Original Paper

Using a Genre-Based Approach to Raise College Students' Awareness and Use of Discourse Markers to Improve Discourse Competence in Oral Communication

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Abstract

This study explored college students' knowledge of discourse markers (DMs hereinafter) and the development in raising their awareness of discourse competence by adopting a genre-based approach (GBA hereinafter) to eliminate students' inappropriate use of certain DMs. The participants were 28 freshman students with an English proficiency at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR hereinafter) B2 level. A pre- and post-test design was employed to measure students' use of DMs in speaking before and after the GBA intervention in written and spoken discourse. The results showed a statistically significant increase in the students' frequencies and varieties of DMs in the post-test. The study concluded that teaching DMs through GBA raised the students' metalinguistic awareness of using DMs in different genres and enhanced their ability to engage in coherent and cohesive discourse. The outcomes suggested that applying GBA to teach DMs helps students transfer receptive skills into productive skills used to express their thoughts orally.

Keywords

discourse markers, coherence, cohesion, genre-based approach, spoken discourse

1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives and Significance of the Study

In language learning, learners' receptive skills develop typically before their productive skills. Language learners may indeed understand a language in listening or reading tasks; however, they may have difficulty speaking or writing in the language they need to express their thoughts' complexity. Learning to speak a foreign language requires a certain knowledge base, such as "extralinguistic

knowledge, including topic and cultural knowledge, knowledge of the context, etc. and linguistic knowledge, referring to genre knowledge, discourse knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, grammar, vocabulary and phonology" (Thornby, 2005, p. 11). English is a compulsory subject in Taiwan's education system from Grade three in elementary school onward. English learning at the tertiary level is expected to encourage students to use English in actual communication, and specifically, to develop college students' ability to express, exchange, and present their thoughts more accurately and appropriately. In light of this, tertiary students should develop the ability to practice discourse competence to give a well-organized oral presentation (Januin & Stephen, 2015). Hence, it is necessary to identify various achievable strategies to help transfer their receptive skills into productive skills to allow them to express and exchange thoughts, or give a speech using the language.

To enhance students' oral communication in English, much exposure to knowledge of the discourse competence necessary to develop confidence and ability is required. Thus, this study was designed to use GBA to enhance college students' awareness and use of DMs to achieve greater discourse competence in English oral communication, as a problem observed frequently in the researcher's classroom is that students at the tertiary level, having been learning English for at least a decade in Taiwan's educational system, are still unable to use the English language effectively, in that they do not speak English in a way that demonstrates quality discourse competence for communicative purposes. Accordingly, this study addresses the following specific research questions:

1. To what extent do university students know about DMs before the teaching intervention?

2. To what extent can GBA serve as practical and effective guidance to develop competent English speakers by raising students' awareness of discourse competence through reading and listening in different genres to identify discourse markers?

3. To what extent can teaching DMs help enhance students' ability to structure and manage discourse with respect to coherence and cohesion?

4. What are the students' responses to teaching DMs through GBA and the transcription for reflective language learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Discourse Markers

DMs are words or phrases serving as textual units to establish meaningful connections between discourse components and coherence, which helps "define and characterize the nature of relationships between discourse components" (Das & Taboada, 2017, p. 744); hence, DMs help readers or listeners understand written or spoken discourse. There has been interest in research on DMs since the 1970s, and the study of such lexical units has expanded continuously throughout the 1980s and 1990s in pragmatics, discourse analysis research, and sociolinguistics, among others. This has contributed to different theoretical frameworks and approaches to these lexical units, which has resulted in various terms. Among the wide terminological array, including conjunctive expressions (Halliday & Hasan,

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1976), discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987), discourse operators (Redeker, 1990), and pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1996), the term accepted most widely is discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1996; Fraser, 1990). In this study, the term DMs was adopted to avoid the confusion attributable to the various terms. DMs create stronger coherence and cohesion in a text effectively because markers function on different planes of talk and provide clues to discourse contexts (Schiffrin, 1996). DMs are also essential features of spoken language for acting as signposts for speakers and listeners during their familiarization in the ongoing discourse (Aijmer, 2002; Schiffrin, 1987). Schiffrin (1987) pointed out that DMs contribute to increasing coherence in the discourse structure, context, meaning, and action if attention can be directed toward their function: Bridging the potential gaps during communication and helping the recipients make sense of the information received. Syntactically, removing a DM does not necessarily make its host sentence ungrammatical (Zwicky, 1985); however, when DMs are used to refer to conjunctions, connectives, and sentence adverbs, they are associated directly with host utterances or "stretches of discourse" (Fraser, 2006). This suggests the necessity of teaching DMs because of their strong relation to EFL learners' understanding of discourse, as comprehension may be more difficult without them (Aijmer, 2002). Accordingly, a discourse can be understood more completely when learners are taught to identify the elements contributing to conveying messages. Thus, DMs serve as essential guidelines that reveal how texts are produced, expressed, reformulated, distributed, and consumed in authentic contexts (Schiffrin, 1987) to establish linguistic and functional relations during the transitions between speech units. The skillful use of DMs demonstrates a learner's higher level of fluency and proficiency in producing and understanding authentic language. Because DMs serve to facilitate oral communication, "it is logical to suppose that the lack or inappropriate use of them in an L2, could, to a certain degree, hinder successful communication or lead to misunderstanding" (Mart ńez, 2006, p. 177).

