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A Corpus-based Analysis of EFL Learners' Use of Discourse Markers in Cross-cultural Communication

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This study examines the use of discourse markers in cross-cultural communication between EFL learners in an e-learning environment. The study analyzes the use of discourse markers in a corpus of an interactive web with a bulletin board system through which college students of English at Japanese and Korean universities interacted with each other discussing the topics of local and global issues. It compares the use of discourse markers in the learners' corpus to that of a native English speakers' corpus. The results indicate that discourse markers are useful interactional devices to structure and organize discourse. EFL learners are found to display more frequent use of referentially and cognitively functional discourse markers and a relatively rare use of other markers. Native speakers are found to use a wider variety of discourse markers for different functions. Suggestions are made for using computer corpora in understanding EFL learners' language difficulties and helping them become more interactionally competent speakers.

[discourse markers/pragmatic competence/corpus/cross-cultural communication/ e-learning]

I. INTRODUCTION

Discourse markers play a fundamental role in spoken interaction (Schffrin, 1987; Carter & McCarthy, 2006). Halliday and Hassan (1976) and Schiffrin (1987) analyzed discourse markers based on a theory of discourse coherence. Further influential research undertaken by Fraser (1996, 1998, 1999) and Blakemore (1992) approaches discourse markers from a grammatical-pragmatic perspective and limits discourse markers to linguistic expressions which indicate how the relevance of one discourse segment is dependent on another. Within this framework, discourse markers are viewed in terms of

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how the use of certain words and phrases outside of the clause structure link segments of the discourse to one another in ways which reflect choices of monitoring, organization and management exercised by the speaker (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007). In this sense they have mainly procedural or pragmatic meanings. More recent work by Aijmer (2002) and Fung and Carter (2007) emphasizes that discourse markers have functions on the textual and interpersonal level and must be described in terms of discourse contexts.

Speakers often have to choose best way to organize and sequence their message for the benefit of their listeners and in collaboration with them. In this way, discourse markers have communicative functions in the organization and management of interaction. Therefore, discourse markers have a feature of relational language which serves to create and maintain good relations between participants in interactions. Discourse markers are context-sensitive (Aijmer, 2002). Some situations demand more discourse markers than others. This is borne out when a corpus is searched for some of the most frequent discourse markers across different types of data.

Discourse markers are received a great deal of attention in conversational analysis and there has been a considerable body of conceptual and empirical research (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Fraser, 1996, 1998, 1999; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Aijmer, 1987, 1996, 2002; Brinton, 1996; Lenk, 1998; Chen & He, 2001; Macaulay, 2002; O'keeffe et al., 2007; Andersen, 1998, 2001; Stenstrom, 1998; Wouk, 2001). However, discourse markers in EFL learners' discourse represent a little-studied area and we still know little about how they are typically realized in EFL learners' interaction and how they are different from that of native speakers', although Romero Trillo (1997, 2002) and Fung and Carter (2007) are notable exceptions.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the use of discourse markers in a corpus of EFL learners' discourse in cross-cultural communication. More specifically, the study compares and contrasts differences in the use of discourse markers between the EFL learners' corpus with a corpus of native speakers. The study aims to gauge whether EFL learners have a tendency to overuse or underuse discourse markers, and understand the roles discourse markers play in their cross-cultural communication. It also points to the need for further cross-linguistic research based on a broader and wider-angled corpus-driven account.

II. CORPUS-BASED STUDIES ON DISCOURSE MARKERS

With revolutionary developments in corpus linguistics and the increasing availability of computer corpora of native English such as British National Corpus, International

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Corpus of English, and Brown Corpus, a number of researchers have explored and described the complex nature of the authentic native English. The advantage of the corpus-based approach is that researchers at least are able to place a number of restrictions on our cognitive biases, they cannot remove bias completely though (Baker, 2006; Blommaert, 2005; McEnery & Wilson, 1996). At least, with a corpus, research can be starting from a position whereby the data itself has not been selected in order to confirm existing biases. Coupled with computer corpora a search tool like a concordance allows researchers to combine quantitative and qualitative analysis taking into account the context that a single word is placed (Baker, 2006).

