The Effect of Consciousness- Raising Tasks on Improving Algerian EFL Students' Use of Discourse Markers in Speaking

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Abstract

The investigation described in this dissertation aims at studying some aspects of spoken discourse which are discourse markers, and will consider in particular the production of those devices by EFL students of English as well as the effect of consciousness-raising tasks on improving discourse competence and communicative language performance of non-native speakers of English in Algeria. In this context a quasi-experimental research was adopted consisting of two groups of twenty (20) Algerian students each belonging to first year English LMD: one constitutes the experimental group while the other represents the control one. The experiment was conducted in three phases during which three techniques were adopted in the collection of the required data; i.e. we employed two written tests [a pre- test and a post- test], two interviews [from which we derived student corpora] and a questionnaire. The study reveals some development in the students' discourse competence as far as the use of spoken discourse markers is concerned; nevertheless, a discrepancy is noticed in the frequency and use of those targeted features when compared with a subcorpus of native speakers' talks containing 460,050 words, already employed by the author [15], selected from the whole CANCODE pedagogical corpus. Moreover, the investigation unveiled that some discourse markers were overused or underused whereas others were misused or not used at all.

Keywords: Discourse markers; Awareness-raising; Speaking skills.

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1. Introduction

In our daily interactions, we use language to fulfil many different goals. We communicate information, ideas, beliefs, emotions and attitudes to one another. When using language for communication, both the interlocutor and the addressee are involved in two major processes: transmitting ideas and interpreting the message produced. The same processes take place when learning another language as English. The latter requires a combination of knowledge of the target language with skills and strategies that enable to use it effectively.

Indeed, when using English language in conversation, both the speaker and the listener signal constantly how they want things to be understood and interpreted through the use of a multitude of small words such as *you know, I mean, well, see, so, and, but* and many others. The latter play an important role in discourse and have been allotted various names by various researchers such as *discourse particles, connectives, pragmatic expressions* or *pragmatic markers*, yet the term *discourse markers [DMs]* is more commonly employed by researchers who work on English discourse. Therefore, we use the term discourse markers in this survey.

A great deal of studies on discourse markers such as [2,13,32,33] which have been carried out during the last two decades indicate that they are significant elements requiring to be learnt by non-native speakers. In this respect, [35] qualified the study of discourse markers as *an extensive area of research in itself*, while [13: 932] characterised it *as a growth industry in linguistics*. Furthermore, [20:43] high lights their presence as the *pepper* in spontaneous conversation.

Accordingly, this survey aims at investigating the effect of applying discourse analysis in the classroom with specific focus on teaching discourse markers to Algerian EFL learners and will attempt to answer some issues relating to students' awareness about these aspects. In this framework the following major question stands out:

- What is the effect of consciousness-raising tasks on improving EFL students' use of discourse markers in speaking?

Likewise, some sub questions are raised. These have to do with:

- Are Algerian EFL learners aware of the existence of discourse markers as discourse forms that facilitate oral fluency?
- Does classroom instruction of the spoken discourse markers, considered in this study, improve learners' spoken language performance? And to what extent do interviewees use discourse markers appropriately in Algerian educational settings?

2. Significance of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of applying discourse analysis in the classroom with specific focus on teaching discourse markers to EFL learners. In other words, the main aim of this research is to study the effect of raising EFL learners' awareness about discourse markers on developing their oral competence and performance. The reasons lying behind the present research can be summarised as follows:

Some EFL learners may stand still without uttering a word once they are involved in English social interactions requiring prompt or spontaneous responses, especially in exchanges involving face to face requests, refusals or compliments. This may be returned back to the lack of mastery of linguistic devices such as discourse markers. However, a delay marked by pure silence would be socially and linguistically awkward, so it is often filled in with discourse markers such as *well, uh, oh* as they refer to and anticipate the following utterance [32]. Thus, in explaining the latter to students, instructors can make clear that such words are helpful or necessary to keep the flow of conversation going on and clear. Likewise, they can highlight the use of discourse markers and elucidate their meaning as well as their correct usage in the target language via awareness-raising activities.

