# The Use of Discourse Markers in Academic Writing by In-Service Primary School Teachers of English

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*This paper presents and discusses a computer-assisted study that seeks to investigate the use of discourse markers ("DMs") in academic writing in English as a Foreign Language ("EFL") by a group of in-service primary school teachers ("participants"). The aim of the study is to establish whether or not there would be differences in the use of DMs in the corpus of academic writing in EFL in literature and linguistics written by the participants, who concurrently with teaching EFL at a range of primary schools are enrolled in an in-service tertiary course in English. The corpus of the study consists of the participants' i) reflective essays in English linguistics and children's literature in English, respectively, and ii) analytic explanatory essays in English linguistics and children's literature, respectively. The corpus of the participants' essays was analysed quantitatively in order to identify the frequency of DMs per 1,000 words. The results of the quantitative data analysis indicated that the participants' use of DMs seemed to be, primarily, determined by i) genre conventions of academic writing in English associated with reflective essays and analytic explanatory essays and ii) the participants' individual preferences. These findings are further presented and discussed in the paper.*

**Keywords**
Academic writing; computer-assisted study; discourse markers (DMs); English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

## 1. Introduction

This paper presents and discusses a computer-assisted study that seeks to establish the use of discourse markers in the corpus of academic writing in English as a Foreign Language ("EFL") written by a group of in-service

primary school teachers ("participants"). Two notions are central in the study, namely i) the genre of academic writing in EFL and ii) discourse markers ("DMs"). Whereas the notion of genre in general is referred to as "recurring, typified actions that respond to and re-create common rhetorical situations" (Aull 2019, 272), the genre of academic writing is deemed to be a constellation of discursive and lexico-syntactic features that are prevalent in scientific writing and associated with specific purposes (Uccelli et al. 2013, 39). The present study is based upon a contention that the genre of academic writing is a socio-cognitive discursive phenomenon (Johns 2008) that involves variables of the specialist knowledge and "socially-driven forms of communication used in the particular field" (Bruce 2013, 5). This view of academic writing as a genre is concomitant with Hyland (2008), who regards it as socio-cognitive constraints imposed by social contexts on language use that determine how writers respond to recurring audiences and situations. Academic writing in the English language is thought to be characterised by a number of typical genre-specific features.  In particular, Hyland (2008) indicates that

> compared with many languages, academic texts in English tend to be more explicit about structure and purposes, to be less tolerant of digressions, to be more cautious in making claims, and to use more sentence connectors (such as *therefore*, *in addition*, *however*). (Hyland 2008, 548)

Another concept that is essential in this research is associated with DMs, or sentence connectors in the terminology used by Hyland (2008). Following Fraser (1999), DMs in this study are regarded as such lexical items as *however*, *so*, *then*, and *well,* which are employed by the writer to signal a sequential relationship between the sentences. This relationship is further specified by Fraser (1999) as

> a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it S2, and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it S1. In other words, they function like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce, the other lying in the prior discourse. I represent the canonical form as <S 1. DM+S2> (Fraser 1999, 938)

Whilst the use of DMs in academic writing by EFL student writers has been widely elucidated in applied linguistics and EFL studies (Bax, Nakatsuhara, and Waller, 2019; Triki 2019), little attention has been awarded to the exploration

of the differences in the use of DMs in a variety of genre categories of academic writing (Aull 2019, Aull and Lancaster 2014). This study aims to explore whether or not there are differences in the use of DMs in the functional genre categories of academic writing represented by analytic explanatory essays and reflective essays written by a group of participants, who have no prior tertiary education in English, but, nevertheless, teach EFL and other subjects (e.g., literacy, numeracy, the Norwegian language, and digital skills) at primary schools in Norway concurrently with being enrolled in a tertiary EFL course for in-service primary school teachers. Their study programme is comprised of such courses as functional grammar of English, English phonetics, and children's literature in English and lasts for two semesters (i.e., one academic year). The participants are expected to submit a set of essays written in two functional genre categories of academic writing in English, i) reflective essays in children's literature in English and English linguistics, respectively, and ii) analytic explanatory essays in children's literature in English and English linguistics, respectively.

The present study is embedded in Aull's (2019) argument that functional genre categories of academic writing in English tend to involve different genre characteristics and, subsequently, may be associated with different micro-discursive means, such as DMs. A similar contention is found in Hyland (2011), Kuteeva and Negretti (2016), and Aull and Lancaster (2014), who argue that functional genre categories in different scientific disciplines are concomitant with the differences in lexico-syntactic choices made by academic writers. Based upon these arguments, two hypotheses are formulated in this study. Hypothesis 1 factors in the potential differences associated with the use of DMs in analytic explanatory and reflective essays (Aull 2019, Hyland 2011, Kuteeva and Negretti 2016). Presumably, the differences might be manifested by the frequencies of DMs in these essays. In contrast to Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 considers an assumption that the participants' use of DMs is stable in analytic explanatory and reflective essays. The assumed stability of use would be evident from little to no differences in the frequency of DMs in the functional genre categories of academic writing in English represented by analytic explanatory and reflective essays. In accordance with the hypotheses, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ 1: Would there be variability in the use of English DMs manifested by the statistically significant frequencies of DMs in the corpus of the participants' analytic explanatory and reflective essays?

RQ 2: Would there be stability in the use of English DMs that is evident from no statistically significant frequencies of DMs in the corpus of the participants' analytic explanatory and reflective essays?

Prior to proceeding to answering the afore-mentioned research questions, it seems pertinent to expand upon the theoretical background of the study that is associated with i) academic writing as a genre in EFL (see section 2) and ii) DMs in academic writing by EFL students (section 3). Thereafter, the present study and its results will be discussed in detail in section 4. The paper will be concluded with a summary in section 5.

## 2. Theoretical background: Academic writing as a genre in EFL

There is a body of previous research that emphasises the importance of genre and genre awareness in academic writing in EFL (Kuteeva and Negretti 2016, Hyland 2011, Tardy 2006). In particular, Kuteeva and Negretti (2016) argue that the notion of genre is fundamental in academic writing in EFL studies. Genre is regarded as a recurrent use of conventionalised features that are facilitative of establishing relationships "between writers and readers, which influence the behaviour of text" (Hyland 2011, 174). From the vantage point of EFL studies, genre is operationalised not only as a description of text types and their conventions, but, rather, as a complex socio-cognitive construal "which shapes and is shaped by human activity" (Tardy 2006, 79) as a text-bound interaction among individuals and communities (ibid.). A similar view of genre is expressed by Hyland (2011), who argues that genres are associated with social realities, as well as personal identities and professional institutions. In concert with Hyland (2011) and Tardy (2006), the notion of genre in the present study is informed by the socio-rhetorical approach, in which genres are regarded as repeated discursive and social actions that structure group-specific discourse both in written and oral modes of communication (Tardy 2009). Following this approach, the appropriation of the relevant genre conventions by a language learner "requires more than learning text types and forms; it requires learning the social contexts, actions and goals that give genres their meaning" (Tardy 2009, 12).