With roots in corpus linguistics, researchers in the field of second language acquisition and contrastive interlanguage analysis have created English learner corpora (Flowerdew, 2002; Granger, 2002; Tono, 2002) and compared native language and learner language focusing on various linguistic features such as amplifiers (Granger, 1998; Kennedy, 2001; S. Lee, 2006), adverbial connectors (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; E. Lee, 2004), adjective intensification (Lorenz, 1998, 1999), and hedges (Min, 2010). Most of these studies argued that due to the lack of communicative competence and the low proficiency in English, EFL learners show a tendency to overuse or underuse each items.

The use of discourse markers also has been explored in a corpus-based approach (Aijmer, 1987, 1996, 2002; Andersen 1998, 2001; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Brinton, 1996; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe et al., 2007; Strentrom, 1998). All these studies focus their attention to the context-based function of discourse markers in various native English corpora. Corpus-based research on the use of discourse markers in other languages is also developing (Chen & He, 2001; Wouk, 2001). But relatively limited research has been undertaken on the range and variety of discourse markers used in English by second or foreign language speakers.

The most cogent attempt to place discourse markers within an EFL context is that of Fung and Carter (2007) who examine and compare the production of discourse markers by native speakers and Hong Kong learners of English in classroom setting. They show that while native speakers are found to use discourse markers for a wider variety of pragmatic functions, Hong Kong learners are found to display a liberal use of some functional discourse markers but a relatively restricted use of other markers the overall tendency of relatively restricted use of some discourse markers. Fung and Carter (2007) argue for the need to prepare learners to become more interactionally competent speakers. Their work is clearly suggestive to any discussion of discourse markers in EFL context, but their extension of fossilization framework (Muller, 2005; Romero Trillo, 1997, 2002) that argues for EFL learners' lack of pragmatic competence provides only a partial account of discourse markers in EFL learners' discourse. Their researches focus

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their attention on the use of discourse markers in non-native speakers of English in a classroom context and indicate the ultimate need for further cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research.

Corpus-based research actually depends on both quantitative and qualitative techniques. As Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998: 4) says, association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However, functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis (Baker, 2006). Comparing the EFL learners' use of discourse markers with those of native speakers, therefore, this study aims to offer a broad description of discourse markers in both EFL learners' corpus and that of native speakers, and investigate the similarities and differences between EFL learners' and native speakers' use of them.

III. CATEGORIAL FRAMEWORK OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Discourse markers do not constitute a single grammatical category but come from different grammatical and lexical inventories (Biber et al., 1998; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe et al., 2007). And the status of a discourse marker needs to be contextually-referenced. The theoretical framework of this study embraces a functionally-based account and is grounded both on textual and interpersonal perspective (Aijmer, 2002). Basically adopting Fung and Carter (2007), this study classifies discourse markers into interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive.

Interpersonal: Discourse markers are used to mark shared knowledge (*you know, you see*), to indicate (*I see, right, okay, great, sure*), and to indicate the speakers' attitudes (*well, like, you know, kind of, sort of*). Discourse markers have the affective and social functions of spoken grammar. In this sense, discourse markers of this category mark the affective and social functions of spoken grammar (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Fung & Carter, 2007).

Referential: Discourse marker in this category mark relationships of an existing utterance with the preceding one. They provide indexical direction to various semantic relationships such as causal (*cos/because*), contrastive (*but*), coordination (*and*), consequence (*so*).

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Structural: Discourse markers in this category provide information about the opening , closing and summarizing, transition between topics (*now, OK, right, so, well*), and continuation of the current topic (*and*, cos, so).

