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THE EFFECT OF EXPLICIT TEACHING OF DISCOURSE MARKERS ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC FLUENCY

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ABSTRACT

Research into classroom interaction can be contributive to achieving a better comprehending of what goes on in an EFL classroom. This might shed light into the mental processes of speakers. This study aims to investigate the impact of teaching discourse markers on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic fluency. 70 Iranian advanced EFL learners (15 male and 35 females) with age range of 20-40 years, learning English at the language center of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in Ahvaz, Iran were required to participate in this study. Out of 70 only 50 were found to be homogenized by a proficiency test. They were assigned two groups: experimental and control. Both groups were administered a pragmatic fluency pre-test which was composed of a general topic eliciting their opinions about the air pollution in Ahvaz, Iran. The experimental group was presented with the treatment, DMs instruction, in eight sessions. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis and comparison. The results of paired t-test showed no statistically significant difference between the performances of the experimental and control group on the pre-test. The results of the independent t-test, however, showed a significant difference between the mean score of pre-test and post-test of experimental group. That is experimental group which had been exposed to the treatment outperformed the control group under conventional approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Research into classroom interaction and the study of non-native use of language based on an analysis of the discourse can be very instructive for two main reasons: first, it may contribute to achieving a better comprehending of what takes place inside the EFL classroom and second, it provides a worthy probability to analyze and the language used by non-native teachers and learners of EFL. An essential contribution of discourse analysis to language teachers was presented by McCarthy (1991) who determined not only a sound theoretical framework and explanation according to the study conducted by him but also practical activities which sensitized teachers towards the language used inside their own classrooms.

Definitions

Discourse markers

A theoretical definition of DMs is described as "members of a functional class of verbal (and non-verbal) devices which

provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk" (ibid.41). At the deeper level, they are reflexive; they mirror the mental processes of speaker as imagined and predicted in "the fabric of talk-in-interaction" noticing on what happens in speaker's mind (Redeker 2006). An increasing number of studies and researches in linguistics are concerned with English discourse markers found in oral discourse such as 'so', 'because', 'and', 'but', 'or', 'oh', 'well', 'now', 'then', 'you know', 'I mean', 'I'm just saying' etc. Schiffrin (1987) operationally defined discourse markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket unit of talk". They are mostly used with high frequency in spontaneous speech and rarely found in rehearsed or prepared and planned talk.

Pragmatics

Kasper (1993) defined the term as "the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context" (p. 3). This brief definition states the elements of context and production as relevant elements of pragmatics that are fundamentals of any speech act in a language. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the eminent American philosopher and scientist, claimed that pragmatic fluency has a lot to do with

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pragmatic meaning and defined pragmatic meaning as a rule of logic expressed in the Pragmatic Maxim (PM): *Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object* (5.402, 1878, How to Make our Ideas Clear). He claimed that the meaning of a concept is the sum total of its implications for possible observations and actions.

Markers and Pragmatics

Like Schiffrin's perspective, Fraser's (1990, 1998, 2006, 2009a) approach to discourse markers is embedded within a larger framework that impacts upon the analysis of markers. Fraser's theoretical framework concerns the meaning of sentences, specifically how one type of pragmatic marker in a sentence may relate the message conveyed by that sentence to the message of a prior sentence. In contrast to Schiffrin's (1987a) approach to accounting for the use and distribution of markers in everyday discourse -Fraser's starting point is the classification of types of pragmatic meaning, and within that classification, the description of how some pragmatic commentary markers (discourse markers) "signal a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them and the prior discourse segment" (Fraser 2009a: 296).

Statement of the Problem

The present study is designed to spot out the instruction and effect of discourse markers (DMs) on second language learning especially in EFL context. A few numbers of researches have focused on the effects of DMs in second language acquisition, especially in EFL context where the learners do not have a great opportunity to impose with second language.

