

# Discourse Markers and Text Pattern of Organization in Teaching Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract:** The current study examined the use of discourse markers (DMs) and text pattern of organization (TPO) in teaching reading comprehension. It investigated the effectiveness of DMs and TPO to improve reading comprehension on Indonesian EFL students. Eighty male and female were selected using purposive sampling technique from two classes of a senior high school students, each class consists of 40 students. They were assigned into experimental and control groups. A pre-test was administered to the groups. The experimental group received reading instruction and activities to help them recognize DMs such as enumerative (firstly, then, finally), additive (again, moreover), and TPO such as enumeration, comparison-contrast, while the control group received no treatment. After receiving the treatment, a post-test was administered. The statistical analysis indicates that the participants in the experimental group got better score than the participants in the control group. It means that DMs and text pattern of organization help Indonesian EFL students comprehend English text.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Discourse markers (henceforth DMs) have been much studied in the last twenty years; different proposals and approaches have been developed on this subject by different researchers under different labels (Fraser, 1999). Researchers have agreed that DMs are lexical expressions that relate discourse segments. DMs is defined as a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases that signal a relationship between the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1.

It means that DMs are the signal words which indicate relationship among ideas of a text. In other words, DMs are the authors' clues or signals that will help them figure out their ideas and help the readers identify the authors' messages. DMs express signal relationship among ideas through phrases, clauses, and sentences (Brown, 1994).

There are three main subclasses of DMs, first are contrastive markers that signal that the explicit interpretation of the second sentence contrasts with an interpretation of the first sentence; second

subcategory is elaborative markers that signal a quasi parallel relationship between the sentences; and the third subclass, inferential markers, signal that the following sentence is a conclusion derived from the preceding sentence (Fraser, 1999).

DMs and text pattern organization (TPO) cannot be separated, because DMs construct the text organization. A text author uses DMs to present their ideas in written, and the readers use DMs for comprehension to get the meaning of what they read. In other words, DMs are the bridge between the authors and the readers.

In reading, DMs help the readers to understand the text. Acquiring the DMs is important for the reader especially for the English as foreign language (EFL) learners. A good reader recognizes the relationship between ideas by identifying DMs and TPO (Vacca, 1981). A well-written text is often put in a logical pattern.

The four basic of TPO are as follows:

- (1) **Enumeration/Listing:** Listing bits of information (facts, propositions, events, ideas), usually qualifying the listing by criteria such as size or importance. The author states the main idea in the form of a generalization and gives a

list of details or examples to support that general statement.

- **Keywords/phrases in the main idea:** *many, several, a number of, a variety of, a few, kinds of.*
  - **Signal words/phrases:** *for example, for instance, first, second, another, also, besides, in addition, final, last, most important,* (Jeffries and Mikulecky, 2007).
- (2) **Time Order/Sequence:** Putting facts, events, or concepts into a sequence, using references to time (like dates) to order them. The author explains the main idea with a series of events or steps in a process that follow one after the other in time order.
- **Keywords/phrases in the main idea:** *began, account, story, process, history, sequence.*
  - **Signal words/phrases:** *first, second, then, next, after, while, since, then, soon, finally, at last, in 1965, last June, later, over time, the next step, the following week,* (Jeffries and Mikulecky, 2007).
- (3) **Comparison-Contrast:** Pointing out likenesses (comparison) and differences (contrast) among facts, people, events, concepts, etc. The author's main idea is a general statement about two things and how they are similar and/or different. A comparison can include both similarities and differences, or only the similarities. A contrast states only differences.
- **Keywords/phrases in the main idea:** *similarities, differences, both, in common, same, different, compare, comparison.*
  - **Signal words/phrases for similarities:** *similarly, also, in the same way, as, like, both, in common.*
  - **Signal words/phrases for differences:** *however, but, on the other hand, although, while, in contrast, than, conversely, yet, unlike,* (Jeffries and Mikulecky, 2007).
- (4) **Cause-Effect:** Showing how facts, events, or concepts (effects) happen or come into being because of other facts, events, or concepts (causes). The writer's main idea is that one event or action caused another event or action.
- **Keywords/phrases in the main idea and the signal words for details are the same and often include:** *causes, leads to, is the cause of, results in, creates, brings about, makes, provokes, produces, gives rise to, contributes to, is due to, is*

*the result of, comes from, results from, is produced by, is a consequence of, follows, is caused by,* (Jeffries and Mikulecky, 2007).

Several previous studies have been conducted to examine the effect of DMs on the learners' comprehension of written and spoken text. There is high correlation between the students' knowledge of DMs (i.e., their correct recognition of discourse markers) and their reading comprehension (Khatib and Safari, 2011).

The positive correlation between DMs and students' reading performance has been reported in several researches (Martinez, 2009; Khatib and Safari, 2011; Behnam and Yaghchi, 2014).

The effect of explicit instruction of DMs on the reading comprehension of the second language learners shows that the students in the treatment group performed better than the control group on the reading test (Innajih, 2007 as cited in Khatib and Safari, 2011).

DMs facilitate the comprehension of a text, it reveals the rhetorical structure of a text that helps the readers (Jafarinejad and Tavakoli, 2011).

