

Research Article

Discourse marker in descriptive essays: A study on junior high school students

Abdul Wahid^{1,2}, Imam Suyitno², Suyono³, Martutik⁴

Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Article Info

Received: 07 January 2020

Revised: 14 June 2020

Accepted: 25 July 2020

Available online: 15 Sept 2020

Keywords:

Discourse markers

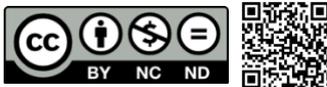
Cohesion and coherence

Descriptive essays

2149-360X/ © 2020 The Authors.

Published by Young Wise Pub. Ltd.

This is an open access article under
the CC BY-NC-ND license



Abstract

This study aims to determine the use of discourse markers (DM) in the descriptive essay text of students in high school. This study uses a qualitative approach that is classified as a case study. Data in the form of students' descriptive essays were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The essay writing instrument has a validity value of 95% and a reliability value (α) of 0.8. Participants were 96 grade IX students in Balikpapan, Indonesia, aged between 14-15 years. The purposive sampling method is used to select participants. The participants in this school were chosen because they were accustomed to receiving assignments in writing essay descriptions by their teachers. The results of this study indicate that (1) distance order is the dominant type of DM that is elaborately utilized, followed by elaboration, temporal, contrast, comparison, reason, causal, conclusions, and examples in participants' description essays, (2) class categories of types such as elaboration, comparison, and contrast have not shown varied use of participants, (3) students' DM usage skills are inadequate because of their inability to distribute DM primarily from coordinating conjunctions to linguistic units appropriately, and the existence of multifunctional DM avoidance strategies. The findings of this study become an evaluation material in teaching writing to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the use of discourse markers of high school students. The researcher recommends for the next study to look more closely at the development of thoughts and skills in the use of DM in essay writing.

To cite this article:

Wahid, A., Suyitno, I., Suyono, & Martutik. (2020). Discourse marker in descriptive essays: A study on junior high school students. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 8(3), 1099-1111. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17478/jegys.764191>

Introduction

Writing skills are required in almost every student learning activity at the educational level (Sharndama & Yakubu, 2013). In addition, writing skills as part of critical literacy can equip students to engage in social change or socio-political issues, take action, and promote social justice, economic equality, and cultural diversity (Lewison et al. 2002). Writing skills play an important role for students in the future, both in the learning process in the classroom and in life. Therefore, these skills are taught and trained in high schools in Indonesia in accordance with communication objectives (Lampiran Permendikbud No. 68 Tahun 2013, 2013). Based on this goal, one form of writing skills taught is writing descriptive essays.

The descriptive essay aims to give the impression/impression to the reader of objects, ideas, places, events, and the like that the author wants to convey (Suladi, 2015). In other words, in writing this essay, students need to build sentences that have a relationship or relationship between one another. To create this connection, functional linguists have brought two concepts, namely cohesion and coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion deals with the relationship of forms between its parts (Baryadi, 2002). There were links in sentences that involve the relationship between the elements, which can be explained by the correct arrangement of words, phrases, and syllables, provided that the sentence is grammatically also correct. The linkage will be even more real if the use of pronouns was considered; there is an alignment of ideas with what is stated; the point of view is maintained (Indiyastini, 2009).

¹ PhD Student, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, (abdulwahid@unismuh.ac.id), Orcid No.: 0000-0001-7882-7751

² Professor, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, (imam.suyitno.fs@um.ac.id), Orcid No.: 0000-0001-7733-3637

³ Professor, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia, (suyono.fs@um.ac.id), Orcid No.: 0000-0001-9698-4363

⁴ Assistant Professor, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia, (martutik.fs@um.ac.id), Orcid No.: 0000-0002-4013-0964

Coherence in description essays originates from cohesion. An important contribution to coherence comes from cohesion, the set of language resources each language has (as part of the textual metafunction to link one part of the text with another part) (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Essay descriptions produced by students need to be packaged with attention to aspects of cohesion and coherence. Readers can easily follow the mindset of the writer without experiencing obstacles because the order of thoughts is well organized without any jumps of confusing ideas. Coherence determines the readability of the message or information delivered in the student's essay description. This can provide a better understanding of the interpretation of the text, and the quality of the text (Crossley & McNamara, 2010; Karadeniz, 2017). One way students can take to create cohesion and coherence in their descriptive writing is to use discourse markers (hereinafter referred to as DM).

DM is a linguistic feature like 'because', 'and', 'then', and 'therefore', which is useful for stringing or binding several propositions in an essay so that the transition of ideas in the essay feels smooth. There are many definitions given by the author about DM, and even, the definition is among the authors. There is no broad agreement between the authors about how DM should be defined or how it functions (Fraser, 1999). In addition, there are many labels or terms used to refer to the same concept as DM. There are many languages for DM preferred to call this as 'pragmatic markers' (Fraser, 1999); labeled it as 'discourse connectives' (Blakemore, 1996); categorized this as 'sentence connectors' (Halliday & Hasan, 1976); called this as 'cue phrases' (Knott & Dale, 1994); 'discourse signalling devices' (Polanyi & Scha, 1983); 'semantic conjuncts' (Quirk et al. 1985); and 'pragmatic connectives' (Stubbs, 1983). However, for clarity, the analytical framework used in this study rests on taxonomy (Fraser, 2009). This choice is based on the consideration that Fraser's taxonomy is in accordance with written discourse, and appears to be the most comprehensive taxonomy in written discourse (Jalilifar, 2008). In this taxonomy, there are four types of DM, namely contrast, elaborative, inferential, and temporal (Fraser, 2009).