Significance of the Study

This study will be conducted in order to investigate the impact of DM on Iranian EFL learners, outcome. This study can be helpful for syllabus designers, curriculum planners, researchers, EFL Language teachers, and EFL students and anybody who wants to provide flexible environments, which are necessary for optimizing learning and teaching. Most of the research on this issue has been limited to its theoretical and conceptual dimensions but not to its practical implications. Teaching discourse markers can raise the quality of awareness in both teachers and learners when they are in terms of listeners, interlocutors, or audiences who need to follow up the speaker's chain of thoughts.

The Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of explicit instruction of discourse markers on learners' pragmatic fluency in the context of English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the study tries to focus on the use of discourse markers in Iranian EFL classroom interactions. The main objective of this research is to enrich the literature of DMs by seeking its impact on learners' outcomes especially in their pragmatic fluency and the way they can practice it in EFL classroom interaction.

Research Questions

The present study is trying to answer the following research questions:

- Do teaching discourse markers have any effects on EFL learners' pragmatic fluency performance?
- What's the difference between the pragmatic fluency of experimental group and control group after explicit teaching discourse markers to the experimental group?

Research Hypothesis

- The null hypothesis generated from this study indicates that teaching discourse markers has no effect on EFL learners' pragmatic fluency.
- Teaching discourse markers have no effect on the experimental group of participants.
- There is no difference between control group and experimental group after teaching discourse markers.

Literature review

Theoretical framework

According to van Dijk (1997), people use language to communicate ideas, beliefs or emotions in social situations. He also adds that in communicative events, the participants do not restrict themselves to using the language or communicating, they interact (Dijk, 1997): As Douglas (2001) mentioned, language is seen as social interactions which occur within a classroom context, among adult students and a non-native teacher of EFL. One particular dimension of classroom interaction and language use is the occurrence of discourse markers. Since 1987, a great deal of attention has been focused on DMs. In spite of the influence of discourse markers on both second language fluency and proficiency, as well as their high frequency in spoken language, they have received relatively little attention in second language acquisition research (Müller 2005).

Operational framework

Pragmatic fluency

An important issues regarding pragmatic fluency is through instructing DMs. There have been few studies regarding pragmatic fluency and DMs. This section revises the most relevant measures used in previous studies. House (1996) measured the development of pragmatic fluency through the use of gambits, discourse strategies, speech acts, turn-taking, speech rate, pauses, and repairs. Gambits, the linguistic features frequently used in oral interactions which are also named discourse markers, were categorized by Edmonson and House (1981) and by House (1996) into the subsequent kinds: the uptake that provides the information which the message has been received and accepted; the clarifier, which is the on-going speaker's utterance; the applier, which is what the speaker expects the interlocutor to do; and the starter, which anticipates expects the speaker is going to say something. Expressions like ok, you know, well, now, right, yeah, are regarded as gambits. As regards fluency measures are concerned, House (1996) analyzed the speech rate of the

learners' production in addition to the frequency of filled and unfilled pauses. The results overall demonstrated that the groups he determined, improved in their use of routines. Taguchi (2007a, 2007b) exploited fluency measures in relation to proficiency and pragmatic competence. The results showed that the pragmatic knowledge did not always seem to match the learners processing capacity. Taguchi (2007b) investigated on task difficulty in L2 oral output in requests and refusals in different power relation situations. He analyzed appropriateness, planning time, and speech rate in the data. The results showed that, in the situations where there was a higher power relation, speech rate was generally slower and the learners at low proficiency level required more planning time. Conversational routines have been regarded as a way to promote fluency and pragmatic competence as well (Kasper, 1995; House, 1996, 2003; Kanagy, 1999). Conversational routines are related to particular social circumstances and carry a strong pragmatic force. Such expressions are categorized into two: routines, which are wholly memorized structured such as 'how are you'; and patterns that are only partially memorized structures with open slots such as 'Can you X' (Hakuta, 1974).

