

Effectiveness of Discourse Markers Usage in Improving High School Students' Essay Writing performance

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Abstract. The present study sought to examine the effectiveness of discourse markers usage in improving high school students' essay writing performance with respect to two dimensions of appropriateness of usage and usage frequency. The study employed two group quasi-experimental research design. All 160 students participants were randomly divided into either experimental or control group. A pre-test was administered to gain the necessary background of student participants' knowledge of the subject-matter in essay writing before treatment. To measure the two groups' performances on their written output, after sessions of explicit instruction for experimental group on the established areas, a post-test was also conducted. Using a range of measures, the obtained findings revealed a low positive relationship in the pretest essay writing performances between students in control and experimental. There was no significant difference in the pre-test scores between students in the two groups as they all lack skill of appropriate usage of discourse markers. Statistically significant differences were thereafter recorded between pre-test and post-test scores in the writing performance of the students in Experimental group as a result of the treatment. The conclusion suggests that students' writing abilities are improved not only on contribution of length and lexicogrammatical intricacy, but also through consideration of appropriateness in the usage of the discourse markers and how much and how frequently they make use of these transition

elements can significantly predict effective essays' writing quality.

Keywords: Discourse markers, Appropriate usage, Frequency, Essay writing.

1. Introduction

Writing according to Richard, (2002) is undoubtedly a complicated skill to master for L2 learners. The difficulty stems from the fact that generating and organizing ideas and then translating them into readable text are time-consuming and long-sought skill even for native speaker. The complex skills which are used in writing require L2 learners to not only focus on planning and organizing skills in higher level but also on spelling, punctuation, word choice skills in a lower level.

In today's society, the act of writing is ingrained in every aspect of our lives and continue to shape human interaction as we head full force into the 21st century. Writing and the explicit teaching of writing has played a central role in education in many historical periods, from the ancient Greeks through much of the twentieth century. The Greeks valued writing for its rhetorical and persuasive powers; the Romans prized eloquence in writing; and the British of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw it as a tool for instilling moral values (Graham, S., and Hebert, M. A. (2010). Fifty years ago, writing was taught via technical aspects of proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and other

conventions. Grammar instruction, or essentially, “how the English language works,” was thought to be essential to learning how to write and therefore, a principal focus in teaching (Hillocks, 1987).

As scholars began to study writing systematically, it became clear that the written word is an indispensable tool for communication and achievement. In today’s electronic world, writing provides an almost instantaneous means for communicating with family, friends, and colleagues (Graham, 2006). People use writing to explore who they are, to combat loneliness, and to chronicle their experiences. Writing is beneficial both psychologically and physiologically (Smyth, 1998). Writing is also a valuable tool for learning (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkenson, 2004; Graham and Perin, 2007a), enabling us to gather, preserve, and transmit information with great detail and accuracy.

Theoretically, written texts, based on the analysis of schema theory typology by the theorists, as cited in (Sanusi 2017), are identified under “Forma Schemata” which is seen as organizational forms and rhetorical structures. Formal schemata are described as abstract, encoded, internalized, coherent patterns of meta-linguistic, discourse and textual organization that guide expectation in our attempts to understand a meaning piece of language. Formal schemata are learner’s indispensable knowledge of the macro-structure of framework of a text. If a student is familiar with different genres and formats of different writings, it would be very easy for him to activate certain formal schemata stored in his brain according to given information. Thus, students need to activate their previous schemata stored in their long-term memory during the writing process, and they also have to obtain new knowledge which helps them create good essays. Schemata supply the necessary knowledge of phrases, content and organization forms, which have much influence on writing planning, revising and editing process.

The ability to write articulately gives one the power and opportunity to share and influence

thoughts, ideas and opinions with others, not only in day-to-day situations, but across time and space. Admittedly, as May Heller writes, “The value that is placed on reading and writing arises out of share need to literate people, this is a function of our society and of our culture” (1996, p13). As writers, it is important to produce quality works, and as educators, we have to learn a great deal about what it means to teach others to do the same. According to Graham and Herbert (2010) Writing plays two distinct roles in school. First, it is a skill that draws on sub skills and processes such as handwriting and spelling; a rich knowledge of vocabulary; mastery of the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and grammar; and the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text). All are necessary for the production of coherently organized essays containing well developed and pertinent ideas, supporting examples, and appropriate detail (Needels & Knapp, 1994).

