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Analytical Study on the Relationship between Discourse Markers and Speaking Fluency of Iranian EFL Students

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Abstract

Emphasis on importance of fluency was originated in 1970, a period that was called communicative movement. So, what really affect EFL learners' oral fluency? And to what extent do discourse markers play the role in this case? In this study, two groups of EFL students were selected and in the first group; types of discourse markers were presented in five sessions through a month. Five conversation texts were administered in both groups and they were asked to prepare for retelling these conversations by own wording on the next session for the next week. After recording, we counted and recorded the number of discourse markers and speech disfluencies used by speakers of each group for retelling the same conversation text. They were codified and appropriate statistical methods were used to test the hypotheses of the study. Results indicated that applying discourse markers intrinsically takes more time and whereas our definition about the fluency is based on the amount of timerequired to deliver one correct information unit, applying discourse markers cannot be effective.

Keywords: Discourse; Discourse Markers; Fluency; Formulaic Sequence; Speech Disfluency

1. Introduction

Many language learners indicate that they are interested in developing speaking ability and to speak fluently as much as a native speaker. In fact, we live at a time where the ability to speak an L2 fluently has become a must, especially for those who want to advance in certain fields of education and business.

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On the other hand from the teachers view, speaking fluently is one of the targets which they are willing to achieve with their student at any stage of their studies, using various approaches, techniques and activities to have more students successful and fluent in using English. This paper is intended to highlight the importance of discourse markers instruction for second language speakers' fluency.

So, as the time was ticking away, various types of teaching methodologies and communicating strategies were introduced to the world of foreign language teaching. But still many students were not able to speak fluently. Again many language teachers and researchers have focused on linguistic features which play great roles on fluency, like discourse markers, formulaic sequence and so on.

Regarding the above statements about the role of discourse markers, second language learners usually face problems when they want to apply them in L2. Only few people are able to use discourse markers and speak fluently. Beside the lack of word knowledge, stress and other factors, some of the problems originate from insufficient information about discourse markers. Even many learners at the advanced level may not be able to find them or spend a long time while they are speaking. Therefore, their speaking does not indicate their linguistic ability.

2. Review of Literature

DM use manifests one of the important dimensions of natural spoken discourse. Discourse analysts and language teachers can barely afford to ignore its significance in spoken language.

So during the past couple of decades, the study of DMs has turned into a growth industry in linguistics, with dozens of articles appearing yearly and during this time many approaches to this notion have been developed. As B. Fraser (1999) explained, the term has different meanings for different groups of researchers, and also the studies on DMs are done under a variety of labels.

An early reference for DMs as a linguistic entity was made by Labov and Fanshel (1977: 156) in discussing a question by Rhoda that began with well.

They wrote:

"As a discourse marker, well refers backwards to some topic that is already shared knowledge among participants. When well is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern."

Schiffrin (1987), the first scholar to bring up the importance of DMs, gives the operational definition of discourse markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk", units that include such entities as sentences, propositions, speech acts, and tone units, and the exact nature of which she deliberately leaves vague. She labels them 'discourse markers' and suggests that, conversely, discourse markers themselves may define "some yet undiscovered units of talk".

Schiffrin also "defines discourse markers at a more theoretical level as members of a functional class of verbal and nonverbal devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk. She explains that they include a broad class of discourse markers conjunctions (e.g. and, but, or), interjections (oh, uh, um, huh), adverbs (now, then), and lexicalized phrases (you know, I mean).She also suggests that DMs do not easily fit into a linguistic class and explains that paralinguistic features and non-verbal gestures are possible DMs.

Brown & Yule, (1989)" Discourse markers are "metalingual comments" in which the speaker specifically comments on how what he is saying is to be taken. It is clear that the thematized metalingual comments are not integrated with the representation of content which the recipients are constructing. They merely give them directions about the type and structure of mental representation they should be constructing."

Bright, (1992)"DM, or vocal hiccups such as um, uh, like and you know are defined as a set of linguistic items functioning in the cognitive, social, expressive, and textual domains ."

Fraser (1993) believes that discourse markers are one type of commentary pragmatic marker.

He divides discourse markers into discourse topic markers, discourse activity markers, and message relationship markers. Each type has a list of markers.

Fraser, (1998) defines "a discourse marker is a lexical expression which signals the relation of either contrast (John is fat but Marry is thin), implication (John is here, so we can start the party), or elaboration (John went home).

Fraser (1999) describes discourse markers as "a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from a class of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositional phrases and with certain exceptions they signal a relationship between the interpretations of the segment they introduce S1 and the prior segment S2."

On the other hand, emphasis on importance of fluency (the ability that learners use the language that they have learnt, freely even when they make mistakes) was originated in 1970, a period which was called communicative movement. At that time the goal of foreign language teaching was the ability to communicate meaning rather than structure and learners had to use language in real life situation to access certain level of fluency.