Discourse markers in pedagogic settings

Classroom, as Walsh (2006) calls attention to, is a "dynamic" context (p. 4) where series of interactions take place among teachers, learners, discourses, settings and learning materials. Communications between teachers and learners like conversation and dialogue are realized through the medium of classroom discourse. As one main part of classroom interaction, DMs are advantageous to support the flow of speech. Three main attempts were developed at roughly the same time; Schiffirin (1987), Blakemore (1987) and Fraser (1988). Schiffirin (1987) provides a very detailed analysis of DMs as linguistic expressions. She analyzes the semantic and grammatical status of these markers, their functions and features. She points out that DMs are exploited in discourse due to the point that they present "contextual coordinates for utterances". I.e. they contribute to building the local coherence which is jointly constructed by speaker and interlocutor in their discourse structure, context, meaning and action during interaction. They serve to demonstrate how what is being said is related to what has already been said, either through a speaker's turn or across speakers' turns.

The different studies of DMs distinguish several domains where they may be functional, in which there are included textual, attitudinal, cognitive and interactional parameters. Researchers such as Fox Tree and Schrock (1999) suggest that the existence of DMs such as *well* and *I mean* is one of the most salient characteristics of spontaneous talk. Regarding that the use of DMs produces a naturalistic conversational influence, many novelists work on the given trait to distinguish their descriptions of the setting or plot and the characters' dialogue. The fact that the early work on DMs draw primarily on conversational issues also reflects the close relationship between DMs and orality. All in all, DM use brings about one of the important aspects of natural spoken discourse. Discourse analysts and language teachers can hardly afford to ignore its importance in oral language. Studies on DMs encompass investigations and descriptions of their use

in different languages. Müller (2005) analyzed the use of seven DMs in conversations of native and non-native speakers of English in Germany and USA.

Considering the study of DMs in classroom context, De Fina (1997) investigated the function of the Spanish marker *bien* in classroom interaction. She compared the use of this particular DM in classroom discourse to its use in conversation and discussed both similarities and differences of situational variations. In their attempt at determining if consultation of a corpus of classroom discourses can be beneficial in language teacher pedagogy, Amador, O'Riordan and Chambers (2006) analyzed the uses of discourse markers in French and Spanish. A quantitative analysis illustrate the low number of frequencies of DMs in both a French class and a Spanish class while a qualitative analysis described the main functions of DMs identified in classroom discourse. These functions were classified into five groups regarding mainly the role of the teacher in the classroom: To present a new topic or activity; to motivate the pupils; to call the pupils' attention; to elaborate or recap what has been said. In a recent research Hellerman and Vergun (2007) investigated the frequency of use and some functions of three specific discourse markers, *well*; *you know*; and *like* in classroom interaction and in-home interviews. Their results propose that the pupils who exploit more discourse markers are those who are more acculturated to the US and use them outside their classroom. After this overview on discourse markers, a brief account on research regarding non-native EFL teachers discourse will be presented.

Non-Native EFL Teachers

To focus on this issue, it would be perhaps important to refer to what is meant by native speaker of English. A native speaker of English would be a person who speaks only English, or a person who learned another language later in life but still mainly uses English as L1. The language used by non-native teachers in the EFL classroom has been studied by relatively few scholars. By applying standard discourse analysis procedures, Cots and Diaz (2005) analyzed the nonnative teachers' classroom function looking predominantly at the structure of social relationships and the way linguistic knowledge is conducted. Their analysis proposed that teacher talk might be a continuum that locates teachers' discourse somewhere between a discourse of power and a discourse of solidarity and that gender variables may be more relevant than nativeness in order to comprehend interactional styles in the EFL classroom. Frodden, Restrepo, and Maturana (2004) conducted a research project on foreign language teachers' discourse and practices with respect to evaluation in two Colombian universities.

Their main aim was to contribute to the improvement of non-native English teachers' assessment practices. Pineda (2004) explored how adult EFL students and non-native teachers constructed meaning in the classroom when dealing with critical thinking related tasks, the meta-cognitive processes involved, the types of interactions built around the tasks and how they influenced language competence and critical thinking. Chang (2004) investigated the relationships between five EFL non-native teachers' identities and the impact on their teaching practices in Taiwan. The study proved that the

five participants' knowledge of multiculturalism and language awareness, their Chinese-centered education, and their educational and personal experiences were evident in their teaching. As Müller (2005) claims little is known about DMs usage by nonnative speakers and, even less is known about their usage by non-native EFL teachers.