Cognitive: Discourse markers represent cognitive processes of speakers. They serve to denote the thinking process (*well, I think, I see*), to reformulate the utterances (*I mean, that is, in other words*), or to assess the listeners' knowledge (*you know, you see*).

IV. METHOD

1. Corpora

The present study adopts a corpus-driven approach and uses two sets of corpora, the non-native EFL learners' corpus (NNC) and the native speaker of English corpus (NC). The NNC was compiled by a corpus of cross-cultural communication through the bulletin board system through which college students of English at Japanese and Korean universities interacted with each other discussing the local and global issues. Thirty six students (16 Koreans who registered in a national university in Korea and 20 Japanese from a private university in Japan) participated in on-line discussion through the bulletin board system. All Korean participants majored in English education or English language and literature, and Japanese students were English and computer science majors. Participants from both countries volunteered for the on-line discussion. The NNC contains of 1005 messages totaling about 133,664 words, each message having an average length of about 133 words. Though the students wrote messages through the bulletin board rather than face-to-face conversation, their on-line discussion is quite similar to the spoken communication. It was informal and almost real time interaction. A sample of the NNC is presented in the Appendix.

For the native speaker corpus, a sub-corpus of the International Corpus of English Great Britain (ICE-GB), one million word collection of spoken and written texts, was used. The ICE consists of total twenty varieties of English around the world for comparative studies of English worldwide. The ICE United States was not released yet. Currently available ICE corpora include Canada, East Africa, Great Britain, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, and Jamaica, Singapore. Among these, ICE-GB was selected for the corpus of native English speakers. The sub-corpus of written English in ICE-GB consists of formal writings in both academic and non-academic contexts except some personal letters. Considering context-sensitive nature of hedging, therefore, in this study the sub-corpus of ICE-GB spoken discourse, in particular, face-to-face conversations in the

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workplace, broadcast interviews, and broadcast discussions, was used. The speakers of the texts are aged 18 or above and educated in the Great Britain. The NC is made of texts of 50 conversations, 10 interviews, and 10 discussions with a total of 149,505 words. Each text of the NC has an average length of about 2,000 words. A sample of the NC is also presented in the Appendix.

However, ICE-GB is a large, systematically collected and attested corpus of naturally occurring use and the student corpus is one of elicited use. Findings from ICE-GB take a more central role as facts about British English and the learners' data are treated as more exploratory and indicative. So, the differences between the production of discourse markers in the two corpora should not be claimed to reflect differences between British native speakers' English and non-native speakers' English in Korea and Japan.

2. Procedure

Discourse markers do not constitute a single grammatical category but come from different grammatical and lexical inventories (Biber et al., 1998; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe et al., 2007). However, it is not possible to sort out every possible discourse markers used in English. So, collocations associated with the twenty three most frequent hedging items; *and, so, yeah, right, but, or, just, okay, like, you know, well, because, now, yes, sort of, see, I think, I mean, say, actually, oh, really, cos* (Fung & Carter, 2007), are the focus of this study. Multifunctionality of discourse markers can be exemplified by the word *so* and *now*, and their use as a flexible interactional resource in summarizing, switching topic, and marking boundaries of talk (Fung & Carter, 2007).

Since discourse markers function in both inter- and intra-clause, a syntactic approach cannot fully explain this aspect of grammar. Moves from lexical or sentential levels to discoursal or contextual analysis are required. So, both quantitative method of macro investigation and qualitative method of analytic examination through observation are used in this study. WordSmith Tool (Scott, 2001) was used to find the discourse markers items in the two corpora. The primary use of WordSmith Tool is to generate concordance or listings of all the occurrences of any given word in a given text, with words shown in context. With the use of WordSmith 4.0 (Scott, 2001), all the twenty three discourse markers were automatically retrieved from the NNC and the NC, and then manually sorted through examination. This process allowed to eliminate an expression such as "You know what we need?" and "Really?" in which 'you know' and 'really' do not function as discourse markers. 'Say' is not a discourse marker in directives So this sort of token was eliminated.