Arguably, the acquisition of the afore-mentioned genre-related variables by EFL learners would require not only knowledge of text types and conventions

in the sense posited by Tardy (2009), but also meta-knowledge associated with genres. In this regard, the recent literature in applied linguistics suggests that EFL learners' successful mastering of the required genre involves a meta-cognitive type of knowledge that is often referred to as "genre knowledge" (Tardy 2006) and "genre awareness" (Rugen 2020, 117). Typically, genre knowledge is thought to be comprised of i) formal knowledge (i.e., discursive and lexico-syntactic conventions), ii) process knowledge (i.e., the process of writing), iii) rhetorical knowledge (i.e., the purpose and socio-rhetorical context), and iv) subject-matter content knowledge used in the given discipline (Tardy 2006, 20–22). Genre awareness involves the understanding of norms and patterns of the language used by a particular discourse community (Rugen 2020, 117).

Presumably, EFL students should be aware of genre knowledge and genre-related discursive practices in order to produce genre-appropriate academic discourse in the sociocultural contexts of EFL teaching and learning (Kuteeva and Negretti 2016). It should be observed that the acquisition and appropriate use of genre conventions associated with academic writing are deemed to be beneficial to the professional development of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers alike (Hyland 2007, Kuteeva and Negretti 2016, Tardy 2006). In this regard, Hyland (2007) indicates that a fairly recent attention to genre and its use in EFL teaching and learning contexts

> is largely a response to changing views of discourse and of learning to write which incorporate better understandings of how language is structured to achieve social purposes in particular contexts of use. For teacher educators, genre based pedagogies offer principled ways of assisting both pre- and in-service writing teachers to provide their students with targeted, relevant, and supportive instruction. (Hyland 2007, 148)

Assuming that academic discourse is "at the heart of the academic enterprise" (Hyland 2011, 171), the acquisition of genre-appropriate and relevant academic writing skills by EFL students appears to be a pathway for the development of their language proficiency in academia, for instance in tertiary and in-service EFL settings (Hyland 2007, Negretti and Mežek 2019). In its turn, language proficiency and academic writing appear to be substantially related to academic achievement by an EFL student (Kuiken and Vedder 2020, Wei 2020). Arguably, in order to achieve academic proficiency, EFL students should acquire and employ genre-specific discursive means in their academic

writing (Bax 2011). The recent literature in applied linguistics and EFL studies suggests that academic writing in a variety of EFL contexts is concomitant with genre-appropriate use of macro- and micro-discursive means, such as DMs (Ament, Barón Páres, and Pérez-Vidal 2020, Furkó 2020, Povolná 2016). The following section of this paper provides an overview of the literature concerning the use of DMs in academic writing by EFL students.

## 3. DMs in academic writing by EFL students: Literature overview

DMs are deemed to be a complex phenomenon (Aijmer 2019, Fraser 2015, Povolná 2016), since there are multiple definitions of what a DM is and, correspondingly, different approaches to its analysis (Aijmer 2002, Bell 1998, Cuenca and Marín 2009, Waring 2003), as well as diverse functions that DMs perform in oral and written discourse (Rhee 2014, 1). The present study follows the definition of DMs proposed by Fraser (2015), who argues that

> a DM is a lexical expression, drawn from one of three classes (Contrastive DMs, Elaborative DMs, and Implicative DMs), which typically occurs in S2 sentence-initial position in a S1-S2 combination, and which provides no semantic content value but rather signals a semantic relationship between the two sentences. (Fraser 2015, 48)

In order to illustrate this definition, let us note that in accordance with Fraser (2015), contrastive DMs are thought to be comprised of *but*, *however*, *yet*, *still, nevertheless, despite that*, *on the other hand*, *alternatively*, *on the contrary*, *in contrast*, *conversely*, *instead*, and *rather*, whereas the group of elaborative DMs can be exemplified by such DMs as *and*, *above all*, *also*, *in other words*, *in fact*, and *moreover*. Following Fraser (2015), the group of implicative DMs is deemed to involve *so*, *therefore*, *thus*, *then*, *given that*, *as a result*, *as a consequence*, *consequently*, *as a conclusion*, *all in all*, *accordingly*, *hence*, and *for that reason*. It is inferred from Fraser (2015) that another class of DMs comprises sequential DMs, which are represented by the DMs *first/firstly*, *finally*, *second/secondly*, etc.

There is a wealth of prior literature associated with DMs in academic writing (Furkó 2020, Hyland 2004, Povolná 2012). There is a common contention in the literature that DMs pertain to micro-discursive phenomena which are used in academic writing for a variety of reasons (Furkó 2020, Povolná 2016).

Typically, DMs in academic writing are employed to signal hedging (e.g., *perhaps*, *possibly*), logical connections (e.g., *however*, *hence*), and sequencing (e.g., *afterwards*, *firstly*). In terms of the connective and sequential functions of DMs, Bell (2010), by means of quoting Fraser (1990), argues that "Fraser has likened the effect of discourse markers to that of 'discourse glue' (1990, 385)". In other words, DMs are deemed to be among those discursive devices that facilitate cohesion and coherence in a piece of academic writing. In this regard, Hyland (2004, 135) suggests that the addition of DMs to a text written in academic English "can help writers to transform a dry, difficult text into coherent, reader-friendly prose".

Whilst the use of DMs in academic writing in EFL contexts appears to play a facilitative role in the students' writing (Hyland 2004), their use is not automatic and needs to be acquired by an EFL learner (Ament, Barón Pàres, and Pérez-Vidal 2020). Moreover, the acquisition of DMs should be concomitant with their use in the genre of academic writing in EFL contexts (Aijmer 2001, Das and Taboada 2018, Hyland 2004, Polat 2011). In this regard, literature in applied linguistics and EFL studies suggests that the genre-appropriate use of DMs by an EFL learner is associated with a number of challenges (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017).

It is evident from a number of prior studies (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017) that the challenges with the genre-appropriate use of English DMs in academic writing by undergraduate EFL students involve such variables, as i) an EFL learner's L1 background, ii) the level of mastery of the English language, and iii) overuse/underuse of DMs. Endeavouring to address these challenges, recent research seeks to contrast the use of DMs in academic writing by undergraduate EFL students and that of English L1 writers (Ha 2016, Tapper 2005) or, alternatively, to contrast the use of English DMs among undergraduate EFL students from different L1 backgrounds (Appel and Szeib 2018). Another line of research in DMs in academic writing by EFL students is represented by a fairly recent study conducted by Werner (2017), who contrasts EFL students at different levels of EFL proficiency without any explicit reference to the English L1 controls.