Some studies on DMs have been conducted from the descriptive and contrastive perspectives to define their effects on reading (e.g., Bahrami, 1992; Innajih, 2007), listening (e.g., Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2007), and writing (e.g., Jalilifar, 2008; Norment, 1994; Steffensen & Cheng, 1996) in language learning. These studies' findings revealed DMs' positive effect on reading comprehension through explicit instruction, and on learners' better comprehension of the lecture. In addition to receptive skills, DMs have been applied in teaching writing, and have largely targeted their frequency (Norment, 1994; Steffensen & Cheng, 1996), DMs' direct and positive influence on the quality of the compositions (Jalilifar, 2008), analysis of the inappropriate use of DMs in students' writing (Feng, 2010), as well as an investigation of their necessary role whenever students are writing (Surjowati, 2018). DMs have been used in teaching students' classroom oral discourse (Rahimi, 2012; Jones & Carter, 2014; Shimada, 2014; Alraddadi, 2016; Campbell-Larsen, J., 2017). However, within the extensive literature on using DMs in listening, reading, and writing, few attempts have been made to address such cohesive devices in relation to language learners' proficiency in speaking skills. This gap in the literature encouraged the researcher to conduct a study to identify an effective model that incorporates teaching

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DMs into language learners' comprehension and production stage appropriately and effectively.

2.2 Genre-based Approach

The GBA Halliday developed in the 1980s is designed to expose and activate learners' language learning to identify the differences in different text types. This methodology can allow learners to develop their knowledge and learning strategies in productive skills, as well as use a variety of spoken and written texts to address spoken and written discourse in social contexts, leading to learners' communicative competence (Richards, 2006).

In literacy education, GBA places texts as the core of instruction and curricula (Johns, 2002) and is "the best-known approach to the analysis and teaching of professional and academic discourse" (Flowerdew, 2000, p. 369). In GBA, learning a language is also a meaning-making and social activity, and as Halliday (1993, p. 111) described, language learning is "learning to mean and to expand one's meaning potential." By adopting GBA, learners are also provided with explicit and systematic explanations of the way a language functions in specific social contexts (Hyland, 2003). Moreover, the focus in GBA is largely on entire texts, not isolated sentences. Based on Systematic functional linguistics (SFL)-GBA, any instance of social language use constitutes a text and all texts are models of specific genres in context (Christie, 1992); thus, its goal is to explain the way learners use language and language is structured for its different uses (Eggins, 1994). Furthermore, in GBA, teaching and learning occur when teachers' instructions are explicit, and necessary and timely intervention are readily provided during the learning process to scaffold students appropriately as they construct knowledge and skills of the explicit target items for learning. Additionally, the genre pedagogy in the SFL genre framework is presented systematically in a teaching and learning cycle (TLC), originally in three stages: Deconstruction; joint construction, and independent construction (Feez, 2002), to help learners connect texts, context, and lexicogrammatical features when using the language, which many studies have reported to be beneficial to explore the degree to which GBA allows learners to gain an awareness of genre and improve the quality in the way they use the language (Tsou & Lin, 2013).

With focuses on the relation between written texts and the contexts in which they are created, a fairly large body of literature on the SFL-GBA in EFL classrooms has been reported in teaching writing, in which most focus largely on students' changes in their awareness of the language's universal structure (Chen & Su, 2012; Feez, 2002) by applying GBA with the TLC (Tsou & Lin, 2013), or on improvements in both universal structure and lexico-grammatical features of specific genre essays (Tuan, 2011; Wang, 2013; Nagao, 2018; Rezvani & Saeidi , 2019). Students have predominantly recognized the necessity and usefulness of applying TLC in learning a specific genre (Tuan, 2011), and the genre-based methodology had significant effects on EFL learners' motivation to write (Rezvani & Saeidi, 2019).

