

The Role of Discourse Markers and Cohesive Devices in Writing: EFL Students a Case Study



Linguistics

Keywords: Discourse Markers, Cohesive devices, EFL learners, Coherence, Written discourse.

Arburim Iseni

State University of Tetova, Macedonia

Ali Asbitan Almasaeid

The Hashemite University, Jordan

Mohammad Ali Bani Younes

The Hashemite University, Jordan

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to highlight the role of discourse markers and lexical cohesion in coherence of English writing. The current study investigates and examines thirty articles written by intermediate students about why they learn English. Therefore, the study shows how discourse markers and lexical devices achieve written text cohesion experimentally. The study also clarifies the researchers' views about the definitions of discourse markers and why discourse markers can't be classified under a grammatical or lexical category. The differences between discourse markers' functions have been discussed in detail as well as the difference between grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion as DMs play a significant and crucial roles in starting, directing and ending discourse. The study deals with how discourse markers and lexical devices function in the establishment of textual coherence from different perspectives..

I. Statement of the problem

Through the review of related literature, many linguists and researchers emphasize that discourse markers in spite of their multi-classification play an important role in text cohesion. But a wide sector of people who are specialized in teaching English as a foreign language neglect teaching their students how they deal with DMs and use these markers in writing appropriately and correctly. Although some students recognize the using of DMs in their writing, their writings still under the level. In addition to DMs, grammatical cohesion that includes repetition, substitution and ellipsis was partially ignored. Also, the lexical cohesion in their writings is weak due to their neglect of semantic devices such as repetition, synonymy and collocation.

Here, the targeted group which the study investigated is the twelfth grade in three public schools in Jordan. The study analyzed thirty articles, focusing on the use of discourse markers and lexical cohesive devices as well as their effects on the quality of writings.

II. Introduction

Language is a means of communication that helps people to express their ideas and opinions, understand what is going around them and share knowledge with others. During the past twenty years, the study of discourse markers has been argued by many linguists who have written dozens of articles, papers, theses and dissertations about discourse markers. But, the term has different meanings and titles such as: discourse operators (Redeker, 1990), phatic connectives (Bazanella, 1990), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1990), pragmatic operators (Ariel, 1994), semantic conjuncts (Quirk, 1985), sentence connectives (Halliday and Hassan, 1976), discourse signaling

devices (Polanyi, 1983), pragmatic expressions (Erman, 1992), discourse particles (Schorup, 1985), pragmatic particles (Östman, 1995) pragmatic connectives (van Dijk, 1979).

Some researchers tried to classify discourse markers into categories, but DMs have different functions. Some linguists consider discourse markers as grammatical cohesive devices while still others tend to classify DMs as semantic devices that lead to cohesion. Hence, it is difficult to put them in a particular category. According to Anderson (2001), discourse markers are not only multifunctional in different context but they also have multiple functions in the same context. In other words, the functions of DMs are governed by the texts in which they are occurred. Hence, their functions vary according to their role in the context and situation. In other words, discourse markers have achieved different functions in discourse. DMs can also be located in the initial, middle, and the end of sentence. Regardless of their locations, they have different level of semantic meaning and therefore they can signal a discourse relationship between sentences or signal attitudes of speakers or writers.

Fraser states that “a discourse marker is a lexical expression which signal the relation of either contrast (John is fat but Mary is thin), implication (John is here, so we can start the party), or elaboration (John went home. Furthermore, he took his toys) between the interpretation of segment two and segment one” (1998: 302). Hence, discourse markers play a significant role in spoken and written discourse and Fraser (1999) points out that different researchers have studied discourse markers and they have considered discourse markers as lexical expressions related to discourse segments, but neither they have reached agreement on how discourse markers are defined nor what functions they serve. Also, Schorup (1999) indicates that there is disagreement among researchers on some fundamental issues associated with the study of DMs. Although there is disagreement among researchers on classification of DMs, they play an important role in the discourse of any language and people use these particles in everyday life.

