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# An analysis of conjunctive discourse markers in the EFL classroom: a case study of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the use of three major categories of DMs by 40 male Saudi EFL teachers in their English classrooms, viz., additive, causative, and adversative DMs. The analysis revealed that the participant teachers used the three major DM categories; however, the additive discourse markers recorded the highest mean scores. The findings also indicate that DMs performed a number of pragmatic functions; they are deployed to express a cause, to show continuity and addition of new information, and to express contrast, denial and cancellation. Moreover, the results revealed that the participant teachers made many errors in the use of the DMs under investigation, but such errors fell into the category of misuse. The study concludes that English language and literature programmes at the Saudi universities should revise their curricula so that a special attention is given to DMs. Moreover, teacher training programmes should focus on conjunctive discourse markers because of their impact on the cohesion of both spoken and written discourse.

**Keywords:** discourse markers; classroom discourse; innovation; learning; pragmatic connectives; coherence; Saudi Arabia.

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**Biographical notes:** Ghaleb Rabab'ah holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Jordan, Jordan. His research interests include psycholinguistic aspects of second language, and language learning and teaching. He has published many research papers in different reputable international journals.

# 1 Introduction

## *1.1 Background and significance*

Previous research indicates that the presence of micro-cognitive discourse markers (DMs) help listeners understand better. For example, Murray (1995) suggests that adversative conjunctions have a strong influence on the integration of the sentences these conjunctions precede. Murray (1995) also concluded that adversative DMs had stronger impact in comprehension. Smit's (2006) study findings showed that students comprehend a lecture better when they are aware of DMs. Similarly, Eslami Rasekh and Eslami Rasekh's (2007) findings clearly revealed that learners comprehended the lecture better when DMs were included than when they were omitted. In line with Murray's (1995) findings, Winfield and Tomitch's (2012) corroborate the facilitative effect of causative and adversative DMs.

Other studies, which investigated the effect of DMs on comprehension, revealed that these devices play an important role in reading comprehension. Bahrami (1992) studied the effect of the number of DMs in the texts on the subjects' reading comprehension, and he found that the group who took the test with the greatest number of DMs performed better than the other two groups. Degand et al. (1998, p.1) suggest that "connectives facilitate the comprehension process in that they improve threading process ... It might even be possible that they ease the reading task in such a way that they provide the reader with the "impression" of having understood the text instead of a real understanding." Akbarian (1998) examined the comprehension of two groups of learners with the same language ability, reading two versions of the same texts (original and manipulated ones whose DMs were deleted). The subjects who had the original texts, from which no DMs were omitted, performed better. Khatib and Safari (2011) found that there is high correlation between the students' knowledge of DMs (i.e., their correct recognition of DMs) and their reading comprehension.

Another line of research examined the impact of DMs on EFL learners' writing ability. For example, Martinez (2004) investigated the use of DMs in expository composition of Spanish undergraduates. The study revealed that there was also a significant relationship between highly rated essays and poorly rated ones in the frequency use of elaborative, contrastive and topic relating DMs. Those essays with larger number of elaborative, contrastive and topic relating DMs obtained a higher score.

Some other researchers highlighted the significance of DMs' instruction. Studies conducted by Cheng and Steffensen (1996) and Intarparawat and Steffensen (1995) found that students' writing is improved when they write with an awareness of textual metadiscourse markers. Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010) concluded that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers in Iranian EFL courses is quite successful for improving learners' writing ability.

Tehrani and Dastjerdi (2012) found that the use of DMs facilitated their subjects' comprehension and had positive effect on producing more cohesive compositions. Similarly, in attempting to determine the effect of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension skill, Jalilifar and Alipour (2007) found a positive influence of form-focused instruction of metadiscourse markers. The study also revealed that metadiscourse markers are primarily responsible for cohesion rather than coherence. Innajih (2007), on the other hand, investigated the effect of explicit instruction of DMs on the reading comprehension of the second language

learners. The results showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group on the reading test.

As shown above, ample research has identified the great impact of micro-cognitive DMs or textual DMs on listening comprehension, reading comprehension and writing ability. More importantly, several studies revealed that there is an impact of DM instruction on the correct use of such devices, which will consequently affect comprehension and production, and that DM instruction improved EFL learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Simin and Tavangar (2009, p.230) assert that "metadiscourse instruction has a positive effect on the correct use of metadiscourse markers". This lends support to Moreno's (2001, p.129) claim that "In the case of the L1, discourse markers are acquired as part of our communicative competence, and, therefore, it is important that they also be part of an L2 student's communicative competence" because they provide coherence on the one hand, and fulfil interactive functions on the other hand. Jalilifar (2008, p.119) confirms that "Correct application of DMs in terms of occurrence, selection, and placement is like knowing how to create master painting, how to select the colours with regard to the impression they might have on people psychologically, and how to place it where everyone has perspectively good view of it." Moreover, Castro (2009, p.57) found that DMs fulfil textual and interpersonal functions which may "contribute greatly to the coherent and pragmatic flow of the discourse generated in classroom interaction".