First, the number of tokens of discourse markers in the two corpora was compared in order to see the difference in the use of hedges between the NNC and the NC. Then each

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discourse marker was examined to look at whether the non-native EFL learners' use of discourse marker is general phenomenon or due to overuse/underuse of particular discourse marker. And final stage of analysis described differences in diverse discourse functions that discourse markers fulfill in the two corpora.

V. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. General analysis

Table 1 indicates a discrepancy in the production of discourse markers by the two groups of speakers. Table 1 shows the frequencies of the tokens of the discourse markers used in the NNC and the NC. Since the two corpora differ in size (133,665 words for the NNC and 149,505 words for the NC), the number of tokens per 10,000 words is also provided. Due to the limitations of computer software in distinguishing the discourse function of individual words, the words cited may function as other roles than those of discourse markers and the overlapping functions of discourse markers (Andersen 2001) sometimes make their classification difficult.

TABLE 1

Frequencies of discourse markers in the corpora

	NNC	NC
Tokens	840	1229
Tokens per 10,000words	62.87	82.20

The frequency in the token analysis of the NNC indicates that EFL learners use fewer hedging items in their cross-cultural communication than the native speakers (62.87 vs. 82.20). The result is analogous to Fung and Carter's (2007) study, in which a statistically very significant underuse of discourse markers in the non-native speakers' corpus was reported. It is also in line with some corpus-based L2 studies on pragmatic markers in general which reported learners' underuse of markers in their speech (Muller 2005; Romero Trillo 1997, 2002). The analysis in terms of the frequencies of discourse markers only does not confirm that the vocabulary of nonnative speakers is smaller than that of native speakers in general (S. Lee, 2006). In the next section, therefore, a more detailed examination will be made on EFL learners' use of discourse markers in comparison with native speakers'.

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2. Frequencies of each discourse marker

Tables 2 and 3 show the frequency scores for the twenty three discourse markers in the NNC and the NC.

TABLE 2

Frequency of discourse markers in the NNC

Rank	Discourse markers	Tokens	Tokens/10,000 words	%(tokens/840)
1	I think	324	24.25	38.57
2	you know	111	8.30	13.21
3	So	109	8.15	12.97
4	And	89	6.66	10.59
5	But	77	5.76	9.16
6	I mean	29	2.17	3.45
7	Because	20	1.49	2.38
8	Well	17	1.27	2.02
9	Yes	16	1.19	1.90
10	Or	15	1.12	1.78
11	Okay	7	0.52	0.83
11	Just	7	0.52	0.83
13	Actually	6	0.45	0.71
14	Really	5	0.37	0.591
14	Sort of	5	0.37	0.59
16	Right	3	0.22	0.35
17	Say	0	0	0
17	See	0	0	0
17	Oh	0	0	0
17	Yeah	0	0	0
17	Cos	0	0	0
17	Now	0	0	0
17	Like	0	0	0

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Table 2 shows the percentage of discourse markers occurred in the NNC. The most frequent marker is *I think*, which comprises about 38.57 % of the total use of discourse markers. EFL learners combine *I think* with various words, phrases, and sentences. This means that *I think* is the most versatile discourse marker that EFL learners use in their interactions. Along with *I think*, *you know, so, and,* and *but*, which comprises about 84.5% of the total use of discourse markers, are frequently used in the NNC. EFL learners combine these with various words, phrases, and sentences.

In terms of frequency, other types of discourse markers are comparatively rare. Overall occurrence of all other types of discourse markers is much lower. There is no occurrence of *say, see, oh, yeah, cos, now, like*.

Table 3 shows the frequency scores of discourse markers occurred in the NC.