Noticeably, the researchers and linguists gave multiple definitions to discourse markers as they can't classify DMs into a grammatical category. But the focus of this research paper will be on how the use of discourse markers and lexical cohesive devices function and participate in the establishment of coherence in written texts.

III. Discourse and Discourse Markers

Discourse is a language spoken by human beings to communicate with each other or to debate. What makes a discourse different from random sentences is that the discourse has coherence. Hence, the ultimate goal of discourse is to send a message from the speaker to the hearer or from the writer to the reader. So, the hearer or the reader receives the message and upon this message he/she behaves and reacts. A single word as the imperative verb ‘stop’ can be considered as a discourse. But if the speaker needs to talk more than one sentence, he/she is forced to use discourse markers. Discourse markers are “linguistic, paralinguistic, or nonverbal elements that signal relations between units of talk by virtue of their syntactic and semantic properties and by virtue of their sequential relations as initial or terminal brackets demarcating discourse units”

(Schiffrin, 1987: 40). The speakers use DMs in their everyday discourse and dialogues. DMs are such as salt for food as discourse can't be considered as a discourse without DMs.

IV. Coherence & Cohesion

Can discourse markers achieve coherence?

Before answering this question, we will introduce some researchers' definitions of coherence. Halliday and Hasan (1976) assume that coherence is a means that makes the sentences semantically well-formed. When two sentences connect with each other, their connection relates to semantic relations. Werth (1984) states that we can achieve well-formedness of discourse through "connectivity" that exists in four forms: 'coherence', 'cohesion', 'connectors', and 'collocations'. But this study aims at exploring how coherence is achieved by using cohesive devices.

In any language, cohesion can be established through the employment of discourse markers. Therefore, cohesion can be achieved when the interpretation of an utterance or sentence is dependent on that of another. So, if all sentences relate to each other, and no sentence is interpreted in isolation of other sentences, the coherence will prevail the context. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976) point out that "cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another" (299). The authors divide cohesion into two broad categories: grammatical cohesion referring to the structural content, and lexical cohesion referring to the language content of the piece. Under the first heading, they study the concepts of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Lexical cohesion, on the other hand, can occur in the form of reiteration or collocation. Despite this grammatical and lexical division, Halliday and Hassan treat cohesion as a semantic relation rather than a grammatical relation. To conclude, cohesion focuses on sentences and their relatedness to each other, while coherence is concerned with the context. So, the role of cohesive devices is to link between sentences, clauses and phrases.

Here, the researchers will focus on two forms in his study; cohesion and coherence as there is interrelation between the two terms. To elaborate further, coherence is the umbrella under which cohesion works. Hence, cohesion is the linguistic devices that lead to the coherence of the text by using syntactic processes to connects sentences. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define a text as "not just a string of sentences. It is not simply a long grammatical unit, something of the same kind as a sentence, but differing from it in size a sort of supersentence, a semantic unit" (291). In other words, the equality of text is not scored and allocated by using only long grammatical sentences, but it is judged by how ideas in the text relate to each other.

V. Grammatical Cohesion

Halliday and Hassan (1976) describe four grammatical strategies that the speakers of a language can use to achieve relatedness. The first cohesive device is *conjunction*; the use of a variety of strategies to tie the sentences meaningfully. So, the use of conjunctions, words such as *but, however, because, so, nevertheless, rather, although, though, and ... etc*, contributes to

producing cohesive texts. Consequently, conjunctions tie the meanings of the parts of the utterances to achieve coordination between sentences. Consider the following example:

- (1). *Ahmad* is a manager of company *and* works in Bahrain, *but* he is in a holiday in Jordan now.

The second device that the speakers or writers use to tie different parts of utterances to create sentences is *substitution*. In addition, the speakers resorts to substitutes in order to economize language and to avoid repetition. So, the words and phrases that are considered substitutes include *so* which substitutes for a sentence or a phrase, *one* as *the second one*, and *another one* which substitutes for noun phrase, and *do* which substitutes for a verb *so do I*. Substitution is illustrated in this example:

- (2). A: Do you think that the government will reform the constitution?
B: I hope *so*.