Another reason is that throughout my period of work as a teacher of oral and listening comprehension at the English department of the University of Algiers 2, I have noticed that first year LMD students of English tended to imitate English people's talk when conversing with each other. They frequently made use of certain markers such as *well, so, ok, and* and *but*; however, they tended to overuse them or misuse them. Besides, they restricted their speaking to the use of the aforementioned devices and neglected the whole list of those elements smoothing conversation. This may be explained by the fact that some expressions are culture bound, and that learners often ignore where and when to make use of them. This idea is sustained by [1] who points out that *learners of the [target) language are usually not aware that there are rules governing these expressions* [1:30].

Furthermore, since no previous study has been conducted as far as discourse markers are concerned in the Algerian context, a call for a rigorous investigation is necessary to confirm or deny the Algerian EFL learners' consciousness about those devices and. their appropriate use. This can be put into concrete form on the basis of the studies carried out in this field such as [2,14,32,33] indicating that they are significant elements requiring to be learnt by non-native speakers.

In addition, in EFL classes, there exists a tendency to put great emphasis on teaching grammar and vocabulary to enable learners to communicate. Nevertheless, this tendency seems to disregard teaching the pragmatic component of the target language in the language classroom. The latter is supposed to link form and context to enable users to express and interpret the intended meaning accurately. In this respect [38:194] asserts that t*eachers and learners of a language tend to... disregard the study and development of pragmatic weight that discourse markers add to language learning.*

Moreover, as far as language acquisition is concerned, native speakers of English acquire pragmatic competence in their childhood. Therefore, EFL learners need to know about the cultural aspects of the foreign language in order to avoid misuse or any misunderstanding from the part of native speakers. [34:171] illustrates this essentially and states that it is impossible that native speakers pinpoint any grammatical error *If a foreign language learner says five sheeps or he goed,* yet it is essential to learn those linguistic devices to sound natural.

3. Background to the study

Many studies on discourse markers have been carried out during the last two decades; therefore, highlighting the concept of discourse markers, as linguistic devices which contribute to the flow of conversation, as well as the

issues relevant to the appropriate teaching of speaking to EFL learners require to be dealt with.

3.1 Definition and Terminology

Despite the wide research interest raised by discourse markers for many years, there is no generally agreement upon the definition of this term. In fact, discourse markers have been used under a multitude of terminologies and given various definitions.

As far as the terminology adopted to determine discourse markers, there is no definite consensus upon what to call those items. They have been assigned various names. References [32,22:178,25:03,27: 172] referred to them as *discourse markers*. [36:194] called them *linguistic elements*. References [33,2] gave them the name of *discourse connectives*. Another fairly frequent term is *pragmatic markers* (as cited in [5]). Furthermore, [28:30] attributed to them the term *utterance indicators*, while [10:14] prefers the term *cohesive devices*. Reference [29] referred to them as *discourse operators* and were named *cue phrases* by [18,19,31]. Other less frequent terms according to [14:190] include *discourse particles, discourse signalling devices, indicating devices, phatic connectives, pragmatic operators, pragmatic particles, semantic conjuncts, and sentence connectives*.

Concerning the definitions attributed to those linguistic elements, [32:31] gave an *operational definition* to markers. She defines them as sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk. [22: 178] put forward this definition: *discourse markers are words or phrases which are normally used to mark boundaries in conversation between one topic or bit of business and the next*. Another definition is submitted by [38:191] who defines them as *those elements such as you know, I mean, well, oh, m, you see, look, listen, have a specific semantic meaning and contribute to scaffold the pragmatic coherence of interaction*. Besides, Reference [27: 172] define them as *words and phrases outside the clause structure, that function to link segments of the discourse to one another in ways which reflect choices of monitoring, organisation and management exercised by the speaker*. Moreover, Reference [28:30] defines discourse markers or utterance indicators as *signposts indicating the structure of the conversation for the hearer, and helping the audience understand what is being said*.

