

STUDENTS’ DISCOURSE MARKERS IN IN-CLASS ORAL PRESENTATIONS (A Case of English Language Education Students at a University)

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Abstract

The study aims to analyse English discourse markers in students’ oral presentations in class in order to explain the use and functions of discourse markers in the presentations, and to explain how discourse markers impact on students’ oral fluency. Discourse markers are those parts of the language that connect one piece of discourse or extended speech to another. A qualitative case study, particularly a spoken discourse analysis, is used as a method of the study. The unit of analysis is the discourse markers produced by the sixth semester students of the English language education program at Universitas Negeri Semarang in the academic year of 2017/2018. The students’ oral presentations during Information and Communication Technology course are recorded and then transcribed. The data are analysed by following Belles-Fortunato’s taxonomy (2006) of English discourse markers. There are three categories of discourse markers and each category has five functions. Findings show that micro markers are the most frequent discourse markers used by the students and mostly have functions as additional markers. It is suggested that students should be taught explicitly the use of discourse markers to develop their oral fluency.

Keywords: discourse markers, students’ oral presentations, fluency.

INTRODUCTION

In this current globalization era, English language plays an important role in connecting humans all over the world. MacKay (2002) states that the interest in learning English has increased to such an extent that English is now considered by many researchers to be an international language. English has been used as a major language in many fields, such as: education, science, law, business, entertainment, communication, health, art, internet, and many more. In this twenty first century, the development of English language teaching runs so fast. This condition is indicated by the change in whole teaching process, such as: teaching method, teaching approach and theory, teaching media and material, and many more. One of the most popular media used in English language teaching at university level is power point presentation. It does so since presentation of learning materials in graphical form is beneficial for students (Rose, 2001). In contrast, presentation as the popular learning media used in college life also has many weaknesses in some point of views. There are some problems arising from both presenter and audience. In order to keep presentation going well, there has to be a good relationship between the presenters and the audiences. Being a good presenter means they have to be communicative enough in delivering information. In fact, most

presenters weren't communicative enough in delivering the materials. As what Nunan (2001) said that speaking skill is considered to be the most difficult skill among the other language skills. As a result, there was less interaction between presenters and audiences. Presentation is said to be effective when the audiences understand the content of the presentation or simply audiences understand what the presenters are trying to say. For that reason, the use of discourse markers in speaking can assist presenters to communicate their ideas clearly. Discourse markers enable students to speak more communicatively since it acts as a word connector. Moreover, discourse markers will definitely help presenters to maintain the flow of their presentation. Therefore, the use of discourse markers in speaking can be very helpful to improve students' speaking skill.

Thus, this study tends to describe, analyze, and explain more about the uses and functions of discourse markers in students' oral presentations and also how discourse markers can assist the presenters in creating an effective presentation. In addition, this study brings some benefits in some point of views. Theoretically, this study can elevate knowledge and enrich references of the previous studies on discourse markers, especially the studies focusing on the use of discourse markers in oral presentation. Pedagogically, discourse makers can be taught for certain purposes in teaching English, mainly in improving students' speaking ability. Lastly, the finding of this study can be useful for students who want to improve their speaking ability, especially for the presenters who are trying to be communicative during their oral presentations.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study, particularly a spoken discourse analysis, is used as a method of the study. The unit of analysis is the discourse markers produced by the sixth semester students of the English language education program at Universitas Negeri Semarang in the academic year of 2017/2018. The students' oral presentations during Information and Communication Technology course are recorded and then transcribed. There were several steps that the researcher did to find out the result of the study. First of all, the researcher did coding by giving a mark in the form of check list of the students' utterances. The following step was by doing highlighting. In this step, the researcher bolded one of the words which was belonged to the discourse markers. The next step was classifying. The researcher used the transcribed data to be classified and analyzed based on Belles-Fortuno's taxonomy (2006) of English discourse markers.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results gained from the analysis are illustrated based on each proposed research question:

The Most Frequent Discourse Markers Used by Students

Regarding to the data findings, the use of discourse marker is still low. The data finding stated that the frequency rate of the use of discourse marker is not more than 10%. The highest use of discourse marker having frequency rate 9.03%, while the lowest one having frequency rate of 6.31%. The most frequent discourse markers used by the students is

micro markers. This finding has the similar result with what has been stated by Fortuno's (2006) in her journal which is also mentioned that micro markers was the most frequent discourse markers used by speakers. One of the reasons why there were a lot of students used micro markers is that micro-markers tend to be more fixed and less variable linguistic units (Swales, 2004).

On the other side, the lowest frequency of the use of discourse markers was macro markers. These happened due to the characteristic of macro markers which tend to have longer chunks of language, more unsteady and sensitive to changes and prone to form language expressions, which may vary from one language to another, not having clear corresponding counterparts (Swales, 1990).

Functions of Discourse Markers Used by Students

Discourse markers by Fortuno (2006) having three main categories, they are micro markers, macro markers, and also operators. Each of them is having five functions. So, there are three categories and fifteen functions. Micro markers is having five functions: Additional, Consecutive, Contrastive, Causal, and Temporal Marker. Then, macro markers is also having five functions: Starter, Rephraser, Topic Shifter, Conclusion, and Organizer. The last category, Operators also has five functions: Pause filler, Attitudinal, Elicitation, Confirmation Check, and Acceptance. Among those fifteen functions of discourse markers, there are only 2 functions that are not used by the students; they are organizer and conclusion. While the most frequent discourse marker that is used by the students is discourse marker *and* which is functioned as additional marker and pause filler.

How the Use of Discourse Markers Contributes to Student's Fluency

Based on the data findings, the use of discourse marker is still low. The minimum rate of discourse markers used by the students during oral presentation indicated that they still lack of using words especially connector in their speech. That is why the presentation seems not interesting enough. As we know that, mostly college students having presentation as their learning media. Presentation is said to be effective enough to be used since it has a lot of benefit both for the students and the lecturer.

Based on the classroom observation, mostly 70% of the students were reading the book instead of speaking naturally. There were only 30% of them who speak by their own words. I think this is the main reason why the use of discourse markers is still low. Moreover, while they were reading the material in their book, they did not paraphrasing it by their own understanding or their own word. So, it seems so much monotonic.

In order to make the situation during the presentation more interesting, as the speaker we have to speak fluently. So that is why, speakers have to pay attention to the choice of words they going to use especially in applying discourse markers in their speech. Sadeghi (2014) in his research conclusion stated that by using discourse markers it can help the students to connect sentences and establish the coherence of the text. Moreover, discourse markers also help students to give a pause time to think what they are going to say. Discourse markers keep the discourse runs smoothly; it helps the speakers to feel more comfortable.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this study stated that the use of discourse markers during students' oral presentation is still low. The data finding stated that the most frequent discourse marker used by the students is micro marker, while the lowest discourse marker used by the students is macro marker. Then, the second result showed that there are a lot discourse marker functions that is used by the students. Out of fifteen functions of discourse marker, there are only two functions that are not used by the students; they are organizer and conclusion. The most frequent discourse marker that is used by the students is discourse marker *and* which is functioned as additional marker and pause filler.

The last result also showed that discourse marker contributes to students' fluency. By using discourse markers, it helps connecting sentences in a discourse; it helps the speakers to speak more fluently. As we know that in a presentation, the audiences' participation is really important. So, that is why in order to make them participate, the presenter has to be able to speak communicatively. Thus, discourse markers take a role to help them speak fluently.

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