Discourse Markers in the Introductory Section of Research Articles in National accredited Journal

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Abstract. Discourse markers provide writers with signaling devices to connect ideas and guide readers in grasping the connection of ideas in the texts. An introductory section of a journal article represents a unique text which should be written with clear and interconnected arguments. This paper aims to reveal how discourse markers play vital roles in realizing the development of the arguments in this knotty text. To achieve this, introductory sections of articles published in a nationally accredited journal were examined. Using Fraser's (2009) functional classes of discourse markers, 22 introduction sections were analyzed employing text analysis to determine the usage of these markers. It was found that despite employing all types of discourse markers, not all of them were applied appropriately. Their uses may not be in line with their functional classification. Among others, there are three functional classes of discourse markers proposed by Fraser (2009), they are contrastive markers, elaborative markers, and inferential markers. Elaborative markers were the most used type among the different types, followed by contrastive and inferential markers. This implies that authors tended to develop ideas more often, whereas contrastive and inferential markers were used less frequently but were crucial for indicating differences and making conclusions within the texts.

Keywords: discourse markers; rhetorical moves; introductory section; research articles

Introduction

In essence, writing is not simply the act of placing words and sentences on paper; it is also the end result of a process that involves learning what it means by putting the ideas in written form (Nunan, 1991). A good paragraph form is crucial for all forms of writing, including academic writing, which is a type of writing that lecturers, teachers, and students at the university and high school levels always deal with. One of them is research article. Research articles is an important type of academic writing because they form the basis for scholarly interaction and the

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spread of research knowledge so that lecturers, teachers and also university students are required to publish it. Research articles published in journals have some sections and one of the models commonly used is IMRaD. IMRaD is an acronym for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. This model is commonly proposed structure and standard request by journal publication in general (Codina, 2022).

Introduction section is the second section after the abstract, but it is the basis of the whole article. The initial part of a scientific article is designed to present a certain topic and attract the reader's attention (Peh, 2008). Similarly, first impressions matter, it should be able to attract the readers. Therefore, it determines whether readers will continue reading the whole article (Grant & Pollock, 2011). A well-written introduction section establishes the background and context of the topic, exposes knowledge and comprehension gaps, specifies what is happening, and giving readers a sense of what to expect in the rest of the article (Annesley, 2010).

One important aspect that supports well-written introduction section is the use of discourse markers (henceforth DMs). Discourse markers refer to sequentially dependent elements which bracket units or signal relationships (Schiffrin, 1987). According to Fraser (2009), discourse markers in English are divided into three functional classes: contrastive markers, elaborative markers, and inferential markers (Fraser, 2009). This categorization is based on the specific functions these markers serve within communication. Contrastive markers, such as "but" are used to signal direct and indirect contrasts between statements or ideas. Elaborative markers, exemplified by "and," indicate an elaboration or addition to the previous point. Finally, inferential markers, like "so," are employed to signal a conclusion or inference derived from the preceding discourse.

Lacking the use of DMs, the article could fail to provide clear transitions between ideas or sections, making it difficult for readers to follow the flow of ideas. It can make a negative effect on readers, particularly students, who will find it more challenging to understand and be less interested in reading journal articles if the writer is unable to connect every idea well. As mentioned by Akmal et al. (2020) that the disinterest of university students in reading journal articles is primarily influenced by factors such as the selection of texts or reading materials and the text-reader factor. In this case, journal article writing using DM effectively will provide easy reading for readers, especially university students, who hope they will be more interested in reading and writing articles.

Discourse markers are used to indicate relationships between sentences or paragraphs. As stated by Lu et al. (2022) that discourse markers can be utilized to connect phrases, provide additional information, clarify reasons, present opposing statements, and indicate simultaneous events. Moreover, Raputri et al. (2022) specifically mentioned that discourse markers are applicable in research article because they support writing to be more comprehensible and cohesive, which makes them useful in research articles. Thus, increasing the variety of DMs may assist in organizing the text and also facilitating the reading process (Jafarinejad & Tavakoli, 2011).