In addition, Reference [7:449] define them as *inserts which contribute to the interactive character of speech, because they signal relations between speaker, hearer [s) and discourse*. They also assert that discourse markers *signal interactively how the speaker plans to steer the dialogue* [7:456]. Another definition is given by [36:15-33] who says that *discourse markers are used to buy time, to start a turn, or to mark the beginning or end of a segment through the use of grammar and vocabulary*. The International Encyclopedia of linguistics defines discourse markers as *a set of linguistic items in the cognitive, social, expressive and textual domains* [8].

3.2 Approaches to the Teaching of Speaking

Instruction constitutes an attempt to intervene in the process of language learning [11:713]. As concerns the teaching of conversation in second language programs, current literature [11,17,30,37] indicates that there are two major approaches that can be applied in the teaching of conversation: *an Indirect Approach* and *a Direct*

one.

3.2.1   The Indirect Approach

In his attempt to deal with the teaching of conversation, Reference [30] makes a distinction between two major approaches aforementioned. According to him, the indirect approach is an approach *in which conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction* [30:76-77]. In other words, learners can develop their spoken skill via their participation in communicative activities. Moreover, [37] state that *the indirect approach assumes that learners can acquire conversational competence simply by doing it* [37:275]. Reference [11: 725] on his part points out that indirect intervention*, with its emphasis on learning through communication, is likely to result in linguistic knowledge that is deployable.*

The justification for an indirect approach to the teaching of conversation is based on the notion laid out by Krashen and SLA theorists which states that *language can be unconsciously acquired through conversation and exposure to comprehensible input* [30: 77]. SLA researchers have argued that *in using conversation to interact with others, learners gradually acquire the competence that underlies the ability to use language*.

However, there are certain causes justifying hesitancy in recommending this instructional approach. In this respect, Reference [11: 725] mentions some causes that may prevent the implementation of the indirect approach in language pedagogy. *First it may not result in high levels of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.* Second, there is clear design for indirect intervention. Third, there may be a clash between the indirect approach and the analytical one.

3.2.2   The Direct Approach

Advocates of the direct approach argue that speaking skills should be taught explicitly via consciousness raising activities [17,30,36,37]. Reference [17] for instance stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to have conversations. He asserts that the direct approach *involves planning a conversation program around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation* [17:77]. Reference [37] support this idea by indicating that the direct approach *presupposes the need for a form-focused instructional stage at some point in the lesson cycle* [37:275].

The direct approach to teaching conversation raises learners' awareness of the nature, systems and patterns involved in conversation. Reference [17] states that it is *one that focuses on the processes and strategies involved in casual conversations*   [17: 79]. The latter can be applied by implementing certain aspects as *strategies for turn-taking, topic control, and repair, conversational routines; fluency; pronunciation; and differences between formal and casual conversational styles* (op.cit).

Likewise, learners gain knowledge on how and where to make use of certain fixed phrases and expressions that are abundant in spoken English discourse by implementing some aspects of conversation. These, according to [37: 276], *may take the form of discourse markers and conversational gambit, and they may take the form of*

conventionalized ways of performing certain speech acts, such as apologizing, requesting and thanking.

To sum up, this section has attempted to explore two major approaches to the teaching of conversation for EFL learners. It is evident that each approach has its properties, and it is not possible to declare that the direct approach is superior to the indirect one or vice versa. Nor is it possible to declare that a focus instruction on one will lead to better learning than another. Consequently, a balance between explicit awareness raising techniques and indirect methods is suitable to provide competent Algerian speakers of English.

4. Methodology

The subjects, the research tools as well as the steps undertaken to investigate the effect of consciousness raising tasks about discourse markers on developing Algerian EFL learners' spoken language performance are developed.

4.1 The Subjects

As previously introduced, the population of the present investigation comprises two groups of Algerian University students belonging to first year English LMD. They are enrolled in the English department, at the University of Algiers 2 to get a Bachelor of Art degree (BA degree) in English as a foreign language. The first group constituting the experimental group consists of twenty [20] students, while the second one comprising the same number [20 students] constitutes the control group.

Both groups are a mixture of male and female young students aged between eighteen and twenty two years old belonging to different social and cultural backgrounds. In other words, they come from different regions of Algeria and have different baccalaureates: literary, scientific and exact sciences. Additionally, all the members of the population are multilingual. They speak at least two of the following three languages: Arabic, French, Berber besides the English language which they have been studying for approximately seven years.