Previous research has shown that incorrect use of DMs will distort meaning of the speakers' or writers' discourse, and will eventually hinder reading and listening comprehension. The situation can even be worse when this incorrect use of DMs is used by a non-native EFL teacher because the incorrect use of DMs will not only affect EFL learners' comprehension, but it will also affect their language development. They will acquire wrong uses of DMs, while their teachers are not aware of their incorrect uses of such devices. Research has also shown that being aware of DMs, especially micro-cognitive or textual DMs, will help EFL learners comprehend better and produce coherent utterances and texts. Moreover, the literature review reveals that little research has focused on incorrect use of DMs, and that none of the previous research has investigated the use of DMs in an Arabic-speaking EFL teachers' classroom discourse. Therefore, I believe that it is important to examine the use of conjunctive DMs in an Arab EFL teachers' classroom to find out if those teachers use these devices correctly because they have an impact on cohesion, and the functions they actually perform in a classroom setting. The findings of the present research might suggest some pedagogical implications for EFL learners. The aim of the present research is, thus, to examine the correct and incorrect uses of DMs in the Saudi Arabic-speaking EFL teachers' classroom, and find out which functions such DMs perform. More specifically, the study investigates the use of additive, adversative and causative conjunctive DMs in 40 Saudi EFL teachers' talk.

### *1.2 DMs: definition, characteristics and functions*

'Pragmatic connectives' (Van Dijk, 1979), 'discourse particles' (Schourup, 1985) and 'discourse connectives' (Warner, 1985; Blakemore, 1987) have been used to refer to DMs, which have been tackled from three different approaches. The first approach is Schifrin's (1987) coherence model in which he conveys that DMs have four coherence functions: exchange structure, action structure, ideational structure, and participation framework. Schiffrin (1987, p.31) operationally defines them as 'sequentially dependant

elements which bracket units of talk'. It is suggested that DMs be used in discourse because they provide 'contextual coordinates for utterances', which indicates that they help in building coherence.

The second approach is the grammatical-pragmatic perspective by Fraser (1990) in which he conveys that DMs are not used only for textual coherence, but they refer to the intention of the speaker to the next turn in the preceding utterances. According to Fraser (1999, p.946), DMs are not just functioning as textual coherence but also signalling the speakers' intention to the next turn in the preceding utterances. He categorised DMs into two major types; DMs which relate messages and DMs which relate topics. DMs which relate messages include contrastive markers (e.g., though, but, contrary to this/that, conversely, etc), collateral markers (e.g., above all, also, and, besides, I mean, in addition, etc.), inferential markers (e.g., accordingly, as a result, so, then, therefore, thus, etc.), and additional subclass (e.g., after all, since, because, etc.). DMs which relate topics include examples like back to my original point, before I forget, by the way, etc.

The third approach, which is adopted in my present research, is the systematic function grammar approach introduced by Halliday and Hasan (1976) who view that DMs are effective cohesive devices that have different meanings and functions in segment organisation. Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify five types of cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion). The current research is concerned with the fourth type, *conjunction* and its first three categories of conjunctive relations: *additive*, *adversative* and *causal*. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.226), these elements are cohesive not in themselves, but indirectly by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding or following text but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. They are also semantic relations, which specify that what is to follow is systematically connected to what has been stated previously.

DMs have been categorised in many ways. According to Nuttal (1982), conjunctive DMs belong to three major categories. Additive markers are used to introduce further facts or ideas that are seen by the writer as adding to or reinforcing those already dealt with. Eulenberg (1996, p.1) sees the additives like 'throwaway' words – more decorative than meaningful. He found that there are conditions that these words specify, having to do with the speaker's goal and the informativeness of the expressions that these additives 'add'.

Adversative markers introduce information that the writer sees as contrary to what is expected or hoped or to what has been said. Finally, causal markers indicate relationships of cause effect, result intention, and of condition. These relationships may be:

a between external facts

b between parts of the writer's argument.

In the second case, the marker will be used in a meta-statement, for example:

a She felt extremely tired. For this reason, she did not leave her room.

b This matter is extremely complex. For this reason, we shall not go into it further at this point.

