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The Correlation between Discourse Markers and Communicative Competence on EFL University Students.

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Discourse markers are generally defined as words or linguistic expressions of different functions in discourse Discourse markers are words and phrases that are used to manage and organize the structure of discourse. They connect sentences without changing the general meaning of what is being said Communicative competence can be defined as the ability to use language, or to communicate, in a culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions The students use of discourse markers at Iraqi Universities and its correlation to their communicative competence .This study is a correlation study. The sample of the study is 300 students from Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities. It consists of (150) students of third stage is derived from Department of English Language, Collage of Education for Humanities at University of Tikrit and (150) students from Department of English Language, College of Education for Humanities at Kirkuk University during academic year (2022-2023). The test has been constructed, validated and applied to the two involved Universities. The required data has been collected and analyzed statistically. The data is gathered by using diagnostic tests .The results show that there is a statistically significant low relationship between students' DMs at Kirkuk University. The results show that there is statistically significant low relationship between students' DMs at Tikrit University. The results of question 4 aim to show that there is statistically significant moderate relationship between students' CC at Kirkuk University. The results also show that there is statistically significant relationship between students' CC at Tikrit University. This research also contains previous studies of DMs and CC and the discussion of the them .

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العلاقة بين علامات الخطاب والكفاءة التواصلية لطلبة الجامعات

عمر خلف محمود /مدرس في اعدادية العباسي

دنيا طاهر حميد / جامعة تكريت

الخلاصة:

العلاقة بين علامات الخطاب في الجامعات العراقية وارتباطه بكفاءتهم التواصلية

تهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على:

استخدام الطلبة لعلامات الخطاب في الجامعات العراقية وارتباطه بكفاءتهم التواصلية من خلال:

. 1استخدام طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية لعلامات الخطاب في الجامعات العراقية. (جامعتي تكريت وكركوك).

٢. استخدام طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لعلامات الخطاب حسب الجنس (ذكور وإناث).

٣. كفاءة التواصل لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في الجامعات العراقي (جامعتي تكريت وكركوك).

4. العلاقة المحتملة بين استخدام طلبة جامعة اللغة الانجليزية لعلامات الخطاب وكفاءتهم التواصلية في الجامعات العراقية (جامعتي تكريت وكركوك).

تكونت عينة الدراسة الحالية من (٣٠٠) طالب و طالبة وتشمل (150) طالباً من طلاب المرحلة الثالثة من كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية في جامعة تكريت و (150) طالباً من قسم اللغة الانجليزية في كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية في جامعة كركوك خلال العام الدراسي (2022–2023). تم إنشاء الاختبار والتحقق من صحته وتطبيقه على الجامعتين المعنيتين. وقد تم جمع البيانات المطلوبة وتحليلها إحصائيا. وأظهرت نتائج الهدف الثاني أن هناك علاقة منخفضة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين مستوى التعلم لدى الطلاب ومستوى التعلم في جامعة كركوك. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك علاقة منخفضة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين مستوى التعلم لدى الطلاب ومستوى التعلم في جامعة تكريت. وأظهرت نتائج الهدف الرابع وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية متوسطة بين طلاب الكفاءة التواصلية في جامعة كركوك . يحتوي هذا البحث أيضًا على دراسات سابقة لعلامات الخطاب و الكفاءة التواصلية ومناقشتها.

وأخيراً انتهت الدراسة ببعض الاستنتاجات والتوصيات والمقترحات لمزيد من الدراسات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علامات الخطاب , الكفاءة التواصلية , العلاقة .الجنس.

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Discourse markers are markers which can make messages delivered in a conversation developed and way. They can be words, phrases, and clauses. They also influence the flow of the conversation. By employing the discourse markers, statements that are uttered are smooth and easy to be grasped by the listeners (Ramadhani, 2017) Savignon defines students' communicative competence as "the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons or between one person and a written or oral text" (Savignon, 2001, p. 249). Savignon characterizes communicative competence as a dynamic rather than a static concept since it relies on the negotiation of meaning among people and applies to both written and spoken language. In her opinion, there is a theoretical difference between

competence and performance. She elucidated competence as a presumed underlying ability and performance as the overt manifestation of that ability (Savignon, 1997)

Based on the previous background, the problem statements were:

1. How is the level of students of communicative competence through using discourse markers?
2. What factors influencing the students' communicative competence?

1.2The study aims at identifying through

1. EFL students' use of DMs at Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) .
2. EFL students' use of DMs according to gender (male and female) .
3. EFL University students' CC at Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and KirkukUniversities)
4. The possible relationship between EFL university students' use of DMs and their CC at Iraqi Universities (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) .

1.3. Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the following items

1. Discourse marker and communicative competence.

2- The university EFL students, college of education, English department for the third stage students at Tikrit University and Kirkuk University.

3- Academic year 2023-2024. First Course.

4- The texts that involve discourse markers in the English Grammar text books

1. 4.The Plan of the Study

To meet the aims of the study, the following steps will be considered:

1. Presenting a general theoretical survey about discourse marker, communicative competence and some previous studies related to the current study.

2. Preparing the tools that are suitable to the aims of the study then obtaining their validity, reliability, difficulty level, and discrimination power.

