



The Use of Discourse Markers in Kurdish EFL Undergraduate Students' Writing: at Raparin University.

Rayan Saleem Khalid¹ - Khalid Ali Abdalla²

rayan.bee16013@uor.edu.krd - bozhin@uor.edu.krd

¹Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Raparin, Ranya, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

²Presidency of the University of Raparin, Directorate of Language and Development Center. Ranya, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

Abstract

The current study examines discourse markers which are important language devices that enhance coherence in writing. Coherence and cohesion in Kurdish EFL Undergraduate Students' Writing are essential components that contribute to clarity and effectiveness. The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which Kurdish EFL undergraduate students at Raparin University, third-year morning class, utilize DMs in their writing. Moreover, to identify the difficulties that learners face and the most frequently used DMs. This study adopts Halliday and Hassan's cohesion model for the process of data analysis collected at Raparin University. For this purpose, mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) are used in the process of data collection. As well as survey is used as a tool for this investigation. Fifty participants from Raparin University participated in answering survey questions.

The results show that undergraduate students exhibit various kinds of frequency in utilizing additional types of DMs while writing an essay. Due to a lack of understanding about how to employ adversative, temporal, and causal forms of discourse markers, students overuse additional types of DMs, and their writing lacks cohesion and coherence to write an academic essay.

Keywords: Discourse Markers Frequency, Coherence and Cohesion Challenges in Writing, Halliday and Hassan's Cohesion Model, Kurdish Third Year Undergraduate Students.

به کارهینانی (ئامرازی لیکدەر) له نوسینی خویندکارانی کورد- بهشی زمانی ئینگلیزی زانکۆی راپەرین .

رەیان سەلیم خالید^۱ - خالید عەلی عبد الله^۲

۱- بهشی زمانی ئینگلیزی، کۆلێژی پەروەردەی بەنەرەت، زانکۆی راپەرین، رانیه، کوردستان، عێراق.

۲- بهشی سەرۆکایەتی زانکۆی راپەرین، بەریوەبەری سەنتەری زمان و گەشەپیدان، رانیه، کوردستان، عێراق.

پوختە

ئەم توییزینەوەی لهو ئامرازە لیکدەرانە دەکۆلێتەوە کە گرزنگن بۆ یەکگرتويی دەق له نوسیندا. پەیوهندیدارییەتی و یەکگرتويی (coherence and cohesion) پیکھاتەی گرزنگن له باهەتی نوسینی خویندکارانی زانکۆدا.

ئامانجی ئەم توییزینەوەی بۆ دەرخستنی ئەوەیه تا چ رادەیەک خویندکارانی کوردى قۆناغی سییەمی بهشی زمانی ئینگلیزی- بهیانیان ئامرازە کانی لیکدەر له نوسیندا به کاردین. هەروەها بۆ دەرخستنی ئەو ئاستەنگانەی کە روبەروی خویندکاران دەبنەوە، لەگەل ئەو ئامرازە لیکدەرانەی کە زۆرتەنین به کارهینانیان ھەیە. بۆ ئەم لیکۆلینەوەیه مۆدیلی یەکگرتو (Halliday - Hassan) بە کارهاتوھ. بۆ پرۆسەی شیکارکردنی داتاکان له زانکۆی راپەرین.

بۆ ئەم مەبەستە، هەردو میتۆد (چەندییەتی و چۆنییەتی) بە کاردەھیزىن بۆ شیکردنەوەی داتاکان. هەروەها راپرسى بە کاردەھیزىت وەک ئامرازىک بۆ ئەم لیکۆلینەوەیه. پەنجا بەشداریو له زانکۆی راپەرین بەشداریان کرد له وەلامدانەوەی پرسیارە کانی راپرسى.

لە ئەنجامدا ئەمەمان بۆ دەرداھەکویت کە خویندکارانی زانکۆ زۆرتەنین دوبارەبونەوە ئەنجام دەدەن له بە کارهینانی ئامرازە لیکدەرە کان له جۆری درێژدان (Additional) له کاتی نوسینی و تارتیکدا. بەھۆی کەمی زانیاری دەربارەی چۆنییەتی بە کارهینانی ئامرازە لیکدەرە کانی تری وەک جۆری پیچەوانە (Adversative)، کاتی (Temporal) و ھۆکار (Causal)، خویندکاران جۆری ئامرازە لیکدەرە کانی (Additional) زیاد له پیویست بە کاردەھیزىن و نوسینە کەیان کەمتر رونی و یەکگرتويی پیوەدیارە.

کلیله و شە: ئامرازە لیکدەرە دوبارەبوبە کان، بەربەستە کانی پەیوهندیدارییەتی و یەکگرتويی له نوسیندا، رونی و یەکگرتويی مۆدیلی Halliday and Hassan، نوسینی خویندکارانی کورد له قۆناغی سییەمی زانکۆ.

1. Introduction

This study addresses a gap in the literature, as there is not enough research on the usage of discourse markers in the context of Kurdish English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Discourse markers have been examined generally in earlier studies. There has not been much research done on the difficulties Kurdish students of English as a foreign language face while writing academically. By examining the types and frequency of discourse markers, as well as common mistakes made by students.

