

Discourse Markers Usage and Challenges in Students' Writing of Procedure Text

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze how vocational students use discourse markers in writing procedure text. Moreover, this study tends to address students' challenges in using discourse markers to write the text. The study used qualitative content analysis. To collect the data, documentation and interviews were chosen as the technique. The results are elaborative discourse markers are the most used type among four types by Fraser's (2005) categorization. It is also found that students' challenges are students' unfamiliarity with discourse markers and its' meaning in Indonesian. It is concluded that the study support previous researches' statement about discourse markers usage is related with students' competence.

Keywords: Discourse markers, procedure text, writing, vocational students

Introduction

Discourse markers impact language skills, especially writing is widely known as a field of study. Understanding a range of skills, such as vocabulary, organization, content, usage of language, and mechanics, is necessary for writing as part of language learning (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). It implies that using discourse markers effectively is counted as one of those skills. Discourse markers project logical links, which help to maintain text coherency (Luo et al., 2019). Discourse markers are, to put it another way, words or phrases that link various sections of a reading text together (e.g., but, and, so, then, etc.). Even though discourse markers groups are presented in many sources one of them is the book, discourse markers are writing components that are rarely discussed.

Writing using discourse markers is necessary for students as both readers and writers. According to Patriana et al. (2016), discourse markers aid students as writers in creating compelling texts. Furthermore, it is intended for students as readers to understand the connection between ideas and textual conversation flow (Harris, 2010 in Adewibowo, 2018). One type of English text that vocational students study is procedure texts. Writing procedure text helps the students to understand instructions logically and orderly (Knapp and Watkins, 2005 in Prihatna and Nugroho, 2015). It is in line with the orientation of vocational high school which is preparing students for the work field (Suharno et al., 2020). The procedural text used in vocational classrooms is chosen based on its competency and purpose.

Previous researchers identified types of discourse markers that are used in students' writing (Adewibowo et al., 2018; Sohaya, 2018; Rاپutri et al., 2020). Then, analyzing the problems and errors in using discourse markers has been carried out by Sari (2018) and Riznanda (2021). The difference with prior research is that this study reveals the challenges that the students face. It also involved vocational high school students as the participants while previous researchers were choosing university students. This study attempts to explore the use of discourse markers (types and problems) and the challenge in using discourse markers to write procedure text.

Methods

This study employed content analysis, where to discuss the first objective it is used the deductive one. A deductive approach is predicated on an earlier theory or model and moving from the general to the specific (Burns and Grove 2005 in Elo and Kyngas, 2007). To explore the second objective, inductive content analysis is applied. According to Chinn and Kramer (1999 in Elo and Kyngas, 2007), an inductive data-based approach proceeds from the specific to the general, observing individual cases before combining them into a more comprehensive sum or generalization. The techniques for collecting data are documentation and interviews. Furthermore, the data analysis technique is adapted from Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. There were 21 participants from the 12th grade because they had learned the procedure text and it assisted them in doing the worksheets. Participants' names are confidential and changed into numbers in the data display.

Result and Discussion

In this study, categorizations of discourse markers types are taken from Fraser's (2005) framework. It was found that there were 121 total discourse markers groups (or connecting words). The result is shown in the Figure 1.