MATERIALS AND MOTHEDS

Participants

The participant in this study were 50 Iranian advanced EFL learners who were learning English at the language center of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in Ahvaz, Iran. Seventy students were participated in the placement test which was conducted by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. Having obtained the proficiency test results, the researcher decided to choose those participants whose score range fell one standard deviation above and below the mean (i.e. mean±1). This being so, only 50 members met this homogeneity criterion and were thus selected to serve as the participants of this study. The participants' age ranged from 20 to 40 years. Fifteen of them were male and the rest were female. All the participants' mother tongue was Persian and English was studied as a foreign language. According to the results of proficiency test, which was used as a homogeneity criterion in this study, all student participants somehow were at the same language proficiency level; therefore, they were randomly assigned to the two equal groups (experimental and control) involved in the study (25 students each).

Instruments

In order to collect the data three instruments were used: a proficiency test which is divided to two sections (placement test and demographic information), and voice recorder.

Proficiency Test

In this study in order to make sure that student participants were truly homogenous with regard to their English proficiency level and minimize the individual differences, the Quick Placement Test of Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, version 1 (2001) was given to them. The test was divided to two parts contained 8 sections with total of 60 items and 30 minutes time allotted for the participants to copy their answers onto the answer sheets (see Appendix A). It seemed more appropriate to employ standardized test which was specifically designed for this purpose. The reliability of this test was estimated as 0.910, using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3.3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Nof Items
.885	.910	60

Demographic information

The second sectionof the proficiency test was designed to collect the members' demographic information, including their

genders, age, and first language. Demographic information about the participants is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Gender	First language	Age			
		20-24	25-29	30-34	35 or more
Male (N=15)	Persian	4	7	2	2
Female (N=35)	Persian	9	14	5	7

A Voice Recorder

Since in this study pragmatic fluency of EFL learners was significant, for pre-test and post-test there is a need to record the participants' oral interaction; therefore a voice recorder was used.

Procedures

Design of the Study

In the present study, a proficiency test was carried out using the Quick Placement Test of Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, version 1 (2001). The researcher distributed the proficiency testat the language center of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in Ahvaz, Iran. Subjects with one score lower or higher than men were included. The participants were randomly assigned to the experimental and control group. Then, a pre-test was given to both groups. The experimental group was exposed to treatment for eight sessions. Finally a post-test was given to both groups.

Data Collection Procedures

At the first step, participants were divided randomly into control and experimental group. Proficiency test which was the Quick Placement Test of Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, version 1 (2001) was administered to determine the language proficiency level of the participants. The participants received one point for each correct answer and this test was taking 30 minutes. Since this study was designed to focus on the pragmatic fluency of EFL learners after employing certain types of treatment, a pre-test and post-test were used to assess the participants' knowledge of request prior to and after the treatment phase of the study. Before the treatment, the pre-test of fluency speaking performance was administered to both the experimental and the control groups. For pre-test in this study, all the candidates had a conversation on a general topic selected by the researcher (their opinion about the air pollution in Ahvaz). Each participant talked about the topic for about three minutes.

All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed for the purpose of further analysis and comparison. The learners in the experimental group were presented with the treatment in eight sessions, which was DMs instruction, consuming 15 minutes of the class time. In each session, they were familiarized with some types of DMs explicitly by the use of some examples. No DMs instruction was presented to the participants in the control group. They were only asked to memorize the conversations and do the role plays. At the end of the treatment, in order to see the effect of the DMs

instruction on the learner's oral fluency, again, the candidates had a conversation on a selected topic individual as a post-test to elicit discourse markers from the participants to observe the difference in performance of the two groups. The time allocated for this test was 3 minutes for each participant.