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4) claim that text is a unit of language in use. Apart from a grammatical one, it is a semantic unit. The semantic concept of cohesiveness refers to "relationships of meaning that exist inside the text and that define it as a text". Hence, features of cohesion are the characteristics that differentiate a text from a succession of phrases that are not related to one another. Moreover, Nunan (1991: 36) states that "writing is extremely complex for everyone because of cognitive skill"; in this activity, the writer has to show control of some variables simultaneously.

In addition, Anwar and Ahmed (2016) mention that the act of writing itself cannot be reduced to the mere creation of symbols; rather, it entails the systematic organization of these symbols into words, which in turn make sentences, to build paragraphs and essays.

In the course of their attempts to practice or produce a range of academic writing tasks in the third year at a selected university, EFL undergraduate students frequently encounter difficulties, as shown by the results of these research studies. In order to be more precise, one of the most obvious issues is the use of discourse markers in the writing that learners generate. McCarthy and Carter (1994) state that the construction of writing that is both expressive and comprehensible is accomplished via the use of discourse markers, which are language procedures.

Furthermore, Kurdish EFL students at Raparin University often face difficulties in producing a range of writing at various levels, and few studies have been done in the Kurdish EFL setting that concentrate on the difficulties of using various DM types or the most regularly used additional DMs. To achieve this goal, this study primarily focuses on Kurdish EFL use of DMs and challenges associated with employing types of discourse markers in persuasive

writing. The theoretical framework will be used to define discourse markers and examine them in terms of coherence and cohesion. To continue, the literature review appeals to previous studies. Next, this study goes into the methodology, and then analyze Halliday and Hassan's model. Finally, we shall reach a verdict.

This study reports three research questions.

- To what extent do Kurd EFL undergraduate students at Raparin University use DMs in their writing?
- What types of discourse markers do Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners at Raparin University commonly use in their academic writing?
- What are the most specific mistakes learners at University of Raparin make when using DMs in their writing?

1.2 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are to investigate how Kurdish EFL undergraduate students at Raparin University use discourse markers (DMs) in their written performance. In addition, the study aims to investigate the frequency and consistency of discourse markers' use in the written texts of these learners. Examining the most popular discourse markers and how they contribute to stronger textual coherence is another goal. In addition, the purpose of the research is to investigate the unique challenges and mistakes that students have while using discourse markers. This will allow for the evaluation of the students' degree of skill and the identification of potential areas that need pedagogical attention.

1.3 The Scope of the Study

Halliday and Hassan's model has been adopted for conducting the study at Raparin University; for this purpose, fifty participants have been chosen.

1.4 Hypothesis

1- Most Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners demonstrate a limited variety of DMs in their writing.

2- Most Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners cannot use these markers in their proper positions to link ideas and face struggles in specifically using them.

3- A variety of errors are detected in their writing, such as overuse of additional types of DMs, underuse of causal, temporal, and adversative, and avoidance errors.

2. Coherence and Cohesion

Halliday and Hassan (1976) state that cohesion is one of the main language systems that help with text structure. One of the main reasons why cohesion is so important is to show how well connectors in writing help the readers follow ideas and understand the meaning in context. In addition, in Halliday and Hassan's Cohesion book in English, published in 1976, the types of links that exist between sentences are referred to as cohesiveness, and coherence usually includes both the cohesive ties between sentences and general rhetorical elements of a text. In addition, repetition, collocation, ellipses, comparison signals, personal and demonstrative pronouns, and a plethora of other components make up its coherent link categories. "Research on Cohesion" delves more into these connections. Hence, Halliday and Hassan (1976) state that cohesiveness is one of the core language systems that help with text structure.

Thus, coherence is a major feature in writing. Comparing coherence to cohesion on a global scale is a component of other than sentence-level relationships that come together to create a coherent step. These features include the organization and evolution of sentences into paragraphs, as well as extra-textual rhetorical concerns. The reader adds expectations and information to the literary environment when judging whether a piece is coherent or nonsensical.

Kolln (1999) argues that a text achieves coherence when its sentences logically support each other, contributing to the overall flow and making the writing easy to follow. One effective way to organize ideas is by ensuring a logical and unambiguous order. Similarly, Bastug and Demirtas (2020) note that Kurdish undergraduate students, while learning English often encounter challenges in using discourse markers effectively. Because of this, the structure of the Kurdish language and conversational habits vary from the structure of the English language, so transfer problems may arise. The differences between Kurdish and English structures make it difficult to employ suitable DMs in written English for students to write a coherent essay. Such as, in English the structure is (SVO), while in Kurdish is (SOV). As the points discussed earlier demonstrate, cohesion and coherence are two of the most

important aspects of writing paragraphs, essays, and whole sentences. Writing transitional phrases may be problematic, according to research on EFL and ESL sets.

Ludji, Hambandima, and Christiani (2022) state that cohesive devices are a fundamental characteristic of excellent writing that has been acknowledged as an essential aspect of academic writing. Additionally, Lu (2023), asserted that discourse markers were crucial for both making and understanding utterances, and using them correctly improves students' writing to make texts more coherent. Rullyanti (2024) discusses a text as either a written or spoken communication medium to show how ideas are developed, organized, and connected. The speaker or writer integrates their personal knowledge and experience, sociocultural accounts, and coding of such information into a cohesive, beyond-sentence. Cohesive devices make numerous contributions by facilitating coherence and shaping textual cohesion.