TABLE 3

Frequency of discourse markers in the NC

Rank	Discourse markers	Tokens	Tokens/10,000 words	%(Tokens/1229)
1	So	131	8.76	10.65
2	Right	111	7.42	9.03
3	Yeah	80	5.35	6.50
4	And	74	5.21	6.02
5	You know	72	4.94	5.85
6	Like	71	4.74	5.77
7	Well	68	4.54	5.53
7	Okay	68	4.54	5.53
9	But	65	4.34	5.28
9	Or	59	3.94	4.80
11	Just	55	3.67	4.47
12	Because	53	3.54	4.31
13	Now	49	3.27	3.98
14	Sort of	41	2.74	3.33
15	Yes	36	2.40	2.92
16	I think	35	2.34	2.84
17	I mean	30	2.00	2.44
18	Actually	29	1.93	2.35

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19	Say	28	1.87	2.27
20	Oh	26	1.73	2.11
21	Really	25	1.67	2.03
22	Cos	23	1.53	1.87

The native speakers' use of *I think* (2.84% of the total) sharply contrasts with the EFL learners' use of it, which is the most frequent discourse marker and takes up 38.57% of the total use of their discourse markers.

In terms of frequency, native speakers use a wider variety of discourse markers. The commonly used eight discourse markers in the NC such as *so, right, yeah, and, you know, like, well,* and *okay*, vary significantly in their distribution in the NNC. This strikingly contrasts with the EFL learners' use of them. EFL learners are found to display a more frequent use of several markers (*I think*, *you know, so, and, but*) and rare use of other markers. The result is analogous to Fung and Carter's (2007) study, in which non-native speakers are found to use less frequently the kind of discourse markers native speakers usually do.

To sum up, the results of frequency analysis show that the EFL learners tend to use relatively smaller number of discourse markers with limited number of different types than the native speakers. The study shows that EFL learners' overuse of several discourse markers results in relative underuse of other markers. And the most notable difference in use of discourse markers between the two corpora is that the most commonly used discourse markers in the two corpora vary significantly in their distribution. The EFL learners' tendency to overuse some markers and underuse of the others may cause their speech or writing to become less competent.

3. Categorial functional analysis

Generally discourse markers are less frequent in the NNC. Different lexical and grammatical categories (notably *I think*, *you know, so, and, but*) are used pragmatically as discourse markers in cross-cultural interactions, operating in the four functional categories as connectors, confirmation markers, response seekers, and thinking markers. Compared to the native speakers, however, the EFL learners tend to use less frequently the kind of discourse markers the native speakers usually use. Common ones functioning primarily on the interpersonal category (*sort of, right, actually, well* in Table 3) have only limited occurrences, even no occurrence at all (*really, say, see, yeah*). The following short extract from the NC indicates a high occurrence of interpersonally

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functional discourse markers. Among the 13 discourse markers, 7 (*all right, yeah, good, right, right, see, good*) function primarily in the interpersonal category.

> **So** that you know that I do take notes at the other end. There are my notes and that It absolutely critical for us to know.
> **All right**, **yeah**. **Good**.
> I haven't just done that. It's quite a different coloured pen. He did mention that to me he did say that to me. **Right**, there are two or three things that we are essential for us to find out when people phone in. **First of all**, whether the whole environment of selling advertising appeals. Whether they can be understood on the phone. **And** I'm not worried about accents.
> No, **right**.
> **I think** they are more acceptable nowadays anyway aren't they? **So**, **see** if I can understand people after twenty five thirty years in sales and marketing listening to people on the phone and knowing how important it is in this. Then I then that's fine. But I've **actually** spoken to an even a real Tyne and Wear Geordie accent.
> **Well, yes**. **Good**.
>
> (ICE-GB)

In contrast, discourse markers by the EFL learners occur primarily in the textual category, with a particularly heavy use of referential markers and cognitive markers. The range of discourse markers used is limited in and confined to a frequent use of *I think, you know*, *and*, and *but* as a kind of "pragmatic fossilization" (Muller, 2005; Fung & Carter, 2007). *I think* is used to mark speaker's thoughts and to express their attitude and *you know* to assess the listener's knowledge. Both belong to cognitive functional category of discourse markers. *And* and *but* work on a textual level and mark referential relationship in discourse.