Hartmann & Stork (1976) suggest that "a person is said to be a fluent speaker of a language when he can use its structures accurately whilst concentrating on content rather than form, using the units and patterns automatically at normal conversational speed when they are needed."

Fillmore (1979, p. 93) identifies four abilities that might be subsumed under the term fluency, the first of which is the ability to talk at length with few pauses. The three other abilities include the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned, and "semantically dense sentences", the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, and finally the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use.

Brumfit (1984) feels that fluency is "to be regarded as natural language use. "Richard et al. (1985) maintain that fluency is "the features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions." Considering native speakers' oral production.

According to Wood (2001), empirical research lends much support to the idea that speech rate is a sound indicator of fluency.

Brown (2003), suggest that communicative language strategies can help learners communicate fluently with whatever proficiency they happen to have and at any given time, including the ability to use speed, pauses, and hesitations efficiently.

So the focus was on two dimensions of fluency, the amount of time required to deliver one Correct Information Unit, a measure that excludes material that is unintelligible, ungrammatical or not appropriate to the communication task, and pause duration, periods of silence during continuous speech.

In this case, Bussman (1984) contends the use of discourse markers helps speakers develop language skills, feel more comfortable about their conversational skills, and allows speakers to collect their thoughts before officially speaking. Markers (e.g., um, like, uh, you know, well, by the way) aid communicators in linguistic or conversational consistency and coherence. In fact, discourse markers can replace with the pauses of the conversation and replete them.

Sidner (1985) states that discourse markers are necessary for recognizing the relations between the intended acts and the overall plans of the speaker.

Several studies have discussed the positive effects of the presence of discourse markers in texts (Chaudron& Richards, 1986; Flowerdew&Tauroza, 1995; Williams, 1992). The presence of more global discourse makers and phrases which signal a change in topic or point of emphasis appears to aid recall in lectures (MacDonald et al. 2000). Flowerdew and Tauroza (1995) found that the presence or absence of lower level discourse markers, "words that speakers use to mark relationships between chunks of discourse such as *so, well, OK,* and *now"* aids comprehension. (p.449)

Schiffrin's *Discourse Markers* formalized the study of discourse markers. By observing various types of conversation, or discourse, Schiffrin (1987) identified how certain terms and/or phrases indicate understanding or coherence in conversation. Schiffrin concluded each single marker in the communal lexicon has various functions, depending upon the situation of the speaker. She also provides an operational definition of discourse markers, giving evidence that discourse markers have functions such as aiding coherence and cohesion in text.

Chaudron and Richards (1986) found that macro-markers help more than micro-and macro-markers together and more than micro-markers alone in second language learners' understanding and recall of lectures.

Inspired by Chaudron and Richards' (1986) research, Perez and Macia (2002) conducted an exploratory study to find out to what extent the presence or absence of discourse markers effect comprehension as perceived and reflected upon by students and to see if students notice the presence or absence of discourse markers in a lecture. The results suggest that the students' level of language proficiency in English and different types of discourse markers present in lectures is two intervening factors that influence the level of listening comprehension.

According to Tam (1997), the speech of fluent speakers is often filled with reduced forms such as contraction, elision, assimilation, and reduction. These forms usually have a positive influence on speeding up one's rate of speech because they often lead to: 1. Disappearance of word boundaries, 2. Omission of end vowels and consonants, and 3. Substitutions of elements within words. Fluent speakers also produce sentences that appear in elliptical forms. As such, when the context is obvious, subjects, articles, verbs, pronouns, etc., are frequently deleted.

Fox Tree and Schrock (1999) propose that the presence of DMs such as well and I mean is one of the most salient features of spontaneous talk.

Kent Lee (2009), explained the skilful use of discourse markers often indicates a higher level of fluency in both spoken and written English.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Forty students on Second semester in listening speaking class are chosen randomly as the participants of this study. They study English Language Teaching in Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch. They have studied English for more than1 year and have all covered the same course books in the same listening speaking class.

A Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was administered to set the initial English proficiency level.

So, the initial number of the participants was reduced to 36; 4 of the participants were excluded since their proficiency level did not correspond to that of the other participants. Therefore, the final number of participants who actively participated in this study was 36.

They were divided into 2 groups: Each group includes 3 males and 15 females, ranging in age from 20 to 24. For the first group, definition and the types of discourse markers have been taught with emphases on their position and also practice during various exercises. Infact they learned that discourse markers are those expressions that perform different purposes in discourse. Sometimes they play the role of connectors and sometimes take the role of modifiers. Also they may appear at any position in a sentence: at initial, in the middle or at the final position.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1 Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)

As the first step, a Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was administered to the students to specify their level of proficiency. The MTELP used in the present study is a 100-item multiple choice test consisting of three parts. It includes forty grammar items, forty vocabulary items requiring the completion of a sentence or the selection of synonyms or antonyms, and four reading passages each followed by five reading comprehension questions (See Appendix A).