3. Literature Review

Some studies were conducted about discourse markers in writing. The most significant challenges encountered by Kurdish EFL students in academic writing classes were examined in a research by Haji (2024). Understanding these obstacles that delay students' growth and success was the rationale behind this study. Moreover, a mixed-method research approach was used. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth interviews were the tools used for data collection. Four public universities in Iraq's Kurdistan Region two hundred students. Research showed that Kurdish EFL students struggle with classroom writing for a number of reasons, including an irrational fear of making errors and problems with writing mechanics, including grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice.

Moreover, Hayatolain and Ganji (2023) conducted a study titled "*Investigating the Instruction and Usage Frequency of Transition Markers*". The frequency of transition markers and the pedagogical strategies used in three foreign English for Academic Purposes (EAP) grammar textbooks that matched those three Iranian grammar textbooks were the subjects of this study. Additionally, this research used Hyland's (2005) interpersonal metadiscourse model to estimate the frequency of transition indicators, with a focus on signals of addition, comparison and contrast, and consequence.

Mixed-methods approach to data analysis was used in the study. The collected data was interpreted. Twenty-seven samples of grammar textbooks, and chi-square tests were used to search for significant differences between Iranian and foreign textbooks. The results

showed that addition transitions were the most common kind whereas consequence transitions were the least common.

Similarly, Raputri, Pratama, and Hartono (2022) explored the investigation titled *“Evaluating the Use of Discourse Markers in Selected English Education Journal Articles”*. The purpose of this study is to identify the mistakes associated with the use of certain discourse markers, such as contrastive, elaborative, and inferential markers.

Further, data for this study were derived from written language, specifically journal articles published by the English Education Journal (EEJ), and were collected using a qualitative research design. This investigation, in particular, implemented content analysis. Twenty scholarly papers were examined. According to the findings, the following discourse markers were used by all of the data. Elaborative discourse markers were the most frequently used by the writers.

Additionally, Haninda and Bram (2022) investigated a study about *“Academic Writing of EFL Students' Undergraduate Theses”*. The purpose of this work was to examine the discourse markers that undergraduate students employed while writing their thesis backgrounds as well as the degree of accuracy with which DMs were utilized. In addition, the methodology that they utilized was descriptive research, document analysis was used to investigate the data, and twenty-eight undergraduate thesis backgrounds were gathered for this study by participants. Results exhibited that, discourse markers that were used the most often were elaborative markers (74.58%), causal markers (9.29%), inferential markers (8.31%), and contrastive markers (7.82%).

Moreover, Hama (2021) carried out a study under the title of an *“Investigation into the Difficulties of Using Transitional Words in Kurdish EFL Students”*. The objective of the study was to investigate the use of a variety of transitional terms by Kurdish EFL students in their writing at the university level, at two distinct academic levels. The students in the second and third year of academic writing classes who were Kurdish EFL typically challenged and experienced difficulties in utilizing discourse markers when composing essays and paragraphs. Furthermore, the methodology that he used to collect data was sampled and then analyzed descriptively for each sample of the paragraph. The outcome showed that second-year students lacked the competence and experience to properly use a range of transitional terms. The opposite was true for third-year students; they had more talents, but they misused or misunderstood most transitional terms.

Likewise, Aziz and Nuri (2021) Implemented *“The Essay Using Conjunctive Adverbs by Iraqi Kurdish EFL Students”*. Given that the essay's coherence and cohesion were crucial, since

these aspects greatly affected the essay's overall quality and tone. The objectives of this research were to conduct an in-depth investigation into the specific types of conjunctive adverbials that were overused, underutilized, or misused, as well as the locations within sentences in which they were found. In addition, mixed methods were used for this investigation; a comprehensive essays composed by fifty participants were assembled. The findings illustrated that, in contrast to causal and adversative adverbs, learners favored additive and sequential conjunctive adverbs.

Alahmed (2020), explored the title of "*The Use of Discourse Markers in Second Language Writing of Iraqi Undergraduate Students*". This study outlined the use of discourse markers (DMs) in essays written by Iraqi bachelor (B.A.) students at Al-Qalam University College in Kirkuk province, Iraq. Additionally, the main goal of the investigation was to find out whether DMs were used while the essays were being written. Moreover, the quantitative method was used, and ninety participants participated in writing on the subject that was provided. As a result, it was determined that students excessively used the EDMs. However, in their writing, they misused DMs. The research indicated that students had to enhance their proficiency in using discourse markers to attain an academic standard in their writing.

Suleiman and Seyyedi (2020) examined numerous areas of research, one of area examined the "*Use of Additive Discourse Markers in English Journal Articles Written by Native Speakers of both Kurdish and English*". The researchers attempted to discover how Kurdish natives who speak English as a second language compared to native English speakers, while using additive discourse indicators. The research methodologies that are used include both quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed method approach). Through the use of a comparative corpus, it was based on the concept of comparing writings published by Kurdish academics with those written by their counterparts who spoke their first language (second language). The acronyms of these corpora were (NACE) and (KACE). In order to accomplish this, the researchers utilized a corpus of 27 research articles that were published by native English speakers in a variety of English journals, as well as two language corpora consisting of 34 research articles that were published by Kurdish scholars in a variety of Iraqi Kurdistan Region universities and international journals. The research also demonstrated that Kurdish learners employed a greater number of additive types of DMs than English natives.