3. Selecting a representative sample which is consisted of third year students of the colleges of Education in two Iraqi Universities. (Kirkuk and Tikrit Universities)

4. Collecting the required data and analyze it statistically.

5. Constructing diagnostic tests of DMs and CC.

6. Obtaining and giving conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

The results can be used for the further researchers which focus on developing classroom interaction among students by using discourse markers in the classroom.

1.5. Definitions of Basic Terms

1.5.1 Discourse Markers

Discourse markers could be considered as a set of linguistic expressions comprised of members of word classes as varied as conjunctions (e.g. and, but, or), interjections (oh), adverbs(now, then), and lexicalized phrases (y'know, I mean). Also proposed was a discourse model with different planes: a participation framework, information state, ideational structure, action structure, exchange structure. Schiffrin, 1987:1)

Operational Definition of Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are words or phrases that the flow or structure of dialogue without changing the meaning behind it. Discourse markers help students develop their communicative competence .

1.5. 2 Correlation

Correlation means an association more precisely it is a measure of the extent to which two variables are related. There are three possible results of a correlational study: a positive correlation, a negative correlation, and no correlation (McLeod, 2018, p. 1).

The operational definitions: Correlation means measure of a possible relation between Students' communicative competence .

Correlation also means students' use of discourse markers and communicative competence. Correlation means students' use of discourse markers. The correlation may be positive or negative or no relationship.

Communicative Competence

It is defined as the ability of using languages in communication; that is, what linguistic utterances in language that are communicatively appropriate for circumstances in which we are going to use them.(Cook, 2003, p. 42) .

The operational definition of communicative competence:

Communicative Competence is students' ability to understand and use discourse markers effectively to communicate in authentic society and university environment.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Background and Previous Studies

2. 0. An Introductory Note

This chapter consists of two sections; the first section contains theoretical background which consists of discourse markers, communicative competence and the second section contains previous studies related to the subject of the study.

2. 1 Theoretical Background

2. 1. 1 Discourse Markers

2. 1. 1. 1 Concept of Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are words and phrases such as 'well', 'I mean', 'because' and 'however'.The term 'discourse markers' was first introduced in 1988 by the American linguist Deborah Schiffrin. **(**Schiffrin, 1987**)**

Discourse markers are markers which can make messages delivered in a conversation developed and coherent. They can be words, phrases, and clauses. They also influence the flow of the conversation. By employing the discourse markers, statements that are uttered are smooth and easy to be grasped by the listeners (Ramadhani, 2017)

Schiffrin provides “an operational definition”. He “defines discourse markers at a more theoretical level as members of a functional class of verbal and nonverbal devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk (1987, p. 41).” Discourse markers are “sequentially dependent elements which bracket unit of talk” Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31)

2. 1. 1. 2 Types of Discourse Markers

Hyland and Tse (2004) sub classify textual discourse markers into seven categories which are:

A. Additive (and, furthermore etc.). The marker “and” has both cohesive and structural roles; structural because they link two (or more) syntactic units such as clauses, phrases or verbs, and cohesive because the interpretation of the whole conjunctive utterance depends on the combination of both conjuncts.)

B. Adversative (but, however, while, yet, though etc.) However, you should bear in mind this is a new era; this is the era of the Renaissance of State Police. (Rama, Deep reform in education system, 2014) Entitled Discourse, 29Volume 4, Number 1.

C. Conclusive relationships (finally, in sum etc.) present in the text. Concluding, I am hoping that the opposition is going to think about this process once again (Rama, 2014 Government, partner to all who do business in Albania, 2014) Entitled Discourse.

D. Causatives (so, because, as a result) according to Schifrin (1987, p. 33), "because" is used by the speaker to indicate a relation of 'cause and result'. (This is why I did not mention our Business Climate reform in the above list of structural reforms, because it deserves special mention. (Entitled Discourse)

E. Sequencers (Temporal) : are markers which indicate particular positions in a series and serve to guide the reader in the presentation of different arguments in a particular order (in the first place). Second, it is of great importance for the concept of the Rule of Law, that means the functioning of the Rule of Law and of the regarding institutions. (Nishani, 2012)

F. Reminders: are markers that refer back to previous sections in the text in order to retake an argument, amplify it or summaries some of the previous argumentation.

G. Topicalisers: are markers that explicitly indicate some type of topic shift to the reader so that the argumentation can be easily followed such as: (now).

H. Code glosses: are markers that explain, rephrase, expand or exemplify propositional content.

I. Illocutionary markers: are markers that explicitly name the act the writer performs through the text.

J. Announcements: are markers, which refer forward to future sections in the text in order to prepare the reader for prospective argumentation. .

2. 1. 1. 4 Function of Discourse Markers

The explanation toward the classification of discourse markers below, understanding toward its functions will be required as well to complete the series of discourse markers' study. As it is mentioned previously, the main function of discourse marker is to construct coherent texts as stated by Zhao (2014). Discourse markers for written form are also called as transition signals, Mahendra & Dewi (2017) classify that the common functions along with words and phrases involved in each function.

Discourse markers can be found not only in the initial position. Depending on the information structure they can occupy several positions: at the beginning of an utterance, as "insertions" in the utterance or at the end.