This is why it is very important to choose the appropriate discourse marker that makes the logical connection which ensures that the reader understands the text in the way the author had intended. As this will help to create a sense of coherence and provide signposting for the reader to follow the writer’s thread of thought throughout the text. According to Tanskanen (2006), discourse unity can only be established via the use of cohesive devices that contribute to text cohesion. Hence, researchers describe discourse markers as linking words that perform important functions in writing, signal to the reader the direction the writer is taking by connecting or linking ideas within a paragraph and providing a bridge between paragraphs.

2. Literature Review

Most pieces of formal writing are organized in a similar way: introduction; development of main ideas or arguments; conclusion. An organized piece of writing is expected to exhibit effective and coherent use of discourse markers which in other words called linking words or phrases. The linking words or phrases are used to effect a smooth transition from one sentence to another, and more importantly, one paragraph to another.

These linking devices are employed in writing to serve different purposes. These include, sequencing ideas, expressing conditions, expressing contrast, adding further support, stating results, expressing similarities, providing reasons, giving examples or concluding statements.

Kolawole (1998) says the technical nature of writing and the need to use writing to express a writer's thought in a logical and coherent manner call for it to be taught well. All other macro-skills of language are taught without facing serious challenges on how to coordinate ideas, thoughts and the application of mechanics as is required in writing skills. Therefore, appropriate use of discourse markers is a germane issue for an effective written discourse.

Correspondingly, according to Sanusi K.K., (2017) Transition words which in other words called discourse markers play an important role in the development of an academic essay. They help to create a sense of coherence and provide signposting for the reader to follow the writer's thread of thought. Choosing the appropriate discourse markers or any transition words that make the logical connection will ensure that the reader understands the text in the way the author had intended.

According to Sanford (2012) as cited in (Yunus and Haris 2014) "appropriate use of discourse markers depicts accurate meaning of the sentences as well as communicative competence expressions and realistic message efficiency". Discourse markers are crucial in helping both reader and writer to understand better and also stand as a support for comprehension of a text (Eslami & Eslami, 2007). Dergisi' (2010) corroborates this idea, where he stated that a good writing is not only about grammar, but it is as well about cohesion and coherence.

Similarly, according to (Schleppegrell, 2004; Snow & Uccelli, 2009) joining forces with other researchers currently working in this area, with what is identified as "explicit discourse organization" (e.g. using markers to signal text transitions). They argue that in academic writing, organizational discourse markers

contribute to the cohesion of a text, functioning as explicit guidelines for interpreting relations across sentences and discourse fragments. They maintain that extensive research on textual analysis has identified a repertoire of organizational markers characteristic of academic discourse.

Basing on this, Crew (1990:321) outlines three pedagogical approaches which represent what he describes as "three stages of awareness that connectives (Discourse Markers) have as textual meaning and not just surface-level fillers" these approaches may help to explore the ways of enhancing students' ability to use linking devices. He refers to these three approaches as 'Reductionist', 'Expansionist' and 'Deductionist'.

The Reductionist approach suggests that students should be presented with a small subset of a long list of linkers, and over time, students should become more aware of their semantic and discourse value. A shorter list would have the advantage of "allowing the contrasts between the connectives to be more easily stressed" (Crew 1990; 322); where he describes the three problematic areas of conceptual categories: 'Additives', 'Adversative', and 'Causal'.

The Expansionist approach encourages "explicit markers" (Crew 1990; 322) which are expressions which explicitly state the connection with either the preceding or following textual matter. Most of expression would contain the reference word 'this'. Some examples that Crew list are: 'because of this', 'for this purpose', 'as a result of this'.

The criticism of the above two approaches is that they work from backward to discourse. Rather than concentrating on discourse first, they only consider method of controlling output. As they focus at the level of lexis, the logical development of the argument or discussion is taken for granted.

