

**A CORPUS-INFORMED STUDY OF DISCOURSE CONNECTIVES IN  
NARRATIVE ESSAYS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

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CONNECTIVES IN NARRATIVE ESSAYS OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**A CORPUS-INFORMED STUDY OF DISCOURSE CONNECTIVES IN  
NARRATIVE ESSAYS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

The use of English language has been steadily increasing as more people can be seen to use the language in their everyday conversations. English users who express the language in written form have to include discourse connectives in their texts. Discourse connectives are important indicators of textual coherence and have the purpose of unifying a text. Previous studies have investigated the types of discourse connectives used in L2 learners' texts (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Hinkle, 2003; Hamed, 2014). However, students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives were often not considered in those studies. In this corpus-informed study, the semantic use of discourse connectives in a corpus of 96 narrative essays written by 32 students and interviews with 10 selected students regarding their views on their own use of discourse connectives were explored. Drawing on this corpus of learners' written texts, this study adapted the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) in order to categorise the discourse connectives used in learners' texts. Analysis of the corpus revealed that *additive* discourse connective was the most frequently used type of discourse connectives, while *and*, *but*, *because*, *so* and *then* occurred as the top five most frequently used discourse connectives in the students' written texts. This study also uncovered the students' own preferred discursual practices. For instance, some of them used more DCs in their texts while others used less DCs in their texts. Moreover, the findings from this study indicated that some students tend to use different types of discourse connectives in their sentences although they were aware that there were other types of discourse connectives that could be used. There were also some students who used some DCs not in accordance with the related frameworks which shows their innovative ways of using the DCs. Most importantly, the findings from this study reveal

that it is time to appreciate L2 learners' choices for using discourse connectives in their texts. In conclusion, it is hoped that the findings in this study will bring awareness to linguists that the most important thing for L2 learners is to become accomplished users of English and not imitations of native speakers (Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Cook, 2013).

**Keywords:** cohesion, discourse connective, narrative essay, semantics, corpus-informed

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**KAJIAN BERASASKAN KORPUS-MAKLUMAT TENTANG KATA HUBUNG  
DALAM KARANGAN NARATIF DI KALANGAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH  
MENENGAH  
ABSTRAK**

Penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris hari ini semakin meningkat apabila semakin ramai rakyat Malaysia dilihat menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris dalam perbualan harian mereka. Pengguna yang menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris dalam bentuk penulisan akan menyertakan kata hubung ke dalam teks mereka. Kata hubung merupakan petunjuk penting bagi menyatukan sebuah teks. Kajian terdahulu telah mengenal pasti jenis-jenis kata hubung yang digunakan dalam teks pelajar bahasa kedua (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Hinkle, 2003; Hamed, 2014). Walau bagaimanapun, pandangan pelajar berkaitan penggunaan kata hubung mereka sendiri sering tidak dipertimbangkan dalam penyelidikan sedemikian. Dalam kajian korpus-maklumat ini, penggunaan semantik di dalam kata hubung dalam sebuah korpus yang terdiri daripada 96 karangan yang ditulis oleh 32 pelajar serta temubual bersama 10 pelajar terpilih mengenai pandangan mereka tentang penggunaan kata hubung mereka sendiri telah di terokai. Kajian ini menggunakan kerangka kerja Halliday dan Hasan (1976) dan Hyland (2005) yang telah diubah suai bagi mengkategorikan kata hubung. Analisis korpus menunjukkan bahawa kata hubung aditif merupakan kata hubung tertinggi yang digunakan oleh pelajar, dan *dan*, *tetapi*, *kerana*, *maka* dan *kemudian* merupakan lima kata hubung teratas yang dilihat digunakan dalam teks pelajar. Kajian ini juga mendedahkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar ini mempunyai amalan wacana mereka tersendiri. Sebagai contoh, sesetengah pelajar menggunakan banyak kata hubung dalam teks mereka sementara sesetengah pelajar lain hanya menggunakan sedikit kata hubung dalam teks mereka. Dari hasil penemuan ini juga, sesetengah pelajar dilihat cenderung menggunakan pelbagai jenis kata hubung dalam ayat mereka walaupun mereka menyedari bahawa terdapat beberapa

jenis kata hubung lain yang boleh digunakan. Selain itu, sesetengah pelajar juga tidak menggunakan kata hubung seperti dalam kerangka kerja berkaitan. Ini menunjukkan bahawa mereka telah menggunakan kata hubung secara inovatif. Penemuan dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sudah tiba masanya untuk menghargai pilihan pelajar bahasa kedua untuk menggunakan kata hubung dalam teks mereka. Secara kesimpulannya, diharapkan kajian ini dapat memberi kesedaran kepada ahli bahasa akan pentingnya menjadi pengguna Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua yang berjaya dan bukan imitasi kepada pengguna asal Bahasa Inggeris (Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Cook, 2013).

**Kata kunci:** kohesi, kata hubung, karangan naratif, semantik, corpus-maklumat

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DC	:	Discourse connective
DCs	:	Discourse connectives
EFL	:	English as a foreign language
ESL	:	English as a second language
L1	:	First language
L2	:	Second language
N	:	Total number of students

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

A discourse is not just a random set of utterances but it is more than that. It shows connectedness or cohesion (Sanders & Pander-Maat, 2006) in spoken and written communication. Hence, when it comes to discussing the notion of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan (1976) have been important figures for researchers. They stated that the notion of cohesion (see Section 2.2 for more discussion) is used to categorise cohesive devices in a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Moreover, this notion is used to study the language development of language learners (Sanders & Pander-Maat, 2006). There are many types of cohesive devices such as discourse connectives, ellipsis, substitution (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), frame markers and evidentials (Hyland, 2005). The present study explores the use of discourse connectives in learners' texts because they play a key role in unifying a text (Shea, 2009).

The use of discourse connective as a cohesive device has been extensively studied (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999; Cowan, 2008; Shea, 2009) and it "is likely due to their complex nature, reflected in key theoretical issues involving semantic vs. pragmatic meaning, propositional vs. non-propositional meaning and procedural vs. conceptual meaning" (Camiciottoli, 2010, p. 650). However, students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts are often unheard of in such studies. Students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives are important in order to justify any interpretations made by previous studies so that the interpretations are more valid and can distinguish between the present study and previous researches.

On the other hand, previous studies have viewed L2 learners as imperfect speakers of English because they used the language in ways that contradicted the language standards of native speakers (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011; Hamed, 2014; Martinez, 2016). Instead of viewing L2 learners as imperfect speakers of English by comparing their texts to native speakers' texts, students who know more than one language are different from monolinguals; therefore need to be looked at in their own rights, rather than being viewed as deficient monolinguals (Cook, 2013). Thus, this study aims to examine the semantic use of discourse connectives in the essays of 32 secondary school students over time and their views on their own use of discourse connectives in the written texts.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

### **1.2.1 Nature of Writing**

Human beings use language to communicate and share ideas and thoughts with each other. Communication can either be in written or spoken form. These forms can be seen in the language skills needed in a language learner. The four important skills in language learning are writing, reading, speaking and listening. Among these four important skills, writing skill plays a key role in expressing ideas, thoughts and opinions. However, information in a written text must be conveyed to readers without any aiding tools other than the language itself (Norrish, 1983).

In addition, a written text has no non-verbal expressions such as gestures, head movements and facial expressions that can act as additional tools in ensuring that the ideas in a written text are conveyed and understood correctly (Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011) by the readers. On the other hand, in terms of sentence structure, a written text has no prosodic features. Therefore, writers will need to replace them by

choosing appropriate structures. They will also have to use suitable cohesive devices to ensure the cohesiveness of the text (Byrne, 1988).

### **1.2.2 Discourse Connectives as Cohesive Devices**

Cohesive devices can be briefly defined as devices that are used to link sentences and paragraphs together to help readers understand the ideas in a text. Therefore, these devices are crucial in written texts (Zamel, 1983). As mentioned in Section 1.1, there are many types of cohesive devices, for example, discourse connectives, ellipsis, substitution (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), frame markers, evidentials (Hyland, 2005) and many others.

A discourse connective or what Halliday and Hasan (1976) coined as *conjunctions* or *sentence connectors* is a type of cohesive device. According to Biber et al. (1999), a discourse connective clearly signals the connections between sentences and passages in a text and signifies the writer's own views regarding the link between two units of discourse. In other words, discourse connectives will help readers connect different sentences and paragraphs together so that the whole text makes sense (see Section 2.3 for more discussion). Thus, discourse connectives are significant to be used in a written discourse.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Previous studies have viewed discourse connectives as problematic for L2 learners. Crewe (1990), Shea (2009) and Wang and Li (2016), for example, identified discourse connectives as a source of difficulty in foreign and L2 learners' texts. Moreover, most corpus studies on discourse connectives still follow the tradition of comparing non-native speakers' texts to native speakers' texts in identifying different patterns in the use of discourse connectives in texts written by the two different groups of learners (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Bolton, Nelson & Hung, 2002; Hinkle, 2003; Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011; Ong, 2011). The comparison was also made in order to develop pedagogical strategies that could correct L2 learners' misuse of discourse connectives so that their written texts would be as similar to the native speakers' writing styles as possible (Shea, 2009).

There are also several studies that have investigated L2 learners' texts only (Lei, 2012; Hamed, 2014; Hamid Abd Allah Arabi & Nauman Al Amin Ali, 2014). One common aspect that these researchers have addressed is in terms of the frequencies or patterns of the types of discourse connectives used in learners' texts. However, they relied solely on the findings in making such interpretations without seeking the learners' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. A few possible sources of errors in the use of some discourse connectives in the learners' texts were identified (e.g. overgeneralization and transfer error), but they were only assumptions that were based on the learners' productions of written texts, which could be right or wrong (Hamed, 2014). These sources of errors are biased beliefs from past studies and may beg the question of whether the errors are probable in the real life. It reflects the researchers' bias for not considering the writers' views on their own use of discourse connectives. As a result, corpus analysts have increasingly focused on understanding why writers make the choices they do when they write (Hyland, 2012). This action is

“generally undertaken through interviews with text users, grounding patterns of text meanings in the conscious choices of writers and readers” (Hyland, 2012, p. 30). Unlike the above studies, the present study adopts a qualitative method by constructing semi-structured interview questions to explore the choices that learners make for using some of the discourse connectives in their written texts.

In addition, previous studies also held the assumption that L2 learners are imperfect and deficient speakers of English. However, “instead of invoking negative framings surrounding the daunting complexity of factors that allegedly explain the lack of success in L2 acquisition” (Ortega, 2013, p.18), L2 learners need to be looked at in their own rights and not as deficient monolinguals (Cook, 2013). Consequently, it is crucial to study the students’ views as a contribution to the issue being investigated. The present corpus-informed study targets the use of discourse connectives in secondary school students’ texts and their views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts.

#### **1.4 Research Aim**

This study is based on a corpus of 96 narrative texts with the aim of examining the semantic use (see Section 2.6 for more discussion) of discourse connectives in the secondary school students’ texts over time and their views on their own use of discourse connectives.

## 1.5 Research Questions

To achieve the research aim, this study was guided by three research questions as follows:

1. What are the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts?
2. What are the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at three different points in time over 18 weeks?
3. How do students perceive the use and meaning of some discourse connectives in their texts?

Research question one provides a general view on the types of discourse connectives found in students' texts over an 18-week period. First of all, students' written texts were collected three times to observe any changes in their use of discourse connectives. According to Chau (2015), "a period of time allows for observation of how a form or structure emerges in its accompanying patterns in the developing language" (p. 21). Thus, the method of observing the changes in the use of discourse connectives was implemented in this study.

Next, students' texts that were collected were then manually typed into electronic formats and uploaded into AntConc 3.4.4.0 version software (Anthony, 2005) to categorise the discourse connectives based on a modified version of frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). The type of corpus collected was a learner corpus which is an electronic collection of texts produced by L2 learners (Granger, Gilquin & Meunier, 2015). However, the corpus for this study was manually collected before being transferred into electronic formats. Then, the types of discourse connectives as well as the discourse connectives observed in the students' texts were compared and further discussed.

Next, research question two identifies the semantic types of discourse connectives used by the students at three intervals. The top five most frequently used discourse connectives and the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives in the students' texts were manually analysed for a deeper analysis. The findings from the analysis were then further discussed to answer research question two.

For research question three, the students were asked regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their written texts. Students' views are important to clarify, justify and support any interpretations made from the findings of research question one and research question two in order to discover any fresh perspectives in the students' use of discourse connectives in their texts, with the main focus of treating L2 learners in their own rights. According to Biber, Conrad and Rappen (1998), a qualitative approach helps to provide more insights on language use. Hence, a qualitative approach of interviewing 10 selected students was conducted based on several semi-structured interview questions to explore the reasons behind the choices that the students made for using some of the discourse connectives in their texts. During the interviews, the students were also guided by their essays and lists of discourse connectives used. The interviews were recorded using a smartphone and were later transcribed. After that, all the relevant points from the interview transcripts were divided into themes and further discussed. All the research questions mentioned here are answered in Chapter 4.



## **1.6 Scopes and Limitation of the Research**

This study focuses on two components. The first component is the semantic use of discourse connectives outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). The first component mainly focuses on the types of discourse connectives and the semantic types of discourse connectives that can be observed in the students' written texts over time. The second component is the students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. This involves interviewing some of the students with the purpose of exploring the reasons behind the choices that they made for using some of the discourse connectives in their written texts. However, the limitation of this study is that the findings from this study cannot be generalized to represent the whole population because of the small number of students who were involved in this study (see Chapter 3 for more details).

## **1.7 Significance of the Research**

There are three contributions of this study. Firstly, the findings from this study highlight the importance of cohesion in written production. This can be observed from the discussion on the types of discourse connectives and the semantic types of discourse connectives found in the students' written texts. This study also paves ways in viewing L2 learners as unique speakers of English rather than as deficient speakers of the language. This can be seen from the findings and discussion related to the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts.

Last but not least, it is hoped that by adopting a different research design, the new discoveries that emerge from this present study will become a fundamental step towards the expansion of corpus-informed studies on the use of discourse connectives in the future. In the next chapter, some terms and literatures that are relevant to the development of this study are discussed.

## **1.8 Ethical Consideration**

To conduct this study at the chosen school, permission was obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education and the school administration prior to conducting the study. A consent form (see Appendix F) was distributed to all the students to obtain permission from their parents and guardians so that they could participate in the study. All students were informed that all personal data gathered throughout the corpus collection and interview processes would be kept confidential. Pseudonyms and numbers were used throughout the study to ensure the students' anonymity. In addition, the students were given the right to withdraw from this study if they wished to do so. After all the data were collected, the students were given some incentives as a token of appreciation for their participation in this study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

As stated in Section 1.6, there are two components investigated in this study, namely the semantic use of discourse connectives in the students' texts and the students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. This present chapter mainly shows precedent works that are related to discourse connectives and also provides related theoretical frameworks that were used in categorizing the discourse connectives in the students' texts.

This chapter can be divided into seven sections which discuss several important terms related to this study (cohesion, discourse connectives, corpus linguistics, cohesion theory and semantic use), the frameworks on discourse connectives by prominent scholars that were adapted to be used for categorizing the discourse connectives and also past corpus studies on discourse connectives that have guided the development of the current study.

### 2.2 Cohesion

As mentioned in Section 1.1, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) book on *Cohesion in English* was used as a reference in comprehending the notion of cohesion (Martinez, 2015). Cohesion is a semantic concept and can be understood as the range of possibilities or semantic resources that exist for connecting units, clauses or sentences that are referring to the preceding discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In other words, cohesion is a semantic relation. Gutwinski (1976) has also provided a complete definition of cohesion in which cohesion in a written text is achieved by establishing a

semantic relationship whereby the interpretation of some elements in a text depends not just on a sentence but on each sentence. In addition, cohesion is also used to “show how sentences, which are structurally independent of one another, may be linked together” (Halliday & Hasan 1976, p. 10). According to Moe (1979), the links that establish cohesion are called *ties* while a single occurrence of cohesion is known as a *cohesive tie*.