The scholar (Cladera, 2001) has analyzed 367 minutes of spontaneous conversations and found that discourse markers indicating the central part of the

turn have a major frequency of use and contribute in this way to the progression of the conversation. In the second place she put the initial markers, conversational role of which is that of being markers "of reinforcement of dialogical initiative or reactive connector of two acts or interventions in the dialogue". The smallest amount of discourse markers was used in the final position

The American linguist Fraser (1993) has also contributed to the analysis of the position of discourse markers in the English language. He found that these linguistic elements appear in three positions: each discourse marker may occur sentence initially, some may take up sentence-medial position and a few of them may occur in sentence final position.

For example, explicitly teaching a structure for which the individual is not yet cognitively ready can not help the individual to jump stages in the developmental sequence. Thus in turn this view may provide evidence for the necessary shift of teaching focus during different learning and teaching stages. (Piennemann, 1984) This learnability-hypothese may suggest that teaching should be well arranged and processed according to learners' levels and different leaning stages(Piennemann, 1984) .

The fact that the seniors, compared with the sophomores, didn't show obvious progress in using discourse marker , besides the lack of practice and attention, may result from the failure of a necessary shift of teaching focus from basic knowledge and simple practice to a more advanced discourse comprehension. For example, students at advanced level should know the essentials about discourse structures, written styles and the techniques such as linguistic and non-linguistic means and the schemata theory in discourse structure to make articles cohesive and coherent. Thus the students' attention is drawn to the skills needed to put knowledge into action and to achieve successful communication and interaction **. (**Sun, 2013 **.)**

2. 1. 2 Communicative Competence

This concept was first proposed by (Hymes, 1972) in an essay where the sociolinguist argued for a linguistic theory which could focus on "the capacities of persons, the organisation of verbal means for socially defined purposes, and the sensitivity of rules to situations" (Hymes, 1972, p. 292).

Communicative competence can be defined as the ability to use language, or to communicate, in a culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning andaccomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions. (Tarvin, 2014)

Hymes was reacting to Chomsky's famous distinction between the competence of "an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language

perfectly." On one hand, and "errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance," on the other (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3).

Hymes recognises this distinction as a contemporary interpretation of a tradition leading back to Saussure and even Humboldt, and questioned the prioritisation of linguistic competence, that is, "tacit knowledge of language structure" over performance, or "imperfect manifestation of underlying system" (Hymes, 1972, p. 271-2).

It is because, as Hymes proposes, the production of grammatically well-former sentences unrelated to the situation in which they are produced would not resultin a successful communication. Thus, Hymes suggests the notion of communicative competence. It is defined as the ability of using languages in communication; that is, what linguistic utterances in language that are communicatively appropriate for circumstances in which we are going to use them (Cook, 2003, p.42).

2. 2. Previous Studies

2. 2. 1 Studies Related to Discourse Markers

2. 2. 1. 1 Khatib (2011)

This led the researcher to investigate the relationship between comprehension of discourse markers and reading ability.

Three tests were used in the present study: a reading comprehension (RC) test, a test of discourse markers , and a discourse cloze test.

Eighty six (86) Iranian sophomores majoring in English took a test of discourse markers alongside a reading comprehension test.

The research findings indicate a high correlation between the two. This suggests that, on the whole, students who have good command of discourse markers can comprehend reading texts significantly better than students who are poor at the comprehension and recognition of discourse markers.

2. 2. 2 Previous Studies Related to Communicative Competence

2. 2. 2. 1. Al-Shamiry (2020)

It aims at developing the learners' communicative competence. In other words, it is mainly concerned with developing the communicative ability in language learners.

The tool of this study is test.

The sample of the study is ninety.

The result is that there is no significant difference among groups on tests of grammatical competence, the communicative competence group scored significantly higher than the other two groups on four communicative tests she developed .

experimental groups were drawn (30 students), and so the study population is represented by all the third-grade intermediate students in schools in makah .

2. 2. 4. 1 Discussion of Previous Studies Related to Discourse Markers

Aims The study of Khatib (2011) aims to investigate the relationship between comprehension of discourse markers and reading ability.

Tools There are different types of tools that have been used in the previous studies**;** The instrument in Khatib (2011) study was three tests were used in the present study: a reading comprehension (RC) test, a test of discourse markers and a discourse cloze test **.**

Samples There are different samples in the previous studies, which were from different levels due to the various aims of these studies. So, some studies have selected the university levels such as Khatib (2011) While the sample of this study is 300 male and female students from Tikrit University.

Results

The results of previous studies were different from study to another;

Al-Khatib's (2011) study the research findings indicate a high correlation between the two. This suggests that, on the whole, students who have good command of discourse markers can comprehend reading texts significantly better than students who are poor at the comprehension and recognition of discourse markers.

2.2. 4. 2 Discussion of Previous Studies Related to Communicate Competence

Aim Al-Shamiry (2020) aims at developing the learners' communicative competence. In other words, it is mainly concerned with developing the communicative ability in language learners.

Tool The tool of Al-Shamiry's (2020) study is a test.

Sample While in Al-Shamiry's (2020) study the sample of the pilot study was ten students and the actual population of the study was ninety students from level four and eight

Result.While in Al-Shamiry's (2020) study the result is that there is no significant difference among groups on tests of grammatical competence, the

communicative competence group scored significantly higher than the other two groups on four communicative tests she developed

Chapter Three

Methodology

3. 0 Introductory Note:

This chapter discusses the procedures used to carry out the study. It describes the research design, population and sampling, construction of the tests, their validity, reliability, and administration.