Moreover, Omar et al. (2020) investigated a study under the title of "*Grammatical Cohesion Skill for EFL Learners*". For EFL students to compose coherent sentences, they had to possess the ability of grammatical coherence. It entailed being proficient in the foreign

language's reference to coherent devices, both anaphorically and cataphorically. The major objective of this study is to analyze the resolution of anaphoric pronouns among KLEs. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine the reasons behind the insufficient usage of this cohesive device by undergraduate Kurdish learners of English (KLEs). An exploratory and descriptive methodology was used by them. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative analysis was to determine how 53 KLEs utilized references to structure their writings in the target language. The participants were senior students from the English Department and the College of Education-Qladze, University of Raparin participated in the research. The outcome indicated that insufficient knowledge, awareness, and proficiency in L2 writing, especially regarding grammatical cohesiveness, were the factors for KLEs to impose L1 writing standards onto L2.

Likewise, Lestari (2020) conducted a study under the title of "*an Analysis Discourse Marker Used in Student's Undergraduate Thesis of English Department of IAIN Metro during the Academic Year*". The main aim of the research is to examine the most common discourse marker type used in undergraduate theses by English department students at IAIN and to find out how discourse markers are used. In addition, this is qualitative research, and the tool used was a case study; it used a descriptive qualitative research approach. Moreover, ten undergraduates from students in the English department participated as the major source of the data in IAIN Metro in the Academic Year. The outcome revealed that the additive kind of discourse markers, such as *and*, *or*, *also*, *in addition*, *moreover* are the most common form of the discourse markers that were used in undergraduate theses written by students.

Lastly, Tadayyon and Farahani (2017) discuss the "title *Exploring Discourse Markers Used in Academic Papers*". The aim of the study is to analyze the different types of discourse markers (DMs) used in the English-written articles published by Iranian academics. The frequency with which they were utilized, and then comparing these findings with the published papers that were written by English native scholars. Fraser's (2006) taxonomy is used by the researchers in order to categorize and assess the DMs that were utilized in thirty academic publications that were picked at random and written by Iranians. Moreover, they analyzed data from two articles using mixed methods to investigate how Iranian and native English scholars employed DMs in their academic papers. Among the discourse markers examined, the researchers found that elaborative discourse markers were most frequently used by Iranian academicians in their publications.

This study is different from prior research in that it specifically addresses the obstacles encountered by Kurdish EFL undergraduate students at Raparin University when employing discourse markers (DMs) in academic writing. The key concerns are the overreliance on additive DMs, the underuse of adversative, temporal, and causal markers, and the impact of first language transfer. With the aim of identifying frequent errors and providing suggestions for enhancing academic writing education, this research aims to investigate the frequency, variance, and correctness of DMs in student writing. A mixed-methods design is used in this study to collect data. The researcher uses SPSS (version 28) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the purpose of analyzing the data in order to determine the frequency and accuracy of discourse markers usage. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis is employed to investigate the qualitative data from the essay writing in order to acquire a more profound understanding of the students' writing efficacy and the obstacles they face.

3.1 Gaps in The Research

There were observable likenesses and differences between the previously declared work and the current research, both in general and in specific terms. The current study implements Halliday and Hassan's model and tries to explore Kurdish EFL undergraduates' performance in using DMs in their writing at Raparin University, identify their challenges, and the most specific type of errors they make, because this model is an important framework in comprehending cohesion and coherence.

Furthermore, various studies are conducted on DMs, but most of them are restricted to a limited number of samples and do not take Halliday and Hassan's model specifically. Studies of DMs have been undertaken in a variety of contexts and settings.

3.2 Halliday and Hassan's Model

Halliday (1976) argues that text is a meaningful linguistic unit consisting of certain stylistic or textual components, including syntactic and semantic aspects of text. These components contribute to the cohesion of the text and allow the text to operate as a united linguistic unit. Furthermore, the text's components govern Halliday's pragmatic semantic approach to language and the means by which meaning is conveyed.

Afzaal et al. (2021) confirm that the parts of a text determine the types of text that the reader is reading. So, everything that sends a specific message between the lines and figures out what the language means based on the situation or context is a text. Halliday (2006) states that cohesion is a syntagmatic relationship, and in terms of grammar, structure aids in

explanation. The process of arranging items of the same rank in a certain order to produce something of a higher rank is referred to as structure. Moreover, he claims that the initial step in the historical study of linguistics is to investigate the morphology of language, which is followed by an investigation into the meaning of words at the sentence level. Finding the meaning of the linguistic forms ultimate objective of such a study.

In addition, Halliday and Hassan (1976: 7) state that texture is defined as what gives any length of writing is meaning and coherence. A text without texture would merely be a collection of separate phrases with no connection to one another; texture is the foundation for unity and semantic interdependence within a text. Meanwhile, Non-structural text-forming relations are "cohesion" which means, semantic linkages, which are "relationships of meanings that exist within the text and that define it as a text.". DMs are classified into lexical and grammatical characteristics are elucidated. As well as the focus on four types of DMs, such as,

1. Additional type of DMs.
2. Adversative type of DMs.
3. Causal type of DMs.
4. Temporal type of DMs.

4. Research Methodology

This research is a mixed-method approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive examination of the topic content. Additionally, statistical data provide measurable knowledge on the accuracy and frequency of discourse markers through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS V:28). Qualitative data provide interpretive depth by examining students' use of discourse markers in written work. According to Garbarino and Holland (2009), it is essential to make a point of mentioning that the terms "qualitative" and "quantitative" should be used in order to refer to the various types of data that are generated over the course of the research process.