DM has been widely studied in various linguistics fields since 1970s (Ali & Mahadin, 2016); it has been studied in many languages and genres. DM studies have been investigated in many languages such as Chinese, Danish, Finnish, French, German, and Hebrew (Rahimi, 2011). In addition, they have also been investigated in various different genres such as newspapers, radio conversations, political interviews, tutorial sessions, and classrooms (Rahimi, 2011). DM has been studied, both in oral and written discourse. In the context of writing, DM research is related to how it is used in the written language of ESL / EFL students see (Dumlao & Wilang, 2019; Ghanbari et al. 2016; Jalilifar, 2008; Kapranov, 2017; Rahimi, 2011; Surjowati, 2018), the difference between native and non-native of English in using DM (Field & Yvette, 1992; Hinkel, 2001; Šimčikaitė, 2012), and how DM contributes on the whole writing product quality (Castro, 2004). The exposure shows how much research on DM. However, research related to the use of DM in high school student description writing for Indonesian speakers seems to have never been studied before. Writing descriptive writing is a challenging and difficult written language skill for high school students, but the study of descriptive essays for high school students has not been investigated until this research was conducted.

Problem of Study

This study determines the use of DM in the description essays of high school students. Specifically, the problem of the study was formulated as follows:

- Which types of using DM classes were used nicely in linking one proposition to another in the essay description of high school students?
- Which categories of DM classes were used nicely in linking one proposition to another in the essay description of high school students?
- How the high school students' skills of DM using in writing a descriptive essay?

Method

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach classified in case studies. Qualitative research with descriptive analysis methods is used to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics (Nassaji, 2015). The case identified is the frequency of use of DM that is used neatly by students in linking several propositions to the descriptive essay. In this study, data can be collected qualitatively but analyzed quantitatively using frequency frequencies, averages, or other statistical analyzes to determine relationships.

The data of this study were DM, which marks the relationship between propositions in the descriptive essays of high school students. The relationship between propositions is exposed in sentences (intra-sentences), inter-sentences

(or paragraphs). Thus, this research data in the form of sentences and inter-sentences (or paragraphs) which change DM. The data source of this study was taken from the essay description of high school students.

Participants

Participants in this study were 96 high school students in IX classes aged between 14-15 years. This participant is studying at State High School (SHS) 1 Balikpapan, Balikpapan, Indonesia. These participants were chosen using the purposive sampling method for two supporting reasons. First, cognitive abilities. Piaget categorizes that age 12 years and over were in the formal operational stages. With these characteristics, participants were certainly able to operate written language that is logical, abstract, and complex in their descriptive essays (Schunk, 2012). Second, they were chosen because of the teaching of writing descriptive essays. Thus, in writing descriptive essays, participants already have basic theoretical knowledge and experience writing descriptive essays (Kemedikbud, 2013).

Data Collection Tools

The main data collection tools used in this study are instruments for writing essays description. This instrument was designed with reference to the Flower and Hayes writing process model, which consists of three stages, namely planning, translation, and review (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In the planning stage, students observe objects (plants, buildings, facilities, etc.) that are found; choose objects that are considered interesting to be used as writing material; and selecting objects that are considered interesting to be used as writing material; and write down important things that you want to be used as writing material on the observation note sheet. At the translation stage, students are asked to arrange the words collected on their observation sheets. At the review stage, students are asked to revise their writing.

Writing a description essay instrument declared valid and reliable. Validity was obtained from interview content analysis by two professors who had expertise in Indonesian. Validity checks are performed on the suitability of the content and language used for high school students. The validity value is 95%, which means the instrument to write a descriptive essay is valid and suitable for use. Meanwhile, reliability was obtained from trials on 20 high school students in the city of Balikpapan. The reliability value using the Cronbach's Alpha test obtained α of 0.8, which means that the writing instrument has a high criterion to use.

Document analysis is used as a systematic procedure for analyzing the results of students' essay descriptions. Bowen (2009) states that document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material. In this study, document analysis with the following steps: (1) Data in the form of DM are identified by sorting based on the type and category of the class used nicely. The identification of the type of DM will determine the number of class categories used in the student description essay. (2) Data in the form of DM is encoded. The coding activity carried out at this stage is giving a code (sign) to the analyzed essay. The code used includes five parts. The first, second, third, and fourth parts are essay identities that refer to the names of students' initial letters, clauses, paragraphs, and sentences. The next part is the identity of the analyzed data (Example: NAD/9.1/P.1/K.2-3/DM-UJ).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study uses the interactive model of Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), which presents four activity streams, with three of them being used in the process of analyzing the data of this study, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher reads the data intensively to sort out, categorize, and focus important parts related to the research focus using document analysis. In the second stage, the presentation of data, a collection of information that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions, and drawing actions is compiled. Technically, the data presented were in the form of narrative text, tables, and charts. The presentation of this data is done to see whether the data collected is correct and sufficient or still needs to be re-analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Based on data analysis, these results obtained from the use of DM in participants' descriptive essays. Out of 96 descriptive essays, 6,355 DM were found. These results were obtained from nine types of DM used by participants. The overall types and categories of DM classes used in 96 participants' descriptive essays.

Frequency of Using of DM in Descriptive Essay

Meanwhile, Figure 1 presents the frequency of each DM according to the class category. The criteria used to determine the goodness were (1) the accuracy of the usage logic (in accordance with the grammatical meaning), (2) unity and cohesion, and (3) function of connecting propositions with one another, both in sentences (intra-sentences) or between sentences in the participant's descriptive essay.