3. 1 The Study Design

A study, which is designed to determine relationships among two or more variables and to explore their implications for cause and effect, is called correlational research .

Correlational research is sometimes referred to as associational study ,which does not attempt to influence the relationship between two or more variables (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006, p. 335).

Correlational study is often referred to as a form of descriptive study because it describes an existing relationship between variable (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2009, p.11) .

Napolean (as cited in Spangler, 1996, 23) recommends that "plan your work and work your plan" .The study design also consists of a planned sequence of the entire study process and a series of guidelines to keep one on the right path. Essentially, Research process is within the conceptual structure of research design. In fact, the research designs create the groundwork for the total study effort, and facilitates the chosen task with less trouble and in an organized mode (Lillykutty and Samson, 2018, p. 205).

The correlation statistical test is used to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between the two variables or sets of scores.

The variables employs in this study as follows;

1. The first variable is DMs.
2. The second variable is CC.

3.2 Population and Sampling:

3.2.1 Population

The population in the present study is 350 undergraduate college students from the departments of English, College of Education for Humanities at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities on the academic year 2022-2023.

3.2.2 Sample

A sample "is a group of individuals, items, or events that represent the characteristics of the larger group from which the sample is drawn" Researchers frequently need to be able to collect data from a smaller group or subset of the complete population in order to get knowledge that is representative of the total population (however defined) under study (Gay and Geoffrey, 2010, p. 129). The sample of the present study is 300 third-year college students (male and female). They are from the morning studies in the Department of English at the Colleges of Education, University of Tikrit and University of Kirkuk on the academic year 2022-2023. The sample of the current study represents 60% of the Population as indicated in table (3.1)

Table (3.1) The Population and Sample of the Study

University	College	No.of Population	No.of Pilot study	No. of the Sample	Percentage
Tikrit	College of Education for Humanities	196	25	150	76. 53%
Kirkuk	College of Education for Humanities	220	25	150	68. 18%
Total		416	50	300	72. 11%

3. 3 The Study Instruments

Creswell (2012, p.355) notes that correlation research requires the researcher to collect two datasets from each individual. According to that, the researcher uses diagnostic tests that are used as tools for collecting the data of the study. The 1st test is used to gather information about the DMs to English language learning while the 2nd test is used to gather data about EFL college students' CC.

3.3.1 Diagnostic Tests

One of the most commonly used assessment tools in education is to conduct tests. Beyond being considered as an instrument, tests can also be seen

as standard procedures used to systematically measure a sample of behaviour by posing a set of questions. (Linn, 2008).

In this research the researcher used the test as the instrument. According to (Ary et al 2010) "A test is a set of stimuli presented to an individual in order to elicit responses on the basis of which a numerical score can be assigned". It means that a test is used to investigate the students' response and it was measured in form of scores (Ary et al, 2010, p. 201) .

3.3.1.1 Diagnostic Discourse Markers Test

Test (1) one is designed to show the ability of third grade University students to use discourse markers in correct way. It consists of three questions .

1. First question includes (10) items out of (40 scores). This question requires from students to put the correct linking words that is the best to completes the sentence.

2. Second question contains (10) items out of (30 scores). This question

includes a mistake either in vocabulary or usage, so the students should recognize the correct answer by choosing one of the options.

3.Third question contains (10) items out of (30 scores). This question is about the use of conjunction. Students are asked to choose the correct words that best for blanks. (See table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Categories of the Diagnostic Test Discourse Marker

Level	No. of question	Content	Behavioral objective	Items	Scores
	Q1	Fill in the blanks with suitable discourse markers.	To recognize the correct answer by choosing one of the options.	10	40
	Q2	Choose an appropriate discourse markers.	To Recognize the suitable DMs from other DMs.	10	30
	Q3	Complete these sentences by choosing words from brackets.	To show differences between cause and contrast sentences by choosing correct DMs among so, but, because and although.	10	30

2.3.1.2 Diagnostic Communicative Competence Test

The second test is designed to show third grade university students' communicative competence. It consists of 6 questions (sociolinguistic competence has two questions). These questions represent competences of communicative competence according to Littlewood's Model. Littlewood(2011)

1. First question is about linguistic competence that includes (5) items out of (20 scores). This question requires from students to choose the correct one that best completes the sentence
2. Second question deals with sociocultural competence. It is concerned with choosing the correct words to fill in blanks to make good paragraph. It includes (10) items out of (20 scores)
3. Third question (sociolinguistic competence) is contains (2) items out of (10 scores). Students are asked to give the meaning of the word and the proverb in target language (T L).
4. Fourth question is also about sociolinguistic competence. It contains three items out of (10) scores. It consists of three topics about three situations. The students are required to choose one and write a paragraph about 50 words.
5. Fifth question is about discourse competence. It contains three items out of (20) scores. It consists of three topics about three situations. The students are required to choose one and write about 50 word-text.
6. Sixth question is about pragmatic competence. It is out of (20 scores) the students are required to identify discourse markers in the paragraph and put each in a meaningful sentence.

