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**RESEARCH WORK PRESENTED TO OBTAIN THE ACADEMIC TITLE OF
MAGISTER EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS**

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DEDICATORY

With profound respect and sincere gratitude, we here submit this thesis to all the people whose unwavering support and valuable contribution have been with us every step of the way in this academic journey.

To our families, whose constant support, tolerance, and unconditional love have been the cornerstones of our strength. Your belief in our aspirations has provided the strength and motivation to overcome every obstacle along the way.

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RESUMEN

This thesis project focuses on the importance of discourse markers in the development of speaking skills for future English teachers. The proposal was created with the purpose of giving students more opportunities to practice oral communication in academic contexts, where fluency, coherence, and clarity are necessary. The project was designed around a communicative approach, avoiding a strong focus on grammar or vocabulary in isolation. Instead, the activities encouraged students to use discourse markers naturally, helping them to organize their speech and improve their confidence when speaking English.

The research included both theoretical and practical elements. On the one hand, theoretical studies demonstrated the value of discourse markers for fluency and cohesion in spoken language. On the other hand, practical classroom interventions showed how students applied this knowledge through class presentations, daily-life examples, and short workshops. These activities created spaces for production and interaction, which are essential for developing communicative skills.

The validation process used instruments such as pre- and post-tests, surveys, Likert scale observations, and recordings of classroom sessions. The results, reviewed by the tutor and supported by peer recommendations, were positive. They showed noticeable improvement in the correct and confident use of discourse markers. Class observations especially provided useful insights into how students reacted to the proposal and how their speaking performance improved.

Formative and summative evaluation were considered. Tests and presentations showed clear evidence of learning, while future projects could include rubrics, portfolios, or self-reflections to make the evaluation process less dependent on quantitative results. This way, students' growth would be measured in a more complete and meaningful way.

This work also identified some limitations. Time, bureaucracy, limited resources, and curriculum restrictions made the project more challenging. However, these difficulties also showed the real conditions in which future teachers work and confirmed the need for additional spaces, such as

a subject focused on oral production. Furthermore, the lack of technological tools and students' availability highlighted the importance of planning carefully for future implementations.

Finally, the project suggests that discourse markers should not only be used in speaking but also in writing, especially at higher levels of English. They are essential for creating academic texts, literature, and professional documents that show coherence and clear organization of ideas. Therefore, this proposal is not only useful for the present but can also guide future researchers and educators to innovate, create new subjects, and continue improving the quality of English teaching.

ABSTRACT

Este proyecto de investigación explora el papel de los marcadores discursivos en la mejora de las destrezas orales de los futuros docentes de inglés. El estudio se desarrolló bajo un enfoque comunicativo, en el cual el objetivo principal no fue la gramática ni el vocabulario aislado, sino el fortalecimiento de la fluidez, la coherencia y la confianza en la expresión oral. A través de presentaciones en clase, ejercicios prácticos de la vida cotidiana y pequeños talleres, los estudiantes aplicaron marcadores discursivos en contextos significativos, lo que les permitió organizar mejor sus ideas e interactuar de manera más efectiva.

La propuesta fue validada mediante instrumentos como pruebas diagnósticas y finales, encuestas, observaciones con escala Likert y grabaciones de actividades de aula. Los resultados, revisados por el tutor y respaldados por las recomendaciones de los pares, evidenciaron un progreso significativo en el uso correcto y natural de los marcadores discursivos. Además, la observación de clase aportó información valiosa sobre el impacto real de la propuesta en el proceso de aprendizaje.

Aunque el proyecto enfrentó limitaciones relacionadas con el tiempo, los recursos, la burocracia y las restricciones curriculares, demostró que resulta fundamental crear espacios —o incluso una asignatura específica— dedicados a la producción oral en la formación docente. Asimismo, la investigación resalta la importancia de los marcadores discursivos en la escritura de nivel avanzado, ya que contribuyen a una comprensión más profunda del lenguaje y de la expresión académica.

Keywords: *Discourse Markers, speaking skills, communicative Approach, oral production, teacher training, fluency, academic English.*

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INTRODUCTION

Presentation and contextualization

Effective communication is essential when learning a language, especially when studying English. According to Brown (2014), a crucial component of linguistic competency is the capacity for clear and fluent idea expression. Swan (2005) has brought attention to the underutilization of discourse markers as a challenge among learners. This shortcoming impairs comprehension and hinders the growth of effective oral communication skills. Given this disparity, learners' discourse marker proficiency needs to be addressed and improved immediately.

A focused intervention is necessary, as shown by observational evidence collected from educational environments. According to Thornbury (2005), learners frequently have trouble integrating a wide variety of discourse markers into their speech, which results in fragmented communication that is disjointed. Schiffrin (1987) pointed out that a prevalent problem with discourse marker usage is its lack of variety and precision. This observed pattern highlights the need for a disciplined teaching strategy designed to enhance the use of discourse markers and, as a result, raise oral expression competency levels overall.

The idea that improving oral expression through focused discourse marker education will result in noticeable gains in language competency among learners is the foundation of this strategy. Discourse markers, in the words of Celce Murcia (2001), are essential components of spoken conversation. The idea attempts to establish a more dynamic and productive communication environment by methodically resolving the issues that have been discovered and offering clear instructions on the nuanced application of discourse markers. The expected results are in line with the overarching objective of giving students the tools they need to communicate effectively in social, professional, and academic settings. As a proactive response to identified gaps, the proposal aims to provide students with the language skills they need to express themselves clearly and confidently.

Justification of the problem

This research is essential because many students encounter challenges when using discourse markers in their English speech. Discourse markers are like signposts that guide our conversation and using them well is crucial for clear communication. However, students often find it

challenging to incorporate these markers effectively. By understanding how to use discourse markers better, students can improve the way they express their ideas academically and professionally. This study aims to provide a helpful plan for students to learn and apply discourse markers, ultimately enhancing their spoken English and academic communication skills.

Problem Statement

When it comes to speaking clearly and coherently, English language learners face many obstacles in their pursuit of clarity. The appropriate application of discourse markers, which are crucial linguistic tools for organizing speech and expressing meaning, is one prominent area of challenge. Discourse markers, according to Smith's (2018) research, are linguistic signposts that aid in organization thoughts, indicate connections between ideas, and lead the listener along the speaker's line of reasoning. Discourse markers are crucial in spoken conversation; however, research by Johnson (2019) has shown that many students find it difficult to use them correctly. Rather than using complex or repeating language patterns, pupils frequently turn to fragmented and rambling speech.

This deficit not only makes it difficult for them to communicate well, but it also makes it difficult for them to succeed in school and the workplace. Furthermore, miscommunication and misinterpretations can result from a lack of proficiency with discourse markers, especially in situations involving cross-cultural communication. As a result, it is critical to investigate the particular difficulties that students encounter when applying discourse markers in spoken language and to create focused teaching strategies to address these problems. By doing this, teachers may provide students the tools they need to improve their oral communication abilities and develop into more self-assured and capable speakers in both formal and informal contexts.

Delimitation

When teaching English to speakers of other languages, the subject of clarity in the use of discourse markers in oral communication is essential. Discourse markers are essential for speech organization and coherence because they help structure ideas and direct the listener through the conversation, as Brown (2017) clearly states. However, Johnson's (2019) research indicates that many of students struggle to use these markers successfully, which might result in disorganized

and unclear communication. Teaching English as a second language is severely hampered by the disparity between the significance of discourse markers and students' proficiency with them.

In this way, the project's main goal is to close the gap between students' proficiency with discourse markers and their perceived significance. Carter (2018) asserts that it is critical to provide instructional strategies that support students' comprehension of the function of discourse markers in oral expression and their ability to apply them correctly in a variety of communicative situations. This method improves students' language proficiency while also improving their capacity for successful interpersonal and intellectual communication.

Additionally, the study supports the general goals of the curriculum, which include the application of efficient language teaching techniques and the growth of communicative skills in a multicultural setting. According to García (2016), creating instructional techniques that support the development of strong communication skills and intercultural competence requires an understanding of how students learn and employ discourse markers in oral expression. Thus, this project will further research into language acquisition and language teaching methods in multicultural educational contexts in addition to advancing the teaching of English as a second language.

Research object

In this way, the goal of the study is to find out how difficult it is for English language learners to use discourse markers in oral communication. The purpose of the study is to investigate the particular problems that students have while using discourse markers correctly and to create instructional strategies that effectively address these problems. The goal of the research is to improve language teaching methods and increase students' communicative competence in English by investigating the function of discourse markers in oral communication and determining the barriers that prevent students from using them proficiently.

General objective

- To evaluate the effectiveness of specific discourse markers in enhancing the clarity and persuasiveness of spoken English among university students.

Specific objectives

- Assess how often and effectively students use discourse markers in their spoken English.
- Enhance students' ability to structure their oral presentations using appropriate discourse markers.
- Develop strategies to help students speak more fluently by reducing unnecessary pauses and using discourse markers naturally.

Scientific Questions

- What particular difficulties do students have when applying discourse markers in spoken English as a second language?
- What impact do contextual and individual factors have on students' ability to use discourse markers effectively?
- Which instructional techniques could be most useful for enhancing oral expression understanding and appropriate discourse marker use?

Idea to defend

One could defend the idea that effective teaching of discourse markers in oral expression is crucial for the development of solid communicative skills in English as a second language.

Thematic guide (historical profile research)

Examination of the development of discourse markers historically and their applicability to language instruction.

Evaluation of earlier studies on proficiency with discourse markers in various linguistic and cultural situations.

Analysis of pedagogical approaches from the past and present that teach oral expression discourse markers.

Statement of the variables or research categories to be declared

Independent Variable

The instructional method used in this study to help students use discourse markers more effectively when speaking orally serves as the independent variable. Teachers manipulate this variable to see how it affects their pupils' linguistic skills.

Dependent variable

The ability of students to express themselves orally in English is the dependent variable. This variable is examined in order to assess how the teaching method affects the language proficiency and communicative skills of the students.

Identification of the methods to be employed (theoretical, empirical, and statistical-mathematical)

Theoretical approaches

Examining current research, theories, and conceptual frameworks pertaining to discourse markers, language learning, and pedagogy are all part of theoretical approaches. This involves examining academic publications, textbooks, and theoretical models to inform the development of teaching strategies and instructional materials.

Empirical approaches

Empirical techniques involve carrying out real-world exercises and experiments to gather information on students' discourse marker usage and oral expression skills. This may include performance reviews, student assessments, and classroom observations to evaluate the success of instructional initiatives.

Statistics and mathematical approaches

Statistical mathematical approaches involve the application of statistical tools to the analysis of quantitative data obtained from empirical studies. This includes descriptive statistics, inferential analysis and result interpretation are all part of this process to find patterns, trends, and correlations pertaining to students' discourse marker usage and language competency. Analysis of variance

(ANOVA), t-tests, and chi-square tests are statistical tools that can be used to determine the significance of differences in discourse marker usage and language proficiency levels between the experimental and control groups. Furthermore, methods for population sampling and statistical power analysis can be applied to guarantee the validity and dependability of study's results.

Population and sample

The population of this study represents a diverse mix of students from different backgrounds. This diversity is important to gain a comprehensive understanding of how discourse markers are used in oral English expression. By focusing on students in the later semesters, to ensure that the participants have enough language skills to benefit from and contribute to the study. This selection will help in achieving more reliable and valid results for the research.

The sample for this research will include students from the Universidad Central del Ecuador who are in the last semesters, specifically the 6th, 7th and 8th semesters. These students are chosen because their English proficiency levels must be B1+ or B2, which is suitable for the complexity of this research. The groups are mixed in terms of English level, gender, status, and other factors. Each group has approximately 27 students, and there are both morning and afternoon sessions.

Chart 1

Population and sample of the study

Category	Description	Source
Population	Students from Universidad Central del Ecuador, with diverse backgrounds, focusing on later semesters to ensure appropriate language skills.	Researcher (2025)
Sample	Students from the 6th, 7th, and 8th semesters of the English program.	Researcher (2025)
Proficiency	English level B1+ to B2, suitable for the complexity of the research.	Researcher (2025)
Group Size	Approximately 27 students per group.	Researcher (2025)

Sessions	Both morning and afternoon sessions included.	Researcher (2025)
Diversity	Mixed in terms of English level, gender, academic status, and other factors.	Researcher (2025)

Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

Statement of the research type

The research examines how the use of discourse markers can improve English-speaking skills for students at levels B1+ and B2 levels. The primary objective is to enhance fluency and clarity in speech by incorporating words such as "however," "therefore," and "meanwhile." This study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the impact of these words. Combining both approaches provide a comprehensive view of the influence of discourse markers on speaking abilities.

The qualitative aspect of this research aims to understand students' perspectives and experiences regarding the use of discourse markers. Interviews, observations, and open-ended questions will be used to gather insights. This method helps reveal the reasons and ways in which students incorporate these words into their conversations. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that qualitative research is valuable for understanding complex phenomena in their natural settings, making it particularly useful for studying language learning.

The quantitative component is crucial for measuring improvements in students' speaking skills. Pre-tests and post-tests, along with structured surveys, will be used to collect numerical data indicating progress. This method provides clear evidence of the effectiveness of discourse markers. According to Dörnyei (2007), quantitative research is effective for collecting large datasets to identify patterns and draw general conclusions.

A mixed-methods approach was selected to leverage the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. This strategy offers a holistic view of the research problem by combining detailed, in-depth information with broad, statistical data. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that mixed-methods research delivers a more complete picture by addressing the limitations of using a single method. This approach will enable well-rounded conclusions and practical recommendations for teaching English.

Main contributions

Enhanced teaching strategies: The study will shed light on efficient teaching techniques for improving students' discourse marker proficiency and oral communication skills. Teachers can adapt their strategies to better suit the needs of English language learners by determining which approaches work best.

Better language learning outcomes: By applying the study's findings, language learners can expect improvements in their oral expression and more efficient use of discourse markers. This can lead to increased confidence and success in interpersonal communications.

Contribution to pedagogical knowledge: By providing evidence-based insights into the instruction of discourse markers in oral expression, the research contributes to the field of language teaching pedagogy. This can help guide future studies and support the ongoing development of effective language teaching approaches.

Cross-Cultural Communication Skills: Students' capacity to communicate well in a variety of linguistic and cultural situations can be strengthened by developing their discourse marker proficiency and oral communication skills. This enhances their overall proficiency as worldwide communicators.

Implications for curriculum development, teacher training programs, and educational policy: The research findings may have an impact on these areas. Policymakers can make well-informed decisions to enhance language education practices at the institutional and systemic levels by recognizing successful teaching methodologies.

Evaluation of English proficiency: The research project can be employed to evaluate the school's leveling up divisions of English proficiency. Through the examination of students' responses on CEFR-aligned standardized language tests, teachers can pinpoint the school's overall English language program's strong points and opportunities for development.

Future research and indexed scholarly articles: The results of this study can be used as a starting point for further research on the efficacy of language instruction methods. Furthermore, the findings can be shared through indexable scholarly publications, adding to the body of knowledge and influencing recommended practices for teaching and learning languages.

Importance, Social Need, Novelty, and Scientific Relevance

Importance

In the subject of language education, the research project on the use of discourse markers and oral expression proficiency is highly significant. The goal of the project is to improve language teaching methods and improve students' communication abilities by addressing the difficulties students have when utilizing discourse markers successfully.

Social need

The ability to communicate effectively in English is increasingly necessary in both social and professional contexts. Students need to become proficient in using discourse markers and oral expression to succeed in today's global society, where English is often the language of choice.

Novelty

By focusing on discourse markers, the research introduces a novel approach to address the specific linguistic needs of English language learners. Although often overlooked in language instruction, discourse markers are essential for structuring speech and facilitating communication.

Scientific relevance

The study contributes to academic knowledge by offering empirical evidence on the effectiveness of teaching discourse marker usage in oral expression. Through rigorous research methodologies and the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the study enhances our understanding of pedagogy and language learning.

Description of the chapters

Introduction

The introduction presents the general background of the research, the importance of discourse markers in oral production, and the need to strengthen speaking skills in future English teachers. It also explains the problem, objectives, and justification of the study, highlighting its relevance to teacher education.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework describes the main concepts related to discourse markers, communicative competence, and speaking skills. It reviews the contributions of different authors and studies that support the research. This chapter also connects theory with the specific context of the university program, laying the groundwork for the proposal.

Chapter 2: Methodology for the development of the research and diagnostic study

This chapter explains the research design, population, and sample of the study. It also presents the instruments used, such as tests, surveys, and class observations, and describes how data were collected and analyzed. The diagnostic study identifies the current level of students and their main needs in relation to oral production and discourse markers.

Chapter 3: Presentation and validation of the proposal

This chapter describes the proposal created to improve students' speaking skills through the use of discourse markers. It explains the activities, workshops, and strategies suggested for the program. The validation process, including instruments, results, and evaluation, is also presented. Finally, this chapter shows how the proposal contributes to the professional development of future English teachers.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Legal and normative framework

The description of this study is contextualized in the Ecuadorian education policies, whose focus is communicative competence for the foreign language teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education (2016) indicates that the National Curriculum Guidelines for English require students to develop receptive and productive skills focusing on the communicative aspect. This guideline reinforces including strategies not only on grammar or vocabulary but also on aspects such as discourse markers, responsible for fluency, coherence, and oral interaction efficacy

At a tertiary education level, the Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (LOES) dictates that universities should ensure academic programs aimed at professional and societal demand. Teacher training programs, therefore, should equip prospective teachers with the appropriate communicative skills to serve students as language models. The integration of discourse markers, which enhance the organization and elucidation of speech, directly addresses this legal directive by ensuring prospective teachers are able to communicate efficiently in English both academically and professionally.

International standards also strongly justify this study. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001/2018) makes communicative competence the focal aim of language acquisition. At B1 and B2 levels, learners should be able to structure their thoughts, connect sentences, and employ linkers to ensure coherence in utterances. This standard strongly conforms to the aims of this study since the study of discourse markers is a fundamental means of achieving the CEFR descriptors. Therefore, the proposal not only pertains to local needs but also conforms to globally recognized standards.