4.2. Research Tools

In this research we used multiple techniques to gather the data necessary to answer the enquiries previously mentioned. Thus, in this study, we made use of pre and post-tests; interviews (from which derive student corpora), CANCODE corpus and a questionnaire. Each of these tools is presented below.

4.2.1   A Pre-test and a Post- test

Two tests were assigned to the subjects of the study: a pre test and a post test. The reason behind the implementation of the latter is to discover the extent to which Algerian EFL learners as non native speakers of English are aware of spoken discourse forms; i.e. discourse markers used in spontaneous spoken language . The students were devoted 15 minutes to do the work by noting down the items that they consider being discourse markers and explain the reasons lying behind their use. Besides, both tests were allotted 20 points each; then, the results scored were compared and analysed to determine the extent to which awareness about discourse markers

is raised.

4.2.2   *Interviews*

In this study we employed two interviews with the intention to collect information about Algerian EFL learners' consciousness about discourse markers while engaging in spoken interaction. The first one took place before the instructional phase whereas the other one was conducted after the instructional period. Besides, it is worth noting that the participants were informed that the interview was more like a casual conversation without knowing that their use of discourse markers was the research target.

Both interviews were recorded and transcribed. Consequently, students' corpora were realised, compared and analysed. Moreover, in order to verify the appropriate use of discourse markers in communication by EFL Algerian students, an authentic corpus was necessary to enable comparison between the student corpus and the latter. Thus, the CANCODE sub-corpus of English native speakers was adopted.

4.2.3   *Questionnaire*

A questionnaire was designed and administered to the subjects of the survey during pre-instruction phase to provide us with the information necessary to answer the questions aforementioned. In fact, the questionnaire is viewed by [26: 143] as a popular means of collecting data. According to him, *it enables the researcher to collect data in field settings.*

As pointed out earlier, the questionnaire consisted of four questions which took the form of *list questions* [6: 138]. The reason behind the choice of this type of questions is that the more they are well structured the less problems will be encountered at the at the analysis stage.

It is worth underlining in this context that the questionnaire had been piloted before being administered to the subjects of survey. The purpose lying behind this step is to make sure that the questions set are answerable and that the respondents in the main study will experience no difficulties in completing it. Accordingly, [6,26] stressed the necessity to pilot questionnaires. Reference [6:147], for instance, asserts that piloting enables us *to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable to remove any items which do not yield usable data.* Moreover, Reference [26: 145] stated that *it is imperative to pilot any questionnaire which is developed.*

4.3   *Research Procedure*

In order to investigate the effect of consciousness-raising tasks on improving EFL students' understanding and use of discourse markers in speaking, we have adopted the quasi-experimental approach which was developed in three phases.

4.3.1   *Phase One*

As concerns the first phase related to the pre-instructional period, the subjects of both groups of the research were assigned a pre-test consisting of a task adapted from [36:51] to assess their knowledge about communication strategies and more precisely about discourse markers and their functions. Thus the students were asked to note down the fillers used in the task and to give an eventual explanation about their function. The test included 20 items to which one point was allotted to each one so that the maximum score would be 20. In this respect, it is worth noting that since the pre-test conducted was too succinct and the discourse markers included were not obvious, we considered it not enough to draw conclusions about the learners' discourse markers knowledge. Consequently, an interview was necessary to be carried out.

Indeed, an interview, aiming at assessing the subjects' oral fluency with a great focus on their use of discourse markers, was conducted and recorded. The latter dealt with themes having connection with general topics such as the reasons lying behind choosing to study English; the students' hobbies and their future plans after getting the degree. The main reason behind this interview is to make students deal freely with topics that are close to them and without any constraints. Therefore, by replying to the enquiries of the interview, the students may face some difficulties in expressing themselves, since as it was mentioned previously they belong to first year English LMD. They may thus employ some discourse markers constituting the focus of our study as a strategy to keep the smoothness of conversation and to overcome their language difficulty. Just after that, the students were given a questionnaire to complete.

