

THE USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING OF IRAQI UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The current study describes the use of discourse markers (DMs) in essays written by Iraqi B.A. students at Al-Qalam University College (in Kirkuk province, Iraq). The main aim of the current study is to find the use of DMs in essay writing. 90 Iraqi B.A. students participated in this study. They were from three stages (freshmen, sophomores, and seniors). The participants wrote 90 essays; each participant wrote one essay on topics that were specified. The DMs used by the participants were classified into four categories; a) Contrastive Markers (CDMs); b) Elaborative Markers (EDMs); c) Implicative Markers (IDMs), and d) Temporal Markers (TDMs). The findings of the current study show that the participants used EDMs (66%), followed by TDMs (17%), CMDs (11%), and IDMs (6%). It was concluded that the students overused the EDMs, such as 'and', 'as', 'or', 'but', and 'so'. In addition, they misused some DMs in their writing. The study also concluded that students' ability in using discourse markers has to be developed to reach the academic level in their writing.

Keywords: Discourse Markers, Essay Writing, Iraqi B.A. Students

1. Introduction

Using discourse markers (DMs) in academic writing has attracted the interest of several studies since writing skill is considered the most difficult skill in Language for native and non-native speakers (Norrish, 1983). DMs are concepts that show the relationship between the primary message and the previous text and convey the speaker's mindset and certain realistic intentions. House (2013) explored the usage of DMs and how they influenced EFL teaching in a study that involved both native and non-native speakers of English. The results showed that all groups of students (Chinese students, Japanese students, and native English speakers) shared some of the characteristics and used different types of discourse markers used in their writings, such as 'to conclude, and, first, and so'. On the contrary, a lot of studies explained the effect of DMs on the quality of the text (e.g. Dan-ni & Zheng, 2010;

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Ghasemi 2013; Leo, 2012). In addition, studies focusing on DMs to analyse writing produced results close to the current study (Irfan et al., 2020; Dumlao & Wilang, 2019; Ghanbari, 2016; Sudrajat & Asih, 2020). Werner (2017) investigated the use of DMs in academic writing by EFL students on different proficiency levels without a further comparison with English L1 undergraduates. These studies showed that DMs play a significant role in improving the writing rate when used appropriately (Jalilifar, 2008). The use of DMs was explained in more than one Language, based on Rahimi (2011), such as Chinese, Danish, French, German, Finnish, and Hebrew, as there are very limited studies that explain the use of DMs by Iraqi students at Iraqi universities. Hence, the current study is concerned with explaining the use of DMs in Iraqi students to fill the gap that there are very limited studies on the use of DMs by Iraqi students at Iraqi universities.

2. Literature Review

It can be said that there is terminological confusion in the area of discourse markers. It is not uncommon for different authors to label the same item differently. For example, *I mean* has been labelled “discourse particle” (Schourup 1985), “pragmatic particle” (Ostman 1982a), “phatic connective” (Bazanella 1990), 'discourse marker' (Schiffrin 1987), the researcher chooses the label 'discourse marker' because it seems to be the one most widely used. However, as is evident from the previous example, there is no general agreement. Table (1), by no means exhaustive, shows what other terms different authors have used for discourse markers, with examples in English of the language forms they refer to.

Table (1). Discourse markers: other labels they have received

<i>Author</i>	<i>Labels</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>Bazanella 1990</i>	phatic connective	<i>I mean. Well</i>
<i>Blakemore 1992</i>	discourse connective	<i>However. Therefore. so</i>
<i>Dooley 1986</i>	sen tence- initial elements	<i>in consequence</i>
<i>Fuentes. 1987</i>	extrasentential links	<i>however. consequently</i>
<i>Ostman. 1982a</i>	pragmatic particle	<i>in addition. nonetheless</i>
<i>Redeker. 1991</i>	discourse operator	<i>but. then. So</i>
<i>Schourup. 1985</i>	discourse particle	<i>I mean. well. you know.</i>
<i>Stubbs, 1983</i>	Adverbs	<i>furthermore, finally</i>
<i>Stubbs. 1983</i>	pragmatic connectors	<i>and. however</i>
<i>Van Dijk. 1985</i>	sentence adverbs	<i>However, consequently</i>
<i>Van Dijk. 1985</i>	adverbial compounds	<i>as a consequence. on the contrary</i>
<i>Warner. 1985</i>	discourse connectives	<i>so, but. otherwise</i>

In light of the terminological confusion, defining the researcher's perspective by the discourse marker is necessary. If one exists, a single definition does not seem to readily emerge from the literature, perhaps because the study of discourse markers has begun fairly recently in the eighties. However, examining the work of different authors in the field reveals two elements in common that can serve to characterise what a discourse marker is.

Levinson (1983) does not specifically define discourse markers, but in his discussion of discourse deixis, he states that "there are words and phrases in English . . . that indicates the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse" (p. 87). His examples of discourse deictic items include *but, therefore, in conclusion, to the contrary, still, However, anyway, well, besides, actually, all in all, so after all* (p. 128), which have been considered discourse markers by many authors.

DMs are used to provide a connection between what has been said and what could be said by a speaker or writer, despite the fact that they lack the sense of a term in a sentence or the context in which they are used. However, DMs make sense in their context; in other terms, the context in which they are used and the reason with which they are used influence their meaning in a document or discussion (Schiffrin, 1987; Cowan, 2008). Lubishtani (2019) conducted a comparative analysis to determine the semantic relationship and role of connectors in argumentative texts written in English and Albanian.

Schiffrin (1987) gives two definitions of discourse markers, an operational one: and a theoretical one. Operationally, discourse markers are "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (p. 31). By sequentially dependent, she means that discourse markers operate at the discourse level, not at the lower level of the units of which discourse consists. Her definition is especially vague because it references units of talk without defining what this means. The decision to use this wording is deliberate, and she explains since units of talk can be sentences, propositions, speech acts, or tone units. Discourse markers serve as brackets because they signal the boundaries between units of talk.

Theoretically, Schiffrin (1987) defines discourse markers as contextual coordinates. She says that they show "that an utterance is focused on either the speaker, or the hearer, or both" and "index their containing utterance to whatever text precedes them, or to whatever text is to follow, or to both" (p. 323). In other words, discourse markers index utterances within the context, pointing forward or backwards in the text, or both directions simultaneously, and to the speaker, the hearer, or both at the same time. Combining Schiffrin's operational and theoretical definitions, we could say that discourse markers are used to split up the text into smaller units and indicate how those units relate to one another.

Redeker (1991) prefers the term *discourse operator* instead of the discourse marker because it usually signals a link between propositions. The primary function of discourse operators is to bring to the hearer's attention a particular kind of link between the upcoming utterance and the discourse context.

Blakemore (1992) refers to discourse markers as *discourse connectives*. According to her, discourse connectives are expressions that constrain the interpretation of the connection between two utterances. In other words, these expressions impose constraints on implicatures by indicating what the relevance of an utterance concerns the prior utterance, thus helping the hearer choose the context intended by the speaker for the interpretation of the forthcoming utterance.

2.1 Characteristics of DMs

This section will explain specific characteristics of DMs, such as their function, meaning, and non-defining characteristics.

2.1.1 The functions of DMs

In Language, in particular, words are organised in a specific fashion to achieve a communicative goal. In this section. The researcher discusses how discourse markers contribute toward such a goal by focusing on their function in discourse.