As GBA is used primarily to teach and address writing, little empirical research has been conducted yet to determine whether GBA can contribute to learners' development of oral proficiency in language learning contexts in a similar way that it promotes writing and literacy. Therefore, this study applied

the definition of genre as different types of written texts to enhance learners' understanding of the relation between the social purpose in the texts and structure, which may heighten learners' awareness of DMs' nature, and GBA was used as a way to offer repeated exposure and practice of DMs.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were 35 first-year students at a university in southern Taiwan. In this mandatory general English course, the participants were required to take a placement test, the College Student English Proficiency Test (CSEPT) that The Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan developed, the test results of which are consistent with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The test results showed that the participants' English proficiency was at the CEFR B2 level. However, some of the participants did not meet the requirements for this study, so the final number of participants was 28.

3.2 Procedure and Data Collection

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. To ensure the research's validity, triangulation of data was conducted through three data collection techniques: Oral tests (pre- and post-test); a questionnaire survey, and interviews.

3.2.1 Pre-test

To gather information before the formal instruction, the participants were given a pre-test questionnaire containing seven questions. One was answered on a Likert scale to determine the frequency with which they spoke English in class when they were in senior high school, three yes-no questions were included about the students' experiences when they were evaluated in speaking English, and three open-ended questions evaluated their knowledge of the elements of oral assessment. Thereafter, in Week 3 (a week before the intervention), a speaking test was given as a pre-test to determine the students' use of DMs in speaking without any mention of the term DMs. A topic was given based on the theme of a unit in the assigned course textbooks, Q: Skills for Success Second Edition: Reading and Writing and Q: Skills for Success Second Edition: Listening and Speaking, and the students had ten minutes to prepare for a one-minute individual speech. The students' test scores in the pre-test were recorded and scored according to the global and analytic categories of speaking performance, including range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and coherence. Specifically, a classroom-friendly version of the IELTS speaking scoring rubric, Speaking Feedback Sheet (IELTS Academic, 2016) was adopted as the evaluation sheet for the students' pre- and post- tests and speaking practice in class to rate their fluency/coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range/accuracy, and pronunciation. Further, the speeches were recorded for the students to transcribe them for reflection and correction as a part of learning.
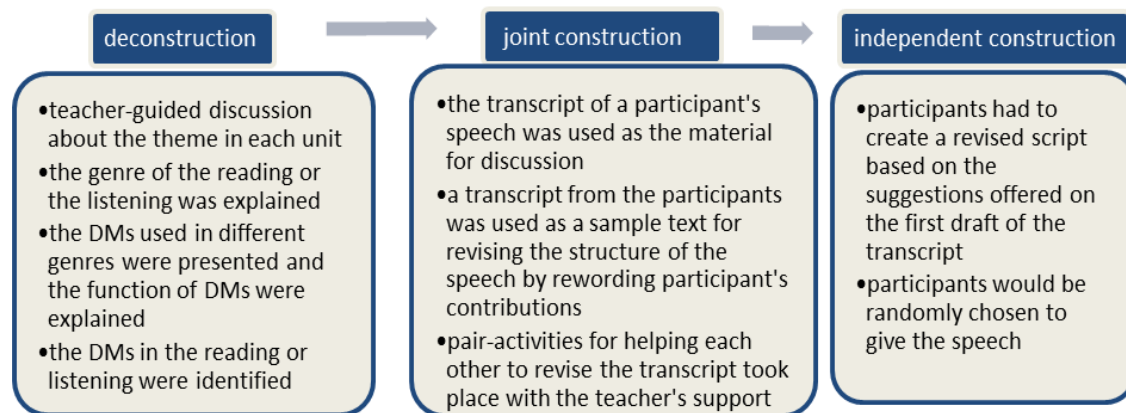
3.2.2 Teaching Intervention

The pedagogical treatment lasted for 13 weeks, including three cycles of in-class instruction and practice following Stringer's model of action research, the linear "look, think, act" routine, as shown in

Figure 1, which is ideal to explore details of the classroom activities during observation, reflection, and action.
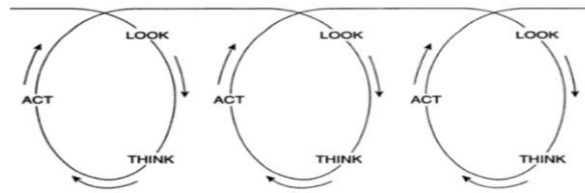
Figure 1. Action Research Interacting Spiral Source: Stringer (2007, p. 30)

The class was conducted twice a week, and the participants were required to go through basic stages of GBA: deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction, to set the context and develop field activities occurring throughout the three stages. Several activities in the three stages are presented briefly in Figure 2 in chronological order.

deconstruction	joint construction	independent construction
•teacher-guided discussion about the theme in each unit •the genre of the reading or the listening was explained •the DMs used in different genres were presented and the function of DMs were explained •the DMs in the reading or listening were identified	•the transcript of a participant's speech was used as the material for discussion •a transcript from the participants was used as a sample text for revising the structure of the speech by rewording participant's contributions •pair-activities for helping each other to revise the transcript took place with the teacher's support	•participants had to create a revised script based on the suggestions offered on the first draft of the transcript •participants would be randomly chosen to give the speech