Moreover, cohesion can be expressed partially through grammar and somewhat through vocabulary (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). These divisions are called grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion can be subdivided into reference, substitution, ellipsis and discourse connectives (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) while one example of lexical cohesion is reiteration. Due to the many categories of grammatical cohesion available, which are also considered as cohesive devices, investigating the use of these devices in a written text will be demanding as it will require a detailed analysis of all of them. Thus, this study only focuses on exploring the use of discourse connectives in learners’ texts as discourse connectives play a major role in unifying a text (Shea, 2009).

### **2.3 Discourse Connectives**

An increasing number in the study of discourse connectives that focuses on what discourse connectives are, what they mean and what function these discourse connectives mark in written texts can be seen in the following studies (Hinkle, 2001; 2003; Park, 2013; Hamed, 2014; Chun & Yuan, 2015; Martinez, 2015). Thus, it is common for discourse connectives to be explored by researchers and it “is likely due to their complex nature, reflected in key theoretical issues involving semantic vs.

pragmatic meaning, propositional vs. non-propositional meaning and procedural vs. conceptual meaning” (Camiciottoli, 2010, p. 650).

As mentioned in sub-section 1.2.2, a discourse connective clearly signals the connections between sentences and passages in a text and states the link between two units of discourse (Biber et al., 1999). In other words, discourse connectives can be understood as devices that indicate the links between preceding and following clauses, sentences and paragraphs for the purpose of assisting the text interpretation (Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011). This shows that discourse connectives are important to ensure that textual cohesion exists in a text (Biber et al., 1999) and mastering them both in written and spoken form is important to attain a language (Zufferey, Mak, Degand & Sanders, 2015).

Interestingly, the complex nature of discourse connectives leads to various terms that are similar to discourse connectives being used by different scholars in their studies, for example, *sentence connectives* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), *conjuncts* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985), *logical connectives* (Crewe, 1990; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002), *connectors* (Granger & Tyson, 1996), *linking adverbials* (Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2002), *logical connectors* (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), *discourse markers* (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999), *discourse particles* (Stede & Schmitz, 2000) and *discourse connectors* (Cowan, 2008). Although the terms differ in these studies, they still function the same way which is to signal the connections between clauses, sentences and passages in written texts. However, the term *discourse connectives* is used in this study because it emphasizes on elements that have semantic relations as well as connecting functions in a written discourse (Chun & Yuan, 2015). Moreover, this term fulfils important purposes in regard to textual cohesion (Biber et al. 1999) of a discourse. Later in Section 2.8, various existing studies related to discourse connectives are discussed to show how they led to the development of the present study.

## 2.4 Corpus Linguistics

A corpus is “a collection of naturally occurring language text chosen to characterise a state or variety of a language” (Sinclair, 1991, p. 171). However, the definition was later revised to denote a collection of texts that are stored and accessed electronically and analysed using a concordancer (Hunston, 2006). Studies on corpus linguistics explore patterns of authentic language use through analysis of actual usage (Granger & Tyson 1996; Krieger, 2003; Granger, Gilquin & Meunier, 2015). Through corpus studies, researchers are able to investigate large samples of learners’ written texts with the help of a corpus and a concordance program. Many scholars including Sinclair (1991), Biber et al. (1999) and Hunston (2006) have made significant contributions to the development of this field. Sinclair (1991), for example, introduced the idea of ‘units of meaning’ in which meaning is often conveyed through several words in a sequence and not through the word itself.

In addition, most studies on corpus are corpus-based or corpus-driven. Corpus-based studies normally use corpus data for the purpose of exploring a theory or testing a hypothesis (Hyland, 2012), with the objective of validating, refuting or refining it (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). The area of corpus-based study is still growing in applied linguistics, from studies that focus on basic descriptions of language (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Sinclair, 1991), to researchers that investigate more practical applications of language such as lexicogrammatical approaches to grammar instruction (Liu & Jiang, 2009). On the other hand, in corpus-driven studies, “the corpus itself embodies a theory of language” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, pp. 84-85) and researchers will discover new insights (Hyland, 2012) pertaining to language use. Examples include studies conducted by Milton and Tsang (1993), Hinkle (2003) and Hamed (2014) who investigated the use of discourse connectives in learners’ corpora to identify the frequency patterns of discourse connectives used.

However, Trace and Janssen (2014) argued that there is more value that can be gained and learnt from the collections of authentic language used by the learners than just how frequent the words are used. Unlike the past studies, the current study is very different in the sense that this study consists of a corpus analysis of students' actual use of discourse connectives and the results are used to design interview questions that can explore the students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. The existing studies have mainly focused on identifying the frequency of discourse connectives used in learners' texts and the findings were justified from past studies. However, no justifications were made by the learners themselves regarding their views on how and why they used some of the discourse connectives in their texts.

Therefore, the term *corpus-informed* is used to distinguish the present study from the past studies. A corpus-informed study requires rematerializing related features (e.g. discourse connectives) in the learners' texts (Hyland, 2009) and interviews with learners that are mainly constructed based on observations of the learners' own use of discourse connectives in their texts, in order to comprehend why they decide to make the choices they do when they write (Hyland, 2009). Corpus-informed study also helps discover more input regarding the reasons underlying the students' decisions in using some discourse connectives in their written texts. In other words, including learners' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their texts will provide a clearer picture of the reasons underlying their use of cohesive devices.

## 2.5 Coherence Theory

There are many theoretical frameworks that have looked into discourse connectives over the past years. Among them include *coherence theory* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), *relevance theory* (Blakemore, 1987), *discourse representation theory* (Jaye & Rossari, 2002) and *cognitive linguistics* (Pander-Maat, 1999). However, only coherence theory is discussed here as this study solely focuses on the theory. In coherence theory, clauses, sentences and paragraphs in a text are connected together coherently and such links that exist are usually signalled by the use of discourse connectives in the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

The most prominent figure in coherence theory is Halliday and as mentioned in Section 1.1, his most well-known book is *Cohesion in English*, written by both Halliday and Hasan (1976). According to Schourup (2011), studies on discourse connectives that have looked into coherence theory usually came from the belief that discourse connectives are used to show the link between units of discourse that will lead to textuality or coherence. In other words, researchers who have analysed discourse connectives within the coherence theory will adopt and adapt various frameworks that focus on linking units of discourse (Rouchota, 1996) with the result be made to ensure that the texts are coherent. The present study can be related to this theory as it focuses on discourse connectives as cohesive devices and uses two different frameworks to analyse and classify the DCs.



## 2.6 Semantic Use

As mentioned in Section 2.2, cohesion is a semantic concept because it can be referred as relations of meaning that exist within sentences, paragraphs and texts. Thus, cohesive devices evolved around semantics as one element of DCs are understood by reference to another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In other words, the interpretation of any items in a text requires making reference to other items. That is why one of the main components of this present study is to investigate the semantic use of discourse connectives in students' texts. Semantics can generally be defined as "the study of meaning" (Lyons, 1977, p. 1). Previous studies indicated that the use of discourse connectives in learners' texts in regard to their meanings has been studied (Milton & Tsang, 1993; Hinkle, 2001; 2003; Bolton et al., 2002; Tapper, 2005; Park, 2013; Hamed, 2014). Such studies explored the use of discourse connectives in learners' written texts in regard to their semantic aspects, either in terms of semantic forms or semantic functions.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'semantic use' of discourse connectives is used. This term can be defined as the use of discourse connectives in terms of their meanings. It also includes functions and intentions of the speakers regarding how and why they use some of the discourse connectives in their texts. Discourse connectives can be categorized into two different categories, namely grammatical categories and semantic categories (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Grammatical categories can be understood as "one which holds between the words and structures themselves rather than relating them through their meanings" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 226). In terms of semantic categories, these categories are the types of discourse connectives that are commonly used in written discourse. It is understood as an item that holds the meanings together instead of the linguistic forms. Examples of semantic categories can be seen in Table 2.1

## 2.7 Discourse Connective Frameworks

There are many frameworks on discourse connectives that were used by different scholars in the past (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2002; Hyland, 2005). All of these frameworks show the categories of discourse connectives that can be used to categorize discourse connectives in written texts. However, all of these frameworks differ in terms of whether they look at the forms, functions or semantic use of discourse connectives. In this study, only two frameworks are discussed here as they were used to categorize the discourse connectives in the students' written texts.

The first framework is by Halliday and Hasan (1976) who have categorised discourse connectives into four categories, namely *additive* (e.g. *and, or, furthermore*), *adversative* (e.g. *but, however, yet*), *causal* (e.g. *so, for, because*) and *temporal* (e.g. *then, first, next, finally*). These categories by Halliday and Hasan (1976) were designed according to the relationships the discourse connectives express and their functions in texts as well. The following table shows the categories of discourse connectives by Halliday and Hasan (1976):

**Table 2.1: Semantic categories of discourse connectives in Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243)**

Category	Function	Examples
1) Additive	Adds relevant new information to the previously mentioned discourse connectives.	and, and also, furthermore, in addition, besides
2) Adversative	Introduces information that mark corrections, contrasts, and opposites in light of previous information.	yet, though, but, however, nevertheless
3) Causal	Introduces information that is a result or consequence of the preceding discourse.	so, then, hence, therefore, consequently
4) Temporal	Relates two discourse units with sequential, simultaneous, and preceding relations.	next, after that, at the same time, in short, briefly,

In addition to that, there is also another framework devised by Hyland (2005). Hyland (2005) focused on studying metadiscourse in academic texts at the university level. Metadiscourse is defined as the “aspects of a text which explicitly organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader” (Hyland, 2005, p. 14). An interpersonal model of metadiscourse is used to study metadiscourse. This model can be divided into interactive and interactional resources. Interactive resources show the writer’s assessment in terms of what needs to be clear in order to limit and guide what can be recovered from a text (Hyland & Tse, 2004). The types of resources can be seen as follows:

**Table 2.2: An interactive model of metadiscourse in academic texts in Hyland (2005, pp. 49-50)**

Category	Function	Examples
<b>Interactive resources</b>	Help guide readers through the text.	
1) Transition markers	Express semantic relation between main clauses.	in addition, but, and
2) Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	to conclude, my purpose here is to
3) Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text.	noted above, see Figure, in section 2
4) Evidentials	Refer to sources of information from other texts.	according to X/(Y, 1990), Z states
5) Code gloss	Help readers grasp functions of ideational material.	namely, such as, in other words

This interactive model creates textual cohesion by showing logical relations between propositions (Feng & Guang, 2014). One of the interactive resources in the interactive model of metadiscourse is *transition markers*. These markers are mainly discourse connectives that signal the semantic relations among main clauses and sentences. There are also other interactive resources mentioned by Hyland (2005) like frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code gloss. However, as Hyland focused on analysing academic texts at the university level, only the transition markers which are also known as discourse connectives were included in this study as they can also be

found in school students' texts. The following table shows the transition markers in Hyland's (2005) framework:

**Table 2.3: Categories of Transition markers in Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	Function	Examples
1) Addition	Adds elements to an argument or activity.	and, also, moreover
2) Comparison	Marks arguments, events, things and qualities as either similar or different.	but, yet, however
3) Consequence	Explains why and how things happen.  Tells readers that a conclusion is being drawn or justified or that an argument is being countered.	then, so, thus

In this framework, discourse connectives are divided into three categories. They show *addition*, *comparison* and *consequence* relations. The first category, which is *addition*, is to add elements to an argument (Hyland, 2005). The second category is *comparison* which marks arguments as being similar or different (Hyland, 2005). The last category in this framework is *consequence* which tells readers that a conclusion is being drawn or justified or that an argument is being countered (Hyland, 2005). In general, the two frameworks (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Hyland, 2005) mentioned in this section are mainly used for the categorisation of written discourse and appear to be the most comprehensive categorisations of discourse connectives in written discourse. Moreover, both frameworks discuss the semantic relation of discourse connectives and have nearly similar categories. Hence, they were adopted and adapted in this study.

## 2.8 Findings of Previous Studies

In the past, the analyses of large corpora of published written texts in English have paved the way for new discoveries regarding the meanings, uses and functions of all discourse connectives (Hinkel, 2003; Martinez, 2015). In addition, most studies on the use of discourse connectives were conducted using a corpus-based approach (Milton & Tsang, 1993; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Bolton et al., 2002; Chun & Yuan, 2015) and are discussed in this section. Moreover, the studies of discourse connectives in L2 written texts remain as a fundamental subject in coherence studies (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Chun & Yuan, 2015). Thus, a number of studies that are related to cohesion are included in this section.

First of all, it was discovered that numerous comparative studies have been carried out to identify different patterns in the use of discourse connectives between two languages (Bolton et al., 2002; Narita, Sato & Sugiura, 2004; Lee, 2013; Park, 2013; Martinez, 2016). For instance, Milton and Tsang (1993) conducted a preliminary analysis of a corpus of written texts by EFL students from a university in Hong Kong to identify the overuse of discourse connectives. The corpus in this study consisted of 2,000 texts from 800 first year undergraduates. This corpus was compared to three native-speakers' corpora. In this study, it was suggested that the overuse of discourse connectives among the EFL students was because of inadequate teaching materials related to discourse connectives and also due to mixed attitudes pertaining to cohesion shown through the students' written texts.

Granger and Tyson (1996) employed a corpus-based approach using data from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE). They compared 90,000 words from texts written in French language to 78,000-word English texts by French students and followed Quirk et al.'s (1985) framework in categorising the discourse connectives. The

analysis of the corpus revealed that the overuse of discourse connectives could be seen in *corroborative* relation (e.g. *indeed* and *of course*) and *additive* relation (e.g. *moreover*). On the other hand, the underuse of discourse connectives was of *contrastive* relation (e.g. *however*, and *yet*). Granger and Tyson (1996) argued that the overuse of discourse connectives among L2 learners might be due to patterns of transfer from the students' first language which is French.

Another study, which was carried out by Bolton et al. (2002), compared the underuse and overuse of discourse connectives in the written texts by university students in Hong Kong and Britain. All data were collected from the Hong Kong component (ICE-HK) and the British component (ICE-GB) of the International Corpus of English (ICE). The list of discourse connectives used in analysing the data came from 40 samples which were taken from academic papers and books from various disciplines. In that study, they argued that this approach improved the accuracy of their analysis.

The results from the analysis revealed that the most overused discourse connectives in the Hong Kong data were *so* and *and* as compared to the British data, where *so* and *however* were the most overused discourse connectives. The researchers revealed that the overuse of discourse connectives in the students' texts was not limited to non-native speakers only but it was a prominent feature of the students' texts in general. However, there was no indication of underuse of discourse connectives in both groups of learners.

Similarly, Prommas and Sinwongsuwat (2011) examined the use of discourse connectives in argumentative texts by Thai undergraduate students from Thaksin University, Songkla campus. They compared the students' written texts to the English native speakers' written texts. The native speakers were students from the University of Michigan. A total of 44 written texts were collected in which the texts by the native speakers were taken from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS). This study adopted a few frameworks from the many famous frameworks available in

the literature in order to categorise the discourse connectives. Among the frameworks used were by Halliday and Hasan (1976), Cowan (2008) and Biber et al. (1999). Prommas and Sinwongsuwat (2011) created a list of 140 DCs which were then categorised into eight semantic categories.

The findings of this study showed that *and*, *but*, *because*, *for example* and *also* were the most frequent DCs found in the written texts of the two groups of students. It was also discovered that both groups of students used these discourse connectives for similar functions. However, the findings of this study suggested that Thai students had difficulties using some discourse connectives in their texts, which might be due to the influence of their L1. From these studies, it can be seen that comparing the patterns of native speakers' and L2 speakers' use of discourse connectives indicates how the use of discourse connectives varies between different groups of learners. However, this comparison with the native speakers' texts seems to be put into words with reference to the native speakers' competence rather than the L2 users' own terms (Cook, 1999). Unlike these studies (Milton & Tsang, 1993; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Bolton et al., 2002; Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011), the current study explores the use of discourse connectives in L2 learners' written texts, but without making any comparison to native speakers' texts.