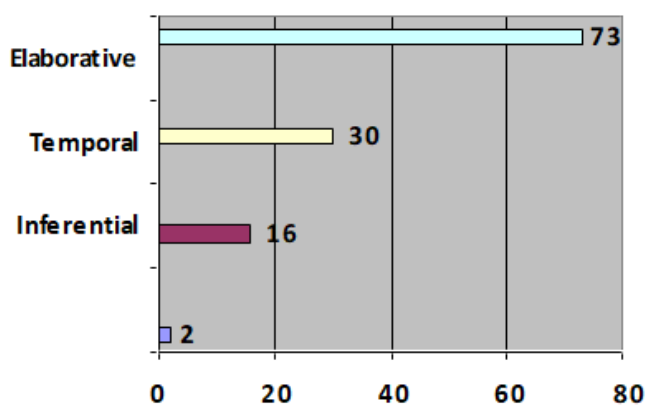


Figure 1. Types of Discourse Markers in Procedure Text by Students

It identified 73 total occurrences of elaborative discourse markers in students' procedure texts. There are 57 'and', 14 of the marker 'or', and 2 of the word 'also'. The 'and' marker is utilized in the procedural text to provide additional details and list materials or ingredients. The term 'or' is employed in the text to provide substitute materials or procedures. In procedure text writing, the word 'also' can be used to indicate that the readers have completed the necessary steps. It strengthens previous findings by Susanto et al. (2019), Kusumayati (2020), Rahayati et al. (2021), and Alsaawi (2022) that elaborative discourse markers are the most used discourse markers type, especially the marker 'and'. Ali and Mahadin (2016) stated that compared to the advanced students, the intermediate students were more familiar with elaborative discourse markers rather than other types.

The second most used discourse markers type is temporal with 30 occurrences. In procedure text, temporal discourse markers work to show the steps in logical order. According to Sohaya (2018), the marker 'first' serves to explain the initial processes, while 'after' describes the signal in the following steps. The same researcher stated that even though there was one procedure text that did not apply discourse markers at all, the text is still understandable. It is because other procedure text elements are encountered, such as the title, lists of materials or components, steps, and the use of present tense verbs at the beginning of each instruction.

The other two types are inferential and contrastive discourse markers. There were 16 occurrences, 9 of which were the word 'then'. It is used to indicate how sentences or steps in procedural texts flow from one another. On the other hand, there were only 2 occurrences of contrastive discourse markers, the only marker was 'but'. It displays a conditional or exception to the

sentences in the procedural text. The imbalance amount of markers used by students highlighted issues with discourse markers that are advance used, overused, and misused (Al-khazraji, 2019).

Advance Used Discourse Markers

According to Al-khazraji's (2019) findings, advance used is a positive problem of discourse markers where the students used discourse markers appropriately. Between overused and misused, the marker 'and' can be rightly applied according to its function in the text by the student.

Passage 1:

First, prepare an iron

Second, plug the iron cabel to an electric socket until the iron becomes hot

Third, prepare a shirt or blouses you want to iron. Place it on a flat surface.

Fourth, put the iron on the shirt or blouses and move it to the right and left. Do it until the clothes become smooth.

Finally, fold the clothes you have ironed.

Passage 1 illustrates the appropriate use of temporal discourse markers, including positional and function markers, in sentence construction. Fraser (2009) noted temporal markers as sequential markers, as the function suggested which is to mark sequential dependence (Brinton, 1996).

Overused Discourse Markers

Passage 2:

First, crack the eggs into a small bowl and add a pinch of salt and pepper. Whisk until all is well blended.

Remove the eggs from the heat, and continue to fold and stir the eggs for around a minute

It is shown that the word 'and' is excessively used. Apart from that, the overused marker in a procedure text is 'then'.

Passage 3:

Then cut the bamboo as needed. For better results rounds 1,5cm.

Then sand the bamboo until it is smooth and apply brown paint or polish so that is looks like the item is made from bamboo.

Then select a section of bamboo to place the decorative lights.

'Then' in the passage is used to describe the next steps. The passage is understandable, but the student actually has options to apply other markers that have similar meanings and functions. From Fraser's (2005) elaborative markers, there are 'moreover' and 'furthermore'. Temporal micro-markers by Belles-Fortuño (2004 in Fadilah Nur, 2019) there are 'afterwards' and 'next'. There is also macro-marker by Chaudron and Richards (1986), 'The next thing was/is...'. Since 'and' is used so frequently, students may also misuse it. One of the misuses is putting the word 'and' at the beginning of the sentence.