Figure 2. Three-stage Practice in Class

According to Burns (2010), several kinds of activities must be included in GBA-based teaching: Preparation activities, discourse activities, language activities and interaction activities. Accordingly, before each unit was taught, the students were given ten minutes to prepare for a one-minute individual speech based on the main question, serving as preparation activities, to activate their background knowledge of different issues and genres. After the speech, comments based on a classroom-friendly version of the IELTS speaking scoring rubric, the Speaking Feedback Sheet (IELTS Academic, 2016), were given to each student to draw their attention to the use of DMs for coherence and cohesion.

Then, the students were provided with their recording of the one-minute speech for them to transcribe it to reflect upon the structure and genre in their speech.

Thereafter, deconstruction was initiated during several discourse activities when the teacher started to analyze the way a written or spoken text began, developed, and ended, and the way DMs were applied

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in the text, during which the participants learned some metalanguage that would pave the way for joint construction.

In the joint construction stage, the transcript of their own speeches served as materials for the researcher and students to collaborate on language activities providing practice in grammar and DMs. Meanwhile, interaction activities, such as the students' reading each other's transcripts and giving advice on grammar and the use of DMs, were offered for repeated opportunities to engage each other with the genre in an authentic discussion.

In the independent construction, the students revised their speeches and focus on organizing their thoughts by adding particular DMs necessary for better cohesion and coherence, and correct the mistakes in vocabulary or grammar suggested during the pair or group work on the transcriptions. Thereafter, some of the students were chosen randomly to give the revised speech.

3.2.3 Post-test

In the 17th week of the 18-week semester course, a post-test in the form of a one-minute personal speech was implemented to measure the intervention's effect upon the acquisition of DMs. The post-test included five topics based on the five main genres learned in class. Each student drew one of the topics and prepared for the speech within ten minutes, in which they were expected to demonstrate their use of DMs when giving opinions, offering explanations, demonstrating analysis, stating reasons, and providing results. The students' test scores in the post-test were recorded and scored with the same feedback sheet to rate their fluency/coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range/accuracy, and pronunciation. Further, the questionnaire and interviews were conducted to determine the students' understanding of the evaluation criteria of speaking skills, knowledge of DMs, and application in four skills in learning English before and after the teaching intervention, as well as their experience transcribing their own oral tests.

4. Findings

The data gathered from the pre- and post-tests were then subjected to statistical analysis. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranked Test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two test scores and compare the results of the students' use of DMs in the two with the goal to determine whether using GBA can serve to provide practical and effective guidance in developing competent English speakers by raising their awareness of discourse competence when reading different genres to identify DMs. Secondly, data analysis for the pre- and post-test questionnaire was conducted by computing descriptive statistics to determine the students' knowledge of DMs before and after the intervention. Thirdly, the data from the interviews with the students responding to the nine questions were transcribed and analyzed to identify their experience of learning the DMs in this class.

4.1 Results

RQ1: To what extent do the university students know about DMs before the teaching intervention?

To determine the students' understanding of the oral assessment, seven questions were asked. One was answered on a Likert Scale to determine the frequency of the students' experiences in speaking English in class in senior high school, three yes-no questions were used to determine the students' experiences in being evaluated when speaking English, and three open-ended questions assessed their knowledge of the oral assessment's elements.

First, the results indicated that 50% of the students had opportunities to speak English in class when they were in senior high school, while 35.7% of them seldom, and 14.3% of them never. Second, 53.6% of them had received feedback on their speaking skills, while 46.4% of them never had. Thirdly, the results showed that 35.7% of them knew the way speaking skills were evaluated, while 64.3% of them indicated that they lacked such understanding. Fourth, with respect to the percentage of the students who took an official oral proficiency test, 28.6% of them had taken such test, and 71.4% of them answered no for this experience.