3.2.2Conversation Text

Five Conversation texts for the High Beginner level were selected from a web site. This web site is for people studying English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In fact it has interesting things for ESL students and they can practice listening to naturally-spoken English Audio with Transcriptions. Each text is a conversation between two students from different countries with different topics such as answering to some questions about Apple, about kids and technology today, or talks about what kinds of music they like to listen to or their jobs and their routine during a typical evening.

Also, Unscripted, Natural-sounding Reductions, Natural Hesitations and DM are the cases which have been considered in these conversations.

3.2.3 Voice Recorder

Three voice recorders and a PC were used to record the students while retelling the conversation and to analysis data.

3.3. Procedures

First of all a Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency was administered to make sure that all students are at the same level of proficiency. Then the students of the first group were given explicit instructions about discourse markers in an attempt to raise their awareness as to the importance of discourse markers. The instruction consisted of five class periods during which the students compared narratives with and without DM markers. After special treatment about the discourse markers in the first group, the same conversation texts are administered in both groups and they are asked to prepare for retelling these conversations by their own wording in the next session of the next week. The students were notified before giving their speech production task that they were being recorded for this study. Specific information about discourse markers was not provided before the round. The information was not provided so students would not consciously or unconsciously alter their linguistic habits and language. Moreover, the students were not informed about the specific details of the study, so the student's performance would not be hindered. No student names are on the recorded files and CDs, only tournament dates, and events.

3.4. Data Analysis

After recording, only those parts that are contextually meaningful to the field of study were selected randomly from the whole data as the sample of our study. Then the number of discourse markers and pauses used by speakers of each group for retelling the same conversation text were counted and recorded. As the next step, discourse markers and pauses were codified and appropriate statistical procedures ways were used to test the hypotheses of the study.

4. Results

In order to discern the characteristic features of the discourse markers in question, the empirical data, taken from actually recorded, spontaneous discourses have been analyzed.

The subjects were instructed to do certain tasks, but were not instructed as to what expressions to use to retell the conversation. So, thirty six conversations were analyzed, the total recording time of which is approximately three thousand two hundred forty seconds. The recordings were done in two-track mode so that the utterances of one speaker can be clearly distinguished from those of the other. Then each token utterance was collected,discourse markers and pauses and also the time of them were calculated and was shown on the table.

An analysis was made by observing the number and time of each discourse marker in the token utterance. So there was a particular attention to the pitch pattern of the token, as well as to which function each utterance of a token conveyed.

4.1. A comparison of the Obtained Results of Two Groups for each Conversation Text

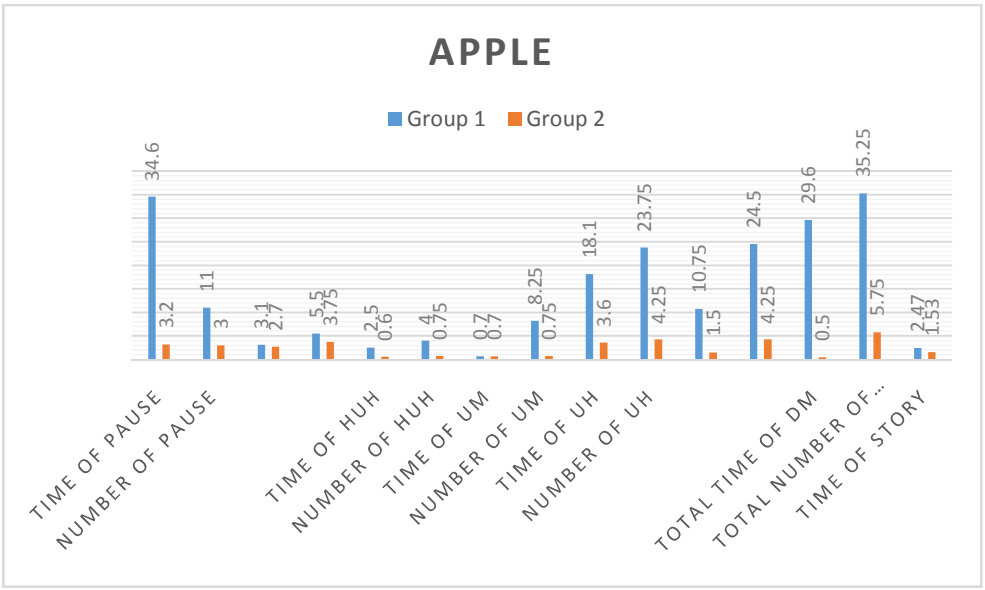
Now based on the analysis and transition of data obtained from each student of two groups, a comparison is made for each conversation text in two groups in the following tables and graphs.