Previous studies have explored the discourse markers in various section of research articles. Alif et al. (2023) explored DMs found discussion sections in 11 articles from the ELT Forum. Using Fraser (2009), the study discovered that all

student article writers use elaborative markers correctly, whereas not all authors use contrastive and inferential markers. Moreover, Raputri et al. (2022) analyzed the utilization of discourse markers in selected articles from the English Education Journal and discovered that elaborative discourse markers were the most frequently employed. The second most used is inferential markers. Lastly, contrastive markers were the last discourse markers commonly used by writers. On the other hand, 17 journal articles contained errors in the use of discourse markers. Here, the wrong relation category is used seven times. From those study it can be seen that each article in Indonesian journal has its own way in the implementation of DMs.

Furthermore, Indonesian writers as concluded L2 writers still struggle to use various kinds of DMs in their writing due to their limited exposure to DMs. Writers applied standard discourse markers in their academic writing (Alsaawi, 2022; Lu et al., 2022). In line with Manan & Raslee (2027) that mentioned L2 writers tend to use more limited and redundant sets of DMs in their writing due to their English language proficiency. Those issues can affect the quality of writing because improper use of DM lead to difficulties in coherent interpretation (Adewibowo, 2018)

In addition to Indonesian journals, both native and non-native speakers have used discourse markers in writing scholarly journal articles. For example, Tadayyon & Farahani (2018) analyzed 60 research articles, comprising 30 by Iranian scholars and 30 by native English-speaking scholars. Their study found that Iranian authors used DMs with a total of 9,379 occurrences, compared to 8,963 occurrences in articles by native English speakers. It also implies that the use of DMs correctly and effectively can make writers more native-like writing. Moreover, Rahayati et al. (2021) also investigated discourse markers found in 6 abstract of international journals. The most common types of markers are elaborative markers, which are overused in abstract sections. There was no significant difference in the use of various discourse markers between qualitative and quantitative articles. This is based on the authors' diverse styles and cultural backgrounds.

According to the explanation above, using discourse markers will aid in the creation of a well-written text. Publishing in nationally accredited journals requires writing that is clear and well-organized because these journals have high academic standards. Studying how DMs are used in these journals is important and timely, as it can help writers improve their work and meet these standards more effectively. Besides, the urgency of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the enhancement of academic writing practices among Indonesian writers. By examining the use of DMs, particularly in a prominent journal, the study provides actionable recommendations for educators and researchers to foster clearer and more effective communication in research articles writing. Additionally, this research may serve as a benchmark for further studies on DMs across various academic genres and contexts.

There is still little research that discusses the implementation of discourse markers in introduction sections of journal articles, especially in nationally accredited journals in Indonesia such as ELT Forum. This study focuses on published articles of the ELT Forum to see the implementation of discourse markers. This study comes with 3 research questions: (1) How is the implementation of contrastive markers in the research articles in a nationally

accredited journal? (2) How is the implementation of elaborative markers in the research articles in a nationally accredited journal? (3) How is the implementation of inferential markers in research articles in a nationally accredited journal?.

Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a content analysis focus. In qualitative research, content analysis is a technique that systematically examines written, visual, and verbal documentation (White & Marsh, 2006). This research analyzed the introductory sections of 22 articles from the ELT Forum. The selected articles were articles from the 3 latest editions. There are 7 articles published on July 1, 2024, 6 articles published on March 31, 2024, and 9 articles published on November 30, 2023. *ELT Forum* is a nationally-accredited journal in the field of English teaching, so that writing English journal may be a challenge for Indonesian writers which are non-native writers. Writing academic texts in English is often a challenge for second language learners (Fitriati & Wahyuni, 2019). Furthermore, the researcher applied a three-part interactive data analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (2014). The three streams of activity are: (1) data condensation; (2) data display; and (3) data drawing or verifying conclusion.

