

## DISCOURSE MARKERS USED BY MULTILINGUALISM STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This small research is aimed to know the discourse markers used by multilingualism students at Bina Bangsa School. The instruments used were the survey and interview conducted at the school. The respondents were students and teachers (not only English teachers). The sample were the student of junior high schools grade two. The results of the small research is that shows some discourse markers used by students are; the most frequently used and popular discourse markers among the subjects are - *but, so, and, therefore, however, then, anyway, whereas*. In the written texts, the subjects have often used the discourse markers namely *consequently, as a result, in addition, nevertheless, moreover, furthermore, regarding*. Those discourse markers used in written texts on an examination texts produced by students. The conclusion is that discourse markers frequently used by multilingualism students while doing their writing examination on any subjects.

**Keywords:** discourse markers, multilingualism, written texts

### Introduction

Multilingualism is now a legitimate reality in the world. (Cook V, 1995) Given that multilingualism is a norm rather than the exception, maintaining and developing multilingual competence has become a necessity. A majority of students arrive in schools with multilingual competence and hold multiple identities. And even if they arrive as monolinguals, it is imperative that they have opportunities to acquire additional languages from peers or from instruction. Multilingualism has been excessively discussed and often linked to the ability of an individual or a community of speakers to use multiple languages (Jessner, 2006). To appreciate language diversity, most nations have designed their language policy to reflect and accommodate their multilingual nature. (De Angelis, 2007) This in no way gives equal status to all the languages that exist in that society because national identity, nationalism and education are given much consideration. As a result, multilingualism has remained a complex phenomenon. There are a number of challenges that affect multilingualism.

Language policy and globalization, although being the main catalyst for the promotion of multilingualism, also affect multilingualism in many ways (Cenoz 2009). In many schools and societies, multilingualism has been emphasized but the result has not been positive since only the national language is promoted (Dewaele, 2010). Therefore, as part of the effort to explore them, this paper reports the observation about the impact of nationalism on multilingualism in Indonesia and how it affects foreign language teaching. Indonesia is a multilingual society with over 700 hundred indigenous languages. Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) is the national language used for communication, education and for all government affairs throughout the archipelago. Other indigenous languages are neglected and usually used in the villages for no official purposes. The nationalist stance to strengthen the Indonesian language has led to a recent proposal by the Ministry of Education to stop teaching English in primary schools starting two last year when the new curriculum is implemented. Since 1955, Indonesia has embraced English as the first foreign

language taught at all levels of education. The proposal, if implemented, will have grave consequences to multilingualism and foreign language teaching in the country.

Bina Bangsa School is a young, growing and vibrant school. Established in 2001, Bina Bangsa School has quickly distinguished itself for its academic excellence. In BBS, students undergo a rigorous program modelled after the Singapore curriculum. BBS provides quality education to students ranging from Pre-School to Junior College levels. Our students sit for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the International 'A' Levels examination offered by Cambridge University. BBS aims to nurture leaders who strive to be the best that they can be through lifelong learning, and also grounded in the Word of God. The BBS family consists of 5 campuses located in Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang and Malang and has a total enrolment of more than 3000 students. Our teaching fraternity is staffed by 250 qualified and experienced teachers representing over 12 countries, bringing with them diverse cultures and experiences to enrich students' learning.

Besides, pursuing academic excellence, BBS also has a framework to develop our students holistically through the following programs:

1. Music (Chinese or Western Instruments)
2. Performing Arts and Drama
3. Sports and Fitness
4. Community Service
5. Faith Builder

Within a short span of 10 years, BBS students have accomplished countless achievements, such as:

1. Cambridge Brilliance Awards (Best in Indonesia)
2. Cambridge CIE (Top of the World Awards)
3. University of New South Wales

4. ICAS (Numerous Gold Awards and High Distinctions)
5. Ranked 1 for ICAS performance by University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

In addition, many of our students have received full scholarships from prestigious schools in Singapore such as Hwa Chong International and Nanyang Girls School. Bina Bangsa's alumni have also gone on to further their studies in world renowned universities such as: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University, Hong Kong University, University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales, University of California, University of Alberta and University of Toronto. Despite these achievements, Bina Bangsa School continues to strive for excellence and improvements because we believe every BBS student deserves our best. We invite you to make Bina Bangsa your school where you can learn and grow.