Blakemore's (1989) main idea is that speakers adhere to the principle of relevance to obtain adequate contextual effects with the minimum effort when engaged in conversation. To achieve this goal, speakers can use discourse connectives, “expressions used to indicate how the relevance of one discourse segment is dependent on another” (Blakemore, 1989, p. 125).

Schiffrin's (1987) key point is that discourse should be coherent, and she assigns discourse markers an essential role in accomplishing this goal. According to her, discourse markers contribute towards coherence by providing contextual coordinates or indices for utterances. Schiffrin points out that discourse markers can operate at different levels. For example, *so* conveys a causal relation of "result" in different planes of discourse: a fact-based relation holds between events and states, a knowledge-based relation holds when there is an inference to be made, and “an action-based relation holds when a speaker presents a motive for an action being performed through talk” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 202).

In Redeker's view, discourse coherence arises from the semantic and pragmatic relations between discourse units. Similar to Schiffrin (1987), Redeker (1991) maintains that discourse markers play an essential part in discourse coherence by making explicit the relations between discourse units.

In summary, the function of discourse markers is to contribute toward discourse coherence by explicitly showing the relations that make one discourse unit relevant to another.

2.1.2 The meaning of DMs

A discourse marker is part of a sentence, but it is not part of the proposition expressed in such a sentence. Thus, a discourse marker does not affect the propositional meaning of the sentence in which it occurs. Propositional meaning is just one kind of meaning conveyed through discourse. If a discourse marker does not contribute propositional meaning, then what type of meaning does it convey? In what follows, the researcher first summarises why a discourse marker must have meaning. Then the researcher identifies the type of non-propositional meaning that a discourse marker signals (Alami, 2015). According to Ali Al-Qahtani, “the use of D.M. leads to increased students' writing skills” (Ali Al-Qahtani, 2015).

Among the conditions that allow an expression to be a discourse marker, Schiffrin (1987) says that “it either has to have no meaning, or a vague meaning, or to be reflexive (of the language. of the speaker)” (p. 328). This is even more clear when more than one relationship can hold between sentences, as shown in (1):

(1)-

- a. He is not coming. *However*, we should address these important issues at today's meeting.
- b. He is not coming. *Therefore*, we should address these important issues at today's meeting.
- c. He is not coming. *Besides*, we should address these important issues at today's meeting.

In (1), the speaker's discourse marker will display the relation *she* intends to the hearer.

Even if a discourse marker does not contribute representational meaning to the sentence in which it occurs, its meaning can be derived from representational meaning. For example, the discourse markers *and so* have meanings closely related to those of the conjunctions. To illustrate the difference between them, consider the examples in (2) and (3). (Example (2b) consists of a dialogue between speaker A and speaker B; this notation will be used for those examples in which two speakers are involved.)

- (2) a. He said he would come, but he never showed up.
b. A: Can you tell me the time? B: *But* don't you have a watch yourself?
- (3) a. He is sick, so he'll stay at home today.
b. He is sick. So let's get down to business.

In (2a), *but* signals a contrast between "coming" and "not coming", in (3a), *so* indicates that "staying at home" is a direct consequence of "being sick". In (2a) and (3a), *but* and *so* express relationships between the propositions of the two sentences. In (2b) and (3b), there is some kind of contrast and consequence because that is the basic meaning of these discourse markers. However, these relationships do not hold between the propositions by themselves. In (2b), there is a contrast between a question and a condition that would make a question valid (i.e. that the person asking the question does not have access to the requested information). In addition, in (3b), "getting down to business" is not a direct consequence of him "being sick". But given an appropriate context. For example, when people are gathered for a meeting that cannot be postponed, the statement that one person is sick can be interpreted as enough reason to start the meeting since there is no point in waiting for this person to arrive.

Blakemore (1989) provides a hint of what the meaning of discourse markers might be when she states that "not all linguistic meaning can be defined solely in terms of input to the processes that deliver propositional representations for the world. Some linguistic meaning provides instruction as to how the proposition recovered is to be processed for relevance" (p. 18). According to her, linguistic meaning can be representational or procedural (Blakemore, 1992, p. 149). She provides examples of expressions such as, after all, and you see that do not contribute to the propositional content of the utterances in which they appear (Blakemore, 1989, p. 143). understanding language involves more than interpreting propositional

representations. These representations must also be manipulated; they are related to other representations in different ways. Discourse markers are devices that instruct the hearer how to manipulate these representations. The basic idea is that discourse markers have procedural meaning and point the hearer to the correct context for interpreting the sentence. They do not say anything about the truth value of propositions but provide a procedure for interpreting them.

To summarise, the meaning and function of discourse markers are intimately related. As we saw earlier, the function of a discourse marker is to indicate a relationship between discourse units. In addition, to carry out their function, discourse markers must have meaning. This meaning is procedural because it encodes a procedure for the interpretation of the relationship between sentences.

2.1.3 Non-defining characteristics of DMs

We now turn to other characteristics of discourse markers, those that can be termed "non-defining". The following characteristics have been compiled from many sources. They are based upon work done by Fraser (1990, 1993), Ostman (1982b), Quirk et al. (1985), Schiffrin (1987), Svartvik (1980), and Zwicky (1985).

To begin with, discourse markers cannot be syntactically characterised. In the inventory of English words and phrases that are considered discourse markers, there are examples of verbs (*look*), adverbs (*now*), literal phrases (*as a result*), idioms, meta-talk (*what I mean is*), coordinate conjunctions (*but*), subordinate conjunctions (*so*). In addition, if a discourse marker serves as such in a sentence, that will be its only function within the sentence; that is, *now* cannot be analysed as both a discourse marker and an adverb in the same sentence. Furthermore, while sometimes, the meaning of the discourse marker can coincide with that of the "traditional" part of speech (as in *repeat*). This need not be the case. Idioms are an excellent example of this, but even a verb like *look* used as a discourse marker in *Look, you'd better start behaving yourself* does not keep its literal meaning (Ali, 2016, p. 5).

There is a strong and important association between mastery of student discourse markers and students' capacity to compose exposition documents, according to Muhyidin (2020). Since DMs play an essential role in writing, students should know about it (Aidinlou & Shahrokhi, 2012).

Commonly, discourse markers occur in a sentence-initial (pre-subject) position. However, this does not rule out the possibility of a discourse marker occurring in the medial (post-subject) or even final position (after the verb phrase). This is to be expected, as discourse markers do not necessarily have scope over whole sentences but can also have scope over larger or smaller discourse units. A non-initial position of a discourse marker will usually indicate over what smaller unit the discourse marker has scope.

To illustrate what is meant by the scope of a discourse marker, consider the following examples:

- (4) a. John went home. However, Mary did not.
b. John went home. Mary, however, did not.

In (4a), *however* has scope over Mary did not, and the complete sentences are being contrasted. But in (4b), *however* has scope only over Mary; that is, it also acts as a focus marker that selects a unit smaller than the sentence. In this case, it is the subjects of the two sentences that are being contrasted by *however*. The fact that a medial or post-subject discourse marker has scope over the subject only is more easily seen in (5):

- (5) a. John went home. *However*, he didn't stay there.
b. John went home. He, * *however*, didn't stay there.