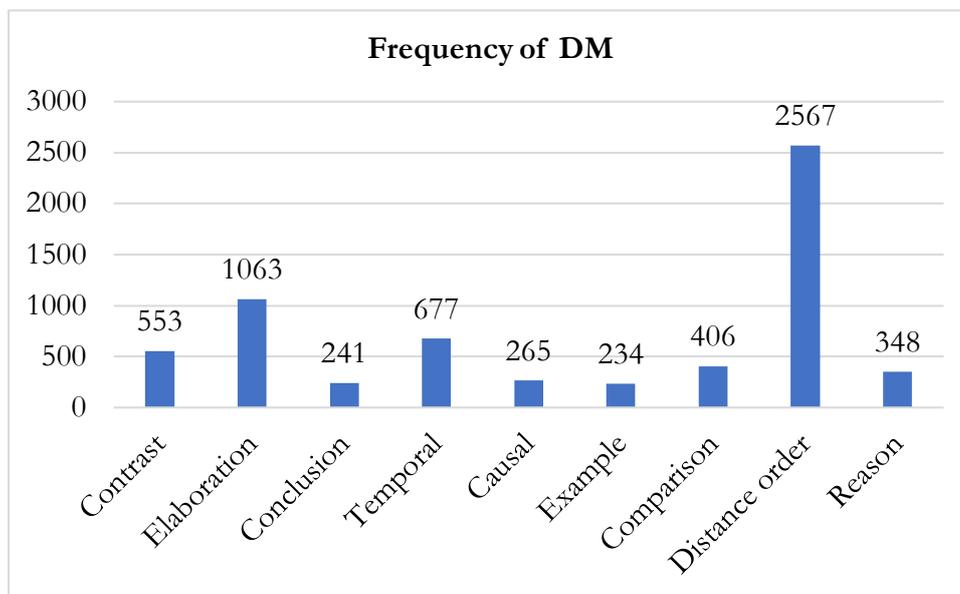


Figure 1.

The Frequency of Each DM according to the Class Category

Figure 1 shows that DM sequence distance (2567) occupies the highest position followed by elaboration (1063), temporal (677), contrast (553), comparison (406), reason (348), causal (265), conclusion (241), and examples (234). This finding is different from the finding of the previous result (Dumlao & Wilang, 2019; Ghanbari, 2016; Jalilifar, 2008; Martínez, 2004; Manan & Raslee, 2017; Rahimi, 2011). All of these researchers report that DM elaboration is the most dominant DM used by students in their writing compared to others. In this study, Fraser's taxonomy of DM is used as the main taxonomy (Fraser, 2009). Therefore, the results of this study present new findings and models about DM in descriptive essays.

Using of the Distance order DM

As stated earlier, distance order DM is one of the DM types most often used by participants in their descriptive essays. In this DM is seen in seven class categories that were used by participants in their descriptive essays neatly. This is interesting because almost all class categories of distance sequence DM were used by participants to compose one proposition with another. This pattern is a pattern of developing descriptive paragraphs that describe objects in the form of space, objects, or places. The author begins to describe a room from left to right, from east to west, from bottom to top, from front to back, and so on (Suladi, 2015). When using this pattern, participants tend to use words like 'here', 'there', 'close', 'across', 'close to', and 'side by side'. All of those words were DM distance order category categories (Suladi, 2015).

Distance order DM is a type of DM that serves to mark the relationship of propositions that state a place. In relation to stating this place, a proposition that is mentioned after the DM sequence of distances is the place where the conditions or events mentioned earlier take place (Suladi, 2015). In the descriptive essays of participants, to connect propositions that state places, the DM class category of the dominant distance sequence used by participants is 'here'. An example of the data is given below.

- (1) (a) A place that I visit often is library. (b) Here students of SHS 1 read, borrow, or search for books (...)
(NAD/9.1/P.1/K.2-3/DM-UJ)

Quotations (1) consist of two sentence propositions that were well correlated. This relation occurs in one of the propositions (or constituents) contained in the previous sentence proposition (1a) with one of the constituents

contained in the following sentence proposition (1b). In the previous sentence proposition, there is a place name that is 'library', while in the following proposition there is a placeholder pronoun, that is 'here'. This pointer pronoun refers to a lingual unit in the form of a place name, which is 'library' which is mentioned in the previous sentence proposition (1a). In other words, the lingual unit 'library' and 'here' corresponds. This relationship between propositions is called the relationship that states the place.

Using of the Elaborative DM

Elaborative DM is a type of DM that occupies the highest position in the participant's descriptive essay. In accordance with the results obtained, this DM ranks second used by participants (see Figure 1). Propositions that were strung together were generally equal and provide additional information on previous propositions (Rani et al. 2013). DM elaboration in the participant's descriptive essay is often utilized because the delivery of information (or propositions) as a whole is not done using one clause or sentence. In this case, the participant submits the proposition in stages, i.e. the position given in one clause is added.

In the participant's descriptive essay, the elaborative DM found 5 class categories, which were 'and', 'apart from that', 'even', 'what else', and 'also'. This can be proven by the absence of the use of class categories such as 'further', 'besides that', 'additionally', 'in other words' (Fraser, 2009). This is caused because (a) in writing textbooks, these class categories were not presented in full, (b) the teacher does not teach thoroughly related to the use of DM in writing, and (c) the limited knowledge of participants. These three factors were concluded based on surveys, and interviews from teachers and participants.

The dominant DM elaboration class category used by participants to connect propositions by means of the conjunctions 'and'. This finding is relevant to the findings of previous studies who also report that 'and' show high frequency in student writing (Asassfeh et al. 2013; Dumlao & Wilang, 2019; Jalilifar, 2008; Rahimi, 2011). High frequency of the use of elaborative DM 'and' because it functions to connect equivalent words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. However, in the context of research, according to criteria, the words 'and' were separated whether it functions to connect between propositions (or clauses) or in sentences (intro sentences). In other words, the words 'and' which function structurally, for example, 'male and female' were not sorted out in this study. Examples of good use of the word 'and' are given below.

- (2) The library of SHS 1 Balikpapan is located left of the outer side of the gate and next to the toilet in its left side (ARSA/9.1/ P.1/K.4/DM-EL).