Table 3.3 Categories of the Diagnostic Test Communicative competence

Level	.No. of que.	Content	Behavioral objective	Items	Scores
	Q1	Fill in the blanks with appropriate discourse markers	To choose an appropriate DMs from MCQ.	5	20
	Q2	Complete the passage with suitable words.	To complete the paragraph by choosing suitable words.	10	20
	Q3	What are the intended meaning of the word, expression and a proverb	To identify meanings of the proverb, the word and the sentence.	2	20

	Q4	Write an essay about certain topic	To choose the topic you want to write about and do your best.	3	10
	Q5	Choose a topic and write a paragraphs using DMs	To take in charge talk about certain subject you are about to decide.	3	20
	Q6	Find out discourse markers and put them in meaningful sentences.	To try to find a DMs among other words of sentences and put it in meaningful sentence.	10	20

3.5.1.2 The Internal Consistency of the Test

In order to find out the correlation between the items' scores and the total score for the (50) participants, Pearson correlation coefficient is used and the statistical analysis of items reveals that all the correlation coefficient values are statistically significant when compared to the critical value which is (0.396) at a degree of freedom (28) and level of significance (0.05), as shown in the table below

Table 3.6 ***Correlation Coefficients Between Item Score and the Total Score of the Test***

Item	R-Value	Item	R-Value	Item	R-Value	Item	R-Value
Test 1 /Q1		**Test1/ Q3**		Test 2/ Q2		Test3/Q1	
1	0.873	1	0.362	**5**	0.437	**1**	0.668
2	0.883	2	0.449	**6**	0.437	Test3/Q2	
3	0.512	3	0.496	**7**	0.309	1	0.668
4	0.803	4	0.701	**8**	0.463	2	0.503
5	0.764	5	0.476	**9**	0.342	3	0.321
6	0.634	6	0.390	**10**	**0.432**	4	0.650
7	0.436	7	0.451	Test 2/ Q3		**5**	0.503
8	0.873	8	0.668	**1**	0.432		
9	0.883	9	0.503	**2**	0.668		
10	0.765	10	0.321	**3**	0.503		
Test 1/ Q2		**Test 2/ Q1**		Test 2/ Q4			
1	0.512	1	0.610	**1**	0.436		
2	0.705	2	0.543	**2**	0.765		
3	0.660	3	0.326	**3**	0.512		
4	0.779	4	0.569		0.668		
5	0.764	5	0.423	Test2/ Q5			

6	0.765	**Test 2/ Q2**		1	0.532		
7	0.553	1	0.674	**2**	0.415		
8	0.758	2	0.794	**3**	0.803		
9	0.379	3	0.608	Test 2/ Q6			
10	0.640	4	0.511	**1**	0.764		

3.5.1.3 Reliability of the Test:

According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007:506) the reliability of the test an be calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha formula, which is a formula used to measure internal accuracy statistically. It tests how closely a group of items is associated with each other. Cronbach's Coefficient value varies from(0)to(1). The following table is the level of internal consistency of Cronbach Alpha

Table (3.7) Internal Consistency by Using Cronbach Alpha Formula

Cronbach Alpha	Internal Consistency
> 0.90	**very highly reliable**
0.80–0.90	**highly reliable**
0.70–0.79	**Reliable**
0.60–0.69	**marginally/minimally reliable**
< 0.60	**unacceptably low reliability**

To obtain the reliability of the test, the researcher used SPSS 26.0 program is used to find out whether or not the test is reliable and table (3.8) shows the result:

Table(3.8) The Reliability of the Test

	Reliability Statistics	
	No. of Question	Cronbach's Alpha
Discourses Markers	**3**	**85**
Communicative Competence	6	**80**

From the table (9), the Cronbach's Alpha value for DMs is 0.85 , Alpha value for CC is 0.80 we can assume that the reliability of the test is highly reliable according to Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency in the table (3.8).

3.4 Validity of Study

Validity is the most important consideration in the development and evaluation of measurement instruments. Validity has been defined as the extent to which the instrument measures what it claims to measure (Ary et al., 2018, p. 225). Validity revolves around the defensibility of the inferences researchers

make from the data Collected through the use of an instrument (Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun, 2012, p. 112).

3.4. 2 Construct validity

Weirs (2005, p. 17) illustrates that the construct validity as a matter of the a posteriori statistical validation of whether a test had measured a construct in individuals.

McNamara (2000, p. 138) defines validity as —the relationship between evidence from test performance and the inferences about candidate‘s capacity to perfoInstrument criteria that are drawn from that evidence.

3.5.1.3 Content Validity

According to Hughes (2003:26), a test is said to have content validity if the content reflects a representative sample of the language skills, Structures, and other topics with which it is equipped to identify. A diagnostic test has been constructed by considering the contents and behavioural objectives of the instructional material. It consists of three tests; Test (1) consists of (3) questions and scored out of a hundred, as shown in table (2).

3.6.1 Scoring Scheme of Diagnostic Test

The whole scoring of the constructed Diagnostic Tests is (300) Which is distributed among two (2) tests;

The Scoring Scheme of First Test is scored out of 100 scores. This test consists of three questions the first question carries forty(40) scores .The second and the third questions carry the same scores each has 30 scores.

The first question consists of 10 items each one has four (4) scores. If the answer of the student is correct, s/he will get 4 scores, but if the answer is incorrect , the student will get zero (0).