In (5a), the two sentences are contrasted. However, in (5b), the use of *however* in medial position is not allowed. The reason for this is that in (5b), *however*, selects the subject of the second sentence (he) and attempts to contrast it with the subject of the first sentence (John), and there is no such contrast since the two subjects have the same referent.

However, a discourse marker in a non-initial position does not necessarily function as a focus marker. In (6a and b), the scope of the discourse marker is the same.

- (6) a. She's not coming to the park with us. She'll go to the library instead.
b. She's not coming to the park with us. Instead, she'll go to the library.

Although a discourse marker is structurally found within a sentence, we noted that it does not affect the representational meaning of the sentence. For this reason, the discourse marker is detachable from the sentence in which it occurs. However, it should be emphasised that the fact that discourse markers are syntactically detachable does not necessarily mean that they are always optional because they might be indispensable from a pragmatic point of view. Notice the difference in the following pairs, where (7a and b) are identical to (7a' and b'), except for the omission of the discourse markers despite this and on the contrary.

- (7) a. John's always been good at math. He flunked Calculus.
a'. John's always been good at Math. *In spite of this*, he flunked Calculus.
b. A: He was here on time. B: He arrived late.
b'. A: He was here on time. B: *On the contrary*, he arrived late.

As these examples show, in some contexts, the omission of a discourse marker can result in grammatically acceptable sentences that are pragmatically disjointed, unnatural, or even rude (Brinton 1990). In (7a) and (7b), a different intonation could perhaps compensate for the omission of the discourse marker.

To summarise the characteristics of discourse markers:

- a- Discourse markers are drawn from different parts of speech.
- b- They have a core meaning; their meaning is not representational but procedural.
- c- Their meaning may or may not be the same as that of the homophonous part of speech
- d- They have only one function within the sentence (namely. that of discourse marker)

They usually (though not necessarily) occur in sentence-initial position; they are syntactically detachable.

2.2 Research Questions

- 1- What types of DMs are used by the Iraqi bachelor students?
- 2- What types of DMs are misused by the Iraqi B.A. students and how their L1 affected their use of DMs?
- 3- What types of DMs are overused by the Iraqi B.A. students?

3. Methodology (if applicable)

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative approach was adopted in the current study to explore the use of discourse markers in academic writing by Iraqi B.A. students. The semantic perspective of Fraser (2004) was following in classifying the discourse markers. The DMs are classified as follows into four categories:

- Contrastive Markers (CDMs), such as *alternatively, in spite of, conversely, but, although, in contrast, despite...*
- Elaborative Markers (EDMs), such as *by the same token, in particular, above all, equally, also, for example, and...*
- Implicative Markers (IDMs), such as *as a conclusion, all things considered, so, as a consequence, after all, therefore, accordingly, hence, then...*
- Temporal Markers (TDMs), such as *eventually, as soon as, meantime, finally, before, meanwhile, first, after...*

3.2 Participants

The current study was conducted with 90 B.A. students that study English as a foreign language in Al-Qalam university college (45 males and 45 females). The Iraqi B.A. students that are participate in this study are studying at three different stages. The stages that the researcher has taken are Freshmen, Sophomore, and Senior. Since the students are learning English as a foreign language, they have taken specific writing courses. The freshmen students have taken basic writing and grammar writing. Sophomore students have taken the course of writing and intermediate essay writing. Senior students have taken a course in advance writing. The participants are aged between 20-25 years.

3.3 Instrument

The current study is using Fraser's categories of DMs and student's compositions as instruments. The selected students are asked to write a descriptive essay chosen by the researcher on topics that they are familiar with for B.A. students the researcher asked them to write about ("Write about how the speech organs work in English" First stage, "Write about the role of youths in nation-building" Second stage, "Write about your favourite film or Tv show" Third stage). The reason why the researcher chose descriptive essay writing was because of the fact that the students were more familiar with writing descriptive essay assignments.

Fraser's theory intends to explain different types of discourse markers (DMs) used by Iraqi students in essays, their features, functions, and the relation between them. To show the DMs used in the essays, Fraser's (2004) classification will be applied. The current study adopted this model while analysing the data because it fits the analysis procedures of this study. Also, this model selects DMs as a cover term to avoid confusion with the diversity in the terminology used by researchers in the sources of DMs in general.

3.4 Data collection

The present study is a corpus-based study. The corpus consists of the essays written by 60 students. The total number of words is 46774. The number of words written by the freshmen was 18075, the number of words written by sophomores was 16790, and by senior students was 11909.

Table (2). The characteristics of the corpus

	freshmen	sophomore	senior	total
Male	7050	9193	4994	21237
Female	11025	7597	6915	25537
Total	18075	16790	11909	46774

The data was collected in three weeks. Each level of the students (freshmen, sophomore, and senior) had one week to write their essays. Without prior notice, the students were asked to write an essay consisting of (100-1000) words within two hours on a specific topic. Thirty freshmen students were asked to write about "how the speech organs perform during speaking English language". The sophomore students were asked to write about "the role of youth in nation-building". Senior students were asked to write about "favorite film or T.V. show". The students were not given any feedback to increase their level of confidence. The researcher received 90 essays from the students as all participants submitted them.

The current study uses a quantitative research design to explore DMs in the writing of the students. To increase the reliability of the data analysis, the researcher used AntConc for corpus analysis. AntConc is a freeware, multi-platform, multi-purpose

corpus analysis toolkit explicitly designed for use in the classroom. The program is going to identify the DMs that Iraqi students in their writings used. It hosts a comprehensive set of tools, including a powerful concordancer, word and keyword frequency generators, cluster and lexical bundle analysis tools, and a word distribution plot.

4. Findings

The results are presented as follows, in the order of the research questions:

4.1 Research question 1

What types of DMs are used by the Iraqi bachelor students?

The first question is answered by the use of accurate computerised reading of the essays, which freshmen, sophomores, and seniors wrote. The total papers entered into the program AntConc were 90 (females and males- no specifications). The program came up with the results:

- A- Out of the 90 essays of the three stages, the total rating of the words were 46000 to 47000 words.
- B- The total number of DMs used by the three stages participants (no gender specification) was 3173.
- C- The total types of DMs used by the three stages participants (no gender specification) were 34.

The result of the analysis that AntConc came up with is more clarified by the following tables

Table (3): Contrastive discourse markers used by all participants

DMs	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
CDMs			
<i>In spite of</i>	0	0	0
<i>But</i>	32	31	58
<i>Although</i>	2	3	2
<i>In contrast</i>	0	1	0
<i>Despite</i>	0	1	7
<i>However</i>	7	6	3
<i>Or</i>	112	44	34
<i>Otherwise</i>	0	0	0

Table (8). presents the results of the use of contrastive discourse markers by the participants. As seen from the results, the most commonly used discourse markers are ($f=112$) and ($f=58$). The use of *or* as a D.M. is overwhelmingly more than the others. In this category, the

participants did not use discourse markers like *In spite of* (f=0) and *otherwise* (f=0). Moreover, DMs like *although* and *despite*, were very rarely used by the participants.