There are also studies that have only investigated L2 learners' texts (Rahimi, 2011; Lei, 2012; Hamed, 2014; Hamid Abd Allah Arabi & Nauman Al Amin Ali, 2014). Hamed (2014), for example, investigated the use of discourse connectives in terms of its semantic functions in 32 argumentative essays which were collected from 16 EFL undergraduate Libyan students at a university in Libya. The study followed the framework by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in categorising the discourse connectives in the students' argumentative essays. Previous studies like Granger and Tyson (1996) and Bolton et al. (2002) incorporated the term *underuse*, *overuse* and *misuse* of discourse

connectives in their studies. However, Hamed (2014) did not analyse the discourse connectives according to these terms. Instead, he replaced them with the terms *appropriate* and *inappropriate* use of discourse connectives. He argued that the former did not describe the specification of the description of errors. Thus, the terms were replaced with *appropriate* and *inappropriate* use of discourse connectives. The findings from the study revealed that the students used the discourse connectives inappropriately in their texts and identified *adversative* relation as the most difficult discourse connective category for the EFL students. It was then suggested that some of the difficulties faced by these students in employing discourse connectives in their argumentative texts were due to negative transfer and overgeneralisation in the L2.

Next, a study by Nor Hafizah Anwardeen, Ong, Gabriel and Seyed Ali Rezvani Kalajahi (2013) analysed the use of metadiscourse in argumentative essays by Malaysian college students. The corpus used was taken from the Malaysian Corpus of Students' Argumentative Writing (MCSAW) which contains texts written by Form 4, Form 5 and college students from Malaysia. The focus of this study was to mainly look at the frequency of metadiscourse used by the students and analyse the errors made, which were grammatical errors and the misuse of hedges in the learners' texts.

On the other hand, Feng and Guang (2014) studied the use of interactive metadiscourse in 120 research articles. Again, the findings focused on the frequencies of discourse connectives used and the errors made by the students. Although these researchers made attempts to only focus on L2 learners' texts, the errors discussed in their studies were merely assumptions that were based on the students' production of texts, which could be right or wrong (Hamed, 2014). As mentioned in Section 1.3, these errors are biased beliefs from past studies, which may raise the question of whether these errors are really probable in the real world. These studies also did not incorporate the students' views on their choices for using some discourse connectives in their texts.



The students' views are very important in justifying any interpretations made by previous studies so that the interpretations can be considered to be valid.

In addition, although many studies mentioned in this chapter have explored the use of discourse connectives from contrastive perspectives (mainly quantitatively) to identify the patterns of discourse connectives in learners' texts, numbers alone give little insights about language (Conrad, 2002). Thus, qualitative approach will help to deeply interpret the language patterns. Chun and Yuan (2015), for example, investigated the use of 80 discourse connectives in the argumentative essays by native speakers and non-native speakers in Asia. These speakers were university students and they were mainly from Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore. The written texts were taken from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE). The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate frequency lists of the discourse connectives and to identify their use in order to provide additional insights to the analysis.

It was discovered that the total number of discourse connectives used by Hong Kong and Singaporean students was lesser than the native students'. Moreover, the additive *and* was the least frequently used discourse connective found in the written texts of the L2 students. These findings provided an insight related to the pragmatic use of discourse connectives by both groups of learners as a way to influence the understanding of the message in a text and therefore succeeded in attaining the learners' communicative goals.

Moreover, students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives are often unheard of. As a result, learners' voices are seldom heard. Even if the studies did incorporate the students' views, the findings merely pointed out the students' unconventional use of discourse connectives without addressing the reasons behind it. Consequently, L2 learners were suggested to employ specific pedagogical strategies in

the attempt to follow the language standards of the native speakers in order to improve their writing.

Lee (2002), for example, investigated the teaching and learning of coherence in texts which includes the use of discourse connectives in learners' texts. A topic on cohesion was also included as one of the topics on coherence learnt by the students. Questionnaires were carried out on 16 students from a Hong Kong university where English language is learnt as an L2. In addition, group interviews were also done on four students to explore their perspectives concerning their problems and difficulties in applying the coherence principles that had been taught to them which includes how to use discourse connectives in texts. The findings from the study showed that one informant had difficulties in choosing which coherence principle that should be used in the texts, thus would avoid using such principles. Another student mentioned that he focused mainly on grammar rather than the principles.

In addition, Seyed Ali Rezvani Kalajahi, Ain Nadzimah Abdullah and Roselan Baki (2012), for example, explored Iranian post-graduates' views on their own use of discourse connectives and if there were any differences between what were expressed in the interviews and what were found in their written texts. The findings from this study showed that all informants were aware in terms of applying discourse connectives in their written texts but they did not have sufficient knowledge in choosing the suitable discourse connectives that need to be used in their texts. It was argued that this problem might be due to the pedagogy practised at their schools, either from the resource books that they were using or from the teachers themselves.

Another study that has the same concern was conducted by Nuruladilah Mohamed (2016), who examined the use of cohesive devices or more specifically, the use of discourse connectives and the writing quality in argumentative texts written by 50 Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) undergraduates. The findings from this study

revealed that there were *appropriate* and *inappropriate* uses of discourse connectives in the students' texts due to the lack of exposure to the different categories of discourse connectives. On the other hand, the results from the interviews showed that the students had difficulties in using discourse connectives that share similar meanings. Unlike these studies, the present study explores the reasons for the choices that students made when they used some of the discourse connectives in their texts. The data was collected through interviews with a few selected students.

In addition, most studies in this literature did not implement a repeated-task design. On the contrary, the corpus obtained in the studies was collected only once and then compared with other corpus. Larsen-Freeman (2006, p. 595), citing Thelen (2002), stated that conducting the same task several times shows that "even subtle differences in a task can affect performance profoundly and leave unanswered the question if the subject has control over the language resources or not." On the other hand, the data from longitudinal corpora made up from the same learners over time showed a steady rise (Granger et al., 2015), but it is still lacking as compared to cross-sectional studies. Unlike previous studies, the present study requires the students to perform the same task at different points in time so that any small changes in the use of discourse connectives in the students' texts can be compared and discussed further.

## 2.9 Chapter Summary

The above reviews show that many studies have been conducted to identify the use of discourse connectives in ESL and EFL learners' written texts. In short, previous studies still follow the comparative tradition of analysing L2 learners' use of discourse connectives against native speakers' written texts (Bolton et al., 2002; Narita, Sato & Sugiura, 2004; Lee, 2013; Park, 2013; Martinez, 2016). Unlike these studies, the current study only focuses on investigating L2 learners' semantic use of discourse connectives in their texts.

Moreover, previous studies did not recognize L2 learners as a group with the rights to their own views (Lei, 2012; Feng & Guang, 2014; Hamed, 2014) and the things they do that fail to follow the language standards of the native speakers are therefore seen as language mistakes (Cook, 2013). As a result, L2 learners are seen as deficient rather than different. Unlike previous studies, the present study helps to explore the students' views in terms of what they attempt to achieve with the specific choices of discourse connectives used in their texts, and hence perceives them with the rights of their own. Any findings obtained from the corpus and the interviews are used as justifications for the use of discourse connectives in the students' essays.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Section 1.4, this study aims to explore the semantic use of discourse connectives in the students' texts as well as their views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. This study attempts to achieve this aim by addressing the three research questions as follows:

1. What are the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts?
2. What are the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at three different points in time?
3. How do students perceive the use and meaning of some discourse connectives in their texts?

In this chapter, the design of the study and procedures involved throughout its completion are discussed. This chapter comprises three main components which are divided into different sections. The first component, which is Section 3.2, outlines the research design which includes the participants, setting, type of research design as well as research instruments and materials used in this study. The second component, which is Section 3.3, illustrates the data collection procedures that include procedures of the corpus collection and how the interviews were conducted. The last component, which is Section 3.4, elaborates on the data analysis which includes the theoretical frameworks for data coding and how the data were coded and analysed.

## 3.2 Research Design

This corpus-informed study was based on a learner corpus of 96 narrative essays written by 32 secondary school students. It implemented both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In terms of quantitative approach, the focus was to answer research question one which concerns identifying the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' written texts. The frameworks used in determining the types of discourse connectives were modified from the frameworks devised by Halliday and Hasan (1976) as well as Hyland (2005). The modified version of the frameworks is discussed in detail in Section 3.4.1. The frequency lists of the types of discourse connectives generated from AntConc 3.4.4.0 software were used to allow comparison and to identify the changes that occurred in terms of the use of discourse connectives over the given period of time.

In addition to that, the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at three different points in time, were also explored. This was done by manually examining the students' texts in more details, especially on whether there were changes in the use of some of the discourse connectives in their texts in regard to what meanings did those discourse connectives portray. This study also implemented a qualitative approach whereby several students were interviewed individually. As mentioned in Section 1.5, this method was implemented to explore the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. Semi-structured interview questions were constructed to deeply investigate the problem and achieve the optimal goal of this study, which can be obtained through the students' samples of written texts and the list of the discourse connectives that they used in their written texts. The following sub-sections elaborate on the participants, setting, research instruments and materials in more details.

### **3.2.1 Participants and Setting**

Initially, the participants who were involved in this study comprised a total of 61 Form four students aged 16 years old from two classes in SMK Saujana Utama, which is located in Sungai Buloh, Selangor. These students were reported to either speak the Malay, Mandarin or Tamil language as their mother tongue and they learn English as the second language at school. Eventually, there was an inconsistent number of students who attended the second and third corpus collection sessions. As a result, only 32 (N = 32) students contributed their narrative essays to this study. In this study, they will be referred to by a code number ranging from 001 to 032.

Moreover, the students were selected because of their accessibility and they were suggested by the school administration. Permission was granted by the Ministry of Education and the school administration to conduct this study on the students. The school was chosen as the research site because the researcher was familiar and could easily obtain access to the school. Moreover, the Ministry of Education also granted permission to conduct the research at the school. Consent forms were also distributed to all students to obtain permission from their parents and guardians. In addition, some demographic details of the students such as name, gender, class and past English language test results, were collected to identify the students' backgrounds. In short, the criteria for selecting the 32 students and their essays for analysis are as follows:

1. The students had attended all three corpus collection sessions.
2. The students submitted their consent form to the researcher (see Appendix F).

### **3.2.2 Research Instruments and Material**

The research instruments used in collecting the data were prompts and several semi-structured interview questions. The main material used was a narrative essay. These instruments and material were used to collect all the necessary data required to gain understandings and insights into the semantic use of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts as well as their views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. The instruments and material used for this study are discussed in the following section.

#### **3.2.2.1 Narrative Essay**

The narrative essays collected constituted the basic material as well as the corpus for this study. In order to put the story into a narrative format, the use of linguistic devices is required. There are several devices that are formal and specific to narration while cohesive devices express semantic relations (e.g. *addition*, *comparison* and *consequence* relations) to ensure the progression of the narration process (Vion & Colas, 2005). This genre is commonly used in schools throughout Malaysia and students are able to freely express their creativity and ideas in the texts without following strict formats like other writing genres. For this study, the topic for the essay was a pre-determined topic in line with the school syllabus. During the corpus collection, the students were asked to write a narrative essay based on the same topic, at three intervals over a period of 18 weeks. All essays were manually collected. The topic of the essays is as follows:

“It was the Happiest Day of my Life”



### 3.2.2.2 Semi-structured Interview Questions

As mentioned in Sections 1.4 and 2.1, this study explores the use of discourse connectives in narrative essays of secondary school students in terms of their semantic use. Therefore, a qualitative approach would help elaborate this notion in a more detailed manner. A set of semi-structured interview questions, which includes a series of open-ended interview prompts, was used to explore the semantic use of discourse connectives among the students in a detailed manner and to comprehend what they attempted to achieve with the specific choices made.

The analysis began with detailed examinations of the narratives extracted from the students' written texts and included questions such as 'Why did you use *and* here in this sentence?' and 'If you were to rewrite this sentence, would you consider changing this word or stick to the same word?' (see Appendix C for the list of interview questions), which were constructed from the observations of the students' use of discourse connectives in their essays. However, it must be noted here that the interview questions constructed were based on the analysis of the use of discourse connectives in each student's texts. Therefore, the interview questions might vary depending on each individual student. Further questions came from the prompts. Some students tend to provide short and brief answers, hence the researcher had to prompt them with more detailed questions from the answers given to elicit the students' understandings of their use of discourse connectives and to uncover their preferred discursial practices (Hyland, 2002).

### 3.2.2.3 List of Discourse Connectives

The list of discourse connectives was used together with the students' written texts to guide the students in answering the research questions during the interviews. The list varies depending on each student's use of discourse connectives observed in their texts. The summary list of the discourse connectives found in the students' texts is as follows:

**Table 3.1: List of Discourse connectives found in the students' texts**

No.	Discourse Connectives	
1.	And	15. Plus
2.	And also	16. Though
3.	Or	17. So
4.	Or else	18. Then
5.	Furthermore	19. For
6.	Moreover	20. Because
7.	Besides	21. Otherwise
8.	In addition	22. Hence
9.	Yet	23. As a result
10.	Only	24. Instead
11.	But	25. Rather
12.	However	26. At the same time
13.	Actually	27. Although
14.	At least	

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

All the data were collected from several stages within a 10-month period of study. The following sub-sections describe the procedures carried out during the corpus collection and interview sessions.

### 3.3.1 The Corpus Design

The corpus used in the analysis comprised of narrative essays produced by Form Four secondary school students (N = 32). In order to develop the corpus, the students were asked to do the same tasks for three times over an 18-week period. Each text was written in a nine-week interval. It is said that a repeated-task design makes it difficult to differentiate performance differences from those of more general language development task designs because of the task repetition (Larsen-Freeman, 2006). However, as indicated in Chapter 2, Larsen-Freeman (2006, p. 595), citing Thelen (2002), stated that “using the same task several times was one way of dealing with the fact that even subtle differences in a task can affect performance profoundly leaving unanswered the question of whether the subject has control over the language resources or not.” Moreover, learners normally change their language use over a period of time, just like any other language users do (Chau, 2015) and therefore, they are considered as “developing language users or in other words dynamic meaning makers” (Chau, 2015, p. 2). In this study, the essays were collected several times to look at how the use of the discourse connectives by the students changes and varies between each interval.

The essays were collected at three different intervals (1<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017) with a gap of nine weeks between each interval. This gap was based on the dates provided by the school. Although the gap of each interval was only nine weeks with only three intervals, the changes in terms of the semantic use of discourse connectives in the students’ texts were observable even for this period of time. During the first essay collection, the students were informed that the purpose of writing the essays was for a research and all the data obtained would be kept confidential. Each student was asked to independently write a narrative between 300 to 350 words, which is the standard SPM writing format, about a past experience that they felt as the happiest day of their lives (see Appendix A for samples of students’ written texts). The students

also included their demographic details (e.g. name, age, gender, English PT3 test results and contact number) before writing the essays.

The texts were written in 60 minutes time which is a two-period class. However, at Time 2, the time given by the school to conduct the task was only 30 minutes. The students were not informed about this change and they were also not briefed on the reason why the time allocated was different from the first task. Nonetheless, the time allocated for the task at Time 3 was 60 minutes. On the other hand, no dictionaries or extra reading materials were allowed during the tasks as the tasks were in the form of an examination. The researcher was present throughout the three times of the data collection. All the essays were collected immediately after the time has ended. The nature of the data was a spontaneous individual production of written work. Hence, the data occurred naturally.