It is worth noting that the interviews were recorded and transcribed; thus, a student corpus was established to define the frequency of discourse markers employed as well as their appropriateness in comparison with a sub-corpus of native speakers' talks containing 460,050 words, already employed by [15: 417].

4.3.2 Phase Two

As concerns the instructional phase, in an attempt to raise students' awareness about a range of discourse markers, I have decided to proceed in the experiment as follows:

Concerning the control group, it was assigned oral lessons devoted to enable EFL learners to communicate ideas, feelings, attitudes and information to the hearers and employ speech that relates to the situation. Thus, to achieve this purpose, we tried through *group discussions* and *student presentations* [9:177] to deal with a multitude of different topics. These were to do with themes related to: internet versus books; illegal immigration; corruption; delinquency; rural exodus; unemployment; war.

As concerns the experimental group, in order to develop the students' spoken skill and raise their awareness about discourse markers, the learners were involved in a multitude of activities ranging between written ones and audio-video. The latter aimed at exploring language of interaction via three steps: It started with *awareness raising activities*, where the learners discovered the features of the spoken language. Then, it was followed by *appropriation activities* where learners gained control over these features before achieving *autonomy* as independent speakers. In other words, they were introduced to tasks aiming at raising their awareness about the linguistic form and function of discourse markers in conversations. This was achieved via the adoption of the

Cognitivists' learning theory which called for some degree of conscious awareness about the rules of the system. Consequently, it replaced the three-stage PPP model [presentation, practice and production] with one that progresses from *awareness-raising, through proceduralization to autonomy* [36: 38]. In this context, Reference [3:218] asserts that *from a language pedagogical perspective, it is necessary firstly, to make learners aware of the natural use of discourse markers in spontaneous spoken language, and, secondly, to automatise, as it were, the use of discourse markers.*

4.3.3   *Phase Three*

As concerns the third phase related to the post-instructional period, the subjects of both groups of the research were assigned a post-test consisting of a task adapted from [36:50] to assess their knowledge about communication strategies and more precisely about discourse markers and their functions. Thus the students were asked to note down the fillers used in the task and bring forth eventual explanation to their use. The test included 20 items in which one point was allotted to each item so that the maximum score would be 20. In this respect, it is worth noting that since the test was concise, a post interview was administered to the subjects of the survey so that conclusions about the students' development as far as discourse markers use is concerned would be drawn.

Indeed, an interview, aiming at assessing the improvement of the subjects' oral fluency with a great focus on their use of discourse markers, was conducted and recorded. The interviewees were asked general questions relating to what they had done during the holidays, describing the place where they lived in addition to a specific topic to choose related to: comparison between reading books and internet, talking about illegal immigration, delinquency, and unemployment. The aim behind this interview is twofold: to assess the development of the students' speaking skill as well as paying attention to the extent to which they employ discourse markers appropriately in their talk.

It is worth noting that the interviews were recorded and transcribed; thus, a student corpus was established to define the frequency of discourse markers employed and their appropriateness in comparison with CANCODE sub corpus of English native speakers previously mentioned.

Once the data necessary for the accomplishment of the survey were gathered, results were retrieved, analyzed and discussed to try to find answers to the issues aforementioned.

5. Results and discussion

In order to discuss the research findings, we organised and presented data analysis following the research questions. In other terms, we tackled each research question raised at the beginning of the survey and tried to answer it on the basis of the data results obtained via various streams [tests, interviews and questionnaire].

5.1   *Response to Sub-Question One*

Harking back to the first question regarding the extent to which Algerian EFL learners are aware of the

existence of discourse markers as discourse forms to help oral fluency, a pre-test and a post-test were administered to the population of study. The analysis of the scores realised by both the experimental and control groups revealed the failure of the subjects in identifying discourse markers included in the pre-test. This can be returned back to the fact that these linguistic elements are allotted little or almost no consideration as far as teaching of the target language is concerned; i.e. English language in our case.

However, a great discrepancy is noticed between both groups after instruction phase during which only the experimental group received instruction about English discourse markers. Thus the experimental group scores are far beyond those achieved by the control one. Presumably the control group requires instruction on those items.