Table (4). Elaborative discourse markers used by all participants

DMs	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
EDMs			
<i>In particular</i>	3	2	1
<i>Above all</i>	0	0	0
<i>Equally</i>	0	5	0
<i>Also</i>	22	34	15
<i>For example</i>	6	3	3
<i>And</i>	523	784	521
<i>Besides</i>	1	0	0
<i>Moreover</i>	0	1	2
<i>Furthermore</i>	0	7	0
<i>Such as</i>	44	14	6
<i>In addition</i>	5	2	1
<i>Because</i>	44	31	17

Table (9). presents the results as to the use of Elaborative discourse markers by the participants. As seen from the results, the most commonly used discourse markers are (f=784) and *Because* (f=44). The use of *and* as a D.M. is overwhelmingly more than the others. In this category, the participants did not use discourse markers like *Above all* (f=0). Moreover, DMs like *Besides* and *Moreover* were very rarely used by the participants.

Table (5). Implicative discourse markers used by all participants

DMs	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
IDMs			
<i>So</i>	40	31	26
<i>As a consequence</i>	0	0	0
<i>After all</i>	0	0	1
<i>Therefore</i>	5	6	4
<i>Accordingly</i>	1	2	0
<i>Hence</i>	2	5	0
<i>Then</i>	42	3	17
<i>Thus</i>	3	5	3

Table (10). presents the results as to the use of Implicative discourse markers by the participants. As seen from the results, the most commonly used discourse markers are *Then* (f=42) and *So* (f=40). The use of *Then* as a D.M. is overwhelmingly more than the others. In

this category, the participants did not use discourse markers like *As a consequence* (f=0). Moreover, DMs like *After all* and *Accordingly* were very rarely used by the participants.

Table (6). Temporal discourse markers used by all participants

DMs	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
TDMs			
<i>Eventually</i>	0	0	0
<i>As soon as</i>	2	2	0
<i>Finally</i>	0	4	4
<i>Before</i>	7	4	13
<i>First</i>	30	6	14
<i>After</i>	6	7	20
<i>Firstly</i>	0	1	0
<i>Secondly</i>	0	1	0
<i>Thirdly</i>	0	1	0
<i>Lastly</i>	0	0	0
<i>Next</i>	1	1	6
<i>As</i>	198	125	84

Table (11). presents the results as to the use of Temporal discourse markers by the participants. As seen from the results, the most commonly used discourse markers are *As* (f=198) and *First* (f=30). The use of *As* as a D.M. is overwhelmingly more than the others. The participants did not use discourse markers like *Lastly* (f=0) and *Eventually* (f=0) in this category. Moreover, DMs like *Firstly*, *Secondly*, and *Thirdly* were very rarely used by the participants.

Table (7). Contrastive discourse markers used by all participants (per 1000 words)

DMs	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
CDMs (Contrastive discourse markers)			
<i>In spite of</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>But</i>	6,8	6,6	12,4
<i>Although</i>	0,4	0,6	0,4
<i>In contrast</i>	0,0	0,2	0,0
<i>Despite</i>	0,0	0,2	1,5
<i>However</i>	1,5	1,3	0,6
<i>Or</i>	23,9	9,4	7,3
<i>Otherwise</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0

Table (12). The most frequently CDM used by freshmen is Or (f= 23,9 per 1000 words), the sophomore is Or (f= 9,4 per 1000 words), and senior is But (f= 12,4 per 1000 words). Show that the contrastive DMs were most frequently used by freshmen as well (f=3,27 per 1000 words).

Table (8). Elaborative discourse markers used by all participants (per 1000 words)

EDMs (Elaborative discourse markers)			
<i>In particular</i>	0,6	0,4	0,2
<i>Above all</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>Equally</i>	0,0	1,1	0,0
<i>Also</i>	4,7	7,3	3,2
<i>For example</i>	1,3	0,6	0,6
<i>And</i>	111,8	167,6	111,4
<i>Besides</i>	0,2	0,0	0,0
<i>Moreover</i>	0,0	0,2	0,4
<i>Furthermore</i>	0,0	1,5	0,0
<i>Such as</i>	9,4	3,0	1,3
<i>In addition</i>	1,1	0,4	0,2
<i>Because</i>	9,4	6,6	3,6

As we can see from Table (13), the highest number belongs to elaborative DMs (f=44,83 per 1000 words). Table (13). also shows that freshmen used mostly elaborative DMs (f=13,85 per 1000 words). The most frequently used DMs by seniors were elaborative DMs (f=12,10 per 1000 words). The most elaborative DMs used by the three levels of students is *AND*.

Table (9). Implicative discourse markers used by all participants (per 1000 words)

IDMs (Implicative discourse markers)			
<i>So</i>	8,6	6,6	5,6
<i>As a consequence</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>After all</i>	0,0	0,0	0,2
<i>Therefore</i>	1,1	1,3	0,9
<i>Accordingly</i>	0,2	0,4	0,0
<i>Hence</i>	0,4	1,1	0,0
<i>Then</i>	9,0	0,6	3,6
<i>Thus</i>	0,6	1,1	0,6

Table (14). Show that the Implicative DMs were most frequently used by freshmen as well (f=1.99 per 1000 words). In general, the least frequently used DMs were Implicative DMs (f=4.19 per 1000 words). The most Implicative DMs used by freshmen is *THEN*. The sophomore and senior are *SO*.

Table (10). Temporal discourse markers used by all participants (per 1000 words)

TDMs (Temporal discourse markers)			
<i>Eventually</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>As soon as</i>	0,4	0,4	0,0
<i>Finally</i>	0,0	0,9	0,9
<i>Before</i>	1,5	0,9	2,8
<i>First</i>	6,4	1,3	3,0
<i>After</i>	1,3	1,5	4,3
<i>Firstly</i>	0,0	0,2	0,0
<i>Secondly</i>	0,0	0,2	0,0
<i>Thirdly</i>	0,0	0,2	0,0
<i>Lastly</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>Next</i>	0,2	0,2	1,3
<i>As</i>	42,3	26,7	18,0

Table (15). Show that the Temporal DMs (f=11.48 per 1000 words). Freshmen used temporal DMs (f=5,22 per 1000 words). Sophomores also used temporal DMs (f=3,25 per 1000 words). With seniors, they used temporal DMs (f=3,01 per 1000 words). The most temporal D.M. used by the three-level is *AS*.

Table (11). Contrastive discourse markers used by male and female students

CDMs	Male	Female	Both
<i>In spite of</i>	0	0	0
<i>But</i>	45	76	121
<i>Although</i>	5	2	7
<i>In contrast</i>	1	0	1
<i>Despite</i>	3	5	8
<i>However</i>	4	12	16
<i>Or</i>	77	113	190
<i>Otherwise</i>	0	0	0

Table (16). specifies all Contrastive discourse markers that male and female students use. This Table shows that all the participants (freshmen, sophomore, and senior) have used a high rate of CDM *Or* followed by *But* Male students used *Or* (f=77) followed by *But* (f=45) while female students used *OR* (f=113) followed by *BUT* (f=74). In addition, the least common CMDs that the participants use were *Otherwise* and *In spite of* which they did not use them at all (male and female) in their assigned essays.

