.

2.3. Evaluative Comprehension

Basaraba et al (2013) define evaluative comprehension as the reader’s ability to “analyze and critically interpret the text based on their prior knowledge and experiences” (p. 353). This involves the reader to make judgments about a number of

aspects within the text like the literacy quality of the text, the competency of the author, and the righteousness of the characters and actions. It is generally accepted that evaluative comprehension is viewed as an extension to literal and inferential levels of comprehension. First, readers understand the written format (literal comprehension), then make interpretations between elements in the text. Ultimately, they analyze and evaluate provided information by relating it to personal experiences and prior knowledge (Basaraba et al, 2013, p. 356).

To sum up, reading comprehension is a complex process that readers go through as they seek to figure out the author's intended meaning. The three levels of comprehension that vary in complexity, are needed together to ease the reader's cognitive tasks involved in text understanding.

3. Reading as a Cognitive Process for Decoding Written Discourse

The structural representation of written discourse undoubtedly plays a fundamental role in ideas conveyance. Essentially, writers' prime objective is to help readers attain the target meanings. Thus, it is reasonable to question the ways information is cognitively processed. In cognitive psychology, the most significant way to explain these cognitive processes is what is called schemata theory.

A comprehensive definition of the schemata theory is provided by Cook (1989) who elucidates that "these [schemata] are mental representations of typical situations, and they are used in discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situations which the discourse describes" (p. 69). This definition sheds light on the recall of background knowledge to figure out the intended meanings. When the mind receives information, it forms separate, easily accessible units of knowledge, each corresponding to particular situations. These units of information become

activated whenever the reader/hearer meets a similar situation. The process of understanding discourse, involves readers/ hearers to activate a number of schemata simultaneously. This entails building new schemata, discard old ones, and modify existing ones to fit the new situations. As such, recipients' understanding of the subsequent discourse is aided by the portions of knowledge which are stored in the mind and generated from experiences they go through.

In terms of written discourse, the schemata theory involves the recall of mental representations stimulated by key words or phrases in the text. It helps readers predict what is happening next. At the lexico-grammatical scale, interpreting what is coming next after a DM (for example the DM *although*) helps the reader interpret the functional role of the upcoming sentence (which will likely express opposition or concession). McCarthy (1991) groups this background knowledge under two main sub-types. First, knowledge about the world, that is natural phenomena, typical sequences of real-life events, behavior, and conventional aspects. Second, knowledge about texts, which is typical structural representations and organizations (p. 168). Thus, active reading as encouraged by teachers aid EFL learners generate familiarity with the ways that different essay genres are structured.

Comprising knowledge about the schemata theory is quite significant in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension abilities. On the one hand, it helps readers deeply understand how information is cognitively decoded; yet, it encourages extensive reading to foster learners' familiarity with the different structural patterns of texts. On the other hand, it enhances learners' ability to formulate new schemata to cope with the new unexpected situations.

In sum, the schemata theory is a useful way to elucidate on how our minds understand texts. McCarthy (1991) depicts good listeners and readers by their ability to predict what is to come at both word and paragraph levels (p. 169). Hence, EFL learners can profit from the contributions of the schemata theory to advance their reading comprehension skills.

4. Techniques to Promote Active Reading

According to Krashen, “Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammatical competence, and the only way we become good spellers”(Krashen, 2004, p. 37). To attain these objectives, readers can approach reading materials following top-down as well as bottom-up approaches.

4.1. The Top-down Process

The top-down process is thought of as “using the macro-level clues to decode the text” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 168). Top-down strategies are global reading strategies in which the reader uses prior knowledge, common sense, cognitive processes, interests,...etc to construct understanding. Hence, it helps the reader to figure out a clear view of the overall structure of the text which in turn directs interpretations about what the writer will place next (Nuttall, 2005, p. 16). This technique is then the reader’s suitable choice to sort out the overall purpose of the text. It is quite helpful to guide readers establish understandings about what the next sentence is most likely to mean on the basis of their experience and meaning of already processed sentences(Brown & Yule, 1983 ,p. 234).

4.2. The Bottom-up Process

The bottom-up process is defined as “decoding of the text step by-step from small textual elements such as words and phrases” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 168). Bottom-up strategies are local strategies which are limited to sentence and syntax level only. In this kind of information processing, the reader generates meaning by recognizing letters and words, working out sentence structure...etc (Nuttall, 2005, p. 17). Learners may shift to this reading technique when they have unsatisfactory background knowledge on the topic or when the writer’s point of view is different from that of the reader. In such a situation, this technique helps learners to decode grammatical complexity between pairs of sentences. This gives the reader a closer look on text constituents like: verbs, nouns, and discourse makers. The latter, as stated by Nuttall (2005), help the reader “point out the intended value of the sentence in which they occur. If we read the word *thus* we expect to find a result; if *however* occurs, we look for a contrast to follow and so on” (p. 26).

All in all, top-down and bottom-up techniques are two primary reading techniques that have a direct impact on comprehension. In some cases, one technique dominates depending on the reader’s reading purpose, but it is generally accepted that the two techniques foster comprehension when used simultaneously (McCarthy, 1991, p. 168).

5. Reading to Enhance the Use of DMs

The relation between reading and writing occupies a central position in language learning and teaching contexts. On the one hand, this close relation is convenient in terms of the complete grasp of discourse message on the part of the reader. On the one hand, there is no doubt that reading is a one major way to promote

writing. “we acquire writing style, the special language of writing, by reading” (Krashen, 2004, p. 132).

Many researchers argue that reading (especially extensive reading) help learners to foster their writing abilities. Among these researchers is Hyland (2003) who lists three main ways through which reading promotes the writing skill which are the provision of content for writing through source texts, real instances of language use, and strategies for the acquisition of writing. Additionally, since reading fosters vocabulary acquisition, it contributes to familiarize learners with the right use of DMs in essays. These cohesive devices are responsible for bridging the ongoing discourse and the foregoing one in logical ways; hence, they guide the reader’s interpretation throughout the whole passage. Nuttall (2005) assumes that “ the main reason for studying them[DMs] is their usefulness in helping the reader to work out the meaning of difficult text”(p. 94). Assuming their crucial functional value in text comprehension, the appropriate use of these links can be promoted through extensive reading. Grabe (2003) states that “(extensive) reading leads to vocabulary expansion, thus providing the means of expression to be used in writing” (as cited in Llach, 2011, p. 41). On this ground, McCarthy (1991) points out to the key role of reading in vocabulary enhancement. He states that reading helps readers to be familiar with a number of textual structures like cleft sentences, rhetorical questions, front-placing of adverbials and other markers, and any other discourse-level features(p. 169). Consequently, EFL learners who come across different authentic texts become aware of the importance and the appropriate use of DMs in essays.

To conclude reading is central to the enhancement of the writing skill. “Reading is a powerful means of developing reading comprehension ability, writing

style, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling” (Krashen, 2004, p. 37). The following figure summarizes the prevailing role of reading in enhancing writing techniques of EFL learners.