Redeker (1991) puts forward the following model of discourse coherence:

a *Ideationally*, if their utterance in the given context entails the speaker's commitment to the existence of that relation in the world the discourse describes. For example, temporal sequence, elaboration, cause, reason, and consequence [Redeker, (1991), p.1168].

b *Rhetorically*, if the strongest relation is not between the propositions expressed in the two units but between the illocutionary intentions they convey. For example, antithesis, concession, evidence, justification, and conclusion [Redeker, (1991), p.1168].

c *Sequentially*, if there is a paratactic relation (transition between issues or topics) or hypotactic relation (those leading into or out of a commentary, correction, paraphrase, aside, digression, or interruption sentence) between only loosely related (or indirectly related adjacent discourse sentences [Redeker, (1991), p.1168].

### *1.3 DMs in classroom context*

Several researchers examined the use of DMs in a classroom setting. For instance, Khazaee (2012) studied the rate of DMs used by Iranian EFL teachers, who were considered very good users of English in terms of scores obtained in the IELTS exam before taking the job and again one year before the current study. The talk of the teachers (126 hours) was recorded for three semesters. The researcher found that two of the teachers who had the experience of living in English speaking countries were good users of DMs, but one who had no experience of such kind was a weak user of the DMs. The researcher found the evidence that years of living in an ESL setting had an influence on the use of DMs. Khazaee believes that having such knowledge of functions and meanings of DMs by teachers can help learners of English to develop competence in this regard, too.

Investigating the most frequent DMs among British teachers of English, Martinez (2011) concluded that English teachers in the UK use frequently the following DMs: 'Nevertheless', 'still', 'yet', 'I might', 'I might go', 'I mean', and 'it depends on many things and stuff'. In fact, this is not the case when talking about non-native teachers of English.

Liu (2006) carried out a pragmatic analysis on a Chinese literature class and concluded that DMs used in teacher talk have five major textual functions: *connect*, *transfer*, *generalise*, *explain* and *repair*. Using data from an EFL class, Castro (2009) describes the occurrences and frequencies of DMs, and provided an account for the main functions of DMs as used by a non-native teacher of English. The qualitative analysis revealed that DMs fulfil a number of textual and interpersonal functions which may contribute greatly to the coherent and pragmatic flow of the discourse generated in classroom interaction.

The DMs under investigation (additive, adversative and causative) have been researched by some researchers. For example, Stukker and Sanders (2012) in their most recent work focused on the linguistic structure of discourse causality, and the way language users express discourse causality with connectives like because, so and therefore in three European languages: French, German, and Dutch. The study concluded that people use different kinds of expressions to express causality, and this indicates that they distinguish between these types. Sanders et al. (2009, pp.1–2) state that language

users systematically prefer to use one particular causality item rather than the other. Such choices could provide a window on speakers' cognitive categorisations of causality.

Jasinskaja (2012) studied correction phenomenon by adversative and additive markers. She concluded that the adversative marker 'but' and the additive marker 'and' have corrective markers. According to Jasinkjasa (2012, p.1899), adversative markers are used to highlight the similarities and differences between two propositions; argumentative uses (example 1), as giving an argument and a counter argument for the same claim or suggestion (example 2); and concessive, or denial of expectation uses where the second conjunct denies an inference suggested by the first (example 3).

1 This ring is beautiful, but that one isn't.

2 This ring is beautiful, but expensive.

3 This ring is beautiful, but we won't buy.

Moreno (2001, p.139) states, "The absence or inappropriate use of DMs is likely due to the lack of declarative and/or procedural knowledge on the part of the students with respect to the DMs. The declarative knowledge allows us to know the functions of the DMs and the procedural knowledge allows us to use them in real-time situations".

Previous research indicates that there is a discrepancy in the use of DMs between native and non-native speakers. For example, Sankoff et al. (1997) investigated the use of DMs in English and French by English learners of French as a second language in Montreal. The researchers found that learners tended to use DMs less frequently in their L2 (i.e., French) than in their native language (i.e., English) and that those who were more integrated into the local francophone community had more native-like use of DMs, especially those who had been exposed to French since their childhood. In examining the use of DMs in English by native and non-native children and adults, Romero-Trillo (2002) concluded that native and non-native children show a similar pattern in their use of DMs, whereas non-native adults fossilise in their L2 pragmatic development due to the lack of DM instruction. Regarding the ESL context, Fuller (2006) compared the use of DMs by NSs and NNSs in different contexts – interviews and conversations. Her findings supported all the previous studies on the use of DMs by NNSs that overall NNSs use fewer DMs. Fung and Carter (2007) compared the production of DMs by NSs from a corpus of spoken British English with NNSs from a corpus of classroom discourse in Hong Kong. They found a considerable discrepancy in the use of DMs between NSs and learners. Liao (2008) suggests that previous research indicated that NNSs do not use DMs to the degree that NSs use them. Liao concluded that the more contact NNSs have with the target language culture, the more likely they will use DMs in their spoken discourse.