Table (12). Implicative discourse markers used by male and female students

IDMs	Male	Female	Both
<i>So</i>	28	69	97
<i>As a consequence</i>	0	0	0
<i>After all</i>	1	0	1
<i>Therefore</i>	8	7	15
<i>Accordingly</i>	2	1	3
<i>Hence</i>	2	5	7
<i>Then</i>	29	33	62
<i>Thus</i>	3	8	11

Table (17) specifies all Implicative discourse markers that male and female students use. This Table shows that all the participants (freshmen, sophomore, and senior) have used a high rate of IDM *So* followed by *Then* in their assigned essays. Male student used *Then* (f=29) followed by *So* (f=28) while female students used *So* (f=69) followed by *Then* (f=33). In addition, the participants did not use discourse markers like *As a consequence* (f=0) (male and female) in their assigned essays. Moreover, DMs like *After all* was very rarely used by the participants.

Table (13). Elaborative discourse markers used by male and female students

EDMs	Male	Female	Both
<i>In particular</i>	6	0	6
<i>Above all</i>	0	0	0
<i>Equally</i>	2	3	5
<i>Also</i>	35	36	71
<i>For example</i>	9	3	12
<i>And</i>	930	898	1828
<i>Besides</i>	1	0	1
<i>Moreover</i>	2	1	3
<i>Furthermore</i>	3	4	7
<i>Such as</i>	27	37	64

<i>In addition</i>	7	1	8
<i>Because</i>	40	52	92

Table (18) specifies all Elaborative discourse markers that male and female students use. This Table shows that all the participants (freshmen, sophomore, and senior) have used a high rate of EDM *And* followed by *Because* in their assigned essays. Male student used *And* (f=930) followed by *Because* (f=40) while female students used *And* (f=898) followed by *Because* (f=52). In addition, the participants did not use discourse markers like *Above all* (f=0) (male and female) in their assigned essays. Moreover, DMs like *Besides* was very rarely used by the participants.

Table (14). Temporal discourse markers used by male and female students

TDMs	Male	Female	Both
<i>Eventually</i>	0	0	0
<i>As soon as</i>	1	3	4
<i>Finally</i>	4	4	8
<i>Before</i>	12	12	24
<i>First</i>	21	29	50
<i>After</i>	16	17	33
<i>Firstly</i>	0	1	1
<i>Secondly</i>	0	1	1
<i>Thirdly</i>	0	1	1
<i>Lastly</i>	0	0	0
<i>Next</i>	1	7	8
<i>As</i>	159	248	407

Table (19) specifies all Temporal discourse markers that male and female students use. This Table shows that all the participants (freshmen, sophomore, and senior) have used a high rate of TDM *As* followed by *First* in their assigned essays. Male student used *As* (f=159) followed by *FIRST* (f=21) while female students used *As* (f=248) followed by *First* (f=29). In addition, the participants did not use discourse markers like *Eventually* (f=0) and *Lastly* (f=0) (male and female) in their assigned essays. Moreover, DMs like *Firstly*, *Secondly*, and *Thirdly* were very rarely used by the participants.

The total number of DMs used by male students are 1484 and by female students are 1689. The log-likelihood calculations indicated that male students use fewer DMs than female students (log likelihood= -30.89 p < 0.001).

Table (25): The rate and the percentage of the DMs used by Iraqi B.A. students

	CONTRASTIVE	ELABORATIVE	IMPLICATIVE	TEMPORAL
<i>Freshmen</i>	(13.44%)	(56.94%)	(8.17%)	(21.44%)
<i>Sophomores</i>	(7.33%)	(75.27%)	(4.43%)	(12.95%)
<i>Seniors</i>	(12.06%)	(65.66%)	(5.91%)	(16.35%)
TOTAL	(11%)	(66%)	(6%)	(17%)

Table (20) shows the exact percentage of DMs that Iraqi B.A. students used. Accordingly, the participants have used EDMs more than the other types of DMs. They used EDMs 66%, TMDs 17%, CMDs 11% and IMDs 6% in their 90 essays (male and female). The freshmen students have used 56.94% of EDMs, 21.44% of TMDs, 13.44% of CMDs, and 8.17% of IMDs in their 30 essays (male and female). In addition, the sophomore students have used 75.27% of EDMs, 12.95% of TMDs, 7.33% of CMDs, and 4.43% of IMDs in their 30 essays (male and female). Finally, senior students have used EDMs 65.66%, TMDs 16.35%, IMDs 16.35% and CMDs 12.06% in their 30 essays (male and female). The findings of the current study are similar to other studies done by some researchers such as (Alahmed, Mohammad & Kırmızı, 2020), (Ab Manan & Raslee, 2016), and (Martinez, 2004) they found that the students used a high rate of EDMs in their writing.

Table (16): The frequency DMs used by Iraqi B.A. students

participants	CDMs	EDMs	IDMs	TDMs
<i>Freshmen</i>	153	648	93	244
<i>Sophomore</i>	86	883	52	152
<i>Senior</i>	104	566	51	141
TOTAL	343	2097	196	537

According to the categories of DMs, table (21) shows the number of each category that was used by the Iraqi B.A. students. According to the findings of the data analysis that were processed with AntConc, the freshmen students used CDMs (f=153), EDMs (f=648), IDMs (f=93) and TDMs (f=244). The sophomore students used CDMs (f=86), EDMs (f=883), IDMs (f=52) and TDMs (f=152). The Senior students used CDMs (f=104), EDMs (f=566), IDMs(f=51) and TDMs (f=141).

Table (17). The frequency DMs used by Iraqi B.A. students (per 1000 words)

	<i>CONTRASTIVE</i>	<i>ELABORATIVE</i>	<i>IMPLICATIVE</i>	<i>TEMPORAL</i>
<i>Freshmen</i>	3,27	13,85	1,99	5,22
<i>Sophomores</i>	1,84	18,88	1,11	3,25
<i>Seniors</i>	2,22	12,10	1,09	3,01
<i>TOTAL</i>	7,33	44,83	4,19	11,48

In order to facilitate comparison, the results as to D.M. types were normalised to 1000 words. The results are presented in Table (22). As we can see from Table (22), the highest number belongs to elaborative DMs (f=44,83 per 1000 words) followed by temporal DMs (f=11.48 per 1000 words). Table (22) also shows that freshmen used mostly elaborative DMs (f=13,85 per 1000 words), followed by temporal DMs (f=5,22 per 1000 words). Sophomores also used mostly elaborative DMs (f=18.88 per 1000 words) followed by temporal DMs (f=3,25 per 1000 words). Finally, a similar pattern of D.M. use was also observed with seniors. The most frequently used DMs by seniors were elaborative DMs (f=12,10 per 1000 words), followed by temporal DMs (f=3,01 per 1000 words). When we compare freshmen, sophomores, and seniors, it can be seen that sophomores used more elaborative DMs (f=18.88 per 1000 words) compared to other groups. The freshmen used contrastive DMs more frequently than other groups (f=3,27 per 1000 words). Implicative DMs were most frequently used by freshmen as well (f=1.99 per 1000 words). In general, the least frequently used DMs were Implicative DMs (f=4.19 per 1000 words).