> To tell the truth, I don't know about that 19 years old and 20 years old are not much different from each other. On the contrary, **I think** I agree with you. However, **I think** that to be 20 years old is the big event which marks the stages of life. 19 years old is a minority still, and 20 years old is an adult. **So I also think** that this arrangement is very strange and difficult to understand. Therefore, **and**, I want to know various opinion or thinking of everyone. Please tell me about this if you have some idea!
>
> When we are a grown-up, we can do a lot of things by ourselves. **And** over twenty years, all behaviors come with responsibilities and we should be responsible for

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> our behavior. However, **I think** sometimes we claim only the rights and don't' care about the responsibilities. A 20 year old youth is not a real grown-up. **I think** they just mature physically but not mentally. **And** they just demand many things for reason of just an adult. In Korea, it can be found easily in and around us**. I also think** that the people don't have enough consciousness of adults at the beginning of 20 years old. **You know** what I mean. **But I think** drinking and smoking are not quite natural for us at the age of twenty. **And** many people think drinking and smoking is natural. Do you think so, too? We have to think about the right and responsibility as an adult.
>
> (NNC)

As in the data above, many instances of *and* mainly indicate transition or continuation in the referential category. Similarly, the EFL learners' corpus reveals extremely high instances of *I think*. Research on *I think* in spoken discourse and informal written discourse suggests that its role is to mark linguistic politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), the degree of certainty of the propositions involved (O'Keeffe et al., 2007) rather than to signal an act of cognition. However, its high frequency in the NNC indicates that *I think* is used very heavily to mark both speakers' thoughts and to express attitude, which is argued to be an evidence of "a process of pragmatic fossilization" (Fung & Carter, 2007).

VI. CONCLUSION

Drawing data from EFL learners' cross-cultural communication and the subcorpus from ICE-GB , this study compares a different use of discourse markers in native and learner English, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Discourse markers take a role of smoothing the progress of interaction and are useful contextual clues for both native speakers and learners to structure and organize speech and writing in interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive categories. The results of the study consist with findings from a growing research in pragmatics, including cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, that they contribute to the management and development of discourse and perform important textual and interpersonal functions.

Quantitatively, there is a considerable discrepancy exists between EFL learners' corpus and the native speakers' corpus in the use of discourse markers. The EFL learners tend to use relatively smaller number of discourse markers than the native speakers in terms of total tokens. Among the discourse markers frequently used in the learners' discourse, *I think*, *and,* and *but* belong to the referential and cognitive categories on the

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textual level. But markers which have interpersonal functions (*yeah, right, so, see, cos*) are far less frequent compared to the discourse of native speakers. The EFL learners' tendency to overuse discourse markers on the textual level and a very restricted use of markers on the interpersonal level to mark shared knowledge or to indicate responses may cause their speech or writing to become less competent. Their overuse of one single versatile form (*I think*) and a few other markers demonstrates the EFL learners' difficulties in acquiring subtle stylistic variation in target language registers and pragmatic competence (Hill, 2001). The EFL learners' difficulties in using variety of discourse markers can lead to obstacles to coherent mutual intelligibility and difficulties in making a successful communication.

Due to the fact that the limited amount of data of the EFL learners' on-line discussion was analyzed and the corpus of native speakers compared does not belong to the exact same category with the EFL learners' corpus, the findings of the study should not be conclusive about Korean and Japanese learners of English. Differences between the use of discourse markers in the two corpora cannot be claimed to conclusively reflect differences between native speakers and non-native speakers of English. And while the use of discourse markers in the EFL learners' interaction is found to be inconsistent with that of native speakers, the listed items are not an exhaustive list of all the discourse markers in the English language. Moreover, the circumstances recognized as appropriated for the use of discourse markers and the functions each discourse marker is seen to fulfill might differ markedly in different domain such as family conversations, female vs. male friends chatting, teacher-student interactions, personal letters, etc, so the results of this study should be compensated in the future.