Figure 3. The Reading Hypothesis (Krashen, 2004, p. 17)

Conclusion

In summary, comprehension of written discourse is a complex cognitive task that readers engage in to construct mental representations. In accordance with this fact, readers activate their units of knowledge and personal experiences along the scale of comprehension levels’ complexity to clear out the obscure meanings in a given text. In addition, they rely on top-down and bottom-up processes to attain the intended meanings. Equally, both of extensive and intensive types of reading encourage dynamic reading; this would in turn enrich the linguistic repertoire of EFL learners especially at the level of linking words. Accordingly, this would directly impact learners’ production of good quality essays.

CHAPTER THREE

Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction

The current chapter is devoted to data collection, analysis and interpretation. As mentioned previously, this study holds the assumption that there is a correlation between EFL learners' reading comprehension abilities and their use of DMs in essays. In addition, it is meant to investigate the status of DMs use within the sampled EFL students' essays. Due to nature of this endeavour (being both quantitative and qualitative), a mixed methods paradigm is adopted. On the basis of the results obtained, the hypotheses of the study were tested, and important implications were discussed.

1. The Sample

The present study uses a conveniently chosen sample that included 25 Second Year EFL students at the department of Foreign Languages in Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre (Mila). A small sample is chosen because of the expected difficulty in obtaining results from a larger sample in terms of correlational research requirements and testing conditions. There are a set of reasons behind selecting a sample from this population of students. First, second year university EFL students are believed to be already familiar with DMs since they generally receive explicit instruction about these linguistic particles during their first year written expression course. Second, it is in the second year within graduate studies that they actually start getting to grips with essay writing, which would make them more alert to the significance of sentences relatedness. Finally, since the aim of the research is to

explore the relationship between DMs and reading comprehension abilities, it was considered appropriate to investigate students' composition skills at this specific juncture.

2. Research Design

In accordance with the specificity of the questions raised in our study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed. As explained by Dörnyei (2007, p.45), by using this mixed-methods approach “we can gain a better understanding of a complex phenomenon by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data”.

The first dimension of the study involves the examination of the relationship between students' reading comprehension abilities and their DMs use within essays. To this end, the study follows a correlational research design, which is quantitative in nature. According to Creswell (2012), “A correlation is a statistical test to determine the tendency or pattern for two (or more) variables or two sets of data to vary consistently. In the case of only two variables, this means that two variables share common variance, or they co-vary together” (Creswell, 2012, p. 338). Although correlation between variables can be researched using different statistical measures, the present research relies on Pearson's product-moment coefficient as a statistical test. This coefficient provides a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables, and is denoted by r . Like all parametric tests, Pearson r has some conditions that must be met lest the credibility of the results will be at stake. Brown (1988) lists four main assumptions underlying Pearson r :

- each pair of scores is independent from all other pairs;
- each of the two variables involved is normally distributed;

- each of the two variables involved is measured on an interval scale;
- the relationship between the two sets of scores is linear. (Brown, 1988, p.136-137)

In the present study, these conditions have been fulfilled. First, students' scores are independent from each other- each student has two scores: one in reading comprehension and another in DMs use within essays. Second, Students' reading and writing scores are continuous (measured on an interval scale). Third, the visual inspection of the scores from the histograms as well as the results of Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality (which are both non-significant at $p > .05$) reveal that the two scores of the two variables are approximately normally distributed.

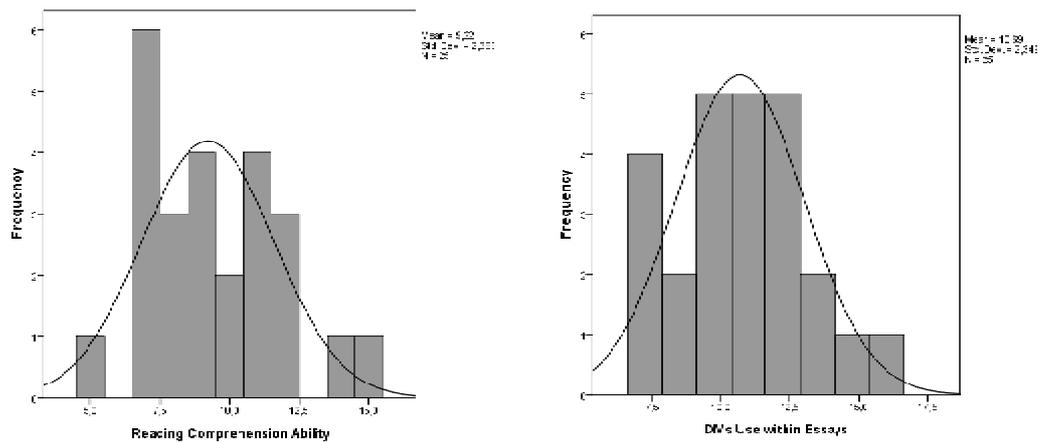


Figure 4.The Distribution of Students' Scores in Reading Comprehension and DMs Use within Essays.

Table 2. Tests of Normality of Scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
DMs in Writing	,088	25	,200*	,969	25	,618
Reading Comp.	,139	25	,200*	,953	25	,287

a Lilliefors Significance Correction

Finally, the linearity between the two variables can be manifest in the following scatterplot.

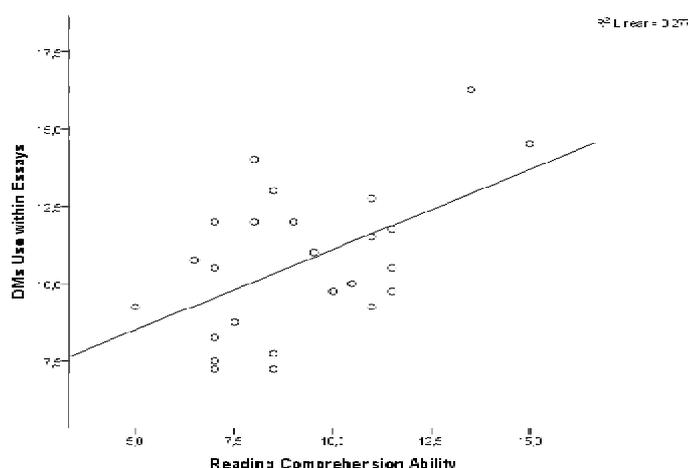


Figure 5. Line of the Best Fit between the Reading Comprehension and DMs Use within Essays.

The second aspect of the study is concerned with the quality of DMs use within students' essays. In order to shed light on the appropriateness and variety of these linguistic particles, students' essays were reevaluated according to Fraser's (1999) taxonomy of DMs. In fact, this taxonomy serves as a benchmark against which students' diversification in using DMs is measured.

3. Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

The measurement of students' reading comprehension abilities and DMs use within essays was a challenging task. To increase the reliability of the evaluation instruments, students were required to sit for two tests for both reading comprehension and essay writing. Thus, the average score of each student within these tests is considered as a close representation of the abilities under investigation.