As mentioned earlier in Sub-section 3.2.1, initially, 61 students participated in this study. However, the number of students who attended each corpus collection varied. The total number of narrative essays collected in the first corpus collection was 58 essays, 47 essays in the second corpus collection and in the third essay collection, only 44 essays managed to be collected, making a total of 149 essays altogether. However, after identifying the students who had participated in all three corpus collections and submitted their consent forms, only the essays of 32 students ( $N = 32$ ) were chosen for further analysis. As a result, the total number of essays included in the learner corpus for analysis was 96 essays (32 students x three essays each). The total number of words for the whole corpus was 33,161 words. By the end of the data collection, all students involved were given a token of appreciation for participating and cooperating in the corpus collection. The details of the corpus for analysis are presented in the following table:

**Table 3.2: Learner corpus**

<b>Time</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>No. of essays</b>	<b>No. of words</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> March 2017	32	32	11,431
28 <sup>th</sup> April 2017	32	32	8,226
26 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	32	32	13,504
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>33,161</b>

### **3.3.2 Interview Data**

As mentioned in Section 1.5, 10 students were selected for an interview regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their three narrative essays after all the essays were completely analysed. Given the number of students involved in this study, only the top five students with the highest number of discourse connectives used and the lowest five students with the least number of discourse connectives used in their essays were selected to participate in the interview. The interviews were conducted separately to ensure confidentiality and were done either at the school or outside of school hours, depending on the students' availability. Two students were interviewed at the school while the remaining students were interviewed outside of the school hours. The first four students were interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017, while the tenth student was interviewed on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Again, the time gap in interviewing each student was due to their availability.

Regarding the interview procedures, the students were first asked to read their written texts for the purpose of recalling the story that they had written. Next, the list of discourse connectives that they used was shown to indicate that these were the words found in their written texts. After that, the semi-structured interview questions were directed to them. Some samples of excerpts extracted from their essays were shown and discussed. Prompts were used to stimulate the students in gaining more information about their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. A smartphone was used to record the interviews and each interview session lasted for more than 15 minutes.

In addition, eight students were interviewed for the second time as more interview questions were developed and later added based on the current findings. At the same time, five students who used the least number of discourse connectives in their texts were asked whether they used other linguistic resources in place of discourse connectives in their texts. After all the students were interviewed, the recordings were then fully transcribed to be efficiently analysed.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The analysis of all data began by having the essays manually typed and stored into electronic formats to be analysed using AntConc 3.4.4.0 software. This simple and easy freeware software (Anthony, 2005) provides a list of words that can be sorted according to frequency and alphabetical order (Diniz, 2005), thus will help generate the frequencies of discourse connectives used in an easier and faster way. Each of the essays was labelled with a code number (e.g. 001xa, 002xb) without disclosing any information about the students to avoid bias during the analysis. The code number also included the letter (x) to refer to male participants and (y) to refer to female participants. Moreover, the letters (a) was included to indicate the essays collected at Time 1, (b) to indicate the essays collected at Time 2 and (c) to indicate the essays collected at Time 3, all of which indicated three different points in time.

### 3.4.1 Theoretical Frameworks for Data Coding

To identify the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts (see research question one in Section 3.1), the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) were adapted as the main sources for quantifying the discourse connectives. Some modifications were made after some theoretical and practical considerations. For instance, the framework by Hyland (2005) is normally used when analysing the metadiscourse elements found in academic discourse such as thesis, research project and written work of students at the university level. In this study, only the *transition markers* coined by Hyland (2005) were used to match the level of the students in the current study.

On the other hand, the framework by Halliday and Hasan (1976) shows a detailed explanation on how to categorise discourse connectives in written texts. Thus, this framework was modified to correspond to the framework by Hyland (2005) and was included in this study. After appropriate revisions, the types of discourse connectives for this study are as follows:

**Table 3.3: Modified version of types of discourse connectives following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Discourse Connective	Category	Semantic use	Example(s)
	1) Additive	Adds relevant information, activities or arguments to the previously mentioned expressions.	and, and also, or, or else, furthermore, moreover, besides, in addition
	2) Contrastive	Compares and contrasts events, things, qualities, arguments and evidences in light of previous information.	yet, but, however, at the same time, rather, at least, instead, though
	3) Consequence	1. Introduces information by explaining why and how things happen. 2. Draws conclusion or counters arguments as a result or consequence of the preceding discourse.	so, then, hence, for, because, otherwise, as a result

### 3.4.2 Coding of the Data

To quantify the data, each text was uploaded into AntConc 3.4.4.0 software. The frequency of the types of discourse connectives used was identified and annotated via this software. Next, each discourse connective was manually checked to include any misspelled discourse connectives and to identify words that could also go under other parts of speech. For example, *for* can either be a discourse connective or a preposition. Words like this were only included in the study if they carry the same function as discourse connectives. Any grammatical or lexical errors were ignored. The frequency lists obtained from the analysis were then categorised into the types of discourse connectives and transferred into tables that were divided into Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 to be calculated into percentages (%) and ranked for comparison and further discussions. Additional tables that show the overall use of discourse connectives over time were also constructed.

Then, in order to answer research question two regarding the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' essays at three different points in time, a close study of the texts was carried out. The students' texts were manually reread to identify the types of discourse connectives used by them. A modified version of the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) was used to categorise the DCs. Given the long list of discourse connectives found in students' texts, only the top five most frequently used discourse connectives and the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives by the students were analysed. The use of these discourse connectives was identified individually according to their semantic types. Moreover, a few sentences that contain these discourse connectives were extracted from the texts and included as examples to be further discussed.



At the same time, the written texts of the students that comprise the least number of discourse connectives were analysed again to identify any linguistic resources that had the potential to replace the discourse connectives in the students' written texts. Finally, in addition to the text analysis, the interview recordings collected were manually transcribed into a word format for effective analysis with the purpose of answering research question three. The analyses of the transcripts focused on the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts especially regarding their choices in using some of the discourse connectives in their texts. The findings from the transcripts were divided into appropriate themes and some samples of excerpts from the interviews and sentences from the written texts were included in the discussion to support any justifications made later.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This present chapter illustrates a step-by-step process consisting of the research design, procedures of data collection and data analysis that were specifically designed to accomplish the aim of this study, with the main concern of examining the semantic use of discourse connectives in the secondary school students' texts over time and their views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. In the following chapter, the findings from the analysis of all 96 narrative essays as well as from the interview transcripts collected are discussed with the aim of answering all three research questions.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This corpus-informed study is based on an analysis of a learner corpus of 96 narrative essays written by 32 Form Four students and interviews with 10 selected students. This chapter aims to address all three research questions as follows:

1. What are the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts?
2. What are the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at three different points in time?
3. How do students perceive the use and meaning of some discourse connectives in their texts?

This chapter is divided into seven sections. Sections 4.2 to 4.6 show the frequency of the types of discourse connectives as well as the discourse connectives produced by the students in their narrative texts. Section 4.7 shows the semantic types of the top five most frequently used discourse connectives as well as the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives by the students in their texts at three different points in time. As mentioned in Chapter 3, given that there was a huge number of discourse connectives used by the students in their essays, only the top five most frequently used discourse connectives and the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives were selected to be the focus of the analysis. All the discourse connectives observed in the students' texts were categorized based on a modified version of frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005).

The last section of this chapter, which is Section 4.8, shows the findings based on the interviews with 10 selected students. The findings concern the students' views on their own use of DCs in their written texts. The 10 students were listed as the top five students with the highest number of discourse connectives used and another five students with the lowest number of discourse connectives used in their narrative essays. The overall findings revealed three main insights representing the three research questions which are useful for the field of second language acquisition (see Chapter 5 for more discussion).

#### 4.2 Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts

**Table 4.1: Overall frequency of types of discourse connectives observed in students' texts at Time 1-Time 3 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	Discourse connective	Frequency counts	Percentage of total (%)
Additive	and	980	58.13
	also	58	3.44
	or	32	1.90
	and also	8	0.47
	besides	3	0.18
	plus	2	0.12
	moreover	1	0.06
	or else	1	0.06
	in addition	1	0.06
	furthermore	1	0.06
Consequence	because	200	11.86
	then	97	5.75
	so	88	5.22
	for	11	0.65
	otherwise	1	0.06
	hence	1	0.06
	as a result	1	0.06

**Table 4.1: Continued**

Contrastive	but	160	9.49
	at the same time	10	0.59
	yet	9	0.53
	though	6	0.36
	although	5	0.30
	at least	4	0.24
	instead	3	0.18
	however	1	0.06
	rather	1	0.06
	whereas	1	0.06
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1686</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 shows the overall frequency of the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at Time 1 until Time 3. The analysis of the corpus shows that there were approximately 27 discourse connectives used by the students in their narrative texts over time. It also shows that there were an overall of 1,686 occurrences of these discourse connectives altogether. In terms of the types of discourse connectives used, the discourse connectives used at Time 1 until Time 3 corresponded to one another and were constant over time in which the type of discourse connectives used in the students' narrative texts that indicated the highest frequency was *additive* with a total number of 1,087 (64.47%) counts. This is followed by *consequence* with a total number of 399 (23.67%) counts and *contrastive* with a total number of 200 (11.86%) counts.

In addition, Table 4.1 shows that there was a significant variation in the use of discourse connectives *and*, occupying more than half of the percentage of the whole frequency. This discourse connective also had the highest frequency of discourse connective used by the students in their texts with a total number of 980 (58.13%) counts. This is followed by *because* with a total number of 200 (11.86%) counts, *but* with 160 (9.49%) counts, *then* with 97 (5.75%) counts and *so* with 88 (5.22%) counts. The discourse connectives used by the students in their texts with the lowest frequency

were *furthermore*, *moreover*, *or else*, *in addition*, *however*, *rather*, *whereas*, *otherwise*, *hence* and *as a result* with a total number of 1 (0.06%) count each.

### 4.3 The Frequency of Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts at Time 1

**Table 4.2: Frequency of types of discourse connectives observed in students' texts at Time 1 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	No.	Discourse connective	Frequency counts	Percentage of total (%)
Additive	1.	and	348	56.77
	2.	also	19	3.10
	3.	or	15	2.45
	4.	and also	4	0.65
	5.	plus	2	0.33
	6.	furthermore	1	0.16
Consequence	7.	because	82	13.38
	8.	so	36	5.87
	9.	then	29	4.73
	10.	for	2	0.33
Contrastive	11.	but	61	9.95
	12.	at the same time	4	0.65
	13.	yet	3	0.49
	14.	although	3	0.49
	15.	at least	3	0.49
	16.	rather	1	0.16
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 shows the frequency of the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at Time 1. As shown by the data in Table 4.2, a total number of 16 discourse connectives were used by the students in their texts with an approximately 613 number of occurrences altogether. From the 613 occurrences, the type of discourse connectives that demonstrated the highest frequency was *additive* with a total number of 389 (63.46%) counts, followed by *consequence* with 149 (24.31%) counts and *contrastive* with 75 (12.23%) counts.

In terms of the discourse connectives used by the students at Time 1, 348 (56.77%) of the discourse connectives were *and*, followed by *because* with a total number of 82 (13.38%) counts, *but* with 61 (9.95%) counts, *so* with 36 (5.87%) counts and *then* with 29 (4.73%) counts. Moreover, it was also found that the discourse connectives used by the students in their texts at Time 1 that depicted the lowest frequency were *furthermore* and *rather* with a total number of 1 (0.16%) count each.

#### 4.4 The Frequency of Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts at Time 2

**Table 4.3: Frequency of types of discourse connectives observed in students' texts at Time 2 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	No.	Discourse Connective	Frequency Counts	Percentage of total (%)
Additive	1.	and	255	62.81
	2.	also	14	3.45
	3.	or	5	1.23
	4.	besides	2	0.49
	5.	moreover	1	0.25
Consequence	6.	because	38	9.36
	7.	then	26	6.40
	8.	so	21	5.17
	9.	for	1	0.25
	10.	otherwise	1	0.25
Contrastive	11.	but	35	8.62
	12.	at the same time	3	0.74
	13.	although	2	0.49
	14.	yet	1	0.25
	15.	instead	1	0.25
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of 15 discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at Time 2 with an approximately 406 number of instances altogether. It was discovered that 277 (68.23%) were *additive*, 87 (21.43%) were *consequence* and 42 (10.34%) were *contrastive* discourse connectives respectively. The findings show that the types of discourse connectives used by the students in their texts were constant with their use at Time 1.

In addition, this table shows that the discourse connective used by the students in their texts that showed the highest frequency was *and* with a total number of 255 (62.81%) counts. This is followed by *because* with 38 (9.36%) counts, *but* with 35 (8.62%) counts, *then* with 26 (6.40%) counts and *so* with 21 (5.17%) counts. The discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at Time 2 with the lowest frequency were *yet*, *for*, *moreover*, *instead* and *otherwise* whereby each of these discourse connectives had a total number of 1 (0.25%) count only. Although it was found that there were occurrences in the use of new discourse connectives at Time 2, it can be observed that the total number of discourse connectives used by the students which was 15 DCs declined as compared to at Time 1 which had 16 DCs.

#### 4.5 The Frequency of Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts at Time 3

**Table 4.4: Frequency of types of discourse connectives observed in students' texts at Time 3 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	No.	Discourse Connective	Frequency counts	Percentage of total (%)
Additive	1.	and	377	56.52
	2.	also	25	3.75
	3.	or	12	1.80
	4.	and also	4	0.60
	5.	besides	1	0.15
	6.	or else	1	0.15
	7.	in addition	1	0.15
Consequence	8.	because	80	11.99
	9.	then	42	6.30
	10.	so	31	4.65
	11.	for	8	1.20
	12.	hence	1	0.15
	13.	as a result	1	0.15
Contrastive	14.	but	64	9.60
	15.	yet	5	0.75
	16.	though	6	0.90
	17.	at the same time	3	0.45
	18.	instead	2	0.30
	19.	at least	1	0.15
	20.	however	1	0.15
	21.	whereas	1	0.15
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.4 shows that the total number of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at Time 3 was 21 discourse connectives. Within these DCs, it could be seen that there were a total of 667 number of occurrences of these DCs throughout the students' narrative texts. 421 (63.12%) of them were *additive*, 163 (24.44%) were *consequence* and 83 (12.44%) were *contrastive*. Again, the types of discourse connectives used by the students in their texts at Time 3 were consistent with the findings at Time 1 and Time 2. In addition, the total number of discourse connectives



used by the students in their texts increased from only 16 DCs at Time 1 and 15 DCs at Time 2 to 21 discourse connectives at Time 3. These findings show that the use of discourse connectives by the students changed over time.

Moreover, the discourse connective used by the students in their texts at Time 3 that had the highest frequency was *and* with a total number of 377 (56.52%) counts. This is followed by *because* with 80 (11.99%) counts, *but* with 64 (9.60%) counts, *then* with 42 (6.30%) counts and *so* with a total number of 31 (4.65%) counts. On the other hand, the discourse connectives used by students in their texts at Time 3 with the lowest frequency were *however*, *at least*, *besides*, *or else*, *in addition*, *hence*, *as a result* and *whereas* with the same frequency count for each which was 1 (0.15%) count each. Next, the following table indicates the summary of all discourse connectives observed in the students' narrative texts at three different points in time (Time 1 until Time 3).

#### 4.6 Summary of the Students' Overall use of the Types of Discourse Connectives at Three Different Points in Time

**Table 4.5: Summary of types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts over time following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	No.	Discourse connective	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Total	(%)
Additive	1.	and	348	255	377	980	58.13
	2.	also	19	14	25	58	3.44
	3.	or	15	5	12	32	1.90
	4.	and also	4	0	4	8	0.47
	5.	besides	0	2	1	3	0.18
	6.	plus	2	0	0	2	0.12
	7.	moreover	0	1	0	1	0.06
	8.	or else	0	0	1	1	0.06
	9.	in addition	0	0	1	1	0.06
	10.	furthermore	1	0	0	1	0.06
Consequence	11.	because	82	38	80	200	11.86
	12.	then	29	26	42	97	5.75
	13.	so	36	21	31	88	5.22
	14.	for	2	1	8	11	0.65
	15.	otherwise	0	1	0	1	0.06
	16.	hence	0	0	1	1	0.06
	17.	as a result	0	0	1	1	0.06
Contrastive	18.	but	61	35	64	160	9.49
	19.	at the same time	4	3	3	10	0.59
	20.	yet	3	1	5	9	0.53
	21.	though	0	0	6	6	0.36
	22.	although	3	2	0	5	0.30
	23.	at least	3	0	1	4	0.24
	24.	instead	0	1	2	3	0.18
	25.	however	0	0	1	1	0.06
	26.	rather	1	0	0	1	0.06
	27.	whereas	0	0	1	1	0.06
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>1686</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.5 shows the overall types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts over time (see Appendix D for more details). As mentioned in Table 4.1, *and*, *because*, *but*, *then* and *so* were the top five most frequently used discourse connectives by the students in their narrative texts. This finding can also be seen in Table 4.5 above.