To try to remedy this effect, Crew presents a third approach: the 'deductionist' approach, which begins by obliging the students before the writing process (within the essay plan), for example, to state the connection between the stages in the argument (Crew 1990:323). If we

do this first, we can use lexical selections from a more complex list, rather than having terms like 'additive' and 'adversative' as the category titles, the sections could be labeled with discourse questions. Crew (1990:323) suggests some of the following:

Does your next section add another similar point to the argument? If so, is it of same importance or of greater importance? Same? Use 'also', 'in addition', or 'besides'. Greater? Use 'moreover', or 'furthermore'.

Does your next section add an opposing point to the argument? If so, are points valid or does the second one cancel out the first? Both valid use 'but', 'however', 'nevertheless' or 'on the other hand'. The second cancel the first? Use 'on the contrary'.

Crew says that the schema above will ultimately need to contain a full range of discourse moves (1990:323), for example, *listing, comparing, exemplifying, showing consequence, rephrasing and concluding*.

Furthermore, drawing from information gathered from concerted efforts of researchers, a piece of writing or text may also include a complete list of transition words and conjunctions which are called cohesive devices or discourse markers. These markers are identified with a lot of functions, some can be used to link paragraph and other can be used to link ideas within a paragraph. All these call for students to plan and organize their imagination clearly and in sequential order to fulfill the essence of writing. Below are lists of some which are commonly used:

To indicate time order

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

To indicate how or when something occurs in time

Suddenly, all at once, instantly, immediately, quickly, directly, soon, as soon as, just then, when, sometimes, some of the time, in the meantime, occasionally, rarely, seldom, infrequently, temporarily, periodically, gradually, eventually, little by little, slowly,

while, meanwhile, always, all of the time, without exception, at the same time, repeatedly, often, frequently, generally, usually, as long as, never, not at all

To indicate sequence

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

To repeat

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

To provide an example

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

To concede

Of course, after all, no doubt, naturally, unfortunately, while it is true, although this may be true, although, to admit, to confess, to agree

To conclude or to summarize

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

To add a point

Also, too, as well as, besides, equally important, first of all, furthermore, in addition (to), moreover, likewise, above all, most of all, least of all, and, either...or, neither...nor, however, yet, but, nevertheless, still, to continue

To compare

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

similarly, similar to, in comparison, in relation to

To contrast

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

To emphasise or to intensify

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

To generalize

On the whole, in general, as a rule, in most cases, broadly speaking, to some extent, mostly

Showing our attitude to what we are saying

Frankly, honestly, I think, I suppose, after all, no doubt, I'm afraid, actually, as a matter of fact, to tell the truth, unfortunately

Following this line of inquiry, a number of studies have been conducted by various researchers on the usage of discourse markers which in other words called cohesive devices. In a study conducted by the duo of Yunus, M., & Haris, N. (2014) on the Use of Discourse Markers among Form Four SLL Students in Essay Writing in Malaysia. The result of the research which involved three categories of discourse markers in terms of misused, overused and advanced used showed that the misused and overused of discourse markers indeed affected the flow of the students' essay writing and makes it less coherent.

Abdul Rahman, Z. A. A. (2013). Investigated the use of cohesive devices in descriptive writing by Omani student-teachers. The results

of the study indicated that there was a notable difference between the natives' and the students' use of cohesive devices in terms of frequency, variety, and control. While L1 English users' writing displayed a balance between the use and frequency of various types of cohesive devices, the students overused certain types (repetition and reference) while neglecting to use the others, thereby often, rendering their written texts noncohesive.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Olateju (2006) examined the use of cohesive devices in the essays of 70 final-year students of Ooni Girls High School in Osun State. The researcher concluded that although the students had 6 years of intensive English instruction at the secondary-school level, they lacked the ability to properly use cohesive devices in their essays.

Considering the submissions of these researchers, it becomes crystal clear that raising awareness on the pedagogical implication on the effectiveness of appropriate use of discourse markers and their frequent usage for quality written texts can never be overemphasized. Abdul Rahman, Z. A. (2013) supporting this assertion, argues that to use writing as a means of communication, it is necessary to go beyond sentence-level manipulation to the production of paragraphs and subsequently to multi-paragraph compositions. Once people are involved in writing two or more interconnected sentences, they have to use these cohesive devices as a means of linking sentences together and organize ideas into a unified whole.

3. Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to find the relative effectiveness of discourse markers usage in improving students' performance in English essay writing. Specifically, the objectives of the study are; to assess the level at which students use discourse markers in their essay writing before given treatment; to determine the effect of using discourse markers on students essay writing performance when exposed to treatment and to determine the differential effect of discourse markers usage on the essay writing performance of students exposed to treatment over those without treatment.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised based on the statement of the problems:

What is the positive relationship in the pretest essay writing performances between students in control and experimental in terms of discourse markers usage?

Is there any significant difference in the pre-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups?

Is there any significant difference in the post-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups?

Is there any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in the writing performance of students in Experimental group?

5. Research Hypotheses

The following were formulated to guide the study:

- There is a low positive relationship in the pretest essay writing performances between students in control and experimental in terms of discourse markers usage.
- There are no significant differences in the pre-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups.
- There are significant differences in the post-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups.
- There are significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores in the writing performance of the students in Experimental group.

6. Methodology

Method and the statistical procedure employed in carrying out the study are here presented. The research design, population, sample and sampling technique, research instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument and procedure for data collection are specifically discussed.

6.1 Research design

The study adopted two group quasi-experimental design using pretest and posttests. This allowed

the application of treatment on the experimental group and comparison with the control group.

6.2 Population, sample and sampling technique

The population of this study was made up of all the final year students of Orolu Local Government Public Senior Secondary Schools in Osun state. The local government in Osun state belongs to the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria. Ifon-Osun is the headquarters of Orolu Local Government where this study is being carried out in western part of Nigeria. As at the time of this research, Orolu Local Government had 10 public secondary schools out of which 3 are high schools and the remaining are middle schools. All the three high schools with 160 numbers of students are therefore considered for this study. The study used universal sampling technique where the whole 160 students comprised by the three selected schools were considered as sample size. The selected students were randomly divided into either control or experimental group of 80 students each.

6.3 Research instrument

The study made use of an adapted WAEC essay writing pass question tagged 'The English Essay Writing Test' (EEWT) as an instrument for data collection. This test was made up of a narrative essay which was used to assess student writing skill. This instrument is of national and international status. It has been standardized and is employed by teachers of English and experts in English studies.

6.4 Validity of the instruments

For face, content analysis and editing, the essay test was critically examined by experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, two experienced high school teachers of English language and experts in language testing for critical appraisal before administration.

6.5 Reliability of the instruments

This is to ascertain the consistency and stability of the instruments in measuring what they are intended to measure. In doing this, test re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument following Cronbach's suggestion. The trial test was done using two high schools

which were not part of the study. The results of the re-test were subjected to item analysis using Person Product Movement Correlation where a coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. This shows that the essay test was reliable to perform the purpose for which it was designed.

6.6 Procedure for data collection

Initially, the participants, both control and experimental groups were administered with a pretest in order to test for the level at which they make use of discourse markers before treatment. Afterwards, the experimental group was treated with necessary instructions on effective usage of discourse markers towards the improvement on their essay writing which lasted for two weeks. During this period, the students in the control group were not taught by the researcher. To compare the two groups' writing performance and the effectiveness of the treatment on the experimental group, the researcher observed all the groups again for post-test. The students' essay work for pre-test and post-test were thereafter scored and the results were subjected to statistical analysis.

6.7 Data analysis

The results of the study are presented according to the sequence of the hypotheses generated. The data collected were analyzed using Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Independent sample t-test for the comparability of the mean scores. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

6.8 Assessment tool and measurement

A package titled Essay Writing Discourse Markers Usage Guide (EWMUG) consisting of instruction to be used to measure the participants' written outputs in both two groups was developed by the researcher. Here, the researcher included the two dimensions of "Appropriateness of Discourse Markers Usage" (ADMU) and "Frequency of Discourse Markers Usage" (FDMU). The tool was developed to guide discourse markers usage as alternative to syntactic accuracy and complexity as in Grammatical Accuracy. This is because, while there are specific procedures in published materials for standard assessment for measuring syntactic errors in writing, there is no currently a

consistent protocol utilized for measuring students' writing progress in discourse markers usage. Based on this, an analytic rubric was used as a scoring scale for assessing students' writing skills including two components mentioned: appropriateness of discourse markers usage and frequency of discourse markers usage.