The tests administered to students were adapted samples from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). This test is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication. It is designed to test contestants' level of English in the four skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Although the basic format of the IELTS tests is maintained in the abilities under consideration, some adaptations are made in order to fit the level of students and the requirements of the present research.

3.1. Reading Comprehension Tests

Each reading comprehension test is made up of two passages. The duration of each test was limited to 40 minutes. Regarding the first test, the first passage is about the risk of cigarette smoke, and the second is about television addiction. In the second test, the first passage is about the triune brain, and the second is about the science of Chronobiology. Each passage is followed by two exercises making the sum of ten items that range from identification of writer's claims/views, sentence completion, multiple-choice questions, to table completion. All the items that appear in each reading test make the total number of twenty questions scored out of twenty.

3.2. Writing Skill Tests

Students were required to sit for two writing tests which lasted 30 minutes, each. They were asked to write expository essays about two debatable topics. In the first test, they wrote about preference for change, as denoted in the following construct “*Some people prefer to spend their lives doing the same things and avoiding change. Others, however, think that change is always a good thing*”. And in the second they wrote about the beneficial and harmful sides of modern technology, as signified in the following construct “*Modern technology now allows rapid and uncontrolled access to and exchange of information. Far from being beneficial, this is a danger to our societies*”.

Quantitative Data analysis was performed using SPSS 16.0 (2007) which is widely used by scholars in the social sciences in general and applied language studies in particular. As for the qualitative evaluation of students’ essays with reference to DMs use, we relied on Fraser’s (1999) taxonomy of discourse markers (cf. Appendix 06) together with an interview with some written expression teachers (cf. Appendix 08).

4. Results

A broad overview about students’ scores in reading comprehension and DMs use within essays is provided in table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Scores in Reading Comprehension and DMs Use

	N	Range	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
DMs Use within Essays	25	9	7	16	10,69	2,342
Reading Comprehension Ability	25	10	5	15	9,22	2,385

As mentioned earlier, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is used to test the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between students' reading comprehension abilities and appropriate use of DMs within their essays at $\alpha < .01$ non-directional. Pearson's $r(25) = .52, p < .01$ indicates a significant positive correlation between the two variables. In other words, the higher students' scores in reading comprehension, the more appropriate they use DMs to achieve coherence. Table 4 presents the statistics of this test.

Table 4 Correlation between DMs Use in Essays and Reading Comprehension Abilities

		DMs use in Essays	Reading Comprehension.
DMs use in Essays	Pearson Correlation	1	,526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,007
	N	25	25
Reading Comp.	Pearson Correlation	,526**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007	
	N	25	25

In order to get a much clearer picture of how the two variables covary, it was deemed appropriate to divide the reading comprehension ability variable into two sub-levels, namely high and low reading comprehension abilities. The score representing the average was the cut-off point in determining high and low reading comprehension abilities. The results, shown in table5, reveal a significant strong positive correlation between the appropriate use of DMs and high reading comprehension ability. Pearson's $r(10) = .77, P < .01$. Similarly, the table shows a weak positive correlation between the appropriate use of DMs and low reading comprehension abilities, Pearson's $r(15) = .06, P < .01$. The statistical results are presented in table 5.

Table 5. Correlation between the Appropriate Use of DMs and Reading Comprehension Abilities (High and Low)

		DMs1	High. R. Comp.	DMs2	Low. R. Comp.
	Pearson Correlation	1	,774 ^{**}	,334	-,092
DMs1	Sig. (2-tailed)		,009	,345	,801
	N	10	10	10	10
	Pearson Correlation	,774 ^{**}	1	-,057	-,132
High	Sig. (2-tailed)	,009		,876	,716
	N	10	10	10	10
	Pearson Correlation	,334	-,057	1	,069
DMs2	Sig. (2-tailed)	,345	,876		,806
	N	10	10	15	15
	Pearson Correlation	-,092	-,132	,069	1
Low	Sig. (2-tailed)	,801	,716	,806	
	N	10	10	15	15

The qualitative analysis of the students' essays was conducted to get more insights about the variety and frequency of DMs use to achieve and maintain coherence. Although the essays of the first and second tests seem a suitable corpus for the qualitative analysis, we chose to work on the second topic in which the students were supposed to write an expository essay developed by examples about their opinions about the beneficial and harmful sides of modern technology.

Table 6 presents students' use of DMs in essays. A simple look at the table shows that students used DMs 214 times in total. Among the three functional classes of DMs, Elaborative Discourse Markers were used 104 times, dominating 48,52% of the total usage of DMs in essays. This is followed by 58 Inferential Discourse Markers making 27,07% of the total number of DMs, and finally 52 Contrastive Discourse Markers making 25,17% of the total number of the DMs used by students in essays.

Table 6. Frequency and Variety of Students' Use of DMs in their Essays

Elaborative Discourse Markers(EDMs)			Contrastive Discourse Markers(CDMs)			Inferential Discourse Markers(IDMs)		
DM	N	%	DM	N	%	DM	N	%
And	48	22,42%	But	29	13,55%	Because	24	11,21%
Also	19	8,87%	Although	10	4,67%	So	4	1,86%
In addition	10	4,67%	However	6	2,80%	Finally	11	5,14%
For example	13	6,07%	Even	2	0,93%	To	7	3,27%
For instance	4	1,86%	Eventhough	1	0,46%	conclude	6	2,80%
Or	4	1,86%	Despite(that/the fact that)	1	0,46%	To sum up	5	2,33%
Moreover	2	0,93%	While	1	0,46%	Thus	1	0,46%
Besides	1	0,46%	On the other hand	1	0,46%	Since	1	0,46%
Furthermore	1	0,46%		1	0,46%	In order to	3	1,40%
In other words	1	0,46%		1	0,46%			
Otherwise	1	0,46%		1	0,46%			
Total Σ	104	48,52%	Total Σ	52	25,17%	Total Σ	58	27,07%

In order to corroborate the results obtained from the qualitative analysis of the essays as far as DMs use is concerned, five written expression teachers were interviewed about this issue. In fact, we resorted to these teachers because the corpus

of essays that we analyzed was not large enough. Written expression teachers can fill in this gap since they regularly evaluate students' essays (both assignments and examinations). Most interviewees share similar opinions about EFL learners' use of DMs in essays. Results reveal that EFL learners use DMs regularly. Notably, they overuse EDMs (and, in addition, moreover, also) and underuse IDMs (because, consequently) and CDMs (in contrast, however), but they are unaware of the importance of these language units in qualitative essay construction. At the level of variety in use, EFL learners' use of DMs is reserved. Students use different DMs which express different functions; however, they misuse some common DMs (*however, although, eventhough, and whereas*). Additionally, reading can improve EFL learners' use of DMs.

5. Discussion of Results

This study set out to investigate the relationship between the use of DMs in essays and reading comprehension abilities. There are two working hypotheses to answer the outlined research questions. First, there is a relationship between Second year EFL learners' use of DMs in essays and their reading comprehension abilities; second, it is assumed that students in our sample use DMs appropriately while writing essays. The outcomes of the current study depict some scaffolding of the two hypotheses.