The second question contains 10 items. Each item carries three (3) scores. If the answer is correct, the student will get three (3) scores. But if the answer is incorrect, the student will get zero (0).

The third question contains 10 Items. Each item carries three (3) scores. If the answer is correct, the student will get three (3) scores. But if the answer is incorrect, the student will get zero (0).

The Scoring Scheme of the Second Test

(Communicative Competence)

Each question takes (20) scores except question (3 and 4) take (10) scores because question three (Q3) includes (2) items and question four (Q4) requires only one topic to write about. Questions number (5, 6) are 20 scores. If the answer of the student is a half (10) scores or a full answer (20) scores.

The second test is constructed with six questions, as follows:

1. First question takes (20 scores) . This question contains five (MCQ) items. Each item has four (4) scores; if the student answer correctly, s/he will get (4) scores if s/he answer incorrectly, s/he will get zero (0).
2. Second question takes (20) scores. This question contains ten (10) (MCQ) items. Each Item has two scores. If the student answers correctly, s/he will get two (2) scores. If the student answers uncorrectly s/he will get zero (0).
3. Third question takes (10) scores. This question contains two (2) items. Each item has five (5) scores. If the student answers correctly s/he will get five (5) scores and if s/he answers fairly s/he will get 2 scores and if the student answers badly, s/he will get zero (0).

4. Fourth question takes (10 scores) the student should write down a text. This question contains three items but the student can choose one topic to write about. If his or her answer is very good the student will get 10 scores. But if the answer is good he will get 5 scores while he will get zero if his answer is bad.

5. Fifth question takes (20 scores). This question contains three items but the student can choose one topic to write about .To answer this question, the student should write down a text about 50 words. If his or her answer is very good the student will get 20 scores. But if the answer is good he will get 10 scores while s/he will get zero if her/his answer is bad.

6. Sixth question carry (20 scores). The student is required to find 10 discourse markers and put each one in a meaningful sentence. For each correct sentence or correct answer, the student gets (2) scores. If the answer is weak s/he gets zero (0.)

For the questions that carry 10 scores the distribution among the four aspects: Grammar (3 S), Spelling (2 S), Vocabulary (2 S), and finally Idea(3 S). For the questions that have 20 scores the distribution among the four aspects: Grammar (6 S), Spelling (4 S), Vocabulary (5 S), and finally Idea(5 S). The last four questions are in the form of essay writing, i.e. questions (3, 4, 5, 6) . See table 3.10

(Table 3.10) Scoring Scheme of the Second Test (Communicative Competence)

Criteria	Qualities	Scores					
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
		20S	20S	10S	10S	20S	20S
	Bad	0-1	0-1	0	0	0-1	0-1
	Good	3-4	3-4	2	2	3-4	3-4

Grammar	Very good	5-6	5-6	3	3	5-6	5-6
Spelling	Bad	0-1	0-1	0	0	0-1	0-1
	Good	2-3	2-3	1	1	2-3	2-3
	Very good	4	4	2	2	4	4
Vocabulary	Bad	0-1	0-1	0	0	0-1	0-1
	Good	2-3	2-3	1	1	2-3	2-3
	Very good	4-5	4-5	2	2	4-5	4-5
Idea	Bad	0-1	0-1	0	0	0-1	0-1
	Good	2-3	2-3	1	1	2-3	2-3
	Very good	4-5	4-5	3	3	4-5	4-5

3.6.2 Administration of the Diagnostic Test

Following the immediate completion of the test administration, the final administration of the test took place. On the same day and in the same location. The test has been finally administered after calculating their validity, reliability and pilot administration. Each student attends the classroom and the students are asked to answer the questions. The time needed is about (120) minute.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Preliminary Note

This chapter aims to presenting and statistically analyzing the data obtained from the diagnostics test, based on the verifying the study's questions to achieve the aims that have been identified .

4.1 .Data Analysis

4.1.1 Results related to the First Question

4.1.1.1 Identifying the Difference Between Theoretical Mean and the Mean Scores of EFL University students' DMs at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities

To analyze the data related to the first question namely: **Do EFL students use discourse markers at Iraqi universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities)?** , The T-test formula of one independent sample has been used. Consequently, the first aim of the study undoubtedly: **EFL students' use of discourse markers at Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities**), will be achieved .

For achieving the first aim, an diagnostics test is applied for (300) students from Tikrit and Kirkuk universities. Then, the calculated t-

value and the tabulated t-value is achieved by using the T-Test formula for one independent sample to estimate student's performance .

In the light of the following results in Table (4.1), the mean scores of students' performance in discourse markers is (41.85) lower than the theoretical mean (50) with a standard deviation of (17.58) degrees. Comparing with the tabulated t-value which is (1.65), the calculated t-value (8.021) is higher than the tabulated t-value with, a degree of freedom (299) at a level of significance (0.05). That means, there is a significant difference between students' performance and the theoretical mean in DMs of EFL university students' performance. The university students have a lower level of DMs than the theoretical mean. This means that Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) have weak level in DMs.

