

# An Investigation into the Difficulties of Using Transitional Words in Kurdish EFL Students' Writing at the University Level

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to deal with the use of different kinds of transitional words in Kurdish EFL students' writing in two different levels. Namely, Kurdish EFL second- and third-year students often encounter problems of using transitional words when they want to write any kinds of paragraphs, essays in academic writing lectures. They have particularly made various kinds of mistakes while writing argumentative or persuasive essays. This study comprises of theoretical background and data analysis for samples of writing. It also proposes possible pedagogical implications and recommendations which cover doable teaching strategies for improving writing practice and academic writing. The result shows that second year students have inadequate ability and skills to use different kinds of transitional words. On the other hand, third year students have more abilities, but they have often misrepresented or clichéd most of the types of transitional words.

**Keywords:** Transition Words, Types of Transitional Words, Undergraduate Students' Essays, Academic Writing, Coherence and Cohesion, Discourse Markers.

## 1. Introduction

There are different definitions for writing according to various contexts and majors. Halliday et al. (1989) states that the process of writing needs more hard work and judgment as an explicatory act. This is correlated with Nunan (1991) who defines writing a complex process of composing phrases and words on papers as a significant product of that process. Similarly, the ability for uttering ideas and notions in writing articles in foreign or second language settings reliably and accurately is a major achievement that native English speakers do not learn perfectly (Celce- Murcia, 2001). Particularly, writing might be difficult for those who have not acquired language skills in order to interpret their ideas into a coherent text. Currently, several types of research have been carried out on how EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) students write, and what problems they encounter in their own writing (Chen & You, 2007; Wu, 2006; Crewe, 1990). These studies reveal that learners often have problems when they want to practice or write various pieces of writing at different levels. Namely, one of the obvious difficulties is using transitional words or discourse markers in students' pieces of writing. Transitional words are linguistic devices that generate a clear and expressive text McCarthy and Carter (1994). More importantly, there are not many studies in the Kurdish EFL setting on the difficulties of using transitional words. Thus, it is believed that Kurdish EFL university students often have problems when they want to write various pieces of writing at different levels. In order to fulfill this aspect, this research

will chiefly shed light on the difficulties of using different kinds of transitional words in persuasive and argumentative pieces of writing. Firstly, transitional words will be defined and discussed in terms of coherence and cohesion based on the theoretical framework. Secondly, previous studies will be argued as a part of the literature review on transitional words. Thirdly, several kinds of research will be analyzed depending on problems of teaching and learning writing skills. Another point is that this study shows that how students use transitional words mistakenly when they attempt to use simple and complex transitional words. Finally, pedagogical implications and recommendations will be proposed to teach transitional words in the Kurdish EFL context at the university level properly. Recommendations will be proposed to teach transitional words in the Kurdish EFL context at the university level properly.

### **1.1. Coherence and Cohesion**

Coherence and cohesion are two prominent textual elements that have been recognized as formative features of good writing texts (Halliday & Hassan, 1976; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This means that the two elements are necessary when students want to demonstrate their ideas. In addition, the analysis of cohesion creates a useful content of the good organization and quantity of the written contexts. Because of the importance of cohesion in English and writing, many researchers have been conducted since the publication of cohesion in the English language (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion can be seen as one of the main linguistic systems of text organization (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Another importance of cohesion is that it shows the presence or deficiency of clear signals in the written texts which assist the reader to follow ideas and understand the meaning inside the context. At a macro-level, cohesion is an element that impacts the relationships between clauses Winter (1994, pp. 94). At a wider level, transitional words are used to join parts of a paragraph in order to create a coherent piece of writing (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, pp. 4). More importantly, transitional words and phrases can be seen as a great part of grammatical cohesion to link the clauses or sentences together (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Simple and complex transitional words are differently used by students when they want to write a coherent piece of writing. Thus, some of them might face difficulties in employing these words effectively. This is correlated with Wikborg (1990) who states that Swedish learners possibly have cohesion problems since they overuse or misuse transitional words in essay or composition writings. The same problem is often observed amongst Kurdish EFL university students when they want to use transitional words in their own writing. The above-mentioned points refer to the point that coherence and cohesion are two important elements of writing clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and essays. There are also studies in EFL and ESL sets show the problems of using transitional words in writing.