A contrastive approach to the investigation of DMs in EFL academic writing is reflected in the studies conducted by Appel and Szeib (2018), Ha (2016), and Tapper (2005), respectively. In particular, Tapper (2005) juxtaposes the use of connective DMs in written work produced by Swedish L1 advanced EFL students and English L1 university students in the USA. The study focuses upon the differences in the use of DMs in terms of over- or underuse

of connective DMs. Tapper (2005) reports that Swedish L1 EFL students overuse connective DMs in contrast to the English L1 controls.

Similarly to Tapper (2005), Ha (2016) examines the patterns of use of DMs in Korean L1 EFL students' writing in comparison with English L1 writing by university students in the USA. Ha (2016) concludes that the differences in the use of DMs by the Korean L1 and English L1 student writers are insignificant and exhibit comparable use of DMs associated with causal, contrastive, and sequential relations. However, Ha (2016) observes that the Korean L1 EFL students tend to overuse sequential and additive DMs. Whereas Ha (2016) and Tapper (2005) focus their studies on the contrast between English L1 and EFL students, contrastive research reported by Appel and Szeib (2018) involves the comparison of the use of linking DMs in the learner corpus of argumentative essays written by EFL students from Arabic L1, Chinese L1, and French L1 backgrounds. Analogously to Ha (2016), Appel and Szeib (2018) report a relative overuse of additive DMs by Arabic L1 EFL students, contrastive DMs by Chinese L1 EFL students, and appositional DMs by French L1 EFL students.

In contrast to the afore-mentioned studies, Werner (2017) investigates the use of DMs in academic writing by EFL students on different proficiency levels without a further comparison with English L1 undergraduates. Specifically, Werner (2017) juxtaposes the use of contrastive DMs, such as *actually*, *but*, *in fact*, etc., by beginner and intermediate EFL students with that of advanced EFL students. The findings in Werner (2017) indicate that different patterns of DMs use are associated with the EFL proficiency levels. In addition, Werner (2017) posits that the genre-appropriate use of contrastive DMs appears to be mastered by advanced EFL students and not intermediate students.

It is evident from the literature (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017) that the current research focuses, predominantly, on undergraduate EFL students. An overview of the state-of-the-art research indicates that little is known about the use of DMs in functional genre categories of academic writing produced by in-service EFL teachers, who are enrolled in in-service EFL university courses. Moreover, there are no prior studies that examine the use of English DMs in academic writing by in-service EFL teachers, who teach English at primary school and combine their full-time teaching with an in-service EFL course. Arguably, an investigation that aims at establishing the use of DMs in academic writing produced by this group of participants would be of particular interest in light of the following two variables, i) the participants, who combine a dual role of an EFL student

and an EFL teacher and ii) the role of academic writing in English, which is thought to be one of the central aspects of teacher education (Johnson and Golombek 2020). Whereas the importance of academic writing is uncontested in teacher education in Norway (Krulatz and Iversen 2020), there are hardly any studies that explore the use of micro-discursive means, such as DMs, in academic writing by Norwegian in-service primary school teachers of English (Kapranov 2019). The study further presented in section 4 of this paper seeks to provide more knowledge about this under-represented research area.

## 4. The Present Study

As previously mentioned in the introduction, the present study involves an intra-subject design (i.e., there is no control group in the study, because all participants execute the whole array of tasks) in order to elucidate the use of English DMs by a group of participants, i.e., primary school teachers, who combine their teaching with an in-service university course in English that is offered at a regional university in Norway. Given that the university course is comprised of functional grammar of English, English phonetics, and children's literature in English, all of which involve tasks in academic writing in English, the examination of the participants' use of English DMs is embedded in the realistic course settings. To reiterate, the participants submit reflective essays in children's literature and English linguistics (grammar or phonetics), respectively, and analytic explanatory essays in the same disciplines. In the present study, the participants' essays are analysed with the purpose of establishing potential differences and/or stability of the use of DMs (see the hypotheses and the research questions formulated in the introduction).

Reflective essays are expected to be written in the first semester of the course. Currently, the task of reflective essay writing is an increasingly common tendency in higher education that allows to capitalise upon EFL learners' experiences in order to make learning more personal and, consequently, more motivating and productive (Mack 2012). Given that reflective essays are associated with inward variables that involve the participants' personal learning experiences, impressions, and ideologies (Starks, Nicholas, and Macdonald 2012), it is assumed that they may be characterised by a certain degree of variability in terms of the choice of micro-discursive means, such as, for example, DMs.

Analytic explanatory essays are offered to the participants in the second

(and final) semester of the course. They are aimed at writing reports with the elements of analysis, evaluation, and research on the topics in EFL didactics in relation to children's literature and linguistics, respectively. The participants are made aware that these essays are grade-bearing. After a lecture on academic writing in English during the first semester, the participants are informed that they should write their essays in a high quality academic English, demonstrate subject-specific knowledge, take into consideration the instructor-audience, and structure their essays in, at least, three constitutive parts, e.g., introduction, main part, and conclusion.

## 4.1. Participants

This study involves 32 participants (30 females, 2 males, mean age = 43 years old, standard deviation = 8.3). All participants are university educated primary school teachers, however, none of them reports prior EFL studies at college/university. All participants are speakers of Norwegian as their L1. There are neither native speakers of English nor English/Norwegian bilinguals among the participants. The participants' EFL experiences appear to be confined to primary and secondary school (mean years of learning English at school = 8, standard deviation = 2.3). To reiterate, all participants are in-service primary school teachers, who teach EFL without any prior experience of EFL studies at the tertiary level. To be able to continue teaching EFL at primary school, they have to obtain university qualifications in EFL, hence they are enrolled in the university EFL course concurrently with full-time employment at their respective primary schools. The participants signed a consent form allowing the author of this paper to collect and analyse their essays for scientific purposes. To ensure confidentiality, the participants' real names are coded as P1...P32 (P = participant and the number from 1 to 32, respectively).