Infact it showsif there is any relationship between presence of discourse markers and absence of discourse markers and its impact on the speaking fluency of EFL, firstly the mean time of telling the same story in both groups were compared, respectively, Text 1 of the first Group ("conversation about Apple 01" text for trained learners) and Text 1 of the second group ("conversation about Apple 001" text of untrained learner). Then the mean of total number and time of discourse markers was calculated, the mean of the number of long and short discourse markers, mean of number and time of the most frequent discourse markers of conversation (uh, um, huh), mean of number and time of the original DM of the text and finally the mean of number and time of the pauses of each text.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Apple Conversation

Apple	Total Time of Pause	Number of Pause	Total Time of original Text Used	Total Used	Time of Huh	Number of Huh	Time of um	Number of um	Time of Uh	Number of Uh	Number of Short DM	Number of long DM	Total Time of DM	Total number of DM	Total Time of story
1	0:32	10	0:07	7	0:05	10	00:08.5	11	0:16	27	13	32	00:38.5	45	2:41
2	0:54	12	0:02	2	0:02	2	0:10	11	00:08.5	10	5	18	00:19.5	23	2:42
3	00:46.5	13	00:03.5	4	0:00	0	0:08	9	00:13.5	17	9	17	00:21.5	26	2:53
4	0:06	9	0:00	9	0:03	4	00.01.5	2	00:34.5	41	16	31	0:39	47	2:54
M01	00:34.6	11	00:03.1	5.5	00:02.5	4	0:07	8.25	00:18.1	23.75	10.75	24.5	00:29.6	35.25	02:47.5
1	0:04	3	0:03	7	0:00	0	0:01	1	0:07	7	0	8	0:08	8	1:58
2	0:04	4	0:02	2	0:00	0	0:02	2	0:02	2	0	4	0:04	4	2:26
3	0:01	1	0:02	2	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:01	1	0	1	0:01	1	2:02
4	0:04	4	0:04	4	00:02.5	3	0:00	0	00:04.5	7	6	4	0:07	10	1:06
M02	00:03.2	3	00:02.7	3.75	00:00.6	0.75	00:00.7	0.75	00:03.6	4.25	1.5	4.25	0:05	5.75	1:53

Table No 1 shows a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the apple conversation text. Whereas the mean time for retelling the apple conversation text in the trained group was 2 minutes and 47.5 seconds, the untrained students retold it in only 1 minute and 53 seconds. In this case, the mean of total time of pauses in trained group was 34.5 seconds with 11 times repetition in comparison to the untrained with 3.2 seconds and 3 times. The first group used 5.5 original text's discourse markers in 3.1 seconds and second group 3.75 in 2.7 seconds. The mean time and number of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group were respectively 2.5 seconds with 4 times, 7 second with 8.25 times and 18.1 seconds in 23.75 times while in untrained group it was 0.6 seconds with 0.75 times, 0.7 seconds with 0.75 times and 3.6 seconds in 4.25 times. In other words, the first group had used 24.5 long DM and 10.75 short DM and second group 4.25 long DM and 1.5 short DM. Totally, the trained group used 35.25 discourse markers in 29.6 seconds, while untrained had used 5.75 discourse markers in 5 second.



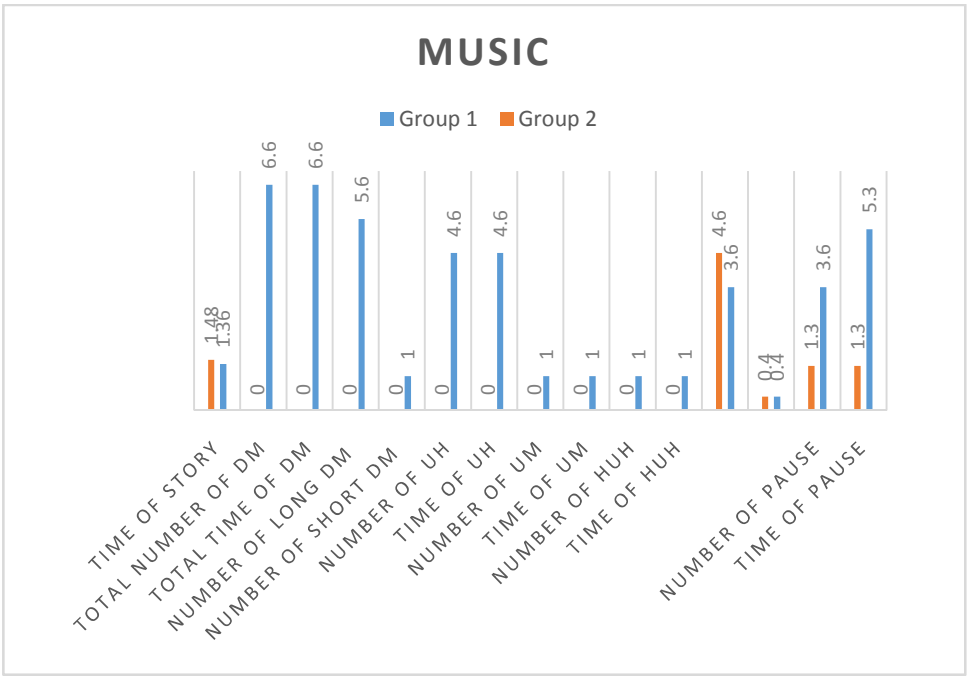
Graph 1. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Apple Conversation