Findings and Discussion

This section is intended to answer research questions of this research. It analyzed the implementation of discourse markers of the ELT Forum Journal articles. The distribution of discourse markers can be seen on the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of Discourse Markers in Each Article

Frequency of Number Journal Articles	Types of Discourse Markers		
	Contrastive Markers	Elaborative Markers	Inferential Markers
Article 1	5	93	6
Article 2	6	78	6
Article 3	6	78	3
Article 4	5	54	5
Article 5	5	88	11
Article 6	3	52	2
Article 7	5	43	4
Article 8	8	34	6
Article 9	3	37	3
Article 10	8	76	2
Article 11	10	64	8
Article 12	3	56	3
Article 13	4	40	5
Article 14	1	52	3
Article 15	6	40	6
Article 16	6	55	4
Article 17	7	64	3
Article 18	7	32	6
Frequency of Number Journal Articles	Types of Discourse Markers		
	Contrastive Markers	Elaborative Markers	Inferential Markers
Article 19	3	38	6

Article 20	4	45	4
Article 21	11	98	11
Article 22	5	115	11
Total	120	1,353	119

All authors of the journal implemented discourse markers proposed by Fraser (2009). 1592 DMs are found in introduction sections of 22 articles. According to the table, the most frequently used DMs is elaborative markers, 1353 elaborative markers are found in the introduction sections. The percentage is almost 85%. The second most used discourse marker is contrastive markers, the data found 120 or 7.54% contrastive markers. Followed by inferential with the total markers is 119 or 7.47%. According to the data in the table, journal authors prefer to elaborate, provide additional information, and provide specific examples to build their introduction. Researcher present the figure and explanation of each types of discourse markers below.
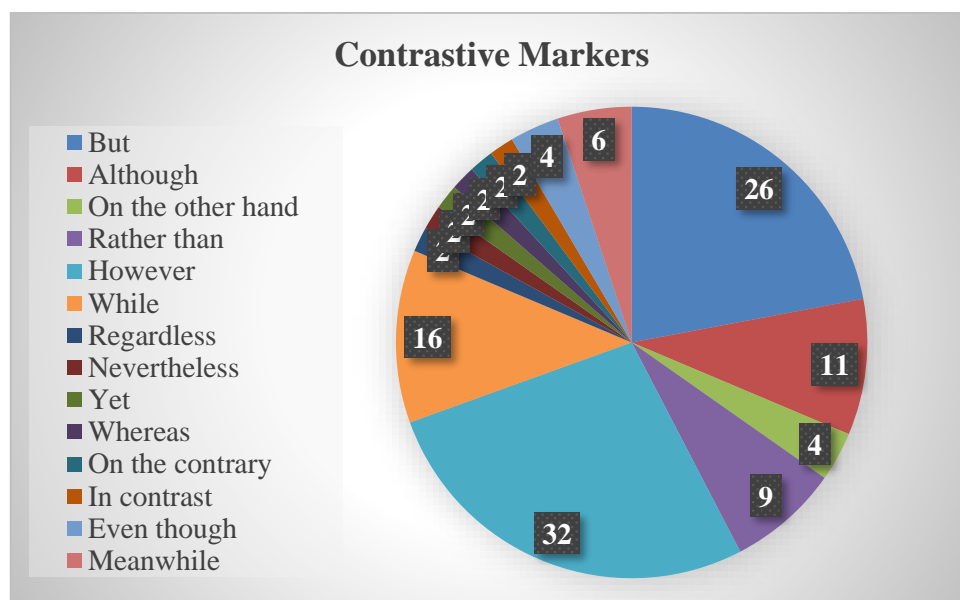

Figure 1. Contrastive Markers

The first type of discourse markers is contrastive markers (CDMs). Contrastive markers aimed to signal that there is a contrast between sentences or ideas. As a result, the object of this research employed 14 kinds of contrastive markers, namely *but (26), although (11), on the other hand (4), rather than (9), however (32), while (16), regardless (2), nevertheless (2), yet (2), whereas (2), on the contrary (2), in contrast (2), even though (4), meanwhile (6).*(Fraser, 2009).