Example (2) has two propositions. First is The library of SHS 1 Balikpapan is located left of the outer side of the gate and the second is The library of SHS 1 is next to the toilet in its left side. The first proposition and the second proposition are interconnected through the use of the words 'and', which is used by the participant to provide information conveyed in the previous proposition. In this case, the use of the words 'and' expresses the relationship of intra-sentences propositions that add information to the previous proposition.

Using of the Temporal DM

Temporal DM as shown in Figure 1 ranks third used by participants in their descriptive essays. This DM is a marker of relations between propositions that are usually marked by stages such as beginning, implementation, and completion can be arranged in chronological order. Such an arrangement is called order based on time sequence (Rani et al. 2013).

In the participant's description essay, the temporal DM used were seven class categories. Of the seven class categories, the words 'at this / that time' and 'then' are the most frequently used by participants in connecting between propositions that state the time sequence in their descriptive essays. The findings of this study contrast with previous findings, which found that temporal DM 'then' and 'now' are most often used in academic written languages for L2 English users (Ab Manan & Raslee, 2017; Dumlao & Wilang, 2019). Apparently, this difference occurs because the characteristics of academic writing are different from descriptive writing. An example of data on the use of good temporal DM usage is given below.

- (3) (a) Musala Tursina is usually crowded at 12.20. (b) At that hour, the mosque is full of people. (AH/9.3/ P.1/K.6/DM-T)

In the example data (3) above, participants appear to make good use of the temporal DM 'at that hour'. The word 'at that hour' is placed at the beginning of the sentence proposition (3b) to connect to the time Musala Tursina is crowded with people who will pray at the sentence (3a) proposition.

Using of the Contrast DM

Contrast DM is one type of DM that is useful for connecting contradictory or contrasting propositions with other parts (Rani et al. 2013). In participant's descriptive writing, contrast DM is one type of DM that is used less than other DM (temporal DM, elaboration, and distance sequence). This finding is similar to the findings by previous, who also found that contrast DM is rarely used in student writing (Asassfeh et al. 2013). The low usage of DM is because it is one of the most difficult types of DM to be learned by students at the high school level. Different for example, essay argumentation, DM is needed by the authors to corroborate their statements (arguments). Contrast DM is indispensable in the argumentation essay because it departs from a controversial issue between the speaker and the speech partner (Rani et al. 2013).

In the participant's descriptive essay, the more dominant categories of contrast class DM used were 'but' and 'but'. This shows that the most reliable way according to participants to connect one proposition with the other in contradiction is the two words. This finding supports previous findings which also showed that students has dependency in using contrast DM "but" in their writings (Ali & Mahadin, 2016; Asassfeh et al. 2013; Dumlao & Wilang, 2019). The sample of how contrast DM has been used well is shown as follows.

- (4) Students reading books while sitting in the floor in the library, but for me, it is something uncomfortable (NQA/9.1/P.1/K.1-3/DM-K).

Sentence (4) above has two intra-sentence propositions that are combined well. The propositions are (Students reading books while sitting in the floor in the library) and (sitting on the floor makes me uncomfortable). The first proposition with the second proposition has a contrasting relationship. This relationship is marked with the word 'but'. The use of this word states the relationship, which is the implication of the first proposition. In other words, the use of the word 'but' denotes a state which is contrary to the proposition that was mentioned earlier.

Using of the Comparison DM

To show the two propositions being compared, a comparison DM is needed, which serves to show the existence of a similarity or difference between one proposition with another (Rani et al. 2013). In accordance with the results, as shown in Figure 1, comparison of DM appears to be rarely utilized by participants in their descriptive essays. This is because the style of expression of ideas in the participant's descriptive essay in addition to being dominant uses a 'spatial' pattern as well as using an objective pattern. An objective pattern is a pattern of developing descriptive paragraphs by describing objects as they are without the author's opinion (Suladi, 2015).

The four class categories to express the relationship of propositions by means of comparison, i.e., are different from', 'same as', 'like', and 'just like'. These four DM comparisons are commonly used in various genres of student writing. In other words, the use of comparative DM in participant's descriptive essay has not included varied class categories. This can be proven from the absence of comparative DM class categories for example, 'in such a case', 'in line with it', 'linear with it' 'commensurate with' used in descriptive essays participant (Rani et al. 2013). This limitation occurs because the comparative DM class categories presented in the textbooks of participants' writing skills are also very limited. In addition, from the results of interviews conducted with Indonesian language teachers, teaching related to the use of DM is admittedly rarely given to students. For example, comparative DM data are presented below.

- (5) (a) The hall of SHS 1 is big and designed in the classic model. (b) The model of the hall is like an ancient building (AIA/9.3/ P.2/K.1/DM-P).

In the example data (5) above, there are two sentence propositions. The first proposition (The hall of SHS 1 is big and designed in the classic model), while the second proposition (The model of the hall is like an ancient building). These two propositions are well connected to each other. This goodness is achieved by the use of the 'like' comparison DM in the sentence proposition (5b). The use of this word shows similarities or unsimilarities in sentence propositions (5a).

Using of the Reason DM

In participants' descriptive essays, the use of this type of DM was found to have three class categories, namely 'cause', 'due', and 'due'. This is because this type of DM tends to be more widely used in the written genre of argumentation and persuasion (Rani et al. 2013). In other words, a descriptive essay does not always require this DM because it contains a role, which is a description of the condition of a thing (Baryadi, 2002). Exposure to ideas in descriptive essays is sometimes not accompanied by opinions of the author (Suladi, 2015). In contrast to the argumentation, the

strength of the argument lies in the author's ability to express three main principles, namely what is called a statement, reason, and justification (Rani et al. 2013). This is as reported by previous studies that the use of DM in argumentation essays is more dominant than others (Rahimi, 2011). Examples of the DM data for reasons used nicely by participants are presented below.