Finally, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and language's function as a tool of access to information and participation in global contexts. Adopting the application of discourse markers for oral production, this study contributes to the improvement of communicative competence, an essential aspect of academic mobility and professional advancement. Accordingly, the legal and normative framework affirms that the study is not an isolated endeavor but part of a holistic education policy framework for efficient communication to be an integral part of teachers' training.

Typology

Discourse markers show a variety of functions throughout discourse and can be found serving different roles. Among them, one model proposed by Schiffrin (1987) identified five primary planes where discourse markers operate: exchange structure, action structure, ideational structure, participation framework, and information state. This typology clarifies the many different roles discourse markers play in organizing and interpreting the meaning of spoken and written language.

Firstly, according to Siepmann (2005) discourse markers control the speed of the discussion and invite turn-taking within the exchange structure. This involves using markers like "well," "and," "but," "or," and "so," which help the speaker to indicate a change of topic, the end of the sentence, or the end of giving the floor to somebody else. These markers are important in maintaining the flow of the discussion, ensuring that interactions run smoothly.

Secondly, Siepmann (2005) refers to the aspect of action structure which concerns the sequencing of speech acts. Here, discourse markers like "oh," "well," "and," "but," "so," "because," and "then" signal various sorts of activities in a discourse. Such cues facilitate the listener's ability to trace the argument or development of ideas more easily. For example, "so" may be used to introduce a conclusion or result, while "oh" often precedes a response or a reaction.

Thirdly, Siepmann (2005) states that discourse markers primarily work to link propositions or ideas in the ideational framework. Some of these markers are "and," "but," "or," "so," "because," "now," and "then." Apart from providing the organizational logic for the transitions from one theme or subtopic to another and presenting such relationships as background information, explanation, illustration, or justification, these markers also provide cohesive links between sentences and utterances. This role is essential to the logical flow and clarity of discourse.

Fourthly, Siepmann (2005) suggests that interpersonal components of the discourse emphasize the participation framework. Group discourse markers, represented by such phrases as "well" and "I mean," reflect the speaker's position or attitude and negotiate understanding with the audience, while also helping to mediate the relationship between speakers and listeners. The markers can also be used to monitor potentially embarrassing conduct in a conversation or clarify the intention, or even express the speaker's commitment to what is said.

Finally, Siepmann (2005) explains that markers that control the knowledge and information passed between speakers and listeners form a part of the information state. Discourse markers like "oh," "y'know," and "I mean" aid in indicating the sharing of new information or in expounding on arguments previously made. They are crucial in keeping the conversation informative and comprehensible for each and every participant.

In short, the analyses by Schiffrin and other researchers about the typology of discourse markers underline their complex and multi-functional nature. Understanding these categories helps us recognize how discourse makers shape the coherence, structure, and social-interpersonal character of discourse in general.

Each of these types of discourse markers will be discussed at greater length in the subsections to follow, pointing out in each case their distinctive functions and uses in spoken discourse. The researchers will consider how these markers enhance the fluency and accuracy of spoken language by investigating exchange structure, action structure, ideational structure, participation framework, and information state. These discourse markers help structure interpersonal interaction, clarify reasoning flow, and provide smooth conversational transitions, thereby enabling coherence in conversation. All of these functions will be emphasized in the present analysis.

Chart 2

Typology of discourse markers and examples

Typology	Function	Examples of Discourse Markers	Example in Use
Exchange Structure	Controls turn-taking and topic changes; signals end or continuation of speech.	well, and, but, or, so	<i>Well, I think we should move to the next point.</i>
Action Structure	Organizes sequencing of speech acts (introducing, concluding, reacting).	oh, well, and, but, so, because, then	<i>So, we decided to cancel the meeting.</i>
Ideational Structure	Connects ideas and propositions; ensures logical flow.	and, but, or, so, because, now, then	<i>Because it was raining, we stayed inside.</i>

Participation Framework	Expresses speaker's attitude; manages relationships with listeners.	well, I mean I mean, that's not exactly what I meant.
Information State	Manages knowledge exchange; indicates shared or new information.	oh, y'know, I mean Oh, I didn't realize you were here.

Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge University Press.

Siepmann, D. (2005). *Discourse markers across languages: A contrastive study of second-level discourse markers in native and non-native text with implications for general text theory*. Routledge.

Information structurers

Some of the discourse markers are called information structurers because they help organize information in speech. They help the listener comprehend what the speaker has to say. Some suggested terms in information structuring are "firstly," "for example," and "in conclusion." Schiffrin, (1987) and Müller (2005) hold that these markers are very important as they help the speaker sort out his ideas, hence leading to better understanding of the message being conveyed.

Information structurers are used in many contexts in real life. A presenter may say, "We will talk about the problem first, and then look at the solutions," while presenting information. The words "first" and "then" help the listener to grasp the sequence being used by the speaker (Müller, 2005). Another case is in informal conversation when someone is describing a recipe: "First, chop the onions, then fry them until golden brown"(Müller, 2005).

Such structurers are useful in speech retention. A speaker using such markers ensures that the audience quickly comprehends how the material being presented is organized, which allows the flow of information. The audience remains captivated and misunderstandings are reduced. For instance, a speaker in a debate trying to describe points of contention can employ information structurers and thereby fortify their presentation (Schiffrin, 1987).

Information organizers also increase the accuracy of communication. They help speakers write and give their speech precisely, making sure that all ideas are clearly expressed and understood. The use of terms like "for instance" or "in summary" allows speakers to emphasize certain facts or

bring succinct summations, hence making their communication effective and accurate (Schiffrin, 1987; Müller, 2005).

Consequently, information structurers are very essential tools in formal and informal communication. They allow more organized thinking, fluency in communication, and accuracy of information. It is with the aid of these markers that speakers are at a vantage point to enhance their communication abilities and convey their intended message (Schiffrin, 1987; Müller, 2005).

Connectors

Connectors, or conjunctions and linking words, form an essential part in both spoken and written discourse by connecting ideas and sentences. They help make the content clear and effective in understanding the flow of the different parts of the text. Common connectors include "and," "but," "because," and "therefore." According to Schiffrin (1987), connectors help to maintain the conversation flow and ensure that the listener or reader can follow the speaker's or writer's line of argument.

Connectors are used in general cases. For instance, if you are late, you can explain, "I was late because there was a lot of traffic." Here, "because" is used to connect the cause to the result. In another case, you use "and" to give additional details while talking about plans to a friend: "*We can go to the beach, and then we can have dinner.*" These examples show connectors helping to form full, logical sentences.

Not only are connectors crucial in written language, but they are also widely used in spoken language. Connectors assist in the logical flow of ideas in essays and reports. Positioning "firstly," "secondly," and "finally" among others ensures a more structured list of points. According to Siepmann, 2001 connectors provide the readers with an understanding of the text by giving details on how the ideas of the author are developing.

Moreover, connectors enhance the fluency of communication. They prevent the speech or writing from being jerky by smoothly connecting phrases and ideas. This smooth flow in language is necessary to keep the interest of the reader or listener engaged. Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) observed that whereas English regularly relies on juxtaposition of phrases and parts of the text, for instance, French extensively uses explicit connectors for clarity in communication.

All in all, connectors are a significant tool in both written and verbal discourse because they set up a flow of information, explain it, and connect ideas. They can lend coherence and fluency to a speech or text considerably if they are used correctly.

Reformulators

The reformulators are a type of discourse markers that aid in summarizing or clarifying previously presented material. They make it easier and clearer for the listener to understand the information. They are crucial for making sure the reader or listener understands exactly what the speaker or writer intends, both in spoken and written communication (Schiffrin, 1987; Brinton, 1996).

In everyday situations, reformulators are used to make our arguments clearer. For example, when giving directions, one may say, "*Go straight for two blocks.*" *In other words, keep going until you see the library.*" The use of "in other words" here is not only used for simplicity but also for clarifying the instructions clearer. Furthermore, reformulators make communication more accurate and fluent. A number of rewordings and explanations help speakers ensure that the message has been understood and that the audience is not misinformed. This is paramount in scenarios that involve strict and precise communication, such as business meetings or class discussions.

In general, reformulators are handy tools in clear communication. They ensure that the listener gets the meaning intended by the speaker, keep the talk going, and help make communications smooth. Through enhancing the speaker's accuracy and fluency, reformulators make speakers express ideas more effectively and engagingly.

Argumentative markers

Argumentative markers, in most cases, are words or phrases that indicate giving a reason or providing an argument. They can clarify and make our writing or speaking easier to read by giving it some order. For example, common markers of contention are the words "because," "therefore," and "however." The logical connectors of our ideas enhance and boost the credibility of our arguments. Proper use of argumentation markers can raise the quality of our communication and make our ideas clearer (Jucker & Ziv, 1998).

Argumentative markers find their applications in many situations in day-to-day life. A speaker uses argumentative markers while introducing their idea or its rebuttal in a debate. They might

argue, "*We should reduce the use of plastic because it harms the environment.*" The argumentative marker introducing the rationale here is "because." Another example would be using them in their academic writing. They may say, "*Some, however, think it necessary to use plastic for convenience.*" However, sets a counterpoint of view or contrast. (Siepmann, 2005).

Indicators of arguments form a very important part of written and spoken communication. They make our arguments crystal clear and coherent, which is an element that is very important in persuading people. If not indicated, our writing or voice will sound jumbled or not clear. Jucker and Ziv, 1998, comment that argumentation markers are vital to conversation in that they enable one to clearly organize and present information efficiently. This helps listeners understand our arguments and follow our line of reasoning better (Müller, 2005).

Apart from making the speech more fluent and have argumentative indicators, such indicators make the flow of our writing and communication more fluent. For example, it can systematically organize opinions using markers such as "firstly," "secondly," and "finally" to make our opinions in a discourse clear. This makes our communication more interesting and increase the chances of audiences following through with our argument. Per Siepmann, 2005, this set of markers is used to realize a cohesive and logical text, all of which characterize effective communication (Jucker & Ziv, 1998).

On the whole, therefore, arguments markers play a very important role in our language. They help in the simple and clear presentation of our points, thus making the logic of our writing and speeches clearer and persuasive. By using those signals, it can be develop the ability to communicate better and achieve more effective arguments. They help in the coherence and flow of our communication and are used in a very wide range of applications, from academic writing and discussions (Müller, 2005).

Cognitive markers

Cognitive markers refer to words or phrases in language that help structure ideas and thoughts. They give cohesion and clarity to communication by leading the reader or listener through the thought sequence of the speaker or writer. Cognitive markers comprise words and phrases such as "firstly," "secondly," "for example," and "conclusively." They are particularly important because

they help us keep track of arguments and make sense of how different points relate to one another (Redeker, 2001).

Cognitive markers are found in written texts like essays and reports, as well as in academic lectures and presentations in the real world. A teacher may say, "*First of all, we will consider the causes of global warming. Secondly, we shall examine its effects. Lastly, we shall consider possible solutions.*" This way, cognitive markers enable students to grasp the lesson structure and sequence of ideas (Müller, 2005).

Cognitive markers show how information is organized and highlight important details. They help manage the flow of information, which helps the audience understand and retain the information being transmitted. For instance, a speaker can provide examples to illustrate and reinforce their major points by using markers such as "for instance" (Siepmann, 2005).

Generally, cognitive markers are powerful tools for effective communication. They not only help the writer or speaker organize ideas, but also express them and guide the listener through their arguments. Cognitive markers ensure clearly delivery and better reception by increasing the coherence and flow of speech (Müller, 2005).

Organizational

Organizational discourse markers are words or phrases that help in organizing and structuring written and spoken communication. They are essential in guiding the discussion and maintaining the flow of logic clear for the reader or the listener. Some of the examples that recur are "in conclusion," "firstly," "secondly," and "on the other hand." Such markers act as signposts that divide different discourse segments that help the audience understand how ideas evolve.

Organizational discourse markers are frequently required in meetings, presentations, and other casual conversational settings in real life. For example, in a business meeting, the speaker would most likely use "firstly" to introduce the topic and "in conclusion" to summarize the work done thus far. This makes the audience aware of the agenda and the actions taken. Similar to this, Fraser (1999) notes that academic lecturers frequently employ cues like "let's summarize" or "moving on" to preserve the flow of transition from one topic to the next and make the points they want to emphasize clear and logical.

Therefore, the primary purpose of organizational discourse markers is to structure discourse by introducing new ideas, developing existing ones, making conclusions, and contrasting them. When it comes to speaking and writing, this organizer function typically controls the flow of information flow and sustains the audience's interest. When introducing a contrary thought, for instance, employing the phrase "on the other hand" can help the listener prepare for a shift in viewpoint, which may improve comprehension and memory (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Communication fluency is significantly enhanced by organizational discourse markers. They aid speakers in organizing and logically transitioning between concepts, making it easier for them to express their ideas. This ensures that the message is conveyed correctly and leaves very little opportunity for misunderstanding. This is due to the fact that markers like "to sum up" or "finally" help participants conduct talks better, stay focused, and manage their time (Sankoff et al., 1989).

Organizational discourse markers play a critical role in ensuring that communication is coherent, clear, and fluid. They serve as crucial tools for directing the audience throughout the discussion and assisting in the organization of the information flow. These markers are useful for speakers and writers to ensure that the messages they are conveying are clear and organized. This is particularly relevant in contexts like business, academic purposes, and even interpersonal relationships where clear communication is necessary for a fluid interchange of information. (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999).

Opening

Opening discourse markers are words or phrases that initiate conversations or new conversations within discourses. They facilitate the start of communication, signaling to the hearer that a new topic or point is about to begin. Opening discourse markers include "well," "so," "okay," and "now." They, therefore, play a crucial role in the flow and structure of spoken discourse. Opening discourse markers improve fluent speech by providing clear signals regarding the structure of the conversation. These markers allow the speaker to gather their thoughts and provide the listener with the complete idea that they are starting a new segment. For example, during a presentation, a speaker may say, "Well, first of all, let us show you the main key points of our research." The marker "well" makes it easier for the speaker to lead into the main content, thus making it more coherent and fluent for the audience to follow the sequence of the presentation (Müller, 2005).

In real life, opening discourse markers are used frequently. For instance, in a classroom context, a teacher may start a class by saying, "All right, let's begin today's class with a review of the topic of yesterday's lesson." The marker "All right" signals the start of the lesson and prepares students to focus. Similarly, in a business meeting, a person may say, "So, let's get started with our meeting for today." Here, the marker "so" works as an opening marker to indicate that the meeting is going to begin (Schiffrin, 1987).

Opening discourse markers also set up a sense of engagement with the audience, making them feel that the conversation is interactive. For example, using "okay" or "now" attracts the attention of the audience and makes them feel included in the conversation space. For example, a parent may tell their kid, "Now, let us talk about what we will do this holiday." The marker "now" enables the child to focus on the new topic being introduced and makes the conversation very interactive (Fraser, 1999).

In summary, opening discourse markers are crucial for managing the flow and structure of spoken communication. They help signal the start of new topics, improve fluency by providing clear transitions, and engage listeners by creating a sense of interaction. Understanding and effectively using these markers can greatly enhance communication skills, making conversations more coherent and engaging (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Complementing

Complementing discourse markers are one of the classes of words or phrases that give more information, reinforce a point, or add details in conversation, amplifying what has just been said. Examples of complementing discourse markers include "also," "besides," "furthermore," and "in addition." They, in fact, form a very important part in deepening and clarifying the meaning in spoken discourse. Speech fluency will be enhanced by the use of complementing discourse markers since the ideas are joined logically and consecutively. It allows the speaker to develop his or her point without any abrupt changes and hence, the conversation will be more coherent. For instance, in a lecture, a teacher will say, "The experiment was a success. In addition, the results were better than expected." The marker "in addition" assisted the teacher to add more information smoothly and made the lecture easy to follow (Müller, 2005).

In real life, discourse markers of complementation are very frequent, giving additional information. For instance, while speaking about plans for the weekend, one might say, "We can go to the beach. Also, we could visit the new café nearby." Here, the marker "also" adds another option to the initial plan. For instance, in a meeting, someone may say, "The sales have increased this quarter. Furthermore, our customer satisfaction ratings have improved." In this example, "furthermore" presents another piece of good news (Schiffrin, 1987).

Complementing discourse markers also help in highlighting vital details and making sure that the listener gets the information clearly. Using extra information, speakers are able to clarify their points, thus avoiding miscommunication. For instance, a friend may say, "I liked the movie because of the story. Besides, the acting was great." The marker "besides" adds emphasis on the second reason, thereby making the speaker's enjoyment of the movie clearer (Fraser, 1999).

That is to say, discourse markers of complementation serve to add supplementary information and explaining matters in a way that makes communication enriching. By logically connecting ideas, they improve fluency of speech and strengthen the speaker's impact on the listener. Comprehending and utilizing such markers in an apt way shall give speakers the ability to develop conversations in more detail, thereby enhancing their communication skill (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Closing

Closing discourse markers are those words or expressions that show the ending of the conversation or even just a part of it. These markers make a conversation end smoothly, and thus the conversation feels complete and orderly. Examples of closing discourse markers are "anyway," "in conclusion," "to sum up," and "finally." They play a very important role in modulating communication and indicating a clear endpoint (Schiffrin, 1987).

In real-life discourse, markers are used to wrap up discussions. At the end of a meeting, for instance, either party could say, "So to sum it up, we have to lock in the budget by next week." The marker "to sum up" signals that the speaker is now concluding all that he wishes to say. For example, a teacher wrapping up in the classroom might say, "Finally, remember to review the chapters for the test." Here, "finally" indicates that the teacher is giving the last major point of information to be conveyed. (Schiffrin, 1987).

Closing discourse markers make speech more fluent by sending out clear signals indicating its conclusion. They help speakers wind up the points raised without leaving the listener uncertain. For instance, at the end of a presentation, a speaker may say, "In conclusion, our findings demonstrate significant enhancements in the new method." The marker "in conclusion" serves the purpose of wrapping up what one has been saying neatly and, therefore, making the final point easy to grasp for the audience.