To conclude, the extensive review of literature shows that researchers have paid little attention to the use and functions of DMs as used by EFL teachers in an EFL context. In classroom context, less attention has also been paid to the effect of DMs and their function in teacher talk, though many studies have suggested that there is a positive effect of DMs in classroom interaction as effective conversational endeavours (Othman, 2010). It is true that there has been some research conducted on the DMs as used by non-native speakers in an educational setting (classroom). Nonetheless, Fung and Carter (2007) confirmed that studies on DMs in teacher talk yet are under-researched and/or under-represented. Fung and Carter (2007) analysed the occurrence of some specific lexical items in a university lecture, that is *lipón* ('so', 'well'), *ára* ('therefore', 'hence', 'so'), *oréa* ('fine', 'good') in a literature lecture in a private Greek Cypriot University.

According to Christodoulidou (2011), scarce research is relevant to the spoken lecture discourse and the correlation between meaning and interaction has been carried out to date. According to Yang (2011, pp.102–103), "DMs in teacher talk, on the other hand, are rarely reached in literature. The use and functions of DMs as one essential interactional factor in teacher talk so far have not been fully described in previous studies. There are still few exceptions though."

## 2 Methodology

### *2.1 Aim and questions of the study*

The present study aims to find out the most favoured types of DMs (adversative, causative and additive) used by the Saudi EFL teachers in their classrooms. The study is also concerned with the textual or pragmatic functions of markers, which are more related to the construction of discourse coherence. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1 Are there any significant differences in the Saudi EFL participants' overall use of DMs (additive, adversative, causative)?

2 Are there any significant differences in the Saudi EFL participant teachers' use of the individual DMs (and, also, besides, but, yet, however, because, so and therefore)?

3 What are the pragmatic functions of additive, adversative, causative DMs?

### *2.2 The participants*

It is perhaps important to define the non-native EFL speaker in our context. The non-native EFL speaker is the person who learned English at school, probably after grade 6. The non-native English teacher in Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, refers to a person who spent his life in an Arab country, and he/she holds a BA in English Language and Literature or an MA in TFFL/TESL, which he/she obtained from a Saudi University or another Arab world universities. The participants in this study are 40 male Saudi EFL teachers working in Saudi public schools. Their ages range from 27 to 48. They have been teaching English as a foreign language in 14 public schools in Riyadh and its suburbs in Saudi Arabia. The participant teachers' and their students' native language is Arabic. Their teaching experience ranges from 5 to 15 years.

### *2.3 Data collection and analysis procedure*

The study aims to examine the use of three types of DMs as cohesive devices, namely, adversative (*but, however, yet*), causative (*so, because, therefore*), and additive *(and, also*, *beside*s) devices in the classroom talk of 40 male Saudi EFL teachers. Each voluntary participant teacher was asked to audio-record one of his 45-minutes English language classes. The teachers were asked to use their own recorders to audio-record their own lessons. The teachers were also advised to record their classes when they are well-prepared, and when they feel that they are comfortable to do so. The 40 teachers signed a consent form.

Once the recordings were received, an initial process of transcription of the audio-recorded classes began. The audio recordings were transcribed and analysed. Occasional speech errors made by participants were not corrected.

Bearing in mind the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used. The quantitative side of the analysis was performed by the use of descriptive statistics (t-test) to find out means cores and any significant differences between the various types of DMs. The qualitative analysis consisted of the identification and description of the pragmatic functions of the major categories and subcategories of DMs. The extracts included in this article comprise transcriptions of approximately 30 hours of audio-recorded English language lessons in public schools located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

## 3 Results

### *3.1 Overall use of DMs in the non-native EFL teachers' classroom discourse*

In order to answer questions 1 and 2 of the present research, statistical analysis was applied to the corpus of the study:

1 Are there any significant differences in the EFL participants' overall use of DMs (additive, adversative, causative)?

2 Are there any significant differences in the EFL participant teachers' use of the individual DMs (and, also, besides, but, yet, however, because, so and therefore)?

Table 1 shows the frequency of DMs in the Saudi EFL teachers' discourse. It is noticed that the nine conjunctive DMs registered a total of 1,616 instances. The additive DMs recorded about 55% of the total number of DMs in the corpus, followed by adversative and finally causative DMs, 370 and 364, respectively.