This research would investigate the influence of introducing DMs and TPO for students' reading comprehension. To that end, the following objectives and hypotheses were put forth:

- (1) To know the effectiveness of introducing DMs and TPO for students' reading comprehension;
- (2) To determine whether students who learn reading by introducing of DMs and TPO get better scores than those who learn reading without introducing DMs and TPO.

The following null hypotheses were formed:

- (1) The students who are introduced DMs and TPO in reading comprehension do not get better score than those who are not introduced it;
- (2) There is no significance different between the scores of experimental group (EG) and control group (CG).

## 2 METHODS

### 2.1 Participants

Eighty male and female were selected as purposive sampling from two classes of a senior high school students, each class consists of 40 students. They were assigned into experimental (EG) and control groups (CG).

## 2.2 Instrumentation

Multiple choice reading comprehension tests was used in the present study contained 50 items. DMs items test was inserted into the test.

## 2.2 Procedures

The experimental group (EG) received reading instruction and activities to help them recognize DMs such as enumerative (firstly, then, finally), additive (again, moreover), and TPO such as enumeration, comparison-contrast, while the control group (CG) received no treatment. A pre-test was administered to the groups before the treatment then followed by post-test after the treatment.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the table 1 above the result of the pre-test for the EG is 39.20 for the mean, and 9.09 for the standard deviation. And the result of the post-test is 73.15 for the mean and 8.85 for the standard deviation. The result of the pre-test for the CG are 39.05 for the mean, and 9.38 for the standard deviation. And the result for the post-test is 47.25 for the mean, and 11.40 for the standard deviation.

Table 1: Independent t-test for CG and EG on Pre-test

Mean	CG	EG	df	t
	39.05	39.20	78	0.09
SD ( $\sigma$ )	9.38	9.09		

As shows in the table, there was not significant difference between the two groups before the experiment started and the two groups started with the same level. It was indicated by the mean scores and the standard deviation of both groups are relatively same.

Table 2: Independent t-test for CG and EG on the Post-test

Mean	CG	EG	df	t
	47.25	73.15	78	11.29
SD ( $\sigma$ )	11.40	8.85		

As the results indicate, EG significantly did better than CG in the post-test. In other words, the experimental group who had introduced DMs made more improvement in their reading comprehension than the control group. Since the two groups of students had almost the same classes during the time

interval between the pre-and post-test, one can claim that the difference in their performance on the reading comprehension was due to the fact that the EG had been introduced DMs.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for the results of the pre- and post-tests for the CG.

The mean of the pre-test for the CG is 39.05, and that of the post-test is 47.25. The difference between the means is -8.20. There is no significance difference between the results of pre- and post-tests for the CG. The standard deviation for the pre-test is 9.38, and that of the post-test 11.40. Besides, the range of the scores of the pre-test is 36, whereas that of the post-test is 44.

Table 3: CG pre-test and post-test

Statistics	Pre-test	Post-test
Sum	1562	1890
Mean	39.05	47.25
SD	9.38	11.40
Range	36	44
Max.	22	28
Min.	58	72

The table shows that the mean for the pre-test is 39.20, whereas that of the post-test is 73.15. There is a relatively difference between the standard deviations of the two tests: 9.09 in the case of the pretest and 8.85 for the post-test. This shows that the subjects have performed closer homogeneously on the post-test. This claim can be verified referring to the difference between the range of the scores on two tests (34 for the pre-test and 30 for the post-test).

Table 4: EG pre-test and post-test

Statistics	Pre-test	Post-test
Sum	1568	2926
Mean	39.20	73.15
SD	9.09	8.85
Range	34	30
Min.	20	60
Max.	54	90

Table 4 shows the difference between the means of pre- and post-test for the EG. The results show that there is a significant difference between the means on the pre- and post-tests -33.95. It indicates that there is improvement in post-test result. Since the mean scores of the subjects in all the cases have increased from the pre-test to the post-test, it can be

claimed that introducing DMs to the students can improve their reading comprehension.

Based on Table 5, the writer found that the  $t$  Stat is 11.29 and it is greater than the  $t$  table ( $11.29 > 1.68$ ). Therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected and the  $H_1$  is accepted. It means the hypothesis that the students who are introduced DMs in reading comprehension get better score than those who are not introduced it.

It can be verified by three pieces of evidence. Firstly, according to the Table 5 below that indicates the null hypothesis is rejected and significance at  $p=0.05$ .

Table 5: The pairs  $t$  test of post-test between EG and CG

	EG	CG
Mean	73.15	47.25
Variance	78.34	129.99
Df	78	
t Stat	11.29	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.68	

In the post-test, however, a significant difference can be observed between the scores of the two groups. Since the mean of the scores for the EG is larger than that of the CG, one can truly claim that introducing DMs has helped students improve their reading comprehension.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The writer concludes that the result of the students who are introduced to DMs got positive improvements of achievement than those who were not introduced. It is shown at the mean of the post test of the students who are introduced DMs (73.15). The mean of the students who were not introduced to DMs was 47.25. The standard deviation of the experimental group is 8.85 and the standard deviation of the control group is 11.40.

The students who are introduced to discourse markers (DMs) in reading comprehension get better score than those who are not introduced it. It is significant at  $p = 0.05$ . And there is significance different between the means of post-test result for EG and CG (25.90). The result of the EG is bigger than CG ( $73.15 > 47.25$ ).

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