Analyzing Arabic Discourse Markers Through the Lens of Aljazeera's Instagram Caption

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Abstract

In recent decades, there has been growing interest at discourse markers (DMs) to improve the quality of writing and increase the comprehension of text. Despite the existence of many studies into Arabic DMs, little work reports the investigation of Arabic DMs diversity in accordance with the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) approach selected in social media. To plug this gap, this present study investigates Arabic DMs diversity through the lens of aljazeera Instagram caption. This qualitative study employed theory of Fraser (2005) and Khairudin, Noor & Rohman (2020) as the main framework of the study for the data analysis process. Findings show that there are top three of elaborative DMs on Aljazeera's captions namely wa (148), adhâfa (14), haisu (8). And lâkin, fîma, and filmaqâbil as a top three of contrastive DMs. Inferential DMs has bidzâlika, wa bidzâlika and wa bidzâlika bi sababin. Besides ba'da/wa ba'da, 'indamâ and wa ba'damâ as a temporal DMs on Aljazeera. Additionally, affirmative DMs as a new category also found in this study. Out of a total of 90 captions, Aljazeera used more elaborate DMs with 69,3 % than other categories. The major reason for the high frequency of EDMs is the high frequency of DMs wa.

Keywords: Arabic language, discourse markers, Instagram caption

Introduction

Discourse markers (hereafter DMs) have been the focus of many researchers and became of interest to them from the 1970s (Al-Khwaldeh, 2020). DMs as words or phrases, have an important role in promoting coherent discourse segments (Alsager, Afzal, Aldawood, 2020). Arabic DMs are a common cohesive device that used by language users to mark logical relationships between sentences, or other units of discourse that are united by DMs. They argue that DMs can explicitly show the function of each sentence in the text, therefore DMs are the main linguistic tools available for writers to explicitly show the structure of discourse (Saeed & Fareh, 2015). DMs exhibit a set of grammatical properties that distinguish them from other lexical and grammatical forms (Heine et al., 2021).

In the context of education and learning, the development of structure and various forms of DMs has an impact for Arabic students and teachers, particularly in writing skills (Khairudin & Noor, 2021). Writing skills have a role as a prominent representation of professional attitudes in the field of education (Al-Khazraji, 2019; Nurbayan et al., 2021). Alkhazraji also mentions that DMs are a linguistic strategy that allows students to achieve an effective writing. In academic writing, the use of DMs is an important element, and its shortcomings are seen as a beginner's mistake among second language writers. Students experienced problems regarding the use of DMS including unequal exchange and excessive use. Despite their awareness of the importance of DM to ensure the coherence of their essays, they need to develop their ability to use DM properly and efficiently to make their writing more logically connected (Riznanda, 2021). It is extremely important to also design

alternative ways and strategies for teaching discourse markers to equip students with the knowledge needed to become competent in writing cohesive whole texts (Dumlao & Wilang, 2019).