Consequently, it is apparent that Algerian EFL learners as non-native speakers of English are not aware enough of the existence of discourse markers in spontaneous spoken language.

Moreover a questionnaire was designed and administered to the subjects of investigation just after the interview, during the phase preceding instruction. The questionnaire consisted of four questions, with question 1 to 3 focusing on consciousness in using discourse markers. The results indicated that among the 20 subjects belonging to the experimental group 75% replied they realised; 65% answered they were unconscious; while 30% hesitated between consciousness and unconsciousness. Besides, among the 20 subjects relevant to the control group 85% replied they realised, 10% used discourse markers purposefully, 15% answered they were unconscious while 75% were not sure.

Therefore, the results revealed no great awareness about those linguistic devices. This idea is supported by [31] who point out: *it is not clear how much speakers and hearers are aware of their presence in discourse.* In other terms, the Algerian EFL learners make use of certain discourse markers in their talk, yet they do not realise neither their significance nor their appropriate functions. This statement can be illustrated by the following excerpts of transcripts extracted from student corpora realised before instructional phase.

(1)   I love this language, but I have some difficulties. Um, uh, I don't know[...] *I don't have the words,   so uh, uh I don't have uh I   I have a little just a littlee* [...] *I have some difficulty to speak English, because um I don't read books.*

 [Students' corpus/experimental group]

It appears from the first example that the speaker has difficulty in expressing herself in English. When trying to overcome this difficulty, she over uses some discourse markers. She clusters both hesitation markers [*um, uh*] with vagueness [*I don't know*] which reflects her ignorance about the significance of discourse markers as well as her lack of English proficiency. Besides, she puts the result marker *so* with hesitation marker *uh* to gain time to reflect about what to say. Besides, the addressee expects a result to come forward, yet another idea stands out.

(2)   Oh, they it was awful because I had to stay at home, and um and pick my niece because uh it's the job of aunts, so I have [...] *to do that.*

[Students' corpus/experimental group]

When considering the second example, we find an overuse of linguistic elements [*and um and*] as well as a misuse of *and* which is supposed to be reflective of listing. Yet, in this case it took the role of a linker and a tool for delay. This is due as mentioned before to the lack of consideration devoted to the teaching of discourse markers and also to *the strict divide between grammar practice activities and vocabulary practice activities,* underlined by [24:66], prevailing in the EFL classroom that limit or decrease the naturalness and fluency of the learners' speech. In this respect, Reference [3: 218] calls for the necessity to make learners aware of the natural use of those linguistic elements in spontaneous spoken language and to *promote the use of formulaic language.*

5.2 Response to Sub- Question Two

Regarding the question relating to whether classroom instruction about discourse markers improves learners' spoken language performance and the extent to which Algerian EFL learners use those spoken devices appropriately, it will be discussed as follows.

As far as the first part of this question is concerned, the results of the comparison established between CANCODE native speakers' sub-corpus and student non-native speakers' corpora before instruction phase revealed that both native and non-native speakers of English employ discourse markers in their talk; nevertheless, a discrepancy is noticed.

In fact, Non-native speakers of English either over use or underuse discourse markers. They even misuse them or do not use them at all. The reason behind that can be returned back to many factors. The first one is linked to the fact that Algerian educational settings do not provide EFL learners with sufficient exposure to authentic language to acquire the skills to engage in natural conversations. In this context, Reference [39: 770] points out that a language can be learnt via two parallel tracks: *a formal track and a pragmatic one*. The former relates to the grammatical and semantic rules that conform to the competent use of any given foreign language while the second track concerns knowledge about *the rules and principles which govern language in use* [21: 476].