Closing discourse markers also summarize the points of a message and drive it home. Giving a clear ending will guarantee the speaker that their main ideas have been understood and noted by the listener. For example, a friend may end a conversation about plans like this: "Anyway, let's meet at 5 PM at the café." The marker "anyway" helps wrap up the discussion, confirming the plan and making it clear and memorable.

In other words, closing discourse markers offer cues towards the end of conversations and are intended to summarize important ideas. They help in the management of communication flow, enhancing the fluency of speech, and ensuring that the final message being passed is clear to the audience or the listener. It is through grasping and proper usage of these markers that speakers can structure and make their conversations complete and impactful, hence enhancing their communication skills (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Semantics of discourse markers

One of the big drivers of the semantics of language is discourse markers. These devices add extra dimensions of meaning to the words being spoken by assisting in the communication of the intentions, attitudes, and feelings of the speaker. "Well," "actually," and "you know" are just some of the phrases that do far more than act like conjunctive tissue to sew ideas together; they indicate the speaker's emotions or the importance of what is being said (Schiffrin, 1987).

Discourse markers are clearly evident in everyday discussions in the real world. Examples of statements include, "Well, I believe we ought to leave now." The word "well" in this sentence introduces an imminent view of the speaker. Another is, "*Actually, I don't agree with that.*" In this case, the use of the word "actually" introduces an opposing viewpoint by the speaker. These markers also help the listener to grasp the subtlety of the conversation as well as the content of the conversation itself (Fraser, 1999).

One major feature that makes communication meaningful and effective is the use of discourse markers. These devices are quite important in bringing out clarity and adding depth to our interactional discourses, whereby one is able to put thoughts in order and underline key points. For instance, when somebody says, "You know, it's really important to be on time," it shows the speaker is trying to get something clear by putting emphasis on his message (Müller, 2005).

Discourse markers additionally aid with speaking fluency. They might let the speaker to take a moment to reflect without disrupting the conversation. Saying anything like "um" or "uh" allows the speaker to gather their thoughts while maintaining eye contact with the listener. When communicating orally, such as in presentations or interviews, it greatly facilitates the flow of speech (Schiffrin, 1987).

Understanding discourse markers' semantics may help with both written and oral communication. They provide a text's additional meaning, enable concept ordering, and maintain the conversation's momentum. A speaker who uses the markers well will always convey ideas that are appealing, logical, and clear. Mastering discourse marker usage can significantly improve communicative skills, especially for language learners (Fraser, 1999; Müller, 2005).

Speaker Attitude

The speaker's attitude is what the vocabulary, tone, and body language of the speaker reveal about his thoughts and feelings. This at times may include a speaker's attitude when communicating, like enthusiasm, anger, and indifference. To comprehend the real meaning of the words, a person needs to interpret the attitude of a speaker for effective communication. For example, even such a simple sentence as "*I'm fine*" can show absolutely different meanings if the speaker uses different intonation and body language (Schiffrin, 1987).

Speaker attitude is usually present in informal dialogue in real life. For example, a sentence like, "*I can't believe you did that!*" It denotes a large range of attitudes when spoken with a happy attitude, expressing amazement. When pronounced aloud with an awful look, then it probably means you are disappointed or angry. The speaker's attitude provides contextual meaning that words alone might not communicate (Müller 2005).

However, the application of speaker attitude is very vital in professional contexts, apart from the interpersonal ones. For instance, the positive attitude of a representative in customer service can

make all the difference in how clients perceive the support they receive. Whereas a negative or indifferent attitude may lead to complaints and dissatisfaction, a helpful and friendly tone can enhance customer satisfaction (Shumin, 2002).

One major factor in enhancing the fluency of communication is the attitude of the speaker. Fluency concerns far more than the easy and confident talk; it also pertains to the successful expression of attitudes and feelings. Speakers who communicate their attitudes clearly assist listeners in gaining a deeper understanding and becoming more involved in the discourse. This involvement may lead to a livelier and more fluid relationship between them (Schiffrin, 1987).

Cohesion and coherence

Coherence and cohesion are two very important concepts when it comes to expressing ideas. Cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), refers to how concepts and sentences are connected using "and," "but," or "so" to make the flow of a story fluid. For instance, if say, "*I went to the store*. Rather than, "*I went to the store and bought milk*" makes the idea more cohesive than "*I bought milk*." This strengthens the ties between the ideas and makes it easier to understand the other person (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Interpersonal interactions reflect coherence in our communication. For example, the use of cohesive devices provides a sense of giving clear directions. Instead of saying, "Turn left. We say, "Turn left, then go straight. Go straight." The listener could grasp the actions in the series without getting confused thanks to this use of cohesiveness (Müller 2005).

On the other hand, coherence refers to the general logic of a text and its structure. It is how the components of a text fit together to provide completeness. In a cohesive piece of writing, ideas are logically interrelated and have a clear beginning, middle, and end. A coherent story, for instance, has a clear plot, and also proceeds reasonably from one event to another. Even grammatically correct sentences may seem disjointed and vague if coherence is lacking (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Cohesion and coherence are the two writing techniques that bring about a readable and captivating narrative. Writers use cohesive techniques such as conjunctions, pronouns, and repetition in linking ideas and phrases. This is also ensured by coherence, the sticking to the key issue and the orderly arrangement of ideas. The result will be that the readers find the text easier to read and comprehend and be better able to comprehend its content (Siepmann, 2005).

Cohesiveness and coherence make one talk and write fluently. Coherent writing and speaking styles naturally use cohesive devices to ensure that the writing or communication flows fluently and is logically coherent. They also ensure the coherence of their ideas by logically structuring them. This makes communication more effective because the listener only needs to follow and understand information provided (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Oral Expression

Oral expression is the human activity of expressing one's thoughts, feelings or ideas through spoken words. This means that it involves not only what students say but how they say it. This includes the tone of the voice, speed, and clarity. Therefore, oral expression is the heart of everyday communication since it allows one to share information, express one's emotions, and connect with others (Nogués, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

In real life, oral expression is used in a variety of scenarios. Oral expression is used, for example, by students to ask questions and participate in class discussions, by employees for presentations and teamwork with coworkers, and in social situations while chatting with friends or sharing experiences following the narrative of stories. These examples highlight the value of oral communication in several spheres of life (Siepmann, 2005; Nogués, 2020).

The listener's comprehension of the speaker is further improved by oral expression. The listener will find it easy to follow up with clear and structured communication. Discourse markers such as "First of all "on the other hand," and "in conclusion" help the speaker to organize their speech and guide the audience through the main ideas. For the speaker and the listener, this enhances the effectiveness and quality of the discourse (Siepmann, 2005).

Also, good oral expression boosts confidence in speaking. If people know that they can express ideas clearly, they are more confident in conversations. This consequently yields to better interactions and stronger bonding with others. In other words, oral expression is a very crucial aspect of communication and helps an individual connect well with others.

All in all, it provides an opportunity for clear expression of thoughts and ideas and can foster confidence, understanding, and connections. An individual's capacity for verbal expression will serve them well in school, the workplace, and other social and professional settings throughout their life. Fluency is the partner of oral expression that guarantees smooth and interesting

interactions, as has been mentioned. After all, it makes it possible for everyone to openly voice their opinions and promote deeper bonds with others.

Fluency

Fluency in oral expression refers to the ease, smoothness, and readiness of speaking. It consists of speech production with very few hesitations, an appropriate speed, and clear articulation. Fluency is important in communication in that it enables the listener to understand the message clearly and follows the flow of conversation. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, fluency is regarded as spontaneous speech produced without much effort that holds a natural flow (Nogués, 2020).

Fluency can be observed in various situations. A fluent speaker in a business meeting is capable of clearly explaining the idea and responding immediately to others. In social situations, the fluent speaker may engage in conversations without long silences or repeated corrections. This type of fluency will help the communication to become effective and engaging (Siepmann, 2005).

It involves discourse markers, which are important for fluency. Such words or terms, like "well," "you know," "so," and "anyway," organize discourse, manage interaction, and signal relationships between ideas. Discourse markers can help a speaker buy some time to think during an interview, show topic shifting, or even express agreement or disagreement without broken fluency (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

Discourse markers provide fluency by giving structure to the conversation, organizing the speaker's speech and the flow of ideas for the listener. An example is starting the response with "Well, I think.", it gives the speaker time to collect his thoughts while warning the listener that what follows is an explanation or opinion. This will maintain coherence and continuity in conversation (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

In summary, discourse markers make comprehension easier for the listener by stressing certain points and explaining the relationships between ideas. For example, "because" or "therefore" will instantly show the cause-and-effect relationship, hence contributing to the overall coherence of the speech. This promotes not only proper communication but also helps the speaker to ensure that discourse is fluent and logical (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

Continuous Speaking

Continuous speaking refers to the act of producing language spoken for an extended period of time without any significant pauses or hesitations. It refers to linking ideas and then expressing thoughts coherently. Continuous speaking is one of the skills required in any number of different communicative situations, whether it involves making a presentation or conversing casually. Effective continuous speaking requires proper planning, organization of ideas, and use of appropriate language. Fluency, accuracy, and complexity are three of the basic components of communicative competence, as stated by Brown, and continuous speaking contributes directly to all three elements (Nogués, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

When it comes to observing continuous speaking in real life situations. It would be important to highlight that carrying out a presentation, one has to speak continuously to keep the audience engaged. While narrating a story or a complex idea, continuous speaking helps not to lose the attention of the listener during casual conversations. It is also quite important in situations of an interview whereby the candidate has to answer smoothly and confidently the questions put forth (Nogués, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

Continuous speaking also enhances the speaker's confidence. If people can speak continuously, they are able to feel that they are in control of their communication. Confidence can help them engage in discussions and clearly bring out points in their ideas. For example, when there is a confident speaker during a meeting, they can present their points in a more articulate and clear way, hence promoting good teamwork and decision-making (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Furthermore, the other aspect of continuous speaking is that it keeps the listeners within the message. A message is understood more by a listener if the speech is presented with a smooth and flawless flow. Oral discourse markers, like "first," "next," and "finally," serve the purpose for structuring the speech, helping the listener move smoothly through the speech. This will make the process enjoyable for both the speaker and the listener at the same time as being effective (Siepmann, 2005).

Continuous speaking is one of the very key skills in communication, for it allows high effectiveness in delivering information. Fluency, confidence, and clarity are some of the

ingredients of successful interactions in any setup. Those who have mastered continuous speaking find it easy to express themselves powerfully, hence promoting better understanding and closer ties with others. Though continuous speaking is potent on its own, there is a need to combine other speaking techniques in order to come up with highly captivating and dynamic conversations (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Avoidance of repetition

Avoiding repetition means not using the same words, phrases, or ideas many times within a short period. This skill is quite relevant in communication, in that it keeps the conversation interesting and captivating. In case the speakers avoid repetition, they will manage to convey their message clearly and more effectively hence maintaining the listener's attention.

In real life, avoiding repetition is crucial in different scenarios. For instance, a teacher who does not repeat the points in a class generally keeps his students much more interested. Also, in business meetings, using different words for communicating similar ideas is often very convincing and persuasive. Therefore, it is not surprising that, during unofficial conversations, people who manage to express themselves without repetition come out as much more dynamic and engaging in their discussions (Siepmann, 2005; Nogués, 2020).

Avoidance of repetition helps achieve fluency because it makes the speech varied and interesting. Fluency does not simply refer to the act of talking smoothly but also to the aspect of capturing the interest of the listener. For instance, instead of saying something like "very good", a speaker can use synonyms such as "excellent", "fantastic" or even "superb." Such variation is attractive and enables conversation to flow with ease (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Expression words in different ways avoid monotony, and it helps the listener for a better understanding of the message. Phrases such as "what I mean is," "in other words," or "another way to say this" can be helpful in paraphrasing ideas without repetition. This will transform random words into a more effective communication, and also the listener will stay alert at all times (Siepmann, 2005). Moreover, it may enhance the speaker's confidence. When a speaker knows how to use different expressions for similar ideas, then he will be more capable and versatile. This makes one confident about his skills, which enables one to participate in any discussion and deliver his point of view logically. For instance, a confident speaker in a presentation may use different

types of expressions to specify and stress all the main points of the presentation, which makes it more effective (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

In few words, repetitiveness lowers fluency and effective communication. This technique helps in conveying clear messages to the audience and keeps the conversation lively, hence boosting the confidence of the speaker. Ahead, there is a need to discuss another aspect of effective communication, which is coherence, if better communication skills have to be achieved (Nogués, 2020).

Coherence

Coherence refers to the logical presentation of ideas in speech or writing and their orderly flow. This ensures that all parts of the communication are interwoven and flow smoothly from point to point. A coherent speech or text gives the listener or reader an easy time following through to understand the message. For instance, a coherent presentation will have a clear introduction, logically ensuing key points, and a concise conclusion. (Nogués, 2020; Siepmann, 2005).

Coherence is key in several aspects of real life. For instance, a teacher conveys a difficult concept coherently to the students in a classroom by making it easy to follow. In a business setting, a coherent report or presentation is necessary for colleagues and clients to capture key points and conclusion. In speech, coherence ensures that what the speaker is saying is easily followed by the listener without them getting confused (Siepmann, 2005; Nogués, 2020). Coherence in speech and writing adds significantly to fluency. Ideas that are well-organized and logically connected provide for a smoother flow of communication. For instance, transitional words and phrases, such as "Then," "next," and "finally," instruct the listener in grasping the sequence of ideas. This makes the speech more engaging and easier to follow (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Coherence also enables speakers to convey their message more clearly. If a speaker's ideas are well-organized and logically flowing, then an audience will have an easy time getting the main points. For example, in a debate, a coherent argument will be more convincing since it provides a clear and logical flow of ideas. This promotes effective communication at the same time increasing the credibility of the speaker (Siepmann, 2005).

All in all, coherence helps to enhance the speaker's confidence besides improving clarity and fluency. Speakers are confident in what they are delivering, knowing it is well organized, logical,

and easy to understand. Such confidence makes a speech effective and impactful. Further, it will be imperative to appreciate the role of connectives in enhancing coherence and general communication skills as we proceed (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Connectives

Connectives are words or phrases that link ideas together in writing or speech. They create flow by gluing sentences and paragraphs together, allowing the text to move coherently. Some examples of common connectives used in everyday conversation and writing may be "and," "but," "because," and "therefore." In a daily basis, connectives are used in simple tasks as: giving directions, telling a story, or explaining a process. They, in essence, help the listener or reader grasp easily how points raised flow from one point to the other in light of the relationship that exists between them (Siepmann, 2005; Nogués, 2020).

Effective connectives provide clarity to the communication. Ideas logically linked facilitate the audience to go along with your arguments. For instance, in a business presentation, connectives like "firstly," "next," and "finally" bring clarity in laying out all the points. This will keep the interest of the audience and also guarantee that the audience identifies the sequence of ideas. Indeed, connectives, such as "however" or "on the other hand," help to make the text contrasting, which strengthens the argument (Siepmann, 2005).

Connectives are also very prominent in everyday settings. For example, while explaining a recipe, you would say something like, "First, chop the onions," "Then, heat the oil," and "Finally, add the onions." This logic guides the listener through the actions in a very clear sequence, without leaving them in a muddle. Similarly, the connectives in storytelling are oriented toward maintaining the flow of events so that the listener will go on smoothly (Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Apart from providing clarity and structure, connectives enhance fluency in speech. Connectives also aid fluency since they help a speaker go from one point to another without jerks that, in turn, may cause confusion among the listener. This is especially in formal situations, such as during lectures or speeches where one has to capture the audience's attention until the very end. It is through careful use of connectives that speakers manage to maintain coherence and clarity in the message across up until the very end (Nogués, 2020).

Progression

Progression in communication refers to the orderly flow and development of ideas in a conversation. This ensures that thoughts are logically and smoothly connected and easy to follow and understand by the listener. For example, clear progression would be manifested by starting with the causes, proceeding to the effects, and then giving solutions when giving a speech on climate change. This structured approach maintains interest but also makes sure that a message is adequately addressed (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

In the case of applications in real life, one can see progressions in many other forms of communication. For example, in a story, it moves from an introduction to the climax and then to the conclusion. In the case of a business presentation, for instance, the presentation may start with an overview, move on to provide data, and close finally with recommendations. This way, the audience can perceive the flow of information and its highlights (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

Progression in communication is important for clarity and coherence. If information is logically set out, there would be no chaos, and each point would get reached into the previous one. This is especially so in instructional settings, when complex information must be split down into manageable parts. Progression in instructional materials helps make new concepts easier to learn and retain (Ruch & Crawford, 1988; Siepmann, 2005).

It also plays a great role in enhancing fluency, be it in oral or written communication. When ideas flow smoothly from one to the other, this creates a rhythm pleasing to the ear of the listener or the eye of the reader. This fluency makes the communication memorable and persuasive. Effective progression demands careful planning and organization to ensure that each part of the communication piece supports and enhances the whole message (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Progression also increases the credibility of the speaker. A well-structured message conveys that a person understands and is well-prepared with the topic of discussion, thus maximizing trust and confidence of the audience in the speaker. It also allows the speaker to predict and answer some questions and objections in more logical order. Progression helps not only in understanding but also reinforces the overall effect of communication (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

Finally, progression has to do with logical order and coherence in the expression of ideas. This enhances clarity, fluency, and attention to the audience. Next, students move to accuracy, pointing out the necessity for precision and correctness in communication. It complements the structured approach of progression by ensuring that the information presented or communicated to the target audience is reliable and trustworthy.