## **2. Literature Review**

Researchers have dealt with transitional words in EFL and ESL setting and attempt to shed light on writing skill as a great part of the discourse. It can be stated that discourse is mainly concerned with writing and spoken forms of communication. There are also two elements that students encounter to create various kinds of discourse (McCarthy, 1991, pp.8). Therefore, written discourse can be discussed through its establishment and process. The formation and process of writing include several steps that assist learners to compose a good piece of writing. Holland and Lewis (1996) claim texts must be well-thought and structured from the first statement to the last. Similarly, the order of the writing is structured by the clearance amongst clauses and sentences, which is taken into account by the 'lexical and grammatical choices of language' (Holland & Lewis, 1996, pp. 29). In order to show problems and find out possible solutions in academic writing, several types of research have been carried out to point out the difficulties of using transitional words, arranging ideas logically, using proper lexical and grammatical choices of the English language in different pieces of writing. For instance, Jalilifar (2008) reveals that EFL Iranian learners repeatedly used elaborative transitional words in descriptive compositions. Additionally, Briane and Liu (2005) realized that EFL Chinese students mostly employ additive transitional words such as 'and', 'also', and 'or'. Also, some researchers found the prevalence ratio of the overall number of reference and conjunctions in student's writing (Johns, 1980; Briane & Liu, 2005; Zhang, 2005). Another researcher states that the quality of writing is not adequate due to overusing and misusing transitional words (Zhang, 2000). These researchers show the difficulties of using transitional words. There are also some other researches that show complications of using transitional words in students' writing (Field & Oi, 1992; Johns, 1984; Johnson, 1992). Nevertheless, some others indicate that there is a positive correlation between the number of cohesive devices and good writing (Field & Oi, 1992). This means that students can keep the balance between the number of transitional words and the content of the writing. This argument shows the two aspects of using transitional words in different contexts. When it comes to the Kurdish EFL setting, some researchers dealt with the use of discourse markers or transitional words amongst Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners For example, Hassan (2010, pp. 211) analyzed cohesive devices in students' writings and revealed that more than two hundred students used different types of transitional words wrongly. This is in agreement with (Martinez, 2004) who found that EFL Iranian learners cannot easily construct a clear and structured text. The final researcher indicated that the quality of writing is affected by having data of essential features

of different genres (Saminan, 2011). Thus, Kurdish EFL university students might have the above mentioned problems when they want to employ different kinds of discourse markers.

### 3. Fraser's Model

Transitional words are chiefly classified based on Fraser's taxonomy (1999). This taxonomy can be seen as the most inclusive list of transitional words for the organization of written discourse. Depending on Fraser's taxonomy (1999), transitional words are distinct as lexical, pragmatic expressions, which are harnessed from structural classes of connectors, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. Each transitional word has its own meaning and indicates a link between the clarification and description of the parts of sentences they present. Rahimi (2011, pp.71) shows that transitional words are assigning contextual messages linguistically and conceptually. In order to deal with the problems of using all kinds of transitional words, the researcher investigated various theoretical frameworks and finally decided to choose Fraser's taxonomy as a theoretical framework.

There are six categories and subcategories based on Fraser's Model (1999)

1. Conclusive: in Conclusion, in sum, to sum up, finally, lastly, in summary, etc.
2. Reason: Because, because of, since, owing to, due to, etc.
3. Elaborative DMs: And, also, moreover, in addition, additionally, as well as, etc.
4. Contrastive DMs: but, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, although, etc.
5. Inferential: Therefore, thus, as consequence, consequently, hence, so, as a result, etc.
6. Exemplifier: for example, for instance, such as, etc.

### 4. Methodology

In order to collect data on the difficulties of using transitional words, ten second-year students and ten third-year students were taken and tested as samples of the study. The students were chosen from the College of Basic Education, English department. The students were chosen from the English department since they have studied 'reading and writing' and 'essay writing' as two academic subjects. The students were chosen in the academic year 2021. The researcher prepared two different writing tasks based on the curriculum and the topics, students studied. The third-year students were asked to write an argumentative essay on one of the titles "The advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones" and "The advantages and disadvantages of public transport". The students were required to answer one of the titles. The second-year students were also asked to write a descriptive paragraph on "Sulaimani" or "their favorite place in Kurdistan". The titles were chosen from academic resources, all ethical issues, guidelines, word limits were also explained by the researcher.