When compared to Time 2, *and*, *but*, *because*, *so* and *then* were still ranked as the top five most frequently used discourse connectives by the students in their texts up until that point in time. Interestingly at Time 3, these five discourse connectives still maintained the position as the top five most frequently used discourse connectives. As a result, these five discourse connectives showed constant results at Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 which indicated that these discourse connectives were the top five most frequently used discourse connectives by the students in their texts at three different points in time.

This table also shows the occurrence of new discourse connectives in the narrative texts of the students at Time 2 in which they did not occur at Time 1. The discourse connectives were *besides*, *moreover*, *instead* and *otherwise*. The discourse connective *besides* appeared twice at Time 2 while *moreover*, *instead* and *otherwise* appeared only once. In addition, this table again highlights that the students were able to use new discourse connectives at Time 3. These new discourse connectives were *however*, *or else*, *in addition*, *though*, *hence*, *as a result* and *whereas*. The changes that were observed at Time 1 and Time 2 indicated that new words had appeared in the learners' language.

A closer look at this table, however, shows that although this table reveals that the students managed to include other discourse connectives at Time 2 and Time 3, but they were still unable to constantly maintain the use or occurrence of all discourse connectives throughout the three different points in time. Among the discourse connectives were *furthermore*, *rather* and *plus* which only appeared at Time 1 but did not appear at Time 2 and Time 3, and *although* that occurred at Time 1 and Time 2 but did not occur again at Time 3. Moreover, there were some discourse connectives that only appeared once over time either at Time 1, Time 2 or Time 3. The following table

illustrates the discourse connectives that only appeared once at three different points in time:

**Table 4.6: Discourse connectives observed in the students' texts that appeared once over time following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 242-243) and Hyland (2005, pp. 50-51)**

Category	No.	Discourse connective	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Total	(%)
Additive	1.	moreover	0	1	0	1	0.06
	2.	or else	0	0	1	1	0.06
	3.	in addition	0	0	1	1	0.06
	4.	furthermore	1	0	0	1	0.06
Consequence	5.	otherwise	0	1	0	1	0.06
	6.	hence	0	0	1	1	0.06
	7.	as a result	0	0	1	1	0.06
Contrastive	8.	however	0	0	1	1	0.06
	9.	rather	1	0	0	1	0.06
	10.	whereas	0	0	1	1	0.06
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	

Table 4.6 shows that *furthermore* and *rather* appeared at Time 1 only while *moreover* and *otherwise* appeared at Time 2 only. On the other hand, the discourse connectives *or else*, *in addition*, *hence*, *as a result*, *however* and *whereas* appeared at Time 3 only. The occurrences of these discourse connectives at three different points in time show that students had produced new words over time. Moreover, these findings showed direct evidence that although the students conducted the same task for three times, the students did not necessarily look at the task in the same way or write the essays using the same DCs.

In short, since there is more to be discussed about these variations between the three intervals, the surface comparisons made cannot infer the use of discourse connectives in the students' texts but are considered as a general view of their use instead. Therefore, it is more interesting to look at how examples of the sentences used and reasons provided by the students represent their choices in the use of discourse connectives and how the

use changes in time, in terms of the meanings. The next section shows the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in students' narrative texts at three different points in time.

#### **4.7 The Semantic Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts at Three Different Points in Time**

In this section, the top five most frequently used discourse connectives and the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives by the students are discussed in further details. The focus was to identify what semantic types of discourse connectives that were used by the students based on the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) or if the students had incorporated different meanings to express their own intended meanings.

As mentioned in Section 4.6, the top five most frequently used discourse connectives were *and*, *because*, *but*, *then* and *so* while the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives were *furthermore*, *however*, *rather*, *otherwise* and *hence*. Each of these discourse connectives are further presented in the following sub-sections. The use of *and* is first discussed in Sub-section 4.7.1, *because* in Sub-section 4.7.2, *but* in Sub-section 4.7.3, *then* in Sub-section 4.7.4, *so* in Sub-section 4.7.5, *furthermore* in Sub-section 4.7.6, *however* in Sub-section 4.7.7, *rather* in Sub-section 4.7.8, *otherwise* in Sub-section 4.7.9 and *hence* in Sub-section 4.7.10.

#### 4.7.1 The Discourse Connective *and*

As mentioned earlier, the discourse connective *and* is categorized under *additive* and serves to add elements to an argument or activity (Hyland, 2005). The discourse connective *and* appeared at Time 1 until Time 3 (see Table 4.5) and was the most frequently used DC by the students in their texts. Based on the students' narrative texts, most of them had applied the use of *and* following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). The following are some examples of the use of *and* in some of the students' texts at Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 that illustrate this kind of rhetorical work:

- (1) My mom prepared some foods, drinks and snacks to eat at the beach. (002xa)  
Slowly I woke up like a living dead and head to the bathroom. (005xb)  
I went to have my breakfast, 3 slices of bread and a cup of milk. (004xc)

In 002xa, the use of *and* adds more elements to the related activity (Hyland, 2005). The words *food*, *drink* and *snacks* indicated that there were additional elements brought together to *the beach*. In 005xb, it shows that additional activities were happening in a sequential manner. Thus, the use of *and* was added to link the activities that were happening sequentially. Last of all, in 004xc, it shows that additional elements were added to show what the person had for breakfast. Here, *and* was used to link the different kinds of food and drinks together.

From the examples above, although most sentences written by the students used *and* showed some elements of *additive*, however, when it comes to cohesiveness and clarity for the readers, some of the students' sentences were lacking in these elements. Instead of using *and*, other types of discourse connectives were more appropriate to be used in some of the sentences. However, the use of *and* in Excerpt 2 might be due to the writers' innovative way of using *and*, which can later be seen in the interviews which figure out the reasons that made the students write in a particular way. The following

excerpt shows some examples of the use of *and* that explains the aforementioned condition:

- (2) On the same day, my sister had UPSR exam and my mother had to take leave to encourage my sister. (030ya)  
She were pregnant and it is not right for her to do much work. (008yc)  
My mom did not cook and we just have some biscuits dip in milk. (018yc)

Here, the former clause in the students' sentences acted as the effect for the writers' action in the subsequent clause and *and* here could actually function as a *consequence* discourse connective. This shows that the semantic use of the discourse connective *and* changes over time. However, as mentioned earlier, the students' choice for using *and* might be due to their innovative way of writing. Thus, an explanation is needed to further understand their choices of discourse connectives. The above findings show that the semantic use of the discourse connective *and* in the students' texts varied for each interval and this shows that the use of *and* could have different meanings based on the speakers' intended meaning.

#### 4.7.2 The Discourse Connective *because*

The next discourse connective that is discussed is *because*. *Because* indicates a *consequence* relation that is either to explain why or how things happen, or to counter arguments (Hyland, 2005). All students used the discourse connective *because* in their texts at Time 1 until Time 3 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). This shows that the use of *because* was constant over time. There was no indication of other semantic types in its use. Excerpt 3 shows some examples of the use of *because* that can be found in the students' essays:

- (3) My heart was racing at the moment because my name was not listed. (006xa)  
I felt sad because my name was not announced. (011yb)  
He rushed from work to picked me up because my mom was at hospital. (008yc)

As Excerpt 3 above illustrates, it can be seen that these sentences indicate some sort of reasoning to counter their earlier argument or statement (Hyland, 2005). For instance, in 011yb, the student argued that she felt sad thus she provided a reason for that feeling by using *because* to connect her argument with the reason. This condition is also the same with example 006xa and example 008yc in which both sentences showed the reasons for the actions in the preceding clauses. In short, the use of *because* in the sentences semantically fit the environment and took forward the argument of the writers.

#### 4.7.3 The Discourse Connective *but*

The discourse connective *but* shows a *contrastive* argument. This discourse connective appeared at three different points in time (see Table 4.5). It serves to mark differences between two discourse units (Hyland, 2005). The examples in 4 show how some students used the discourse connective *but* in their sentences:

(4) Nothing interesting happened on the way and at the supermarket but it was to be expected. (001xa)

I went to school as usual, but with forced steps and heavy hearted. (009yb)

I am pretty sure that I can meet them on the street or anywhere else but not anymore on the stage. (017yc)

Here, the sentences mark different arguments. The students used *but* in the following sentences following the frameworks. In 017yc, which is an example of a sentence found at Time 3, the student explained that she was able to meet *them* anywhere either on the street or somewhere else. However, she would not be able to meet them on stage anymore. These two actions show that there were two contrasting situations going on. The first one was written in a positive manner while the second one was written in a negative manner. Here, the use of *but* was added to link both situations. As shown in Table 4.1 and Table 4.5, the use of *but* was among the top five most frequently used



discourse connectives by the students in their texts. However, the following examples show some of the students' sentences that could use other discourse connectives instead, in order for the sentences to be more cohesive and clear to the readers:

(5) I was so cold, but my mother comforted me and made sure I was warm. (001xa)

It was actually an exhausted but yet still happy. (012ya)

My father wanted to stay there for 3 days and 2 nights, so we needed a hotel or chalet to stay. But, before the day comes, we had already done some research on the Internet and we finally found it. (018yb)

In 001xa, the student explained that he was *cold*. The use of a *consequence* discourse connective shows the effect of the first clause of *I was so cold*. From the above findings, the use of *but* can be replaced with other discourse connectives. However, the reason for the student's use of *but* in the sentence is discussed later. Next, in 012ya, the student explained that she was really tired. However, she was still happy. In this example, it can be seen that the discourse connective *but* was placed beside *yet*. Both *but* and *yet* indicate the same meaning as to show *contrastive* relation. Hence, the use of either one of these words is sufficient to show that there are two contrasting arguments going on in a sentence. In the next section, the reasons as to why the student chose to use the discourse connective *but* together with *yet* in one sentence are explored. In short, it can be seen from the findings that the discourse connective *but* was semantically used differently at three different points in time.

#### 4.7.4 The Discourse Connective *then*

The discourse connective *then* shows a *consequence* relation (Hyland, 2005). It indicates an action or event that happens as a result of the first action or event. It also shows a relationship related to sequences of time (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). From the analysis of the corpus, it was found that all the students used the discourse connective

*then* at Time 1 until Time 3 following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). This shows that the semantic type for *then* was constant over time. The following examples show some sentences found in the students' texts that follow the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005):

- (6) After about 10 minutes, our friends had arrived and join us. Then, we went to the school hall together and take our sit. (011ya)  
In the bus, we were cracking jokes, took selfies and enjoyed the bus ride. Then, the bus driver asked us to pay RM20. (004xb)  
I rushed towards downstairs and had my breakfast as quickly as possible. Then, I rushed to school. (005xc)

In 011ya, it shows that the discourse connective *then* was used to connect the first sentence with the second sentence. The second sentence was the next action done as a result of *friends had arrived and joined us* written by the student. Another example, which is example 005xc, shows that after quickly eating *breakfast* the student rushed to school. Here, the discourse connective *then* was used to indicate that the second sentence happened after the first sentence. Hence, *then* was used to link the first sentence with the second sentence in a sequential manner, showing evidence that the student used the discourse connective *then* following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005).

#### 4.7.5 The Discourse Connective *so*

The discourse connective *so* indicates a *consequence* relation (Hyland, 2005) just like *then*. Although it is a *consequence* relation, it depicts to the readers that a conclusion or result is being drawn or justified according to what happens in the previous clause (Hyland, 2005) or sentence. Another discourse connective that has the same function as *so* is *therefore*. The following examples illustrate some of the uses of *so* that can be seen in the students' essays:

(7) We never did a family day, so it was a new thing to us. (002xa)

On the recess period, I refused to go recess with friends, so I stay in the class instead, alone.

(009yb)

Each of my family members, they had the different taste on the designs so we decided to send the clothes to the tailor's shop. (018yc)

In 002xa, the student explained that his family had never organized a *family day* before. Due to this, it was their first time conducting a *family day*. In this sentence, it shows that the student was trying to show that the reason stated in the first clause led to the result or consequence in the second clause. He used *so* to link both clauses. In 009yb, the student stated that as she declined to join her friends for recess, she had to stay in class alone. In this sentence, it shows that the second action was a result of the first action being done. The examples in 7 are among the examples of sentences with the discourse connective *so* that follow the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005).

From the findings, it shows that the semantic use of the discourse connective *so* was constant at three different points in time in which all of the sentences containing the discourse connective *so* in the students' essays indicated a *consequence* relation. Again, the use of the discourse connective *so* semantically fit the environment and took forward the argument of the writers.

#### 4.7.6 The Discourse Connective *furthermore*

The discourse connective *furthermore* which goes under the *additive* category shows that there are additional elements to an argument or activity (Hyland, 2005). Thus, it functions the same as the discourse connective *and*. As mentioned in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, *furthermore* only appeared once at three different points in time which was at Time 1 only. The use of *furthermore* can be seen as follows:

- (8) Students talked about how anxious they were waiting for their result. Furthermore, they also talked about their future plans and the boarding school they wanted to study at in Form 4. (006xa)

Here, the discourse connective *furthermore* was used to indicate another additional topic that the students talked about besides the topic in the preceding sentence. This shows that the use of *furthermore* in Excerpt 8 follows the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) in which *furthermore* is an *additive*. As mentioned earlier, the discourse connective *furthermore* only occurred once over time which was at Time 1 but did not appear again at Time 2 or Time 3. This indicates that the student who used this discourse connective had approached the writing tasks differently in which he decided to only use *furthermore* in his first essay but not in the following essays.

#### 4.7.7 The Discourse Connective *however*

The use of the discourse connective *however* only appeared once over time in a student's text and it appeared at Time 3. The discourse connective *however* in the student's text functions like *but*. It acts as a link to connect two *contrastive* elements or arguments (Hyland, 2005). Although the discourse connective *however* only appeared once, it follows the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), in which *however* is a *contrastive* relation. Below is an example of the sentence that contains *however*:

- (9) Tsuna always doted on me, and always spent his time with me, however, he always had this sadness in his eyes when he looked at me long enough. (001xc)

Here, the student explained that *Tsuna* adored him and would usually spend time together. Although *Tsuna* acted that way towards the student, every time he looked at him for a very long time, he would feel a certain kind of sadness. These two actions

happening in this sentence indicated that two different arguments were happening in one sentence, hence, the word *however* was placed in the middle to link the first clause with the second clause.

As mentioned earlier, the discourse connective *however* appeared once only which was at Time 3. This finding shows that the student had produced a new word at Time 3. This also shows evidence of the expansion of repertoire of the language use of DCs in the student's written texts which again signals that the student had approached the writing tasks differently.

#### 4.7.8 The Discourse Connective *rather*

The next discourse connective that is discussed is *rather*. According to the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), the discourse connective *rather* serves a *contrastive* relation. It compares arguments or events in a sentence, showing preferences for one (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) and has the same function as the discourse connective *instead*. As shown in Table 4.5, the discourse connective *rather* only appeared once over time which is at Time 1. This shows that the students rarely used this discourse connective in their written texts. The example below shows the sentence where one student used the discourse connective *rather*:

- (10) Rather than staying at home, we as a woman must has high goals for ourselves and  
make sure that we can achieve our goals. (017ya)

Here, the student argued that woman must have high goals and achieve those goals as opposed to just staying at home. In this sentence, the student tried to suggest a different viewpoint by opposing the first one. Hence, she used the discourse connective *rather* to link different arguments in this sentence. This example follows the conventional way of using *rather* in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and

Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). Again, just like the discourse connectives *however* and *furthermore*, the changes in the use of this discourse connective at three different points in time show that the student had approached the given tasks in a different manner and decided not to use the discourse connective *rather* anymore at Time 2 and Time 3.