4.1 Procedure

In the current study, a survey was the main tool used for collecting data which contained three different tasks, such as multiple choice questions, fill-in blank, and writing an academic essay. In the first task which was MCQ questions, students chose the appropriate

one based on their knowledge of using DMs, while in the second task, fill the blanks by those DMs inside the box, then in the third task, students were asked to write down an essay about (The advantages and Disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence for University Students). Word was limited to 180-200 words, and they had thirty minutes to write.

Moreover, the test paper was gathered from participants. Items of the survey were scored, in each task, in a different way. For instance, in the first and second tasks, the correct answer was scored as number one (1) incorrect answer was zero because of statistical analyzed through (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS) by analysis of variance ANOVA. Meanwhile, the last task is to figure out the frequency of each type of DMs according to Halliday and Hassan's model. The researcher intended to show the difficulties students encountered as well as their actual abilities. After these steps were finished, the researcher analyzed the frequency and types of mistakes in both quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.2 Pilot Study

Before collecting data from Raparin university of Kurdistan region, the researcher complemented the pilot test in (April/2025) with twenty students taken randomly in the third stage. Just to make the result of the survey more accurate and reliable. Moreover, whether any items should be modified or removed. The results of the pilot test were achieved using Kuder – Richardson Formula (KRF).

Moreover, Saupe (1961) claims that the reliability coefficient found in Kuder-Richardson Formula (KR-20), is quite close to being a linear function of the square root of the total number of items that are included in the examination. To ensure this consistency, the researcher conducted a pilot study in a way distributed the survey to a small group of students. The responses were analyzed using the Kuder-Richardson Formula, $KR-20 = (k / (k - 1)) * (1 - (\sum(p * q) / Variance))$, a statistical method for evaluating internal consistency for questions with binary answers (right/wrong).

The result of the participants (KRF) of the first task was 0.76. however, for the second task was 0.6, which was a low internal consistency reliability, therefore the researcher used a discrimination index, and two items of the second task, the question three and ten were eliminated, thus, the result was 0.79, was approximately 8. moreover, it was accepted along with strong reliability of the test due to the discrimination index. Hence, each of the left items serves as an efficient component of the unified measure. In addition, the survey produced

answers that were reliable and consistent when it came to assessing the level of competency that students had in the use of discourse markers. See appendix p (21-24).

4.3 Participants

Fifty third-year students participated in gathering information in the prevalence and challenges of employing discourse markers. The students were selected from the English department of the College of Basic Education. Since "essay writing" was one of their primary courses, the students were selected from the third year for the year (2024-2025).

5. Data collection

The researcher collected data and used mixed methods to determine the frequency and difficulty of DMs utilized by students. Through analysis of variance (ANOVA), the outcome of students in the first task is quantitatively shown in Table (1), see Appendix p (19-20).

Table (1): Shows the Percentage of Correct and Incorrect Usage of DMs

Questions	Answers	University	
		Raparin	%
Q1	FALSE	38	25.3%
	TRUE	12	8.0%
Q2	FALSE	18	12.0%
	TRUE	32	21.3%
Q3	FALSE	7	4.7%
	TRUE	43	28.7%
Q4	FALSE	13	8.7%
	TRUE	37	24.7%
Q5	FALSE	6	4.0%
	TRUE	44	29.3%
Q6	FALSE	7	4.7%
	TRUE	43	28.7%
Q7	FALSE	4	2.7%
	TRUE	46	30.7%
Q8	FALSE	15	10.0%
	TRUE	35	23.3%

Q9	FALSE	18	12.0%
	TRUE	32	21.3%
Q10	FALSE	11	7.3%
	TRUE	39	26.0%
Q11	FALSE	14	9.3%
	TRUE	36	24.0%
Q12	FALSE	10	6.7%
	TRUE	40	26.7%

The first task of the survey which is mentioned in table (1) consisted of twelve multiple-choice questions; each question had four options. In this task, the participants were asked to choose the right DM that was surrounded by three distractors. Moreover, fifty contributors to the survey in this task participated and for each one a code was given to them, code number one for correct answers and zero for incorrect answers. Then the data were analyzed statistically, as a result of this, the percentage of the university is shown above.

Therefore, the highest percentage of correct answers at Raparin University was 30.7% in question seven. Hence, most of the participants answered correctly in items (3,5,7,8,10). On the other hand, the lowest percentage of the correct answers was 25.3% at Raparin. Thus, they faced difficulties in using temporal, causal, and adversative types of DMs in items (2,8,9,10,11,12). The total score of participants revealed the mean, standard deviation (SD), min, and max. Mean refers to the average score that was achieved within a group or across groups. The student's mean was 8.78, while, the standard deviation which referred to measuring variability, demonstrated the dispersion of individual scores relating to the mean, SD was 2.350. Min that was 2, showed the lowest value of the data. In contrast, the max that was 11 indicated the highest value of the data.