After the participants had taken the test, the researcher collected the test papers from them. The samples of the test papers were scored. The scoring scheme was out of 100 marks for each paper. The researcher scored papers and distributed the scores according to the content and mistakes students made. Ten papers were randomly chosen from the samples that got poor, medium, and very good grades. The reason was that the researcher wanted to show the difficulties and real abilities of students. After these steps, the researcher analyzed the mistakes qualitatively with the purpose of showing mistakes clearly.

### 5. Analysis

#### 5.1. Analyzing Descriptive Paragraphs

##### Sample 1

"I usually go to Lovan restaurant and it is my favourite restaurant. This restaurant is very good since it has all kinds of delicious food and make Iranian food. My brother and I go to that restaurant and we order Swrmqabze. This restaurant has nice waiter and waitress. They serve customers warmly (6) I think this restaurant has beautiful and fresh place and also western food and it has cheap meals for customers."

In sample 1, grammatical mistakes, short sentences, and incoherent pieces of writing occur. In sentence number six, 'and' is used wrongly to link phrases and complete sentence. It should be used to link the phrases. This essay lacks other DMs. The overuse of 'and' makes the text unnatural. It also seems that the writer translated the ideas from Kurdish to English.

##### Sample 2

"Sarchnar is a nice place in sulaimani. It has beautiful parks and nice places. This place is famous on sulaimani for 232 visitors. There are facilities and barbecue places. (4) People visit Srachner and it weather and night times. My family and I sometimes stay for the whole night there since there are some wonderful hotels. I remember we stayed one night and we could find any hotels. I believe it is a nice place in Kurdishistan."

In sample 2 the overuse of 'and' appears very often. The fourth sentence expresses a causative effect incorrectly. Thus, the correct DM that should be used to show this causative is 'because of'. The idea does not follow naturally. There are also some grammatical mistakes.

### Sample 3

“Sulaimnai is a very nice city in the world. Many people live in Sulaimani because it is big and popular in Iraq especially in Kurdistan.(3) and, some people are not interested in living in Sulaimani. Arab minorities leave their own places in the South of Iraq and try to find a place in Sulaimani.it also is nice and convenient for all. People get bent when it is hot and cold in summer and winter. (6)But, Kurdishish people still love this city because of its history and famous noblemen.”

In sample 3 ‘and’ is used semantically wrong at the beginning of the fourth clause because it does not express a contrastive meaning. ‘However’ should have been used. In sentence (6) the position of ‘but’ is semantically inappropriate. So, it should not have been used. In short sentences grammatical mistakes also occur.

### Sample 4

“Freedom Park is a wonderful place in Sulaimani. It has lots of trees and flowers. There are also green areas for relaxation. My younger sister and I often visit Freedom Park at weekends. This park is good for all people since it is in the city center. There are also some facilities for children such as games city. People disagree with some other facilities such as toilets and parking areas. (6)Frankly speaking, the government and relevant authorities attempt to renew and rebuilt some parts of this park.”

In sample 4, the students use a few DMs to connect short sentences. However, it seems easy for the audience to understand the clauses. In sentence number (6) frankly speaking, is semantically wrong here because it does not express a contrastive idea. ‘Nevertheless’ or ‘however’ should have been used.

### Sample 5

“My favorite park is Public Park. It is a first established park in Sulaimnai. This park has big spaces for parking cars. I really enjoyed it when I visit it.(3) It is not very far from our house but it takes five minutes on foot. There are also two small sports areas for football players. This encourages people to visit this park and watch football matches.(6) People because held wedding and birthday parties in this park happily because there are some green areas.”

In sample 5, there are some grammatical mistakes with having short sentences and in the third sentence ‘but’ seems to be wrong because it does not prompt a contrast with the previous clause. Therefore, ‘and’ should have been used. In the sixth sentence ‘because’ does not also appear to initiate a logic clause to represent a cause-and-result relationship.