#### **Problem statement**

The problem of this paper is what are the discourse markers used by multilingual students at Bina Bangsa School ?

#### **Related literature**

To support the paper, the writer states some supporting areas of theories like this follows;

1. The Terms Bilingualism and Multilingualism

This section is devoted to analyzing the terms *bilingualism* and *multilingualism*, a distinction that will pave the way for the following section in which I intend to examine how this terminological clarification bears on different types of bilingual and multilingual education models.

Multilingualism is traditionally used as an umbrella term that includes bilingualism. The Oxford dictionary, however, defines a bilingual as the person who is able to

speak two languages equally well, whereas a multilingual person is described as the person able to speak or use many languages. Based on these definitions, two main conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, we can conclude that bilingualism refers to two languages and multilingualism to many. In fact, the dictionary includes an entry that leads the reader to “compare bilingual, monolingual” and the word compare implies that the terms “bilingual” and “multilingual” are not used as synonyms. Moreover, the Latin prefixes “bi” and “multi” literally mean “two” and “many” respectively, which would underpin our first conclusion. Secondly, our attention is drawn to the fact that whereas the bilingual person is supposed to speak or use both languages “equally well”, this adverbial phrase is obliterated in the case of the multilingual. One could also infer that it is quite habitual to speak two languages equally well, but that this is a much convoluted task when three or more languages are involved. This latter idea is closely linked to the concept of multicompetence (for further information, see Cook 2006), which unfortunately falls beyond the scope of this chapter. I will focus then on the first conclusion in the following lines.

It could be advocated that researchers should attempt to avoid using both bilingualism and multilingualism interchangeably, as this lack of precision may lead to misinterpretations of research data. A second reason to propose this distinction is based on empirical research. Those researchers (Jessner 2006 ; De Angelis 2007; Aronin and Hufeisen 2009; Cenoz 2009; Dewaele 2010) who actively work on multilingualism have highlighted that there are significant differences between the acquisition of a second language and the acquisition of third or a dditional languages. De Angelis

(2007), for example, provides abundant evidence illustrating the existing differences between L2 and multilingual acquisition. Jessner (2006: 13) happens to be very assertive and concludes that “nowadays it is known that learning a second language differs in many respects from learning a third language.” This conclusion is also valid for bilingual and multilingual education and both terms should preferably be distinguished.

## 2. Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are the word insertions that provide continuity in conversations. Discourse markers are also known as words or short ‘lexicalized phrases’ (Schiffrin, 2001) that organize texts. Discourse markers help to create ‘cohesion’ and ‘coherence’ in a given text by establishing a relationship between the various ideas that are expressed within the text (Schiffrin, 2001). Schiffrin (1987) operationally defines discourse markers as sequentially dependent elements which brackets units of talk. Examples of discourse markers in English would include ‘oh’, ‘well’, ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘or’, ‘so’, ‘like’, ‘because’, ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘I mean’, ‘you know’, ‘uh’, ‘anyway’, ‘yet’ etc. ‘Discourse markers’ is the term linguists give to the above mentioned words that break our speech up into parts and show the relation between parts. Discourse markers are found in various grammatical categories including conjunctions, interjections and adverbs. Discourse markers can ‘connect’ various units of dynamic meaning (coherence) as well as the surface structure of the text (cohesion). For example, ‘oh’ prepares the hearer for a surprising or just-remembered item, and ‘but’ indicates that sentence to follow is in opposition to the one before. However, these markers don’t necessarily mean what the dictionary says they mean. Some people use ‘and’ just to start a new thought, and some people put ‘but’ at the end of their sentences, as a

way of trailing off gently. Discourse markers also occur when speakers shift their orientation to information. In this case the markers alert the listener that something within the speaker has changed.

Discourse markers are usually polyfunctional elements. Discourse markers can be understood in two ways: First, as elements which serve towards the union of utterances. Secondly, as elements which serve a variety of conversational purposes, discourse markers are linguistic expressions used to signal the relation of an utterance to its immediate context, with the primary function of bringing to the listeners' attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context.