In addition, the most common contrastive marker is "however," which appears 32 times, followed by "but" which appears 26 times. Related with previous studies found that "but" and "however" are the most common contrastive markers used in academic writing (Ali & Mahadin, 2016; Karimah et al., 2021; Raputri et al., 2022; Tikham, 2017.). In 60 journal articles, "however' were used frequently to show opposite ideas (Kurniawan et al., 2019). These markers help guide the reader's understanding by emphasizing oppositions or alternatives, ensuring a clearer comprehension of how the ideas presented either oppose or diverge from one another (Aysu, 2017; Lu et al., 2022; Pasaribu, 2017a; Rabab'ah et al., 2022;

Yulianto, 2021). This finding is similar to a study conducted by Pasaribu (2017) and Raputri et al.(2022) that found contrastive markers is the least used of DMs in students' essay. The few contrastive markers showed that authors of the articles are not encouraged to compare different ideas in their introductory theses.

On the other hand, Rahban (2022) found Iranian and American newspaper used first contrastive more than other types of DMs. Journalists tend to emphasize contrasts or differences when presenting news, opinions, or arguments. It means that the frequency of contrastive markers is based on the text type.

In addition, there are some contrastive markers that don't function as contractive markers. For example, the words *while, yet, in contrast and meanwhile.* The use of while appeared 16 times, 9 words show as contrastive markers but 7 do not. In addition, the word "yet" found twice and one of them highlights the inclusion of an additional point. This usage is more elaborative as it expands on the topic to the discussion. The word of "in contrast" is also used twice, one correct and one incorrect. Furthermore, the word "meanwhile" is found 5 times, one of them is incorrect. There are the examples and explanations of contrastive markers found in the data.

(1) Most learners want to improve their speaking skills, **but** the skill seems one of the difficult aspects of language learning. (article 11)
From the example (1) we can see that the use of "but" is to show contrast between 2 conditions. The first condition is learners want to improve speaking skill; second condition is the skill seems to be one of the difficult aspect. So, the word but purposes link opposite ideas of first and second clause.

(2) Martinez (2019) revealed that teachers utilized online sources through discussion with their students in the classroom. **However,** little attention has been given to the investigation of teachers' views and practices of critical digital literacy in an EFL setting particularly in higher education. (article 21)
In example (2),these 2 sentences showed two contrast ideas. A prior study found that teachers used online resources through classroom discussions with their students. In fact, not much research has been done on the perspectives and practices of teachers regarding critical digital literacy in an EFL context, especially in higher education. Here, the author uses the word "however" to indicate a different reality.

(3) However, the preliminary situational analysis in forms of observation and informal interview found that the teachers' assessment literacy is limited to formative and summative assessment. **Meanwhile,** there are various types of assessment such as assessment of learning (AoL), assessment for learning (AfL), and assessment as learning (AaL) that being emphasized in this 21st century era (article 15)

(4) Therefore, the main aim of this study was to examine how far the training improved the students' vocabulary strategy use. **Meanwhile**, the researchers believed that adequate study was not studied in this area (article 8)
There are 6 the use of word "meanwhile", 5 times are correct and once is incorrect. Example (3) showed the use of meanwhile to show contrast ideas, it highlighted the difference or gap between what the teachers know