## 4.2. Corpus and Methods

Given that each participant has to submit two reflective essays (N = 1 in children's literature and N = 1 in linguistics) and two analytic explanatory essays (N = 1 in children's literature and N = 1 in linguistics), the corpus is comprised of 128 essays (the total N of words in all essays = 107 820). The descriptive statistics of the corpus are calculated by means of the computer program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

| N | Statistical Measures | Reflective Essays in Linguistics | Reflective Essays in Literature | Analytic Explanatory Essays in Linguistics | Analytic Explanatory Essays in Literature |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Total number of words | 13 680 | 36 757 | 23 653 | 33 730 |
| 2 | Mean words | 441 | 1149 | 739 | 1 054 |
| 3 | Standard deviation | 182 | 166 | 397 | 188 |
| 4 | Minimum | 276 | 934 | 115 | 432 |
| 5 | Maximum | 1 098 | 1 544 | 1 990 | 1 451 |

The corpus was analysed in WordSmith (Scott 2008), a computer program, in order to establish the frequency of DMs. The frequencies were normalised by the program based upon a 1 000-word cut-off to enable cross-comparison. The frequency of 1 000 words was deemed to be a standard measure in normalising data (Aijmer 2002, Polat 2011, Wolk, Götz, and Jäschke 2020). The data analysis involved the following procedure. First, the participants' essays (reflective and analytic explanatory, respectively) in children's literature and linguistics were analysed in WordSmith (Scott 2008). Second, the frequency data garnered from WordSmith (Scott 2008) were subsequently processed in the computer program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 (2009) in order to calculate means and standard deviations per group of the participants in each of those essays. The identification of the DMs was carried out in accordance with the definition of DMs formulated by Fraser (2015) that was extended to include those DMs that occurred in sentence-initial positions in a Sentence 1 – Sentence 2 combination, and in clause-initial positions in a Clause 1 – Clause 2 combination so that the unit of research involved the main and subordinate clauses, and the coordinate clauses in a compound sentence. Following that definition of DMs, the possible candidates for DMs in the present research were based upon the list of DMs provided by Fraser (2015) and illustrated in section 3 of the present paper (e.g., *and*, *above all*, *also*, *in other words*, *in fact*, and *moreover, but, however*, *yet*, *still, nevertheless, despite that*, *on the other hand*, *alternatively*, *on the contrary*, *in contrast*, *conversely*, *instead*, *rather*, *so*, *therefore*, *thus*, *then*, *given that*, *consequently*, *as a conclusion*, *all in all*, *accordingly*, *hence*, etc.).

## 4.3. Results and Discussion

The results of the corpus analysis in WordSmith (Scott 2008) and SPSS (2009) are presented in Table 2. This table summarises the frequency of the use of DMs in terms of means (M) and standard deviations (STD) per group of participants in i) reflective essays in linguistics, ii) reflective essays in children's literature, iii) analytic explanatory essays in linguistics, and iv) analytic explanatory essays in children's literature.

Table 2. The Use of DMs by the Participants in Academic Writing

| N | DMs | M (STD) in Reflective Essays in Linguistics | M (STD) in Reflective Essays in Literature | M (STD) in Analytic Explanatory Essays in Linguistics | M (STD) in Analytic Explanatory Essays in Literature |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Above all | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | According to | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 3 | Additionally | 0 | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 4 | Again | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Afterwards | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1.1 (STD 0.3) |
| 6 | All in all | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 7 | Already | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 8 | Also | 2.1 (STD 1) | 1.5 (STD 0.6) | 1.7 (STD 1) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 9 | Although | 0 | 1.3 (STD 0.5) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 10 | And | 4 (STD 2.8) | 4.2 (STD 2.6) | 1.9 (STD 1) | 3.8 (STD 1.7) |
| 11 | As | 2.3 (STD 1.2) | 1.6 (STD 1) | 1.2 (STD 0.4) | 1.4 (STD 0.6) |
| 12 | Basically | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Because | 1.8 (STD 1) | 1.5 (STD 0.5) | 1 (STD 0) | 1.1 (STD 0.3) |
| 14 | But | 1.7 (STD 0.7) | 2.5 (STD 1.5) | 1.3 (STD 0.6) | 2 (STD 1) |
| 15 | Especially | 1.5 (STD 0.5) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 1) |
| 16 | Eventually | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | Finally | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 18 | First | 0 (STD 0) | 1.3 (STD 0.4) | 1 (STD 0) | 1.2 (STD 0.4) |

| # | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | For instance | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20 | Further | 0 | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 21 | Furthermore | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 22 | Hopefully | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 | 1.7 (STD 0.8) |
| 23 | However | 1.8 (STD 0.7) | 1 (STD 0) | 1.2 (STD 0.6) | 2 (STD 0.6) |
| 24 | If | 1.8 (STD 0.6) | 1.2 (STD 0.6) | 1.5 (STD 0.8) | 1.2 (STD 0.4) |
| 25 | In addition | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 26 | In fact | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 27 | Instead | 2.2 (STD 1) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 28 | Just | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 29 | Like | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 30 | Moreover | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 31 | Nevertheless | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 32 | Obviously | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 33 | Often | 2.1 (STD 0.9) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 34 | Or | 2.6 (STD 1.3) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 1) |
| 35 | Perhaps | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 36 | Rather | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 |
| 37 | Secondly | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 38 | Since | 1.8 (STD 0.8) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 39 | So | 1.4 (STD 0.5) | 1.1 (STD 0.3) | 1.1 (STD 0.3) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 40 | Still | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 41 | Then | 1.3 (STD 0.7) | 1 (STD 0) | 1.3 (STD 0.5) | 1.2 (STD 0.4) |
| 42 | Therefore | 1.4 (STD 0.7) | 3 (STD 0) | 1.3 (STD 0.5) | 1 (STD 0) |
| 43 | Thus | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 44 | Understandably | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 45 | Unfortunately | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 1 (STD 0) |
| 46 | Unlike | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 |
| 47 | Usually | 1 (STD 0) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 48 | Whereas | 0 | 0 | 1 (STD 0) | 1 (STD 0) |

As previously mentioned in the introduction, this study is based upon the contention proposed by Aull (2019), who suggests that functional genre categories of academic writing in English may involve different micro-discursive means, for instance, DMs. Given that Aull's (2019) argument is commensurate with the view that functional genre categories of academic writing in English are associated with differences in lexico-syntactic choices made by EFL writers (Ament, Barón Páres, and Pérez-Vidal 2020, Aull and Lancaster 2014, Furkó 2020, Hyland 2004, Kuteeva and Negretti 2016, Povolná 2012), it has been hypothesised in this study that the participants' analytic explanatory and reflective essays would be characterised by quantitative differences that are manifested by the frequency of use of DMs (see Hypothesis 1). However, the application of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to the data has not yielded statistically significant results at $p < 0.05$ (the F-ratio = (2.4), the p value = 0.07). Furthermore, it is evident from the data analysis in SPSS (2009) that the means (M) and standard deviations (STD) of the total frequencies of DMs in the essays appear to be similar, as illustrated by Table 3 below.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations in One-Way ANOVA

| N | Measure | Reflective Essays in Linguistics | Reflective Essays in Literature | Analytic Explanatory Essays in Linguistics | Analytic Explanatory Essays in Literature |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | M | 0.9 | 1 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| 2 | STD | 1 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.7 |

Given that the results of the one-way ANOVA are not statistically significant, Hypothesis 1 is to be rejected. In contrast, Hypothesis 2 seems to be supported by the data. According to Hypothesis 2, the participants' use of DMs could be described as stable in analytic explanatory and reflective essays on the grounds of no statistically significant differences in the frequency of DMs in these essays. These findings will be further discussed in subsections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 of this paper.