Simone Muller (2005) made a list of how discourse markers function. He stated that discourse markers are used

- to initiate discourse,
- to mark a boundary in discourse (shift/partial shift in topic),
- to preface a response or a reaction,
- to serve as a filler or delaying tactic,
- to aid the speaker in holding the floor,
- to effect an interaction or sharing between speaker and hearer,
- to bracket the discourse either cataphorically or anaphorically,
- to mark either foregrounded or backgrounded information.

For a long time, English was considered a language that lacked particles (Lenk, 1998). Subsequent studies of discourse markers in English have meanwhile pointed out that this is indeed not the case: although the propositional content of a sentence might not be altered by the addition or deletion of a discourse marker, discourse markers in English, nevertheless, fulfill an important pragmatic function in the conversational

interaction (Lenk, 1998). Discourse markers are linguistic expressions used to signal the relation of an utterance to its immediate context, with the primary function of bringing to the listeners' attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context.

Thus, it is seen that discourse markers help to create 'cohesion' and 'coherence' (Schiffrin, 2001) in a given text by establishing a relationship between the various ideas that are expressed within the text. During the last two decades, analyses of discourse markers have occupied a large space in the literature on pragmatics. And discourse markers have been considered from a variety of perspectives and approaches.

Some of the functions of the most commonly used discourse markers are as follows-

#### ***Well***

"*Well*" serves various functions in discourse depending on the context and its position in the utterance. "*Well*" at the beginning of a turn serves as a response marker to what has gone before.

#### ***Now***

"*Now*" at the beginning of a turn is used as a transition marker, introducing a new topic and changing the direction of the discourse. In the case of automated dialogues, where the application may be very specific, "*now*" can be used to move from one part of the dialogue to another.

#### ***Actually***

"*Actually*" gives processing instructions to a listener about how the particular utterance should be understood. "*Actually*" can therefore be used to signal to the hearer that although what follows is relevant to the ongoing discourse, it will contain (in the opinion of the

speaker) information that the hearer is not expecting. Etc.

### 3. English Language Teaching and Discourse Markers

Teaching of English in the schools in Indonesia is in a confused state today. Students from the urban vernacular medium and rural vernacular medium are taught English for about six periods per week. So they face problem in forming structures of English. A teacher's so called target is to "prepare" the students for the examination and not to make the students competent in the use of the language they are learning. In reality neither the student nor the teacher is anxious to learn or to teach English. So the student is nervous only about his/her success in the examination and the teacher's sole problem is to see that the pass percentage does not go down. People care more for diplomas than for knowledge. It is not learning that we want, but the prize that learning brings - wealth, prestige, status, and so on.

Generally, the students in the government schools are assessed in all the states in Indonesia by means of a single examination conducted towards the end of the year. In this system students usually work hard for a few days just before the examination and get through the examination. But, such last minute preparation does not help in the case of language. Language needs constant practice over an extended period and this can be ensured only if examinations are held at frequent intervals. The present system of relying solely on an all - important annual examination therefore does not serve the purpose. Moreover the question papers are set in such a way where all the questions can be answered with the help of guides available in the market. For such an examination, students require no thinking, no originality, no imagination and no skill,

though the vital aspect of language learning is integrated skill. Nevertheless, the situation in English medium schools are little better. And, there are institutes which follow TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages). The goal of this experimental text is to introduce the students (and lay men and women who would like to help those who do not know English) to some basic ideas, methods, and tools of teaching English as a second or foreign language. TESOL includes TESL and TEFL. TEFL- Teaching English as a foreign language, that is teaching in a country where English is a foreign language. For example: Indonesia, China, Mexico, and Korea).

As mentioned before, the most interesting feature in a multilingual setting like Indonesian is that irrespective of the language, the people are conversing in, the discourse markers 'ok', 'oh', 'well', 'and', 'but', 'or', 'so', 'like', 'because', 'now', 'then', 'I mean', 'you know', 'uh', 'anyway', 'yet' are seen to be used. The discourse markers do help a student in forming better structures in English as discourse markers or linking words indicate how one piece of discourse is connected to another piece of discourse. The discourse markers help to develop ideas and to relate them to one another. They show the connection between what has already been written or said and what is going to be written or said. Some are very informal and characteristic of spoken language. Others are quite formal and characteristic of written language. There are some discourse markers which help in presenting complicated information in writing.