and what is currently emphasized in the field of assessment. This creates a clearer distinction between the teachers' knowledge and the broader scope of assessment practices. In contrast, in example (4), the word of "meanwhile" does not show contrasting ideas. It appears that the author intends to offer supplementary information regarding their belief about the lack of adequate studies in this area. Next, the researcher discusses the use of elaborative markers found in the data.
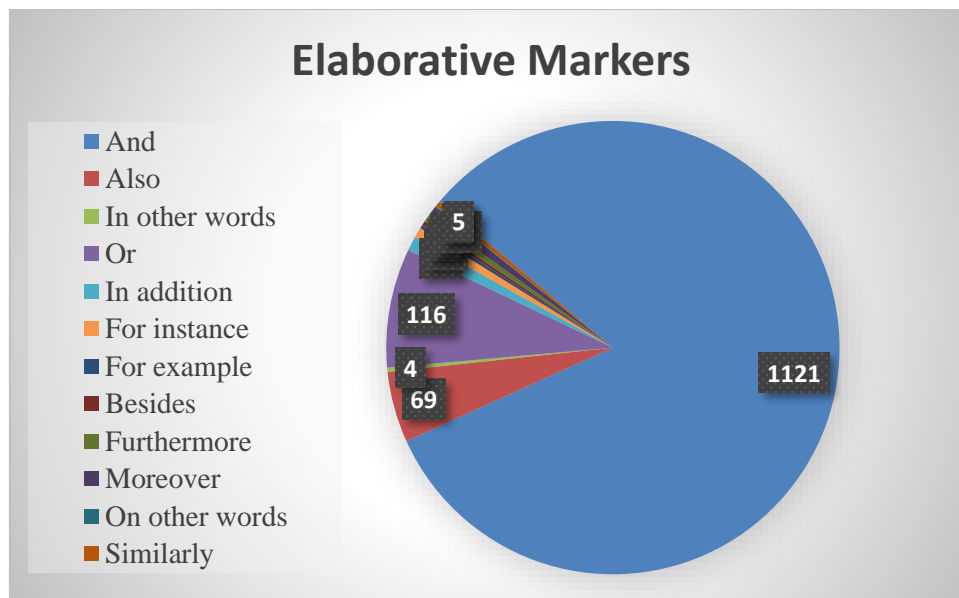

Figure 2. Elaborative Markers

The second type of discourse marker is elaborative markers (EDMs). EDM signals an elaboration in S2 to the information contained in S1. These markers help to provide further explanation, clarification, or additional information that enriches the initial statement. The figure showed 12 kinds of elaborative markers are found in the 22 articles. They are *and (1121), also (69), in other words (4), or (116), in addition (14), for instance (10), for example (4), besides (4), furthermore (7), moreover (10), on other words (1), similarly (5)*. All of the uses of those words have role as elaborative markers. Elaborative markers are prominently used research articles, elaborative discourse markers were the type with the highest frequency used in Iranian and English articles (Tadayyon & Farahani, 2018). It is same in writing backgrounds which is part of introduction (Nirwana, 2022). The most frequently used is "and". In line with Rabab'ah et al. (2022) and Jimola and Dada (2023) that found that EDMs connect two similar ideas and add new information. Almost all of contexts employed "and" due to this is so familiar, simple, and easy word to use, it can be used in written or spoken, formal or non-formal contexts. The high use of elaborative markers such as "and" shows that writers want to explain and provide arguments to elaborate the contents of the article to the reader.

In contrast, elaborative markers are the least used by authors in writing argumentative essays and composition text. It indicates that the writers did not much elaborate their ideas (Gurkosh & Badie, 2016; Patriana et al., 2016). As it can be seen, this may be related to the communicative purpose of particular text. In introduction sections, which is to introduce the contents of the articles, the

authors must explain as much as possible their arguments and important information that can give readers an understanding of why the research is carried out, what are the importance, what are the purpose, etc. There are representative of the use of elaborative markers.

(5)Turnbull et al. (2021) expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards online learning, **and** many language courses are now being delivered entirely online. (article 14)

The word "and" in example (5) acts as elaborative markers. It connects a clause and the next clause to give more elaboration and information. The first clause informs that the pandemic has expedited the transition to online education. The use of "and" introduces additional information, emphasizing that as a result of this shift, many language courses have also transitioned to being delivered entirely online.

(6)AI may be used as a tool in the teaching and learning process to help students to practice (Jaiswal & Arun 2021). **Furthermore**, because AI allows for unfettered access, it was created to provide inclusive access to the area of education (article 20)

The word "furthermore" in example (6) included in elaborative markers because it signals additional ideas. In this context, "furthermore" serves to add more details to the discussion about AI's role in education. The first sentence mentions that AI can be utilized as a tool to aid students in practicing their skills. The use of "furthermore" then transitions to providing an additional aspect of AI's function: its ability to offer inclusive access to education.