Graph No 1 depicts a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the apple conversation text. It shows the mean time for retelling the apple conversation text in the trained group is nearly twice the untrained students. Infact, it expresses that the total time and number of pauses in the trained group was much more than the untrained and there is a high growth in the mean time and number of discourse markers of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group. In other words, it shows an increase in the applying long DM and short DM and Totally discourse markers in the first group and after training.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Music Conversation

Music	Total Time of Pause	Number of Pause	Total Time of original Text Used	Total Used	Time of Huh	Number of Huh	Time of um	Number of um	Time of Uh	Number of Uh	Number of Short DM	Number of long DM	Total Time of DM	Total DM	Total Time of story
1	0:06	6	0:06	6	0:03	3	0:02	2	0:00	0	1	4	0:05	5	1:50
2	0:09	2	0:01	1	0:00	0	0:01	1	0:12	12	1	12	0:13	13	1:21
3	0:01	3	0:05	4	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:02	2	1	1	0:02	2	1:39
M01	00:05.3	3.6667	0:04	3.667	0:01	1	0:01	1	00:04.7	4.667	1	5.667	00:06.6	6.667	01.36.6
1	0:00	0	0:05	5	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:35
2	0:01	1	0:05	5	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:58
3	0:03	3	0:04	4	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:52
M02	00:01.3	1.3333	00:04.6	4.667	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	01:48.3

Table No 2 shows a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the Music conversation text. Whereas the mean time for retelling the music conversation text in the trained group was 1 minute and 36.6 seconds, the untrained students retold it in 1 minute and 48.3 seconds. In this case, the mean of total time of pauses in trained group was 5.3 seconds with 3.66 times repetition in comparison to the untrained with 1.3 seconds and 1.33 times. The first group used 3.667 original text's discourse markers in 0.4 seconds and second group 4.667 in 4.6 seconds. The mean time and number of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group were respectively 1 seconds with 1 times, 1 second with 1 times and 4.7 seconds in 4.66 times while in untrained group it was 0 seconds with 0 times, 0 seconds with 0 times and 0 seconds in 0 times. In other words, the first group had used 5.667 long DM and 1 short DM and the second group had used no long and short DM at all. Totally, the trained group used 6.667 discourse markers in 6.66 seconds, while untrained had used no discourse markers in this conversation text.



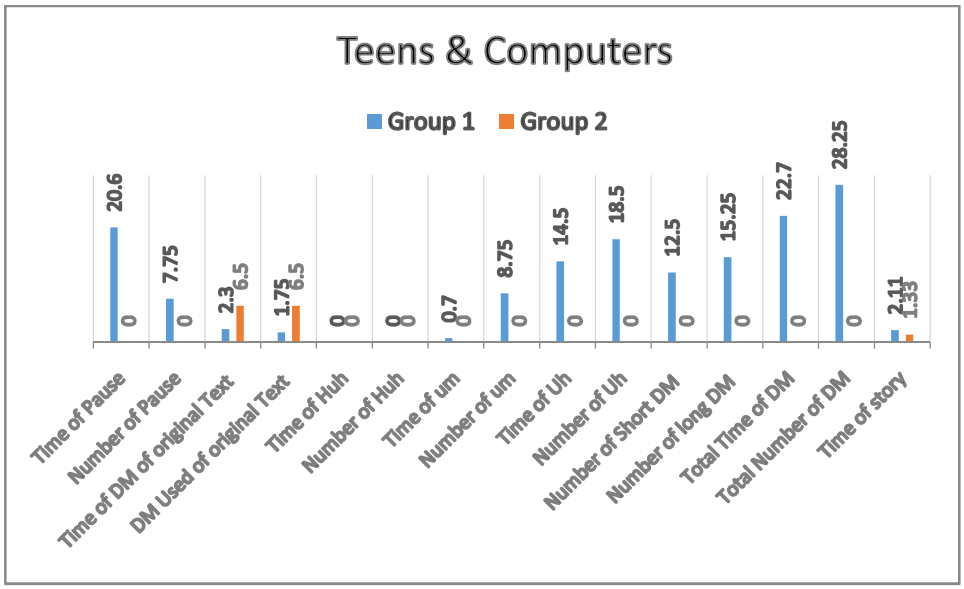
Graph 2. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Music Conversation