**4.3.1. The Use of DMs in Reflective Essays**

As seen in Table 2, the use of the DMs by the participants appears to be stable in reflective essays. This finding is further supported by the absence

of statistically significant differences between the total frequencies of DMs in reflective essays in linguistics (M = 0.9) and children's literature (M = 1). The stability of the use of DMs in the corpus of reflective essays could be exemplified by the DMs that are present both in the essays in linguistics and children's literature. These DMs are *according to*, *again*, *afterwards*, *also*, *and*, *as*, *because*, *but*, *especially*, *finally*, *however*, *if*, *in addition*, *just*, *nevertheless*, *or*, *since*, *so*, *still*, *then*, *therefore*, and *thus*. The distribution of these DMs is illustrated by Figure 1 below.
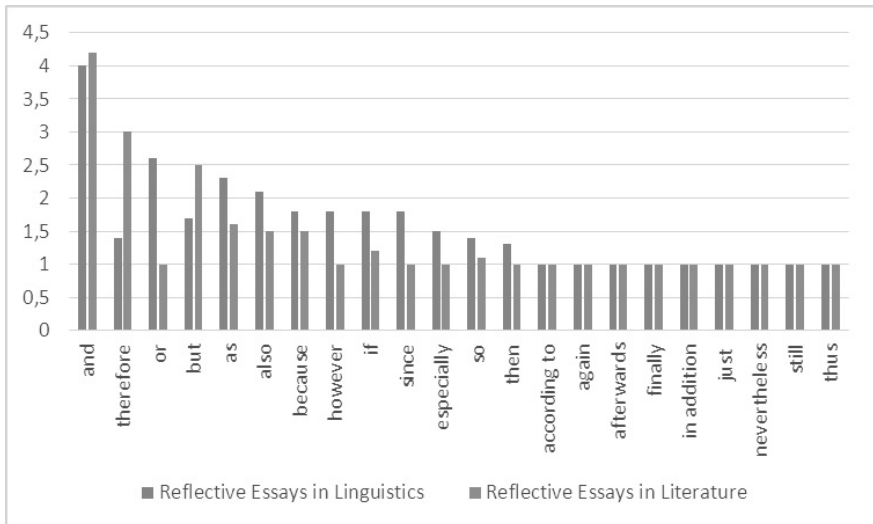


Figure 1. The DMs that are Present both in Reflective Essays in Linguistics and Children's Literature

As evident from Figure 1 and Table 2, there are DMs that are equally distributed (M = 1, STD = 0) between the participants' reflective essays in linguistics and children's literature, for instance the DMs *according to*, *again*, *afterwards*, *finally*, *in addition*, *just*, *nevertheless*, *still*, and *thus* (see Table 2). The equal distribution of these DMs is explicable, to an extent, by their use by the same individual participants in both reflective essays in children's literature and linguistics, as illustrated by excerpts (1) and (2) below, e.g.,

(1) The lack of words can of course be a challenge, but how to pronounce different sounds should not be a problem. **Still**, I find some sounds more difficult than others, for example /s/ and /z/. Words like wizard /ˈwɪzəd/ and zoo /zu:/ are to be pronounced with the /z/ sound, but I find that difficult to do. (Participant P 9)

(2) Her hand is behind her back, in a position that could mean she hesitates and is a bit nervous. Perhaps she already knows the answer? **Still**, she is trying one more time, this time a bit closer to him, in fact, right behind him with her hand and foot on the chair. (Participant P 9)

Excerpt (1) is taken from the participant's reflective essay in linguistics, whereas excerpt (2) is a quote from the reflective essay in children's literature written by the same participant. As seen in excerpts (1) and (2), the contrastive DM *still* is used by the participant in the reflective essays in linguistics and children's literature in order to accentuate certain distinct points that are connected by this DM to the rest of the narrative.

Similarly to the DM *still*, the DMs *according to*, *again*, *afterwards*, *in addition*, *just*, *nevertheless*, and *thus* appear to be equally distributed between the sub-corpora of reflective essays (i.e., reflective essays in children's literature and linguistics, respectively) due to their use by the same participants. Arguably, this finding suggests that the stable use of the DMs in the functional genre category of reflective essay writing is concomitant with the participants' individual preferences and their proclivity to use certain DMs consistently in their reflective essays.

In addition to the equally distributed DMs, the corpus of the reflective essays is characterised by those DMs that share a similar, yet not identical distribution. These DMs are *and* (M = 4 in linguistics, M = 4.2 in children's literature), *therefore* (M = 1.4 in linguistics, M = 3 in children's literature), *or* (M = 2.6 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *but* (M = 1.7 in linguistics, M = 2.5 in children's literature), *as* (M = 2.3 in linguistics, M = 1.6 in children's literature), *also* (M = 2.1 in linguistics, M = 1.5 in children's literature), *because* (M = 1.8 in linguistics, M = 1.5 in children's literature), *however* (M = 1.8 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *if* (M = 1.8 in linguistics, M = 1.2 in children's literature), *since* (M = 1.8 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *especially* (M = 1.5 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *so* (M = 1.4 in linguistics, M = 1.1 in children's literature), and *then* (M = 1.3 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature). It is evident from these data that the DM *and*

exhibits a high frequency of occurrence relative to other DMs in the reflective essays. The frequency of occurrence of the DM *and* does not appear to be associated with a particular number of participants, but rather seems to be used by the participants as a group both in their reflective essays in linguistics and children's literature, as illustrated by excerpts (3) and (4).

(3) I was a very shy student. **And** I did not raise my hand even when I knew the right answer. I particularly remember one episode in the classroom where I pronounced the sound "th" wrong in the word "the". My teacher asked me to repeat the word at least ten times in front of the whole class. **And** everyone laughed **and** I became terribly embarrassed. I have reflected a lot about how I as a teacher can help students with their pronunciation so they are not feeling as embarrassed as I was. **And** now we have many more aids that allow students to practice their pronunciation. The student does not need to read aloud in front of the whole class. (Participant P 14)

(4) The headmaster at Hogwarts, Professor Dumbledore, is the teacher that I relate to in my own style of teaching. **And** although he is not teaching any subjects at Hogwarts any more, he has taught for several years before taking the position as headmaster. In my opinion that justifies my choice of him as an example of what qualities I find treasurable in a teacher. I do not think an English teacher is a different breed of teachers so I have written this essay regarding any teacher striving to be a good role model for the children. **And** I must warn you that some of my perceptions are bordering on the imaginary and the impossible. (Participant P 21)

Both in excerpt (3), which is taken from the participant's reflective essay in linguistics, and in excerpt (4) that represents a reflective essay in children's literature, the elaborative DM *and* is employed by the participants in order to develop, explain and comment upon their reflective narratives. Given that providing comments and explanations would constitute a common strategy in reflective essay writing (Zhou, Zhao, and Dawson, 2020), a relatively high frequency of occurrence of the DM *and* is, perhaps, not surprising in this functional genre category. This finding lends indirect support to the studies conducted by Appel and Szeib (2018), Ha (2016), and Tapper (2005), where a high frequency of occurrence of the elaborative DM *and* is reported. Judging from the prior literature as well from the findings reported in the present study (see Table 2 and the subsection 4.3.2), it could be argued that the use

of the elaborative DM *and* constitutes a recurrent feature in academic writing by EFL students.