Table (4.1): T-Test Value of the Student's Performance in DMs

N.	Mean	SD.	Theoretical Mean Score	T-Value		DF	Level of Sig.
				Calculated	Tabulated		
300	41.85	17.58	50	8.021	1.65	299	0.05

4.1.1.2 Comparison Between the Mean Scores of the Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities at the DM's Test

To find out whether "There are any statistically significant differences among EFL university students' DMs at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities", all mean scores are obtained and compared. Statistics show that the mean score of Tikrit University is 35.08 and that of Kirkuk University is 48.63. By using the t-test formula for two independent, the calculated t-value is found to be 7.223 , while the tabulated t-value is found to be 1.972 at the degree of freedom 298 and level of significance 0.05, this means indicates that there is significant difference between the two universities in the DM Test, as shown in table (4.2).

Table (4.2)

The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Two Independent Sample T-Value of the Students' DMs Tests Between the Two Universities

Group	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Tikrit	150	35.08	15.679	7.223	1.972	298	0.05
Kirkuk	150	48.63	16.800				

4.1.2 Results Related to the Second Question

4.1.2.1 Identifying the Difference Between Theoretical Mean and EFL University Students' CC at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities

To analyze the data related to the question namely: **Do EFL students use communicative competence at Iraqi universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities)?** The T-test formula of one independent sample has been used. Consequently, the first aim of the study undoubtedly: **EFL students' use of communicative competence at Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities), will be achieved.**

For achieving the first aim, a diagnostic test is applied for (300) students from Tikrit and Kirkuk university. Then, the calculated t-value and the tabulated t-value is achieved by using the T-Test formula for one independent sample to estimate student's performance .

In the light of the following results in table (4.5), the mean scores of students' performance in CC is (19.126) higher than the theoretical mean (50) with a standard deviation of (14.792) degrees. Comparing with the tabulated t-value which is (1.972), the calculated t-value (36.150) is higher than the tabulated t-value with, a degree of freedom (299) at a level of significance (0.05). That means, there is a significant difference between students' performance and the theoretical mean in CC of EFL university students' performance. This means that Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) have weak level in CC. **Table (4.5)**

The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Two Independent Sample T-Value of the Students' CC Tests Between the Two Universities

N.	Mean	SD.	Theoretical Mean Score	T-Value		DF	Level of Sig.
				Calculated	Tabulated		
300	19.126	14.792	50	36.150	1.972	299	0.05

4.1.2.2 Comparison Between the Mean Scores of Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities at the CC Test

To find out whether "There are any statistically significant differences among EFL university students' CC at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities", all mean scores are obtained and compared. Statistics show that the mean score of Tikrit University is 12.613 and that of Kirkuk University is 25.640 . By using the t-test formula for two independent, the calculated t-value is found to be 8.484 , while the tabulated t-value is found to be 1.972 at the degree of freedom 298 and level of significance 0.05, this means indicates that there is a significant difference between the two universities in the CC Test, as shown in table (4.6).

Table (4.6)
The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Two Independent Sample T-Value of the Students' CC Tests Between the Two Universities

Group	No.	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
Tikrit	150	12.613	11.254	Calculated	Tabulated	298	0.05
Kirkuk	150	25.640	15.066	8.484	1.972		

4.1.4 Result Related to the Fourth Question

To analyze the data related to the fourth question namely: **Is there a relationship between EFL university students' use of discourse markers and their communicative competence at Iraqi Universities (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities)?** The correlation formula has been used. Consequently, the fourth aim of the study undoubtedly: **The possible relationship between the EFL university students' use of discourse markers and their communicative competence at Iraqi Universities (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities)**, will be achieved .

In order to find whether there is a significant correlation between the students' level in DMs and CC**,** is investigated by using Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation. It is one of the most well-known association measures which has a statistical value ranging from 1.0 to +1.0 and expresses this relationship quantitatively. The coefficient will also be denoted by the sign r (Cohen et al,2007, p. 530).

The data is gathered by means of diagnostics test. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula is used by the researcher within the SPSS version 26 program to measure the correlation between the DMs and CC of EFL of two universities.

Table (4.13) Table of Coefficient and Correlation

Coefficient	Correlation
0.90-1.00	**Very High**
0.70-0.90	**High**
0.40-0.70	**Moderate**
0.20-0.40	**Low**
Less than 0.20	**Very Low**

For achieving this aim, a diagnostic test is applied for (300) students in the two universities to measure the correlation between DMs and CC:

A. Correlation between Students' DMs and their Performance in CC at Kirkuk University

The findings are displayed in table(4.14) show the correlation between students' DM and their performance in CC at Kirkuk University.

Table (4.14)

Correlation between Students' DMs and CC at Kirkuk University

		DMs	CC
DM	**Correlation**	1	.439**
	Significance (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
CC	**Correlation**	.439**	1
	Significance (2-tailed	.000	
	N	150	150
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**			

The calculation above shows the correlation coefficient is 0.439, as it is shown in table (4.14) the sig (2-tailed) value 0.00 is lower than level of significant (α) 0.05 and the correlation coefficient 0.439 is higher than level of significant (α) 0.05. It can also be interpreted according to its r table with df = 148, the coefficient of r table is 0.195 .Thus, r count 0.439 is higher than r table 0.195

After calculating the r (correlation coefficient), the t-test is used to determine how significant the correlation DMs and CC at Kirkuk university College of Education for Humanities in the academic year 2022-2023

$$\mathbf{t= r\frac{\sqrt{N-1}}{1-(r2)} \rightarrow t= 0.439\frac{\sqrt{150-1}}{1-(0.439)2} \rightarrow t= 0.439 * (13.5856) \rightarrow t=5.9641}$$

The t-table value of the degree of freedom (df) = 145 with (0.05) level of Significance is (1.9674). Thus, the obtained t value is higher than the t-table value (5.9641 > 1.9674).