For all these limitations, this study still has both methodological and pedagogical implications. Methodologically speaking, computer corpora of both native and non-native English prove to be useful tool to yield meaningful data for investigating the aspects of EFL learners' language difficulties. The data used in this study came from small sub-corpora (on-line discussion, face-to-face conversations, broadcast interviews and discussions). By isolating sub-corpora of specific contexts of interaction from very large sized corpus, researchers can get a picture of how language use becomes specialized in its context of use and how lexico-grammatical patterns become routinized. Many of the features may not be shown up if they just focus on the mega sized corpora. Therefore, more attention needs to be given to specialized sub-corpora of specific contexts.

Pedagogically speaking, the EFL learners' heavy use of a limited number of hedging items indicates their small repertoire of hedges. Discourse markers constitute an aspect of pragmatic competence that underlies one's ability to use language in appropriate ways (Fung & Carter, 2007) and useful device for the successful interpersonal and cross-

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cultural interaction. This makes a compelling argument for not neglecting this area of language when teaching. It is important that language teachers have an understanding of pragmatics and of the implications for teaching it, particularly in the L2 classroom (Dash, 2004). The focus of teaching and learning English as a foreign language also should be given to how to actively use pragmatic markers such as discourse markers, because they are socially valued (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). It is not something that can be put aside only for the interactions between native speakers. The EFL learners need to be aware of its role in both spoken and written English to improve their communicative and pragmatic competence, so that the learners can be better equipped to avoid cross-cultural communication problems. Therefore, more research should be undertaken on the range and variety of relational language such as discourse marker which is used in everyday communication in English and serves to maintain good relations between participants in interaction. Moreover, research will be necessary to develop the curriculum which maximizes the opportunities for EFL learners to get enough exposure to such features of relational language.

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APPENDIX

A sample of NNC

To tell the truth, I don't know about that 19 years old and 20 years old are not much different from each other. On the contrary, **I think** I agree with you. However, **I think** that to be 20 years old is the big event which marks the stages of life. 19 years old is a minority still, and 20 years old is an adult. **So I also think** that this arrangement is very strange and difficult to understand. Therefore, **and**, I want to know various opinion or thinking of everyone. Please tell me about this if you have some idea!

When we are a grown-up, we can do a lot of things by ourselves. **And** over twenty years, all behaviors come with responsibilities and we should be responsible for our behavior. However, **I think** sometimes we claim only the rights and don't' care about the responsibilities. A 20 year old youth is not a real grown-up. **I think** they just mature physically but not mentally. **And** they just demand many things for reason of just an adult. In Korea, it can be found easily in and around us**. I also think** that the people don't have enough consciousness of adults at the beginning of 20 years old. **You know** what I mean. **But I think** drinking and smoking are not quite natural for us at the age of twenty. **And** many people think drinking and smoking is natural. Do you think so, too? We have to think about the right and responsibility as an adult.

A sample of NC

So that you know that I do take notes at the other end. There are my notes and that It absolutely critical for us to know.
All right, **yeah**. **Good**.
I haven't just done that. It's quite a different coloured pen. He did mention that to me he did say that to me. **Right**, there are two or three things that we are essential for us to find out when people phone in. **First of all**, whether the whole environment of selling advertising appeals. Whether they can be understood on the phone. **And** I'm not worried about accents.
No, **right**.
I think they are more acceptable nowadays anyway aren't they? **So**, **see** if I can understand people after twenty five thirty years in sales and marketing listening to people on the phone and knowing how important it is in this. Then I then that's fine. But I've **actually** spoken to an even a real Tyne and Wear Geordie accent.
Well, yes. **Good**.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

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