To understand the students' knowledge of an oral proficiency test's criteria further, Questions 5, 6, and 7 were open-ended for them to offer their answers in words. The answers to each question are listed below. The students' knowledge of the elements assessed in an oral proficiency test is presented in Figure 3 showing that the students know the elements evaluated during an oral proficiency test, such as fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, etc. Among the four main elements, fluency was the answer provided the most, in which 13 of the 28 (46.4%) recognized the significance of fluency in a speaking test. Pronunciation, to which 12 (42.9%) referred, and was followed by grammar and vocabulary, mentioned by 9 (32.1%).
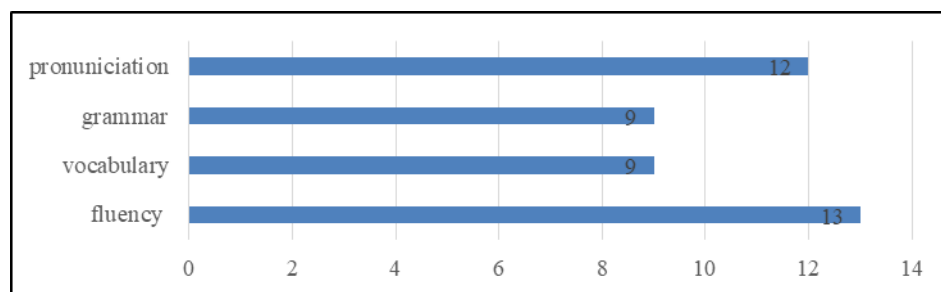
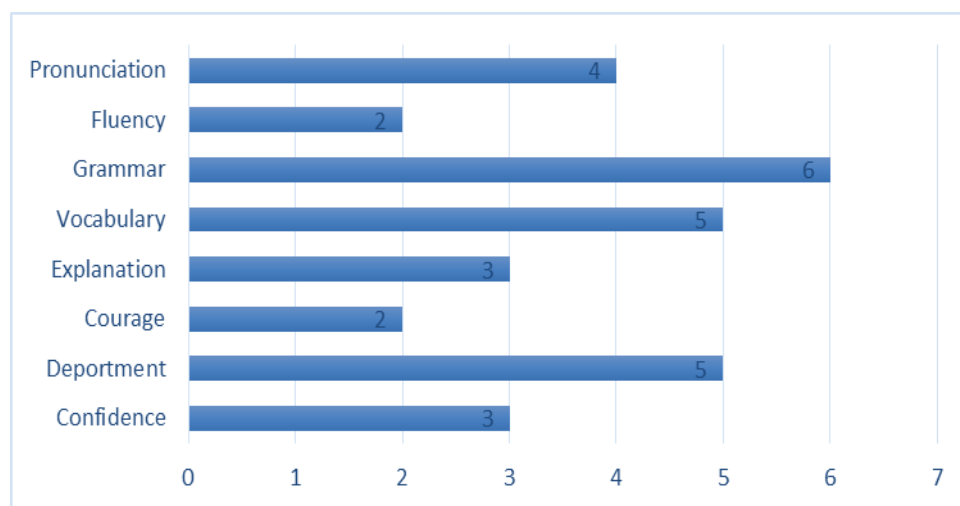**Figure 3. The Students' Knowledge of the Elements Assessed in the Oral Test**

The students' responses to the way they were informed about the elements in the oral assessment are presented in Figure 4, indicating that 9 (32.1%) learned the elements assessed in an oral test from teachers, 8 (28.6%) through their own experience, 14.3% from test-related information on the Internet, and 3 (10.7%) not having access to such information.

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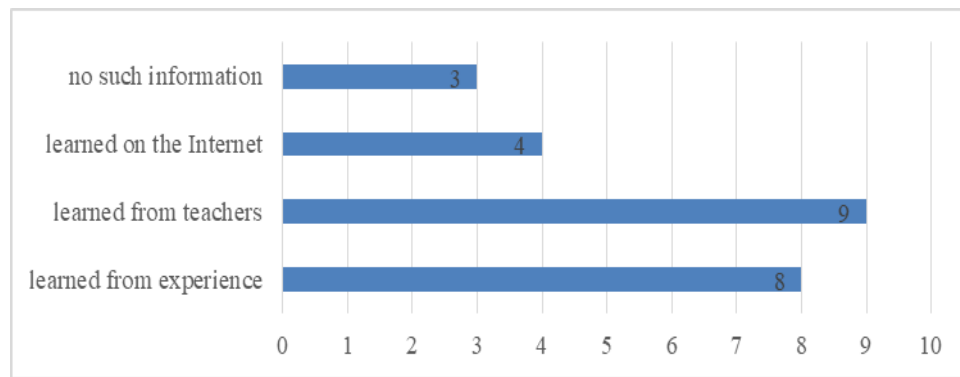
Figure 4. How the Students Were Informed about the Elements in an Oral Assessment

The students' responses with respect to their opinion of the most important competences in an oral proficiency test were calculated and are presented in Figure 5. This indicated that the competences for an oral test were as follows: 6 (21.4%) mentioned accuracy in grammar, 5 (17.9 %) vocabulary, 4 (14.3%) pronunciation, 2 (7.1%) fluency, and there were the remaining items that were not evaluated during an oral proficiency test.

Figure 5. The Students' Knowledge of the Most Important Competences in an Oral Test

RQ2: To what extent can GBA serve the function of providing practical and effective guidance in developing competent English speakers by raising students' awareness of discourse competence through reading and listening in different genres for discourse markers?