Concerning the first hypothesis, there is a statistically significant positive correlational relationship between second year EFL learners' use of DMs in essays and reading comprehension abilities. More specifically, the study found a positive relationship between the writing quality (as measured by the appropriate use of DMs) and the two different levels of reading comprehension abilities (high and low).

Significant strong relationships were found between EFL learners' high reading comprehension abilities and the appropriate use of DMs; however, the correlation found between low reading comprehension abilities and the appropriate use of DMs in students' essays was very weak. The strong relation between the appropriate use of DMs and high reading comprehension ability is possibly explained in terms of student's awareness of the functional aspects that DMs display in essays. Previous research on the relation between the use of DMs in essays and reading comprehension showed similar results. DMs increase both reading comprehension and reading speed (Ang, 2014). On the other hand, reading comprehension is relatively linked to the appropriate use of DMs. Students with high reading comprehension ability in our sample show a noticeable tendency to use DMs appropriately. This can be due to acquaintance with the appropriate usage of DMs displayed in the texts they read. Reading comprehension involves the recall, inference and evaluation of information provided in the text; thus, good readers come across real instances of language use, rhetoric information of information organization in the target language, and strategies for the acquisition of writing, yet of DMs' different usages in the text. Consequently, when asked to write essays, these learners are highly expected to vary the use of DMs in the most appropriate way. In line with the results of the present study, previous research revealed similar results. There is a positive relation between the acquisition of DMs and the frequent use of authentic texts written in English (Vickcov, 2015); by the same token, deficient reading of authentic texts results in low and problematic use of cohesive devices (Ahmed, 2010).

The relationship between the use of DMs and low reading comprehension abilities was very weak. This might indicate that the source of the weak correlation between the appropriate use of DMs and the low level of reading comprehension is not limited

to the variable of reading comprehension level abilities only, but also to other variables; thus, an experimental research would be recommended to understand this relationship.

Pertaining to the second hypothesis, the appropriate use DMs as measured by correctness and variety of use in reference with Fraser's taxonomy was not proved.

- Variety of DMs Use

It is noticeable that students' essays witness variety at the level of DMs. Most students use the three sets of EDMs, IDMs and CDMs though not equally. Among other classes, EDMs appear to be used extensively. Possibly, this can be due to the nature of the topic as it is generally accepted that expository and argumentative compositions necessitate ideas elucidation (Rahimi, 2011; as cited in Ali & Mahadin, 2016, p. 25); thus, students are expected to rely on EDMs to demonstrate explanations and justify their personal opinions. Another possible explanation might be their reliance on the most common DMs that they are familiar with in order to avoid mistakes. Studies conducted on the problems encountered by EFL/ESL learners in writing essays reported similar results (e.g., Feng, 2010; Shareef, 2015; Ali & Mahadin 2016). On the other hand, students use IDMs and CDMs at a lower rate. This is possibly justified in accordance with the level of students' proficiency. In fact, Second year EFL learners are not largely exposed to the whole range of DMs used in essays; hence, they keep repeating the same DMs to express different functions, or they tend to use more restricted and redundant sets of DMs. Past studies conducted to explore the use of cohesive devices and the difficulties faced by EFL learners when writing essays (e.g., Ali & Mahadin, 2016; Darweesh & Kadhim, 2016; Ahmed, 2010) showed similar results regarding the efficient use of CDMs and IDMs in

comparison with the frequent use of EDMs. A further analysis of the table shows that students overuse some DMs and underuse others. With EDMs, students use *and, in addition, also, and for example* repeatedly; while other DMs like: *moreover, besides, and furthermore* are seldom used. With IDMs, students mostly use *because, so, finally, and to conclude* greater than *thus, since, and in order to*; whereas, with CDMs students utilize *but, although, and however* larger than *eventhough, despite, while, and on the other hand*. This discrepancy could be attributed to L1 interference, translation process, lack of reading, and teacher's instruction (e. g., Ahmed, 2010; Feng, 2010).

- Appropriateness of DMs Use

The results reveal that the most used DMs are typically misused. The present study shares similar results with many prior studies conducted to examine students' accurate use of DMs in essays. Students miswrite some common DMs; to illustrate, they use *in the other hand* instead of *on the other hand*, *whoever* instead of *however*, and *wher as* instead of *whereas*. A possible explanation for this can be the lack of knowledge about DMs. At the semantic level, they miscue the choice of DMs and fail to recognize the right DM. For example, they tend to use CDMs where there is no contrast (e. g., *we have the uses of technology in the cases of wars like arms and electrotechnic bombs, however it is also used to spy on the under development country*) or they use an EDM to indicate a causal relation(e. g., *we can't live without technology also it gets our life easy*) (e. g., Darweesh & Kadhim, 2016), they use a DM, but do not place the second segment (e. g.1, *However, the intention behind using it now has changes*. e. g.2, *for me this depends on family and society so to avoid this problem*. e. g.3, *But, we cannot ignore the other side of it*. e. g.4 *In addition to the loose of some important features inside our brains specially concentration which is very essential.*), or they use a DM in a wrong way or a wrong position (*Although*

technology has many advantages but it still has the bad corner that we call disadvantage; but, however...; but on the other hand; so to conclude) (e. g., Fang, 2010). These results may be explained by the fact that students lack practice on DMs or in terms of L1 transfer and translation problems (e. g., Abdul Rahman, 2010; Shareef, 2015).

Teachers' interview analysis showed similar results (cf. Appendix 08). EFL learners use the different types of DMs to express different meanings, but most of the time they fail to use them properly. Moreover, EDMs are students' favourite type; while, CDMs and IDMs are the least used. This is possibly explained by fear of making mistakes and lack of reading. Furthermore, EFL learners misuse the very frequent DMs both at the semantic and syntactic levels. The same DMs witness reoccurrence and redundancy in their writings. This can be probably explained by means of teachers' explicit instruction of DMs and students' unawareness of the facilitative role of DMs in meaning comprehension.

6. Research Implications and Recommendations

This study was conducted to investigate the use of DMs in essays among EFL learners with high and low reading comprehension abilities. The analysis of qualitative and quantitative data revealed that there is a strong correlation between EFL learners' use of DMs and high reading comprehension abilities; furthermore, it revealed that the majority of EFL learners misuse most of the DMs they are familiar with. These findings provide the following insights for teachers, students and future research.

6.1. Implications for Teachers

First, teachers of Written Expression need to pay critical attention to the association of the use of DMs in essays with reading comprehension abilities. Thus, they are highly recommended to assist learners' reading abilities and the appropriate use of DMs simultaneously. Second, teachers need to pay students' attention to the existing strategies to promote active reading like top-down and bottom-up strategies, and extensive reading. Such reading techniques help learners learn the most effective ways to capture the frequent use of DMs in essays, with critical attention paid to the contribution of these language units to text coherence. In addition, it is recommended that EFL teachers promote the appropriate use of DMs in essays through the extensive practice on authentic texts. In addition they are invited to provide corrective feedback on their EFL learners' misuse of DMs regularly.