(7) However**,** with the exception of a few MA theses, the researcher has not come across any local studies undertaken in an Ethiopian setting at the PhD level. **For example**, Abiy (1990) did research to determine the communication demands of high schools, and he proposed that his study be only a partial job to build a course. (article 8)

The phrase "for example" in example (7) is used to provide specific, detailed information that illustrates the previous statement. The use of "for example" introduces a specific case—Abiy's research from 1990—as an example of the type of study that exists. It highlights that while there is some relevant research, such as Abiy's, it is limited in scope and does not fully address the need for comprehensive PhD-level studies. Next, the researcher discusses the use of inferential markers found in the data.
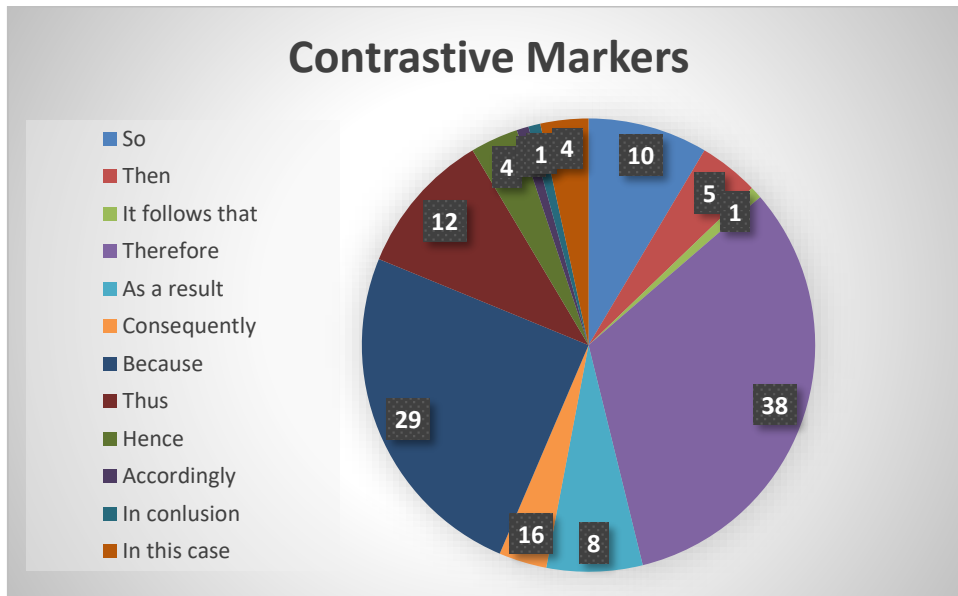
Figure 3. Contrastive Markers

The last or third type of discourse markers is inferential marker (IDMs). It can be used to conclude, summarize, signal that a second part of a sentence or idea is a conclusion based on the previous one. The data found 12 kinds of inferential markers, they are so (10), *then (5), it follows that (1), therefore (38), as a result (8), consequently (16), because (29), thus (12), hence (4), accordingly (1), in conclusion (1), in this case(4).*

Furthermore, the word "therefore" is the frequently used in the articles. This finding is different from previous studies that found the DMs "so" is inferential markers used frequently in English Textbook and also used by university students in their writing (Alsaawi, 2022; Aysu, 2017; Haninda & Bram, 2022; Lu et al., 2022; Yehia, 2015). Based on Aysu (2017) and Vickov & Jakupčević (2017) mentioned that inferential markers could be used for expressing effects or consequences. In addition, Rabab'ah (2022) mentioned that inferential markers can be used for introducing reasons or results. Moreover, the variation in the use of inferential markers like "therefore" versus "so" can be attributed to the types of texts being analyzed. Student essays and textbook reading passages tend to be less formal compared to research articles, which may explain why "therefore" is preferred in more formal academic writing. Furthermore, authors used inferential markers to show cause effect relationships and indicate results.

Additionally, almost all of those words are used correctly except the use of words "then" and "thus". Discourse markers "then" appeared 5 times, 2 times as inferential markers and 3 times used to explain things happen after the other, not because one necessarily causes the other. Furthermore, the word "thus" is used 12 times as inferential and once is used to add another topic. The examples of inferential markers in the articles will be presented in the following explanation.