**Table 1** Frequency of DMs in the Saudi EFL teachers' discourse

| *Adversative* | | | | *Causative* | | | | *Additive* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *because* | *so* | *therefore* | *Total* | *but* | *however* | *yet* | *Total* | *And* | *also* | *besides* | *Total* |
| 171 | 173 | 26 | *370* | 222 | 124 | 18 | *364* | 581 | 216 | 85 | *882* |

The descriptive analysis in Table 2 reveals that the additive DMs (and, so, besides) registered the highest mean scores among the three major categories (7.35). Among the additive DMs, 'and' recorded the highest mean score among all the other subcategories (14.53), indicating that Saudi EFL teachers made greater use of this particular DM. The table also reveals that 'so' (4.33) and 'because' (4.28) among the causative DMs, recorded the highest mean scores. It is also evident that the adversative DM 'but' recorded the highest mean score, while 'yet' yielded the least mean score, 5.55, and 0.45, respectively.

**Table 2** Means and standard deviations of the adversative, causative and additive DMs

| *DM category* | *DMs* | *N* | *Mean* | *Std. deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adversative | But | 40.00 | 5.55 | 1.34 |
| | However | 40.00 | 3.10 | 0.81 |
| | Yet | 40.00 | 0.45 | 0.55 |
| | *Total* | *120.00* | *3.03* | *2.30* |
| Causative | Because | 40.00 | 4.28 | 1.06 |
| | So | 40.00 | 4.33 | 1.05 |
| | Therefore | 40.00 | 0.65 | 0.53 |
| | *Total* | *120.00* | *3.08* | *1.95* |
| Additive | and | 40.00 | 14.53 | 4.14 |
| | Also | 40.00 | 5.40 | 2.15 |
| | Besides | 40.00 | 2.13 | 2.38 |
| | *Total* | *120.00* | *7.35* | *6.06* |

The results of ANOVA analysis presented in Table 3 shows that there are significant differences between the three major categories of DMs, viz., adversative, causative and additive at $p < .05$. This indicates that the Saudi EFL teachers' use of DMs varies. For example, the additive DM yielded the highest mean score and frequencies, and this could be due to the fact that *and*, *so*, and *besides* are easy to use, and that they are within the proficiency level of the participant teachers, who have never been exposed to the target language in its English speaking country. Among the three DMs' categories, *yet*, *therefore* and *besides* recorded the lowest mean scores, implying that the participants used them less frequently. Such DMs require high proficient speakers who can produce compound complex sentence structures. This can also be attributed to the fact the Saudi EFL teachers lacked both declarative and procedural knowledge about the use of such DMs

**Table 3** Results of ANOVA analysis

| *DM categories* | | *Sum of squares* | *Df* | *Mean square* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adversative | Between groups | 520.47 | 2.00 | 260.23 | 283.49 | 0.00 |
| | Within groups | 107.40 | 117 | 0.92 | | |
| | *Total* | *627.87* | *119* | | | |
| Causative | Between groups | 355.32 | 2.00 | 177.66 | 212.43 | 0.00 |
| | Within groups | 97.85 | 117 | 0.84 | | |
| | *Total* | *453.17* | *119* | | | |
| Additive | Between groups | 3,303.35 | 2.00 | 1,651.68 | 180.95 | 0.00 |
| | Within groups | 1,067.95 | 117 | 9.13 | | |
| | *Total* | *4,371.30* | *119* | | | |
| Total | Between groups | 9,709.02 | 2.00 | 4,854.51 | 388.59 | 0.00 |
| | Within groups | 1,461.65 | 117 | 12.49 | | |
| | *Total* | *11,170.67* | *119* | | | |

The post hoc Scheffe test shows that there are also significant differences between the three major categories of DMs, viz., adversative, causative and additive in favour of the additive DMs (Table 4). The analysis also shows that there are significant differences between the adversative DMs, on the one hand, and the causative DMs on the other hand, in favour of the causative. The comparison also shows that there are significant differences between *because*, *so*, *therefore* as causative DMs, in favor of *so* and *because*, indicating that the teachers used these two causative DMs more than *therefore*, which requires high English proficiency level.

**Table 4** The post hoc Scheffe test results

| *Dependent variable* | *(I) DM* | *(J) DM* | *Mean difference (I–J)* | *Std. error* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adversative | But | 2.00 | 2.45 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 5.10 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| | However | 1.00 | –2.45 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 2.65 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| | Yet | 1.00 | –5.10 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| | | 2.00 | –2.65 | 0.21 | 0.00 |
| Causative | Because | 2.00 | –0.05 | 0.20 | 0.97 |
| | | 3.00 | 3.63 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| | So | 1.00 | 0.05 | 0.20 | 0.97 |
| | | 3.00 | 3.68 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| | Therefore | 1.00 | –3.63 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| | | 2.00 | –3.68 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| Additive | And | 2.00 | 9.13 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 12.40 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| | Also | 1.00 | –9.13 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 3.28 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| | Besides | 1.00 | –12.40 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| | | 2.00 | –3.28 | 0.68 | 0.00 |
| *Total* | Adversative | 2.00 | 11.53 | 0.79 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 22.03 | 0.79 | 0.00 |
| | Causative | 1.00 | –11.53 | 0.79 | 0.00 |
| | | 3.00 | 10.50 | 0.79 | 0.00 |
| | Additive | 1.00 | –22.03 | 0.79 | 0.00 |
| | | 2.00 | –10.50 | 0.79 | 0.00 |

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

### *3.2 Pragmatic functions of adversative, causative and additive DMs*

In order to answer question 3, which is concerned with the qualitative analysis, DMs of the three major categories were studied in context to examine their pragmatic functions, and see whether the various types of DMs were used correctly.