Table (2): Shows the Percentage of Correct Usage and Incorrect Usage of DMs in the text.

Questions	Answers	University	
		Raparin	
		NO	%
Q1	FALSE	11	7.3%
	TRUE	39	26.0%
Q2	FALSE	22	14.7%

	TRUE	28	18.7%
Q3	FALSE	33	22.0%
	TRUE	17	11.3%
Q4	FALSE	22	14.7%
	TRUE	28	18.7%
Q5	FALSE	26	17.3%
	TRUE	24	16.0%
Q6	FALSE	28	18.7%
	TRUE	22	14.7%
Q7	FALSE	43	28.7%
	TRUE	7	4.7%
Q8	FALSE	47	31.3%
	TRUE	3	2.0%
Q9	FALSE	35	23.3%
	TRUE	15	10.0%

The percentage of the participants in the second task was slightly different in various questions, for instance, the highest percentage of correct answers was 26.0%, in the first item. On the other hand, the highest percentage of incorrect answers was 31.3% in item eight. Thus, most participants made mistakes in question (3,5,6,7,8,9). As a result, it revealed that the mean of participants was 3.66, SD was 2.125. min was 0, in contrast, max was 8, See appendix p (20-21).

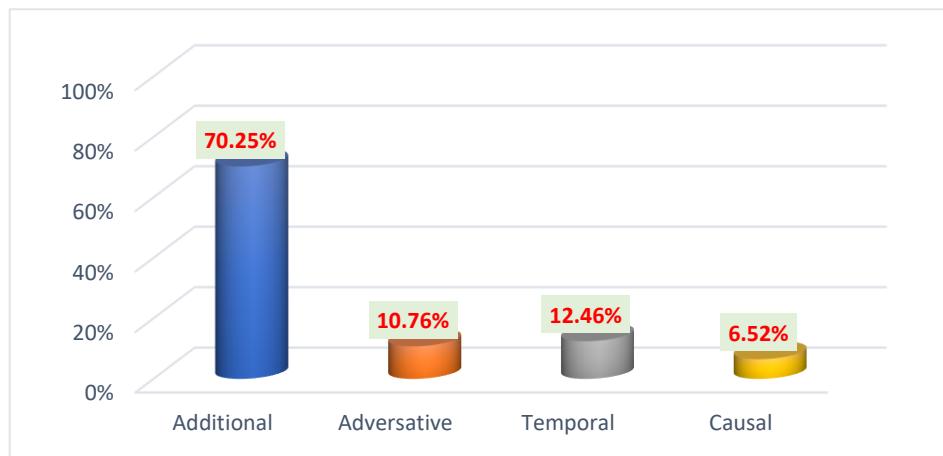
5.1 Qualitative Data Collection Through Writing in Academic Essay by Students.

The performance of the undergraduates in the third task, which required them to write an essay on the topic (the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence for university students), is similar to the other two tasks. For instance, the total usage of DMs was (353) and the average was (88.25). Table (3) below demonstrates the production of students who were better at utilizing additive type than other types of discourse markers. See appendix p (20-21).

Table (3): Frequency of DMs in essay writing at (Raparin University)

University	Types of DMs	frequency	percentages	Average
Raparin	Additional	248	70.25%	88.25
	Adversative	38	10.76%	
	Temporal	44	12.46%	
	Causal	23	6.52%	
Total		353	100.00%	

Graph (1) Results of Raparin University to Produce DMs.



Therefore, the students' writing demonstrated that additional type was one of the most frequent DMs, in contrast, causal was less frequently used by them. The additional type was used at 70.25% which was high compared to other types of DMs. Adversative and temporal were nearly used in parallel by participants. Meanwhile, the causal type was less frequently used. Likewise, Suleiman and Seyyedi (2020) maintain that Kurdish learners overuse the terms "and" and "for instance" and misuse "or, for example, and thus." It also shows that both types of writing regularly use additive discourse indicators in the middle position.

6. Results

The data analysis revealed that third-year participants used a restricted set of discourse markers. Particularly, 70.25% of all markers were additional discourse markers. And was the most frequent discourse marker, appearing 170 times, also followed with 30

occurrences, *or* was used 16 times. Less frequent were *for example*, *for instance*, and *in addition*. Temporal types of discourse markers were used 12.46%, such as *first*, *second*, *when*, and *finally*. Adversative types accounted for 10.76% of the markers, with the most frequent being *but*, *however*, and *on the other hand*. The least frequent type of discourse markers used was causal, at 6.52%. Common examples of causal markers include *because* and *as a result*.

These findings were in line with Fraser (1999), who indicated that most participants regularly employed elaborative discourse markers. Additionally, students demonstrate a proficiency in using simple conjunctions, such as coordinate conjunctions, at the sentence level. Field and Oi (1992) claimed that EFL students utilized a substantially greater frequency of discourse markers in their writing in English compared to native speakers of English. Therefore, participants in this study overused additional discourse markers while misusing adversative, causal, and temporal types of discourse markers. Further analysis aligned with Sanders and Noordman (2010), who emphasized two distinct aspects of coherence: the explicit representation of the relationship between text segments and the nature of the relationship itself. These characteristics are crucial in demonstrating coherence in discourse.