The students' performances were evaluated according to the criteria of the Speaking Feedback Sheet adapted from IELTS Academic (2016) comprised of four parts: Fluency and coherence; lexical resource; grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation.

Each student's total speaking score was calculated by summing the four aspects of speaking with three sub-aspects for each. The students were given scores ranging from 0 to 3 for each, as follows: 0= Not

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all; 1=A little; 2= Sometimes, 3= Always. Then the total score was divided by 4. Hence, if a student had a total score of 36 (12 for each aspect), his/her score for speaking was 9 (36 divided by 4).

The results of the pre-test shown in Table 1 indicated that the mean of the pre-test scores was 10.93. Compared to the total score for the four speaking criteria, 36, the mean of the pre-test scores showed that initially, the students had difficulty speaking English and had no good command of using DMs for cohesion and coherence in the speech.

The post-test was conducted to determine the students' speaking proficiency and their use of DMs after the teaching intervention. The results of the post-test indicated the mean score was 18.43 (see Appendix A). Compared to the total scores of the pre-test, 10.93, the mean post-test score showed that the students' speaking proficiency improved.

The result of the Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated a significant difference ($Z = -4.409$, $p = 0.000$) between the pre- and post-test scores. The median score for the post-test after the teaching intervention was 18 compared to 11 before the GBA.

The effect size was also calculated by dividing the absolute (positive) Standardized test statistic z by the square root of the number of pairs. $r = z (-4.409) / \sqrt{56} = 0.59$. The effect size, 0.59, was very large according to Cohen's classification of effect sizes, which is 0.1 (small effect), 0.3 (moderate effect), and 0.5 and above (large effect).

Rather than asking what the students knew about DMs directly, the frequencies of DMs in the pre-test were recorded, transcribed, and calculated, and are presented in Table 1 with the goal to observe their use of DMs in their one-minute speech before the intervention. As it shows, the total number of DMs used in the pre-test was 195, with a mean of 6.96. The minimum number of DMs used was 2, while the maximum was 12.

To determine whether GBA offered practical and effective guidance in developing the students' competence in speaking English by raising their awareness of discourse competence through reading different genres to identify DMs, the frequencies of DMs the students applied in the post-test were calculated and are presented in Table 1; further, the DMs were transcribed to see the changes that the GBA may have brought about. As it shows, the total number of DMs used in the post-test was 244, with a mean of 8.71, a minimum of 2, and a maximum of 16.

The comparison of the students' use of DMs in the pre- and post-test was conducted using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which showed that the 13-week, twice weekly intervention produced a statistically significant change in the 28 students' use of DMs ($Z = -2.107$, $p = 0.035$). The median score for the post-test after the teaching intervention was 9 compared to 7 before the GBA.

Table 1. The Number of DMs Used in the Pre- and Post-test

	The total No. of DMs used in	
Student	**the pre-test**	**the post-test**
1-5	12, 5, 9, 7, 12	14, 11, 11, 11, 7
6-10	8, 2, 12, 2, 7	10, 4, 9, 9, 7
11-15	5, 8, 9, 4, 9	6, 3, 13, 13, 9
16-20	9,10, 4, 6, 5	9, 5, 6, 8, 2
21-25	6, 7, 5, 3, 7	12, 9, 11, 4, 7
26-28	7, 7, 8	11, 7, 16
Total No. of DMs	195	244
Mean	6.96	8.71
Min	2	2
Max	12	16

RQ3: To what extent can teaching DMs help enhance students' ability to structure and manage discourse with respect to coherence and cohesion?

To explore the way the students managed discourse with respect to coherence and cohesion further, a detailed analysis was conducted on their use of DMs in the pre-test. Among the 195 DMs, "and" was used most often, 79 times; "so" the second most, 24 times; "because," 17 times; "but," 15 times, and "when," 15 times. Table 2 shows that in the pre-test, the students used 19 DMs in their speeches, which can be categorized into 8 groups according to its meaning: Addition; cause; effect; contrast; temporal sequence; temporal overlap; condition, and example (See Appendix B).

Table 2. List of the DMs Used in the Pre-test

DM1	and	**DM6**	before	**DM11**	for example	**DM16**	then
DM2	after	**DM7**	because	**DM12**	however	**DM17**	the reason why
DM3	and then	**DM8**	due to	**DM13**	if	**DM18**	the reason is that
DM4	at that moment	**DM9**	every time	**DM14**	like	**DM19**	when
DM5	but	**DM10**	finally	**DM15**	so		

Among the 244 DMs used in the post-test, "and" was used most often, 57 times, indicating a decrease compared with the 79 times it was used in the pre-test. "If" was used second most, 42 times. The third most was "but," 32 times. As is presented in Table 3, 46 DMs appeared in the post-test can be categorized into 12 groups: Addition; cause; effect; comparison; contrast (concession); purpose; temporal sequence; temporal overlap; example; condition; opinion, and summary/conclusion (See Appendix C).