## 5.2. Analyzing Argumentative Essays

### Sample 1

“This essay will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone which is one of the inventions of this era. Mobile phone invented of the 20th century. In Japan, the first commercial mobile phone begun in 1979. As a result, it becomes one successful communication device. The mobile phone has some advantages and disadvantages. It has restyled the way of life because of several reasons. (6)And, it provides communication for people wherever they want. Second thing, people can take it to everywhere since it is handy and easy to use.(8)However, allowing user to access through internet. It has also many functions like calendar, making notes, alarm clock and calculator. In addition, in customer's point of view, it obvious that mobile phone assist people in business a lot such as, make schedule of working and keep in touch with their companies, owing a mobile phone can solve many issues and hold most of information around the world. (13)but, a number of disadvantages can be identified. Professor Bengt (2008) claimed that radiation activate the brain's stress system," making people more alert and more focused, and decreas ability to wind down and fall asleep". Moreover, if mobile phones brek, people will lose all information. People cannot talk underground and in places because the reception is poor in some areas. Another drawback is that people often use the mobile phones while they are driving and this can cause accidents. Finally, this device also pushes people separate from each other. Beside this, it sometimes disturbs people on their works and studies. (14) [], however mobile phones have brought convenience and comfort to the way the people with others but People should be restrictive with using mobile phones. The relevant authorities and phone companies must issue new rules and regulation to the disadvantages and advice people on using mobile phones safely particularly for teenagers and children who are under 16 years old. It often said that this device may be able to take over computers. In the future, people expect different, something fresh and more high tech than their old mobile phones.”

In sample 1 at the beginning of sentence number (6), ‘And’ seems to be inappropriate to express an elaborative meaning. ‘Firstly’ should have been used to initiate a logical start. At the beginning of sentence number (8), ‘However’ does not elaborate a new sentence. ‘Secondly’ should have been used to elaborate a new sentence instead. In sentence number ‘13’ ‘but’ does not initiate a new paragraph appropriately. ‘however’ or ‘nevertheless’ should have been used to begin the new paragraph. In number (14) it is necessary to use a conclusive DM. Public transport has increased rapidly in the last hundred because of the growth of cities.

### Sample 2

“Public transport has increased rapidly in the last hundred International Journal of Language and Linguistics 2015; 3(4): 230-238 233 years because of the growth of cities. This essay will discuss several advantages and disadvantages. Public transport is usually safe because the drivers have considerable experience. (4) Additionally, at night it can be unpleasant to wait at the bus stop. Public transport is generally efficient since a bus or train can carry many people. However, they are not always full particularly in the evening. A third issue concerns speed. Buses stop regularly and it is necessary to the destination. However, bus lanes help the bus to go quickly. In addition, there is no parking problem. Finally, there is a question of comfort. Public transport may be dirty and crowded. But this is not always the case. (12) In contrast, modern metro systems have air conditioning and good suspension. In conclusion, it can be argued that the advantage outweighs the negative points. Without public transport, cities would quickly stop functioning.”

In sample 2 ‘additionally’ does not express an elaborative point. ‘However’ or ‘nevertheless’ should have been used instead of ‘additionally’ because the next clause has a contrastive meaning. In number (12) ‘in contrast’ used wrongly. ‘Furthermore’ should have been used instead.

### Sample 3

“There are lots of public transports in Sulaimani. People can benefit from all kinds of transportations. Several advantages and disadvantages the impact of public transport The advantages can be further divided into some points. Firstly, public transport is suitable for all people in Sulaimani. Secondly, it is cheap and convenient because of several facilities in the buses. On the other hand, some people are not satisfied with it since it is not available all the time in the bus stops. Next, some buses have not air conditioning. Then, it sometimes takes too much time to arrive in a certain place owing to traffic jam. In summary, it is believed that public transport has been used by majority of people. However The government and relevant must be renewed old roads and transportation systems between cities.”

In sample 3, ‘However’ is semantically wrong positioned in the sentence (10). ‘therefore’ should have been used. Incoherent and insufficient information occur in most parts

### Sample 4

“Many people today think that public transport such as train, plane, taxi are reliable and convenient. Thus, they afford a car and appreciate for these facilities. They also think that public transport has several advantages and drawbacks. Drawbacks can be shown throughout several ways. First of all, I think public transport is not very convenient in Sulaimani because the buses are old. Second, people cannot easily find public garages. Thirdly, public transport is not suitable for disabled people. In addition, I believe that public transport is good and suitable for everyone. Therefore, we can use it everywhere we want. It is also cheap which is good for poor people. Public transport is available twenty four hours a day. Moreover, it encourages people to use public transport more frequently. It can be summarized that public transport can have advantages and disadvantages. However, advantages seem to be more than disadvantages.”

In sample 4, this essay seems to be short and incoherent. Most DMs seem to be used inappropriately. It seems lack of coherent and ideas between DMs and clauses.