#### 4.7.9 The Discourse Connective *otherwise*

Next, the discourse connective *otherwise* indicates a *consequence* relation (Hyland, 2005). It helps to link two arguments in which the first one shows preference of the writer while the second argument shows a different circumstance or a different manner that can happen if the preferred argument is not done (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). As shown in Table 4.5, the use of *otherwise* was only used once throughout the three different points in time which was at Time 2. The example in 11 shows an example extracted from a student's written text that has the discourse connective *otherwise* in it.

- (11) I have always been dreaming to go there because the country is really beautiful especially on spring day. Otherwise I will meet my best friend there. I have not meet her for years. (017yb)

Here, the student explained that she had always wanted to visit *the country*. She also explained that she would be able to meet her best friend during her visit there. These sentences show that there were two activities going on and both activities were the reasons why she really wanted to visit *the country*. The discourse connective *otherwise* in the student's sentences functions not to show *consequence* relation as in the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), but to show another activity that was going on. This indicates *additive* rather than *consequence* relation. It does not follow the semantic type of *otherwise* as according to the frameworks. This

shows that the student had used the discourse connective *otherwise* innovatively. Therefore, the reason for her choice is later explored.

On the other hand, the discourse connective *otherwise* appeared only once at three different points in time which was at Time 2. Interestingly, there was no earlier instance of this use but it suddenly appeared at Time 2. This shows the change in the use of this particular discourse connective. Moreover, this finding shows that the student had expanded the repertoire of her use of discourse connectives in her written texts. However, she failed to constantly maintain its use over time.

#### 4.7.10 The Discourse Connective *hence*

The last discourse connective that is discussed here in terms of its semantic type is *hence*. This discourse connective goes under the *consequence* category as to show the consequence of the previous activity or event (Hyland, 2005). This discourse connective only appeared once over time which was at Time 3. Again, the appearance of *hence* at Time 3 shows that the student was able to expand her use of DCs in her written texts over time and also shows that the student did not necessarily look at the writing tasks in the same way. The following example 12 shows the use of *hence* in connecting the sentences in a student's text:

- (12) Then, I remembered that it was the day I will get my PT3 result just like the other PT3 candidates. No wonder I felt intriguing the moment I woke up. Hence, I quickly went to bath and did some prayers for my result to pass with flying colours. (044xc)

Here, it shows that the student performed the subsequent activities which are taking a *bath* and performing *some prayer* as the consequences of the first action. The use of the discourse connective *hence* in this student's text is in accordance with the frameworks

by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), in which *hence* goes under the *consequence* category.

#### 4.7.11 Further Discussion

The overall findings show that there were significant differences in the use of discourse connectives in the students' written texts over time with some discourse connectives such as *furthermore*, *moreover*, *otherwise* and *rather* appearing only once over time. In addition, the students were inclined to use the discourse connectives following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). However, some students chose to use specific discourse connectives in their texts although there were other discourse connectives that could be used in making the sentences more cohesive. The discourse connectives are *and*, *but* and *otherwise*, which in some of the sentences, were not used in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), whereas *because*, *then*, *so*, *rather*, *hence*, *furthermore* and *however* were used in accordance with these frameworks.

On the other hand, while the frequency of occurrence and the semantic types of discourse connectives are important to determine the scale of the use of discourse connectives over time, in order to learn more thoroughly about how language learners' use discourse connectives and about the choices they made in their narrative texts, their own views in incorporating the discourse connectives in their narrative texts should be explored. The point at which students as writers choose to use specific discourse connectives in their texts has considerable importance in indicating their beliefs in using or understanding these discourse connectives and how they want readers to capture their intended meaning. Hence, the next section of this chapter presents the findings gathered



from the interviews about the students' views regarding their own use of discourse connectives in their narrative texts.

#### **4.8 Students' Views on their own use of Discourse Connectives in their Texts**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted on 10 students to discuss their own use of discourse connectives in their written texts. The responses from the interviews can be realised under the following key terms:

- (a) Relation and variety
- (b) Spontaneous action
- (c) Feelings and situations
- (d) Self-realization
- (e) Different meanings
- (f) Additional activities
- (g) Novel style
- (h) Explanation
- (i) Avoidance strategy
- (j) Inconsistency
- (k) Unfamiliarity

##### **4.8.1 Discourse Connectives perceived to be used with Greatest Confidence**

During the interviews, the students were asked about the discourse connectives that they felt most confident to use in their essays. Seven students out of 10 mentioned the discourse connective *and* as the discourse connective that they felt most confident to use. These students perceived the respective DC to be "simple to use" (001x) and that its function was just to "connect two sentences" (008y). The following are some responses from the interviews from the respondents showing the reasons as to why *and* is the discourse connective that the students felt most confident to use in their texts:

(1) I find that it is simple to use especially when joining sentences together. (001x)

Because, emm...*and* is like connect two sentences in a word. Walaupun dia punya situation apa pun.

*[It is because and is like connecting two sentences in a word although in any kind of situation.]*

(008y)

Emmm, sebab boleh, macam join dua sentence tu terus.

(012y)

*[It is because it can directly join two sentences]*

The DC *and* being predominantly used in the students' essays can also be supported by the fact that this discourse connective was the most frequently used discourse connective by all students in their essays over time. This finding can be seen in Table 4.5 in Section 4.6. However, although *and* was the most frequently used discourse connectives, many sentences containing *and* could have been replaced with other discourse connectives instead to make the sentences clearer and more cohesive to the readers. The later sub-sections discuss in details the use of *and* in some of the students' essays.

On the other hand, while eight students mentioned that *and* is the discourse connective that they felt most confident to use in their essays, the other remaining three students stated that *because* is the DC that they felt most confident to use. These students said that the discourse connective *because* was only used "to state reasons" (006x). In addition, *because* was not just a convenient discourse connective that could be used in their texts but it was also easy. The following examples are the views shared by the students during the interviews:

(2) Emmm, sebab *because* ni macam nak menyatakan sebab. So sebab tu mudahlah.

(006x)

*[It is because the word because is like wanting to state reasons. So, that is why because is easy]*

Because, *because* kan macam sebab. So senang.

(007x)

*[It is because the word because is like telling reasons. So, it is easy]*

Emmm, *because* sebab everytime kita buat, kalau kita nak explain something kena ada sebab jugak.

*[It is because everytime we want to explain something there should be a reason too]* (017y)

Interestingly, as shown in Table 4.5, the discourse connective *because* was the second most frequently used discourse connective observed in the students' essays at three different point in time after the discourse connective *and*. Furthermore, the students managed to use the discourse connective *because* in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) at Time 1 until Time 3. This strongly shows why these students were most confident in using the discourse connective *because* in their written texts.

#### 4.8.2 Discourse Connectives perceived to be used with Least Confidence

Moreover, the students were asked about the discourse connectives that they felt least confident to use in their essays. Among 10 students, only six students answered this question. The findings from the interviews revealed that the discourse connectives the students felt least confident to use were *yet*, *then*, *otherwise*, *but* and *besides*. Students 012y and 028y, for example, stated that they felt least confident to use the discourse connective *yet* while student 008y said that it was *then*. On the other hand, student 017y and student 030y mentioned they were least confident to use the discourse connectives *otherwise* and *but* respectively. From these findings, it seems that only student 012y and student 028y mentioned the same discourse connective that they felt least confident to use in their texts while other students had their own preferences or self-beliefs regarding the matter.

In addition, the discourse connective *yet* was found to be among the discourse connective that the students' were least confident to use in their written texts because they "rarely use" (012y) this discourse connective as it is not commonly used. The following are the views provided by the students regarding their choices for choosing the discourse connective *yet*:

(3) Sebab yang ni dah biasa guna. Yang ni jarang-jarang.

*[It is because I commonly use this one but I rarely use this one]* (012y)

Because it's not really common to use and I don't really like, not, like not really confident using the word. (028y)

#### 4.8.3 The Developmental use of the Discourse Connective *and*

##### (a) Relation and Variety

A thorough analysis was done on each essay to further discuss how the students used the discourse connectives in terms of their semantic types as well as the reasons for the choices made. The example 4 below shows the use of the discourse connective *and* in a student's text. Here, it shows that the use of *and* was to replace *with* which is considered as a preposition. The following example shows the use of the discourse connective *and* replacing *with*:

(4) During the ending months of 2016, around November to be a bit more precise, my mother had brought us to Melbourne, Australia so we could wind down after our personal things, my sister with her university courses, my parents and their work, and me, finally finished my PT3 exam. (001xa)

In this example, instead of repeatedly using *with* as in *my sister with her university courses*, the student used *and* in *my parents and their work*. The student stated that he used the discourse connective *and* to “give a bit more relation” (001x) as opposed to *with* which is a preposition. He also said that instead of using *with*, he decided to replace it with *and* to “add a bit of variety” (001x) to the sentence. These reasons show the student's beliefs on when to use *and* in his text. The following excerpt 5 shows the views as to why the student decided to use *and* instead of *with* in his sentence:

(5) I use it because it shows that they have a lot of it...and their closely to it. It seems odd and I know it sounds odd at some times but to me it just, rather than saying *with their work and my sister*, I wanted to add a bit of variety...I used *and* because to differentiated from using the with already, and to emphasised that they do a lot of work. So, they are really closely related to each other. So, you know. To give a bit of more relation. (001x)

### (b) Spontaneous Action

(6) It is more spontaneous than anything. Although, this gives good results most of the time, I sometimes rarely consider certain words. Thus, *and* becomes my go to for most things. (001x)

In addition, student 001x mentioned that the use of the discourse connective *and* in his sentences were mostly due to “spontaneous” (001x) actions. In fact, excerpt 6 above shows that the student was comfortable in using *and* in most of his sentences thus he preferred using *and* a lot. The above finding also supports why the discourse connective *and* was the most frequently used discourse connective and the discourse connective that the students felt most confident to use in some of their written texts.

### (c) Feelings and Situations

From the analysis of the corpus, it was also found that the discourse connective *at the same time* was used together with either *but* or *and*. This developed a question of how both *and* and *but* were used differently in the students’ texts. Moreover, it also shows that either *and* or *but* was the students’ preferred discourse connective when used with *at the same time*. Examples in 7 below are some of the uses of *and* or *but* together with *at the same time*:

- (7) With my partner Anis we both happy and scared at the same time. (008ya)  
I’m nervous and happy at the same time. (008yb)  
I was jumping and dancing at the same time like monkeys. (012yc)  
It was really unexpected day but it feel happy at the same time (012yc)

From these examples, it shows that student 008y used *and* together with *at the same time* while student 012y used either *and* or *but* together with *at the same time*. Thus, both students were asked regarding their use of *and* or *but*. It was discovered that student 008y constantly used *and* together with *at the same time* at Time 1 and Time 2. No changes of the use of *and* with *at the same time* were found over time in this student's texts. She stated that she used *and* because she wanted to connect two "different feelings" (008y) together in one sentence. She also added that she incorporated *at the same time* to indicate "also" (008y). However, she said that she considered replacing *and* with *but* to show that she was not just combining both emotions together in a sentence but showing that they were different emotions happening at the same time. The following excerpt 8 shows the response of the student during the interview:

(8) Emm...*at the same time* tu macam nak bagitahu juga tapi...

[*The use of at the same time is just like also, but...*]

I will change the *and* and still have the *at the same time*... *With partner, we both happy but scared at the same time...* Because emm...the different feelings tells different, macam ayat lain la. Happy dengan scared tu tak sama.

[*It is because different feelings tell different sentences. Happy and scared is not the same thing.*]

(008y)

On the other hand, student 012y used *and* or *but* together with *at the same time* during Time 3 only. There was no occurrence of this use at Time 1 and Time 2. However, it can be observed that either *and* or *but* was used with the discourse connective *at the same time* in the student's texts. This indicates that the use changed even though it was at Time 3 only. From the interview, the student mentioned that she used *and* or *but* depending on the situation. If there was only "one situation" (012y) happening at that time, she would use *and* together with *at the same time*. On the other hand, she would use *but* to show "two situations that are happening in one place" (012y). This shows that the student used either *and* or *but* depending on the number of

situations happening at the same time that she were trying to convey. In example 9, it shows the student's response regarding this use:

(9) I think because the first sentence is to show one situation but the second sentence is that I want to show that there are two situations there...Eh, no. Two situations that is happening in one place. (012y)

#### (d) Self-Realization

Moreover, some students were inclined to use another discourse connective when they attempted to explain more about the meaning of the selected sentences to the researcher. Below are some examples that can be observed regarding this issue:

(10) Eventually they took half day and they knew about it earlier. (030ya)

In this sentence, the discourse connective *and* was used to connect two clauses or information. However, when the student tried to explain more about the sentence, she mentioned that she should have used *because* instead of *and* in this sentence to show the reason why *they took half day*. Her realization towards this use was during the interview. Example 11 below shows the student's view during the interview:

(11) Yes. They both took half day. Yeah, it should, we should use because...Because it's a reason why they took half day earlier. (030y)

Other examples in the use of *and* can be seen below:

(12) One day, at the practice we lose badly and this day she not being Anis that I knew. (008ya)

It is pouring outside and I a little bit scared it will affect my game. (008yb)

She were pregnant and it is not right for her to do much work. (008yc)

Here, the examples show the use of the discourse connective *and* by student 008y at three different points in time. Student 008y used *and* in all her three essays. However, she overused this discourse connective when connecting two clauses. *So*, which is a

*consequence* DC could be used to replace *and* to make the sentences clearer and “more logic” (008y) to the readers. This was mentioned by the student herself who actually used *so* when explaining the sentences during the interview.

From these findings, it can be seen that some of the uses of the discourse connective *and* in the student’s texts function like a *consequence* DC, which suggests that the student used another discourse connective to show her intended meaning and also illustrates the fact that *and* can bring different kinds of contextual meanings depending on the speaker’s real intention. The following conversation shows the student’s response pertaining to replacing *and* with the discourse connective *so*:

(13) Because she is having. She is pregnant so it’s not good for her to do much work...I would use *so*...Because it will make it more logic...Yes, logic and clearer. (008y)

#### 4.8.4 The Developmental use of the Discourse Connective *but* and *yet*

##### (e) Different Meanings

As shown in Section 4.7.4, student 012y used *but* together with *yet* in one sentence. At first, she thought both words “have different meaning” (012y). She said that the discourse connective *but* was used to show *contrastive* relation while *yet* means *still*. Hence, she used both words together at Time 1. However, at Time 2 and Time 3 she did not use *but* together with *yet* anymore. The student later realized that both words have the same meaning which is to indicate a *contrastive* relationship. The realization came after her English language teacher taught her on “how to use *but* and *yet*” (012y) in a sentence. Thus, her use of *but* and *yet* changed over time. The responses can be seen as follows:



(14) Emmm... sebab, time ni saya ingat dua ni lain makna dia...

[At that time, I thought that both of these words have different meanings.]

But ni tetapi kan? But ni more to tetapi, yet ni more to masih...

[But is more to however, right? Yet is more to still]

Sebab lepas teacher suruh buat ni, and teacher kat sekolah suruh buat essay lain, ada cikgu cakap pasal but dengan yet tu. So, saya tak buatla...

[It is because it was after my teacher told us to do like that. The teacher at school told use to write another essay and the teacher told us about how to use but and yet. That was why I did not do that anymore.] (012y)

#### 4.8.5 The use of the Discourse Connective *otherwise*

##### (f) Additional Activities

The use of the discourse connective *otherwise* in a student's written text at three different points in time was found once, which was at Time 2. Eventhough this DC only appeared once, this still shows the expansion of the student's repertoire of the use of DCs. The use of *otherwise* in the student's essay can be seen as below:

(15) I have always been dreaming to go there because the country is really beautiful especially on spring day. Otherwise, I will meet my best friend there. (017yb)

In this sentence, the student used *otherwise* to show another activity that she could do while visiting *the country*. She added that *otherwise* functions like "*besides*" (017y) which is an *additive*. Hence, she decided to use it in the sentence. This reason shows that another meaning was interpreted when using *otherwise* that contradicts with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) but indirectly indicates the student's innovative way of using *otherwise*. Excerpt 16 illustrates the student's view of the use of *otherwise* in her text:

(16) Errr...saya selalu teringin nak pergi ke sana sebab country sana tu sangat cantik. Apatah lagi bila waktu spring. So, lagipun nanti saya akan dapat jumpa saya punya kawan baik kat sana.