### *3.2.1 Adversative DMs*

Adversative DMs included *but, however* and *yet*, which can function as 'contrastive' in most linguistic environments in which they operate as conjunctive DMs. The results revealed that all the errors of contrast, which the participant teachers made, fell into the category of misuse. The second most frequently used DM by the participant teachers was *but* (mean score 5.55). Unlike additive DMs, *but* was correctly used nearly by all the participants at hand, which could be attributed to the fact that the teachers were low proficient English speakers, and that this device is the easiest adversative DM that suits their level. This can be seen in the scripts below, which represent one use of *but*, namely correction (Jasinskaja, 2012):

1 Pay attention every one! I would like you to write what is on the board, *but* before that, read page 74.

2 Read the second paragraph, *but* don't go fast.

3 I would like you to write in blue, *but* not in red.

In 1, 2 and 3 above, *but* signals the cancellation of the positive actions of writing what is on the board, reading and writing in blue. It is also noticed that *however* recorded some correct and incorrect occurrences. The correct use can be seen in their utterances below. In 4 below, arriving late contrasts with being a good student; in 5 having no one in class contrasts with the ringing of the bell; and working hard contrasts with being sick in example 6.

4 He is a good student; *however*, he comes late to the class.

5 The bell rang; *however*, no one is in the class.

6 You seem you are sick; *however*, you work hard.

*However* was misused by the participant teachers, notably those with few years of teaching experience. This can be clearly seen in their utterances. Consider:

*7 You will write; however, happened. (One of the students refused to write because he was sick. The teacher told him that he had to write. He meant: You have to write no matter what happened.)

&8 The rent is good, and however, the location is perfect. (The teacher was describing a picture of flat).

*9 I will not forgive you; however, happened.

In 7 and 9, the participant teacher replaced *whatever* with *however*. In the second example, the teacher incorrectly used *and however* where he should have used *moreover* instead. This misuse might be due to the convergence among these words.

Unlike the other DMs *yet* has been correctly used nearly by all the participant teachers. This can be seen in their utterances below. *Yet* in 10, 11 and 12 is similar to *but* in that it is used to express the cancellation of the positive action in the premise (e.g., Bell, 2010). Consider:

10. Your homework is good. *Yet*, it needs revision.

11 I am on a diet. *Yet*, I want ice-cream.

12 Your brother is sick. *Yet*, he is present.

### *3.2.2 Causative DMs*

The three DMs of cause, namely, *because*, *so,* and *therefore*, do not only have the textual function of introducing new information, but also provide explanations or reasons connected to the previous information which contribute to the coherence of the discourse as they express the relation of relevance between the preceding utterance and the context. Like other DMs, *because* has been correctly used in many utterances as can be seen below:

1 We want to go faster in the syllabus *because* we are late.

2 I need a long vacation *because* I want to travel.

3 I want to send you to the headmaster *because* you did not bring your homework.

It is noticed that *because* has been mistakenly used by some of the participant teachers. Three teachers used *because* incorrectly. In the three examples below, they mixed the usage of *because* with *because of*. In the first and third examples, the participant teacher should have said, 'You should read this because it is important.', or 'You should read this because of its importance.' This misuse can be attributed to the low English language proficiency level of the Saudi EFL teachers.

*4 You should read this *because* of it is important.

*5 There are many mistakes. This homework is not acceptable *because* many things.

*6 *Because* your politeness, I will allow you to go.

Sanders (2005) noted that *so* often signals the switch from a digressive move back to the main topic of conversation. To express the result of the previously stated event, emphasise and structure discourse coherently, *so* as a result DM has been used correctly in some utterances like the ones below:

7 Your teacher is absent today, *so* I will teach you English instead.

8 You are late, *so* you will have to clean the board.

9 He was absent, *so* he will not be able to answer the question.

Some of the participant teachers used *so* incorrectly as shown in the examples below:

10 To be a good student, *so* study hard.

11 Open your book, *so* you read.

12 You have to write this, *so* you can go.

As can be seen in example 10, the teacher should not have used *so*; the utterance is correct without it. The correct form of example 11 is 'Open your book to read.', or 'Open your book *so that* you can read.' The misuse of *so* in example 12 can also be corrected to You have to write this *so that* you can go.'