### Sample 5

“Nowadays, mobile phones appear to be the most valuable things in our life. We can get benefit from them appropriately. Nevertheless, some disadvantages can be identified. Mobile phones have some advantages. Firstly, it is handy because it can carry to every where, secondly, it has many functions such as listening to music, playing games. Thirdly, it can be used for internet facilities. Furthermore, it is suitable to be used in emergencies. (9) Moreover, several disadvantages can be identified. First, some types of mobiles are expensive. Because of this, most people cannot buy and use them. Second, network reception might not be available or suitable in some areas. As a result, we cannot communicate adequately. Moreover, it is dangerous to be used while driving. In summary, people are satisfied with advantages and using mobile phones widely. However, some disadvantages can have negative impact on our life.”

In sample 5, ‘moreover’ does not express a contrast or disadvantages of mobile phone at the beginning of a new paragraph. Therefore, ‘nevertheless’ should have been used to express an appropriate meaning.

## 6. Discussion

Based on the data analysis, it can be discussed that third-year students overused transitional words compared to second-year students. Particularly, second-year students use more elaborative transitional words such as ‘and’ and ‘also’ and they frequently employ contrastive transitional words such as ‘but’ and causative transitional words such as ‘because’ and ‘since’ very often. Some findings are in line with Fraser (1999) who indicated that most learners practiced elaborative transitional words recurrently. Additionally, they have the ability to use simple conjunctions such as coordinate conjunctions at the sentence level. Nevertheless, most second and third-year students used different types of conjunctions incorrectly semantically. This problem might belong to the student’s understanding of the meanings of transitional words. Moreover, Field and Oi (1992) state that learners might misuse and overuse conjunctions incorrectly. Particularly, EFL (English as a foreign language) learners overused various transitional words in their writings (Yoon,

2006). In terms of cohesion, this result is not correlated with Haliday and Hasan (1976) confirm that ‘and’ relation functions as a conjunction between statements in order to make the text more tight and cohesive. This argument shows that connectors are important glues of writing essays and paragraphs. They are vital to make connections between sentences and clauses stronger. McCarthy and Carter (1994) confirm that the use of sequencing words can be helpful for readers to comprehend the relationships between ideas. The organizations of clauses are defined as clause relations (Winter, 1994; Hoey, 1983). The above-mentioned arguments signpost that transitional words are significant elements of academic writing, however, students still have difficulties of using them properly. Thus, learners should learn and practice more at different levels and they should study all kinds of transitional words in academic writing.

The results of the above-mentioned analysis reveal the most common difficulties of using transitional words. There are some reasons that cause making mistakes in student’s writings. The first problem is that most learners rely on translating ideas from Kurdish into English and vice versa while they are writing sentences. Some researchers showed that transitional words are used in writing essays due to translation from the source to the target language (Jalilifar, 2008). However, there is not sandstone evidence for this aspect amongst Kurdish EFL learners. They might have the problems as some other EFL learners in different settings. Another problem is that most Kurdish EFL learners might not be familiar with the proper academic style, structure of rhetorical conventions of the English language. The style and structure of conventions of the English language are different from another language. This might create more difficulties for learners. In addition, Leki (1991) genre features are different from the English language to another. Thus, Kurdish EFL learners might not be able to create proper essays owing to the establishment of writing a coherent essay is a two-way process that includes speakers and/or writers to take different types of communicative information and grammatical knowledge into consideration (Sanders & Noordman, 2000). Communicative and grammatical knowledge are two important elements that Kurdish English learners might not have the proper abilities to show their personal, social identities, actions to create interpersonal connections between discourse markers in pieces of writing. Furthermore, grammatical knowledge is another point that should be determined. Lichtenberk (1991) states that grammar can be seen as a prominent indicator that forms discourse between the current expression and the previous information and helps students to use a strategic approach to organize transitional words consecutively. Additionally, these researches show that students sometimes do not have prior information. This feature will not allow readers to understand and engage with the text (Ahmed, 2010). Another difficulty is writing anxiety that makes problems in writing a coherent piece of writing. This is correlated with Cheng (2002) who states that writing anxiety negatively impacts on learners’ inducements and accomplishment. The final problem might be connected to a lack of formal teaching methods of cohesive devices and transitional words.