*[I had always wanted to go to that country because it is very beautiful especially during the spring season. Besides that, I will be able to meet my best friend there.]*

Macam *besides*, lagipun.

*[It is like the word besides]*

(017y)

#### 4.8.6 Other Linguistic Resources

It was mentioned earlier in Chapter 3 that five students who had the least number of discourse connectives in their texts were interviewed to determine if they had used other linguistic resources that may function like discourse connectives to unify their texts. Before conducting the interviews, the students' written texts were examined once more to identify potential linguistic resources that could act as cohesive devices (see Chapter 3).

After conducting a thorough analysis on the essays written by the students who used the least number of discourse connectives in their texts, it was discovered that these students had used other linguistic resources such as 1) reference, 2) substitution and 3) using different phrases to refer to sequence of time in retelling their stories. The first linguistic resource found, namely reference, makes reference to something else for their interpretation, while substitution refers to replacement of one item by another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

The last linguistic resource found in the students' written text is the different phrases used to refer to sequence of time in retelling their story. These phrases are not phrases or expressions that are commonly used to indicate sequences of time such as *next*, *last* or *at the same time* but they were phrases created by the students themselves to link preceding sentence with the subsequent sentence and thus show elements of

cohesiveness in the texts. The following examples in 17 show the use of other linguistic resources by some of the students in their written texts:

- (17) Happiness is subjective. It could be receiving a gift, winning a game or even having someone you love to love you back. (006xa)
- Last year, I was a PT3 candidate. That year was very hard. (007xa)
- In the last road before all of us going to escape from the ghost house, we were running with all energies that left. (022yc)

Here, it can be seen that some of the students used other linguistic resources in their written texts. In 006xa, for example, the elements in the second sentence showed reference to *Happiness* in the first sentence. The word *it* was referring to happiness while examples such as *receiving a gift* indicated the form of happiness that people can have. These examples gave reference to the word *happiness*. Moreover, in 022yc, the phrase *in the last road before all of us going to escape from the ghost house* showed sequence of time in retelling the stories. This phrase is not like other ordinary phrases used to refer to the sequence of time. However, it was also used to link preceding sentence with the next sentence indicating the subsequent event that happened after that (see Appendix E for more examples). After analysing the corpus, in order to identify whether the linguistic resources found in the students' essays could act as discourse connectives, some interview questions were directed to them. The responses from the interviews are as follows:

**(g) Novel Style**

(18) Participant: Emmm. Saya cuba ubah cara menulis sikit la. Dia macam novel sikit lah.  
*[I tried to change my writing style to look like a novel]*

Researcher: Is there any chance that you use this one, these kinds of words to connect the whole sentences or the whole text? Because usually people will try to use *and*, *because*, *but* to actually connect the whole sentence...But then for you, you have used lots of these items, rather than using *and*. So, is it actually to connect them?

Participant: Emmm, yes. yes, yes.

Researcher: To connect, to make the story, to make there's a flow in the story?

Participant: Yes. (006x)

Here, the student stated that he included other linguistic resources in his written texts to change his writing style as well to ensure that his stories sounded like a novel. However, he agreed that he used all the resources found in his texts to join and link different sentences and paragraphs together and to ensure that there was a flow in the story. This indicates that the linguistic resources have the same function as discourse connectives.

**(h) Explanation**

(19) Yes. Macam nak menunjukkan lagi dia punya maksud. Macam *big figure* ni nak tunjuk apa *big figure* tu macam *my father*...

*[Yes. It's like wanting to show more about the meaning of it. For example like big figure is to show my father]*

Rasanya tak sebab kata-kata hubung tu memang kena ada. Kalau tak, tak sesuai.

*[I don't think so because conjunctions need to be there. If not, it won't be suitable]*

(017y)

Interestingly, in 19, the student mentioned that she used these linguistic resources to explain and elaborate “more about the meaning” (017y) of a particular person, place or event. Although she agreed that the resources linked her sentences and paragraphs together, she mentioned that these resources were not used to replace the discourse

connectives as discourse connectives “need to be there” (017y). She added that these linguistic resources only acted as additional resources but discourse connectives are compulsory devices that need to be included in texts. This shows how important discourse connectives are for the student even though only a small number of these devices were used in her texts.

This opinion was supported by student 007x who stated that these linguistic resources helped “to connect all sentences” (007x) in a text but discourse connectives are important too. He added that there were certain sentences which did not require the use of any discourse connectives because the most important thing was to rearrange the points in the texts carefully so that readers would be able to understand the speaker’s true intention. The following 20 shows the response provided by student 007x:

(20) Yes. I am trying to connect all sentences...Aaa...dia penting tapi kadang-kadang takyah letak pun takpe. Yang penting dia punya isi tu dah tersusun supaya pembaca faham  
*[It is important but sometimes if you don't put it, its okay. What is most important is that  
The points have been arranged correctly so that readers will be able to understand.]*  
(007x)

All in all, the findings from this section show that the linguistic resources found in the students’ written texts do play the same role as discourse connectives which is to connect sentences and paragraphs together in order to unify a text. Thus, they can be considered not just as types of discourse connectives but also as cohesive devices. However, the common discourse connectives still need to be included in sentences and texts as they play a big role in unifying a text.

#### **4.8.7 Other Concerns**

There are also other concerns that were discussed during the interviews. Among the concerns is in terms of the students' views regarding the problems or difficulties that they faced when using the discourse connectives in their written texts. The students were asked whether they had any problems in using the discourse connectives in their essays. Among the 10 students who were interviewed, only two students shared the problems that they encountered while the remaining eight students stated that they did not actually realise that they had any problem in using any discourse connectives in their essays.

Student 008y for example stated that "I just write it normally..." (008y) which indicates that she did not have any problems in using any discourse connective when writing her essays. This signifies that suitability of the discourse connectives to be used during the writing of the essays was not the main concern faced by her. Instead, the use of discourse connectives was more of a natural and spontaneous action.

##### **(i) Avoidance Strategy**

However as mentioned earlier, the only two students who realized that they had problems in using the discourse connectives during the writing of the essays revealed that they had problems "connecting sentences and events" (010y) and to "create sentences" (022y) using suitable discourse connectives. Hence, they avoided using uncommon discourse connectives and opted for the ones that they would usually use such as "and, but, or" (010y). The following excerpt 21 shows the students' responses during the interviews:

(21) I am very weak in writing a story. Connecting sentences and events. I started writing a story during my Form 4. I always avoid writing stories during exams. But when in Form 4 my teacher encourage me to write a story because stories can be about experience and what you see around you and it's not like facts that should be precise. So to be safe I only use *and*, *but*, *or*... (010y)

Untuk buat ayat... Ah yang itu sebab tak ingat sangat.

[*To create sentences... Yes because I don't remember much*]

(022y)

### (j) Inconsistency

Another concern highlighted during the interviews is in terms of the occurrence of different discourse connectives at three different points in time. As shown in Table 4.5, there are some discourse connectives that appeared at Time 1 but did not appear again at Time 2 and Time 3 such as *furthermore* and *rather*. There are also some discourse connectives that did not appear at Time 1 or Time 2 but appeared at Time 3 such as *or else*, *in addition*, *however* and *whereas*. These findings show that there were inconsistencies in the use of some discourse connectives over time. The occurrence of these discourse connectives at Time 3 indicates that the students' repertoire of the use of DCs expanded over time, leading to the use of new words in their written texts. However, to clearly understand about this inconsistency, some of the students were asked some questions pertaining to this concern.

From the findings, it was discovered that the inconsistencies in the use of some discourse connectives were due to "spontaneous action" (001x) as well as "depends on the type of essay" (017y) being written. In addition, student 012y stated that there were some discourse connectives that were suitable for some sentences and there were also some discourse connectives that were not suitable for other sentences or paragraphs in their essays. Hence, they would not include such DCs in them. The following conversations show the views provided by the students during the interviews:

(22) I believe this is caused by spontaneous action. Since my brain automatically chooses the most useful and possibly repetitive words to accommodate certain sentences... Sometimes I do think of words but time becomes the trigger that causes those spontaneous acts. I might get repetitive even more nearing the end of the time limit. (001x)

Sebab tiga-tiga esei saya ni bukan cerita yang sama.

*[It is because all three essays does not have the same story]*

Emm, sebab, mungkin dia tak sesuai untuk essay tu, untuk story tu... Emmm, untuk kenakan perkataan tu dengan ayat tu.

*[Perhaps it is not suitable to be use in that essay, in that story. To suit the word with that sentence]* (012y)

Actually, it depends on the type of essay yang saya buat. Contohnya macam first essay ni lebih kepada macam fakta tapi macam benda yang betul, tapi essay yang kedua ni macam actually create diri sendiri je. Macam, bukan jadi pun sebenarnya. Event ni bukan jadi pun. Macam yang ni lebih tunjuk macam dia punya macam huraian dia akan ada dia punya sebab dia...

*[Actually, it depends on the type of essay that I write. For example, the first essay was more to facts but it's like a real thing, but in essay two it's about myself. It's not real though. The events were not real. For example, this one is more to showing its elaboration, hence there should be reasons for that.]* (017y)

On the other hand, another factor that was mentioned during the interviews was time. The corpus collections were timed. Hence, it affected the students in terms of the completion of their essays, the use of discourse connectives in their texts as well as the ideas used throughout their essays. This can be seen in Table 4.2 in which the overall number of discourse connectives used by all students declined compared to at Time 1 and Time 3. One reason for this decline was perhaps due to the time that was reduced at Time 2, from 60 minutes to only 30 minutes. During the interviews, the students were asked regarding this situation and one response can be seen as follows:

(23) Emm... yang kedua tu tak sempat siap... Tu yang banyak tak guna tu.

*[I did not manage to finish writing essay two. That was why there are many words that I did not use]*

(007x)



**(k) Unfamiliarity**

It was also discovered that the students rarely used the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives in their essays because they were unsure “if it is suitable or not to be used” (022y). Hence, they opted for and repeated any discourse connectives that were “common” (022y) to them. As mentioned earlier, the bottom five least frequently used discourse connectives were *furthermore*, *however*, *rather*, *otherwise* and *hence*. There were also some discourse connectives that were not suitable to be used in narrative essay. Therefore, some of the students did not include them even in any of their three essays. Conversation 24 shows the response by one student:

- (24) Researcher : You have used fewer conjunctions in your essays? Why is that so?  
Participant : Sebab tak tahu dia sesuai ke tak.  
*[It is because I don't know if it is suitable or not to be use.]*  
Researcher : Jadi awak prefer guna yang awak dah biasa la.  
*[So, you only prefer to use the common ones?]*  
Participant : Ehemm... (022y)

There were also some students who stated that they used other discourse connectives besides the ones found in their three written texts. However, they did not use those because they randomly selected the discourse connectives that were included in their narrative essays. There were also some discourse connectives that were not suitable to be used in narrative essays. Hence, they did not include them in any of their three essays. The response below explains this condition:

- (25) Perkataan-perkataan tu *moreover*, *in addition* ada guna dekat essay yang lain.  
*[I've used those words like moreover, in addition in other essays.]*  
Kenapa? Just, saya pilih perkataan tu randomly.  
*[Why? I just randomly select the words]* (006x)

In the next chapter, each of these findings and issues is discussed in further details.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study explores the semantic use of discourse connectives in students' texts over time and the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. Again, the semantic use refers to the use of discourse connectives in terms of their meanings and includes functions and intentions of the speaker. In this chapter, some of the findings from Chapter 4 are discussed in further details and supporting arguments by previous studies are included. These findings are analysed to answer the three research questions as follows:

1. What are the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts?
2. What are the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts at three different points in time?
3. How do students perceive the use and meaning of some discourse connectives in their texts?

This chapter is divided into seven sections. Each of these sections represents each research question. The first section which is Section 5.2, discusses the types of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts. The second section, which is Section 5.3, explains the semantic types of discourse connectives observed in the students' essays at three different points in time. The third section of this chapter, which is Section 5.4, deliberates the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their texts. The fourth section, which is Section 5.5, further discusses the remaining findings of the study. The fifth section, which is Section 5.6, explains the conclusion of the study while the sixth section, which is Section 5.7, discusses the limitations of the study. The final section, which is Section 5.8, shows the implications for future studies.

## 5.2 Types of Discourse connectives observed in Students' Texts

As mentioned in Section 4.2, the type of discourse connectives with the highest frequency observed in students' texts at Time 1 until Time 3 was *additive* DCs. This is followed by *consequence* and *contrastive* discourse connectives. The use of *additive* in the students' text was the highest type of discourse connective used and was constant at three different points in time. The findings suggest that the students had employed a large amount of *additive* in their narrative texts. This extensive use of *additive* in the students' texts indicates that the students prefer to include discourse connectives that serve the function of adding more activities, information and events in their essays.

In addition to that, this frequent use of *additive* DCs can be contributed to the fact that narrative texts require elaboration of ideas as well as sequence of events (Martin, 1992) which are signalled by the use of *additive* DCs. The frequent use of *additive* can also be seen in Kang's (2005) study, which indicated that *additive* and *contrastive* DCs were the most frequently used types of discourse connectives in Koreans' narrative texts. However, this highly frequent use of *additive* DCs in students' texts was not only restricted to the narrative genre only but in other writing genres as well.

Eman Awni Mahmoud Ali and Radwan Salim Mahadin (2016), for example, investigated students' expository texts and found that *additive* DCs were the most frequently used type of discourse connectives followed by *consequence* and *contrastive* discourse connectives. Moreover, Chun and Yuan (2015) gathered similar findings in their study on argumentative texts written by L2 learners in Asia and found that *additive* DCs were also the most frequently used discourse connectives by the learners. On top of that, Lee (2004) gained a similar finding for her study on Korean EFL learners with *additive* DCs ranked as the most frequently used DCs in the learners' texts.

Similarly, the top five most frequently used discourse connectives by the students, namely *and*, *because*, *then*, *but* and *so* occupied 90.45% (see Table 4.1) which makes up the majority of the overall frequency. This implies that the students used quite a small cluster of discourse connectives in their texts at three different points in time to create textual coherence. These findings resonate with Prommas and Sinwongsuwat's (2011) study where *and*, *but* and *because* were among the most frequent discourse connectives used in Thai EFL learners' texts. This finding can also be supported by a statement from student 001x who used *and* the most in his three essays and stated that *and* is the discourse connective he felt most confident to use (see Sub-section 4.8.3.2).

Interestingly, as the study shows that *additive* DCs were the most frequently used type of discourse connectives observed in the students' texts, it also shows that the most prominent and frequently used *additive* DC in the students' narrative essays over time was *and* which appeared for 980 (58.13%) times. The frequent use of *and* in the students' texts shows that the students tend to include numerous ideas in their texts instead of elaborating or discussing some of the ideas. Therefore, this involves using a lot of *and* as compared to other discourse connectives. This finding also shows that the use of *and* is more closely related to narrative texts than other discourse connectives. In fact, *and* was also the most used *additive* DC in both elaborative and argumentative essays (Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011; Mohammad Rahimi, 2011; Chun & Yuan, 2015; Karahan, 2015), which indicates that the use of the discourse connective *and* is high even in any writing genres.

On the other hand, the *consequence* DC *because* was frequently and repeatedly used by the students to mark the reason that supports a main idea in their essays. This discourse connective actually ranked the second place in the list of the top five most frequently used discourse connectives observed in the students' texts over time (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.5) after the discourse connective *and*. The use of *because* in the

students' texts is necessary to link the *consequence* relationship between two propositions in order to put forward the argument of the writers.

