

Using Discourse Markers to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills

Suryadi^{1*}, Asep Muhyidin², Syafrizal³

Doctoral Degree Program in Education, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Banten, Indonesia ^{1,2,3}

7782210017@untirta.ac.id^{1*}

Abstract: English proficiency is a desirable performance quality. The aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of discourse markers in improving English speaking skills. This study employs a quantitative methodology. This study employed a pre-test-posttest group design. The study's demographic and sample consist of Class XI IPA 80 students from the academic year 2023/2024. The researcher employed the snowball sampling method to ascertain the requisite sample size. Prior to conducting the pre and post tests, the researcher assessed the instrument's validity and reliability using SPSS. This was done by examining the scores on the corrected item total correlation, which measures the correlation between item scores and the total item score. The students were designated as Group A (experimental) and Group B (control). Subsequently, students engage in a Pretest to ascertain any disparities among them. The researcher provided discourse markers to both groups; however, only the experimental group employed them, whilst the control group did not. The experimental group will receive treatment including the use of discourse markers. The T test was employed as the data analysis tool. The results indicated that the observed T value was 7.313, and the Sig. value was less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that the utilisation of discourse markers enables students to enhance their proficiency in English speaking. This research is significant as it can enhance English language acquisition, particularly by highlighting the significance of teachers' role in teaching discourse markers during English language learning.

Keywords: Discourse markers; students; speaking skills.

Penggunaan Pemmarkah Wacana untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berbicara Siswa

Abstrak: Kemahiran bahasa Inggris adalah kualitas kinerja yang diinginkan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui efektivitas penanda wacana dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kuantitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kelompok pre-test-posttest, demografi penelitian dan sampel terdiri dari siswa Kelas XI IPA 80 tahun ajaran 2023/2024. Peneliti menggunakan metode snowball sampling untuk memastikan ukuran sampel yang diperlukan. Sebelum melakukan pre dan post test, peneliti menilai validitas dan reliabilitas instrumen menggunakan SPSS. Hal ini dilakukan dengan memeriksa skor korelasi total item yang dikoreksi, yaitu mengukur korelasi antara skor item dengan skor total item. Para siswa ditetapkan sebagai Grup A (eksperimental) dan Grup B (kontrol). Selanjutnya, siswa melakukan Pretest untuk memastikan adanya kesenjangan di antara mereka. Peneliti memberikan penanda wacana kepada kedua kelompok; namun, hanya kelompok eksperimen yang ditretament, sedangkan kelompok kontrol tidak. Kelompok eksperimen akan mendapat perlakuan termasuk penggunaan penanda wacana. Uji T digunakan sebagai alat analisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan nilai T teramati sebesar 7,313 dan Sig. nilainya kurang dari 0,05. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pemanfaatan penanda wacana memungkinkan siswa untuk meningkatkan kemahiran mereka dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini penting karena dapat meningkatkan penguasaan bahasa Inggris, khususnya dengan menyoroti pentingnya peran guru dalam mengajarkan penanda wacana selama pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Pemmarkah wacana; kemampuan berbicara; siswa.

1. Introduction

Proficiency in English is a highly sought-after skill. When acquiring proficiency in the English language, students are required to engage in the active application and generation of vocabulary, phrases, and sentences

(Nadiahanayati & Suryadi, 2023). A multitude of EFL/ESL students aspire to enhance their spoken proficiency in the English language. According to Leong & Ahmadi (2017), individuals frequently gauge their language mastery by assessing the extent to which their conversational skills have

improved. Verbal communication plays a crucial role in human interactions, as individuals engage in speaking activities in many settings and at any given moment. Speaking involves the transmission of ideas or messages by oral means. In order to encourage students to speak in English, it is necessary to provide opportunities for them to utilise the language in authentic contexts and explicitly advise them to do so (Gilakjani, 2016).