## **7. Pedagogical Implications**

The investigation of problems in students’ writings, and particularly in using different kinds of transitional words and phrases, can make consciousness that is more valuable on finding pedagogical implications for the errors. Every mistake might be a starting point for Kurdish EFL teachers and lecturers to know more about the subject itself and concentrate on the aspects that importantly required to be improving and enriching. Thus, Kurdish EFL teachers need to focus on the most significant areas that are helpful for improving redundant errors amongst EFL learners in terms of using transitional words. In addition, Kurdish EFL should work carefully and not spend time and effort on teaching areas, which have unimportant glitches to the students (Hasan & Sabir, 2010). For example, it is clear that some mistakes of transitional words should be more considered than the others. These errors are mainly connected to grammatical mistakes and insufficiency in the samples of writings. Therefore, teachers and lecturers need to be aware of these difficulties and provide necessary tips and steps to sort out minor and major problems as indicated before.

Depending on previous studies, investigators have proposed and recommended pedagogical implications to sort out the difficulties of using transitional words in writing; more importantly in learning and teaching linking words such as references, types of connectors, and other kinds of conjunctions in academic writing (e.g. Hasan & Sabir, 2010; Rahimi, 2011; Khalil, 1989). This leads to a different discussion in the Kurdish EFL setting. According to the analysis for descriptive and argumentative pieces of writing, Kurdish EFL university students have difficulties in using different kinds of transitional words. Particularly, second-year students cannot use all kinds of transitional words in descriptive whereas third-year students have more awareness of using different kinds of transitional words. Nevertheless, some third-year students might have ambiguities in suing and placing some kinds of transitional words such as “However”. This means that more advanced students are not completely better than low-level students are. Thus, there should be a doable approach and proposal to solve this problem amongst students. Namely, this might lead to propose an effective approach and technique for teaching transitional words appropriately with the aim of decreasing learners’ mistakes and progressive teaching methods for writing activities and tasks. In the world of teaching writing, process and genre, based methods can be seen as two influential approaches. The process approach will allow students to go through steps

respectively such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing and the second approach will also assist students to go through different texts in order to be familiar with different purposes of each genre (Richards & Renandya, 2002, pp. 308). Henceforth, these two approaches will empower students to use all kinds of discourse markers in their own pieces of writings respectively based on the activities and tasks they have inside and outside the class.

Some recommendations and strategies must be undertaken for the adequate use of transitional words in academic writing in order to employ these approaches and steps of writing academically. First, it is required for Kurdish EFL students to be mindful of the challenges of using all types of transitional words in academic writing successfully. Thus, Kurdish EFL instructors should inspire learners to think more about relevant ideas based on different essay or paragraph topics first and then select the most suitable linking words to join the thoughts and clauses. At the same time, the students should be instructed on the way they use transitional words because inadequate or excessive use of cohesive devices could not make a coherent text (Carrell, 1982). Therefore, teachers need to remind their learners to have well-balanced position while using transitional words. Additionally, instructors must give explicit guidelines to the students that cannot use, misuse, or overuse simple and complex linking words. As a result, students will be able to choose the most appropriate transitional words and organize clauses and sentences rationally. This also makes the audience comprehend the meaning of writings (Lee, 2002). Another way to improve the use of transitional words is to encourage Kurdish EFL students read different academic texts in order to enrich and empower their understanding of implicit and explicit relations between ideas and clauses. Heller (1999) and Hirvela (2004) reveal that incorporating reading activity into writing is essential. This indicates that reading texts would be beneficial for learners to improve their writing skills and comprehend transitional words and essential vocabularies in writing activities. This way will also be more useful for students to understand coherence and cohesion because it is not easy to learn coherence via teaching pace only (Connor & Johns, 1990). Nevertheless, it is recommended that instructors should be aware of teaching cohesion and coherence since Kurdish EFL students should study basic elements and techniques of writing skills such as writing topic sentences, paragraphs, and thesis statements (Hassan, 2010). In addition, teachers should show the students how students' structure different models of writing texts academically (Thurston & Candlin, 1998, Yoon, 2006). This part is important to students since it assists students to understand text models and identify elements of texts, for example, demonstratives, pronouns, and discourse markers. For this purpose, teachers should have many different tasks and activities in the classroom to decrease the scarcity of writing opportunities through group discussions and peer reviews on ideas of writing paragraphs and essays. As a consequence, students will be enabled to raise their writing knowledge and use types of transitional words properly.