6.9 Appropriateness of discourse Markers Usage (ADMU):

To measure this, some number of errors were employed for analysis. Specifically, the researcher considers (1) error in misuse of discourse markers. E.g. "but", "and" at beginning of sentence or using "so" and "therefore" together in a sentence etc. (2) error in overuse or wrong use of discourse markers. These were included in the measurement as qualities which are grouped under the item "Appropriateness of usage" with a maximum mark of 20. Therefore, the lower the number of these errors, the higher the appropriate usage would be.

6.10 Frequency of Discourse Markers Usage" (FDMU):

Here, because some students lack proficiency in the usage of discourse markers, they therefore use discourse markers occasionally in their writing. Only better students use discourse markers throughout in their writing. In the light of this, positive qualities in terms of frequency of discourse markers usage in the transition of one phrase to another in a sentence, or more specifically, from one paragraph to another should be adequately measured. To measure this, we look for; (1) How frequent discourse markers are used. (2) Variety of different discourse markers used. (3) Judicious use to avoid overuse, underuse or repetition. These 3 qualities mentioned are those group under the item "Frequency of usage" with a maximum mark of 20. Therefore, the higher the frequency and variety in the usage of discourse markers, the higher the mark would be or vice versa.

Interpretation Guide: each item was marked out of 20 marks. The analysis on each item shows the strength and weaknesses based on the indicator in terms of means. Therefore, the mean scores can be explained as: (1) a mean score that is less than 10 is rated low. (2) a mean score that

is between 10 and 15 is rated Average. (3) A mean score of greater than 15 is rated high.

experimental group in terms of discourse markers usage.

7. Findings

Hypothesis 1: There is a low positive relationship in the essay writing pretest performances between students in control and

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on students' pretest scores on appropriateness of discourse markers usage and frequency of discourse markers usage.

Control group

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Appropriateness of usage	80	5.9375	2.39907	Low
Frequency of usage		6.3750	2.14284	Low
Average		6.1562	1.59825	Low
Experimental group				
Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Appropriateness of usage	80	6.6625	2.43364	Low
Frequency of usage		6.3875	1.59825	Low
Average		6.5250	1.66859	Low

The results of pretest presenting the means of the students in control and experimental groups for pre-test were contained in this table as they centered on hypothesis testing the level of relationship in the essay writing performances between students in control and experimental group in terms of appropriate and frequency usage of discourse markers.

Therefore, according to the findings as shown in Table 1, item 1 in the control group students' scores has the mean of 5.9375, Std. is 2.39907, item 2 mean is 6.3750, std. is 2.14284. Then, the total average mean for the items 1 and 2 is 6.1562. This shows that the level of Discourse markers usage based on the appropriateness and frequency of usage on the writing skills of the control group's students in pretest is low according to the interpretation guide. Also, in the experimental group's scores, item 1 has the mean of 6.6625, Std. is 2.43364, item 2 mean is 6.3875, std. is 1.59825. Then, the total average mean for the items 1 and 2, is 6.5250, which is also low according to the interpretation guide. This indicates that the level of relationship in the pretest essay writing performances between students in control and experimental group in terms of appropriateness and frequency in the usage of discourse markers is low.

Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences in the pre-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups.