Accuracy

Accuracy in communication refers to the correctness and precision of the information one conveys. It refers to word choice, grammar, and facts that have no miscommunication; an example would be accuracy in emails at work through precise language and correct details that prevent miscommunication. This is equally important in many real-life situations, such as giving directions or explaining a recipe so that one ensures that the person listening to or reading it will do the right things accordingly (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

In everyday conversations, accuracy saves us from confusion and probable errors. For instance, in a doctor's office, medical instructions have to be very accurate so that the patient understands how one is supposed to take medication. In the same way, as a teacher, one is supposed to provide accurate information to learners for effective learning. The communicator, therefore, by being accurate, ensures that the message has been understood correctly and acted upon as intended (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

Such accuracy in communication is important in maintaining clarity and trust. If a speaker or writer has accurate information, the audience is likely to believe in a speaker or writer who is known to tell the truth. This is very important in professional and academic settings where accuracy of information counts the most. Accurate communication avoids misinformation and sustains a good reputation. Accuracy also greatly contributes to the fluency in communication. If the information is correct and accurate, then the flow of ideas is smooth, without interruptions or opportunities for correction. Such fluency offers the conversation or text a better flow, which keeps the interest of the audience. Such proper communication will also clearly provide ideas across the message and keep the attention of audiences clearly while writing the text (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

Lexical accuracy

Lexical accuracy refers to the proper application of words in communication. It is the correct selection and application of words for delivering intended meanings and avoiding the wrong choices of words. For example, using "effect" instead of "affect" may completely transform the meaning of a sentence. In practical life, lexical accuracy becomes important in professional situations, such as in report writing and presenting them to audiences, where language needs to be as clear as crystal (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

This, consequently, impacts lexical accuracy in the course of daily discussions. For instance, the use of appropriate terminologies when giving directions prevents miscommunication about the place the listener has to visit. In the case of learning institutions, the tutors should also use the appropriate vocabulary when explaining concepts to learners. This language precision facilitates learner understanding of new ideas at faster rates (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

Lexical accuracy serves to the clarity of the message communication. In such instances, the words applied are accurate; therefore, the message is clearly understood and more persuasive. This is quite important in certain contexts, such as legal documents or scientific research, where exact information may be required. Proper choice of words avoids ambiguity and guarantees that what is intended to be passed across reaches without confusion (Ruch & Crawford, 1988; Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Another important aspect of lexical accuracy is that it facilitates fluency in communication. If one uses the right words, he can express his ideas more smoothly and confidently. Due to this fluency, the communication will be more engaging and effective since the audience is able to follow through the content without getting distracted by errors or unclear language. In any form of communication, what forms the basis of effective communication is not only the correctness but also the appropriateness of the vocabulary used (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

All in all, in effective communication, lexical accuracy cannot be underestimated because it provides clarity and precision in messages and ease of understanding. Correct use of words adds credibility to a communicator and to the message itself. Appreciation and implementation of lexical accuracy are important if one wants to build his or her communication skills. The next

aspect is complexity, which looks into how the complexity of language affects communication and how simplicity relates to sophistication.

In the last analysis provided, accuracy proves to be a critical feature of communication. A clear, precise message can be conveyed; information is reliable, credible, and trustworthy. Communicators can enhance credibility and overall message impact with the aid of accurate information. Comprehending and applying accuracy, understanding and applying it, is something any person who aspires to improve their communication skills needs to do. The next topic will deal with lexical accuracy: the right words and how they affect communication (Nogués, 2020).

Complexity

The complexity of communication refers to the degree of difficulty or ease by which the message is understood because of sophisticated language, intricate ideas, or complicated structures used. It deals with the depth and breadth of vocabulary used and how sentences and concepts are arranged. For instance, most scientific articles have a high complexity because they are made up of technical words and detailed explanations. Such complexity may relate to real-life situations as academic lectures and legal documents require the use of precise and advanced language (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

In everyday communication, complexity can both aid and hinder understanding. While complex language can convey precise and nuanced meanings, it can also make the message harder to understand for those not familiar with the terminology. For instance, explaining a medical condition to a patient might require simplifying complex medical terms. Using too much complexity in casual conversations can confuse listeners and disrupt the flow of communication (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

The use of complexity is applied under appropriate situations of use, namely, for detailed and precise information. For instance, in academic and professional scenarios, the use of complex vocabulary might convey a sense of expertise, fully detailing knowledge of the subject matter. However, one still needs to moderate this complexity with enough clarity to get the message across to the audience. Effective communicators are those who can and do shift the levels of sophistication of their words, according to the level of understanding of the audience to whom they are speaking (Ruch & Crawford, 1988; Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Lexical complexity

Complexity helps with fluency because it enables the communicator to express complicated ideas and relationships between concepts. It makes elaboration of a subject possible, which may be absolutely necessary at times. But too much complexity without an apparent form can be very confusing. The balance of complexity with simplicity ensures richness in meaning with ease of following the message.

Complexity in communication therefore means advanced language and details on concepts. While intrinsically important for the delivery of information that is exact and sophisticated, complexity must be balanced with clarity in order not to confuse the reader or the listener. Only through the ability to adjust this level of complexity appropriate for audiences and contexts can a communicator be certain of an informative and yet accessible message. Another lexical complexity aspect will be dealt with, which goes deeper in respect to the application of a more advanced vocabulary and how this affects communication (Nogués, 2020).

Advanced vocabulary

Advanced vocabulary means the use of more elaborated, and less common words to express ideas more precisely, effectively and accurately. This includes terms normally used in academic, professional, or technical contexts. Examples of advanced vocabulary include such words as "catalyst" with respect to chemistry or "jurisdiction" in connection with the field of law. In the real world, advanced words are helpful in enhancing the clarity and impact of communication in forms such as research papers and business presentations (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

Advanced vocabulary can add richness to straightforward conversations and delineate contextual experiences more clearly. For instance, one would describe the sensation as "exhausted" instead of "very tired". However, it should be a word the audience knows, or it will lose them. Proper advanced vocabulary will make the speaker seem well versed and eloquent (Hager & Scheiber, 1992; Nogués, 2020).

Advanced vocabulary can be particularly important in certain fields where the accuracy of the terms may be necessary. For example, saying "hypertension" instead of "high blood pressure" in medicine conveys the exact meaning and even sounds professional. Advanced vocabulary enables proper communication among professionals in specialized fields, which will in turn avoid

miscommunication. This again will provide more minute and specific discourses that are a must for the solution of problems and processes of critical thinking or decision-making (Ruch & Crawford, 1988; Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 2020).

Advanced vocabulary offers fluency with an extended range of words to choose from to express thoughts and ideas. This helps speakers and writers avoid repetition and conciseness. For example, the use of synonyms and related terms may make the communication more vivid and dynamic. Fluency improves when the language used is varied and very expressive, making the conversation or text more interesting to the audience (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Siepmann, 2005).

Advanced vocabulary is one of the tools for effective communication. It allows expressions to be more exact and subtle; it enriches conversations and is further required at a professional and academic level. Communication practitioners who use advanced vocabulary appropriately will be in a position to improve not only their credibility but also the general effect of their message. Advanced vocabulary can be learned and adopted to significantly improve communication skills that will produce better understanding and engagement (Nogués, 2020).

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH AND DIAGNOSTIC STUDY

Conceptualization and operationalization of main categories

This section outlines and clarifies the general categories that are used as the foundation for investigating the function and effectiveness of discourse markers in improving language learners' accuracy, fluency, and oral expression. In order to organize and comprehend the data gathered throughout the research process, the categories are essential.

The main categories identified for this study include:

Discourse Markers

Refers to words or phrases that play a role in the organization, flow, and meaning of spoken language beyond their literal meaning.

Oral expression

Refers to the characteristics which involve effective communication in speech, possibly influenced by the use of discourse markers.

Definition and explanation of main categories

Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are words or phrases used to organize and manage spoken or written discourse. They help in signaling the relationship between ideas, guiding the listener or reader through the structure of the argument, and enhancing the coherence and flow of communication.

Oral Expression in English

Oral expression in English involves the ability to communicate effectively and fluently in spoken English. This includes a range of skills such as pronunciation, grammar accuracy, vocabulary usage, and the ability to construct coherent and complex sentences.

Operationalization of main categories

Discourse markers

Determining and quantifying the use of discourse markers in oral communication is part of their operationalization. To evaluate how students use discourse markers to organize their speech and improve coherence, the study will employ particular criteria. The frequency of discourse marker use, the range of markers employed, and the suitability of their application in various situations will all be important indicators. The researchers will look at how frequently students use phrases like "however," "therefore," and "on the other hand" to logically connect ideas, for example. These markers will also be assessed to determine whether they enhance the coherence and fluency of spoken English. After student interactions are recorded and transcribed, a thorough examination of discourse marker usage trends will be conducted as part of the data collection process.

Oral expression in English

A number of components of students' spoken language proficiency are assessed as part of the operationalization of oral expression in English. Pronunciation precision, grammar correctness, vocabulary variation, and the capacity to form complex and cohesive sentences are important markers. Oral presentations, interactive speaking activities, and pre- and post-tests will all be used in the study to evaluate these indications. Students' oral proficiency will be measured by the pre-test, and progress following focused treatments will be evaluated by the post-test. Oral presentations will reveal information about students' capacity for confident and clear idea expression. Real-time language use and fluency will be observed through interactive speaking exercises. Data will be gathered via teacher evaluations and audio recordings, with a focus on improvements in grammar, pronunciation, and general communicative proficiency.

Target needs

For the purposes of this study, target needs are the language skills necessary for effective communication. The use of discourse markers in order to organize and express ideas in English is one of the main requirements for Universidad Central del Ecuador students. One of the most important abilities needed to succeed in higher education and the workplace. In order to determine

these needs, the study will use diagnostic tests and surveys to gauge students' present competence levels and pinpoint any areas in which their usage of discourse markers is lacking. The creation of focused interventions to close these gaps will be guided by these findings. The study intends to give students the tools they need to communicate effectively orally by highlighting the most crucial language abilities.

Lacks

The word "lacks" is used to describe the areas in which students' language skills are deficient. The study has determined some of the main areas in which students are having difficulty through diagnostic testing and classroom observation. These include limited vocabulary, problems to construct logical sentences, and failure to use discourse markers. This research will use some teaching techniques, like vocabulary enhancement exercises and the direct teaching of discourse markers, to address these issues. Pre-tests, post-tests, and continuous classroom evaluation will all be used to measure how effectively these interventions are working. The project is intended to improve students' overall language skills and communication by filling in the information gaps.

Learning Needs

The procedures and materials required to produce the intended linguistic results are referred to as learning needs. Role-plays, interaction speech exercises, and practice communicating in real-world situations are examples of effective learning activities for students at Universidad Central del Ecuador. These procedures will be included in the interventions so that students can practice their language skills and improve their language proficiency. To make learning easier, the study will also offer learning resources like internet services, language labs, and supplementary materials. The project intends to establish an inviting and enhancing language-learning environment by attending to learning demands.

Research scope

This study used qualitative and quantitative methods to understand discourse markers and how they affect speaking competence in English. Quantitative data from surveys and

questionnaires were analyzed using statistical methods to establish trends. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the scenario.

Quantitative analysis summarized survey data using statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages. This made it easier to see how proficient the students were and how they used discourse markers. It also aided in identifying general patterns among various student groups.

Qualitative analysis involved looking for trends and patterns in the observation data. Coding the data, categorizing it under themes, and making sense of the findings to have a better understanding of the students' experiences was part of the process. This is how the impact of factors on the use of discourse markers in speech was analyzed. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data gave a comprehensive view of the findings. Mixed-method design enabled the study to gather statistical trends as well as detailed data, making the findings more trustworthy (Creswell, 2014).

In this section, ethical considerations included taking care to preserve data confidentiality, accuracy, and objectivity. In order to produce reliable and insightful research findings, the analysis procedure followed all ethical standards.

Delimitation of the Study

This study uses an applied technique and is categorized as descriptive and correlational. With an emphasis on examining how discourse markers are used in oral expression, the descriptive scope offers extensive insight into how students employ these linguistic components in their speech. The study clarifies usage patterns and their influence on spoken interactions by analyzing their function in communication (Creswell, 2014). The basis for comprehending how discourse markers support fluency and coherence in English-speaking situations is this descriptive study.

The study examines the connection between the use of discourse markers and oral fluency using a correlational approach. The goal of the study is to determine whether using more discourse markers improves the coherence and fluency of spoken English. According to Dörnyei (2007), discourse markers are essential for speech structure, and fluency in a second language depends on a blend of linguistic and strategic competence. By examining this connection, the study offers information on whether or not discourse marker training can result in quantifiable advances in speaking proficiency.

From the perspective of action research, the study seeks to support English language instruction by providing useful strategies for enhancing students' speaking abilities. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), pragmatic awareness and structural knowledge are both necessary for communicative language learning. By offering discourse marker training as a way to enhance speaking ability, this study supports that concept. Teachers are able to provide students with the skills they need to speak more effectively and naturally by incorporating these findings into their lesson plans.

Moreover, evidence from research indicates that discourse markers play a role not only in fluency but also in sustaining interest and coherence in conversation. As previously discussed in this study, the active use of discourse markers is seen in students who are more self-assured when speaking. This affirms the systematic instruction of these features to compensate for gaps in spoken fluency.

All things taken into consideration, this study contributes to the greater understanding of discourse markers and their benefits for oral proficiency. It offers helpful pedagogical recommendations for teaching English by addressing both descriptive and correlational aspects. The results serve as a resource for language teachers looking to include evidence-based practices that improve their students' fluency in English and their communicative competence.

Type of research: declaration and justification

This research is bibliographic, documentary, and field-based since it combines theoretical analysis with direct data collection from participants. According to Hernández et al. (2014), bibliographic research involves reviewing existing literature to establish a theoretical foundation, while field research gathers first-hand data from participants to complement findings. The study is bibliographic because it reviews academic sources on discourse markers and oral expression in English. This helps to understand previous findings and establish a strong theoretical framework.

It is also documentary, as it analyzes research papers, books, and academic studies related to the topic. This supports the identification of relevant theories and concepts that contribute to the study.

Additionally, the research is field-based because it collects data from students at Universidad Central del Ecuador through oral assessments. This allows for direct observation and evaluation of discourse marker usage in spoken English.

Regarding the time frame, the research is cross-sectional since it collects and analyzes data at a specific point in time rather than over an extended period. This approach is appropriate for describing discourse marker usage at a given moment.

Methods used and their purpose in the research context

This study examined how students employ discourse markers in spoken conversations using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A clear conceptual comprehension of the issue was acquired through the use of a mixed-method approach. According to Creswell (2014), combining both methods allows researchers to get a complete picture of the data. This study used pre-tests and post-tests to gauge students' progress and observations to examine how they naturally employed discourse markers.

The quantitative approach focused on gathering numerical information from the speaking performances of the students. The study's progress was measured using pre- and post-tests. According to Best and Kahn (2006), quantitative research helps identify patterns and relationships between variables. After students exercised speech markers, this strategy yielded objective results regarding their improvement.

The qualitative approach offered a deeper examination of the pupils' speech. Discourse analysis and observation were employed in this study to observe how students used discourse markers in authentic conversations. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research allows a rich understanding of communication behaviors. This approach made it possible to determine not only how frequently the students employed discourse markers but also whether or not they did it correctly.

In order to record how students used discourse markers, the study also used a descriptive approach. This type of research seeks to observe, record, and describe characteristics of a particular phenomenon (Best & Kahn, 2006). The research conducted a thorough examination using this method without changing the students' speech environments.

In the end, the data gathered from tests and observations were examined using the analytical approach. This approach entailed comparing the pre-test and post-test findings using statistical methods. As stated by Richards and Rodgers (2014) data analysis is key in language studies to measure learning progress. This approach assisted in verifying the efficacy of the research's tactics.

Instruments derived from the selected methodology

The research utilized both quantitative and qualitative instruments to collect and analyze data regarding students' use of discourse markers in spoken language. The instruments were chosen to provide reliable outcomes and a deeper insight into the problem. According to Creswell (2014), using different instruments helps researchers validate findings from multiple perspectives.

The first instrument was the pre-test and post-test. The tests measured students' ability to use discourse markers before and after the intervention. As Best & Kahn (2006) explain, tests are effective tools for measuring learning progress over time. The results of the tests provided quantitative information to analyze students' progress.

Another instrument employed was the observation sheet, through which students' application of discourse markers in informal speech could be tracked. Observation is essential in qualitative research since it allows the researcher to see how participants really behave in situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through this instrument, common mistakes and trends in students' spoken discourse were established.

Finally, a survey was conducted to obtain students' responses on the application of discourse markers in speaking. Surveys are useful because they give insight into learners' perspectives and experiences (Brown, 2001). The survey results provided good feedback on students' problems and attitudes towards discourse markers.

It was necessary to carry out an in-depth and precise investigation of the study question using the previously mentioned instruments. By providing practical strategies for enhancing students' oral English, this study enhances language instruction. The results can be used by educators to create more effective lesson plans and improve student communication. Additionally, the study validates further research on discourse markers to improve the clarity and organization of speech in academic and professional contexts.

Delimitation of population and sample

The study population consisted of students at Universidad Central del Ecuador, they are students studying from 6th, 7th, and 8th semesters. The population consisted of approximately 200 students with diverse academic backgrounds. The students were chosen because they were finishing their

professional learning process and were sufficiently exposed to discourse markers used in oral production.

The sample selected for this research included 92 students from the total population. They were selected based on their availability and readiness to take part, in addition to their level of English proficiency. Davies (2022) states that a sample is a representative part of a population where its elements share common or similar characteristics. This will enable the results to be generalized to the entire student population.

The sampling method utilized in this study was non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling. This is due to the fact that the research focused on students who actively participated in English language learning and oral expression activities. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) claim that purposive sampling enables researchers to choose individuals who are most appropriate to the study, guaranteeing meaningful data collection.

Additionally, stratified sampling was employed to ensure that students from all three semesters were represented. This worked to even out the number of different academic levels represented. As Creswell (2014) explains, stratified sampling is useful when researchers want to compare different subgroups within a population. This worked to allow closer examination of the use of discourse markers in different academic levels.

Population and sample delimitation was crucial to ensuring the reliability and validity of the study. Through the strict selection of participants, the research created valid observations regarding students' use of discourse markers in oral speech. The findings can be used to inform better teaching practices and enhance students' oral English. The sampling approach employed for this study is purposive or purposeful. This non-probability sampling was selected based on the following requirements:

1. The students possess a B1+ or B2 English level, which is appropriate for the complexity of this research.
2. All students attend the Universidad Central del Ecuador.
3. The students are enrolled in either morning or afternoon sessions, with approximately 2 students in each group.