Here, in the previous dialogue between A and B, the speaker B substitutes *the government will reform the constitution* for *so*. Hence, *so* ties the two parts of the dialogue together by making one meaning depends on the other.

Thirdly, ellipsis is closely related to substitution, which creates cohesive ties by omitting some parts of utterance. The following example is illustrated ellipsis.

- (3). Would you like to have more tickets to the match? I have three. (*tickets*)

In the sentence (3) the word **tickets** was omitted in the second part of the sentence to economize language and to avoid repetition as it is mentioned in the first part of the sentence; hence, it is unnecessary to mention it again.

Fourth, according to Johnstone (2008) *reference* is a cohesive device that refers to an item in a sentence and this item may be mentioned early. Pronouns are the main resource people have for referring, reference can be subcategorized as *exophoric* which refers to something outside the text and *endophoric* which is also subcategorized as follow: *anaphoric* which points backwards, and *cataphoric* which refers to forwards in a text. Here, the following example clarifies the role of reference as a cohesive device.

- (4). A: Look at those people.
B: *They* might be English (anaphoric)
C: After *he* had graduated from the medical college, *Ahmad* worked in a hospital.
(cataphoric)
D: Did you water *those* plants? (exophoric)

As can be noticed, the pronoun (*they*) precedes the sentence (B) as a *anaphoric* reference. So, it is unnecessary for using the word (people) again because it was mentioned in earlier sentence. Again, it creates cohesion between the sentence (A) and the (B) one. Whereas the pronoun (*he*) in the sentence (C) refers to a person that was forwardly mentioned. But in the sentence (D), the exophoric reference (*those*) is not considered a cohesive device as it does not bind two elements within the text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) indicate that there are two different types of cohesion ‘grammatical cohesion’ and ‘lexical cohesion’. According to Halliday, the distinction between grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion is a matter of degree since conjunction is grammatical but with lexical components and so it is difficult to distinguish between the two types. The ‘grammatical cohesion’ are achieved through using DMs such as *and, after all, but, however, now, then* and *yet*. The example below illustrates the ‘*grammatical cohesion*’.

1. (a). Ahmad is the most intelligent student in the class.
- (b). **And** he has got the highest grades in all subjects (additive).
- (c). **Yet**, he failed his Physics test this semester (adversative).
- (d). **Now**, he thinks of taking tutorial lessons in physics (continuative).
- (e). **Because** he wants good marks in physics, he takes a private lessons (causal).

The linking words *and, yet* and *now* in the third example are cohesive devices that state the semantic relationships between (a), (b), (c), and (d). In the sentence (b) the use of (*and*) contributes to introducing additional information, while the use of (*Yet*) in the sentence (c) refers to turning point or reversion. But, in the sentence (d), (*Now*) indicates the temporary situation that Ahmad lives. In the sentence (e), (*because*) refers to causal situation that follows cause and effect.

VI. Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion is a linguistic device that is used to create unity among sentences. Halliday (1994) states that “lexical cohesion is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary.” (274). Thus, the speaker or writer spontaneously selects certain lexical items that are connected to each other in order to achieve lexical cohesion. In other words, ‘lexical cohesion’ can be achieved through several devices such as repetition, substitution, synonymy, antonym, and hyponymy.. So, cohesion is partially expressed through using different types of vocabularies.

VI.1. Repetition is the most direct source of lexical cohesion since it ties between two identical lexical items. One lexical item is repeated in the same sentence or utterance in order to achieve unity of a text. For example: Who is that *woman*? The **woman** who is sitting there is Linda. Here, the second occurrence of woman refers back to the first and repetition gives emphasis to the question that is being asked.