In our case; therefore, Algerian EFL learners would develop the formal track through formal instruction in the language classroom. Yet, the pragmatic track- which is defined as *an understanding of the relationship between form and context that enables us, accurately and appropriately, to express and interpret intended meaning* [25: 293] is difficult to implement in educational setting. This difficulty is underlined by several studies namely the research on Discourse Markers by [39:194] in which he asserts that *the pragmatic component of language learning that is formed by cognitive, affective and linguistic elements [discourse markers] is difficult to reproduce in the nonnative language teaching class.*

The second factor responsible for the discrepancy in the use of discourse markers between Algerian learners and native speakers is that English is not a second language among learners but a foreign one. In other terms, in addition to the learning context which deprives non-native learners from receiving and producing authentically, learners do not interact with their peers in English outside the pedagogical setting. Instead, they use either their mother tongue, i.e., colloquial Arabic, or Berber or French, as a second language, to communicate [as mentioned

in the second chapter when describing the population of study]. Consequently their English is limited to academic language which makes their talk sound unnatural. The third factor that can explain this discrepancy is underlined by [38: 194]. The latter is connected to the shortcomings of learning a foreign language in unnatural environment, especially as to the teaching and use of discourse markers in interaction. In addition, the investigation unveiled the existence of four categories of spoken discourse markers users. These include: over users, under users, misusers and no users, which had been explained in the previous chapter.

As concerns the second part of the second question relating to whether classroom instruction of spoken grammar forms improves learners' spoken performance, it appears - according to the data retrieved from the analysis of the use of discourse markers by Algerian EFL learners after having received instruction in this matter- that their speaking skill and understanding has evolved considerably in comparison with their production before receiving instruction.

In fact, the rate of discourse markers misuse had reduced with 11,54% in comparison with the results of pre-instruction phase; likewise, the rate of misusers had reduced with 10%. However, the learners' output did not reach the level of native speakers since *the native speaker model represented a target that was unattainable for intermediate learners of English* [16: 2]. Besides, the absence of the pragmatic component of language learning in non-native classrooms [aforementioned] makes learners unaware of the reasons and the context of use of those linguistic elements. This statement is supported by [12: 1-2] who states: s*peaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, prononciation, or vocabulary....but also they understand when, why and in what way to produce language.*

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

The present study attempted to answer some issues in connection with the effect of consciousness-raising tasks on improving EFL student's use of discourse markers in speaking. Furthermore, it tried to find a way to foster Algerian EFL learners' talk and give it a more naturalistic form. Therefore some considerations must be taken into account to put into concrete form this goal. These have to do with the pragmatic aspect and the grammatical aspect of English spoken language.

Regarding the pragmatic aspect of spontaneous spoken language, teachers and learners of language tend to concentrate on the acquisition of the grammatical and lexical elements that enable the establishment of communication; however, they neglect an important aspect which is the pragmatic component of language learning. The latter, as mentioned earlier, is difficult to reproduce in the non-native pedagogical setting, yet it is worth to be tried. Clearly then, teachers have the responsibility to develop their students' pragmatic competence and *help them better appreciate and understand how form and context interact to create meaning* [25: 293]. This can be achieved by awakening learners' abilities for pragmatic analysis via some activities listed by [25: 295]. The latter include: involving learners in speech acts that reflect their needs and interests; using authentic materials, and engaging students in translation activities aiming at translating speech acts from their own language into English.

As concerns the grammatical aspect of spoken language, teachers are invited to raise students' awareness about some discourse markers and encourage them to observe and analyze language for themselves, through the implementation of audio-video talks supported by transcripts in their courses in order to allow learners time to notice features of spoken language that cannot be found in textbooks. In fact, introducing authentic language in the language classroom provides an opportunity to the students to explore language as interaction rather than as grammatical units. Consequently, the Algerian EFL learners' tendency to make sense of language and systematize it will be reinforced. Moreover, teachers are invited to initiate student in tasks aiming at making comparisons between the spoken and the written forms of English by looking at transcripts of natural language.

Besides, it is necessary to underline that if learners desire to improve their spoken English fluency, it is important for them to be exposed to features of authentic spoken language, and that they have time to reflect on these features. Therefore, language teachers concerned with developing speaking skill of EFL learners are invited to involve students in consciousness-raising tasks helping them to uncover the gaps of their language and providing them with input in context. This can be realised through the implementation of audio-video talks supported by transcripts in their courses in order to allow learners time to notice features of spoken language that cannot be found in textbooks. Besides, by encouraging learners to observe and analyze language for themselves, their tendency to make sense of language and systematize it will be reinforced.

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