4. They are all in the last semesters of their program, ensuring enough language proficiency and academic competence.
5. The groups are heterogeneous in terms of English proficiency level, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background.
6. Students have the time and are willing to participate in this study.
7. Informed consent has been obtained from all participants, acknowledging their voluntary involvement in the study.

The methodological process of the current study was framed based on the descriptive nature of the research as well as the purpose of it to analyze how discourse markers are used in students' spoken language at a university. Descriptive research aims at specifying characteristics, properties, and significant aspects of a phenomenon (Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista, 2014). The aim of the study was to observe, describe, and analyze the way that discourse markers were being used in the students' English spoken.

The research followed a quantitative approach, as it was founded upon data collection, analysis, and interpretation using structured tools. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research. This approach enabled objective measurement of the frequency and types of discourse markers used by students.

The study was conducted in stages. A review of the literature was conducted initially to offer a theoretical overview of discourse markers and their role in spoken communication. A pre-test was then administered to ascertain students' initial use of discourse markers in speaking. Role-play and guided speaking exercises were then carried out to develop students' awareness and use of discourse markers in real conversation. A post-test was then administered to evaluate improvement.

To ensure validity and reliability, expert validation was conducted by our tutor Diana Egas and also peer feedback. Students were also audio-recorded and observed while doing speaking activities to analyze their use of discourse markers. Field notes and assessment rubrics were used to collect data. According to Dörnyei (2007), a well-structured methodological strategy increases the reliability of findings and helps in drawing valid conclusions.

This research design was required to understand how students use discourse markers in oral discourse. The outcomes made a valuable contribution to teaching methods, allowing instructors to facilitate students' English communicative competence. The research not only yielded scholarly advantages but also provided implications for language acquisition and pedagogy.

Chart 3

Delimitation of Population and Sample

Element	Description	Source
Population	200 students from Universidad Central del Ecuador (6th–8th semesters), diverse academic backgrounds.	Researchers
Sample	92 students selected, ensuring validity, reliability, and B1+/B2 English proficiency.	Davies (2022)
Sampling Method	Non-probability purposive sampling with stratified representation of semesters.	Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim (2016); Creswell (2014)
Time Frame	2 weeks, morning and afternoon sessions.	
Research Approach	Quantitative, descriptive design focused on oral discourse marker use.	Creswell (2014); Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista (2014)
Validation	Tutor review, peer feedback, field notes, rubrics, and video recordings ensured reliability.	Dörnyei (2007)

Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

Description of the methodology

The methodology used in the study was a structured process that was broken into a number of steps, hence allowing a structured investigation of spontaneous discourse markers production among university students. The steps were a structured data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as a way of providing answers to the research aims.

Theoretical study stage

The first phase of research was theoretical research that was unavoidable because theoretical framework of this research had to be sketched. It was conducted through extensive literature review to detail variables in the existing research such as discourse markers, speaking ability, and communication strategies. In accordance with Brown (2004), he mentions that a good theoretical basis is essential in order to explain the nature of language acquisition and language use. It was at this phase that appropriate discourse markers were selected which were used in spoken English and also provided the opportunity to observe their frequency in students' speech at the preparatory level.

Several research articles, books, and academic papers constituted the theoretical foundation of this framework. Studies such as Schiffrin (1987) on discourse markers, Carter and McCarthy (2006) on spoken discourse, and Halliday and Hasan (1976) on discourse cohesion were particularly informative. Theoretically, the findings of those research studies were useful in delineating the variables, dimensions, and indicators of the research in the methodology.

Purpose of the theoretical study

The main objective of this stage was to orient and establish the research problem via the establishment of discourse markers and how they correspond with language proficiency. It also helped to explain the research work that had previously been done and establish gaps in the area of research. This background assisted in establishing the hypothesis and research problems and ensuring the study was grounded in previous research.

Research stages

By adopting this systematic methodology, the research was maintained concise, rational, and to the point in nature. Time devoted to theoretical study also contributed immensely toward framing an effective methodological plan that ultimately led to effective analysis of discourse markers in students' speech.

Theoretical study stage

In this stage, the researchers constructed a pedagogical model to motivate students' employment of discourse markers through classroom tactics. Also, the researchers create a sequence of group

discussion tasks that would elicit the group's employment of connectors like "however," "in contrast," "for example," and "in conclusion." Ur (1996) states that motivation and controlled tasks are the most important factors enabling risk-taking and language production among learners.

The researchers also examined the strategic competence theory proposed by Dörnyei (2007), who opined that learner need strategies for efficient management of communication, especially in real-time communication. The theoretical examination allowed us to frame the gap between what learners already know about the language and its practice. It was our academic basis for crafting our pedagogical proposal and interpreting upcoming outcomes.

Initial diagnostic stage

This stage tried to measure students' current use of discourse markers through classroom observation, diagnostic speaking activities, and questionnaires on Likert-scale.

The researchers watched students in free talk and group activity to monitor the natural stream of speech of the students. The results showed that students habitually hesitated, repeated simple words, and used very low frequencies of discourse markers. These results were supplemented by Richards (2008), which highlighted fluency and coherence in oral performance.

Survey responses also indicated that most of the students were not aware of the variety and function of discourse markers, a finding that was consistent with our observation. This initial diagnosis enabled us to determine significant areas of weakness in their oral skills, specifically organization of ideas and coherence of speech. The findings justified the need for an orchestrated intervention on discourse markers.

Proposal design stage

The researchers carried out class presentations in the fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters, where students were encouraged to apply discourse markers in practical, everyday situations. Instead of multiple tasks, each semester included one structured presentation activity designed to promote the use of connectors naturally in speech. These presentations were based on real-life topics to help students relate the content to their own experiences. At the end of this sequence, a small workshop was conducted where students had the chance to put into practice what they had learned,

using discourse markers strategically in short speaking activities. This progressive approach aimed to build their confidence and communicative competence gradually across the semesters.

Validation stage

In the final phase, the researchers again provided the speaking tasks and Likert-scale questionnaires to compare outcomes and observe the impact of our intervention. A significant improvement in students' organization of ideas and fluency was founded. As compared to the initial tasks, the students now employed a wider range of discourse markers, and their speech was smoother and more coherent.

This substantiates Thornbury's (2005) contention that guided practice can enhance fluency if learners have sufficient tools. The researchers also conducted class discussion to reflect on the learning process. Students told us that they felt more comfortable when speaking and knew how discourse markers help to convey ideas in simple terms. The comparative results of pretest and posttest diagnostics justified our proposal both practically and theoretically, which evidenced its effectiveness to enhance spoken English competence with the help of discourse markers.

Presentation of the diagnostic study results: analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings from the diagnostic stage

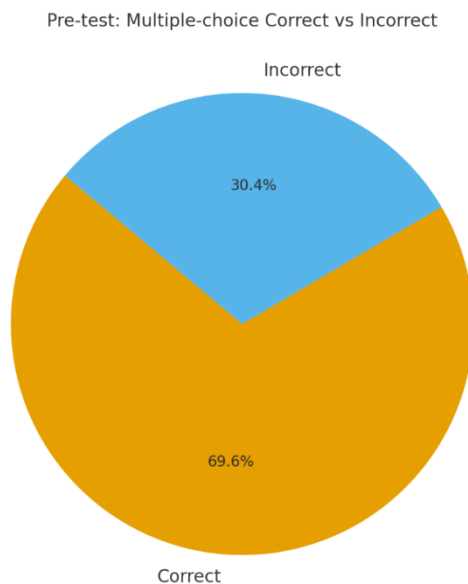
As a part of our research process, the researchers also conducted an initial diagnostic study in the form of a pre-test. The aim at this point was to gauge the current level of students in using discourse markers, specifically the connector *although*, which is critical in communicating contrast in written English. This pre-test allowed us to identify common errors and appreciate students' current use of this language feature in real communication. The test was a combination of multiple choice and sentence building. With this, the researchers were able to gather a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data for the preparation of the next stages of our proposal.

One of the key results from the multiple-choice section was that 30% of participants could not choose the correct answer. This result suggests a discrepancy between students' theoretical knowledge about discourse markers and their use in practice. The majority of students selected distractors which were grammatically correct but did not convey the intended contrastive meaning. This is a problem that suggests that the learners might understand how to employ the connector at

its most basic level but are unable to place it appropriately, perhaps limiting the learners' ability to express themselves effectively in written and spoken English.

Graphic 1

Pretest answers



Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

Other than the multiple-choice question, the candidates were also asked to provide original sentences using *although*. In this section, most of the errors appeared in subject-verb agreement, word order, punctuation, and the use of incomplete clauses. For example, some candidates provided: "Although I wanted to go the movies I couldn't do it," expressing missing prepositions and inadequate vocabulary. Some others wrote fragments like "I saw a movie the last week *although*," which doesn't have a second clause and is therefore grammatically incomplete. The constructions indicate that even though the students are attempting to use the connector, their command over grammar is still weak.

In the section on personal information, to complement information obtained through the pre-test, a diagnostic survey was administered to measure students' self-perceived English proficiency and knowledge of discourse markers in spoken and written discourse.

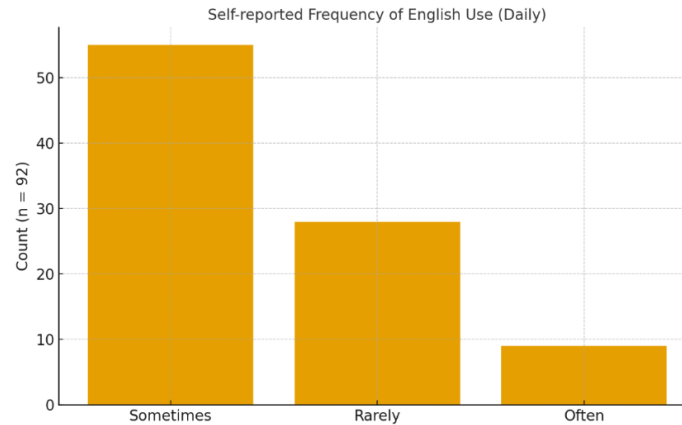
The survey consisted of four sections: personal information, language use in communication, confidence with connectors, and open-ended reflections. This tool was designed not only to validate the objective results obtained from the pre-test but also to examine students' metacognitive awareness of their use of language. As Burns (2010) argues, understanding students' perceptions and inclinations is important in order to design effective pedagogical interventions in second language learning.

Additionally, there was an inclination for describing uncertainty in sentences that compared ideas. Some sentences, including "Although," were written without the proper punctuation or a main clause. "I enjoy winter." or "Even though I didn't take English in high school, I did well in college." Though there isn't much structure or logic, these attempt to contrast ideas. "Although it was raining, we decided to go for a walk" was one of the few instances that achieved the desired outcome. Students have failed to grasp the use of discourse markers in academic writing, as seen by the inability to be accurate and varied.

Regarding daily language use, most students reported using English "sometimes" or "rarely" in their everyday lives. This limited exposure may explain the inconsistencies observed in their ability to apply discourse markers fluently. Nation (2013) highlights the importance of language input for the development of vocabulary and fluency, noting that learners who interact more frequently with the target language tend to internalize grammatical patterns and linking expressions more effectively. Therefore, students' reduced contact with authentic English contexts may contribute to their limited awareness and use of connectors.

Graphic 2

Daily use



Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

In the section about language use in communication, students were asked whether they used words such as *so*, *then*, or *well* to connect ideas when telling a story. Responses indicated that while these markers are familiar to some extent, their use is not consistent. Similarly, when asked about using contrastive discourse markers like *however* or *on the other hand* during discussions, many students reported using them “rarely” or “sometimes.” These findings suggest a developing understanding of how discourse markers function to organize meaning, especially in spoken interaction. Halliday and Hasan (1976) explain that cohesive devices are essential for text clarity, and their misuse or absence can lead to miscommunication, even if grammatical accuracy is maintained.

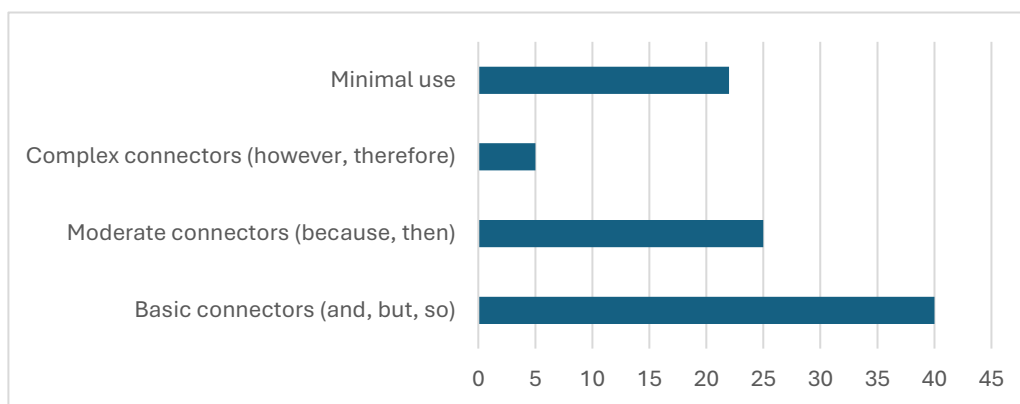
The survey also included open-ended questions to explore the students’ confidence in using discourse markers. Most respondents described themselves as “slightly confident” or “moderately confident” when asked if they could explain their ideas clearly using linking words. When asked to provide examples of words they might use in a presentation or debate, many students gave general connectors such as *and* or *but*, while very few used formal or academic transitions such as *nevertheless*, *consequently*, or *in contrast*. This reflects limited lexical range and a need for explicit instruction on how to use discourse markers effectively in different communicative contexts (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

As part of the diagnostic stage of our research, the researchers conducted a classroom observation during regular English and Linguistics classes of pre-service teachers. Our goal was to analyze how often and how effectively these students used discourse markers during natural communication in the classroom. These observations offered a more authentic picture of their oral

discourse patterns, without the pressure of performing specific tasks. As Ellis (2003) mentions, naturalistic observation allows researchers to detect real language behavior that structured tests might miss. The researchers wanted to see if students applied the discourse markers they theoretically recognized during their regular academic discussions.

Graphic 3

Marker's usage



Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

What the researchers observed was that the use of discourse markers in spoken communication was minimal. Most of the discourse markers heard in class were very basic and repetitive, such as *and*, *but*, *because*, and *then*. More complex or academic discourse markers—like *on the other hand*, *however*, *for example*, or *in conclusion*—were almost entirely absent. This finding contrasted with the results of the pre-test, in which students could often select the correct marker from a multiple-choice list. According to Thornbury (2005), spoken fluency involves not only vocabulary and grammar but also the effective organization of ideas through cohesive devices. In this case, students recognized the correct forms but did not seem to use them in real communication.

Furthermore, the classroom discourse showed that while students could participate in discussions and respond to questions, their speech often lacked cohesion. Sentences were short, disconnected, or loosely joined with basic connectors. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) explain, discourse markers are essential for coherence, acting as signposts for the listener. Without them, the listener must work harder to follow the speaker's ideas. Even though the students had adequate grammatical

competence, their limited use of cohesive devices resulted in fragmented and less impactful communication.

The lack of discourse marker usage may be explained by the context and focus of the classes. These were content-heavy sessions, focusing on Linguistics theory or English language structures, rather than on oral fluency or communication strategies. The absence of explicit instruction or modeling on how to use discourse markers in academic speaking could have affected their performance. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) emphasize that language input must be made meaningful and communicative to support productive skills. Without opportunities to practice discourse-level features like markers, students may fail to transfer their passive knowledge into active speaking.

Moreover, as these students are future teachers, the gap between knowledge and use of discourse markers becomes more concerning. As Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue, teaching discourse competence should begin with developing it in pre-service teachers themselves. Their limited use of connectors in academic discussions suggests a need for more awareness and training, not only to improve their fluency but also to prepare them to model such language for their own future learners.

The intervention stage of our research was designed to address the gaps identified in the diagnostic phase, particularly the limited use of discourse markers in spoken English among pre-service teachers. Over the course of one semester, the researchers implemented two targeted interventions in the form of speaking workshops. Each workshop aimed to develop both general oral proficiency and specific competence in using discourse markers effectively. As Harmer (2015) suggests, structured oral practice, when paired with explicit linguistic input, can significantly improve learners' ability to produce coherent speech. The workshops combined short lectures on marker functions with interactive activities to encourage active production and integration into speech.

In the first set of workshops, our focus was on raising students' awareness of discourse markers and their communicative value. The researchers introduced various categories additive (*moreover, in addition*), contrastive (*however, on the other hand*), and resultative (*therefore, as a result*)—and provided examples in authentic contexts. Students participated in guided speaking tasks such as opinion exchanges, storytelling, and informal debates, during which they received real-time

feedback on marker usage. As Ur (1996) points out, awareness-building is a crucial first step in helping learners move from passive recognition to active application of new language items.

Once students demonstrated awareness and basic control over discourse markers, the researchers progressed to the second phase of the intervention: simulated tasks modeled on the B2 First Cambridge speaking exam format. These tasks required students to engage in pair and group discussions, picture comparisons, and collaborative decision-making activities. According to Weir et al. (2013), such exam-style tasks mirror authentic communicative situations while maintaining a high level of linguistic challenge, making them ideal for promoting fluency and cohesion. The integration of discourse markers was monitored closely, with students encouraged to self-correct and experiment with varied expressions.

The results of these interventions indicated notable improvement. Compared to their pre-test performance, students demonstrated greater variety in marker choice, more appropriate placement within utterances, and increased fluency in longer speaking turns. This aligns with the findings of Richards (2008), who emphasizes that discourse markers contribute significantly to perceived fluency and coherence in oral production. Students also reported higher confidence levels when speaking, attributing this to both increased familiarity with the markers and the opportunity to practice them in realistic communicative scenarios.