VI.2. Synonymy refers to “a word or phrase with the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the same language .” Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (Fifth Edition, 1998). Halliday and Hasan points out “lexical cohesion results from the choice of a lexical item that is in some sense synonymous with a preceding one” (1976: 331). There are different types of synonymy that can be classified:

A. With identity of reference: Here, the lexical item refers back to the preceding one of the same entity. So, lexical cohesion can be achieved by whether synonyms or subordinates since both types refer to the same identity. For example, the *man* who plays basketball is my *father* . Here, father refers back to the man and both terms have the same identity and are synonyms in the narrower sense. But, in this example, we bought three *blackboards* yesterday. These *boards* were put in the store. Here, boards refers back to blackboards but has a higher level of generality and is therefore a superordinate term.

B. Without identity of reference: In this case, the lexical item that refers back to the preceding one is not of the same entity. However, Halliday (1994) asserts that “it is not necessary for two lexical occurrences to have the same referent in order for them to be cohesive” (282). In other words, Halliday the lexical cohesion exist even though there is no referential relation between the lexical items. For example, this *student* is lazy. Good *students* always do their homework. According to Halliday, “many instances of cohesion are purely lexical, a function simply of the co-occurrence of lexical items, and not in any way dependent on the relation of reference. A lexical item, therefore, coheres with a preceding occurrence of the same item whether or not the two have the same referent, or indeed whether or not there is any referential relationship between them.” (1994: 283). Here, student is specific one, while students refer to general group and the two items are not co-referential . There are three types of synonymy without identity of reference:

1. **Hyponymy:** A type of synonymy that describes a “specific-general” relationship between lexical items. For example, Sami has pet *animals* at home. He has three *cats* (hyponymy).
2. **Meronymy:** A type of synonymy describes "a part whole" relationship between two lexical items. So, the following example illustrates this type of synonymy: Cars have parts: *engine, headlight, wheel* (meronymy).
3. **Antonymy:** A type of synonymy that describes the relationship between two lexical items that have opposite meaning. It is *warm here*, but it might be *cold there* (antonymy).

VI.3. Collocation: McCathy et al (2005) describes collocation as “a natural combination of words; it refers to the way English words are closely associated with each other.” (4). In other words, it is two or more than two lexical items that collocate with each other to produce new meaning. The following example illustrates collocation: He will *take into account* what the boss said (collocation).

VII. Written discourse and spoken discourse.

What differentiates a discourse from random of sentences is that coherence that mainly dependent on using cohesive devices. So, scattered utterances and sentences do not necessarily represent a discourse although one word can be a discourse. When a policeman on the highway stands reluctantly and carries a red sign, moving his hand to stop a car, the driver stops his car. This non-verbal sign is considered as an order as well as a discourse. Also, there are two types of discourse: spoken and written discourse. Brown and Yule (1998) states that the speaker has voice effects such as facial expressions, postural and gestural systems which are called paralinguistic cues. So, these cues are different from one speaker to another but these cues are denied to the writer.

Here, the speaker can pause, make self repair and modify what he is saying. Also, the speaker can get feedback directly from the hearer or the audience while the writer can revise what he has already written. Too, the writer has no fear of dealing with his interlocutor who may exploit the time to choose words and phrases.

If we plan to write a well-organized text, we must pay attention to whether the text is coherent and cohesive or not. So, the construction of sentences in a written discourse differ from using bricks to build a house. Consequently, there are lexical and grammatical relations between the part of sentence and between sentences as a whole.

VIII. Hypotheses

According to the works reviewed, DMs play a significant role in textual cohesion and coherence. So, the study hypothesizes that the students who use DMs in their writings are likely to write cohesive and coherent articles. Hence, the quality of their writings can be evaluated by the teachers according to using discourse markers appropriately and correctly and using multiple lexical devices. Another point, the teachers can address it, which is that the use of substitution, reference and ellipsis is not enough to achieve coherence. The study also predicts that the students may use less lexical devices such as substitution, repetition, reference, hyponyms, synonyms, antonyms, and meronymys that lead to writing cohesion.