*Therefore* as a result DM has been correctly used nearly by all the participant teachers. This can be clearly seen in their performance in the utterances (13–15) below. The entire corpus recorded only 26 instances of use of 'therefore', which indicates that

this DM was rarely used by the Saudi EFL participant teachers. This DM requires high proficiency level of English to be able to produce a discourse that contains 'therefore'.

13 Students are sometimes lazy; therefore, I need to give extra activities.

14 I am very busy; therefore, I cannot help you.

15 We have sometime; therefore, we will revise the lesson.

### *3.2.3 Additive DMs*

Additive DMs were used by the Saudi EFL teachers to perform several functions and achieve coherence; however, it was noticed that they misused these conjunctive DMs in many places. For example, *and*, the most frequent DM in all subcategories, has been misused many times in different positions. This violation of this important cohesive device was made nearly by all subjects.

*1 There were many cars in the street. There was a Honda... "hay pay attention" The car was good *and* expensive. (The teacher was explaining the past tense using was and were.)

*2 The weather is very cold *and* it is nice.

*3 I have a pen *and* which is new. (The teacher was explaining the use of have/has.)

As can be seen in the above three examples, the use of *and* lacks both appropriateness and correctedness. In the first two examples, the teacher substituted *but* with *and*. He should have said, 'The car was good, but expensive.', and 'The weather is very cold, but it is nice.' to avoid contradiction. In the third example, *and* was wrongly used. There is no need for *and* at all. Alternatively, the speaker could have said, 'I have a new pen.', 'My pen is new.' or 'I have a pen which is new.'

Most of the uses of the DM *and* in the extracts below are related to its textual function of showing continuity and adding new information. It has been correctly used in the teachers' utterances in 4 and 5 below. It has been noticed that the teachers who produced grammatically correct and appropriate use of *and* are the ones with more years of teaching experience.

4 Now all of you let's see page five *and* page six. If you do not want me to play it again, this means that you understand the subject *and* you are ready to do the questions

5 Our subject today is about two tenses. We should talk mainly about the present *and* the past. There are some differences between them. You should pay attention *and* ask if it is not clear.

Like *and*, *also* has been misused by the participants, notably by the novice teachers. As can be seen, the first two questions are grammatically accepted (in using *also*), but not semantically or pragmatically. There is another grammatical mistake in the first two utterances. The *s* as an inflectional morpheme in 'Who also want to read?' should be added to the verb 'want' to form present simple tense. In the third example, instead of using 'else', the speaker incorrectly used *also*. Consider:

*6 Who *also* want to read?

*7 If you want to go, just raise your hand. Don't speak. Who *also* want to go?

*8 Do you want to say anything *also*?

The above three examples should have been rephrased using 'else':

9 Who *else* wants to read?

10 Who *else* wants to go?

11 Do you want to say anything *else*?

I believe that this confusion or misuse could be attributed to literal translation, resulting from the speakers' mother tongue interference. The Arabic word *Aydan* has several alternatives in English, viz., *also*, *too*, and *either*, and this explains why 'also' was used in this context.

However, *also* was used correctly in many instances as shown in 12 and 13 below:

12 Teacher: At that time of my visit to Germany. I went to France. I visited many places.

Student: I visited Eiffel tower.

Teacher: I was *also* there.

13 Sami is polite. I hope that you all do the same as him. He is *also* a good student.

The least frequently used additive DM was *besides*, which was sometimes used correctly by some speakers, while misused by some others. This can be illustrated in view of the following utterances:

*14 I will sit *besides* you. (In talking about the future tense and the teacher sat beside one of his students)

*15 Come here and sit *besides* your friend.

*16 Look *besides* you.

One can observe that *besides* has been mistakenly used by the participant teachers in the above utterances. They mixed between the use of *besides* as an adverb, which is normally used as one of DMs with the preposition *beside.* Lexically speaking, *besides*, is used when adding another point or statement after one that you have already mentioned, whereas *beside*, the preposition, means next door or very close to someone or something (Longman: Dictionary of Contemporary English).

Like other DMs, *besides* was correctly used in many different positions, and this can be seen in the following utterances:

17 It is hot; besides, the air-conditioner is not working.

18 Besides English, I will teach you history.

19 Besides my high temperature, I have flu.

The above examples show that the more experienced teachers were able to use *besides* correctly. Note here that punctuation marks like periods, question marks, commas, semi-colons, etc., are used although data are spoken, not written. Such punctuation marks

are added by the researcher based on the presence of some pauses, intonation changes, etc., in the teachers' utterances.