### Methodology

An inductive method of research based on a sample survey was used for the present

study. The collection of data was done in the following sequence:

- a. Existing literature related to 'Discourse Markers' were collected and read.
- b. After the above analysis was done, first, a questionnaire containing both subjective as well as objective questions, was prepared.

This questionnaire was taken to the field and the subjects (students) were asked to fill it up. Second, a cloze test was prepared, where in a portion of a text with the discourse markers removed, was given to the students (subjects). The students were asked to replace the missing words with appropriate discourse markers. Third, the students of junior high schools were asked to write a letter, story and an essay. Taking their (the subjects) letter, story and essay as a specimen, the frequency of their usage of 'Discourse Markers' was analyzed. The subjects were selected by simple random sampling.

- c. After the data was elicited and collected, it was categorized and tabulated. This tabulated data formed the basis of the final analysis.

### Data Analysis

The sample of this small study was the students of second grade of junior high schools of Bina Bangsa School. There were 3 classes as the population and sample, the writer randomly took the participants being interviewed and asked filling the questionnaire. There was a teacher became a participant being as well as interviewed and asked filling the survey. Form the surveys distributed, there are about 60 participants who gave it back to the researcher. After the analysis, it was seen that the most frequently used and popular discourse markers among the subjects are- *and, but, so, therefore, however, whereas, then, like, anyway, because* (both in oral and written texts). Again, the subjects often used the discourse markers *consequently, as a result, in*

*addition, nevertheless, moreover, furthermore, nonetheless, regarding* more in their written texts and less in their oral texts.

### Findings

The subjects used these discourse markers sentence initially, (other than one-two exceptions, it was seen in all the scripts of students). A large chunk of the subjects in the written texts used the discourse marker '*and*' to coordinate idea units and to continue the speaker's action. The discourse markers *however, nevertheless, nonetheless* were used by the subjects to emphasize contrast. The subjects used '*therefore, as a result, consequently*' for the same purpose, to show that the second statement follows logically from the first statement. But the frequency in the use of the discourse marker '*therefore*' was much higher than the discourse marker '*as a result, consequently.*' Technically, '*whereas*' give expression to two ideas which contrast but do not contradict each other. But after the analysis, it is seen that the discourse marker '*whereas*' is used by the subjects to both contrast and contradict two ideas. The subjects used '*anyway*' for dismissal of previous discourse or idea unit. The subjects used '*furthermore, moreover*' to add more information. They also used the discourse marker '*in addition*' in the same line but it was used for more formal purpose in their texts.

Other than these discourse markers, the subjects are seen to have used some discourse markers occasionally. Those discourse markers are as follows – The subjects used '*at the same time, on the other hand, conversely*' to balance contrasting points. The subjects used '*At least, in any case*' to dismiss the previous discourse or sentence unit. The subjects used '*similarly, in the same way*' to show similarity, comparison between idea units. The subjects used '*after all*' for persuading. The subjects used '*I mean, actually*' to clarify or give detail of an idea unit. The subjects used

'*basically, generally*' to summarize a discourse unit. 'Yet' is seen to be used by the subjects to emphasize a contrast. The subjects used '*by the way, incidentally*' for change of subject. The subjects used '*lastly, finally*' when they were talking about the end.

### Conclusion

On the basis of the present study it was found that the most frequently used and popular discourse markers among the subjects are - *but, so, and, therefore, however, then, anyway, whereas*. Again, in the written texts, the subjects have often used the discourse markers namely *consequently, as a result, in addition, nevertheless, moreover, furthermore, regarding*. The study reveals that the Discourse markers in English do serve as connectors and aid successful communication in the mother tongue and other languages of the student. Skutnabb Kangas (2000) says that English is a killer language in Indonesia. But it is seen that English is not usually the direct cause of language death in Indonesia. Rather, it is seen to be a driving force in the globalization of the economy, which forces people to switch to English as a means to improve their social mobility. Today, be it education, business or administration, English plays a very important role. It is the medium of instruction for higher education-both academic and technological. Proficiency in English is mandatory for jobs in private companies. Today, the reality is such that it is difficult to think of success in any career in India without adequate proficiency in English.

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