Data Analysis Procedures

In order to analyze the data, the 22nd version of SPSS software was used. To find the effect of explicit teaching of discourse markers on Iranian EFL Learners' pragmatic fluency, a series of descriptive statistics (means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics such as independent samples *t*-test and paired samples *t*-test were run. A descriptive statistics was applied to calculate and report the mean score of the participants in order to answer the research question that investigates the significant difference of mean scores. To find out the significant differences between the experimental and the control groups, independent samples *t*-test was run to compare their pre-test scores. Also, an independent samples *t*-test was applied to explore whether any significant differences existed between the experimental and the control group with regard to the post-test scores. Also *t*-test was used to illuminate significant differences existed between pre-test and post-test in control group and experimental group. Furthermore, paired samples *t*-test was run to compare any individual groups (control and experimental) in both pre-test and post-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study and data analysis required to answer the research questions are brought in the presented chapter. Generally this chapter is divided to two sections: the first section reports the findings and results derived from *t*-tests procedures as well as the percentage rate to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test which were calculated by means of the SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Science) version 22. The results are shown in different tables and figures followed by their interpretations. The second section presents the discussion of the study.

Results and Analysis

The statistical analyses and results of the present study are discussed in this part. The findings of pre-tests and post-tests taken by both the experimental and the control groups are brought in different tables, followed by their interpretations.

Table 4.3. Results of *t*-tests of the experimental and control group pre-tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	7.479	.011	-1.103	28	0.279	-1.73333	1.57097	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.103	21.267		-1.73333	1.57097	-4.99784	1.53117

Descriptive statistics for pre-test

Table 4.1 displays descriptive statistics for control and experimental' scores on pre-test.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	25	17.9333	5.37809	1.38862
Experimental	25	19.6667	2.84521	.73463

As it can be seen in this table, the average score of control is 17.9333 with a standard deviation of 5.37809 and for experimental the mean is 19.6667 with a standard deviation of 2.84521.

Table 4.2 shows descriptive statistics for control and experimental' scores on post-test.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics for post-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	25	16.1333	4.25721	.73463
Experimental	25	22.6667	4.87950	1.09921

As Table 4.2 shows the average score of control is 16.1333 with a standard deviation of 4.25721 and for experimental the average is 22.6667 with a standard deviation of 4.87950.

A comparison of using DMs for pre-test Scores of experimental and control

A pre-test was taken by both experimental and control group participants, to observe and compare the students' performances before exposing to the treatment. The results of pre-tests for both experimental and control groups are presented in Table 4.3. According to Table 4.1 the mean difference scores for both experimental and control group are -1.73333 and -1.73333 (respectively). The statistical 2-tailed *t*-test result (*p* value) is 0.279 which is above .05; therefore, no statistically significant difference between the performances of the experimental and control group on the pre-test was seen. The results illustrate that at the beginning of the study all the participants were at the same level of English language proficiency and any change in their performance on the post-test could be the results of treatment (explicit way of teaching DMs). For better understandings the results are brought in Figure 4.1, below. As can be seen in Figure 4.1 learners at the beginning did not use of DMs a lot in their speaking. Hence, all the students at the beginning stage were similar in their English language proficiency level. For clarifying the point each group's performance on pre-test and post-test were investigated and the results and findings are brought in different tables, following their interpretations.

A comparison of using DMs for pre-test and post-test Scores of control group

For further analysis the paired sample *t*-test is run to see if there is mean differentiation between pre-test and post-test of

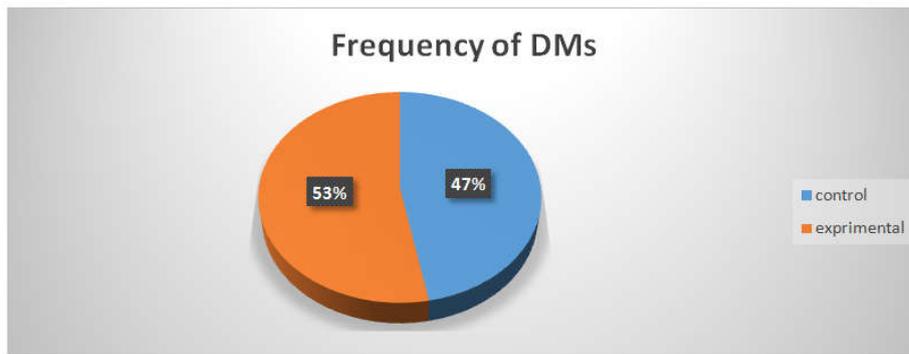


Figure 4.1. Results of frequency of the experimental and control group pre-tests

Table 4.4. Results of Paired Samples Statistics of the Control Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test

Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Pretest	17.9333	25	5.37809	1.38862
	Posttest	16.1333	25	4.25721	1.09921

a. GROUP = control

Table 4.5 paired *t*-test on the mean score of pretests and posttests for the control group

Pair 1	pretest - posttest	Paired Differences					T	d f	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
		1.80000	5.79655	1.4966	-1.41002	5.01002	1.203	14	.249

a. GROUP = control

Table 4.6 Results of Paired Samples Statistics of the Experimental Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test

Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Pretest	19.6667	25	2.84521	.73463
	Posttest	22.6667	25	4.87950	1.25988

a. GROUP = experimental

Table 4.7 paired *t*-test on the mean score of pre-tests and post-tests for the experimental group

Pair 1	pretest - posttest	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
		-3.00000	7.00000	1.80739	-6.87647	.87647	-1.660	14	.000

a. GROUP = experimental

Table 4.8 Results of *t*-test of the experimental and control groups' post-test

Posttest	Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.908	27.495	.001	-6.53333	1.67199	-9.96109	-3.10558

both experimental and control group. Mean score of control group in pretest is 17.933 and in post-test is 16.133 and there is mean differentiation between first test and second one. To see if this difference is meaningful or not the paired sample *t*-test is run on their mean score.

Paired *t*-test on the mean score of pre-tests and post-tests for the control group.

The results from the paired samples *t*-test for control group performance in the pre-test and post-test is presented in Table

4.5, indicate that this difference is not meaningful. So, no statistically significant difference between the performance of the control group in the pre-test and post-test was seen.

A comparison of using DMs for pre-test and post-test Scores of the experimental group

The results show that there is a mean differentiation between the mean score of pre-test and post-test of experimental group and the results indicate that there is a mean increase from pre-test to post-test in experimental group. To find out if this mean increase is significant or not the paired sample *t*-test was run on their mean score.

Paired *t*-test on the mean score of pre-tests and post-tests for the experimental group.

The result indicates that this mean is statistically significant, in other words the performance of the experimental group after exposing to the treatment were increased.

A comparison of using DMs for post-test scores of experimental and Control

According to Table 4.8 there was a significant difference between the performances of the control and the experimental groups on the post-tests. The results show that the mean scores for control and the experimental groups are -6.53333 and -4.53333, and the significance level is 0.001; thus, it can be said that this difference can be the result of explicate teaching of DMs, as the experimental group in the post-test perform better than control group. For clarifying the point the results are bought in Figure 4.2, below.

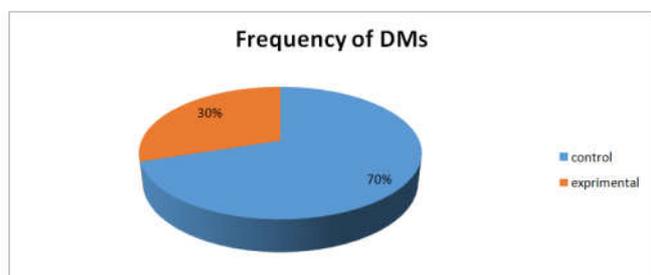


Figure 4.2 Results of frequency of the experimental and control groups' post-test

A comparison of using different categories of DMs by both teachers and students

The percentage of each category of DMs which were used by both teachers and students was calculated to determine the frequency of each DMs' category.

Table 4.9 Results of frequency of DMs used by both teachers and students

Discourse Markers	Additive	Adversative	Casual	Continuatives
Teacher	25%	25%	23%	27%
Student	28%	25%	20%	27%

As indicated in Table 4.9 there was no significant difference between different categories of DMs which were used by

teachers. In contrast students used casual DMs less than the others.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the three research questions and three hypothesis raised in the first chapter will be answered.

(1) Do teaching discourse markers have any effects on EFL learners' pragmatic fluency performance?