7. Discussion

The use of discourse markers (DMs) in academic writing plays a crucial role in forming coherence and cohesion between ideas, which is crucial for the clarity and flow of texts. Discourse markers aid writers in linking ideas, form their views logically, and monitor readers through their arguments. For EFL learners, mastering the use of DMs is vital for attaining proficiency in writing. Like other non-native speakers, Kurdish EFL students may encounter interference from their L1 writing patterns and a lack of exposure to the academic traditions of the target language while attempting to use DMs efficiently.

- Concerning the first research question which is “To what extent do Kurdish EFL undergraduate students at Raparin University use DMs in their writing?”

There was a clear tendency toward the use of a restricted set of discourse markers. Third year students were applying DMs to a very limited extent while writing an essay hence their writing exhibits a lack of coherence and cohesion. In accordance with the first hypothesis, Kurdish EFL students will use a small set of discourse markers more often, which will reduce the variety and cohesiveness of their work. The response to the first study question backs this idea since the students weren't using various discourse markers, and their writing was not very uniform.

- Regarding the second research question, which is “What types of discourse markers do Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners at Raparin University commonly use in their academic writing?”

The most common types of DMs by Kurdish EFL undergraduate students were additive discourse markers. Several additive discourse markers were frequently utilized, like *and*, *also*, *and or*. These DMs are used to add information, ideas and emphasis on the point. Thus, academic writing by EFL students often makes excessive use of additive discourse. Using markers to demonstrate cause and effect, contrast, or temporal relationships appears to be beyond the capabilities of these students, yet they thrive at making simple connections between concepts.

In line with the second research question, the second hypothesis recommended that Kurdish EFL students have trouble illustrating logical connections between different ideas and will rely excessively on a limited number of discourse markers, the majority of them are additive DMs. This hypothesis is supported by the findings from the second research question. The students' writing showed an excess of additive markers, like *and*, *also*, *or* rather than, more complicated markers that express cause and effect, contrast, and time. Studies show that students can add information using discourse markers, but they struggle with more complex links, which supports the proposed hypothesis.

- In reference to the third research question is “What are the most specific mistakes learners at the University of Raparin make when using DMs in their writing?”

Kurdish EFL students' mistakes in their use of discourse markers can largely be attributed to several factors, with the most prominent being negative transfer from their first language. Suleimani and Rasekh (2010) investigate whether Kurdish native speakers at the university level used their L1 writing abilities in L2 writing, taking into account their degree of competency as a key element. Yayli (2011) proposes that, in order to be aware of genres and re-contextualize that knowledge with each piece of writing, some participants find basic genre elements when writing in a different genre. A learner with cross-genre awareness is able to bridge different genres by applying their reconceptualization skills. Muhammed and Ameen (2014) assert that the habits and experiences that second language learners developed while using and studying their mother tongue have an impact on second language acquisition. Thus, "Transfer" or "cross-linguistic transfer" refers to any influence on second language acquisition that originates in the first language. Likewise, Omar (2018) states that

lexical signals of sentence connectors and subordinators demonstrate the usage of concepts from the first language in the process of creating the linkages between clauses and sentences. Similarly, Fareh, Jarad, and Yagi (2020) posit that participants have a low capacity to both recognize and produce discourse markers, as well as to understand the context-dependent functions of these markers. These findings are consistent with Awla and Hamad (2023) posit that negative transfer occurs when learners who speak or write in two languages deliver ideas and patterns that are different from one another. "Interference" is equivalent to "negative transfer" in context. They emphasize that the sources of negative transmission are frequently identified as the distinctions between Kurdish and English. Last but not least, the majority of Kurdish EFL learners are not acquainted with the appropriate academic style, structure, or rhetorical conventions of the English language. The English language's conventions and style are distinct from those of other languages.

in light of the last inquiry, according to the third hypothesis, Kurdish EFL students make various kinds of mistakes when using discourse markers. They overuse of additive DMs. However, they underuse other types of DMs such as causal, temporal, and adversative. Consequently, the findings provide strong support for this hypothesis, showing that Kurdish EFL students struggle with the use of discourse markers, especially when it comes to overuse of additional DMs while misuse other types of discourse markers.

8. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current research, there are considerable limitations in the application of discourse markers (DMs) among undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language in Kurdistan Region at the University of Raparin. A major difference in students' knowledge effectively employ these linguistic devices to structure their academic writing is revealed by the predominant reliance on additive markers, with limited use of causal, temporal and adversative markers. The results emphasize that the coherence and cohesiveness of students' texts are adversely affected by the limited use of DMs in academic writing. Additive markers like *and*, *also*, and *or* were used the most, while other types of DMs are used rarely. Furthermore, the logical flow and overall textual coherence were negatively impacted by the incorrect application or misplacement of discourse markers. Factors such as first language interference and varying levels of English proficiency among students can be attributed to these difficulties. The research emphasizes the need for focused training on

discourse markers to improve students' academic writing skill sets and increase the clarity and coherence of their writing.

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Appendix 1: Survey design to assess students using DMs in three tasks.

Task (1) Instruction: - choose an appropriate discourse marker to fill in the blanks.

1- I woke up late this morning and missed the bus. _____ I forgot my task at home, so my day didn't start very well.

A. However B. Because C. And D. Therefore

2- I studied hard for the science exam and went to bed early. _____ I still found the questions very difficult and didn't finish on time.