6.2. Implications for Students

The results of the current study show a significant positive correlation between students' high reading comprehension abilities and their appropriate use of DMs in essays. Thus, teachers need to focus on increasing students' reading comprehension abilities which alternatively results in the good command of DMs in their writings. EFL learners are recommended to read authentic materials extensively. This learning habit enables them to make the best use of the lexical content they acquire thanks to frequent reading. In addition, they are recommended to take into account teachers' feedback about their use of DMs in essays.

6.3. Implications for Future Research

The weak relation between the proper use of DMs in essays and low reading comprehension abilities is a notable finding in this study. It may inspire future researchers to explore the reasons behind this weak relation. An experiment would be then conducted to study the effect of other variables that would probably result in the appropriate use of DMs in essays.

7. Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations need to be considered. The first one is the motivational aspect of participants. Students in our sample showed no enthusiasm to sit for the tests. They were unaware of IELTS test format which lead to time consumption reading the whole passages instead of looking for specific information in the passage as a well-known technique in IELTS test preparation. Thus, this led to lower levels of motivation.

Second, test difficulty and study requirements are pertinent limitations as well. Students faced serious problems in attaining the objective of the tasks they carried out. Most of them were stuck with the length of passages and the nature of questions which require preparation and practice to generate familiarity with test format.

Third, students' level of proficiency was another limitation in this study. Second EFL learners face serious fears in writing essays. Though they start writing essays in the second semester, students at this stage fail to cope with mechanics of style and the suitable ways to develop ideas in a logical flow.

The number of students was another limitation in this study. The sample was made up of thirty three second year students, but it was condensed to twenty five

students because of students' absences in some tests. More illuminating findings would be produced if the sample was larger.

Finally, lack of experience of teaching and assessing essays on the part of the researchers may lead to some differences between test scores. It would be preferable if the writing task answers were assessed by another teacher to secure reliability.

Conclusion

This chapter is devoted to data collection and analysis. It is by means of both quantitative and qualitative research methods that the hypotheses of the current study were tested. The results confirm the first hypothesis and reject the second. In addition, it provides some pedagogical implications and recommendation in EFL settings. Finally, it provides the limitations faced by researchers while accomplishing this work.

General Conclusion

The focal role that writing plays in the context of language learning has always been an attention grabber to many researchers. When coupled with reading, writing techniques witness remarkable development. Cautious students come to produce coherent written discourse as they become conscious of the most suitable ways to write qualitative essays.

This study is designed through a mixed-method approach to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' use of DMs in essays and their reading comprehension abilities. Equally important, it further investigates the appropriateness of DMs use in essays with an already established taxonomy of DMs, namely Fraser's Taxonomy. This dissertation is made up of two main parts, theoretical and practical. Making the sum of two chapters, the theoretical part is devoted to provide a theoretical framework about the literature review of the role of DMs in essays and the role of reading comprehension strategies in enhancing the proper use of DMs. The practical part is dedicated to data collection and analysis. It sheds light on both of the qualitative and quantitative means of research. It is by means of a correlational test that we were able to discover the strength and direction of the existing relationship between the use of DMs in essays and EFL learners' different reading comprehension abilities. Furthermore, an interview together with an assessment of the qualitative aspect of essays with reference to Fraser's taxonomy of DMs enabled us to test the second hypothesis about the appropriateness of EFL learners' use of DMs in essays.

Pearson's moment coefficient statistics emerged as reliable predictors of the strength and direction of the relationship between EFL learners' use of DMs in essays and their reading comprehension abilities. The findings reveal that the appropriate use

of DMs is strongly correlated with reading comprehension abilities ($r = .52$). by the same token, they reveal a strong positive relationship between the use of DMs in essays and high reading comprehension abilities ($r = .77$), and a weak positive relation between the use of DMs and low reading comprehension abilities ($r = .06$). Correspondingly, writing qualitative test assessment and teachers' interview analysis yield similar results. Most EFL learners use DMs inappropriately because they are unaware of the functional aspect of these logical connectors. Some limitations and implications for further research are provided at the end of this dissertation.

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Appendices

Appendix 01: Reading Test 1

Full name:

.....

Reading Task 1

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Passage 1

The Risk of Cigarette Smoke

Discovered in the early 1800s and named ‘nicotianine’, the oily essence now called nicotine is the main active ingredient of tobacco. Nicotine, however, is only a small component of cigarette smoke, which contains more than 4700 chemical compounds, including 43 cancer-causing substances. In recent times, scientific research has been providing evidence that years of cigarette smoking vastly increases the risk of developing fatal medical conditions.

In addition to being responsible for more than 85 per cent of lung cancers, smoking is associated with cancers of, amongst others, the mouth, stomach and kidneys, and is thought to cause about 14 per cent of leukemia and cervical cancers. In 1990, smoking caused more than 84,000 deaths, mainly resulting from such problems as pneumonia, bronchitis and influenza. Smoking, it is believed, is responsible for 30 per cent of all deaths from cancer and clearly represents the most important preventable cause of cancer in countries like the United States today.

3. Teenagers whose parents smoke are at risk of getting lung cancer at some time during their lives.....

Questions 5-7: (3pts)

Fill in the gaps with appropriate conjunctions:

finally, Consequently, but also, because, in addition, and, however.

The report, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (AMA), was based on the researchers' own earlier research (5).....includes a review of studies over the past few years. The American Medical Association represents about half of all US doctors (6).....is a strong opponent of smoking. The study suggests that people who smoke cigarettes are continually damaging their cardiovascular system, which adapts in order to compensate for the effects of smoking. It further states that people who do not smoke do not have the benefit of their system adapting to the smoke inhalation. (7)....., the effects of passive smoking are far greater on non-smokers than on smokers.

Questions 8-10: (4pts)

Choose the appropriate answer:

8- What are the diseases that smoking does **NOT** cause?

A-Stomach cancer

B- Paraplegia (partial or complete paralysis of the lower half of the body)

C-Mouth cancer

D-Kidneys cancer

9- Cigarette does **NOT** contain

A-Fatty acids

B-Nitric acid

C-Nicotine

10- Passive smoking is **NOT**

A-The breathing of smokes of cars and factories.

B-The breathing in of side-stream smoke from the burning of the tobacco between puff.

C-The breathing of medicinal smoke.

Passage 2

Television Addiction

The term TV addiction is imprecise, but it captures the essence of a very real phenomenon. Psychologists formally define addiction as a disorder characterized by criteria that include spending a great deal of time using the thing; using it more often than one intends; thinking about reducing use or making repeated unsuccessful efforts to reduce use; giving up important activities to use it; and reporting withdrawal symptoms when one stops using it.