One of the key strengths of the intervention was the combination of explicit instruction and experiential practice. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue that language features such as discourse markers require both form-focused teaching and functional practice to be fully internalized. Our workshops followed this principle by first presenting the markers in context, then requiring students to actively use them in communicative tasks where meaning-making was the priority. This approach not only improved accuracy but also encouraged spontaneous usage, bridging the gap identified during the diagnostic stage.

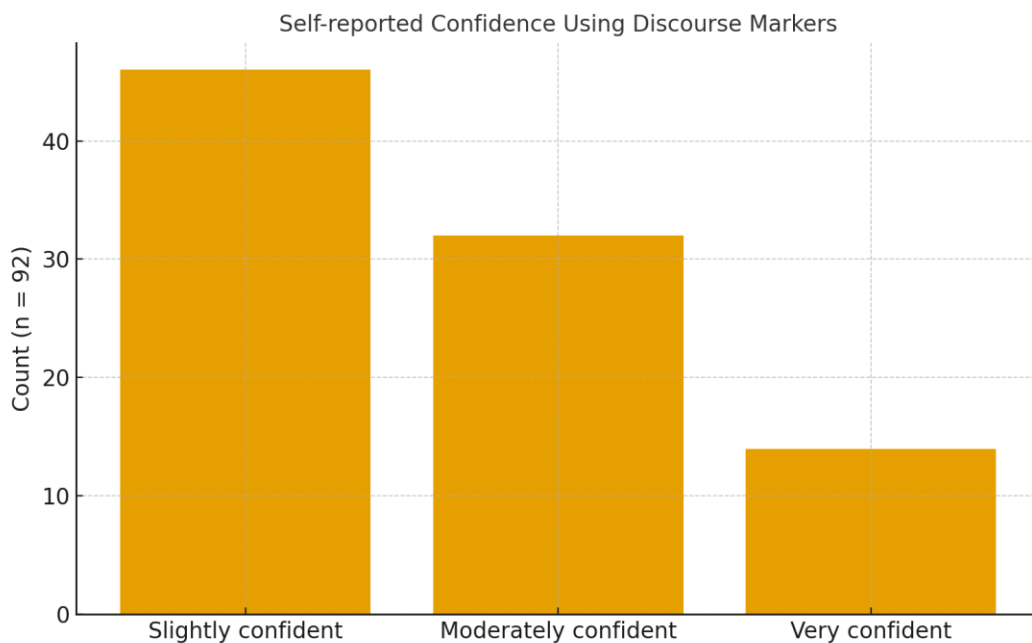
Nevertheless, certain challenges persisted. While the majority of students improved their range and control over discourse markers, a small number continued to rely heavily on basic connectors, particularly under time pressure. This supports Thornbury's (2005) observation that automatization of new language forms can take considerable time and repeated exposure. Future interventions may benefit from extending the number of workshops or integrating marker-focused

tasks more regularly into the curriculum. Overall, the intervention stage proved highly effective in enhancing both awareness and active use of discourse markers, contributing to more coherent and confident oral production among the participating students.

The diagnostic stage of our research provided a precise understanding of the students' initial abilities in using discourse markers within oral communication. Through the pre-test, the researchers identified that 30% of participants had difficulty recognizing the correct discourse marker in a multiple-choice format, which suggested limitations in both comprehension and contextual application. This result supported Fraser's (1999) assertion that discourse markers are not acquired automatically, even by advanced learners, without targeted instruction. The survey complemented these findings by showing that although many students rated discourse markers as "very important" or "extremely important," their confidence in using them during spontaneous speaking tasks remained low. This confirmed Dörnyei's (2007) point that strategic competence requires both knowledge and real communicative practice to be effective.

Graphic 4

Confidence



Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

Classroom observations offered further evidence, revealing that during regular English and linguistics classes, where students are being trained to be future teachers, discourse marker use was almost non-existent in their speech. When present, markers were restricted to basic ones like *and* or *but*, with almost no appearance of more complex forms such as *however*, *on the other hand*, or *in conclusion*. This pattern reflected Thornbury's (2005) argument that fluency and coherence are tied to the ability to link ideas effectively, and without explicit training, students tend to rely on a limited range of connectors.

The triangulation of these three instruments showed a consistent gap between recognition and production. Students could often identify markers in controlled exercises but failed to integrate them naturally into extended discourse. This gap was also influenced by a lack of structured oral tasks that encouraged the use of such markers, as their current academic activities were mostly focused on vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation, without attention to discourse-level cohesion.

Overall, the diagnostic stage confirmed that the challenge was not only a linguistic issue but a functional one: students needed guided practice to transform their passive recognition of discourse markers into active, fluent use. This phase provided a solid evidence base for designing the intervention, ensuring that activities directly targeted this gap. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, a strong diagnosis allows the intervention to be purposeful and efficient, while Richards and Rodgers (2014) highlight that the focus on communicative competence requires integrating cohesion devices into real speaking practice. This diagnostic analysis thus set the stage for a pedagogical response that could meaningfully improve the oral proficiency of our future English teachers.

Chapter conclusions

The diagnostic study confirmed that while students have theoretical knowledge of discourse markers, their utilization in oral production is limited in practice. This indicates the need for specific activities that go beyond recognition and stimulate active usage in communication.

The instruments employed, pre and post-tests, questionnaires, classroom observations, and recordings were effective enough to identify both the strengths and limitations of the learners. These tools offered no room for uncertainty while offering a general overview of their communicative competence and reinforcing the necessity of blending quantitative with qualitative data.

Population and sample analysis revealed that the final-semester students (6th, 7th, and 8th) have the appropriate level (B1+–B2) to benefit from this study. The range of background and experience among them enriched the findings and yielded results that are valid and can be generalized on a larger scale.

The results of this stage provide evidence of the need for interventions that aim at oral production and correct usage of discourse markers. This lays the foundation for the proposal laid out in the next chapter, where strategies and activities are designed to address the shortcomings revealed in the diagnostic stage.

CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION AND VALIDATION OF THE PROPOSAL

Modeling of the Proposal

The foundation of this proposal is based on the need to improve the oral communication skills of students in the English Language Teaching program at the Universidad Central del Ecuador, with a special focus on the use of discourse markers. The diagnostic stage revealed that although students could recognize certain discourse markers in written exercises, they rarely used them in spontaneous speech. This limitation affected their fluency, coherence, and ability to organize ideas effectively, as stated by Fraser (1999), who explains that discourse markers are essential for guiding listeners through the flow of speech.

This proposal is focused on Canale and Swain's (1980) principles of communicative competence, in particular its component of strategic competence, which helps speakers deal with gaps as well as maintain talk flowing. Dörnyei (2007) highlights also that controlled tasks, being a simulation of genuine processes of communication, enhance strategic competence. The proposal is aimed at incorporating explicit discourse marker practice in speaking sessions, with the goal of automatizing and naturalizing their use.

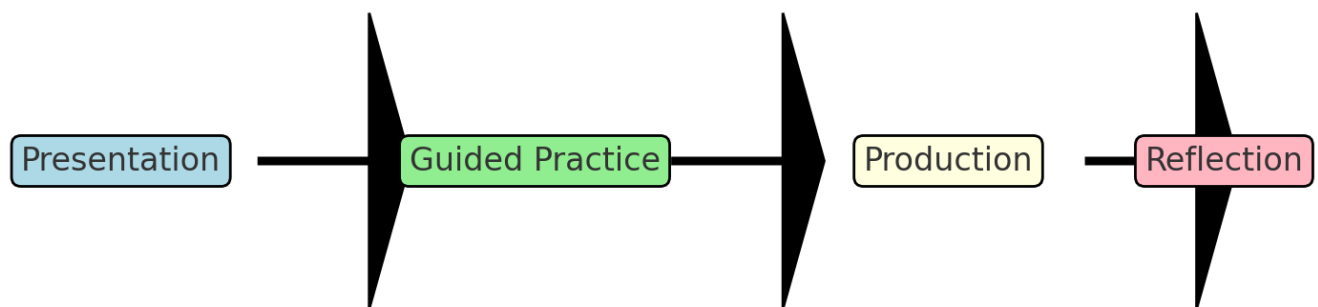
This proposal is innovative because it has two aspects: first, it increases students' awareness of the significance of discourse markers through targeted explanations, exemplifying examples, and identification exercises; then it provides students with the opportunity to create such markers through tasks modeled after the B2 First Cambridge speaking exam, employing an inductive approach. This framework ensures the learning process transitions from passive recognition to active production, effectively addressing the gap identified in the diagnostic phase.

Besides, the structure of the proposals is in close association with real student populations' needs. The proposal involves a sequence of intervention workshops over a course of two semesters, well-structured in terms of goals, materials, and indicators for evaluation. This, in its turn, ensures a progression along a discernible improvement. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), a proposal in language teaching, which is successful, must derive from a context-based approach, rooted in tasks, and well-adapted to learners' needs in their professional futures.

Overall, the basis of this proposal, in terms of its theoretical and practical underpinning, lies not only in filling a linguistic gap, but in advancing aspiring English teachers' communicative and professional competence. Through a narrow focus upon discourse markers, the proposal encourages clearer, more coherent, and compelling oral discourse, a skill which will operate powerfully upon teaching competence as well as student achievement.

Graphic 5

Practice



Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

General Objective

- To evaluate the effectiveness of specific discourse markers in improving the clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of spoken English among university students.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess how often and how effectively students use discourse markers in their spoken English.
2. To improve students' ability to structure oral presentations using a variety of appropriate discourse markers.
3. To develop strategies that help students speak more fluently by reducing unnecessary pauses and integrating discourse markers naturally into their speech.

Characteristics of the Proposal

The proposal aimed at fulfilling a particular need in English language instruction: effective and proper usage of discourse markers in speech. The proposal was defined by a practical and applied approach, examining the real situations encountered by university students who are enrolled in English Language Teaching. The activities and strategies employed were designed based on findings in the diagnostic phase, where results indicated that although students could enumerate a few discourse markers, it was difficult for them to utilize a few discourse markers effectively in spontaneous speech.

The other significant feature is that the proposal integrates practice and theory. The proposal is grounded in theories of linguistics and pedagogies of discourse markers, oral fluency, and communicative competence (Fraser, 1999; Thornbury, 2005). Meanwhile, it covers hands-on speaking workshops, controlled practice, and B2 First Cambridge exam-inspired exercises. This integration guarantees that not only does the student learn about discourse markers, but they are also exposed to opportunities to practice them in a meaningful setting.

A core feature of this proposal is that, consciously, it does not only focus on grammar or vocabulary. Instead, it employs a communicative approach in which effective and natural speaking ability in English is highlighted. The approach aims at yielding lasting knowledge through giving learners functional tools usable in real situations. Since learners are potential future English teachers, there is a point of focalization where communication helps develop professional competence in such a manner, that, as teachers, they are in a position to guide their own learners toward fluent and coherent speech.

It is also unique in terms of flexibility. The activities could be modified based on how well students know English and particular communication requirements. In addition, through pre- and post-tests, observation of classes, and surveys, the proposal may be assessed and refined as time progresses, allowing for its continuous enhancement.

Lastly, the proposal's novelty comes in its targeted intervention; rather than addressing speaking in general, it concentrates on discourse markers, a particular linguistic feature that has a direct impact on the coherence, fluency, and persuasiveness of discourse when spoken. By addressing a

specific gap in students' speaking performance, the concept fosters improved academic and professional speaking skills.

Structure and dynamics

The proposal structure was formulated taking into consideration the type of research conducted, which was enhancing students' oral communicative competence via proper utilization of discourse markers. Being pedagogical in nature, the proposal consists of interrelated elements addressing the problem in a systematic process. The elements were planned in such a way as to take students from awareness, then to practice, so as to ensure meaningful and sustainable development in the longer scheme of things (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The diagnostic phase was carried out first, which provided empirical basis for our proposition. The findings of the pre-test, questionnaire, and classroom observation allowed us to establish consistently that students acknowledged knowing some discourse markers, but hardly used them in real speech situations. These results were essential in tracking the trajectory of interventions and strategies to implement in practice (Creswell, 2014). Without a complete grasp of students' current skills and difficulties, it would have been highly challenging to create pertinent and effective activities.

The second component is the pedagogic foundation, where communicative language teaching methods are utilized in to produce fluency and coherence in speaking ability. Differently to isolated grammar or lexis teaching, there was focus on the exploitation of discourse markers in meaningful contexts. Such teaching adheres to Larsen-Freeman's (2000) realization were communication, not correctness in itself, must be the focus in language teaching. The task was built on natural approach tasks such as story tellings, group discussions, and mini-presentations in which discourse markers were occurring spontaneously as part of the speech.

The third part involved is intervention stage. It was carried out over two academic semesters. The researchers organized a series of workshops during this time, with the aim of enhancing the awareness level of students as well as their use of discourse markers. The initial stage introduced the idea and importance of these connectors, accompanied by examples and performance practice. Subsequently, the second phase included B2 First Cambridge speaking task-inspired activity that offered chances to students to practice using discourse markers in debates, monologues, as well as

in dialogues. The active combination of foundations along with performance-oriented activities, encouraged active participation and involvement during the process (Harmer, 2007).

Another riveting element is the process of evaluation, which made it possible to estimate the influence of intervention. The post-tests and self-report indicated substantial improvement in oral fluency and coherence among the students. Not only did the students use a higher number of discourse markers, but, even more importantly, they used them more effectively to segment ideas, signal contrast, give examples, and continue. This ideal result verifies our suggested format as effective and applicable to future academic and professional growth for teachers of English as a foreign language (Brown, 2004).

Finally, proposal activities were described as dynamic and reflective. Students were not passive recipients of teaching but active participants in building their own knowledge. The proposal provided self-knowledge, peer feedback, and growing independence in speaking production. With a student-centered approach, it facilitated the building of long-term communicative ability rather than through memorization short term (Littlewood, 2004). This is how its elements stacked up organically to meet the general and specific research objectives.

Requirements and criteria based on nature and scope

Due to the pedagogical and formative character of this proposal, founded as it is in the consolidation of spoken competence by means of the utilization of discourse markers, it is therefore important to describe a sequence of demands and conditions which will guarantee, in a first place, its effectiveness, and, in a second place, its viability. Because the target group is preservice English teaching university students, not only must the proposal be focused on cultivating speaking skills, but it must also comply with academic standards set by teachers' education programs.

One of the basic needs of the proposal is dedicated space for oral production. Such spaces would be more than available in typical classrooms and would provide ample, meaningful, and real interaction. The interventions, in the way of speaking workshop sessions, should provide space for students to practice fluency, develop vocabulary usage, and become accustomed to the use of a marker in context. Per Aenfis Texcoco, to achieve a basic level of fluency, 480-720 hours will be required; for more advanced levels such as C1 or C2, as many as 1200 hours may be required. This

stresses the significance of generating in- and out-of-class practice space regularly, especially among those students who aspire to model the language professionally.

Secondly, the proposal should be founded on communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches, in which interaction and fluency take precedence over grammar rule memorization. Implementation criteria include facilitating conversational spontaneity, cohesion and coherence building, and inviting students to employ more lexical and pragmatic devices, including connectors, transitions, and agreement/disagreement expressions. These markers are very useful tools when it comes to structuring speech as well as when it comes to communicating ideas efficiently, especially in formal or academic conversations.

Proposals must also be structured to institutional and international standards. Interventions must also particularly match CEFR B1 and B2 level descriptions, focusing on conveying a message correctly, structuring ideas, and recounting events. B2 speakers, for example, must use a limited range of cohesive devices to link sentences into clear, coherent discourse (Council of Europe, 2018). In this instance, the initial requirement is to select speaking practice and materials that closely resemble real speech, e.g., simulations of the Cambridge B2 First spoken exam.

Additionally, the criteria should be made clear to assess the impact of the proposal. These are students' fluency in speech, frequency use and appropriacy of discourse markers, and their self-rated confidence in engaging in spoken interaction. Measurement using observation rubrics, peer assessment, and video recordings of speaking activities will allow for comprehensive and reflective monitoring of students' progress. The assessment process should also take into account language variety and individual learning requirements, so that all the students are equally advantaged by the interventions.

Finally, there is a need for considering the feasibility and transferability of the proposal. Feasibility of the speaking workshops relies on the conditions of teacher preparation, availability of materials, and administrative support for implementing active and student-centered teaching approaches. Regarding participants' professional experience, the proposed workshops not only upgrade their speaking skills, but provide teachers with an example of communicative teaching methods, which will potentially serve in their own teaching practice afterwards. Such dual-purpose favors applicability and time span of the proposal.

Demonstrations and Examples

The proposal was in the form of a sequence of speaking tasks designed to enable students to practice discourse markers in real communication. The tasks borrowed their format from the Cambridge B2 First (FCE) speaking test, which emphasizes fluency, coherence, and interaction. By adhering to an international standard, the proposal enabled students to practice under conditions that are very close to real language exams and working environments.

The activities were created with a communicative approach, giving more emphasis on fluency and coherence than on discrete lexis or grammar. This was because grammar per se cannot ensure communication and discourse markers play an important role in speech organization and giving the speech a more natural sound. Students were asked to speak freely, connect their statements, and comment on the use of connectors such as however, actually, on the other hand, and so.

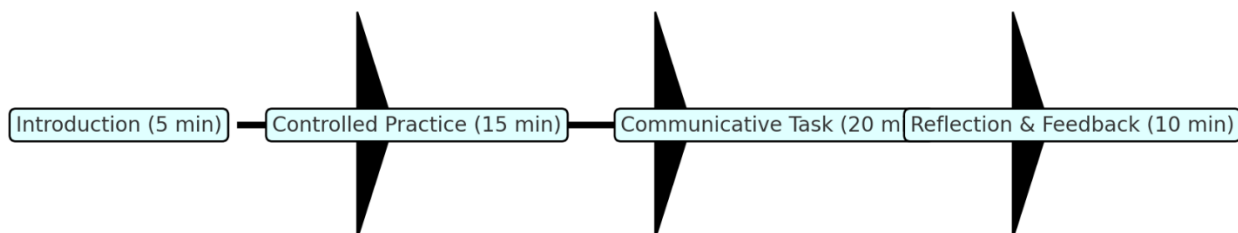
The activities incorporated real-life examples to make it meaningful and practically applicable. For example, they discussed common subjects such as social media, education, and daily routines while incorporating markers into the responses. It brought to their realization that markers are not only helpful during an academic speaking activity but also in everyday conversations. It has reduced anxiety levels and increased their confidence while speaking the language.