- (6) Learning in the library feels very comfortable because we can learn by sitting on the floor (NQA/9.1/P.1/K.1-3/DM-AL).

In the example data above, there are two intra-sentence propositions. The first proposition is (Learning in the Library feels very comfortable) and the second proposition is (we can learn by sitting on the floor). In this second proposition it is seen stating the reasoning relationship of the first proposition. This reasoning relationship is marked by DM reasons because. Thus, the relationship between intra-sentence propositions is called the relationship that states the reason.

Using of the Causal DM

Causal DM or cause-effect relationship occurs when one proposition shows the cause of a certain condition that is the result or vice versa (Rani et al. 2013). In the participant's descriptive essay, 265 data types of DM were found. This number is obtained from 3 DM class categories. The dominant causal DM class category used by participants to declare a causal relationship is 'therefore'. An example of the data is given below.

- (7) (a) Food and beverage prices in the Koperasi are quite expensive. (b) Therefore, students are reluctant to buy there (FSQA/9.1/P.1/K.1-3/DM-K).

'Therefore' in the data example (7) above shows a causal relationship. The word 'therefore' connects to state about why students are reluctant to buy in Koperasi on the second proposition (7b). In other words, the word 'therefore' is used by participants to state the effects of what was stated in the previous proposition (7a).

Using of the Conclusion DM

This marker serves to deliver a summary of the section that contains the description. Conclusion DM is a DM that is useful for connecting two (or more) propositions by concluding the ones mentioned earlier (Jalilifar, 2008). In the participant's descriptive essay, the conclusions DM were found in 241 data, from the three-class categories used. Of the three-class categories, the word 'so' is more dominantly used by participants. These results are the same as the research conducted by Dumlao and Wilang, which observes that this marker is the most frequently used by students (Dumlao & Wilang, 2019). The predominance of the use of conclusions DM 'become' in the essay description of participants cannot be separated from their experiences and habits. In other words, the choice of the word 'so' used in the descriptive essay is closely related to participants' experience and cognitive development. Examples of data on the use of conclusions are presented below.

- (8) (a) This canteen is unique because we do the payment process without a seller. (b) So when making the payment process, we must be honest (IAJL/9.1/P.1/K.2-3/RP-K.P).

The conclusion DM used by the participants in the sample data (8) above is 'finished'. This word is placed at the end of the sentence in the participant's descriptive essay. The word shows the conclusions of the proposition previously expressed (8a).

Using of the Example of DM

In providing information, examples are often needed, which serve to provide illustrations in order to clarify a description that are abstract. Example DM is useful for connecting one proposition to another that shows an example or example (Rani et al. 2013). In the participant description essay, the DM category examples are found in two categories, namely 'for example'. An example of the data is displayed below.

- (9) (a) Koperasi is one of the buying and selling places in SHS 1. (b) Koperasi sells a variety of school equipment. (c) For example, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers, etc. (MARG/9.1/P.1/K.2/DM-C).

The data example (9) above consists of three sentence propositions. The first proposition (9a) contains about Koperasi as a place of sale and purchase at SHS 1, the second proposition (9b) school equipment sold at Koperasi, and proposition (9c) contains examples of equipment sold at cooperatives. The example shows that the use of the word 'example' at the beginning of the third sentence proposition (9c) is connected with the proposition (9b). Here the word 'for example' seems to be used by participants to clarify or detail school equipment sold in SHS 1.

Students' DM Using Skills Level

The skill to use DM is very important to be mastered by students. However, from the results of data analysis, we found that students still have difficulties in using DM. From 96 description essays produced by students, it was found that the use of DM was incorrect. The inappropriate use of DM is elaborative DM ('and'), temporal ('then', 'then'), contrast ('but', 'but', 'while'), and conclusions ('thus'). The DM is used by students across construction. The DM is used at the beginning of a sentence, both as an opening sentence and as an opening paragraph. The reason for the inaccurate use of DM is because students do not have the correct concept of how to link DM in language units. The condition of students who do not have the concept resulted in students mistakenly using the DM. In other words, students cannot distinguish the use of DM especially from coordinating conjunctions. Students assume that the DM of coordinative conjunction can be used across constructions, both between words, between clauses, between sentences, and between paragraphs.

The use of cross-construction DM departs from the DM distribution 'and' and 'or'. Both of these DM can be used to connect word by word and also clause with clause (Alwi et al. 2003; Chaer, 2006). The behavior of the two DMs is so that students draw the conclusion that all DMs from coordinating conjunctions are the same in their use. Finally, DM 'then', 'then', 'but', 'but' 'while' can also be used to connect sentences with sentences in students' essays. Even the DM 'and' were found to be used as paragraph opening. Some examples of inappropriate DM in the student essay are presented below.

(10) But if we buy in the honesty canteen, we also have to prepare the right money because the money to pay is put into the box (HSD / 9.2 / P.3 / K.7-8 / DM-Kon.)

(11) In this school, they carry out routine extracurricular activities once a week. However, there are some extracurricular activities carried out 2-3 times a week (MHR./9.1/P.2/K.4-5/DM-Kon)

The difficulty of students in using DM can be explained from the wrong aspect in generalizing. The reasoning for generalization rests on the principle that the truth contained in group members is also true to other members in the group or to all members of the group. Dawud (1998) says that generalization reasoning starts from objects that are already known then moves to objects that are not yet known. This situation eventually led to broad generalizations that made the wrong conclusions. Thus, students incorrectly generalize that the way to connect DM from coordinating conjunctions is the same.

Unlike the DM reason 'because' which does not include coordinating conjunctions, DM 'because' is used by students to connect sentences with sentences. The use of DM 'because' which is not appropriate in students' description essays is like the following data.