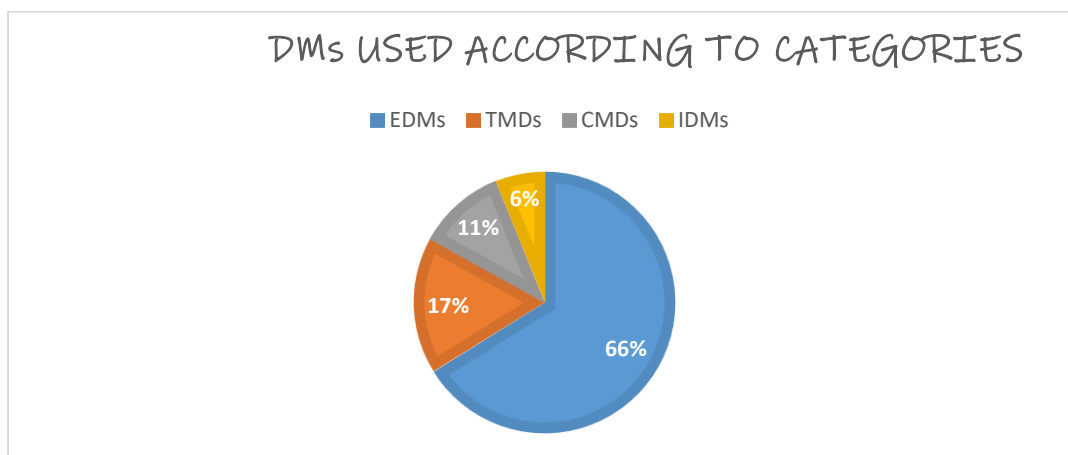


Figure (1): Percentage of the DMs used by Iraqi B.A. students

According to the categories of DMs, figure (1) shows the percentage of each category that the Iraqi B.A. students used. According to the data analysis findings processed with AntConc, students used 66% of EDMs, 17% of TMDs, 11% of CMDs, and 6% of IDMs. The highest rate of DMs is EDMs.

4.2 Research question 2

What types of DMs are misused by the Iraqi B.A. students and how their L1 affected their use of DMs?

The second question is concerned with links between the number of the functioned DMs used by the participants and the quality of the writing. Due to the well-functions DMs, the researcher can identify and decide the quality of the essays produced by the participants. In other words, the uses of DMs in compositions writing identify the good and the poor writing.

Another thing that the current study has highlighted is the stronger influence that some specific DMs can give to the writing. Statically, the current data analysis highlighted differences in the use of DMs between the three levels (freshmen, sophomore, senior). Since the participants were asked to write about specific descriptive subjects, the DMs used mostly Elaborative. EDMs are primarily used, which highlight their importance. In other words, the researcher has noticed a variety of DMs in the essays that were written well. In addition, the same DMs were repeated intensively in the poor essays with the same subject title.

Discourse markers are considered devices for giving text cohesion. Students who are more experienced in the target language tend to use DMs more often in their writings. Since they are more used to the proper archetypical forms of writing. Nevertheless, to make their writing more cohesive, some students overuse DMs within a single paragraph (especially seniors). The students who are more experienced tend to use DMs in their proper places. The students who still have their language barriers tend to overuse or misuse the DMs (especially freshmen). The examples below explain the misuse of DMs in the writing of the participant's essays:

Table (18): Examples of the misuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi B.A. students

Freshmen (juniors)	<p>P1: The air released by the lungs and comes up through the wind-pipe and arrives first at the larynx. So the larynx contains two small bands of elastic tissue and which can be thought of as two flat strips of rubber because lying opposite each other across the air passage. And these are the vocal cords, But the vocal cords take two basic positions.</p> <p>P13: All the sounds we utter because during the speech are issued as a result of muscle and cramps and that occur inside the body. So initially, the chest muscles thus responsible for breathing and create the air stream necessary so to produce almost all sounds of speech letters.</p>
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Sophomore	<p><i>P36: Young people are the energy of society so thus they live their societies, and on their hands civilizations are built and therefore, countries are concerned with directing the energies of their youth in a positive direction and towards development and construction, and without direction this energy can become a demolition pick rather than a builder.</i></p> <p><i>P44: although young people are also comfortable with the concept of “doing well while doing good”, but another finding from that Deloitte study was that almost all Millennials think it is acceptable for business to make a profit from innovations that benefit society.</i></p>
Senior	<p><i>P90: because one of Chuck's molars develop decay, thus he cannot bear more pain, so he breaks with a skateboard and falls unconscious. Chuck spends on the island for four years, and one day the waves eject one of the parts of the wrecked plane, so Chuck decides to use it.</i></p> <p><i>P78: Despite her extreme shyness, she quickly met Mike Newton and Eric Yurty and when she was sitting in the classroom next to Edward Coleen, also she felt his hostile actions towards her without any reason. Also he even tried to change the subject and he was studying with her to avoid it, thus leaving Bella at the top of the amazement, wonder, and condemnation of his behavior.</i></p>

Table (23). Show that the freshmen participants often made grammatical mistakes. It is not only the DMs that were misused but also a lack of correct sentence forms. Participant No.1 misused the EDMs. He used *So* and *Because* within the same sentence without clarifying the cause and the effect of the sentence. In addition, participant No.13 misused *Thus* and *So*, Making the sentence sound awkward and deformed. In the case of freshmen students, following Demirci and Kleiner (1997), they suggest that “DMs are used in their writing due to translation from their first language to second language”. The mother language made most of the junior’s writing affected by their mother language (Arabic). Also, in their study, Jomaa and Bidin (2017) pointed that EFL Arab postgraduates’ L2 writing is distinguished by the use of lengthy sentences (Jomaa & Bidin, 2019) due to the overuse of the relative pronouns „that“ and „which“ and the influence of their L1 (Arabic Language). The same problem of grammatical and structural mistakes can be found in the writings of sophomore students. Participant No.36 in Table (23) used two sequences of EDMs within the same sentence. P36 used *So* and *Thus* together without paying attention to the context of the sentence. P36 should

have used *That* instead of (*So* and *Thus*) to make the sentence understandable. Participant No.44 used EDM and CDM within the same sentence. P44 starts his sentence with *Although* then used *But* in the middle to link the two sentences. To achieve the proper use of DMs with the sentence, EDM should have been omitted.

Senior students have better writing skills than freshmen and sophomores. However, they also made some misuse and mistakes with DMs. Participant No.90 has use three sequences of EDMs. P90 used *Because*, *Thus*, and *So*. The P90 did not have to use *Because*. In addition, *Thus* was not necessary in that place. The participant should have used *That* instead of *Thus*. Participant No.78 used a sequence of EDMs. The use of *Also* and *Thus* made the sentence vague.

Thornbury (1997) reiterated that "Cohesion alone is not enough to make a text coherent". Texts have an internal logic, which the reader recognises even without the aid of explicit cohesive devices (p. 126). In other words, the examples above have failed to achieve the internal logic of the text and thought that by using DMs in different places within the text, it would make sense to the marker of the essays.

4.3 Research question 3

What types of DMs are overused by the Iraqi B.A. students?

Another problem within the writing of the Iraqi B.A. students was the overuse of DMs. According to Alahmed, Mohammed & Kırmızı (2020), some students overuse the DMs to cover their lack of vocabulary. In other words, Iraqi B.A. students have a poor vocabulary of L2 since they do not use English out of the classroom. This section focuses on which Iraqi students overuse DMs. By overuse, we mean which DMs were the most frequently used and which stood out. In Table (24), the examples show the overuse of EDMs within a single paragraph.