Graph No 2 depicts a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the music conversation text. It shows that the mean time for retelling the music conversation text in both groups are approximately as the same. In fact, whereas there were a touchable difference in the mean time and the number of pauses among two groups and also even when there was no discourse markers applying in the untrained group, there were no tangible differences in the time of retelling a story in both groups.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Teens and Computers Conversation

Teens and Computers	Total Time of Pause	Number of Pause	Total Time of original Text Used	Total Used	Time of Huh	Number of Huh	Time of um	Number of um	Time of Uh	Number of Uh	Number of Short DM	Number of long DM	Total Time of DM	Total DM	Total Time of story
1	00:46.5	13	00:03.5	4	0:00	0	0:08	9	00:13.5	17	9	17	00:21.5	26	2:53
2	0:14	9	0:02	1	0:00	0	00:09.5	12	00:24.5	32	20	24	0:34	46	1:55
3	0:22	9	0:02	0	0:00	0	0:10	12	00:10.5	14	16	12	0:25	28	2:21
4	0:00	0	0:02	2	0:00	0	0:01	2	00:09.5	11	5	8	00:10.5	13	1:34
M01	00:20.6	7.75	00:02.3	1.75	0:00	0	0:07	8.75	00:14.5	18.5	12.5	15.25	00:22.7	28.25	2:10
1	0:00	0	0:09	9	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:36
2	0:00	0	0:06	6	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:24
3	0:00	0	0:05	5	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:37
4	0:00	0	0:06	6	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:36
M02	0:00	0	00:06.5	6.5	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	01:33.2

Table No 3 shows a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the Teens and Computers conversation text. Whereas the mean time for retelling the Teens and Computers conversation text in the trained group was 2 minutes and 10 seconds, the untrained students retold it in only 1 minute and 33.2 seconds. In this case, the mean of total time of pauses in trained group was 20.6 seconds with 7.75 times repetition in comparison to the untrained with no pauses. The first group used 1.75 original text's discourse markers in 2.3 seconds and second group 6.5 in 6.5 seconds. The mean time and number of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group were respectively 0 seconds with 0 times, 7 second with 8.75 times 14.5 seconds in 18.5 times while in untrained group it was 0 seconds with 0 times, 0 seconds with 0 times and 0 seconds in 0 times. In other words, the first group had used 15.25 long DM and 12.5 short DM and the second group had used no long and short DM at all. Totally, the trained group used 28.25 discourse markers in 22.7 seconds, while untrained had used no discourse markers in this conversation text.



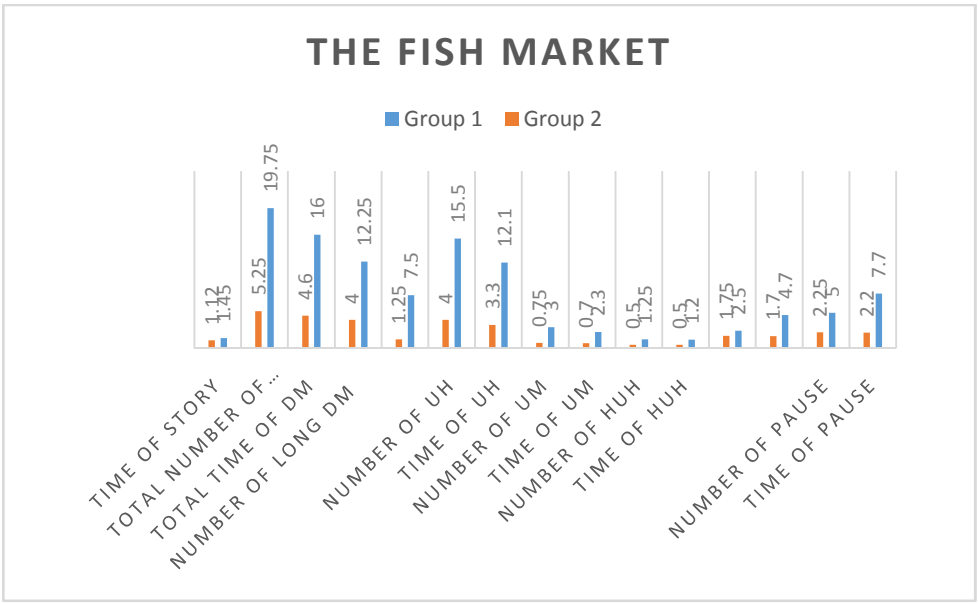
Graph 3. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Teens and Computers Conversation