(12) For me, UKS is like my own home. Because, UKS is very clean, there are comfortable beds, and clean toilets (GJR / 9.3 / P.1 / K.4 / DM-AL)

This data shows that DM 'because' is wrongly used by students. By default, the DM 'because' is used to connect two clauses (propositions) that are not equal in complex sentences (Chaer, 2006). The mistake of using DM 'because' is none other than the frequency with which students use it in daily interactions. In connection with this condition, Brown (2008) says that students are too familiar and accustomed to using this language so that they are wrong or excessive in using language according to its use. Vocabulary that is quickly metered from someone's mind indicates that the vocabulary is often used or often used in communication (Dardjowidjojo, 2012). Thus, it can be said that the DM used is incorrect because of students' habits and ignorance of the concept of how to link DM in language units in their essay description.

Another factor that also affects students so that the difficulty in using DM appropriately is their inability to use DM is complicated. In this case, when students are dealing with a complicated DM they tend to use another DM which is considered easier. The easier selection of DM is done by students as a avoidance strategy. The behavior of students who carry out this strategy was stated by Castele & Collewaert (2013) that 'students tend to rely on simple structures to avoid language expressions that are more difficult to produce'. For this reason, students in the use of DM prefer DM that is functionally considered to have a harmony of form and meaning rather than choosing a multifunctional, or rhetorical DM (Castele & Collewaert, 2013). An example of the data is given below.

- (13) In this library there are 20 bookshelves. (b) Among them are textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, and story books. (c) There are 3 computers and 1 printer. (d) And those are the things about the SHS 1 Balikpapan library that attract attention (IR/9.2/P.2/K.1/DM-P)

In the example of this data a student's mistake in using the DM occurred. This error occurs because DM 'and that' contained in (13d) should use conclusions DM. However, students because it is easier to use the elaborative DM 'and', they compose these two words by using the 'pronouns' phrase to express the conclusions of previous propositions (13a, 13b, 13c). In sentence (13d) the concluding DM that can be used is 'therefore'. However, if it is replaced with this DM, the sentence (13d) needs to be improved, so that it looks like this: Therefore, the library of SHS 1 Balikpapan attracts students' attention.

The skill to use DM is closely related to the language development of students. In the context of writing a descriptive essay, students are writers who are still in the development stage. The use of Indonesian and writing essays for new descriptions are obtained and learned by students when they are in elementary school. The first language of students is the mother tongue (BI) they use in the family environment. Therefore, they are writers who are still at the stage of the development process (Keraf, 2004). Both in terms of writing and the use of Indonesian. Because it is still at a developmental stage, students' written language can be criticized as being at a stage of transition. Selinker (1972) states that there are five central processes that occur at this stage, namely (1) transfer of language as a slippage that occurs due to the transfer of the first language elements that have fossilized into the second language, (2) transfer of training as mistakes because of teaching procedures, (3) B2 learning strategies can lead to language mistakes because of the approach taken by the learner to the rules of the second language learning, (4) communication strategies as mistakes that occur because of the approach taken by the learner in communication with other people / native speakers, and (5) over generalization as mistakes caused by excessive generalization. The central process is the process of learning a second language or a foreign language that occurs in the learner's cognition system (Pranowo, 2015). Cognitive systems develop according to the stages of development of the mind. Therefore, when the mind responds to information received and responds to it, it is adjusted to the stage of development of the mind. Written language experience and thought development are factors that influence students' DM usage skills in writing descriptive essays.

Conclusion

This research shows that there are nine types of DM that are used neatly in students' essay descriptions. The nine DMs are DM sequences of distance, elaboration, temporal, contrast, comparison, reason, causal, conclusions, and examples. The use of slick DM is an indicator of coherence in writing. DM is a linguistic feature that plays an important role in building coherent writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). DM weaves the interwoven ideas between clause units, sentences, and paragraphs into one whole idea/theme in a discourse (Aidinlou & Shahrokhi, 2012). The presence of DM can realize a logical relationship between events or between spaces at the level between clauses, between spaces, or between paragraphs in a composition (Martin, 1992). DM contributes as a structure to essays that facilitate the textual flow of the reader (Al-khazraji, 2019). DM creates a coherent relationship that is considered as the essence and substance in writing (Karaata et al. 2012). This is confirmed by Martínez (2004), which shows that DM is a group of signals that add cohesion and coherence to the discourse. Zhao (2013) found that DM not only provided unobstructed communication, but also provided coherence with the discourse. DM is a linguistic signal that plays an important role in the cohesion and coherence of the essay. However, of the nine types of DM that are used by students are still limited to the local level, namely intra-sentence and inter-sentence in their description essays. That way, students' essay descriptions at the global level (overall text) cannot be categorized as cohesive and coherent.

The use of DM in students' essays description has a number of weaknesses. First, the class categories of the type of DM used are less varied. The use of class categories of DM elaboration types such as 'further', 'besides that', 'additionally', 'in other words' are not found in student essays (Fraser, 2009). Likewise, class categories of causal DM types such as 'consequences'. The DM used by students is the DM that they normally use in daily communication. As a result, the categories of DM type classes that appear are monotonous. For example, to add ideas to previous propositions, the elaborative DM 'and', 'also' are used repeatedly by students in their descriptive essays. This phenomenon indicates that students do not have good enough knowledge about the class categories of each DM. Second, in addition to the limited use of the class category of the type of DM, students also find difficulties in using the correct DM. Inappropriate use of DM by students, i.e., 'then', 'then' then, 'but', 'but', 'while' so '. This inappropriate

use of DM occurs because students do not yet have a concept of the function of using DM in language units. Students still assume that all types of DM can be distributed into units of language. In addition, students in the use of DM choose avoidance strategies. This strategy is carried out by students because of their inability to use DM that requires higher-order thinking skills. Because of that, they chose to use DM, which was considered easy with the assumption that the DM had an error in form and function. With this assumption, there is a mistake in the use of DM in students' description essays both at the intra-sentence and inter-sentence level.