Similarly to the frequently used DM *and*, the implicative DM *therefore* occurs comparatively often in relation to the frequency of other DMs. However, it should be noted that a relatively higher occurrence of the DM *therefore* is associated with the reflective essays in children's literature (M = 3) rather than in linguistics (M = 1.4). Excerpt (5) below, taken from the participant's reflective essay in children's literature, provides an illustration of the use of the DM *therefore*, e.g.

(5) In "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" Professor McGonagall and Professor Dumbledore have an authoritative leadership style. **Therefore** I will use Professor McGonagall and Professor Dumbledore as examples when I reflect on the ideal teacher of English. Both Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall know their subjects. They are transfigurations teachers and extremely powerful, which make them greatly respected. An ideal teacher of English who wants to be respected also needs good knowledge of English. The teacher should speak English as much as possible in the classroom and guide the pupils to pronounce English sounds right. **Therefore** the teacher needs to know how the sounds are articulated. (Participant P 1)

Arguably, a relatively high occurrence of the DM *therefore* could be accounted for by the genre conventions of a reflective essay that presuppose an implicit nature of written reflections without the necessity of arguing for an explicit thesis statement. Given that the explicitness of argument statement is typically not expected in a reflective essay according to its genre conventions (Wei 2020), it could be assumed that the high frequency of the implicative DM *therefore* is facilitated by the participants' writing strategies to convey explanation, implicature and suggestion in their reflective essays.

Analogous to the distribution of the DM *therefore*, the DM *but* appears to be more frequently used by the participants in the reflective essays in children's literature (M = 2.5) in contrast to the reflective essays in linguistics (M = 1.7). The use of the DM *but* is exemplified by the following excerpt taken from the participant's reflective essay in children's literature, e.g.,

(6) Coraline is small for her age, **but** she has a grown-up sense of humor, a great deal of common sense and an imaginative mind. She is a lonely

girl that feels overlooked by both her parents and other tenants. They see her and talk to her, **but** they do not recognize the real Coraline and are preoccupied with their own lives. The book has quite a few other fascinating characters, **but** the character I find the most interesting is the Other Mother as she is referred to in the book. (Participant P 3)

It is seen in (6) and in other reflective essays that the contrastive DM *but* appears to be used by the participants to signal a spectrum of meanings associated with contrast and a certain denial of expectations in the sense postulated by Bell (1998). Presumably, these meanings of the DMs *but* could be concomitant with the functional genre conventions of a reflective essay that involves a depiction of contrast, adversative juxtaposition, and certain expectations on the part of the reader and/or writer (Hyland 2008). Following this line of reasoning, it could be argued that the frequency of contrastive DM *but* in the corpus is reflective of the typical genre conventions associated with reflective essay writing. This finding lends indirect support to the prior study conducted by Werner (2017), who investigates the use of the contrastive DM *but* in EFL writing.

Summarising the stable use of the DMs in the participants' reflective essays, it appears  possible to assume that the stability is associated with i) the participants' individual preferences of DMs that they use in reflective essays in children's literature and linguistics alike (e.g., *according to*, *again*, *afterwards*, *finally*, *in addition*, *just*, *nevertheless*, *still*, and *thus*)  and ii)  a relatively frequent use of genre-appropriate DMs (e.g., *and*, *therefore*, *or*, and *but*) that are typically expected in the functional genre category of reflective essay writing (Aull 2019, Kapranov 2019).

### 4.3.2. The Use of DMs in Analytic Explanatory Essays

The participants' use of DMs in their analytic explanatory essays follows a similar pattern that has been outlined in section 4.3.1. Namely, the participants appear to use a set of DMs that have been identified both in analytic explanatory essays in linguistics and children's literature. Within this set of DMs, there are DMs with identical distribution (M = 1), e.g., *according to*, *additionally*, *although*, *finally*, *further*, *furthermore*, *in addition*, *just*, *obviously*, *or*, *secondly*, *since*, and *whereas*, and similarly distributed DMs, e.g., *and* (M = 1.9 in linguistics, M = 3.8 in children's literature), *but* (M = 1.3 in linguistics, M = 2 in children's literature), *however* (M = 1.2 in linguistics, M = 2 in children's

literature), *also* (M = 1.7 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *if* (M = 1.5 in linguistics, M = 1.2 in children's literature), *as* (M = 1.2 in linguistics, M = 1.4 in children's literature), *then* (M = 1.3 in linguistics, M = 1.2 in children's literature), *therefore* (M = 1.3 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature), *first* (M = 1 in linguistics, M = 1.2 in children's literature), *afterwards* (M = 1 in linguistics, M = 1.1 in children's literature), *because* (M = 1 in linguistics, M = 1.1 in children's literature), and *so* (M = 1.1 in linguistics, M = 1 in children's literature). The distribution of these DMs in analytic explanatory essays is graphically represented by Figure 2 below.
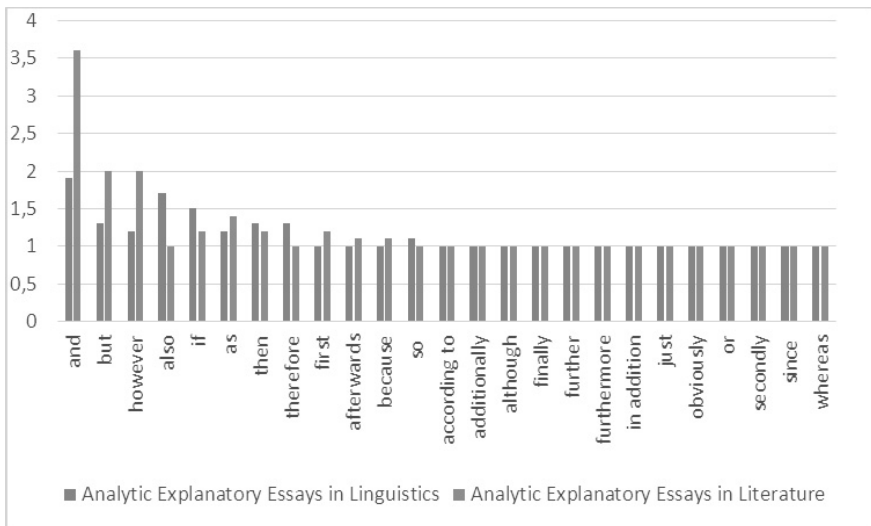