Based on the descriptive analysis of pieces of writing, it can be noticed that many learners still work on the sentence level. Related studies on EFL and ESL learners have already presented that students are mainly concentrating on the word, phrases, and sentence levels more than other aspects of discourse and written steadiness (Bamberg, 1984; Ferris and Hedgecock, 1998). Similarly, most Kurdish EFL learners manage to write single grammatical clauses and sentences but they might not concentrate on the meaning of sentence fragments. Some researchers confirm that many EFL and ESL learners assume that 'their only sense of security comes from what they have learned about grammar' (Leki, 1991). In order to engage students in writing texts and practicing genres, instructors should have or use some doable strategies and techniques to shift student's attention from sentence-level grammar to working on more complex discourse characteristics in written texts such as organizing texts and propositional unity (Basturkmen, 2002). This practice might make learners alter their learning attentions to discourse features. With the purpose of solving problems of using transitional words in writing, instructors need to employ the macrostructure of the essays importantly. This is correlated with the claim which shows that macrostructure has a prominent role for readers and writers to understand functions and categories of different texts (Hoey, 1983). In addition, Kurdish EFL instructors can teach the learners the features of writing essays and its communication purpose through practicing aspects of cohesion. For instance, teachers can teach students how they practice features of coherence through writing argumentative essays. This step will enable students to link and organize thoughts tightly. Another aspect of writing essays is organizing information which is helping readers to understand how the arguments are presented and progressed (Winter, 1994, pp. 49). As a result, the relationships between clauses show the meaning of the essays and solve cohesion difficulties (Hassun, 2010). Through practicing the above-mentioned steps, Kurdish EFL learners will be able to arrange ideas and information properly.

This point possibly justifies and elaborates the arguments in the text coherently. It seems that Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners might not be able to justify and exemplify the arguments because of the insufficient topic and language knowledge. Furthermore, cohesive devices are a useful set of linkers that make communication between the reader and writer (McCarthy, 1991). Kurdish EFL learners might feel ambiguity in using these devices in their essays. This difficulty could vary from descriptive to argumentative essays. It can be worthwhile to propose some useful strategies based on the above-mentioned arguments to improve discourse features, especially using kinds of DMs in

two types of essays in light of their problems in using simple and complex DMs. These strategies are based on Basturkenm (2002) designed strategies to teach cohesion and cohesive devices in EFL learners in Hong Kong and advanced students. The strategies are connected with Kurdish EFL learners because they are high-level undergraduate students.

### **7.1. Resources, Plans, and Engagement to Teach Transitional Words in Academic Writing**

There are several ways of teaching writing in different settings. There are also materials and strategies to proper or better teaching academics. The researcher proposed the following as a great part of teaching and instructing Kurdish EFL learners while studying academic writing

#### **A. Preliminary Tasks**

Kurdish EFL lecturers can present the prominence of transitional words and coherence via the overview of the subject they are teaching and embolden learners' comfort in writing short and long pieces of writing depending on different topics. There are several preliminary activities that lecturers can employ, for example, recitation a present occasion or reiterating an interesting story. Additionally, instructors are able to concentrate on the macrostructure (step by step) techniques to complete the whole activities, and then students can take part and construct the information of the story or events from a single sentence to a short paragraph. This demonstration of material and knowledge will enable learners to be more aware of the exchange of knowledge in texts. This method will enable students to comprehend the meaning and the practice of transitional words to join clauses, sentences and write more comprehensible pieces of writing.

#### **B. Explicit Teaching**

It can be noticed that most Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners have difficulties in using transitional expressions properly and accurately, particularly complex transitional words such as “In addition, nevertheless, however, therefore, in contrast, as a result and in spite of”. Thus, overt way of teaching or instructions of transitional words with giving sentence examples should be accomplished by lecturers rather than accumulative awareness activities through learning (Al-Jarf, 2001; Reichelt, 2001). This way is significant for Kurdish EFL undergraduate students because students often do not have enough time to practice accumulated or bunch of activities or admittance to English sources. Moreover, instructors can choose, justify and work modest and reliable texts. Kurdish EFL learners can also analyze different types of academic writing such as descriptive, discursive, argumentative and narrative structures consequently and then rearrange jumbled sentences and clauses via macrostructure modeling. Then students can work together on short paragraphs and other topic based activities and use different kinds of transitional words in their writings. For instance, students can present and discuss the sense of using different kinds of transitional words. After doing these activities, the instructor can choose a sample from learners' writing and focus on the use and significance of using various transitional words. For example, the instructor can show how “however” or “nevertheless” is used in argumentative and descriptive pieces of writing (Braine and Liu, 2005, pp. 635). This makes the students to be aware of overusing and underusing of transitional words.