Table 2: Independent sample t-test for the pre-test scores of control and experimental groups

Items	Groups	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	t-value	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Appropriateness of usage	Control	80	5.9375	2.39907	-1.898	158	0.060
	Experimental	80	6.6625	2.43364	-1.898		
Frequency of usage	Control	80	6.3750	2.14284	-.033	158	0.973
	Experimental	80	6.3875	2.56803	-.033		
Average	Control	80	6.1562	1.59825	-1.427	158	0.155
	Experimental	80	6.5250	1.66859	-1.427		

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In the above table 2, the pretest scores of students on Appropriateness of usage indicate that, for control group the mean is 5.9375, std. is 2.39907, t(158) is -1.898 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.060 while for the experimental group, mean is 6.6625, std. is 2.43364, t(158) is -1.898 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.060. On Frequency of usage, for control group the mean is 6.3750, std. is 2.14284, t(158) is -.033 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.973 while for the experimental group, mean is 6.3875, std. is 2.56803, t(158) is -.033 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.973. On the average for control group, the mean is 6.1562, std. is 1.59825, t(158) is -1.427

and sig (2-tailed) is 0.155 while for the experimental group, mean is 6.5250, std. is 1.66859, t(158) is -1.427 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.155.

This indicate that the participants in the two groups of study do not make use of discourse markers appropriately and frequently in their essay writings. They were homogenous in their written output and not statistically different in their essay writing with respect to the two mentioned dimensions.

Hypothesis 3: There are significant differences in the post-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test for the post-test scores of control and experimental groups

Items	Groups	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Appropriateness of usage	Control	80	4.1875	1.66949	-41.384	158	0.000
	Experimental	80	16.5500	2.08612	-41.384		
Frequency of usage	Control	80	7.4000	2.27034	-26.033	158	0.000
	Experimental	80	15.8000	1.78176	-26.033		
Average	Control	80	5.7938	1.50882	-46.656	158	0.000
	Experimental	80	16.1750	1.29776	-46.656		

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05level.

In the above table 3, students' scores indicates that in the posttest on Appropriateness of usage for control group, the mean is 4.1875, std. is 1.66949, t(158) is -41.384 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.000 while for the experimental group, mean is 16.5500, std. is 2.08612, t(158) is -41.384 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.000. On Frequency of usage for control group the mean is 7.4000, std. is 2.27034, t(158) is -26.033 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.00 while for the experimental group, mean is 15.651, std. is 2.189, t(158) is -26.033 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.000. On the average scores for control group, the mean is 5.7938, std. is 1.50882, t(158) is -46.656 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.000 while for the experimental group, mean is 16.1750, std. is 1.29776, t(158) is -46.656 and sig (2-tailed) is 0.00.

It shows here that students in experimental group outperformed their counterpart in the control group. The results therefore suggested that the appropriate and frequent usage of discourse markers in essay writing really do have an effect on writing performance of the language students, as there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, when students followed instructions and avoid misuse, wrong use or underuse of discourse markers in their essay writings, they improve in their written output.

Hypothesis 4: There are significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores in the writing performance of students in Experimental group.

Table 4: One sample t-test for pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Items	N	Tests	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Appropriateness of usage	80	Pre-test	6.6625	2.43364	24.486	79	0.000
		Post-test	16.5500	2.08612	70.958		
Frequency of usage	80	Pre-test	6.3875	2.56803	22.247	79	0.000
		Post-test	15.8000	1.78176	79.314		
Average	80	Pre-test	6.5250	1.59825	34.977	79	0.000
		Post-test	16.1750	1.29776	111.480		

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05level.

One Sample t-test was run to see whether there is any statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on the experimental group students essay writing performance in terms in terms of discourse marker usage. As illustrated in the Table 4, the

results of the t-test indicated that there was statistically significant difference. According to the pretest scores on appropriate usage, (Mean= 6.6625, SD= 2.43364); t-value (79) 24.486 and Posttest, (Mean= 16.5500, SD=2.08612); t-value (79) = 70.958, p-value (2-tail) = 0.000. On

Frequency usage pretest, (Mean= 6.3875, SD=2.56803); t-value (79) = 22.247 and Posttest, (Mean= 15.8000, SD=1.78176); t-value (79) = 79.314, p-value (2-tail) = 0.000. Then, on the average score for both pretest and posttests, scores for pretest are: (Mean= 6.5250, SD= 1.59825); t-value (79) = 34.977 while for Posttest, (Mean= 16.1750, SD=1.29776); t-value (79) =111.480, p-value (2-tail) = 0.000. The above obtained results, indicated that there was statistically significant difference between pretest and posttests scores of the experimental groups of the study in respect to their written output. This indicated that the group performed better in their second test (posttest) as a result of treatment they received. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted.