Figure 2. The DMs that are Used in Analytic Explanatory Essays in Children's Literature and Linguistics

As far as the identically distributed DMs are concerned, such as *further*, *whereas*, etc., (see Figure 2 and Table 3), their use could be accounted by the participants' preference for employing the same DM in both essays (i.e., in linguistics and children's literature), as illustrated by excerpts (7) and (8) below. Excerpt (7) exemplifies the participant's analytic explanatory essay in linguistics, whilst excerpt (8) represents the essay in children's literature written by the same participant, e.g.,

(7) After talking about capital letters and full stops, the teacher gives the students several sentences to choose from as a starting point. **Further**, the teacher gives them a word bank to help them generate more ideas and to provide vocabulary support. When most pupils are finished, they are going to pick out sentences they think are good, and explain why. (Participant P 29)

(8) Alexander T. Wolf recounts what really happened to the Three Little Pigs. This story differs from the traditional story of three little pigs. In this essay, I will look into the visual and verbal elements which give the story meaning and make us believe the Wolf. **Further**, I will argue why I find this book a good example of a picture book that can be successfully used in the classroom. (Participant P 29)

In (7) and (8), the use of the DM *further* by the same participant could be attributed to that participant's individual choice of micro-discursive means and/or individual writing style. Whereas the latter explanation seems to be possible, the use of the DM *further* appears appropriate from the vantage point of the functional genre category of analytic explanatory essay writing. Given that analytic explanatory essays presuppose a critical review of the existing research literature and its analytic explanation with the elements of analysis (see Aull 2019), the use of the DM *further* both in (7) and (8) is explicable by the participant's strategy to employ the DM *further* in order to signal sequential and temporal relationships in the analysis and orient the reader in terms of the sequencing of the elements of analysis in the essays. Arguably, the use of other equally distributed DMs in analytic explanatory essays might be justified by the variables that are applicable to the DM *further*. Presumably, these variables are i) the participants' individual choices and ii) considerations of the DM genre-appropriateness and relevance to the essay, which is expected to be written in the academic formal register of the English language.

In terms of those DMs that are similarly distributed in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays (see Table 2), the DMs *and*, *but*, *however*, and *also* appear to be frequently used. Analogous frequencies of occurrence of these DMs (with the exception of the DM *however*) are observed in the corpus of reflective essays (see subsection 4.3.1). The frequent use of the DMs *and* as well as *but* in analytic explanatory essays and reflective essays, respectively, is supported by a number of previous studies (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017), where the occurrence of these DMs is reported.

On the other hand, the literature (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017) does not provide evidence of the frequent occurrence of the DMs *also* and *however* in EFL students' academic writing, whereas these DMs are frequent in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays in the present study. It should be noted that in contrast to the previously mentioned DM *further* and other identically distributed DMs, the use of *also* and *however* is associated with multiple participants. These novel findings concerning the use of the DMs *also* (excerpts 9 – 10) and *however* (excerpts 11 – 12) are illustrated below.

> (9) There are other examples of words containing vowels which are pronounced differently in BE and AE, for example "Alice" (line 1), "stupid" (line 7), "rabbit" (line 9) and "started". **Also,** there is a difference between diphthongs in BE and AE. Look at the word "no" (line 3) which is pronounced /nəʊ/ in BE and /noʊ/ in AE. (Participant P 16)

> (10) The text emphasizes the gloomy and serious mood. The colors in the drawings are not very bright and give us a feeling of being in an imaginary world. **Also,** the colors tell us about a gloomy and sad mood which projects upon a land with mysterious and scary monsters with human features. (Participant P 10)

In the analytic explanatory essay in linguistics (excerpt 9) as well as in the analytic explanatory essay in children's literature (excerpt 10), the participants deploy the elaborative DM *also* in order to provide their essays with the additive characteristics in the sense postulated by Waring (2003), where the meaning of addition is coupled with that of exemplification and explanation. The participants' use of the elaborative DM *also* in (9) and (10) seems to facilitate their strategy of presenting a piece of analysis that is supported by relevant examples and further specification of the analysis. Presumably, such use of *also* conforms to the conventions of the functional genre category of analytic explanatory essay.

As previously mentioned, another novel finding in the present study is associated with the frequent use of the contrastive DM *however*, e.g.,

> (11) If we look at the text in British English, the letter R is not pronounced in the words "tired" and "pictures", because British English is a non-rhotic accent. **However**, in the first line, "sitting by her sister on the bank", we

see an example of the linking /r/ in the word "sister" that follows the word "on" that starts with a vowel sound, and "sister" should be pronounced with a /r/ in this case. (Participant P 5)

(12) The text and pictures are told from Max's point of view, everything happens in his imagination. The text is written in the third person and that does not allow the reader to know what Max is thinking and feeling. **However**, by looking at the pictures we get to know more about the character by his facial expression. (Participant P 11)

Both in the analytic explanatory essay in linguistics (11) and analytic explanatory essay in children's literature (12), the DM *however* is used by the participants to convey an adversative relationship. Arguably, it appears to signal a certain contradiction, cancellation, and contrast that are concomitant with presenting an alternative argument in the analysis. The use of the DM *however* by the participants could be assumed to follow the schema "Argument A + however + cancellation/contrast to Argument A + a possible alternative B". It should be noted that in addition to being a frequently used DM in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays, the occurrence of *however* increases in comparison with the reflective essays. Assuming that analytic explanatory essays, unlike reflective essays, should involve presentation and explanation of several arguments (e.g., an argument and its counter-argument, or a statement and a counter-statement), then a relatively frequent use of the DM *however* appears to be logically substantiated.

The afore-mentioned strategy of depicting adversative relationships could be applied to the use of the DM *but* in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays. The adversative relationship associated with the DM *but* is illustrated by excerpts taken from the analytic explanatory essays in linguistics (13) and children's literature (14), e.g.,

(13) In order to understand these terms, the pupils must be exposed to several examples. In the fifth grade where I teach, the students do not yet know to difference between the terms simple, compound and complex sentences, **but** I have started to prepare them in a simple way. (Participant P 12)

(14) In "Gorilla" we meet Hannah, who I guess is about 6–7 years old. She wants to do something with her father, **but** he is always so busy. Hannah

loves gorillas, **but** she has never seen a real one and her father is too busy to take her to the zoo. (Participant P 26)

Whilst the use of **but** is relatively frequent in relation to other DMs in analytic explanatory essays, the frequency of *but* in this type of essays is lower in contrast to the reflective essays, cf. M = 1.7 in reflective essays in linguistics and M = 1.3 in analytic explanatory essays in linguistics, M = 2.5 in reflective essays in children's literature and M = 2 in analytic explanatory essays in children's literature. Judging from the data, the decrease in the use of *but* in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays is concurrent with the increase in the use of *however* compared to the reflective essays. This observation could be explained by the participants' choice of *however* as a representative of stylistically formal DMs. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to verify this assumption, an investigation into the choice of *but* versus *however* in academic writing by EFL writers would be a promising avenue of future research.