All these criteria can apply to people who watch a lot of television. That does not mean that watching television in itself is problematic. Television can teach and amuse; it can be highly artistic; it can provide much needed distraction and escape. The difficulty arises when people strongly sense that they ought not to watch as much as they do and yet find that they are unable to reduce their viewing. Some knowledge of how television becomes so addictive may help heavy viewers gain better control over their lives.

The amount of time people spend watching television is astonishing. On average, individuals in the industrialized world devote three hours a day to the activity-fully half of their leisure time, and more than on any single activity except work and sleep.

At this rate, someone who lives to 75 would spend nine years in front of the television. Possibly, this devotion simply means that people enjoy TV and make a conscious decision to watch it. But if that is the whole story, why many people worry about how much they view?

Within moments of sitting or lying down and pushing the power button, viewers report feeling more relaxed. Because the relaxation occurs quickly, people are conditioned to associate viewing with rest and lack of tension. The association is positively reinforced because viewers remain relaxed throughout viewing.

Thus, the irony of TV: people watch a great deal longer they plan to, even though prolonged viewing is less rewarding. In our ESM (Experience Sampling Method) studies the longer people sat in front of the set, the less satisfaction they said they derived from it. When signaled, heavy viewers (those who consistently watch more than four hours a day) tended to report on their ESM sheets that they enjoy TV less than light viewers did (less than two hours a day). For some a twinge of unease or guilt that they are not doing something more productive may also accompany and depreciate the enjoyment of prolonged viewing. Researchers in Japan, the U.K. and the U. S. have found that this guilt occurs much more among middle-class viewers than among less affluent ones.

Question 1-4: (4pts)

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2?

YES *if the statement agrees with the writer's claims*

NO *if the statement contradicts with the writer's claims*

NOT GIVEN *if there is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

1- One purpose of the research is to help people to manage their lives better.....

2- Watching television has reduced the amount of time people spent sleeping.....

3- People's brains show less activity while watching television than when reading.....

4- There is a relationship between the length of time spent watching TV and economic status.....

Questions 5-7: (3pts)

Chose the appropriate answer

5) The phrase "But if that is the whole story" expresses:

A- Addition

B- Contrast

C- Cause and effect

6) Light viewers are called so because:

A-They consistently spend less than two hours in front of the TV a day.

B-They associate bad mood with spending much time watching TV.

C-They associate viewing with rest and lack of tension.

7) The conjunction "eventhough" in the first sentence in the last paragraph is synonymous to:

A- And

B- Despite

C- As a result

Questions 8-10 (3pts):

The list below gives some characteristics of addiction

Which **THREE** of the following are mentioned as characteristics of addiction to television?

A- Harmful physical effect

B -Loss of control over time

C -Destruction of relationships

D -Reduced intellectual performance

E -Discomfort when attempting to give up

Best of luck

Appendix 02: Reading Test 2

Full Name:

.....

READING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 in this task

Passage 1

The Triune Brain

A The first of our three brains to evolve is what scientists call the reptilian cortex. This brain sustains the elementary activities of animal survival such as respiration, adequate rest and a beating heart. We are not required to consciously “think” about these activities. The reptilian cortex also houses the “startle centre”, a mechanism that facilitates swift reactions to unexpected occurrences in our surroundings. That panicked lurch you experience when a door slams shut somewhere in the house, or the heightened awareness you feel when a twig cracks in a nearby bush while out on an evening stroll are both examples of the reptilian cortex at work. When it comes to our interaction with others, the reptilian brain offers up only the most basic impulses: aggression, mating, and territorial defence. There is no great difference, in this sense, between a crocodile defending its spot along the river and a turf war between two urban gangs.

B Although the lizard may stake a claim to its habitat, it exerts total indifference toward the well-being of its young. Listen to the anguished squeal of a dolphin separated from its pod or witness the sight of elephants mourning their dead, however, and it is clear that a new development is at play. Scientists have identified this as the limbic cortex. Unique to mammals, the limbic cortex impels creatures to nurture their offspring by delivering feelings of tenderness and warmth to the parent when children are nearby. These same sensations also cause mammals to develop various types of social relations and kinship networks. When we are with others of “our kind” – be it at soccer practice, church, school or a nightclub – we experience positive sensations of togetherness, solidarity and comfort. If we spend too long away from these networks, then loneliness sets in and encourages us to seek companionship.

C Only human capabilities extend far beyond the scope of these two cortexes. Humans eat, sleep and play, but we also speak, plot, rationalize and debate finer points of morality. Our unique abilities are the result of an expansive third brain – the neocortex –which engages with logic, reason and ideas. The power of the neocortex comes from its ability to think beyond the present, concrete moment. While other mammals are mainly restricted to impulsive actions (although some, such as apes, can learn and remember simple lessons), humans can think about the “big picture”. We can string together simple lessons (for example, an apple drops downwards from a tree; hurting others causes unhappiness) to develop complex theories of physical or social phenomena (such as the laws of gravity and a concern for human rights).

D The neocortex is also responsible for the process by which we decide on and commit to particular courses of action. Strung together over time, these choices can accumulate into feats of progress unknown to other animals. Anticipating a better grade on the following morning’s exam, a student can ignore the limbic urge to

socialise and go to sleep early instead. Over three years, this ongoing sacrifice translates into a first class degree and a scholarship to graduate school; over a lifetime, it can mean groundbreaking contributions to human knowledge and development. The ability to sacrifice our drive for immediate satisfaction in order to benefit later is a product of the neocortex.

E Understanding the triune brain can help us appreciate the different natures of brain damage and psychological disorders. The most devastating form of brain damage, for example, is a condition in which someone is understood to be brain dead. In this state a person appears merely unconscious – sleeping, perhaps – but this is illusory. Here, the reptilian brain is functioning on autopilot despite the permanent loss of other cortexes.

Triune=three-in-one

Lobotomy = surgical cutting of brain nerves

Questions 1–5 (5pts):

Classify the following as typical of

A-the reptilian cortex

B-the limbic cortex

C-the neocortex

Write the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**

1. making a decision and carrying it out.....
2. maintaining the bodily functions necessary for life.....
3. experiencing the pain of losing another.....
4. forming communities and social groups.....
5. developing explanations for things.....

Questions 6–10 (5pts): Complete the sentences below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

6. The reptilian cortex is responsible for elementary activities of animal survival;, it helps responding quickly to sudden movements and noise.
7.directed by the neocortex is the desired outcome of the ability to sacrifice our drive.
8. The drop down of an apple from a tree represents the
- 9.....animals have both reptilian and limbic cortex, their brains are unable to engage with reason, logic and new ideas.
10. A person with only a functioning reptilian cortex is known as

Passage 2

Making Time for Science

Chronobiology might sound a little futuristic – like something from a science fiction novel, perhaps – but it’s actually a field of study that concerns one of the oldest processes life on this planet has ever known: short-term rhythms of time and their effect on flora and fauna.