Table 3. List of the DMs Used in the Post-test

DM1	and	DM16	even	DM31	instead of
DM2	also	DM17	even if	DM32	last
DM3	although	DM18	even though	DM33	moreover
DM4	after	DM19	first	DM34	nonetheless
DM5	and then	DM20	finally	DM35	not only… but also
DM6	as well	DM21	furthermore	DM36	on the other hand
DM7	as a result	DM22	for example	DM37	so
DM8	as long as	DM23	generally speaking	DM38	so that
DM9	as a saying goes	DM24	however	DM39	second
DM10	at this point	DM25	hence	DM40	then
DM11	but	DM26	if	DM41	the reason why
DM12	before	DM27	in conclusion	DM42	take… as an example
DM13	because	DM28	in addition	DM43	take… for example
DM14	consequently	DM29	in my opinion	DM44	unfortunately
DM15	due to	DM30	in that way	DM45	when
				DM46	when it comes to

Comparing the DMs used in the pre- and post-test, here were three types of results in the students' use of them in their two tests: the use of DMs increased, remained unchanged, and decreased. As Table 4 shows, 18 students' use of DMs in their speech increased, while 5 decreased, and 5 remained unchanged.

Table 4. Comparison of Each Student's Use of DMs in the Pre- and Post-test

	Increase of DMs	No change	Decrease of DMs
Student No.	1,2,3,4,6,7,9,11,12,14,15,20,21, 23,24,25,26,28	10,16,17,19,27	5,8,13,18,22

Further, to confirm the extent to which the students learned DMs, the common use of "and," but," and "so," were excluded. Then, the DMs used in the pre- and post-test were compared again. As is shown in Table 5, there was a slight change in the three types of results in their use of DMs in the two tests: 21 students enhanced their awareness and variety of DMs in their speech, while 5 decreased and 3 remained unchanged.

Table 5. Comparison of Each Student's Use of DMs in the Pre- and Post-test without "and" "but" and "so"

	Increase in DMs	No change	Decrease in DMs
Student No.	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,20,21,23, 24,25,26,27,28	13,19,20	5,16,17,18,22

RQ4: What are the students' responses to teaching DMs through GBA and transcription in reflective language learning?

The data from the interviews were explored to assess the students' responses to teaching DMs through GBA. Several questions were asked about the students' understanding of the criteria for evaluating speaking skills, knowledge of DMs, application of DMs in the four skills of English learning before and after the teaching intervention, and experience transcribing their own oral tests.

First, with respect to the students' understanding of the criteria for evaluating speaking skills after the one-semester intervention, the analysis showed 21 students (75%) believed that the teaching intervention gave them a much better understanding of the criteria, as each of them was given individual feedback according to the four main aspects.

Secondly, concerning the students' understanding of DMs, their answers indicated that most of them understood DMs as conjunction or transition words, or sign posts with different aspects of meanings. They could even offer many DMs for different aspects of meaning, demonstrating their basic understanding of the way to use DMs in their speaking. Further, they had begun to recognize the significance of using DMs appropriately in their speaking, as they expressed that they found their frequent use of "and," "but, and "so" in their speech; they also began to notice the importance of DMs for organizing the structure of the content in a speech, and one student stated that DMs serve as a signal to continue the talk when giving a speech.

Thirdly, when the students were asked about their use of DMs in listening, speaking, reading, and writing before and after the teaching intervention, their opinions differed greatly. Before the instruction, some of the students indicated that they had past experience of being taught about DMs in their listening (8 students, 28%), reading (12, 43%), and writing (14, 50%). For the listening activities, 8 students expressed their understanding of the significance of using DMs when practicing listening but failed to explain exactly the way they used them when they were actually listening. However, the students apparently understood DMs' functions when reading and writing. As they stated in the interviews, they thought that DMs had helped them predict what would come next when reading an article and could understand the connections in the content easily. When writing, they believed DMs helped them achieve strong cohesion among sentences, as they can be used to organize ideas and increase the writing's structure. The responses above indicate the students' past experience of learning DMs in listening, reading, and writing, but in speaking, 26 (93%), indicated that they had never been

taught to use DMs when engaged in speaking activities because of the lack of such opportunities to speak English.

After the instruction, 24 students (86%), agreed that DMs enhanced their understanding when engaged in listening activities, as they served as indicators to help them predict, expect, or pay extra attention to what might follow or occur next; moreover, they helped them follow the flow of the thoughts and determine the key points. 26 (93%) held a positive attitude toward identifying DMs when engaged in reading activities for nearly the same reason indicated in the receptive skill above. All students reached a consensus on applying DMs in their writing to reduce their repetition of such transition words as "and," "but," and "so," and to organize the content's structure; all of them also agree that applying DMs in their speaking for organizing their thoughts and expressing their points clearly helps the listeners understand their viewpoints.