IX. Methodology and Data collection

1. Participants

The participants consisted of thirty students who are in the twelfth grade from three public schools in the North-East Badia of Jordan. Ten of them are from the literary stream, ten students are from scientific stream and the others are from agricultural stream. All students participated in writing articles about why they learn English language. The sample equally consists of ten male participants from each school. Their teachers have experience in teaching English (7, 10, 12) years respectively.

2. Method

All participants were given one hour and a half to write an article about why they learn English at the same time as a classroom task without knowing what the purpose of task is to ensure that all students would use discourse markers and lexical devices that can achieve cohesion such as substitution, repetition, reference, hyponyms, synonyms, antonyms, and metonyms as usual. Hence, the quality of their articles was evaluated according to the following criterion: the number of discourse markers that had been used appropriately in each article and how the students use lexical cohesion relevantly to the text.

3. Results

The following tables show the results of the classroom task. **S** refers to the subject, **FDM** stands for the frequency of discourse markers in each articles, **AP** stands for appropriate discourse markers that are used while **SB** refers to the number of words that were substituted in each article, **RF** refers to reference, **RP** refers to the number of words that were repeated, **HY** refers to hyponymy, **AN** stands for antonym, **SY** refers to synonymy while **ME** indicates to meronymy, **CO** refers to collocation and **T** refers to the total words in each article.

(Table:1.1)

Twelfth Grade (1) Literary Stream										
S	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
FMD	9	12	3	5	16	14	18	3	6	8
AP	6	8	1	3	13	10	13	1	3	5
SB	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
RF	4	2	0	3	5	3	7	3	4	4
RP	15	18	13	10	15	12	13	9	11	20
HY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AN	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
SY	3	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
ME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO	2	1	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	2
T	201	244	132	157	262	270	258	177	180	212

(Table:1.2)

Twelfth Grade (2) Scientific Stream										
S	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
FDM	7	5	8	6	4	13	9	7	5	16
AP	4	3	5	4	4	10	4	3	3	12
SB	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RF	4	2	0	3	5	3	7	3	4	4
RP	11	17	16	9	11	13	19	9	8	22
HY	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AN	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
SY	3	3	2	1	4	1	2	2	3	1
ME	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1
T	187	194	200	164	148	255	243	179	182	274

(Table:1.3)

Twelfth Grade (3) Agricultural Stream										
S	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
FDM	14	12	9	9	10	14	11	9	8	12
AP	13	10	7	7	8	11	7	6	7	10
SB	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	2	0	1
RF	5	3	4	5	2	3	6	6	5	3
RP	9	13	18	16	10	7	15	13	6	19
HY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

AN	0	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	1
SY	3	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
ME	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
CO	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
T	204	185	222	208	233	271	239	167	190	240

According to the results shown in the previous tables, it is noticed that the students used few discourse markers in their articles. Also, the study proved that the participants used few semantic and lexical devices to attain lexical cohesion. Too, the study showed that there is a misunderstanding in the use of discourse markers in the writings because some students do not recognize the appropriate and correct use of DMs. Too, some students used spoken discourse markers in their writings because they can't differentiate between written discourse markers and spoken discourse ones.

The most grammatical cohesive device that was used in the students' articles is conjunction while there is less use of substitution than usual. Also, the students did not use ellipsis any more since this grammatical device often disappears in written discourse. However, repetition is the most lexical cohesive device that was used in the articles. In contrast, collocations, and synonyms with and without identity of reference were less used.

X. Data Analysis

Here, the gathered data were analyzed focusing only on the appropriate use of discourse markers and lexical devices that can be judged the quality of writing and whether the articles are coherent or not. Hence, the role of researcher is not to correct spelling or grammatical errors far away from the goal of the study.