Graph No 3 depicts a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the Teens and Computers conversation text. It shows that the mean time for retelling the Teens and Computers conversation text in the trained group is nearly one and half times greater than the untrained students. In fact, when there were no pauses and discourse marker's use in the untrained group, the time of retelling the story in the second group was lower than the trained group with discourse marker's use.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in The Fish Market Conversation

The Fish Market	Total Time of Pause	Number of Pause	Total Time of original Text Used	Total Used	Time of Huh	Number of Huh	Time of um	Number of um	Time of Uh	Number of Uh	Number of Short DM	Number of long DM	Total Time of DM	Total DM	Total Time of story
1	0:14	8	0:02	2	0:00	0	00:03.5	4	0:10	12	3	13	0:14	16	1:32
2	0:07	5	0:02	2	0:04	4	00:01.5	2	00:24.5	31	14	23	0:30	37	2:00
3	0:07	4	00:02.5	3	0:00	0	00:01.5	2	0:07	10	7	5	00:08.5	12	1:42
4	0:03	3	00:12.5	3	0:01	1	0:03	4	0:07	9	6	8	00:11.5	14	1:47
M 01	00:07.7	5	00:04.7	2.5	00:01.2	1.25	00:02.3	3	00:12.1	15.5	7.5	12.25	0:16	19.75	1:45
1	0:02	2	0:02	2	0:02	2	0:00	0	0:01	1	0	3	0:03	3	1:05
2	0:00	0	0:04	4	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0	0	0:00	0	1:41
3	0:02	2	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:03	3	0:09	11	4	10	0:12	14	0:53
4	0:05	5	0:01	1	0:00	0	0:00	0	00:03.5	4	1	3	00:03.5	4	1:12
M 02	00:02.2	2.25	00:01.7	1.75	00:00.5	0.5	00:00.7	0.75	00:03.3	4	1.25	4	00:04.6	5.25	1:12

Table No 4 shows a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the fish market conversation text. Whereas the mean time for retelling the fish market conversation text in the trained group was 1 minute and 45 seconds, the untrained students retold it in 1 minute and 12 seconds. In this case, the mean of total time of pauses in trained group was 7.7 seconds with 5 times repetition in comparison to the untrained with 2.2 seconds and 2.25 times. The first group used 2.5 original text's discourse markers in 4.7 seconds and second group 1.75 in 1.7 seconds. The mean time and number of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group were respectively 1.2 seconds with 1.25 times, 2.3 second with 3 times and 12.1 seconds in 15.5 times while in untrained group it was 0.5 seconds with 0.5 times, 0.7 seconds with 0.75 times and 3.3 seconds in 4 times. In other words, the first group had used 12.25 long DM and 7.5 short DM and second group 4 long DM and 1.25 short DM. Totally, the trained group used 19.75 discourse markers in 16 seconds, while untrained had used 5.25 discourse markers in 4.6 second.



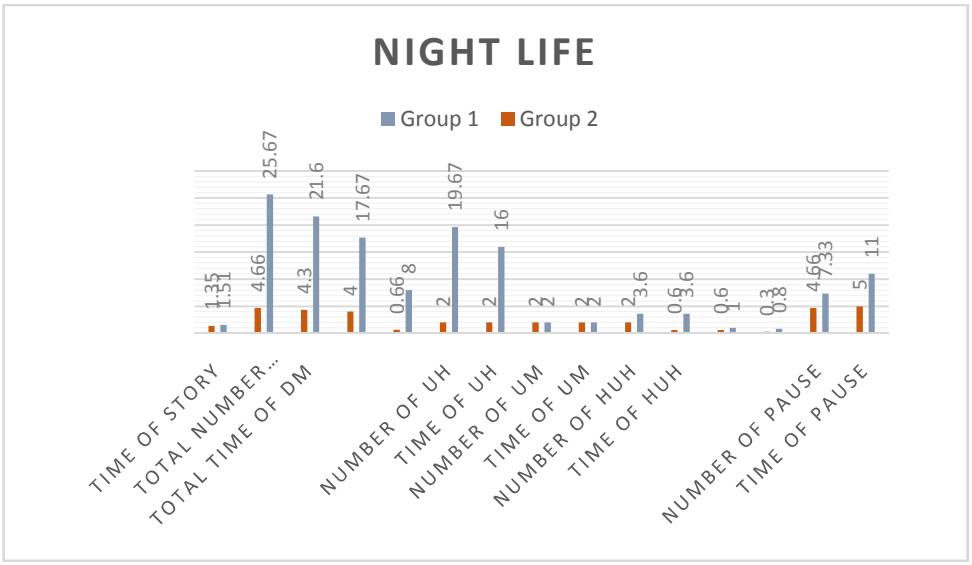
Graph 4. Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in The Fish Market Conversation