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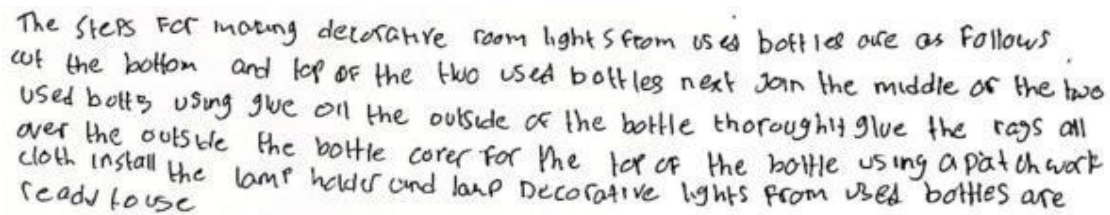
Passage 4:

Pour in the eggs and milk. And wait for around 20 seconds, do not stir it.

The marker 'and' cannot be used at the start of a sentence because it serves as a connecting word between two distinct clauses.

In addition, this study discovered issues unrelated to discourse markers. These include misspellings, poor punctuation, and a deficiency in vocabulary. Misspelling problems can be seen in Passage 1 where the student wrote 'cabel' instead of 'cable' and Passage 3 where the student wrote 'arounds' instead of 'around'. The student is still influenced by Indonesian words and spelling which makes English spelling complex for them (Gowere, 1995 in Astari, 2021).

The next problems are poor punctuation and vocabulary. Punctuation and vocabulary are part of the writing component (Najemi et al., 2014 in Astari, 2021). According to Rif'ah's (2021) research, poor punctuation is one of the problems faced by students in developing generic structure of procedure text.



The steps for making decorative room lights from used bottles are as follows
cut the bottom and top of the two used bottles next join the middle of the two
used bottles using glue on the outside of the bottle thoroughly glue the rays all
over the outside the bottle cover for the top of the bottle using a patchwork
cloth install the lamp holder and lamp decorative lights from used bottles are
ready to use

Figure 2. Poor punctuation by the student (Passage 5)

That passage is not only hard to understand, but also difficult to read. The set of symbols known as punctuation is used to make writing readable (Rif'ah, 2021). She added that to write effectively, a writer which in this study is the student needs to write accurate punctuation, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

One of the examples of how a deficiency in vocabularies can be a problem is shown in the Passage 6.

Passage 6:

Cook for groud in the mp3 module and connect it together.

That sentence lacks context and is hard to understand. Even though it says 'cook for groud', the context is about how to create active loudspeakers. Above all, 'groud' is not a word.

The next result is students' challenges in using discourse markers for writing procedure text. The challenge is they are not familiar with discourse markers. In the interview results, the students only know some of the discourse markers. They know it from books and use it because they find some of them are more dominant than others. As Student 1 stated:

"There are some difficult words because I just know about them. Another difficulty is organizing the right words and writing a little longer text. There was no specific intention in using 'and', it is because 'and' is a more dominant word than other words."

They also admitted that discourse markers or even English in general are difficult because they do not understand the meaning or translation of the words. As Student 4 stated:

"There is no difficulty in writing procedure text, but most of us do not understand English. For some of us, it is easy but for others, it isn't. Even though, it actually will be easy for us if we understand English."

They rely on books, dictionaries, and the internet to help them get through those challenges in the future. It is the same as what they did to complete the worksheet for this research, the students used Google Translate and asked their peers.

Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that discourse markers usage are analyzed from the types and problems. Among the four types of discourse markers suggested by Fraser (2005), elaborative discourse markers are the most used ones. It is followed by temporal discourse markers, since the text for the study is procedure text. The problems are advance used, overused, misused, and writing errors like misspelling, poor punctuation, and deficiency in vocabulary. The challenge that is faced by the students is unfamiliarity with discourse markers. The implication is the students know some discourse markers from books and the internet, but they do not get further lessons about how and why to use them in writing. The students are also conscious of the challenges they encounter when writing in English as a whole. They need more writing and reading practice to be familiar with and be able to apply discourse markers in their English tasks.

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