Subject (1)

*English language is a universal language **and** I advise all people to learnt it honestly. **It** is not easy to learn it without travelling to Britain and America. You should learn English **as you know** the whole world speaks English **and** communicates in English.*

In this example, the student repeated the conjunction (*and*) twice. Also, the expression *as you know* is inappropriate as it is used in spoken discourse rather than written discourse. Too, the student used anaphoric reference (*It*) that refers to English language. But some grammatical devices and lexical devices were neglected by the student.

Subject (2)

*Because English is a language of communication in the modern country, we should learn it and practice it in our daily life. **Therefore**, I ask every student to learn it and master it.*

Here, the student used the anaphoric reference (*it*) several times. The student used the conjunction (*Therefore*) in inappropriate way. The student must use appropriate conjunction such as *Also, Rather, Too, or Furthermore*.

Subject (7)

***Frankly**, learning a foreign language as English is a big challenge to the students who live in remote areas. **Occasionally**, I find difficult to understand English accent **because of** the English speak different dialects. **But**, I learn English to understand how I talk with the tourist they visit Um-Aljemal Castle.*

The adverb (*Frankly*) is an inappropriate as it is a spoken discourse marker. Also, the conjunction (*because of*) is followed by noun phrase and so the student must omit *of*. The adverb *Occasionally* and the conjunction *But* indicate that the student ignores their role in sequence of ideas.

Subject (10)

*The world became a small village and we are part of this world. **Nevertheless**, most internet sites are written in English. **For this reason**, we should learn this language to navigate the web. And we English is spoken by many people as first and second language.*

The adverb (*Nevertheless*) means *In spite of* or *however*. The conjunction (*Nevertheless*) is often associated with (*but*) and its use is an inappropriate here. The using of the expression (*For this reason*) is unclear since which reason the student talks about. Here, the student should use *Because* instead on *Nevertheless* and omit *For that reason*. Also, the subject

Subject (14)

***Actually**, I learn English to get a high salary and especially the life becomes more complicated now than the past. **On the other hand** we learn English to understand how people live in other countries **and** know their culture.*

Here, the adverb (*Actually*) is used in spoken discourse. The conjunction (*On the other hand*) is used to contrast between two things and the using of this conjunction is an inappropriate here.

Subject (15)

*As a global language English occupies the first place. **Thus**, English is necessary to communicate with other people and to interact with foreigners. **And** there are a lot of people in every country speak English fluently. **Furthermore**, English should be learned in Jordan.*

In these lines the student used the conjunctions (*Thus*), (*And*) and (*Furthermore*) spontaneously because (*thus*) can be preceded by causative sentence and followed by an effect or a result. There are more repetition for the word *English*. There are no collocations, references, synonyms and substitution here. Also, the subject is not coherent because the idea is not clear.

Subject (17)

*I like English and I dream to be English teacher for many reasons. Firstly, English is an international language spoken by over 400 million people. **Because** I want a job in Europe, **so** I decide to learn English. It is **difficult** to communicate with strangers without learning English, but it would be **easy** if you master English.*

Here, the student used conjunctions: *and*, *because*, and *so*. He used (*so*) in an inappropriate way. So, the conjunction (*so*) must be deleted as *because* is followed by *cause* and *effect*. Also, the student used antonyms (*difficult*: *easy*).

Subject (20)

*Every language consists of four skills: **listening, speaking, reading and speaking**. So, **I** can't be good in English without these skills. **I** am **interested in** learning English for several reasons. **And I** like English. **Then** English is taught by most universities in many majors. If **I** do not learn English, **I** will not join a university **and as a result** I will become unemployed.*

In the previous lines, the student used meronymy in an appropriate way. Also, the student repeated the speaker pronoun (*I*) six times as a kind of repetition. The conjunction (*then*) is an inappropriate here because it is used if there are steps. The expression (*interested in*) is a type of collocation that consists of an adjective + a preposition.

Subject (23)

***English** is a global language **and** it is a wide spread over the world. **And English** is used in communication and workshops. **English** should be learnt since when the boys are in early stages.*

To learn a foreign language is a good way to start new job and travel easily.