Graph No 4 depicts a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the fish market conversation text. It shows the mean time for retelling the apple conversation text in the trained group is nearly one and half times greater than the untrained students. Infact, it expresses that the total time and number of pauses in the trained group was much more than the untrained and there is a high growth in the mean time and number of discourse markers of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group. In other words, it shows an increase in the applying long DM and short DM and Totally discourse markers in the first group and after training.

Table 5.Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Night Life Conversation

Night Life	Total Time of Pause	Number of Pause	Total Time of original Text Used	Total Used	Time of Huh	Number of Huh	Time of um	Number of um	Time of Uh	Number of Uh	Number of Short DM	Number of long DM	Total Time of DM	Total DM	Total Time of story
1	0:18	12	0:01	1	0:00	0	0:03	3	00:05.5	6	1	8	00:08.5	9	1:47
2	0:05	2	00:01.5	2	0:02	2	0:02	2	0:08	9	4	10	0:12	14	1:37
3	0:10	8	0:00	0	0:09	9	0:01	1	00:34.5	44	19	35	00:44.5	54	2:07
M01	0:11	7.3333	00:00.8	1	00:03.6	3.667	0:02	2	0:16	19.67	8	17.67	00:21.6	25.67	1:50
1	0:09	8	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:01	1	0	1	0:01	1	1:39
2	0:05	5	0:00	0	0:00	0	0:01	1	0:00	0	0	1	0:01	1	1:37
3	0:01	1	0:01	1	0:02	2	0:05	5	0:05	5	2	10	0:11	12	1:29
M02	0:05	4.6667	00:00.3	0.333	00:00.6	0.667	0:02	2	0:02	2	0.6667	4	00:04.3	4.667	1:35

Table No 5 shows a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the Night Life conversation text. Whereas the mean time for retelling the Night Life conversation text in the trained group was 1 minute and 50 seconds, the untrained students retold it in only 1 minute and 35 seconds. In this case, the mean of total time of pauses in trained group was 11 seconds with 7.33 times repetition in comparison to the untrained with 5 seconds and 4.66 times. The first group used 1 original text's discourse markers in 0.8 seconds and second group 0.33 in 0.3 seconds. The mean time and number of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group were respectively 3.6 seconds with 3.66 times, 2 second with 2 times 16 seconds in 19.67 times while in untrained group it was 0.6 seconds with 0.66 times, 2 seconds with 2 times and 2 seconds in 2 times. In other words, the first group had used 17.67 long DM and 8 short DM and second group 4 long DM and 0.66 short DM. Totally, the trained group used 25.67 discourse markers in 21.6 seconds, while untrained had used 4.66 discourse markers in 4.3 second.



Graph 5.Descriptive Statistics Concerning the Comparison of Two Groups in Night Life Conversation

Graph No 5 depicts a comparison of the results of the analysis of data obtained from the two groups about the Night Life conversation text. It shows the mean time for retelling the Night Life conversation text in the trained group is nearly one and a quarter times greater than the untrained students. Infact, it expresses that the total time and number of pauses in the trained group was much more than the untrained and there is a high growth in the mean time and number of discourse markers of "huh", "um", "uh" in the trained group. In other words, it shows an increase in the applying long DM and short DM and Totally discourse markers in the first group and after training.

5. Conclusion

The present study is concerned with the impact of teaching discourse markers on the speaking fluency of Iranian EFL learners. The analysis of the related data resulted in significant findings and indicated that the students began to use the discourse markers much more frequently in the first group and after instruction than in the second group even though they were not always able to use them appropriately; sometimes students engaged in overuse of markers or inappropriate intonation.

Nevertheless, most students reported an increase in their awareness of discourse marker usage even though it may take more time for them to be able to use them in a fluent manner.

Infact the findings presented in this paper suggested that using DM can help students to connect sentences and establish the coherence of the text. It also provides opportunities for them to think about what they want to say and how to say and to avoid pauses. But using discourse markers, intrinsically takes more time to utter a sentence than the time of no DM use. So whereas our definition about the fluency is based on the amount of time required to deliver one correct information unit, applying DM cannot be effective. In other words, discourse markers cannot help to reduce time of speech. While from the discourse coherency's view, it can be claimed that DMs are one of the best elements' connectors. They do connect the segments in discourse, fill pauses in conversation, act as nervous glitches and let speakers feel more comfortable about their conversational skills allows them to collect their thoughts before speaking.

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