In addition to *but* and *however*, the DM *and* is another frequently used DM in the corpus of analytic explanatory essays, especially in children's literature (cf. M = 1.9 in linguistics and M = 3.8 in children's literature). The use of *and* in analytic explanatory essays in children's literature is exemplified by excerpt (15), e.g.,

(15) A quick summary of the story. It begins with young Max doing mischief in his wolf suit, **and** he is sent to his room without eating his supper. His mother called him "Wild Thing", **and** Max said to her: "I'll eat you up!". (Participant P 18)

Similarly to (15), the participants' use of the elaborative DM *and* in analytic explanatory essays in children's literature is associated with reporting/ summarising the content, providing additional information about the argument/statement, giving descriptions, and introducing elaborations. Notably, the use of *and* is not confined to individual participants, but seems to be a group feature with the range of occurrence within the group being from N = 1 till N = 7 in analytic explanatory essays in children's literature and from N= 1 till N = 4 in linguistics. In addition to the frequent use of *and* in analytic explanatory essays, the elaborative DM *and* is frequently employed by the participants in reflective essays (M = 4 in linguistics, M = 4.2 in children's literature). Judging from the use of *and* in both functional genre categories, i.e., reflective essays and analytic explanatory essays, it can be generalised that

the elaborative DM *and* is used in a genre-appropriate manner. At the same time, it should be noted that a relatively higher frequency of occurrence of *and* in the essays in comparison to other DMs in the present corpus could be suggestive of the similarities between the participants' academic writing and that of EFL students rather than EFL graduates or EFL professionals, given that prior research (Tapper 2005, Werner 2017) indicates that high frequency of occurrence of *and* is associated with undergraduate EFL writers.

To conclude this subsection of the paper, it could be generalised that the participants' use of DMs in analytic explanatory essays is comprised of i) the participants' individual preferences of DMs that they use in children's literature and linguistics alike (e.g., *according to*, *additionally*, *although*, *finally*, *further*, *furthermore*, *in addition*, *just*, *obviously*, *or*, *secondly*, *since*, and *whereas*) and ii) the frequent use of the DMs *and*, *but*, *however*, and *also* that are referred to as genre-appropriate DMs in the functional genre category of analytic explanatory essay writing (Aull 2019, Kapranov 2019).

## 5. Conclusions

This paper presents and discusses a computer-assisted study aimed at establishing the use of DMs in the corpus of academic writing produced by a group of participants, who teach EFL at primary schools concurrently with being enrolled in an in-service university course in English. The study is embedded in the concept of academic writing as a genre with its typical and recurring macro- and micro-discursive features (Aull 2019, Uccelli et al. 2013). DMs are treated as one of those micro-discursive features whose genre-appropriate use constitutes a conventional discursive characteristic of academic writing in the English language. Following this contention, the study seeks to explore whether or not the use of DMs by the participants is stable or subject to potential variability. The results of the study do not confirm the presence of statistically significant variability in the participants' use of English DMs in the corpus. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is supported in the study. The Hypothesis is associated with the research question about the stability of use of DMs by the participants.

Based upon the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the stability of use of DMs could be accounted for by the identical distributions of the DMs in the corpus. The identical distribution could be ascribed to the consistent frequency of occurrence of the DMs used by the same participant/

participants. Specifically, it has been found that such DMs as *according to*, *again*, *afterwards*, *finally*, *in addition*, *just*, *nevertheless*, *still*, and *thus* (see subsection 4.3.1) are identically distributed (M = 1, STD = 0) between the participants' reflective essays in linguistics and children's literature, whilst the DMs *according to*, *additionally*, *although*, *finally*, *further*, *furthermore*, *in addition*, *just*, *obviously*, *or*, *secondly*, *since*, and *whereas* are identically distributed (M = 1, STD = 0) between the participants' analytic explanatory essays in linguistics and children's literature. Arguably, the identical distribution of these DMs is indicative of the stability of their use by the participants. In turn, the consistent and stable use of the afore-mentioned DMs could be interpreted as the participants' individual writing style and their individual preferences in terms of DMs. Assuming that consistent, stable and less varied choices of micro-discursive means, such as DMs, are associated with advanced EFL writers (Carter, Guerin, and Aitchison 2020), it could be argued that the participants' stable use of identically distributed DMs would characterise them as mature post-tertiary EFL writers.

Whereas the use of the DMs by the participants could be described as conforming to the genre conventions and requirements, the results of the data analysis indicate that the participants tend to employ a limited number of DMs more frequently. The use of the frequent DMs is evident from their i) reflective essays, where the participants make a relatively frequent, yet genre-appropriate use of the DMs *and*, *therefore*, *or*, and *but*, and ii) analytic explanatory essays that are marked by the presence of the frequently used DMs *and*, *but*, *however*, and *also*. Given that prior studies (Appel and Szeib 2018, Ha 2016, Tapper 2005, Werner 2017) suggest that the frequent use of such DMs as *and* and *but* is associated with undergraduate EFL students' writing, this finding suggests that the participants' frequent use of DMs *and* and *but* is comparable to that of undergraduate EFL students.

These findings could be taken to indicate that the participants' use of DMs in academic writing is characterised by duality. On the one hand, their use of DMs is reflective of the mature writing style of post-tertiary EFL writers, on the other hand it bears the mark of undergraduate EFL writers with the limited number of frequently used DMs. Given that the participants in the study are in-service EFL teachers who are enrolled in an in-service EFL course, this duality raises the need to focus in-service instruction on micro-discursive means in English in order to minimise the duality and "in-betweenness" associated with the participants' awareness of genre-appropriate micro-discursive means, such as DMs.

Obviously, the present study has a number of limitations and the results should be treated with caution. As a desideratum, it would be beneficial for future studies to conduct a post-hoc analysis in the form of a questionnaire aimed at soliciting the participants' answers why they employed more DMs in the literature tasks. In addition, it would be a promising avenue of future research to examine whether or not EFL students are aware of the linguistic and, in particular, micro-discursive conventions associated with a variety of functional genre categories in academic writing.

## Acknowledgements

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