Table (19): Examples of the overuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi students

Freshmen (juniors)	<i>P28: Consonants are produced by restricting and then releasing the flow of air in three ways: vibrating the vocal cords and changing the part of the anatomy which restricts the air flow and changing the extent to which the air flow is restricted and consonants with relatively little vibration of the</i>
	<i>self-reliance and the personality of the young man and girl begin to take shape and has a role and opinion in society through various seminars, conferences and meetings.</i>

	<p><i>vocal cords are called voiceless consonants and consonants with relatively more vibration of the vocal cords are called voiced.</i></p> <p><i>P16: Phonetics is a branch of linguistics and deals with the investigation of the sound and means of a certain language and from the point of view of their articulation and acoustic qualities and semantics.</i></p>
Sophomore	<p><i>P54: The courage and creativity and ability to learn and high self-esteem are young, accounting for 40.3% of Nepal's total population. This is a major source of empowering and robust energy development and socio-political-economic transformation. Different age groups are considered young in different countries.</i></p> <p><i>P36: The same applies to educational conferences and cultural forums that we urge young men and women to instill in them morals and make them pillars and pillars of society in southern Sudan, such as "awareness campaigns" together to fight tribalism in southern Sudan "and support the unity of the people of southern Sudan cultivate a spirit of tolerance and support the social peace process in Our Community "and many others. And other youth projects to advance our nascent country</i></p>
Seniors	<p><i>P70: Youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the partners of today. Young people are also social actors of change and progress. Also, They are a crucial segment of a nation's development and their contribution, therefore, is highly needed.</i></p> <p><i>P72: Man passes through many stages of childhood and boyhood and adolescence and youth and aging and the pyramid, and the most important stage of life is the youth stage, in which the starting and independence of the family and</i></p>

Table (24). Show that the participants from the three levels (freshmen, sophomores, and seniors) overuse the DM AND in their sentences. Besides the lack of vocabulary that was noted as a reason for such overuse, the students have other problems that concern the structure of the sentences. The participants have used CDMs and EDMs even without any explicit meaning of the contrast or the need for elaborations. The overuse of the DMs has affected directly on the quality of the writing. The excessive use of AND have given the writing dull gesture and repetitiveness. Thus, the Iraqi B.A. students need to develop and become more conscious of using DMs, especially freshmen.

The freshmen students have overused the EDM *AND* (f=547) in their writing. Table (24) shows examples from P28 and P16, which both have overuse *AND* the P28 used *AND* (f=5) and P16 used *AND* (f=5). Both participants have an issue of lack of observation of the limit of the structure of the sentence. They both used *AND* as a mean to link a sequence of sentences thinking that it is normal to use EDM in such a way. The result was a long sentence with a vague meaning. In addition, the reader was not able to keep up with the sequence of the sentences.

The same problem of using *AND* to link long sentences arose with the sophomore students. Both P36 and P54 used *AND* to make up for their lack of vocabulary; the P36 used *AND* (f=6), and P54 used *AND* (f=5). They used EDM *AND* to make their text more cohesive. Nevertheless, the result of their overuse was long and dull sentences.

Although senior students have used multiple DMs in their essays, they also tend to overuse to cover their lack of vocabulary. In the table (24), P70 used EDM and CDM, *AND* (f=2), *ALOS* (f=2), *BUT* (f=1), and *THEREFOR* (f=1). P70 overused DMs thinking that it would make his essay more cohesive and cover his lack of vocabulary. In addition, the excessive use of *AND* initiated the same problems of vague meaning and incomprehensive sentence. Although there were few grammatical mistakes in the essays of seniors students, they did not overcome the proper use of DMs.

According to Alahmed, Mohammed & Kırmızı (2020), students overuse some discourse markers to cover their vocabulary limit. Using a high rate of some DMs makes effective and high-quality sentences. As a result of this linguistic use, their writing became weak rather than strong and effective.

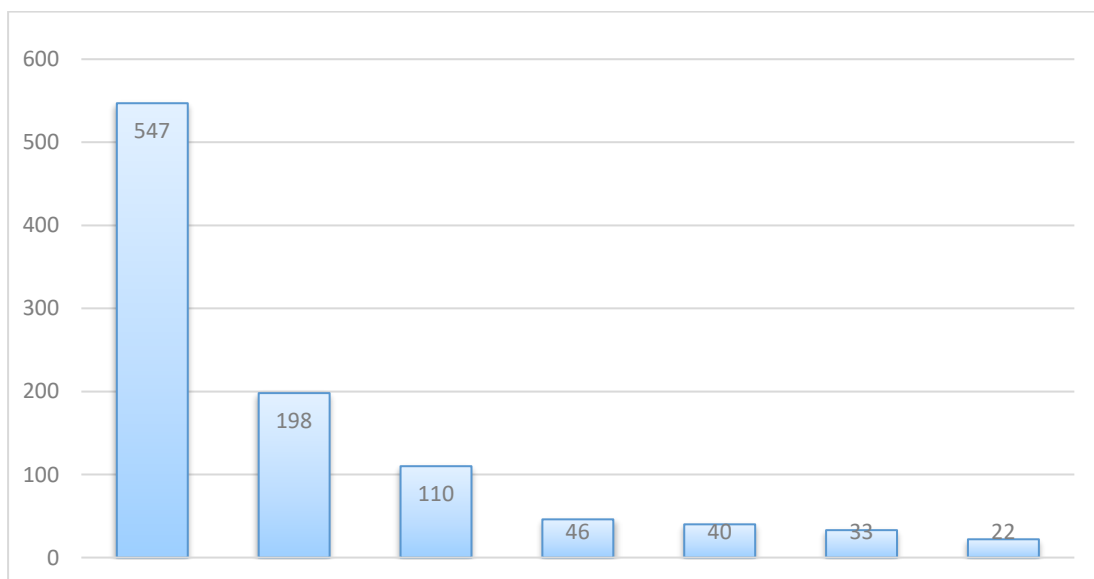


Figure (2): The overuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi students (first stage)

Figure 2 shows the most common DMs that are used by freshmen students. In figure 2, the freshmen students used *And* (f=547), *As* (f=198), *Or* (f=110), *Because* (f=46), *So* (f=40), *But* (f=33) and *Also* (f=22).

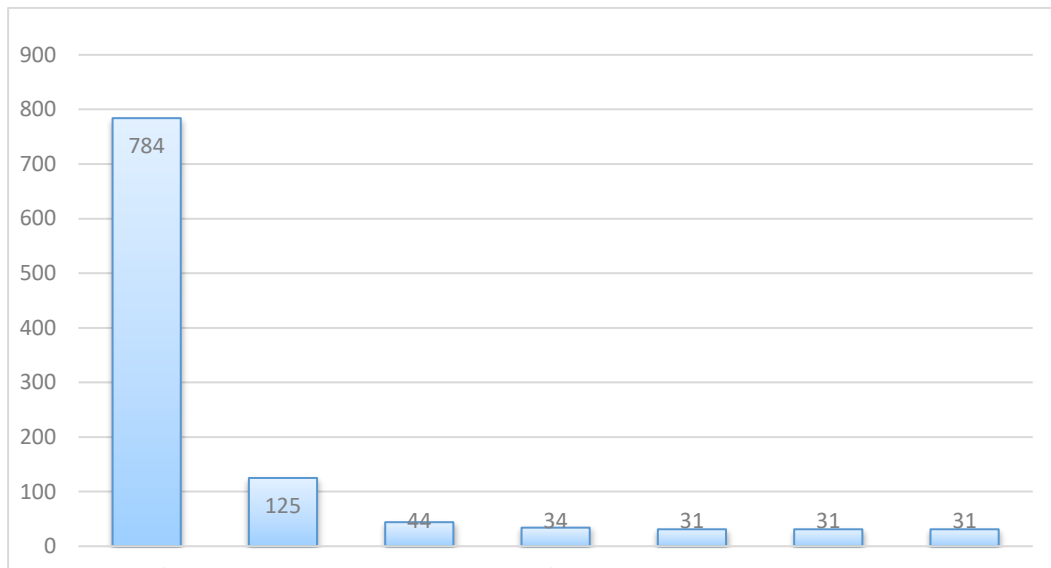


Figure (3): The overuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi students (second stage)

Figure 3 shows the most common DMs that are used by sophomore students. In figure 3, the sophomore students used *And* (f=784), *As* (f=125), *Or* (f=44), *Also* (f=34), *Because* (f=31), *But* (f=31) and *So* (f=31).