H0-1: The null hypothesis generated from this study indicates that teaching discourse markers has no effect on EFL learners' pragmatic fluency. As it was showed in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 the percentages of using DMs at the beginning for control and experimental group were the same but after some weeks of treatment the percentage of using DMs for experimental group was increased while the control group had somehow the same percentage that it had at the beginning. Hence, the first null hypothesis in the present study was rejected automatically.

(2) What's the difference between the pragmatic fluency of experimental group and control group after explicit teaching discourse markers to the experimental group?

As shown in Table 4.8, analysis revealed statistically significant differences between groups in the use of DMs in their aural production. This finding show that as learners are instructed about DMs, their level of using DMs in their speaking also improves. In general it can be concluded that the strong relationship between explicit teaching of DMs and the students' performance in experimental group was seen ($N=25$, $M=4.87950$ and also .001 level of significance), as shown in Table 4.8, implying that the more knowledge learners have about DMs, the more successful they can be in the post-test; therefore, the third hypothesis in the present study was rejected automatically.

Conclusion

The following conclusions drawn based on the findings achieved in this study:

Do teaching discourse markers have any effects on EFL learners' pragmatic fluency performance?

With regard to this question the results of Figures 4.1 and 4.2 (the percentages of using DMs at the beginning and ending for control and experimental group) revealed that at the beginning both group, in terms frequency of using DMs, were at the same level; but, at the end of the research period the students in experimental group performed better than students in control group, according to the percentage of using DMs in their aural production. The summary of the data shown in chapter 4 support this clime.

What's the difference between the pragmatic fluency of experimental group and control group after explicit teaching discourse markers to the experimental group?

Based on the results of Table 4.8, results of *t*-test of the experimental and control groups' post-test, the mean scores for control and the experimental groups are -6.53333 and -

4.53333, respectively and the significance level is 0.001; thus, the participants in the experimental group who were exposed to the treatment (explicit teaching of discourse markers) in contrast of control group in post-test had better performance. Also based on Figure 4.2 the frequency of using DMs among the experimental group was more than control group. The findings of this investigation were in line with Hays (1992) have a great investigation in DMs in classroom oral discourse. He asserted that discourse markers had a great influence on students' oral interaction. The results also were in agreement with Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1986; 1990), Redeker (1991), Fraser (1998), Schiffrin (1987), and others findings about the impact of implicit teaching of discourse markers on learners' achievements. The findings revealed that the participants in the experimental group who received explicit instruction on discourse markers made more frequent use of them in their oral production, in contrast the learners who were in the control group and received implicit instruction did not use discourse markers frequently in their aural production.

Pedagogical Implications

- The research findings revealed the importance of teaching discourse markers to EFL students in increasing their awareness about the place of their usage in a spoken text.
- This study may be helpful to teacher trainers to inform perspective teachers and anybody who wants to provide flexible teaching environments about how important role discourse markers play in understanding different texts by L2 learners.
- English instructors can also familiarize students with the different functions of discourse markers in written and spoken discourse.
- Additionally, Discourse markers have been used as a useful tool to make coherence and cohesion in a text for better understanding. Therefore, materials designers can develop textbooks in a way that students are provided with enough information about different types of discourse markers and their functions in a text.
- Syllabus designers and curriculum planners should believe that including discourse markers in texts books and materials is a necessity.
- Instructors ought to emphasize on discourse markers which are used frequently and are prevalent in a written or spoken text of any nature.

Prospects for Further Research

In fact explicit teaching of DMs seems to influence all language skills since they are important components of language. The following aspects deserve further research:

- It is recommended that the instructor compare the DMs in English with those in the students' first language.
- There is a need that researchers investigate the relationship between comprehension of DMs and language learning ability.
- It would be valuable to conduct more studies investigating the effects of instruction of discourse markers on comprehension of L2 learners.

- There is need for further studies to shed more light on the issues.

Limitation of the Study

- One of the limitations of this study was the relatively small number of participants which was due to the problem of availability of learners. The representativeness of the participants, therefore, should be considered cautiously.
- Additionally, the participants of this study were not randomly selected. In fact, the research was conducted following Intact Group design. However, they randomly divided to control and experimental group. Therefore, the results of this study should be generalized with caution.
- Like all studies this research had limitations and could not include all the issues related to the topic.

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