Engaging in conversational exercises with attentive listeners can enhance individuals' English communication proficiency by offering occasions to refine their delivery and expression of ideas. Linguistic aspects, such as voice intelligibility and ease of communication, have been identified by Mega & Sugiarto (2020). Meanwhile, the technical elements of the performance encompass the speaker's precise articulation, intonation, tone, and vocal production in speech delivery. Successful speakers are those who have the ability to employ whole sentences and ensure coherence in their discourse. Discourse markers (DMs) function as connectors between ideas or topics in a speech to enhance its comprehensibility (Jayantini et al., 2022).

Furthermore, public figures use DMs to provide structured explanations and build a connection with the audience (Banguis-Bantawig, 2019). DMs are commonly employed in spoken speech due to their natural flow and informal nature. However, the structure and reasoning behind their utilisation in written communication might vary significantly. DMs can be employed multiple times inside a single sentence in less formal writing or speaking. Although DMs are commonly used in regular discourse, their usage should be deliberate and considerate (Aysu, 2017).

DMs serve as indicators that help process and organise individual conversational units into a coherent and structured mental representation of ongoing interaction and discourse (Haselow, 2019). The discourse link between two sentences is shown by a certain set of phrases. The discourse markers "but" and "and" are classified as such according to Pan et al. (2018). Several discourse markers in English often occur only between the two statements they link, while the placement of other discourse markers can vary depending on the claims they connect (Nie et al., 2019). Discourse markers enhance the cohesiveness of a discourse by highlighting the relationships between different segments of language (Alahmed & Kirmizi, 2021). DMs can exhibit versatile performance based on the prevailing

circumstances, owing to their adaptability. During the process of completing textual functions, DMs commonly signal a boundary in the structure of the discourse by moving both backward and forward in the conversation. This movement helps to highlight the relationship between the connected utterances. Thus, DMs oversee and structure conversations (Arya, 2020). When examined from a cross-linguistic standpoint, it becomes evident that discourse markers, which are also referred to as discourse cues and discourse connectives, encompass diverse grammatical characteristics in different languages. The precise meaning of a discourse marker can differ depending on the theoretical frameworks and languages being considered (Chiaros & Ionov, 2021).

DMs are linguistic elements that connect different parts of a conversation, indicating the speaker's intentions to structure and control the flow of the discourse. Everyday English conversations often include DMs that are single words, such as anyway, like, alright, right, so, well, as well as phrasal items like for a start, such as I mean, mind you, you know (Carter & McCarthy, 2006). While students acknowledge the importance of DMs in language acquisition, they require assistance in properly utilising them during conversations. DMs indicate that both teachers and students could gain advantages from further advice and teaching in this particular field (Sun, 2013). Examine the generation of students' DMs and their spoken communication. They employ two corpora for the research. The initial corpus comprises transcriptions of course presentations delivered by twenty native undergraduate students, whereas the second corpus consists of transcriptions of presentations given by non-native students enrolled in an English Language Teaching (ELT) programme in Turkey (Aşık & Cephe, 2013). Prior to conducting data comparison, the MICASE corpus is utilised to get transcripts of student presentations delivered by individuals who are native speakers of the language. Subsequently, the researchers determine the frequency of the DMs in the corpora by frequency analysis. Non-native English speakers tend to employ a restricted range of discourse markers in their spoken English. Additionally, it suggests the importance of providing education to non-native speakers on the use of direct messages in their oral English communication.

Moreover, the existing research on the correlation between discourse markers and students' speaking skills primarily concentrates on the impact of acquiring discourse markers on

speaking skills (Arya, 2020; Aşık & Cephe, 2013; Fung & Carter, 2007; Jayantini et al., 2022; Sujarwati, 2017; Truong, 2022). The research findings indicate that the use of discourse markers has positively influenced students' oral communication skills. Hence, the subsequent inquiries are posed: 1). is there a difference speaking skill before and after using discourse markers? 2). Does discourse markers have any effect on students speaking skill?. The aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of discourse markers in improving English speaking skills. This research will aid in the identification and enhancement of students' mastery of discourse markers, thereby enhancing their English-speaking proficiency. Due to the fact that many students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Serang have yet to acquire discourse markers, this research is urgent.

2. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative methodology. Quantitative research aims to elucidate social phenomena by examining the correlation between the variables under investigation. Statistical approach. It is referred to as positivistic research methodologies since it follows the principles of positivism. The research employed a true experimental design for its experimental design. Quasi-trials closely resemble genuine experiments in all aspects except for the absence of comparisons that can be used to infer treatment-induced changes, with random assignment being the only exception. When randomization is neither feasible or practical in field experiments due to logistical constraints, researchers commonly employ 'non-equivalent groups' as an acceptable research methodology. Although we cannot depend on the accurate and automated reactions of actual experiments to handle issues of validity, it is imperative that we personally confront these challenges in such circumstances. When doing quasi-experimental research to establish causal relationships, it is crucial to take into account the influence of initial group differences (Dornyei & Griffee, 2010).

This study employed a pre-test-posttest group design in its research methodology. Prior to conducting the pre and post tests, the researcher assessed the instrument's validity and reliability using SPSS. This was done by examining the scores on the corrected item total correlation, which measures the correlation between item scores and the total item score. The students were designated as Group A (experimental) and Group B (control). Subsequently, students engage in a Pretest to

ascertain any disparities among them. This experiment will involve interactions between two distinct groups: the control group and the experimental group. The researcher provided discourse markers to both groups; however, only the experimental group employed them, whilst the control group did not. The experimental group will receive treatment including the use of discourse markers.

Table. 1 Shows the pretest and posttest research designs

Class	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Control	Y1	-	Y2
Experimental	Y1	X	Y2

According to Table 1, the pre and posttest research design, Y1 is utilising discourse markers for pre-testing prior to teaching in both classes. Y2 involves the use of discourse markers in teaching, followed by the administration of a posttest to both classes. X is instructing the experimental class on the use of discourse markers. The study's demographic and sample consist of Class XI IPA 80 students from the academic year 2023/2024. The researcher use the snowball sampling method to determine the necessary sample size. Conducting an interview with a person of higher authority is a technique referred to as "snowball sampling." Individuals that possess extensive knowledge and expertise in the particular area of the test, such as teachers, principals, or other highly knowledgeable individuals, are considered superior (Creswell, 2014). The researcher use it to ascertain the number of samples to be gathered, as mentioned earlier. After conducting an interview with an English instructor at MA Negeri 1 Serang, who argues that the two IPA sessions in issue were more effective for this study, the researcher reaches a decision regarding which choice to choose. Based on the interview, the researcher concluded that the XI IPA 1 class will receive instruction on discourse markers, whereas the other class will only be taught discourse markers using traditional methods.

Two categories of assessments are conducted on the students to obtain the requisite information. As part of their training, the pupils undergo a lexical quiz conducted by the researcher. The focus is on the meaning-form links of the most commonly used discourse marker forms (Kremmel & Schmitt, 2016). Throughout the treatment, the researcher instructed on the topic of discourse markers and provided guidance on achieving mastery in their effective usage. The discourse markers test was

administered to students as a subsequent assignment following the pretest. The data was examined using pre- and post-test findings. Researchers consolidate test data into a single report upon completion.

3. Result and Discussions

This study primarily examined the utilisation of discourse markers to enhance students' speaking abilities. The report presents the findings of the descriptive statistical test conducted on the variable data.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Class Experiment

Pair 1	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretest	68.55	80	6.250
Posttest	82.50	80	13.563

The subsequent findings are derived from the data analysis conducted in this research: Upon obtaining it, the researchers conducted a comparative analysis of the posttest discourse markers. The research findings indicate that the acquisition of discourse markers has a substantial impact on students' oral proficiency. This approach greatly enhances pupils' spoken communication skills. Both before and after treatment, it was demonstrated that the average test results of class XI IPA 1 pupils were significantly distinct. The mean score for class XI IPA 1 prior to intervention was 68.55, whereas the mean score post-intervention was 86.70. The mean score prior to receiving treatment was 65.40, but the mean score post-treatment was 73.55. Therefore, we can deduce that employing discourse markers is more advantageous than employing conventional methods for teaching speaking.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Class Control