The student used the conjunction (*and*) more than once and repeated the word (*language*) and (*English*) several times. Also, there are no reference, substitution and ellipsis used in this article. Few discourse markers were used and therefore synonyms and collocations never used.

Subject (26)

*I learn **English** because **it** is compulsory course in the school from the first **class** ended in the twelfth **class**. However, **English** is taught in most Jordan universities and I must learn **English** language to succeed in the school. And in the university I will study religious studies in Arabic.*

Here, there is a repetition for the words (*English, class and learn*). Too, the subject does not contain any type of synonyms as well as collocations. Also, the reference (*it*) refers to English. The discourse marker (*However*) was used inappropriately.

Subject (28)

*My favorite subject in the school is **English** language. I like **English** because of my teacher is tolerant and always encourages me to study. **He** says **English** is necessary demand in this world. **Really**, **he** convinced me to study English hard because **he** said the future will be good if you learn **English**.*

Here, the student used the reference (*he*) and the repetition of the word (*English*) as cohesive devices. Therefore, the use of the discourse marker (*because of*) is inappropriate and must be replaced by (*because*). Also, the adverb (*Really*) is inappropriate here as it is often used in written discourse.

Subject (29)

*To learn English is to communicate with people from different countries. For me I like to learn English because I want to study Medicine in the future. **Nevertheless** all courses are written in English language not other languages.*

Here, the discourse marker (*Nevertheless*) was used inappropriately since this marker often refers to contradiction or opposition between two ideas or sentences. Hence, it must be replaced by an appropriate connector such as (*Too, Therefore or Also*). The student has misconception in using discourse makers and does not vary in vocabularies.

Subject (30)

***Honestly**, I learn English so it is the means of communication in all regions and provinces. Because everywhere we go, we find the people speak English beside their own language. English is the language of the world. **Although** of its widely spoken, it is not easy to be learned without communicating English people.*

In this sample, the student used the adverb (*Honestly*) which is common in spoken discourse rather than spoken discourse. Also, the student used (*so*) in an inappropriate way. So, the conjunction (*so*) must be replaced by (*because*). Too, the conjunction (*although*) has not been followed by (*of*) that must be deleted here. There are no synonyms and collocations in this subject.

Conclusion

The study focused on the effects of discourse markers, grammatical and lexical devices on the quality of English language learners' writings. Also, the study highlights the role of discourse markers in cohesion of writings. There are two types of cohesion: grammatical cohesion that includes DMs, reference, substitution and ellipsis, and lexical cohesion that consists of repetition, synonyms and collocations. However, the two types of cohesion have been discussed in details followed by an experimental study. The study consists of thirty participants whose native language is Arabic, and they have been studying English for twelve years. Each participant was asked to write an article about why he learns English. After analyzing the articles, the results of the study showed that there was misunderstanding in using DMs. The study found that there is less use of lexical devices used by the students. To conclude, most students' writings lack cohesion and coherence and they need a course in creative writing to improve their writings.

References

1. Andersen, G. (2001). *Pragmatic Markers of Sociolinguistic Variation: a Relevance-Theoretic Approach to the Language of Adolescents*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
2. Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1998). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Blakemore, D. (2002). *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding Utterances*. Oxford: Blackwell.
5. Fraser B. 1990. An approach to discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 383-395.
6. Fraser B. 1999. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 931-952.
7. Halliday, M. & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
8. Johnstone, B. (2002). *Discourse analysis*. Oxford : Blackwell publishers.
9. McCarthy et.al. (2005). *English Collocations in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
10. Redeker, G. (1990). Ideational and pragmatic markers of discourse structure. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14, 367-81.
11. Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Schourup, L. (1999). Discourse markers. *Lingua Journal*, 3, 227-265.
13. Werth, P. (1984). *Focus, Coherence and Emphasis*. London: Croom Helm.