This can take many forms. Marine life, for example, is influenced by tidal patterns. Animals tend to be active or inactive depending on the position of the sun or moon. Numerous creatures, humans included, are largely diurnal – that is, they like to come out during the hours of sunlight. Nocturnal animals, such as bats and possums, prefer to forage by night. A third group are known as crepuscular: they thrive in the lowlight of dawn and dusk and remain inactive at other hours.

The average urban resident, for example, rouses at the eye-blearing time of 6.04 a.m., which researchers believe to be far too early. One study found that even rising at 7.00 a.m. has deleterious effects on health unless exercise is performed for 30 minutes afterward. The optimum moment has been whittled down to 7.22 a.m.; muscle aches, headaches and moodiness were reported to be lowest by participants in the study who awoke then.

Once you're up and ready to go, what then? If you're trying to shed some extra pounds, dieticians are adamant: never skip breakfast. This disorients your circadian rhythm and puts your body in starvation mode. The recommended course of action is to follow an intense workout with a carbohydrate-rich breakfast; the other way round and weight loss results are not as pronounced.

After-dinner espressos are becoming more of a tradition – we have the Italians to thank for that – but to prepare for a good night's sleep we are better off putting the brakes on caffeine consumption as early as 3 p.m. With a seven hour half-life, a cup of coffee containing 90 mg of caffeine taken at this hour could still leave 45 mg of caffeine in your nervous system at ten o'clock that evening. It is essential that, by the time you are ready to sleep, your body is rid of all traces.

Evenings are important for winding down before sleep; however, dietician Geraldine Georgeou warns that an after-five carbohydrate-fast is more cultural myth than chronobiological demand. This will deprive your body of vital energy needs. Overloading your gut could lead to indigestion, though. Our digestive tracts do not shut down for the night entirely, but their work slows to a crawl as our bodies prepare for sleep. Consuming a modest snack should be entirely sufficient.

-Chronobiology: the study of the effect of time on living systems

-Flora and fauna: plants and animals

Questions 1-5 (5pts):

Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C** or **D**.

1- The study of marine life is:

- A.** just one pattern of Chronobiology
- B.** the only pattern of Chronobiology
- C.** not a pattern of Chronobiology
- D.** a pattern of Bioanthropology

2- What did researchers identify as the ideal time to wake up in the morning?

- A.** 6.04
- B.** 7.00
- C.** 7.22
- D.** 7.30

3- In order to lose weight, we should

- A.** avoid eating breakfast
- B.** eat a low carbohydrate breakfast
- C.** exercise before breakfast
- D.** exercise after breakfast

4- The best time to stop drinking coffee is:

- A.** mid-afternoon
- B.** 10 p.m.
- C.** only when feeling anxious
- D.** after dinner

5- In the sentence “Overloading your gut could lead to indigestion, though.”, the writer is:

- A. giving an example
- B. giving a reason
- C. demonstrating an opposition
- D. demonstrating opposition

Question 6 (5pts)

Classify the following creatures in the below table: **elephants, bears, moonflowers, bees, owls.**

<i>Diurnal Creatures</i>	<i>Nocturnal Creatures</i>	<i>Crepuscular Creature</i>
-.....	-.....	-.....
-.....	-.....	-.....

Appendix 03: Writing Test 1

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 30 minutes on this task.

Write a one page essay about the following topic:

Some people prefer to spend their lives doing the same things and avoiding change.

Others, however, think that change is always a good thing.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Appendix 04: Writing Test2

WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about **30** minutes on this task.

Write a one page essay about the following topic:

Modern technology now allows rapid and uncontrolled access to and exchange of information. Far from being beneficial, this is a danger to our societies.

What are your views?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Appendix 05: Writing Rubrics

Rubrics' Table of Writing Tasks

Rubric		Mark
Task Achievement	-The student discusses issues to do with the accessibility of electronic information; s/he deals with the two diverse points of view concerning technology. Students are expected to support their ideas by the use of reasons and examples.(this is for task 2)	4
	-The student discusses people's distinct choices about favoring change or avoiding it. S/he is supposed to give reasons (arguments) and examples.(this is for task 1) - At about 18 lines, the response is considerably under length.	1
Coherence and Cohesion	-The response is clearly structured: it contains three paragraphs each of which has a distinct function: introduction, body and conclusion.	3
	-Ideas are coherently presented by using transition words (for example, in addition, however, in my opinion, because, to conclude, but, in contrast, while,	4

	<p>whereas, on the other hand...)</p> <p>-Ability to vary word choices and not to repeat the same word; this can be done using: synonyms, near-synonyms, reference...etc.</p>	1
Lexical Resource	-The student demonstrates a reasonably wide range of vocabulary, including less frequent items.	3
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	<p>-The student is expected to use simple sentences.</p> <p>Although errors occur throughout, comprehension is rarely if ever impeded and the reader has the overall impression of fluency.</p> <p>-Punctuation is largely accurate, and sentence divisions are accurate.</p>	2 2

Appendix 06: Rubrics' Table of Students' Appropriate Use of DMs

Rubrics' of Students' Appropriate Use of DMs

Coherence and Cohesion	_The response is clearly structured: it contains three paragraphs each of which has a distinct function: introduction, body and conclusion.	1
	_Ideas are coherently presented by using transition words (for example, in addition, however, in my opinion, to conclude, but, in contrast, while, whereas, on the other hand...) _Functional accuracy of DMs.	1 2
	_Ability to vary word choices and not to repeat the same word; this can be done using: synonyms, near-synonyms, reference...etc.	1
Lexical Resource	_The student demonstrates a reasonably wide range of DMs (EDMs, CDMs, IDMs), including less frequent items.	2
Accuracy	_DMs' punctuation is largely accurate, and sentence divisions are accurate.	1
	-Accurate spelling of DMs.	1

Appendix 07: Teachers' Interview

Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers,

We would be so grateful if you could answer the following questions for the sake of gathering data about the most frequently used DMs in essays by the majority of EFL learners with high and low comprehension reading abilities.

- 1) How many years have you been teaching written expression?
- 2) What do you like about teaching Written Expression?
- 3) According to you, what does characterize a good essay?
- 4) What aspects, you believe, do hinder students' motivation to write essays?
- 5) Which from the following essay types you think is most problematic for students?

-Argumentative

-Descriptive

-Expository

-Narrative

- 6) Among the following, what aspects do you recommend your students to prioritize?

-Form

-Lexis

-Coherence

-Cohesion

- 7) Do EFL learners use DMs in essays on a regular basis?
- 8) Are EFL learners aware of the importance of DMs that contribute to text quality?
- 9) What are the most frequent DMs that are used by the majority of students in their essays when they are required to express these meanings?

-Addition

-Cause and effect

-Contrast

-Time

- 10) What are the common DMs that EFL learners use inappropriately?
- 11) Do you teach DMs explicitly?
- 12) What strategies do you follow to raise your students' awareness about the use of DMs in essays?
- 13) To what extent you believe DMs contribute to the production of good essays?
- 14) Do you include DMs' in essays as an essay rubric?
- 15) Do you provide feedback on your students' use of DMs in their essays in either case (appropriately/inappropriately)?
- 16) If yes, do their essays witness progress whenever DMs are accurately used?
- 17) Do you include some reading tasks in written Expression classes?