To sum up, the findings have revealed that there is a significant Moderate correlation between students' DMs and CC and that the correlation is positive since the coefficient of 0.439 is (+).The coefficient 0.439 is classified as moderate. The results show that there is statistically significant relationship between students' DM and CC, as (sig) 0.000 < (α) 0.05.

Determinant Coefficient

This test, also is known as the R square (R2) calculation, determines how much of the proportion of variance in the independent variable can be explained by the dependent variable. This computation's outcome is shown in the table below:

(Table 4.15)

Determinant Coefficient

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.439 [a]	0.193	0.187	15.147

According to the table above, the determinant coefficient value (R2) is 0.193. This means that the contribution of students' DMs to CC is approximately to(19%), with the remaining 81% due to other factors.

B. Correlation between Students' DMs and their Performance CC at Tikrit University

The findings are displayed in table(4.16) show the correlation between students' DMs and their performance in CC at Tikrit University.

Table (4.16) Correlation between Students' DMs and CC at Tikrit University

		DMs	**CC**
DMs	**Correlation**	1	.258**
	Significance (2-tailed)		.001
	N	150	150
CC	**Correlation**	.258**	1
	Significance (2-tailed	.001	
	N	150	150
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**			

The calculation above shows the correlation coefficient is 0.258, as it is shown in table (4.16) the sig (2-tailed) value 0.01 is lower than level of significant (α) 0.05 and the correlation coefficient 0.258 is higher than level of significant (α) 0.05. It can also be interpreted according to its r table with df =

158, the coefficient of r table is 0.195 .Thus, r count 0.258 is higher than r table 0.195

After calculating the r (correlation coefficient), the t-test is used to determine how significant the correlation between the DMs and CC at Tikrit university College of Education for Humanities in the academic year 2022-2023

$$\mathbf{t= r\frac{\sqrt{N-1}}{1-(r2)} \rightarrow t=0.258\ \frac{\sqrt{150-1}}{1-(0.258)2} \rightarrow t=0.258\ *(12.6342) \rightarrow t=3.2596}$$

The t-table value of the degree of freedom (df) = 148 with (0.05) level of Significance is (1.9674). Thus, the obtained t value is higher than the t-table value (3.2596> 1.9674).

To sum up, the findings have revealed that there is a low correlation between students' DMs and CC and that the correlation is positive since the coefficient of 0.258 is (+). The coefficient 0.258 is classified as low. The results show that there is statistically significant low relationship between students' DMs and CC at Tikrit University and Kirkuk University, as (sig) 0.000 < (α) 0.05.

Determinant Coefficient

This test, also is known as the R square (R2) calculation, determines how much of the proportion of variance in the independent variable can be explained by the dependent variable. This computation's outcome is shown in the table below:

(Table 4.17) Determinant Coefficient

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.258[a]	.066	.060	15.201

According to the table above, the determinant coefficient value (R2) is 0.066. This means that the contribution of students' DMs to CC is approximately to(6%), with the remaining 94% due to other factors.

0.70-0.90	**High**

Determinant Coefficient

This test, also is known as the R square (R2) calculation, determines how much of the proportion of variance in the independent variable can be explained by the dependent variable. This computation's outcome is shown in the table below:

4.2 Discussion of the Results

The obtained results of first aim show that the level of the EFL university students in DMs is lower than the average level, since the mean sores of the students' level is 41.85 and the theoretical mean scores is 50 and the calculated t- value is higher than the tabulated one. This means that the students have weak level in DMs.

The result show that there are any statistically significant differences among EFL university students' DM at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities". The mean score of Tikrit University is 35.08 and that of Kirkuk University is 48.63.

The obtained results of second aim show that the level of the EFL university students in CC is lower than the average level, since the mean sores of the students' level is 41.85 and the theoretical mean scores is 50 and the calculated t- value is higher than the tabulated one. This means that the students have weak level in DMs.

The result show that there is any statistically significant differences among EFL university students' CC at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities". The mean score of Tikrit University is 12.613 and that of Kirkuk University is 25.64.

Chapter Five :Conclusions

According to the obtained results of the current study, the following points have been Concluded :

1. The university students have a lower level of DMs than the theoretical mean. This means that Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) have weak level in DMs.

2. There is a statistically significant difference between the two universities in the DMs Test.

3. The is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the males and females in the DMs at Kirkuk university.

4. There is Significant difference between students' performance and the theoretical mean in CC of EFL University Students performance. This means that Iraqi Universities (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities have weak level in CC.

5 .There is a significant difference between the two Universities in the CC test.

6. The university students have a lower level of DM than the theoretical mean. This means that Iraqi Universities; (Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities) have weak level in DMs.

7. In this study male performance is better than female's in the DMs at Kirkuk university.

8. The results of fourth aim show that there is statistically significant relationship between students' DMs and CC.

9. The results also show that there is statistically significant low relationship between students' DMs and CC at Tikrit University .

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