## 4 Discussion

Previous sociolinguistic studies of SLA have generally used either quantitative approaches or qualitative approaches to explain the use of DMs. The use of both approaches has enabled the present study to gain a fuller picture of EFL speakers' use of additive, adversative and causative DMs as cohesive devices in a classroom discourse because it not only dealt with frequencies and percentages, but also examined the various pragmatic functions of the three major categories of DMs in context.

Among the three major categories, the study revealed that *and*, *but* and *so* were used most often by the participant teachers, which indicates the teachers' preference to use a particular DM over the other. This is in agreement with Sanders et al. (2009) who suggested that language users systematically prefer to use one particular causality as a DM item rather than the other. The study also shows that the participant EFL teachers have shown different uses of DMs. For example, a particular DM was used by one teacher five times, whereas the same was used 15 times by another teacher. In support of Liao (2008), the present study suggests that we should be cautious in making generalisations about EFL speakers, but instead, we should treat each learner as an individual social being with multiple complex identities in their process of language acquisition.

The results also revealed that the participant teachers made many errors in additive, adversative and causative DMs, but they all fall into the category of misuse. These errors resulted from literal translation, which could be attributed to mother tongue interference. Research indicates that Arab learners of English encounter problems while communicating in English as a target language due to their limited linguistic resources. It also indicates that Arab learners of English, the Saudi EFL teachers are an example, encounter such problems and make many errors because they have never been exposed to the target language in its native-speaking country (e.g., Zughoul, 1983; Suleiman, 1983; Rabab'ah, 2001; Rabab'ah and Bulut, 2007). This finding supports Khazaee (2012) who found that two of the teachers who had the experience of living in English speaking countries were good users of DMs, but the one who had no experience of such kind was a weak user of the DMs. Khazaee found that years of living in an ESL setting had an influence on the use of DMs. According to Moreno (2001, p.39):

> "The absence or inappropriate use of DMs is likely due to the lack of declarative and/or procedural knowledge on the part of the EFL learner with respect to the DMs. This declarative knowledge allows language users to know the functions of the DMs and the procedural knowledge allows them to use such DMs in real-time situations."

The findings of the present study indicate that DMs have performed a number of functions; they were deployed to express a cause (*so*, *because*, *therefore*), to show continuity and add of new information (*and*, *also*, *besides*), contrast, denial and cancellation (*but*, *however*, *yet*). This finding is in line with Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.226), who suggest that DMs express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. This finding also lends support to Castro (2009),

who after analysing the occurrences and frequencies of DMs of a non-native teacher of English, found that DMs fulfil a number of textual and interpersonal functions, which may contribute greatly to the coherent and pragmatic flow of the classroom discourse. Furthermore, it lends support to Jasinkjasa's (2012) that adversative markers are used to highlight the similarities and differences between two propositions; argumentative uses, as giving an argument and a counter argument for the same claim or suggestion; and concessive, or denial of expectation.

## 5 Conclusions

While the study shows that the Saudi EFL teachers used many DMs, their English language proficiency level seems to be low, which is evident in their incorrect use of the individual DMs. This suggests that most of the participant teachers lack the linguistic competence related to DMs, which more likely enables the teachers to use them appropriately and correctly. Based on these findings, there are some potential important implications for DM instruction. Fung's (2011) study revealed the underrepresentation of DMs in existing teaching materials. As a former university professor in Saudi Arabia, I suggest that the BA degree programmes in English Language and Literature, which qualify BA holders to be EFL school teachers in Saudi Arabia, should approach the teaching of English from a pragmatic point of view, and develop pragmatic syllabi for the first year English courses. According to Moreno (2001, pp.139–140), such syllabi "would include activities in which the EFL future teachers can participate actively, as well as communicative, cooperative tasks that allow the use of DMs, along with other discourse phenomena, and reflection about them". Furthermore, the Saudi EFL teachers should work on their pragmatic competence by reading grammar books, and as much as they can listen to many audio and watch video materials that enhance their declarative and procedural knowledge. Fung and Carter (2007, p.433) suggested that there is a need to "strengthen learners' pragmatic competence in spoken language by creating space to improve their use of DMs". They also pointed out that "incorporation of DMs into the language curriculum is necessary to enhance fluent and naturalistic conversational skills, to help avoid misunderstanding in communication, and, essentially, to provide learners with a sense of security in L2". This study suggests that we need to strengthen teachers' pragmatic competence in spoken language by creating space to improve their use of DMs. Incorporating DMs into the English language curriculum, especially in teacher training programmes for novice teachers, is indispensable to enhance accurate, fluent and naturalistic language, to *help* avoid making mistakes which might lead to misunderstanding in communication, and, essentially, to provide teachers with a sense of confidence in L2.

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