Interestingly, the students' writing styles were more informal when using *contrastive* discourse connectives. For instance, the more formal contrastive (e.g. *rather* and *whereas*) occurred only once while its informal counterpart *but* occurred 160 (9.49%) times in the students' texts over time (see Table 4.5 for more details). This finding shows that the students' tones in writing were more informal when using these discourse connectives. This may be attributed to the fact that narrative essays are usually informal whereas argumentative or expository essays are more formal and therefore more academic compared to narratives (Chun & Yuan, 2015). In fact, this can also be seen from the interviews when student 010y mentioned that writing narrative essays requires telling stories of experiences and things happening around us as compared to other genres that are more factual (see Sub-section 4.8.7.1). This shows the reason why the informal contrastive *but* was frequently used in the students' texts and was regarded as among the top five most frequently used discourse connectives in the students' narrative texts.

On the other hand, it is also interesting to discover that words such as *otherwise*, *moreover*, *instead*, *as a result*, *in fact*, *in addition* and *furthermore*, which are generally regarded as non-colloquial and though as the least frequently used discourse connectives, appeared in the students' texts. In addition, although it was revealed that the students included new discourse connectives at Time 2 and Time 3 which did not appear at Time 1, they were nonetheless unable to constantly maintain the occurrence of those discourse connectives over time. Among the DCs were *furthermore*, *rather* and *plus* that appeared at Time 1 but did not appear at Time 2 and Time 3, and *although* that occurred at Time 1 and Time 2 but did not occur again at Time 3. This shows that the

students prefer to use different DCs in each of their texts which indicate that they had approached the written tasks differently.

From the interviews, some of the students were not fully exposed to the use of those discourse connectives thus their use was the least common. They also did not tend to use multiword connectives (Karahana, 2015) but preferred the simplest and most frequent discourse connectives in English. Nonetheless, these inconsistencies in the use of some discourse connectives in the students' texts did not hinder the students from expanding their repertoire of their use of DCs in their texts, thus shows that the use of discourse connectives by the students changes over time. More importantly, although there were inconsistency and changes on the use of the DCs by the students over time, the types of discourse connectives used by the students were still constant at the three different points in time.

### **5.3 The Semantic Types of Discourse Connectives observed in Students' Texts at Three different Points in Time**

The findings in Section 4.7 show that the students were inclined to use discourse connectives following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). However, a few students chose to use some particular discourse connectives in their texts although other more appropriate discourse connectives could be used in making the sentences more coherent. The DCs were *and*, *but* and *otherwise* which were not used in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) while *because*, *then*, *so*, *rather*, *hence*, *furthermore* and *however* were used in accordance with these frameworks.

As shown in Sub-section 4.7.1, the students used *and* to express *consequence* relation between preceding and subsequent segments. Chun and Yuan (2015) mentioned that *and* is a special kind of discourse connective that can bring different kinds of contextual effects that may require extra cognitive effort on the readers' part. However, the DCs *besides* and *moreover* can mark the *additive* clearer, therefore reducing the effort needed (Chun & Yuan, 2015). This is probably why the students used *besides* and *moreover* in accordance with the frameworks but not in the case of *and*. However, the students' choice for using *and* may be due to their innovative way of writing. From the interviews, student 001x mentioned that he prefers to include *and* in his sentences because *and* shows more relation to the sentences as compared to other DCs.

Interestingly, student 012y used *and* or *but* with *at the same time* at Time 3 only. This shows that the use of these DCs changes even in one time. From the interview, student 012y would use *and* or *but* with *at the same time* depending on different situations (see Sub-section 4.8.3). If there was only one situation happening at that time, she would use *and* together with *at the same time*. On the other hand, she would use *but* to show two situations that were happening at one particular time. The use of the DC *and* by these students indicates that they used it innovatively to convey their intended meanings to the readers.

On the other hand, *contrastive* discourse connectives were found to be the least frequently used type of discourse connectives in the students' texts (see Section 4.2 for more details), and the most frequently used *contrastive* DC was *but*. This is supported by Nuruladilah Mohamed (2016) who stated that *but* was the most frequently used *contrastive* discourse connective by L2 learners. Most students would use this discourse connective if they wanted to express contradictions. However, from the findings in Sub-section 4.7.3, it was discovered that the use of *but* can be replaced with other discourse connectives like *so* which shows a consequence relation.

Although a *contrastive* DC often indicates contradictions, Bach (1999) suggested that we still judge an utterance of A *but* B to be true even when there is no contrast between them. Thus, although using *but* to indicate a contrast when there is none is rather inappropriate, but it does not make the sentence false (Bach, 1999). This can be seen from the example of sentences containing *but* that were produced by some of the students in their texts (see Sub-section 4.7.3). The students decided to use *but* in their texts because it shows their intended meaning.

From the findings in Sub-section 4.7.3, it was also observed that *but* was used together with *yet* in the same sentence, a finding that has never been found in the native speakers' texts (Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011) and is seen as redundant if based on the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). From the interview, the student who used these two discourse connectives in her sentence mentioned that the word *but* and *yet* were understood with different meanings. Thus, she decided to include both DCs in her sentence to indicate her intended meaning of the sentence. Interestingly, although the use only appeared once over time, this phenomenon raises some interesting questions as to why the discourse connectives *and* and *also* can be used together (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) to show emphasis but not in the case of *but* and *yet*. Moreover, this finding also affirms that the use of the DCs changes over time.

Lastly, the use of the discourse connective *otherwise* in the student's text functions like *besides* (see Sub-section 4.8.5). According to the student who used this discourse connective in her text, she stated that it was her initial understanding on the meaning associated with this discourse connective. Hence, she used *otherwise* to show *additive*. This shows that the student's interpretation of the semantic type *otherwise* was to show *additive*, another semantic type of discourse connectives that differs from the actual *consequence* relation as can be found in the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). This also shows that the students used this DC innovatively for the



purpose of conveying her intended meaning. It also shows that her repertoire of the use of DCs expanded over time.

#### **5.4 Students' Views on Their own use of Discourse Connectives in Their Texts**

##### **5.4.1 Discourse Connectives perceived to be used with Greatest Confidence**

It was mentioned in Sub-section 4.8.1 that the majority of the students chose *and* as the discourse connective that they felt most confident to use in their texts while a few students chose *because*. Choosing *and* as the predominant DC to use can also be supported by the fact that this discourse connective was the most frequently used discourse connective in the students' essays over time and can also be seen in other studies (Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011; Mohammad Rahimi, 2011; Chun & Yuan, 2015; Karahan, 2015).

On the other hand, the discourse connective *because* was the second most frequently used discourse connective over time (see Section 4.2). From the findings of this study, majority of the students used the discourse connective *because* in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). This finding strongly shows why some students were most confident to use the discourse connective *because* in their texts.

#### 5.4.2 Discourse Connectives perceived to be used with Least Confidence

On the other hand, six students revealed that some of the discourse connectives that they felt least confident to use in their texts were *yet* and *otherwise*. Table 4.5 shows that *yet* only appeared nine times while *otherwise* only appeared once over time. Kang (2005) mentioned that students tend to underuse the discourse connective *yet* in their written texts. Thus, these findings regarding the use of *yet* and *otherwise* reveal the reasons as to why *yet* and *otherwise* were among the discourse connectives that they felt least confident to use in their written texts.

#### 5.4.3 The Developmental use of Discourse Connectives

The findings from Section 4.7 reveal that some of the uses of the discourse connectives *and*, *but* and *otherwise* in the students' written texts were not in accordance with the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005). In fact, some of the sentences containing these discourse connectives could have used other discourse connectives instead. For example, the DC *but* was used in some of the students' sentences although there was no *contrastive* relation in the sentences. The DC *otherwise* was also used as an *additive* rather than as a *consequence*. However, the overall findings in this study reveal that the students have specific reasons for the choices of discourse connectives in their written texts.

Previous studies have illustrated possible sources of errors like overgeneralization or negative transfer (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Bolton et al, 2002; Lei, 2012; Hamed, 2014; Hamid Abd Allah Arab & Nauman Al Amin Ali, 2014) as the reasons for the students' inappropriate, misuse or overuse of discourse connectives. However, these studies show that L2 learners are treated as deficient speakers of English and any use of discourse

connectives that does not follow the standards of native speakers is deemed as incorrect and must be rectified.

On the other hand, although some discourse connectives used by the students in this study did not adhere to the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005), the use can be considered as the students' innovative way of expressing meanings and as their preferred discursual practices. Thus, rejecting it for not following the standards of native speakers will not only hinder them from developing their potentials in writings, but will make them be seen as deficient learners of the language. Halliday (1968) said that, "a speaker who is made ashamed of his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human being: to make anyone, especially a child, feel so ashamed is as indefensible as to make him feel ashamed of the color of his skin" (p. 165). This quotation clearly shows the effect of not treating L2 users in their own rights. Due to this, it is time to listen to what L2 learners have to say about their choices in using particular discourse connectives as well as other linguistics features in their written texts.

#### **5.4.4 Other Linguistic Resources**

In terms of the linguistic resources found in some of the students' written texts, these findings show that other linguistic resources do play a role in connecting sentences and paragraphs together to unify the whole text. For example, student 007x substituted *two mid-year test* with *one* and *another one* in the example *next, I have two mid-year test. One at tuition and another one at school.* Student 022y used a phrase to refer to sequence of time in the sentence *the day is coming, we start to get ready in 2.00 a.m.* Both examples show the use of different linguistic resources in the students' texts.

These findings can be supported by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) statement indicating that there are other cohesive devices other than discourse connectives that play the same role. However, as mentioned earlier by one of the students during the interviews (see Sub-section 4.8.6), discourse connectives still need to be included in sentences and texts besides other linguistic resources as discourse connectives play a much bigger role in unifying a text (Shea, 2009).

On the other hand, the use of different kinds of phrases referring to sequence of time that can be found in some of the students' written texts (see Appendix E) shows that it is time for L2 learners to have their rights for the choices that they make in using discourse connectives or other cohesive devices in texts, rather than following the idealized standards of the native speakers. This can be supported from Cook (2013) who said that L2 users have their rights to have their own linguistic system rather than becoming a deficient version of the monolingual native speakers.

#### **5.4.5 Other Concerns**

In terms of other concerns that were brought up during the interviews, it was found that the discourse connectives used in the students' texts were regarded as common discourse connectives. This finding supports Park's (2013) discussion in his study whereby L2 learners have a tendency to use the same discourse connectives such as *and* and *but* because they limit themselves to the discourse connectives that they think are quickly learnt due to their familiarity, high frequency and ease in usage. Crosson and Lesaux (2013) revealed that common discourse connectives are the ones that are more frequently found in written texts and are more familiar to school students than academic discourse connectives. The findings from this study indicate that the use of *and*, *because* and *but* were mostly used in the students' essays and are to be expected.

Lastly, the findings in Sub-section 4.8.7 also reveal that students would use different discourse connectives for different writing genres. The students did not use other discourse connectives besides the ones found in their narrative texts as they were not suitable to be used in the essays. Werlich (1982) said that different genres will require different relationships between the ideas and discourse units. For example, a descriptive genre involves cognitive properties of interrelation and difference of perceptions in space (Werlich, 1982). An expository genre involves comprehension of general concepts through differentiation by analysis or synthesis, while argumentative genre requires evaluation of the concepts through extracting the similarities and contrastive ideas (Werlich, 1982). Narrative requires the relationship of time. Thus, different writing genres will not cohere in the same way as other writing genres and will require the use of different discourse connectives to link ideas and sentences in the texts. Moreover, it was observed that there appears to be different DCs used in each narrative text written by the students. This shows that although the topic for the essays was the same, the students had approached the writing tasks differently, which is why the different use and amount of such discourse connectives in the students' texts should be closely observed.

## **5.5 Further Discussion**

The semantic use of discourse connectives in the students' texts was explored based on a learner corpus of 96 narrative essays written by 32 Form Four students. From the corpus analysis, it was discovered that the students have specific reasons for using some discourse connectives in their written texts. Typically, they want to show more relations and varieties in the use of some discourse connectives in their essays as well as to show the number of situations that are happening at the same time.

The overall findings from this study show that it is time to consider for L2 learners to have their rights in their language use. According to Larsen-Freeman (2011), L2 learners have the capability to create their own patterns with their meanings. They can also expand the meaning potential of a given language and not just adopt a ready-made system. In fact, they have the right to have their own linguistic system rather than becoming a deficient version of the monolingual native speakers (Cook, 2013) for not following the idealized standards. Hence, the findings from this study promote the view of treating L2 learners in their own rights and to respect the choices made by them.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This corpus-informed study was conducted to explore the semantic use of discourse connectives in students' narrative texts following the frameworks by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hyland (2005) as well as to explore the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their essays. A learner corpus consisting of 96 narrative essays written by 32 Form Four students from a secondary school in Malaysia was used as the main material for the study and semi-structured interview questions were generated based on the observations of the students' use of discourse connectives in their texts. Interesting insights were gained from the findings to help understand the semantic use of discourse connectives in the students' narrative texts and the choices that the students made.

Despite the differences in the use of discourse connectives at three different points in time, there are significant similarities identified, with *additive* DCs occurring as the most frequently used type of discourse connectives in the students' texts, followed by *consequence* DCs and *contrastive* DCs. Moreover, the discourse connectives *and*, *but*, *because*, *so* and *then* occurred as the top five most frequently used discourse

connectives in the students' texts at three different points in time and occupied 90.45% which makes up the majority of the overall frequency. This finding implies that the students had used a small cluster of discourse connectives in their texts to create textual coherence. Moreover, the occurrences of new discourse connectives in the students' texts at Time 2 and Time 3 show that the choices in the use of DCs change over time. It also shows that the expansion of repertoire of the language use of DCs in the learners' language with new DCs appearing over time.

In addition, the semantic types of discourse connectives in students' written texts are seen as unique ways used by the students to show their preferred discursial practices. For example, some of the students used the discourse connective *and* to show *consequence* relation while the discourse connective *otherwise* was used to show *additive* relation. Moreover, the use of other linguistic resources in some of the students' written texts shows that they also play the same role as discourse connectives in connecting clauses, sentences and paragraphs together to unify the texts. The overall findings show that the choices of discourse connectives used by the students in their texts paved ways for a better understanding in the sense that following native speakers' standards in writing will only make L2 learners be seen as deficient learners of the language when they make any decisions in writing that do not follow the native speakers' standards. As a result, it is time to fully appreciate L2 learners' choices in using discourse connectives in their texts. By doing so, L2 learners can be successful users of English without having to imitate the native speakers' use of the language (Cook, 2013).

## **5.7 Limitations**

The corpus collection has its own shortcomings. The first limitation is in terms of the time allocated. During the corpus collection, the students attempted to finish their essays in the given time. However, the corpus collection at Time 2 was done for only 30 minutes. Hence, the students' essay writing was affected as many of them were not able to finish the task on time. As a result, less discourse connectives were found to be incorporated in the texts at Time 2.

The second limitation of this study is in terms of generalization. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the whole population because of the small number of students involved in this study, but are specific to the particular writing genre and the group of students described in this study. However, this study can serve as a sample study to inform further exploration.

## **5.8 Implications for Future Studies**

This study incorporates the use of a learner corpus collected from written productions of 32 secondary school students, with the focus of exploring the semantic use of discourse connectives in the students' essays over time and the students' views on their own use of discourse connectives in their essays. The findings from this study have shown interesting insights in terms of the changes that occurred in the use of discourse connectives in the students' essays. However, further studies could explore the semantic use of discourse connectives on larger groups of students so that more insights on the use of discourse connectives in students' texts can be gathered and explored closely.



Moreover, as this study only focuses on exploring the use of discourse connectives which act as cohesive devices in students' texts, future researchers could investigate other cohesive devices (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) by incorporating the same research design for a better understanding of cohesion in written texts of school students.

Last but not least, future researchers could also continue to explore other linguistic features in students' texts that have the same function as discourse connectives, just like what was discovered in this study and develop a new framework associated with the use of discourse connectives in L2 learners' essays. By doing so, it will be interesting to know how differently do L2 learners use the language as compared to the standards of the native speakers.

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