(8) Research has shown that learners who engage in self-regulated learning are more likely to succeed in online courses. **Therefore**, understanding the factors contributing to self-regulated learning in online language learning environments is essential for promoting student success. (article 14)

In these sentences of example (8), the author explained a logical conclusion based on a prior statement or circumstance by using the word "therefore"

to connect two sentences. Understanding the elements that contribute to self-regulated learning in online language learning environments is crucial because it has been noted that students who practice self-regulated learning have a higher chance of succeeding in online courses.

(9) In Ethiopia, all health science or medical students study all courses in English. **Hence,** in Ethiopia, the English language plays a more significant role in the health professions than in any other field. (article 8)

In example (9), the word "hence" connects 2 sentences and also ideas by providing a cause-and-effect relationship. The first sentence establishes a fact: in Ethiopia, all health science or medical students study all courses in English. The second sentence then uses "hence" to express the result or consequence of this fact: because of this, the English language plays a more significant role in the health professions than in other fields.

(10) This article is intended to describe a short teacher education program designed as an alternative course to help novice Indonesian EFL teachers particularly those working at disadvantaged schools located in the most remote areas of Indonesia **so** that they can reconstruct their professional identity and develop their teaching competence that fits their context. (article 5)

Example (10) shows the word "so" indicates the intended outcome or impact of the brief teacher education program that is being discussed. To assist new Indonesian EFL teachers, especially those employed at underprivileged schools in the most isolated regions of the country, a brief teacher education program has been created as an alternative course. With the help of this program, educators can reestablish their professional identities and enhance their contextually appropriate teaching abilities.

Conclusion

Fraser's (2009) functional classes of discourse markers were used by each author in 22 journal articles published by ELT Forum. These three types of markers are contrastive, elaborative and inferential. There were 1,489 discourse markers (DMs) in the introductions of 22 articles, 1,353 of which were elaborative markers. Contrastive markers were used 120 times, with inferential markers coming in third at 119. This suggests a desire for more detail and elaboration in introductions.

Contrastive markers are used to indicate when ideas or sentences differ from one another. Thus, 14 different types of contrastive markers were used in this study, including *but, although, on the other hand, rather than, however, while, regardless, nevertheless, yet, whereas, on the contrary, and in contrast*. From the total 120 contrastive markers, 10 are not used based on the function of contrastive markers. In addition, the words *'however'* and *'but'* are the most often used CDMs.

The second category consists of elaborative discourse markers (EDMs), which indicate that the information in S1 has been developed upon in next sentences or paragraphs. These words aid in offering more details, elaboration, or clarification that enhances the original statement. There are 12 types of elaborative markers with the total 1,353 in the 22 articles. They *and, also, in other words, or, in addition, for instance, for example, besides, furthermore, moreover, similarly, on other words, similarly*. All of elaborative markers have function as elaborative markers. Moreover, the most used words are "and", followed by "or".

Inferential markers are the final or third category of discourse markers (IDMs). It can serve as a summary, a conclusion, or a cue that the following part of a sentence or idea builds upon the previous one. 12 classifications of inferential markers were identified by the data; these *include then, it follows that, therefore, as a result, consequently, because, thus, hence, accordingly, in conclusion, and in this instance*. From 119 words of inferential markers, 4 kinds of DMs don't serve as inferential markers. Furthermore, the words "because" and "therefore" are frequently used in IDMs.

The data source which is introduction sections are probably the reason for the high frequency of elaborative markers. The purpose of the introduction in academic writing is to lay out the context, provide background information, and make the importance of the research clear. In order to assure that readers fully understand the subject, this process naturally calls for an extensive amount of elaboration, additional details, and in-depth explanations. Because of this, authors usually employ elaborative markers to clarify the concepts, add more information, and elaborate on ideas. As a result, these markers are the most used discourse markers that assist the creation of comprehensive introduction.

This study's findings are consistent with Fraser's (2009) theory of discourse markers, indicating that discourse markers (CDMs, EDMs, and IDMs) play an important role in producing coherence and clarity in writing. However, the occurrence misuse of contrastive and inferential markers emphasizes the need for more targeted education in their proper application, especially for non-native authors attempting to produce coherent academic writings.

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