#### **C. Students' Hand-outs**

In order to develop coherence and cohesion, instructors can give hand-out activities on various themes. They can also give more clarifications and illustrations on transitional words with suitable examples in this phase. The instructors should employ the macrostructure procedures in giving explanations of a typical example of the descriptive paragraphs or essays. In this way, students can understand more about the steps of writing paragraphs and essays and the use of transitional words. These activities will also enable students to comprehend the primitive notes on the theme and eloquent notes on the problem – solution, pros and cons and general – specific structures. For example, the learners can be asked to describe a problem-solution essay based on the macrostructure patterns. This is correlated with Hoey's quote (1983) who indicates that “problem solution pattern, consisting of a situation (In which there is a problem) and a problem (within the situation, requiring a response)”. Other hand-out is also required to give more explicit explanations about written and explanatory markers. These activities will be helpful for students to practice different kinds of transitional words and link ideas, clauses and sentences logically.

#### **D. Raising Attentiveness of Patterns**

Raising awareness will be beneficial for learners to be more aware of the text ties such as coherence and cohesion in ranges of genres such as descriptive and argumentative pieces of writing. This is in line with Coffin et al. (2005) who claims that instructors should raise student's consciousness of learners on “how argument essays work in various discipline areas”. In order to raise student's awareness, instructors can provide essay samples and paragraphs on different topics and bring students to the class. Then, the students should be instructed accordingly and worked on the samples individually or with peers. After that, the teacher can lead the discussion and let the learners know how they need to use transitional words and arrange sentences in different patterns. In this way, learners will possibly be able to comprehend the organization of simple, compound, and complex sentences. This will eventually be useful for learners

to propose and comprehend proper transitional words to join ideas in a cause–effect pattern (Holland & Lewis, 1996, pp. 29).

### E. Reformulating

Reformulating is an effective part of the nature of clauses and sentences which shows the rational connotation of a stream of thoughts in pieces of writings (Mezo, 2001). This approach will assist learners to reformulate and rearrange notions, structures and link parts of a paragraph logically. In order to practice this aspect of writing, teachers can give learners random statements and ask them to rearrange sentences into meaningful paragraphs or text based on the task requirement. Reformulation will finally assist learners to practice the meaning and function of transitional words in various types of writings.

### F. Creating Essays

Having the above-mentioned steps will formulate Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners construct and write their academic pieces of writings imaginatively. Formulating comprehensible and unified pieces of writing will conceivably help learners to organize ideas appropriately. As a result, the reader can comprehend the student's writing obviously. To fulfill this strategy, Kurdish EFL instructors should give students familiar essay topics based on the ability of the learners and they should have frameworks to achieve the required notions connected to the pattern of the essays, for example, problem-solution, or general to specific topics. This is correlated with MacCarthy and Carter (1994) who confirm the use of blank frames for different essay topics and patterns of writing. In this way, Kurdish EFL learners are able to work on their own essays and learn how to do reviewing, editing different clause patterns and discourse markers. Instructors can continuously give feedback on the first draft appropriately.

## 8. Conclusion

To sum up, this research mainly focuses on a specific feature of written discourse. It also shed light on how Kurdish EFL undergraduate students use simple and complex transition words in their own writing activities. This study also presents how and to what extent Kurdish EFL learners are mindful of using transition words. Nevertheless, most of them might not have enough background knowledge to select transition words properly. Particularly, low-level students do not often have abilities to use different types of transition words. The above-mentioned difficulties are related to different reasons, for example, unsuitable didactic implications, techniques, strategies, inadequate information, and academic resources. This research also summarizes the difficulties of using transition words such as misusing and overusing. Based on the problems, some pedagogical recommendations, techniques, strategies, and approaches have been suggested to instruct academic writing and transitional words. Namely, proper strategies have been proposed so as to decrease learner's mistakes and raise their consciousness of using transition words and writing kinds of paragraphs and essays.

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