The limitations of students in using DM need attention from the language teacher. Language teachers in junior high schools need to train their students to use DM in a variety of ways. The use of varied and appropriate DM is believed to be an important aspect of improving the quality of student writing. The use of DM leads to an increase in students' writing skills (Ali Al-Qahtani, 2015). Muhyidin (2020) reported that 'there is a positive and significant relationship between mastery of student discourse markers and students' ability to write exposition texts'. Students need to be equipped with knowledge about DM because it has a central role in writing (Aidinlou & Shahrokhi, 2012). DM affects the quality of writing because it increases cohesion and coherence of writing (Hassan et al. 2016). Hence, Dumlao & Wilang (2019) recommends that 'language teachers need to raise awareness about how DM can be used variedly in writing academic essays'. Students need to be trained and taught about the proper and varied use of DM in classrooms. In this case, the teacher can train them by using media, models, and learning approaches.

Recommendations

For Further Studies

This study has only focused on the types and categories of DM that are used nicely in the participants' essay descriptions. Therefore, the researchers are further recommended to identify the misuse of DM in the description essays of junior high school students. In addition, further researchers can also examine the possible relationship between reasoning with DM used by junior high school students.

For Applicants

This research showed that the effective utilization of DM can shape participants' essays to be cohesive and coherent. Therefore, the results of this study can be the basis for language teachers to find out the strengths and weaknesses of students in using DM. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the students can help the teacher in designing essay writing tasks. From the results of this study, we found that participants did not have sufficient knowledge about various class categories of the DM type. In addition, they also tend to use monotonous DM. For example, the "also" elaboration DM is often used repeatedly in participants' essay descriptions to add information to previous propositions. This repetition indicates that participants' knowledge of DM elaboration is inadequate. For that, teachers need to learn the use of DM in teaching composition. Students must be made familiar with various class categories of DM types. In this case, the teacher can familiarize the students with DM by: (a) combining sentences or text that DM is omitted and (b) a number of DM are presented, then students use the DM in composing sentences.

Limitations

The class categories of the nine types of DM found in the participant's description essay are still very limited. This limitation is due to (1) the experience, habits, and cognitive development of participants, (2) the class categories of each DM are not fully presented in textbooks for writing, and (3) the teacher does not teach thoroughly related to the use of DM in writing. As a result, participants were impressed to use the monotonous class categories of each DM in connecting interpropositions in their description essays. In addition, though, not being the focus of research, it was also found that the use of DM is not neat in participant description essays such as 'and', 'then', 'but', 'because', and 'thus'. The DM is used across construction. The DM is used at the beginning of a sentence, both as an opening sentence and as an opening paragraph. Participants assume that the DM can be distributed in each language unit.

Acknowledgments

The research was supported by LPDP-BUDI DN with the scholarship registration number 20161141081832. The authors thank the students and teachers of SHS 1 Balikpapan for their willingness to participate in this research. The author also thanks to the journal editors and reviewers for their willingness to take the time and make comments to improve this article.

Biodata of the Author



Abdul Wahid, Born in Sinjai, South Sulawesi. He is a lecturer at Muhammadiyah University Makassar, Indonesia. He is currently pursuing a doctoral program in the field of Indonesian language education at the Universitas Negeri Malang. **Affiliation:** Universitas Negeri Malang and Muhammadiyah University Makassar, Indonesia **E-mail:** abdulwahid@unismuh.ac.id **ORCID number:** 0000-0001-7882-7751 **Phone:** (+62) 85395517466 **SCOPUS ID:** - **WoS Researcher ID:** -



Prof. Dr. Imam Suyitno, M.Pd. is a professor of education, at the Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Jalan Semarang No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. His expertise is in the field of Teaching Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers. **Affiliation:** Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia **E-mail:** imam.suyitno.fs@um.ac.id **ORCID number:** 0000-0001-7733-3637 **Phone:** - **SCOPUS ID:** - **WoS Researcher ID:** -



Prof. Dr. Suyono, M.Pd. is a professor in education. He is a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Literature, Universitas Negeri Malang, Jalan Semarang No.5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. **Affiliation:** Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia **E-mail:** suyono.fs@um.ac.id **ORCID number:** 0000-0001-9698-4363 **Phone:** +6282141173800 **SCOPUS ID:** - **WoS Researcher ID:** -



Dr. Martutik, M.Pd. is a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Jalan Semarang No.5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. **Affiliation:** Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia **E-mail:** martutik.fs@um.ac.id **ORCID number:** 0000-0002-4013-0964 **Phone:** +6282141173800 **SCOPUS ID:** - **WoS Researcher ID:** -

References

- Ab Manan, N. A., & Raslee, N. N. (2017). Describing the use of discourse markers by ESL learners in writing. *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences*, 4(3), 101–106. <https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2017.03.016>
- Aidinlou, N. A., & Shahrokhi mehr, H. (2012). The effect of discourse markers instruction on EFL learners' writing. *World Journal of Education*, 2(2), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v2n2p10>
- Al-khazraji, A. (2019). Analysis of discourse markers in essays writing in ESL classroom. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(2), 559–572. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12235a>
- Ali Al-Qahtani, A. (2015). The effect of explicit instruction of textual discourse markers on saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension. *English Language Teaching*, 8(4), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n4p57>
- Ali, E. A., & Mahadin, R. S. (2016). The use of discourse markers in written discourse by students of English at the University of Jordan. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 6(3), 23–35.
- Alwi, H., Dardjowidjojo, S., Lapoliwa, H., & M., M. A. (2003). *Tata bahasa baku Bahasa Indonesia* (3rd Editio). Balai Pustaka.
- Asassfeh, S. M., Alshboul, S. S., & Al-Shaboul, Y. M. (2013). Distribution and appropriateness of use of logical connectors in the academic writing of Jordanian English-major undergraduates. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences*, 222(1259), 1–46.
- Baryadi, I. P. (2002). *Dasar-dasar analisis wacana dalam ilmu bahasa*. Pustaka Gondho Suli.
- Blakemore, D. (1996). Are apposition markers discourse markers? *Journal of Linguistics*, 32(2), 325–347. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226700015917>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Brown, H. D. (2008). *Prinsip pembelajaran dan pengajaran bahasa* (N. Cholis & Y. A. Pareanom (eds.); 5th Editio). Pearson Education.
- Castele, A. Vande, & Collewaert, K. (2013). The use of discourse markers in Spanish language learners' written compositions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 95, 550–556. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.681>
- Castro, C. D. (2004). Cohesion and the social construction of meaning in the essays of filipino college students writing in 12