In several previous studies, research projects of DMs were also carried out by analyzing the use of discourse markers (DM) in the verses of the quran. This study investigates DMs *wa* in Arabic in the Koran. They mentioned that *wa* in Arabic has more functions than 'and' in English. This is due to the consideration of the type of text and culture. The Koran tends to use *wa* more often than any other signifier for the sake of harmony and symmetry. This leads to the conclusion that *wa* is one component of a coherent Arabic discourse (Kanaan, 2019). While in Unaldi's research, he found that EFL students in Turkey tend to use these DMs (I think and, in my opinion,) more than necessary and with different attention from native English speakers (Unaldi, 2017). the importance of teaching DMs to students in increasing their awareness of its use in writing a text. Writing not only uses a variety of good text procedures, but also describes and appreciates coherence and cohesion. Learning to write well is an art, which is passed down to some people naturally. However, it needs to be equipped with some other knowledge as well, such as getting to know text binding devices, including discourse markers (Aidinlou et al., 2012). From the study of the suitability of the use of DM, the most misappropriation was in the wrong connection. This problem must be overcome by increasing students' awareness to learn about DM appropriately (Rahayu & Cahyono, 2015).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the transform of school- to- house learning patterns cause all parties to take advantage of information technology (Susiawati, 2021). There was a significant increase in daily users of social media globally (Cinelli, 2020; Kaya, 2020; Bakhos, 2021;). Social media serve information quickly and up to date at any time, even in just seconds. It has a positive impact on the community without having to wait for the information to be published in newspapers or television (Nurkinan, 2017). Nowadays, social media is not limited to certain segments of society, while it has penetrated to everyone, as well as students. (Zhao, 2021; Rasheed, 2020). Studies reveal that among various age groups, college students are the one who have used social media most frequently (Azizi, Soroush, & Khatony, 2019; Kolhar, Kazi, & Alameen, 2021). Besides sharing news and information, it could turn into media of learning and teaching (Hosen et al, 2021), including language learning because it's closely related to socialization (Lai & Tai, 2021). In this regard, the author uses social media Instagram as a source of data for this research.

Several literature review that has been carried out previously revealed that DMs have various structures in the quran, newspapers, and even in the student's essay, but still rarely focuses on the use of DMs on social media, especially Instagram. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by summarizing these findings exclusively regarding Arabic DMs in aljazeera's captions by holistically bringing together various studies. In this study, the authors consider the following research questions: (a) What are the Arabic DMs used by Instagram Aljazeera in the captions they write? (b) What form of DMs is used more often by Instagram Al Jazeera?

Method

This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Furthermore, content analysis design is applied in this study.

The data sources of this study were obtained from several Instagram captions of Al Jazeera. The author chose aljazeera account because it is one of the news accounts that has more than three million followers on Instagram. Additionally, there are many users from

various countries who see the various uploads that are displayed. The captions were taken from aljazeera account that uploaded from 27 September 2021 to 16 October 2021.

The author chooses to apply the theory of Fraser (2005) and Khairudin, Noor & Rohman (2020) as the main research framework and use the classical Arabic approach as a reference in the data analysis process to meet research needs. In the final stage of the study, the authors analyzed the research findings to obtain a comprehensive study of the analysis of the syntactic form of Arabic DMs in Al Jazeera's Instagram captions.

The analysis technique of this study begins by taking on Aljazeera's captions in the form of Arabic DMs. Then Arabic DMs are categorized into four types according to the relationship of sentence meaning based on the theory of Fraser (2005) and Khairudin, Noor & Rohman (2020). Then the Arabic DMs are processed to provide an overview of the frequency of their use in Al Jazeera's Instagram captions.

Results and Discussion

Fraser (2006) divides Discourse Markers (DMs) into four categories: (a) elaborative, (b) contrastive, (c) inferential, and (d) temporal. The following are some Arabic DMs that I found in Al Jazeera's Instagram captions based on the four categories proposed by Fraser. Table 1.
List of Arabic Discourse Markers Category in Aljazeera Instagram Caption

Arabic DMs Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elaborative	183	69,3
Contrastive	18	6,8
Inferential	12	4,5
Temporal	45	17
Affirmative	6	2,4
Total	**264**	**100**

Based on table 1, it is known that the four categories of Arabic DMs based on Fraser's (2006) theory have been used in aljazeera's instagram captions. The elaborative category is the category that is most often used in aljazeera's captionss, with a total of 69.3%, the next category is temporal with a total of 17%, then the contrastive category is 6.8%, the inferential category (4.5%), and the the least used is the affirmative category (2.4%). The same result was also obtained in Choemoe & Bram's (2021) research on the use of DM in academic and non-academic writings of Thai EFL students, the DM most frequently used was the elaborative discourse marker (EDM), F=1,703. The study also concluded that increasing awareness of DM will help Thai EFL students to produce effective and coherent writing (Choemue et al., 2021).