Pair 2	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretest	65.40	80	9.489
Posttest	73.55	80	13.563

Furthermore, the t value is 7.313 and Sig is $0.000 < 0.05$. The results show that there are differences in students' speaking abilities before and after using discourse markers. Discourse markers are linguistic features that rely on their order and purpose to define segments of spoken language (Schiffrin, 1987).

Table 4 reveals significant disparities in the English speaking skills of pupils, as indicated by the paired t test. This demonstrates variations in students' English oral proficiency following intervention with student discourse markers.

Table 4. Paired Samples T Test

Mean	Std. Std.	Mean of	Confidence	t	df	Sig.
Dv	Error	the	interval			
		Difference				
		lower	upper			
8.529	6.801	1.166	6.156	10.902	7.313	33 .000

Research findings indicate significant disparities in students' speaking abilities, as seen by notable variations in the average and variability of pre-test and post-test scores. To address the initial research inquiry, specifically, whether there exists a disparity in speaking proficiency prior to and subsequent to the utilisation of discourse markers. According to the pre-test and post-test results, there are discernible disparities in students' speaking abilities prior to utilising discourse markers, as indicated in table 2 of the students' pre-test outcomes before to receiving intervention. The utilisation of discourse markers indicates that the average value in the experimental group appears to be lower than the post-test outcomes following the implementation of discourse markers. Consistent with prior studies (Aşık & Cephe, 2013; Banguis-Bantawig, 2019; Truong, 2022), it has been found that the instruction of discourse markers (DMs) has an impact on all language skills, as DMs are integral elements of language. DMs, or discourse markers, are linguistic components that serve many functions in social, emotive, textual, and cognitive contexts. Discourse markers play a crucial part in the development of effective communication skills by constructing meaningful phrases (Rahimi, 2011).

Furthermore, in order to address the second study topic, which is whether discourse markers have an impact on students' English-speaking abilities, we can refer to the research findings presented in table 4. A Paired Sample T Test reveals significant disparities in students' English-speaking proficiency following the implementation of discourse marker lessons. Consistent with prior research (Arya, 2020; Tsai & Chu, 2017), the focus of discourse markers and students' speaking skills lies primarily on examining the influence of obtaining discourse markers on speaking proficiency. In contrast, the results of this study oppose the findings of (Khameneh & Faruji, 2020) which indicated that using DMs as a teaching method did not have any noticeable impact on the speaking proficiency or willingness to communicate of intermediate-level English as a foreign language (EFL).

This research is significant as it can enhance English language acquisition, particularly by highlighting the significance of teachers' role in teaching discourse markers during English

language learning. It is anticipated that this research will enable teachers to prioritise the teaching of discourse markers in the classroom, despite the time constraints imposed by the English curriculum.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to ascertain the effectiveness of discourse markers in enhancing English speaking proficiency, based on research findings and discussions. Two research findings indicate that there are disparities in speaking abilities before and after employing discourse markers, and that discourse markers exert an impact on students' speaking skills. This was demonstrated by the pre and post-test outcomes, together with the findings from the Paired Samples T Test data analysis.

This research is important because it can improve the process of acquiring the English language, namely by emphasising the importance of instructors in teaching discourse markers during English language learning. This research is expected to empower teachers to give priority to the instruction of discourse markers in the classroom, even with the time limitations given by the English curriculum. This study focuses exclusively on the acquisition of discourse markers to enhance students' oral proficiency. Therefore, for future investigations, the researcher aspires to broaden the scope by encompassing discourse marker research across all educational levels in Indonesia, rather than solely focusing on high schools or Islamic schools.

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