- english. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 5(2), 215–225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03024959>
- Chaer, A. (2006). *Tata bahasa praktis Bahasa Indonesia*. Rinerka Cipta.
- Crossley, S., & McNamara, D. (2010). Cohesion, coherence, and expert evaluations of writing proficiency. *32nd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, 32(32), 984–989.
- Dardjowidjojo, S. (2012). *Psikolinguistik pengantar pemahaman Bahasa Manusia*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Dawud. (1998). *Penalaran dalam tuturan Bahasa Indonesia siswa sekolah dasar*. IKIP Malang.
- Dumlao, R. P., & Wilang, J. D. (2019). Variations in the use of discourse markers by L1 and L2 English users. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 202–209. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v9i1.15206>
- Field, Y., & Oi, Y. L. M. (1992). Essay writing of Cantonese speakers and native speakers of English. *RELC Journal*, 23(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368829202300102>
- Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31(7), 931–952. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00101-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5)
- Fraser, B. (2009). An account of discourse markers. *International Review of Pragmatics*, 1(2), 293–320. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187730909x12538045489818>
- Ghanbari, N., Dehghani, T., & Shamsaddini, M. R. (2016). Discourse markers in academic and non-academic writing of Iranian EFL Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(7), 1451–1459.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English (English Language Series)*. Longman Publisher.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Deakin University Press.
- Hassan, J., Al, A., & Badie, M. M. (2016). *An investigation on the role of discourse markers in the quality of the descriptive compositions of Iraqi ELT students*. 20(4), 19–25.
- Hinkel, E. (2001). Matters of cohesion in L2 academic texts. *Applied Language Learning*, 12(2), 111–132.
- Huddleston, R., Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1988). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. *Language*, 64(2), 109–128.
- Indiyastini, T. (2009). *Kohesi dan koherensi paragraf dalam bahasa jawa*. Balai Bahasa Yogyakarta.
- Jalilifar, A. (2008). Discourse markers in composition writings: The case of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language. *English Language Teaching*, 1(2), 114–122. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v1n2p114>
- Kapranov, O. (2017). Discourse markers in EFL academic essays written by primary school teacher candidates. *Konin Language Studies*, 5(4), 473–493. <https://doi.org/10.30438/ksj.2017.5.4.5>
- Karaata, C., Cepik, C., & Cetin, Y. (2012). Enhancing the use of discourse markers in academic writing: The combination of incidental al acquisition and explicit instruction. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(40), 11–29. www.esosder.org
- Karadeniz, A. (2017). Cohesion and coherence in written texts of students of faculty of education. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 5(2), 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i2.1998>
- Kemedikbud. (2013). *Kompetensi Dasar Kurikulum 2013*.
- Lampiran Permendikbud No. 68 Tahun 2013, (2013).
- Keraf, G. (2004). *Komposisi*. Nusa Indah.
- Knott, A., & Dale, R. (1994). Using linguistic phenomena to motivate a set of coherence relations. *Discourse Processes*, 18(1), 35–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638539409544883>
- Lewis, M., Flint, A. S., & Van Sluys, K. (2002). Taking on critical literacy: The journey of newcomers and novices. *Language Arts*, 79(5), 382–392.
- Martin, J. R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Martínez, A. C. L. (2004). Discourse markers in the expository writing of Spanish university students. *Iberica*, 8, 63–80.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd Edition). Sage Publications.
- Muhyidin, A. (2020). Does the writing exposition text ability correlate to reading habit and discourse markers mastery? *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 8(June), 885–895. <https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.682065>
- Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>
- Polanyi, L., & Scha, R. J. H. (1983). The syntax of discourse. *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 3(3), 261–270. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1983.3.3.261>
- Pranowo. (2015). *Teori Belajar Bahasa: untuk Guru Bahasa dan Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Rahimi, M. (2011). Discourse markers in argumentative and expository writing of Iranian EFL learners. *World Journal of English Language*, 1(2), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v1n2p68>
- Rani, A., Martutik, & Arifin, B. (2013). *Analisis wacana: Tinjauan deskriptif*. Surya Pena Gemilang.
- Schunk, D. H. (2012). *Teori-teori pembelajaran: Perpektif pendidikan* (6th Edition). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *Product Information International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 10, 209–241. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209>
- Sharndama, E. C., & Yakubu, S. (2013). An analysis of discourse markers in academic report writing: pedagogical implications. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection*, 1(3), 15–24.
- Šimčikaitė, A. (2012). Spoken discourse markers in learner academic writing. *Kalbu Studijos*, 20, 27–33. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.0.20.1196>
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Suladi. (2015). *Paragraf*. Pusat Pembinaan dan Pemasarakatan Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Jakarta.
- Surjowati, R. (2018). The use of discourse markers in EFL students' essay writing. *Fourth Prasasti International Seminar on Linguistics*,

Prasasti, 248–251. <https://doi.org/10.2991/prasasti-18.2018.47>

Zhao, H. (2013). A study on the pragmatic fossilization of discourse markers among Chinese English learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(4), 707–714.