18) Do you ask your students to make some reading about the topics that they are supposed to write essays about?

19) Do you believe that frequent reading can improve EFL learners' use of DMs (which is an important factor of good essay writing)?

Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix 08: Teachers' Interview Analysis

Questions	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
How many years have you been teaching written expression?	16 years	6years	5years	3years	4years
What do you like about teaching written expression?	The secrets of language	Creativity in writing		Content of module, style and organization of ideas in paragraphs	The stages students go through
According to you, what does characterize a good essay?	Unity, coherence, richness of information, and accuracy	Unity, coherence; and richness of vocabulary and information	Correct structure, relevant and interesting ideas, logical and effective organization, in addition to	The thesis statement, the introductory paragraph, correctness (capitalization, punctuation, format) and the quality of the ideas	Correctness Clarity Smooth style

			good and expressive vocabulary		
What aspects, you believe, do hinder students' motivation to write essays?	Grammatical problems, lack of reading, lack of writing experience, absence of teacher's feedback	Lexis and ideas due to lack of reading	Lack of ideas and vocabulary	Lack of reading and ideas, Arabic thinking and lack of vocabulary	Lack of confidence, anxiety, linguistic problems, and lack of reading
Which from the following essay types you think is most problematic for students? -Argumentative -Descriptive -Expository -Narrative	Argumentative	Argumentative and narrative	None	Argumentative	Argumentative
Among the following, what aspects do you recommend your students to prioritize? -coherence	All of them equally	Form Coherence	All of them	Form 1. Lexis 2. Coherence 3. Cohesion	Coherence 1. Form 2. Lexis 3. Cohesion

-cohesion -lexis -form					
Do EFL learners use DMs in essays on a regular basis?	Mostly yes	Yes, but not regularly	No	Yes	Yes, but not usually conscious of the appropriate use
Are EFL learners aware of the importance of DMs that contribute to text quality?	I made them aware, but not feasible in their writing	Some of them	Some of them	Yes, they do, but they keep repeating the same DMs	No they are not
What are the most frequent DMs that are used by the majority of students in their essays when they are required to express the following meanings: -addition -cause and effect -contrast -time	-addition: first, second, third; in addition, moreover -cause and effect: because(of) -Contrast: however	-Addition: and, also, in addition -Cause and effect: because -Contrast: but, however -Time: when, after	-addition: and, in addition to -cause and effect: because, consequently -contrast: in contrast -time: now,	-Addition: and, in addition, moreover -Cause and effect: because, since -Contrast: however, but, while -Time: when, after, before	-Addition: and -Cause and effect: effect: -Contrast: but Time: then, now

			today		
What are the common DMs that EFL learners use inappropriately	DMs of contrast: they miscue some DMs(be that as it may, however), They miscue cause DMs They put a full stop after the subordinating clause)	DMs of contrast and they keep repeating the same DMs	DMs of Cause and effect. They just use few of them (the most common) Generally, the problem is not using DMs	They keep repeating the same DMs Using very simple DMs: and, when, after that	-Addition: in addition -Contrast: although, eventhough, whereas, while
Do you teach DMs explicitly	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
What strategies do you follow to raise students' awareness about the use of DMs in essays	Explicit way of teaching, isolate them and give them a specific text which contain more opposition DMs for example, and provide feedback	Explicit teaching	Instructing students the different types of sentences and how to link them	I just remind them during the whole session.	Explicit teaching

To what extent you believe DMs contribute to the production of good essays	DMs are equal in importance to grammar in the sense that they establish logical linkages between ideas	Yes, because	They contribute a lot	To a great extent: the meaning is explicit thanks to DMs	To a large extent
Do you include DMs as an essay evaluation rubric	No	No	Yes	No	No
Do you provide feedback on your students' use of DMs in their essays in either case(appropriately/inappropriately)	All the time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, do their essays witness progress whenever DMs are accurately used	Yes	Yes, because come to produce logically connected ideas	Yes, if learners take the teacher's feedback into account and follow the instruction	Yes. Definitely	Yes, but not all of them

			s		
Do you include some reading tasks in written expression classes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you ask your students to make some reading about the topics that they are supposed to write essays about	Yes	No	No	No, because this might be an exhausting task.	Yes
Do you believe frequent reading can improve EFL learners' use of DMs(which is an important factor of good writing)	Yes latent reading is important but it should be coupled with explicit instruction of DMs	Yes	Yes	Yes, to a great extent.	Yes, because it become aware of the real instance of language use

ملخص

هناك العديد من الدراسات السابقة أثبتت بالأدلة قوة العلاقة بين القراءة والكتابة. بيد أن نسبة قليلة من الدراسات المتاحة اختبرت العلاقة بين استعمال علامات الخطاب في الخطاب المكتوب من منظور قدرات الفهم الفكري. الأطروحة الحالية تحاول استقصاء استعمال علامات الخطاب من خلال مقالات طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية والذين يملكون قدرات عالية ومنخفضة في الفهم الفكري . الهدف الأساسي هو توضيح العلاقة بين الاستعمال المناسب الصحيح لعلامات الخطاب في النصوص المكتوبة وقدرات الفهم الفكرية . للوصول إلى هذه النتيجة ولجمع المعطيات تم استعمال كل من الأسلوبين الكمي و النوعي. قام 25 طالبا من طلاب السنة الثانية -لغة انجليزية- باجتياز اختبارين في القراءة والكتابة للإجابة على السؤال الأول. وللإجابة على السؤال الثاني تم الاعتماد على التحليل النوعي لمقالات الطلاب استنادا إلى تصنيف "فرايزر" لعلامات تحليل الخطاب بالإضافة إلى تحليل نتائج المقابلة التي أجريت مع الاساتذة. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك علاقة إيجابية واضحة ومعتبرة بين القراءة و الكتابة (معامل الارتباط الخطي) ($=0.52$). كما بينت النتائج أن هناك علاقة إيجابية قوية ومعتبرة بين الاستعمال المناسب لعلامات الخطاب في المقالات والقدرات العالية للفهم الفكري ($=0.77$). بينما هناك علاقة ايجابية ضعيفة بين الاستعمال المناسب لعلامات الخطاب في المقالات والقدرات المنخفضة لفهم القراءة ($=0.06$). بالإضافة إلى ذلك أوضحت النتائج الاستعمال المتواضع والخاطئ لعلامات الخطاب من طرف أغلب الطلاب. تعزز العلاقتين الأوليتين الترابط الاستلزامي بين الاستعمال الصحيح لعلامات الخطاب والقدرات العالية للفهم الفكري . أما العلاقة الأخيرة فهي اقتراح قائم لاكتشاف ما هي العوامل الأخرى التي تبرر العلاقة الايجابية الضعيفة بين الاستعمال الصحيح لعلامات الخطاب و القدرات المنخفضة للفهم الفكري.