The affirmative category is included in a new category adapted from Khairudin, Noor & Rohman (2020). His research shows that this DM has been widely used in modern Arabic script. Thus, Khairudin et al believe that this category can be added to the discourse marker category.

Next, the author will further describe the list of DMs from each category based on the data that the author has found in the Al Jazeera Instagram caption. The list of DMs describes the percentage of frequency of use which is arranged in a table.

Elaborative Discourse Markers

Elaborative DM is used in connecting sentences which aims to describe or explain the previous sentence. EDM can be traced in sentences that show additional information about the issues discussed (Khairudin & Noor, 2021)

Table 2.

List of Elaborative Discourse Markers Based on Aljazeera's captions

No	Arabic Discourse Markers	Meaning	Frequency
1	و	And	148
2	أضاف	Add	14
3	حيث	Where	8

There are 8 types of DMs in the elaborative category that the author found in Aljazeera's Instagram caption. In table 2, the author presents the top 3 DMs that are most often used by Aljazeera's Instagram accounts. Based on table 2, in the elaborative category, the use of Arabic DMs in Al Jazeera captions is wa, which is 148 times used. Next is *adhafa* with a total of 14 times. And lastly, DM *haisu* (8 times) is also widely used by Al Jazeera in their Instagram captions.

The use of DM wa is often found in some Arabic texts. This is because wa has many functions in Arabic. This is revealed in research (Alazzawie, 2019) that *wa* has several different functions in Arabic discourse, namely as a sentence opener (*wa isti'naf/ibtida'*), a conjunction of two or more entities or events (*wa athaf*), a marker of additional letters (*harf za'id*) as reinforcement, as things, as a marker of the oath sentence (*wa qasam*) and as *waw mâ'iyah* which means togetherness.

Because of there are many *wa* functions in Arabic, students often misunderstand it in the context of a sentence. It related to Andayani's study (2014). She revealed that there was a relationship between the use of the DMs and text coherence. Completely, instead of being caused by the matter of the use of DMs, this study revealed that the incoherent text was also triggered by several problems along with grammatical errors, irrelevant sentences, and out-of-topic sentences.

Contrastive Discourse Markers

The use of these DMs can help improve one's writing skills. However, its use needs to be adjusted to the context of the sentence so as not to cause mistakes. It was found that students use variance, abuse and overuse when using CDM. The abuse starts from the misplacement of certain markers, improper punctuation, and misunderstanding the use of markers. Excessive use of CDM is also found in student essays (Syahabuddin & Zikra, 2020)

Table 3.
List of Contrastive Discourse Markers Based on Aljazeera's captions

No	Arabic Discourse Markers	Meaning	Frequency
1	ولكن/لكن	However	10
2	فيما	While	3
3	في المقابل	On the other hand/ In comparison	2

Based on table 3, the Contrastive DMs category has three DMs that are often used by Instagram Aljazeera. These findings indicate that male DM was recorded with the highest frequency used in this category.

lakinna and *lakin* have different functions. *Lakinna* is a particle that is only used in nominal sentences (subject - predicate). It assigns the 'accusative' case to the subject and the 'nominative' case to the predicate, whereas men are usually used in the initial position of discourse to introduce a new topic. *Lakin* is regularly used in news reports and can be

followed up with questions. in this study (Hussein, 2008), alazeera used the two DMs, but the *lakinna* DM was more dominant in conveying a news through the caption.

On the other hand, in English, but has been used mainly by native speakers and non-native speakers as a confirmation or additional marker not to deny previous information. On the other hand, men have broader functions and meanings, which can be interpreted as corrections, confirmations, or rejections, cancellations, and exceptions. Although there are dialect differences among Arab communities, all native speakers use the same male function. This study suggests that DM and males with DM function under the Fraser framework are universal and can be generalized (Alsager, Afzal, Aldawood, 2020).