8. Discussion

In this study, the effect of discourse markers in terms of appropriateness and frequency of usage for the development of students essay writing was examined. The underlying logic is that making high school students aware of a lot of functions that discourse markers are identified with in improving their essay writing performances. As Al-Kohlani (2010) argues, the scarcity of competency in using discourse markers indeed affects the coherence in writing especially in advanced level. The results are discussed in relation to research hypotheses.

The results of the analysis of hypothesis one revealed that there was a low positive relationship in the pretest mean scores of the students both in control and experimental group before the treatment as they maintained a non-significant variation in the mean scores at pre-test level. This means the entire students lack knowledge of appropriate usage of discourse markers and some hardly make use of these devices in their essay writing. It was therefore clearly showed that all students in both groups performed low. This result substantiates that of Abdurrahman (2013) which states that the students overuse of certain types of discourse markers while neglecting others, thereby rendering their written texts noncohesive. This findings similarly lean support from that of Olateju (2006) where he concluded that the

students lacked the ability to properly use cohesive devices in their essay writing.

The results from hypothesis two revealed that there were no significant differences in the pre-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups. They were homogenous in their writing performances. The researcher found that the respondents mostly made use of discourse markers wrongly and again, they rarely used different discourse markers in their essays because the discourse markers they used were almost the same and lacked of variety. These findings are in line with those of Yunus and Haris (2014) on their investigation on the use of discourse markers among Form Four second language learner (SLL) students in essay writing in Malaysia. They stated that “based on the respondent’s essays, there were quite a number of them who misused the function of discourse markers in their essays”.

The analysis of the results of the hypothesis three in this study showed that there were statistically significant differences in the post-test scores between students in the Control and Experimental groups. The results was in favour of the students of experimental group as a results of treatment they received on the appropriate ways of using discourse markers. This implies that providing students with necessary knowledge on the best way of improving their essay writing by adequately making use of discourse markers and appropriately making use of these devices can greatly enhance their writing skills and hence, create cohesion and coherence in their written outputs. The results converged with that of Sanusi K.K. (2017).

According to the findings on the analysis of research hypothesis four, there were statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores in the writing performance of students in Experimental group. The findings of this study revealed a wide range of different performances as evident in the students' scores. Here, the pre-test and post-test scores of the Experimental group were juxtaposed as the effects of the treatment on the Experimental group sparked off a notable significant difference between the two tests favouring post-

test. The mean scores at the post-test level are significantly greater than those of the pre-test. Effect of the appropriate use of discourse markers according to this out-come shows that effective writing is teachable as a process not only product of accurate use of grammar and vocabulary alone but a process that entails discovering information on general development of writing skills.

9. Implication of findings

This study has been able to provide useful information specifically to language learners on more effective ways discourse markers can be made used for the improvement of their essay writing performance. The facts that beyond mechanics and spelling conventions, academic writing requires progressive mastery of advanced discourse elements and functions are fully established. It is also noteworthy in the findings, the Pedagogically-useful tools to assess such language features in adolescents' writing.

10. Conclusion

The empirical evidence drawn from this study shows that students' writing abilities are improved not only on contribution of length and lexico-grammatical intricacy, but also through consideration of appropriateness in the usage of the discourse markers and how much and how frequently they make use of these transition elements can significantly predict effective essays' writing quality. It is also noted that, by providing a good flow of ideas, there will be less interruption for the reader to understand what the writer tries to conveyed, hence, this will create a good quality of writing and allows communicative occurrence to be equally achieved.

11. Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- The language learners as well as teachers of English as second language

should adopt the approach exposed in this study for improved performances.

- Curriculum designers through the Education Ministries should incorporate in English syllabus the variety of discourse markers as this will influence the students' communicative competencies.
- Publishers of language books at high school level should produce textbook materials that would reflect developments and innovations in teaching essay writing based on the use discourse markers.
- Government should help in procuring books, journals and other facilities that can help in the development of the writing skill.

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