Another feature of the proposal that was important was the gradual order of the activities. During the initial stages, the students did highly controlled activities within short conversations for the identification and practice of markers. Subsequently, they were engaged in longer tasks such as pair work and role-plays and even in small group discussions where markers are required to maintain coherence. Hence, a gradual process was followed where students could gradually hone their skills by taking them to more advanced situations.

Finally, a small workshop was incorporated at the end of each cycle in which students rehearsed all that they had performed in a simulated speaking test such as the FCE exam. The workshops allowed students to demonstrate improvement in marker usage and fluency and receive peer and instructor comments. Through this, the proposal not only improved their speaking but also prepared them for real academic and working demands.

Graphic 6

Practice framework



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2025

Chart 4

Speaking Activities for Proposal Accompaniment

Activity	Description	Discourse Markers Practiced	Example
Guided Debate: “Let’s talk about social media”	Students worked in pairs to discuss a topic, similar to Part 3 of the FCE speaking exam.	Contrast markers: <i>however, although, on the other hand</i>	“I agree that social media has negative effects. However , it also allows people to connect and learn from each other.”
Storytelling Exercise: “My worst day ever”	Students told a short personal story, similar to Part 2 (Long Turn).	Sequence markers: <i>first, then, after that, finally</i> Cause/effect markers: <i>because, so, as a result</i>	“ First , I woke up late. Then I missed the bus. As a result , I failed my test.”

Source: Authors' elaboration, 2025

Methods of Application, Implementation, and Evaluation

Application

This project is implementable by constructing a new workshop or course in oral production, designed to better the speaking and communicative skills of students. The course shall not address grammar and vocabulary directly, but rather the manner in which students speak in real contexts, with specific emphasis on the use of discourse markers. The goal is to allow learners to utilize English more naturally, clearly, and confidently as future English teachers who will model for their own students.

The course is based on the premise that systematic speaking practice is necessary to become fluent. The minimum number of hours it can take to attain basic fluency varies between 480 and 720, whereas advanced levels like C1 or C2 may take up to 1200 hours, as cited by Texcoco Aenfis (2023). So, the course must be organized in incremental speaking practice, with students constantly encouraged to take part and grow. The project offers a well-planned context in which oral production is located at the center of learning.

A variety of tasks would be included in this course in order to supply structure and creativity. Students would be involved in telling stories, debates, role-plays, and presentations, all well-managed but with clear goals in terms of fluency, coherence, and effective use of discourse markers. These tasks simulate real contexts without losing the classroom environment supportive and focused so that students can develop their performance and confidence gradually.

The outcomes for this project should go beyond practice within the classroom. Students should be graduating with at least C1 level of oral competence, which is the standard for effective communication in scholarly and international settings. But in the labor market, at least B2 is typically required, especially for teaching professionals or working abroad. This means that the project not only fulfills the immediate academic demands of the students but also prepares them with skills they can utilize for their future career development.

Finally, this course has the potential to have a lasting impact on the professional life of the students. By becoming able to manage discourse markers and improve oral fluency, they will feel more confident in exams, teaching practice, and professional interviews. At the same time, they will be able to keep learning and developing professionally since the foundation set in this course can

serve as the basis for development up to greater heights of communication. By so doing, the proposal not only answers an immediate academic requirement but encourages lifelong learning and career success.

Implementation

This proposal is feasible in the latter semesters of the university course when students already have the maturity and language background to react to more complicated speaking tasks. In these cases, the learners are more aware of their academic and working demands, and they can apply organized practice designed to fluency and coherence. The workshop or course is designed to prepare them not only for immediate scholarly demands but also for their future professional lives as language teachers.

The program's design is uncomplicated yet efficient: one-hour class sessions, two times a week, which ensure continuity without filling up the students' calendars. Each session addresses actual communication in tasks close to what can be found in the Cambridge B2 First exam, for instance, longer turns for speaking, two-way discussions, and group debates. By mirroring these natural settings, the course guarantees that students achieve functional skills that conform to international levels of language measurement.

Every lesson introduces and rehearses a few discourse markers, e.g., however, on the other hand, in addition. The students then rehearse these markers in speaking activities where they are encouraged to use them naturally. In this manner, students not only achieve fluency but also learn to organize their ideas in a logical manner. Discourse markers then form part of their communicative repertoire, rather than discrete items to memorize.

The course also emphasizes the importance of support and feedback from the instructor. According to the British Council (2019), productive skills such as speaking develop best when students receive continuous input and situated practice. Teachers play a key role in doing so by offering correction, guidance, and modeling. Through this support, students feel empowered to try out speaking, which is essential to develop higher levels of proficiency.

Finally, this proposal ensures a safe and interactive classroom environment where the students can grow as communicators and future teachers. By acting out high levels of speaking, they acquire the skill and confidence that they require to excel in their career. The skills they learn, smooth

speaking, logical organization, and effective use of discourse markers will not only be the base of academic success but of their careers in teaching and other professional pursuits.

Evaluation

The assessment process within this proposal then combined formative and summative methods, with the focus at first on a brief end-of-test. This test facilitated an increase in the use by students of discourse markers to be recorded, showing that the intervention was yielding a positive effect. Of value as a starting point for monitoring development, this type of assessment was limited in range and did not take account of the whole of language development.

This is the reason why follow-up applications of the proposal should include more holistic and diverse evaluation tools. Approaches such as portfolios, targeted rubrics, and reflective journals can provide a more accurate picture of students' performance in the long run. These can allow teachers and students to track not only correctness and frequency of marker use, but also fluency gains, coherence improvements, and confidence increases in speaking.

Formative assessment plays a key role in this endeavor. Throughout sessions, frequent feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment can help students learn about their strengths and weaknesses. This reflective practice leads to autonomy, and hence the students become independent in terms of what they learn. It also helps teachers to make adjustments in instruction to meet individual needs and learning styles.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, would be employed to assess the overall impact of the proposal. It could entail controlled speaking tests, presentations, and role-play tests, wherein discourse markers are assessed in coherent and purposeful tasks. By complementing summative exams with formative tools, assessment is made more balanced and reliable so that results reflect both short-term achievement and long-term development.

Finally, this balanced approach to assessment serves not only language acquisition but also professional training. Students being taught under this system not only develop communicative competence but are also introduced to methods of assessment which they can apply in their own classrooms. This way, assessment becomes a means both for learning and professional growth.

Resources and beneficiaries

This proposal involves minimal human resources, making it pragmatic and sustainable within the university context. The major players are the students themselves who are directly involved in the activities and the instructor who does the preparation, facilitation, and evaluation of the learning process. This minimal structure enables the project to be implemented without the need for large additional staff or high costs.

The teacher's role is central to the success of the proposal. Besides teaching, the teacher provides continuous feedback, monitors the use of discourse markers, and maintains communicative and functional activities. The teacher also prepares the assessment procedure and schedules opportunities for the students to practice fluency and coherence in real-life speaking contexts.

Subsequently, other academic researchers may enter to refine the proposal. These include teachers of related subjects, academic counselors, and language coordinators who may provide advice or help extend the project into other courses. Their stamp of approval might give the proposal institutional credibility, merging it into the mainstream curriculum rather than an isolated effort.

The students themselves play a dual role in this exercise. They are, on the one hand, learners who are actively engaged in working on their own to develop their oral skills. They are, on the other hand, potential teachers who are expecting to instruct their own students in the use of discourse markers and effective communication. This dual role makes their participation all the more important, as they learn not just for themselves but also for teaching in the future.

By doing so, the proposal creates a multiplier effect. By teaching English teaching students how to use discourse markers and effectively communicate, the project indirectly makes their future classrooms better. As future representatives of this method, they can reapply the techniques they experienced, which will allow their own learners to become fluent and naturally speak. This is so that the impact of the proposal is greater than on one group and is a contribution to the teaching community as a whole.

Material and Technological resources

One of the major advantages of the proposal is that it does not take a lot of material resources. Most tasks can be accomplished using simple tools such as worksheets, printed materials, notebooks,

and rubrics. These are accessible, low-cost tools with which both the teachers and the students can concentrate on the communicative objectives of the proposal rather than complex logistics. As Richards (2015) describes, successful practice in speech is more a matter of effective interaction quality in the classroom than of rich resources.

Technology is an essential complementary resource, however. Audio and video recordings, for example, can be used to tape student improvement, provide feedback, and allow learners to listen back to their own oral performance. Thornbury (2019) further contributes that employing recordings in speaking lessons allows students to better gauge strengths and weaknesses since they can listen back and analyze their own speech. Technology in this proposal is not a destination but an enabler of reflective and interactive learning.

Online tools are also useful for collaboration and assessment. Google Docs and shared folders served to collect evidence of student work, maintain feedback, and share materials. This kind of use of cloud-based tools promotes collaboration and transparency in learning. Online platforms, as noted by Godwin-Jones (2020), provide greater learner autonomy in the sense that they allow students to access materials anytime and engage in collaborative knowledge construction.

Interestingly, the use of discourse markers in production is not dependent on expensive materials but on skilled direction and structured practice chance. The proposal suggests that cohesion and fluency are achieved if students are instructed to use markers naturally in real speech contexts. In this regard, teacher guidance and well-crafted tasks are more important than the quantity of materials. This also accords with Harmer's (2015) belief that language development is less a question of method and practice than of a material surplus.

All in all, the proposal demonstrates that with inexpensive resources and judicious investment in technology, significant enhancement in students' communicative competence can be achieved. With low-cost materials, recordings, and internet resources, the project is still cost-effective but offers avenues for students' growth. Sustaining a balanced proportion of old and new resources, the proposal becomes sustainable and adaptable across different learning environments.

Chart 5

Material and Technological Resources Used in the Proposal

Type of Resource	Examples	Purpose/Function	Source
Traditional Materials	Worksheets, printed sheets, notebooks, rubrics	Provide structure for activities, organize tasks, and guide assessment	Richards (2015)
Digital Tools	Audio and video recordings	Allow self-reflection, feedback, and progress tracking in oral production	Thornbury (2019)
Online Platforms	Google Docs, shared folders	Support collaboration, store evidence, and promote learner autonomy	Godwin-Jones (2020)
Pedagogical Guidance	Teacher explanations, feedback, modeling	Ensure correct and natural use of discourse markers through structured practice	Harmer (2015)

Source: Adapted from Richards (2015), Thornbury (2019), Godwin-Jones (2020), and Harmer (2015).

Methodological and academic resources

The methodology foundations of this research lie in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Cambridge B2 First (FCE) exam. Both of these global standards describe what students can do at each stage, in the way of communicative competence, and not their particular grammar rules or vocabulary. This ensures that the proposal aligns with recognized measures for language learning and assessment and is thus credible and transferable to broader educational contexts.

The approach used is task-based and communicative because the learners are trained to express their feelings and ideas in real-life situations. As asserted by Nunan (2004), "language is best learned when it is used to carry out real tasks." This allows the learners not only to learn forms and structures but also to feel a sense of effective communication, thus making learning more effective

and long-lasting. This is especially the case for future English teachers, who must exemplify real communication to their students.

The proposal concentrates on fluency and coherence rather than accuracy alone. Thornbury (2005) observes that fluency and confidence in speaking are essential since they allow the learners to produce speech naturally even where there are some errors along the way. In prioritizing markers in discourse, the proposal provides students with the tools to make their speech coherent and move more smoothly, leading to enhanced fluency directly.

The second important academic aspect is the presence of Cambridge-style speaking activities, i.e., long turns, pair discussions, and collaborative tasks. These activities capture the format of the FCE exam but in a classroom-friendly way. They provide structure and authenticity, and they allow students to work on communication strategies while practicing in safe and supportive contexts.

To conclude, the selected academic and methodological materials create a solid pedagogical framework. In line with the CEFR, Cambridge B2 First, and communicative methodology and complemented by Nunan and Thornbury's ideas, the proposal does not only guarantee linguistic knowledge but also communicative competence. This prepares them for academic achievement and professional life as language teachers in advance.

Chart 6

Methodological and academic resources

Framework	Focus/Description	Purpose in Proposal	Source
CEFR (Council of Europe)	Defines communicative competence at different proficiency levels	Aligns learning outcomes with international standards	Council of Europe (2018)

Cambridge First (FCE)	B2	Exam with authentic speaking tasks	Provides real-life models for speaking activities	Cambridge Assessment (2020)
Communicative Approach		Learning through meaningful tasks and contexts	Encourages fluency, coherence, and natural speech	Nunan (2004)
Fluency over Accuracy		Confidence and fluency prioritized in speaking tasks	Supports logical and natural use of discourse markers	Thornbury (2005)

Source: Adapted from Council of Europe (2018), Cambridge Assessment (2020), Nunan (2004), and Thornbury (2005).

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries

The immediate beneficiaries are the students in the teaching program at the university. By using discourse markers in speech more effectively, they become proficient and confident. These are skills that benefit them not only when it comes to giving presentations at the university but as teachers as well when they will be required to guide others. Making fluent speech, using the discourse markers properly, and connecting ideas logically are essential skills for future teachers.

Students also benefit from being at a higher communicative competence level, one that is internationally comparable like the CEFR and the Cambridge B2 First test. They are therefore better equipped to face academic and professional challenges outside the university. For teaching students, this advantage comes into sharp focus, since it allows them to become models for their future pupils.

Indirect beneficiaries

Students and instructors can be helped similarly under this proposal. Instructors of English from other universities can replicate this concept and stage similar workshops or strategies. University staff or scholars can apply the findings to create subsequent academic interventions. This study also offers evidence for additional studies on English oral production, particularly in the Ecuadorian context, where speaking is a part of language learning that is underdeveloped.

University administrators and scholars are also indirect beneficiaries, since the findings of this study can be applied to inform the design of future interventions and curriculum developments. The findings provide evidence for policy and academic programs offering greater focus on spoken language production, which is a neglected skill in the majority of Ecuadorian language programs.

Finally, the proposal also makes a contribution to the field of English language teaching research. By way of documentation of the role of discourse markers in oral communication, the research opens avenues for future research, comparative studies, and action research studies. This is an addition to the academic growth of the institution as well as ongoing improvement of methodologies improving language teaching worldwide.

Institutional and educational impact

Its institutional value is in the ability to be included in the formal curriculum. Once activities such as practice in discourse markers, oral production classes, or certain workshops are institutionalized, students will benefit predictably in the long run. With transition from the piecemeal interventions of the past to systematic programs, universities can ensure that speaking skills are prioritized on par with grammar, vocabulary, and writing. This provides for a strong, well-balanced language program.

Among the long-term advantages is putting in place specialized oral production seminars or courses in discourse markers. These would offer students systematic practice in fluency, coherence, and logical speech structure. According to Aenfis Texcoco (2023), to achieve a basic level of fluency, students learn 480–720 hours; to achieve C1 or C2, students learn 700–1200 hours. This shows the massive time investment required, which needs to be considered by universities when organizing their curriculum.

The academic impact of the proposal is also relevant. Through incorporation of these communicative activities, institutions help the students become better speakers, and this is essential to academic success and professional preparedness. Oral competence is not an option but inherent to them as teachers for instructors who educate students in particular, since they must guide others in the development of the same abilities.

Furthermore, the proposal promotes a shift towards communicative and functional learning. Instead of being concerned with form or with knowledge of language in discrete terms, it focuses on the use of language in context. This aligns with international language teaching trends and prepares institutions to meet international standards such as the CEFR and Cambridge exams.

In brief, the proposal offers an avenue for institutions to bridge the gap between practice and theory in teaching English language. Through the inclusion of oral production and discourse markers in the normal program, universities can establish long-term positive effects on student performance as well as support educational practice innovation. Such an impact extends beyond the student community to encompass the broader teaching community, giving it longevity in relevance.

Validation of the proposal

The process of proposal validation was undertaken through a qualitative and reflective approach. The proposal was initially reviewed by a seasoned English Language Teaching specialist with exposure to communicative language teaching and curriculum design. The specialist reviewed the structure, objectives, activities, and expected outcomes, and provided useful feedback on how to improve theory-practice linkage. Besides, the proposal was applied in actual classroom situations in the fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters. The classroom tests enabled us to see how the students reacted to activities on discourse markers and oral communication. Their reactions, feedback, and performance were crucial evidence to verify that the proposal was suitable and practicable. As O'Malley and Chamot (1990) explain, The use of strategies in real learning tasks provides authentic opportunities to validate instructional methods. Thus, the validation was not just practical but also theoretical, with immediate feedback from students and teachers alike. This made the process all-encompassing, reliable, and useful for future use in similar school settings.

Instruments for validation

For the sake of validating the efficiency and usability of the proposal, various tools were employed prior to and after the intervention process. The tools were selected based on the scope of the project as well as its communicative aims, and all were validated by our academic tutor responsible for verifying the research project.

First, the researchers began by giving a pre-test and post-test to measure students' progress in the use of discourse markers in oral production. These tests were based on B1-B2 level speaking tasks, including structured prompts similar to those of the FCE exam. This allowed us to measure student performance before and after intervention, offering tangible evidence of improvement.

Second, a survey was employed to gather students' views about the usefulness of workshops and activities. The survey included open-ended questions as well as multiple-choice ones in order to learn more about students' attitudes and problems. Dornyei (2007) explains that surveys are effective tools in second language research to conduct systematic research on learners' opinions.

Third, a class observation schedule based on the Likert scale was used throughout sessions. The schedule included essential indicators such as fluency, interaction, spontaneous application of discourse markers, and speaking confidence. In addition, the researchers recorded specific instances of interaction that showed improvement or issues, which were utilized as supporting material in analysis.