A. Also B. Because C. However, D. Then

3. For lunch today, I can't decide: do I want to have a pizza _____ should I go for some lovely pasta instead?

A) and B) but C) also D) or

4- He cleaned his bedroom and did the laundry in the evening. _____ he went to the grocery shop to buy some vegetables.

A. Because B. However C. Next D. Also

5- Ahmad didn't wear a coat, even though it was very cold outside. _____ he caught a bad cold and had to stay home from college.

A. As a result B. But C. Next D. Also

6- Many people like outdoor events. _____ hiking, biking, and swimming are common ways to spend time.

A. Therefore B. However C. For instance D. Next

7- I wanted to go to the café to drink a coffee with my husband. _____ it started raining heavily, so I had to stay home instead.

A. And B. But C. Next D. For instance

8- The group had been involved for weeks. _____ the race finally began, they were well-prepared and accomplished extremely well.

A. However B. When C. Therefore D. But

9- The company's incomes have been gradually decreasing over the past few weeks. _____ the manager decided to implement new policies to progress performance.

A. However B. Thus C. Also D. But

10- The scholars revealed significant errors in the first data analysis. Therefore, they decided to recap the experiment to confirm accurate and reliable results.

A. Moreover B. However C. Therefore D. Meanwhile

11- The marketing team was offering the new campaign strategy to the board of administrators.

However- Also – Thus - And - Meanwhile -

For example -- As a result - Nevertheless- In addition –When

12- Working remotely offers flexibility and decreases commuting time. _____ it can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced group association if not coped properly.

A. In addition B. On the other hand C. As a result D. For instance

Task (2) Instruction: Fill in the following blanks with the right discourse markers in the box.

The Role of English Language skills in Accessing Job Opportunities

Knowing English well helps people catch better jobs. Employees can connect with international establishments (1), join professional groups around the world. This is very helpful in countries such as Kurdistan.

(2), some societies think that native languages are more essential than acquiring a second language. (3), job applicants with high demand English skills have better opportunities than 45% of other applicants. (4), enormous companies like Shell and Microsoft use English for all their work.

When workers learn English words related to their business. They can (5), get better positions. (6), people who speak English well get promoted 30% former. (7), the benefits don't stop there, they can also work on projects in other states. (8), some people struggle to learn English, others are getting these good job opportunities. (9), English has become very important to finding an appropriate job in Kurdistan.

Task (3) Instruction: - write down an essay about (*The advantages and Disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence for University Students*). (Note): - You can use the key points below and/or your own words, the essay should be around 180 - 200 words. You have (30) minutes to finish this task.

Advantages

- Improve learning
- Language support
- Instant help
- Productivity and time saving

Disadvantages

- Over-Reliance
- Critical thinking failure
- Make students lazy
- Cheating gets Easier

Appendix 2: Kuder Richardson Formula for Analyzing Pilot Test Task One.

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Total
													Score
1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	7

2	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
3	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	8
4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
5	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	8
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
7	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	7
8	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	9
9	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
10	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	6
11	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
12	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
13	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
14	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
15	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
16	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
17	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	9
18	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
19	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10

Details of Kuder Richardson Formula (KRF-20) Analysis.

Number of Items

(k) 12

Variance of Total

Test Scores 7.852631579

Proportion of

Correct

Responses (p)

for Each Item 0.2

0.5 0.65 0.7 0.9 0.8 0.85 0.75 0.8 0.6 0.5 0.55

Proportion of

Incorrect

Responses (q)

for Each Item 0.8

0.5 0.35 0.3 0.1 0.2 0.15 0.25 0.2 0.4 0.5 0.45

Product of p and

q for Each Item

(p*q) 0.16

0.2 0.22 0.2 0.0 0.1 0.12 0.18 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.24

5 75 1 9 6 75 75 6 4 5 75

Sum of p*q

Across all Items 2.31

KR-20 = $(k / (k - 1)) * (1 - (\sum(p * q) / Variance))$

KR-20 Formula
Final Value

KR-20
0.769997563

This indicates that the test demonstrates a very high level of reliability.

Appendix 3: KRF for Analyzing Pilot Test in Second Task Two.

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q11	Total Score
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
3	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7
4	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
8	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
10	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
11	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
12	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
13	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
17	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	7
18	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	5
19	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
20	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	4

Details of KRF coefficient calculation after removing Q3 and Q10 by Discrimination index.

Number of Items (k) 9

Variance of Total Test

Scores 6.786842105

Proportion of Correct

Responses (p) for Each

Item 0.7 0.75 0.3 0.4 0.4 0.35 0.4 0.3 0.35

Proportion of Incorrect

Responses (q) for Each

Item 0.3 0.25 0.7 0.6 0.6 0.65 0.6 0.7 0.65

Product of p and q for

Each Item (p*q) 0.21 0.1875 0.21 0.24 0.24 0.228 0.24 0.21 0.228

Sum of p*q Across All

Items 1.9925

KR-20 = $(k / (k - 1)) * (1$ KR-20 Formula $- (\sum(p*q) / \text{Variance})$

Final KR-20 Value

0.794719368

Question	Discrimination Index
Q1	0.31
Q2	0.21
Q3	-0.13
Q4	0.89
Q5	0.71
Q6	0.58
Q7	0.88
Q8	0.71
Q9	0.57
Q10	-0.24
Q11	0.35