Overall, Aljazeera's captions more often use *lakinna/lakin* DMs to explain contradictory and comparative sentence relationships. Although it is not uncommon for Aljazeera to use other contrastive DMs such as *fima, fil muqâbil, wa ragmu.*

Inferential Discourse Markers

This category is a category of DMs that is rarely used by Al Jazeera Instagram. Inferential DM shows a sentence relationship that explains the cause in the previous sentence and the effect in the next sentence. In other words, the sentences or paragraphs before and after relating to explain the cause of a thing and the effect of it.

Table 4.
List of Inferential Discourse Markers Based on Aljazeera's captions

No	Arabic Discourse Markers	Meaning	Frequency
1	وبذلك	Thus/Therefore	3
2	وذلك	And that	3
3	وذلك بسبب	This is because	3

For this category, there are 8 types of DM which are classified as inferential DMs. Based on table 4, the three DMs are DMs that often appear in Al Jazeera's captions in this category. This can be seen from the frequency of the three are the same. DMs *bidzâlika, wa bidzâlika* and *wa bidzâlika bi sababin* are found three times each and are at the beginning of the sentence which aims to explain the effect of the previous sentence.

Temporal Discourse Markers

DM in this category shows that sentence relationships are related to the order between one sentence and another. Usually, this Temporal DM is used in a sentence sequence that describes a sentence description in the form of a sequence; either a sequence that describes the past or the future.

Table 5.
List of Temporal Discourse Markers Based on Aljazeera's captions

No	Arabic Discourse Markers	Meaning	Frequency
1	بعد/وبعد	After	27
2	عندما	At the same time as/ At the time when	6
3	وبعدما	And after	5

There are 9 types of temporal DMs found in aljazeera's Instagram captions. Based on table 5, DM *ba'da/ba'dama* occupies the highest position as the most used DM by Instagram Al Jazeera in this category, then *'indama'* is used 6 times and *ba'dama* is used 5 times.

Based on Schilder's research, temporal DMs such as after, before or during, are generally described as triggering discourse relationships that express temporal relationships (Mann and Thompson, 1987; Knott and Dale, 1996). However, not only that, but also about the interaction of these DMs with the context in multi-sentence discourse (Schilder, 1996).

Affirmative Discourse Markers

This category is a new category adapted by Khairudin, Noor & Rohman (2020). Based on the results of the analysis, the researcher found a new category based on the research data collected. This category is known as Affirmative DM. DM which is included in this category has the function of strengthening and emphasizing the meaning of a sentence in connecting sentences with other sentences in a discourse.

In this category, there are 3 types of DM that are used on Al Jazeera's captions, namely *Khasatan*, *wa akadat an*, and *thab'an*. In addition to the three types of DM, the authors found DM *lâ siyyamâ* which is still rarely discussed by several previous studies. Of the three types of DM in this category, usefulness is DM which is often found in Instagram captions compared to *lâ siyyamâ*.

Conclusion

There are top three of elaborative DMs on Aljazeera's captions namely *wa* (148), *adhâfa* (14), *haisu* (8). And *lâkin, fîma*, and *filmaqâbil* as a top three of contrastive DMs. Inferential DMs has *bidzâlika, wa bidzâlika* and *wa bidzâlika bi sababin*. Besides *ba'da/wa ba'da, 'indamâ* and *wa ba'damâ* as a temporal DMs on Aljazeera. Based on Fraser (2006), the category of DMs that is most often found in Instagram Aljazeera's captionss is elaborative DMs. This is due to the high frequency of using DM wa in each caption. DMs include linguistic items that operate within the text to help L2 Arabic learners as well as translations from and to Arabic to understand and produce Arabic texts more effectively.

Despite these results, it is important to note that this study does not pay attention to the details of the function of dms, such as the letter *wa* which has many functions. The above analysis is mainly based on the theory and analysis of dms choice appearing in the text. Therefore, it is recommended for further research to consider these variables to get a more accurate understanding of how the use of various *wa* functions affects a sentence.

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