Moreover, the tasks and tools were supplemented by my previous experience of conducting such pedagogical projects at the university level. In addition, recommendations were considered from a peer instructor, who read the proposal and provided suggestions based on their teaching experience.

Altogether, these tools provided both quantitative and qualitative data that contributed to the validation of the proposal. They also confirmed the feasibility and positive impact of the suggested strategies for improving speaking skills and communicative competence in future English teachers.

Validation results

The process of validation revealed positive findings both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. Our academic tutor's feedback verified that the instruments employed were valid and in accordance with the research objectives. The global organization and direction of the proposal,

particularly the focus on enhancing oral production with discourse markers, were regarded as valid and coherent with our context of teaching.

The most significant insights came from the class observation sessions, which provided real and detailed evidence of students' performance. The use of the Likert-scale rubric, along with recorded examples of student interaction, allowed us to clearly identify moments of progress, hesitation, or natural use of markers. This tool helped us see how students were transferring what they had practiced into real oral situations, which was key to confirming the effectiveness of the intervention.

In addition, the post-test results showed better organization and fluency in students' speech compared to the pre-test. There was also a visible improvement in the way they used discourse markers to structure their ideas and maintain coherence. Although not every student improved at the same rate, the general tendency was positive and supported the proposal's goals.

Student responses to the survey also indicated satisfaction with the workshop and activity sessions. Most students indicated greater confidence that they could speak English and were more conscious of how the use of discourse markers would help them. This response served as a second validation layer by demonstrating how students viewed their own improvement.

In short, the validation process guaranteed the proposal was capable of developing communicative competence in students. The integration of test, observation, and students' comments provided guarantee that the approach worked not just efficiently but also durably for application in future teaching, particularly by students who were fated to be English teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of some discourse markers in improving spoken English among students at the university level. Through theoretical analysis and practical application, the aim was achieved. The results showed that students became sensitized to the use of discourse markers in a natural way to organize speech, express opinions, and maintain coherence. The integration of practice exercises, workshops, and feedback gave students opportunities to put into practice these markers within actual communication settings.

The first objective was to identify how often and how effectively the students used discourse markers. This was achieved through pre- and post-tests and observations in the classroom. The comparison of the two events revealed observable improvement in the frequency and accuracy of students' use of markers like "on the other hand," "first of all," and "as a result." Observation of classes, supported by a Likert-scale rubric, confirmed that the students used more markers and did so more confidently and by the end of the intervention.

The second objective was on enhancing students' ability to structure their oral presentations using proper discourse markers. This was addressed by controlled speaking practices such as class talks and mini-workshops in which students needed to make short speeches or comments. The practices required them to use markers as a tool to link ideas logically. Both peer and teacher commentaries served to highlight the importance of organization and coherence. The empirical results confirmed that students were better able to deliver coherent and organized messages during the final sessions.

The third objective of developing ways to make the students speak more fluently, especially by reducing pauses and promoting the natural use of markers. Although fluency takes time to develop, there was a noticeable improvement in the way the students handled speaking tasks. Some of the students reported that they felt more confident and prepared to speak in class, and class presentation recordings reflected less hesitation and more fluid speech. These results were in line with the communicative approach promoted in the research.

Theoretically, the study was adequately supported by literature. Authors like Fraser (1999) and Schiffrrin (1987) referred to the functional importance of discourse markers to face-to-face conversation and informed our design choices in relation to the activities. Literature also identified

that there had been little or no teaching of discourse markers as such, especially in speaking contexts, a gap this proposal aimed to address.

Finally, the empirical research confirmed that integrating discourse markers in speaking tasks is both practical and beneficial, especially when it comes to the training of future teachers. The research demonstrated that students were able to advance not only their technical use of language but also their overall communicative competence. This confirms that the methodology implemented was well adapted to the students' needs and the objectives of the teaching program.

RECOMENDATIONS

There are several important considerations that must be taken into consideration in subsequent studies or practice. One, while this project reached its initial goals, it also faced setback in terms of time, bureaucracy, and institutional realities. University procedures, like administrative clearance and liaison with different departments, caused delays. This is normal in education research and must be accounted for early enough to allow for future studies. These difficulties revealed that although there is interest in innovation, external factors can hinder progress.

Another issue of relevance was that there was insufficient time within the semester. The researchers were provided with minimal time (two hours a week), which made it difficult to explore further activities such as extended speaking practice or more complex production tasks. In addition, timetables for students and workload sometimes affected students' motivation and participation. These are common conditions in real academic settings, but they should be taken into account when developing future proposals that require uniformity and reflection.

The university curriculum structure was also a factor. There isn't a great deal of room for a subject focused exclusively on oral production or discourse markers, even though future English teachers clearly need it. This research proposes that it would be a worthwhile contribution to the development of future professionals' fluency and communication ability to create a new subject or to include workshops with a focus on production. Aenfis Texcoco (2023) estimates that to reach B1 fluency, between 480 and 720 hours of exposure are required, and for C1 or C2 levels, between 700 and 1200 hours, hardly attained without extra spaces.

Technological tools were also a challenge. Some students did not have access to devices or stable internet connections during some sessions. Although basic and accessible tools were used, these limitations affected how often students could record or review oral tasks. Future projects could benefit from better access to digital tools, or at least from training students on how to use the available ones more effectively in speaking practice.

Despite these limitations, one positive outcome that has emerged from this is that the topic has started to generate interest. Other academics and instructors are now beginning to address discourse markers, especially in the speaking domain. This project can serve as a blueprint to allow others to frame more specific learning goals and production strategies. It offers a practical

demonstration of how theory and practice can be linked through feasible classroom-based interventions.

Finally, it should be mentioned that discourse markers not only assist in speech. At more advanced levels, such as C1 and C2, learners need to use discourse markers in order to structure written form, especially in academic writing, literature, and business communication. Discourse markers help learners express themselves clearly, connect ideas, and show coherence and cohesion. Therefore, any future projects need to incorporate writing discourse markers, so that students can graduate from basic communication to advanced, creative, and critical use of language. This would also leave space to experiment with new subject matter and build stronger knowledge of vocabulary, style, and expression, and give students the time they need to build lasting knowledge.

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Appendix 1 – Investigation planification for the study proposal

UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR

ANEXO II

“PLAN DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARA LA PROPUESTA, QUE DEBERÁ SER REVISADO Y APROBADO POR LA COMISIÓN DE TITULACIÓN DE CADA PROGRAMA AL CONCLUIR EL TALLER I”

TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL: Discourse Markers in the oral expression

AUTHOR 1: Paulina López

AUTHOR 2: Christian Simbaña

1. Brief analysis and description of the situation that justifies the presentation of this proposal.

In the world of language learning, effective communication is crucial, particularly in English language acquisition. According to Brown (2014), the ability to express thoughts coherently and fluently is a key aspect of language proficiency. However, an observed challenge among learners is the underutilization of discourse markers, as highlighted by Swan (2005). This deficiency hampers clarity and impedes the development of proficient oral communication skills. Recognizing this gap, there is a pressing need to address and enhance the proficiency of discourse markers among learners.

Observational data gathered from instructional settings supports the need for a targeted intervention. As noted by Thornbury (2005), learners often struggle to incorporate a diverse range of discourse markers into their speech, leading to fragmented communication. The lack of variety and precision in discourse marker usage is a common issue, as highlighted by Schiffrin (1987). This observed pattern underscores the urgency for a structured instructional approach tailored to

improving discourse marker usage and, consequently, elevating overall oral expression proficiency.

The proposal to enhance oral expression through targeted discourse marker instruction is grounded in the belief that refining this aspect of communication will lead to tangible improvements in learners' language proficiency. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), discourse markers are fundamental elements in spoken discourse. By strategically addressing the identified challenges and providing explicit guidance on the nuanced use of discourse markers, the proposal aims to create a more dynamic and effective communication environment. The anticipated outcomes align with the broader goal of equipping learners with the skills necessary for successful communication in academic, professional, and social contexts. The proposal thus serves as a proactive response to observed deficiencies, aiming to empower learners with the linguistic tools needed to express themselves with confidence and precision.

2. Statement of the problem to be investigated.

In English learning process, many of us find it a bit tough to use certain words called "discourse markers" when we talk. These markers are like signposts that help people understand our ideas better. But here's the thing: we're not using them as well as we could. This makes our speaking a bit tricky, and our ideas don't come out smoothly. The problem is, we don't have a good plan to learn these markers in a way that really helps us talk better. So, the big question is: How can we learn to use these special words in a way that makes our talking sound awesome and clear? That's what we want to find out in this study.

3. Justification of the research

This research is essential because many students encounter challenges when using discourse markers in their English speech. Discourse markers are like signposts that guide our conversation and using them well is crucial for clear communication. However, students often find it a bit tricky to incorporate these markers effectively. By understanding how to use discourse markers better, students can improve the way they express their ideas academically and professionally. This study aims to provide a helpful plan for students to learn and apply discourse markers, ultimately enhancing their spoken English and academic communication skills.

4. Description of the relationship between the proposal and the research lines of the university.

This proposal is closely connected to the research lines of our university, especially in the areas of innovation, didactics, and educational research. Innovation means bringing new and effective ideas to improve how we learn and communicate. Our proposal, which focuses on enhancing oral expression through targeted discourse marker instruction, aligns perfectly with this goal. By introducing a structured plan to teach discourse markers, we aim to bring innovation to the way students learn to speak English, making it more effective and dynamic.

In the field of didactics, which involves teaching methods, our proposal contributes by providing a practical approach to address a specific challenge faced by learners. Didactics is all about finding better ways to teach, and our plan seeks to offer a clear and accessible method for students to understand and use discourse markers, improving their spoken language skills.

Educational research is about studying how we learn and teach. Our proposal directly engages with this research line by investigating the impact of targeted instruction on discourse markers. By exploring the effectiveness of our plan, we contribute valuable insights to the broader field of educational research, helping to understand how language learning can be enhanced through focused teaching methods.

In summary, our proposal is not just a plan for better speaking; it's a contribution to the university's commitment to innovation, improved teaching methods (didactics), and advancing educational research. We're excited to be part of this effort to make learning English a more effective and enjoyable experience for all students.

5. Object of the research

The main goal of this research is to understand how we can teach and learn better when it comes to using special words called "discourse markers" in English. Our focus is on making talking smoother and clearer. By figuring out a good way to teach these markers, we aim to help students express their ideas more confidently. The object of the research is to explore a plan that makes learning and using discourse markers enjoyable and effective, ultimately improving how students speak English.

6. General objective (one)

How discourse markers improve the oral expression of the English Language?

7. Specific objectives (three)

- Research Question: What are the common discourse markers used in spoken English, and how can learners recognize and understand them?
- Why are discourse markers important in spoken communication, and how do they contribute to making speaking smoother and ideas clearer?
- How can learners effectively practice incorporating discourse markers into their everyday speech?

8. Description of the variables of the study (independent & dependent)

The independent variable in this study is the instruction provided on discourse markers. The teaching methodology and guidance given to learners on recognizing, understanding, and using discourse markers will be the focus of investigation. According to Flowerdew (2013), effective instruction in language learning is crucial for developing students' linguistic skills. The variable is considered independent as it is intentionally manipulated to observe its impact on the learners' use of discourse markers in spoken communication.

The dependent variable in this study is the improvement in oral expression skills of the learners. The extent to which learners enhance their ability to use discourse markers effectively will be measured. This aligns with the idea that language instruction should lead to tangible improvements in language proficiency (Swain, 2013). The dependent variable is influenced by the independent variable, as the quality of discourse marker instruction is expected to correlate with the learners' progress in oral expression.

9. Description of the research approaches, methods, data collection

Research Approaches

In our study, we will use a friendly and organized way to learn about how to speak English better. This is called a "research approach." It's like having a plan to find the best way for us to understand

and use special words called "discourse markers" when we talk. By following this plan, we can see what works well for us and what helps us speak more confidently and clearly.

Research Methods

To figure out the best way to learn about discourse markers, we will use different methods. Methods are like tools that help us gather information. We might use fun activities in class, talk to each other, or even listen to examples of good speaking. These methods will help us understand how to use discourse markers effectively in our everyday conversations.

Data Collection

Data collection is about gathering information to learn more. We will collect data by listening to each other when we talk and noting down how we use discourse markers. We might also share our thoughts in class discussions or do some exercises to practice. This information helps us see what we are good at and where we can improve in using discourse markers. It's like gathering clues to solve a puzzle – each piece of information helps us understand how to speak English better.

10. Description of the beneficiaries and their main characteristics.

The beneficiaries of this study include students actively preparing for international English language certifications at B1+, B2, and C1 levels, participating in spoken contests. Additionally, English teachers specializing in language production skills are valuable participants who will gain insights for enhancing their teaching methodologies.

Main Characteristics of the Beneficiaries

Certification Seekers

Students who are aiming for international English language certifications, such as B1+, B2, and C1 levels, are the primary beneficiaries. These individuals are committed to achieving a recognized proficiency in English.

Diverse Language Proficiency

Beneficiaries may have diverse language proficiency levels, ranging from B1+ (intermediate) to C1 (advanced). The study accommodates this diversity by providing tailored guidance that addresses the specific needs and challenges at each proficiency level.

Aspirants for Spoken Contests

Students actively participating in spoken contests, where effective oral communication is crucial, are key beneficiaries. The study aims to enhance their spoken language skills, contributing to their confidence and success in spoken competitions.

Motivated Learners

Beneficiaries are motivated learners who actively seek opportunities to improve their English speaking skills. This includes a willingness to explore new techniques, participate in class activities, and engage with the study materials for continuous improvement.

Engaged in Learning Process

The study is designed for students who are actively engaged in the learning process. Beneficiaries actively participate in class discussions, contribute to spoken exercises, and demonstrate a genuine interest in refining their oral expression for both certification purposes and spoken contests.

Communication Enthusiasts

Those who enjoy the art of communication and see language as a tool for effective expression will find the study particularly beneficial. Beneficiaries view spoken language as a means to convey ideas persuasively, both in formal certification settings and dynamic spoken contests.

English Language Teachers

English teachers specializing in language production skills form an additional group of beneficiaries. The study offers valuable insights for educators seeking to refine their teaching methodologies and strategies for enhancing students' oral expression skills.

11. Description of the research context

Imagine being in a classroom or a place where people are learning and practicing English. That's the setting, or what we call the "research context," for our study. The study will happen in places where students are getting ready for international English exams like B1+, B2, and C1 levels. Also, some students will be taking part in spoken contests to show off their speaking skills.

Teachers who are experts in helping students speak better English will be a part of this too. Together, everyone will work on finding the best ways to use special words called "discourse markers" to make speaking English clearer and more confident.

So, the research context is like the background or environment where all the learning and talking will take place – classrooms, study sessions, and places where people want to get really good at speaking English.

12. Description of the practical contributions of the proposal.

The proposal has some really helpful and practical things to offer for everyone learning to speak English better. Here's how it can make a difference:

Clearer Speaking

The proposal helps you learn special words, called "discourse markers," so you can speak English more clearly. It's like having a secret tool to make your ideas stand out and be easy to understand.

Confidence Boost

By following the proposal, you'll feel more confident when you talk in English. It's like gaining superpowers for your speaking skills – making you ready to express yourself with courage.

Useful for Exams

If you're getting ready for important English exams like B1+, B2, or C1 levels, the proposal is like a guide that shows you how to use the right words in the right way. It's like having a roadmap to success in your exams.

Winning Spoken Contests

For those participating in spoken contests, the proposal gives you tips and tricks to make your speech powerful and impressive. It's like having a secret formula to win over the audience.

Great for Teachers

If you're a teacher helping others speak better English, the proposal offers practical methods for teaching discourse markers. It's like having a toolkit to make your teaching more effective and enjoyable.

Everyday English Improvement

The proposal isn't just for exams – it's for everyday English too! It helps you speak better in casual conversations, at work, or with friends. It's like improving your speaking skills for all kinds of situations.

13. Importance of the proposal from the following perspectives: Professional, methodological, technological, and social need.

Professional Perspective

The proposal is crucial for professionals, especially English language learners and teachers, as it provides practical tools for effective communication. For learners aiming at international certifications and participating in spoken contests, the proposal offers valuable guidance to enhance their skills, making them more proficient and confident communicators. English teachers, on the other hand, can benefit from new teaching methods, making their classes more engaging and productive (Smith, 2015; Johnson & Brown, 2018).

Methodological Perspective

From a methodological standpoint, the proposal introduces a structured and organized approach to learning discourse markers. It's like having a clear roadmap that guides both learners and teachers on how to teach and learn better. This methodological clarity ensures that everyone involved in the learning process understands the steps to take for improved oral expression, creating a more effective and streamlined learning experience (Anderson, 2013; Carter, 2017).

Technological Perspective

Though not heavily reliant on technology, the proposal can benefit from technological tools, such as online resources and platforms. For instance, learners and teachers can access additional materials, examples, or interactive exercises online to supplement their learning experience. While the proposal itself may not be highly technological, it aligns with the modern age of learning that often involves digital resources (Smith & Davis, 2019; Brown, 2020).

Social Need Perspective

On a social level, the proposal addresses a fundamental need for clear and effective communication in a multicultural and globalized world. By improving spoken English skills, individuals can participate more actively in social interactions, collaborate effectively, and contribute to their communities. The proposal recognizes the importance of language as a social tool, fostering better understanding and connection among people with diverse linguistic backgrounds (Johnson, 2016; Garcia, 2018).

MASTER CANDIDATE 1

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MASTER CANDIDATE 2

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Appendix 2 – Communication of the assigned tutor

February 7, 2024

Dear Professor

MSC DIANA EGAS HERRERA

UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR (UBE)

The Academic Commission of the Master's Program in Teaching English proceeded to designate you as the "research tutor" of the following students:

SIMBAÑA CARRASCO CHRISTIAN ALEXANDER

LOPEZ CASTILLO PAULINA LETICIA

IRUA LECHÓN MARCIA VANESSA

Farinango Caranqui Galo Xavier

Please get in touch with this student to schedule the next online tutorial before February 17, 2024

Regards,

UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR (UBE)