Ultimately, the students' responses to learning DMs through transcription for reflective language learning in this GBA was also addressed. The students were required to revise their own oral tests by correcting the elements of sentences and practicing adding necessary DMs. Asked whether this transcription for reflective learning helped improve the quality of their speaking, 26 students (93%) held a positive attitude toward this activity. As most of them pointed out, transcribing after each oral test helped them in several ways: 1) Identifying and correcting their own mistakes in vocabulary and grammar; (2) reflecting on the content's structure and improving its cohesion by adding DMs appropriately, and (3) learning to organize their thoughts.

5. Discussion

The results of this study provided evidence that GBA can provide practical and effective guidance in developing students' competence in speaking English by raising their awareness of discourse competence through reading different genres to identify DMs, and transcribing their own speeches. Similar to previous studies (Jones & Carter, 2014; Alraddadi, 2016), by teaching DMs explicitly, the participants' awareness of DMs was enhanced and demonstrated in their oral output, and they did so by adopting and comparing different frameworks, as observed in previous studies. Research conducted on the use of other frameworks to teach DMs did result in the participants' greater ability to use the target DMs, but only in the short term, and with limited DMs with respect to their variety and range. However, in this study, what is worth noting is that after the 13-week repeated exposure to DMs in different genres of written and spoken discourses, the students demonstrated their awareness of using DMs to connect sentences logically in larger patterns to achieve meaningful spoken discourse, as was indicated in the frequencies with which they used DMs when giving a speech. The total number of DMs the 28 students used increased by 49. To express this as an average, the increment was 1.75. This finding suggests that identifying DMs continuously while reading and listening can facilitate students' discourse management in speaking.

This study also found that GBA provided distinctive input for language learning that has not been reported in previous studies. When the number of the DMs abovementioned were translated into categories, they used various categories of DMs in their speech. The 12 categories of DMs students used in their speech help process their ideas more effectively. Given this finding, it serves as further evidence of their increased awareness of discourse competence through reading or listening to identify DMs in different genres.

Further, statistically, the students demonstrated their improvement in giving an English speech when the mean of the post-test score, 18.43, is compared with that of the pre-test, 10.93. There are primarily three reasons for the students' much better performance in the post-test. Firstly, the students were instructed explicitly about the texts' genre and DMs when reading and listening, similar to the findings in previous studies (Jones & Carter, 2014; Alraddadi, 2016; Campbell-Larsen, 2017). Secondly, they were encouraged to transcribe their own speeches to review the structure and content, and asked to rewrite them by adding necessary DMs to connect the thoughts correctly. This highlights the need for corrective feedback to improve the students' use of DMs. Third, this GBA enhanced their actual experience in using DMs to convey their thoughts in the speech process, elicit strengthened discourse competence and oral performance (Rahimi, 2012), and increase the students' confidence in speaking English. Thus, teaching DMs can help enhance students' ability to structure and manage discourse with respect to coherence and cohesion.

GBA can equip students with the knowledge and skills to manage spoken and written texts in social contexts, leading to learners' communicative competence in the form of being able to apply different kinds of spoken and written texts in specific contexts (Richards, 2005). Hyland (2003, p. 17) also noted that GBA is intended to guide students "toward a conscious understanding of target genres and the ways language creates meaning in context." DMs, as the focus of activity in this research, were developed in GBA to guide students to learn to "notice" them, and were instructed explicitly to highlight the effective and appropriate use of DMs in speaking.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the 28 participants provided valid data in this action research in a General English course. The results from the pre- and post-test demonstrated the participants' statistically significant progress in oral fluency after the intervention of teaching DMs through GBA. Both the total number and varieties of DMs used in their speeches increased. The interviews showed that the students' positive attitude towards GBA for providing practical and effective guidance in developing their speaking by increasing their awareness of discourse competence through reading different genres and identifying DMs. The transcriptions of the pre- and post-tests collected showed as well that teaching DMs indeed enhanced the students' ability to structure and manage discourse with respect to coherence and cohesion.

There are very few longitudinal studies on developing students' oral fluency by increasing their use of DMs in genre-based speech; hence, further research in this area is clearly warranted. However, the

results of this study were not easy to obtain. To carry out this intervention, the researcher had to arrange many speaking activities within the students' tight learning schedule. Further research may investigate other methods to increase students' use of DMs in expressing the depth and complexity of their thinking. It may also be useful for future research to replicate this study or expand it to different learning contexts. A final word is that the findings of this research suggested that GBA may be applied to teach speaking in particular, separate from writing, as current trends usually focus on the latter.

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