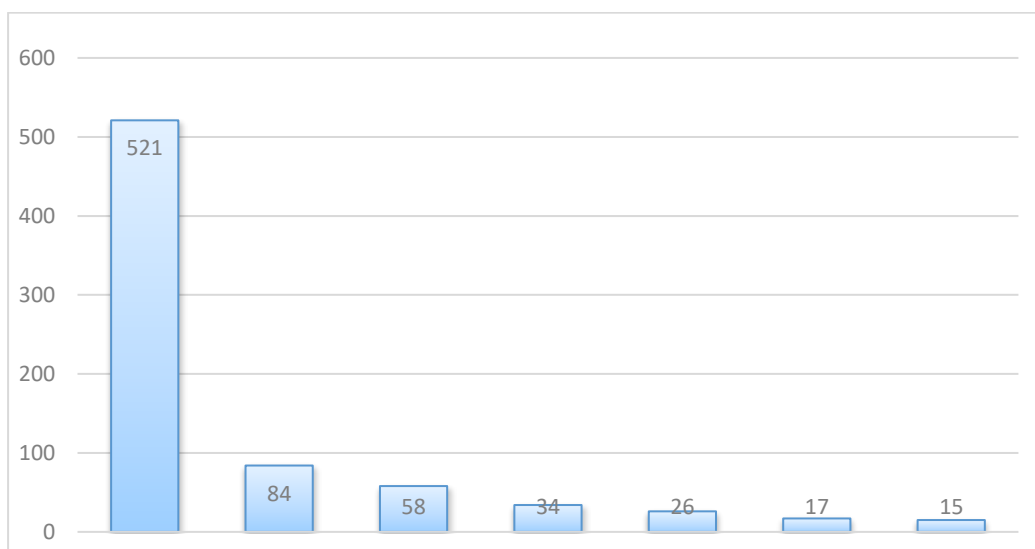


Figure (4): The overuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi students (Third stage)

Figure 4 shows the most common DMs that are used by senior students. In figure 4, the senior students used *And* (f=521), *As* (f=84), *But* (f=58), *Or* (f=34), *So* (f=26), *Because* (f=17) and *Also* (f=15).

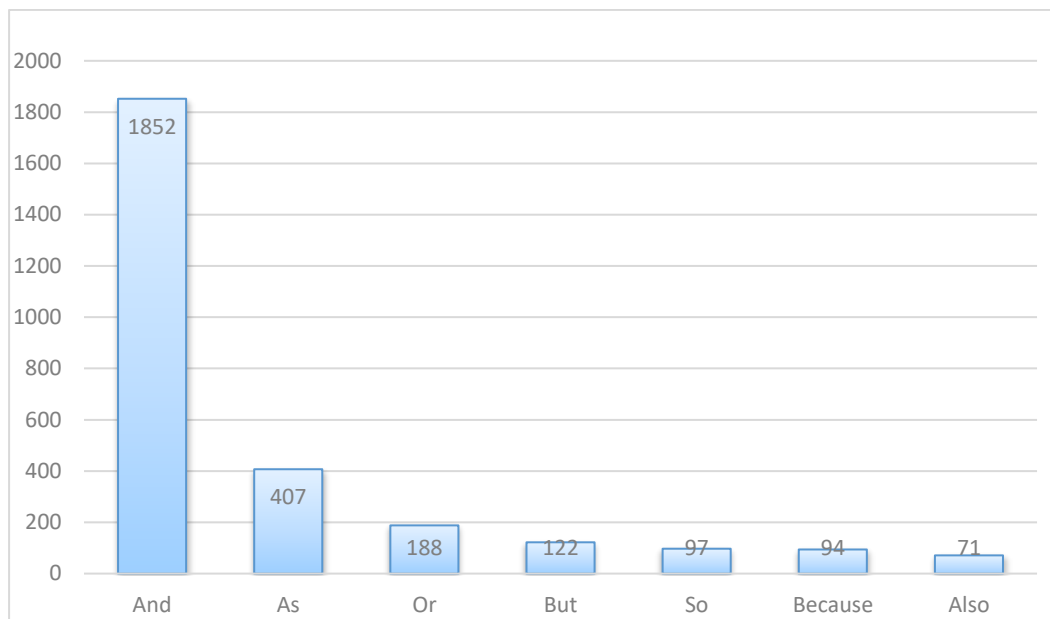


Figure (5): The overuse of DMs in the writing of Iraqi students (All stages)

Figure 5 shows the most common DMs that are used by Iraqi students (All stages). In figure 5, the Iraqi students used *And* (f=1852), *As* (f=407), *Or* (f=188), *But* (f=122), *So* (f=97), *Because* (f=94) and *Also* (f=71).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The current study has achieved its aim: exploring the DMs that the Iraqi B.A. students used in their essay writing. The participants were B.A. students studying the English Language at Al-Qalam university college. The current study analysed the essays that freshmen, sophomores, and seniors have submitted (first, second, and third years). The result of the data was that the participants involved have problems in their writing, especially with DMs. They have to work on their academic level to achieve the requirement of good writing. Considering cohesion and cohesive, all participants have problems in achieving them. They either made overuse of DMs in a specific place within the text or have misused them. This sort of misuse and overuse of DMs have affected the quality of the writing. Students have introduced poor level essays which it filled with DMs issues. The data collected from 90 essays showed that the participants had used a high rate of EDMs rather than CDMs, IDMs, and TDMs. The result of this study is in line with the result of other studies done by some researchers such as (Alahmed, Mohammmd & Kırmızı, 2020; Ab Manan & Raslee, 2016 Aysu, 2017; Gönen, 2011; Martinez, 2004; Modhish, 2012; Muhyidin, 2020; Tiryaki, 2017; Yunus & Haris, 2014) they found that the students used a high rate of EDMs in their writings. The current study found that most participants have overuse EDMs such as *And*, *As*, *Or*, *But*, *So*, *Because*, and *Also*. To solve the issue concerned with DMs use, the English department at Al-Qalam university college should offer a carouse in academic writing, not only relying on the

composition course. Also, as Jomaa (2019) suggests, cause of the complexity in both non-academic and academic discourses, several approaches and strategies should be used to gain both emic and etic perspectives from a writer by using different lenses.

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