Inappropriate Use of Transitions by National University of Lesotho Students

Puleng 'Makholu Letsoela

National University of Lesotho, Department of English, PO Roma 180, Lesotho

Tel: 266-2234-0601   E-mail: mv.letsoela@nul.ls

Abstract

The concept of metadiscourse is based on the view that, when people communicate, they do so on two levels. On one level, they provide information, and on another level, which is the level of metadiscourse, they actively intrude into their texts to guide readers through the texts or simply to build relationships with them. Using the interpersonal model of metadiscourse which was first introduced by Hyland and Tse (2004) and further developed by Hyland (2005), this paper focuses on one subcategory of interactive (or organizational) metadiscourse, transitions. Transitions, typically conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs, are devices that the writer uses to explicitly indicate how arguments are linked. Through them, the writer specifies the inferences that he/she wants the reader to make so that the reader can interpret the text in ways that the writer intends. This paper seeks to find out how the National University of Lesotho students inappropriately used transitions in their academic writing and the extent to which such inappropriate uses affected text comprehensibility. Findings indicate that the errors ranged from minor errors that did not affect text comprehensibility to very serious ones. As regards the errors that did not affect text comprehensibility, it was observed that these were mainly grammatical. Some errors were, however, more serious and concerned cases where it was difficult for the reader to interpret what the writer was trying to say even though he/she had used transitions. In these cases, the use of transitions did not at all make the text easily accessible to the reader.

Keywords: academic writing, metadiscourse, transitions

1. Introduction

The concept of metadiscourse derives from the view that, although people use language primarily to provide information about what happens within and around them, they also use language to comment on the information they give or simply to build relationships with others. For this reason metadiscourse has been defined "discourse about discoursing"

(Williams 1981: 47) or "discourse about discourse" (Vande Kopple (1985:83).

While there is no consensus with regard to the subcategories of metadiscourse, researchers classify metadiscourse into two distinct macro categories. Although the terminology may differ, it is agreed that one macro category, known as textual or interactive metadiscourse, is concerned with organization of the information to create a coherent and easy to follow text. Resources in this macro category are used to guide the reader to interpret the content in ways preferred by the writer. The other macro category, the interpersonal or interactional, is concerned with ways in which the writer enters into a dialogue with the reader and indicates his assessment of the proposition and directly addresses the reader as an active participant in the ongoing dialogue in the text.

In this study, we focus on organizational metadiscourse, or to be more precise, interactive/textual metadiscourse, and limit ourselves to the subcategory of transitions. Transitions are one of the most widely researched areas in writing, with researches using names such as conjunctions (Halliday and Hasan 1976), conjuncts (Quirk et al 1985), linking adverbials (e.g. Biber et al 1999), text connectives (e.g. Vande Kopple 1985) and transitions (Hyland 2005). These linking devices are important for text cohesion as they indicate the writer's understanding of the semantic relationship that holds between two units of discourse. In this paper, transitions refer to those linking devices as proposed by Hyland and Tse (2004). Other textual linking devices such as *in other words*, *firstly*, etc. are not included in this category because, while they also increase text comprehension by making explicit the relationship between sentences or paragraphs, they belong to other interactive sub categories. For ease of reference, Hyland and Tse's categorization of interactive devices is reproduced below:

Table 1. A model of metadiscourse in academic texts

Category	*Function*	*Examples*
Interactive resources	*Help to guide reader through the text*	
Transitions	*express semantic relation between main clauses*	*in addition/but/thus/ and*
Frame markers	*refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages*	*finally/to conclude/my purpose here is to*
Endophoric markers	*refer to information in other parts of the text*	*noted above/see Fig/in section 2*
Evidentials	*refer to source of information from other texts*	*according to X/(Y, 1990)/Z states*
Code glosses	*help readers grasp functions of ideational material*	*namely/e.g./such as/in other words*

Source: (Hyland and Tse 2004:169)

A review of the literature suggests that transitions rank high in in most forms of academic writing in order to ensure that the reader correctly recovers the writer's preferred interpretation. For example, Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993) carried out a cross-linguistic study of metadiscourse in persuasive writing by upper level undergraduate and graduate American and Finnish university students. They wanted to investigate if there were cultural and gender variations in the use of metadiscourse by the two sets of students. For each set of students, they selected twenty essays, ten written by male students and another ten by female students. Findings indicate that, in descending order, students used textual markers (which include transitions), hedges, attitude markers, commentary, interpretive markers, certainty markers and lastly attributors.

Another study that examined the use of metadiscourse in students' academic writing was carried out by Hyland (2004). He examined the purposes and distributions of metadiscourse in a corpus of 4 million words from 20 Masters and 20 PhD dissertations written in English by Chinese students from five Hong Kong universities. The findings indicate that the most frequent sub-categories were hedges, transitions, evidentials and engagement markers.

Another study was carried out by Zarei and Mansoori (2007). The corpus for this study was made from nineteen research articles from Applied Linguistics and Computer Engineering. Nine of the articles were written by native speakers of English and ten were written by native speakers of Persian. The results confirmed the view that metadiscourse is a feature of academic writing as the analysis of the total corpus indicated that there were 5,146 instances of metadiscourse. In terms of the writers' preference for specific sub-categories, it was observed that there were differences in the way writers in the two languages prioritized the sub-categories. For instance, the English writers used transitions followed by evidentials. In Persian texts, on the other hand, transitions were most frequent, followed by code glosses.

Charles (2011) conducted a corpus-based study of adverbials of result (which in this study are referred to as resultive transitions). These transitions were examined in the writing of Masters and Doctoral students. The corpus was built from eight MPhil dissertations with a total of 190 000 words and another eight from PhD theses with a total of 300 000 words. The student writers in both corpora were native speakers of English. The MPhil dissertations were in the field of Politics and represented the soft fields while the PhD theses were in the field of Materials Sciences and represented the hard fields. The following resultive transitions were analyzed for their distribution and functions: *thus, therefore, then, hence, so, consequently, as a result, accordingly, thereby* and *in consequence/as a consequence*. These transitions were searched using Wordsmith Tools. The concordance lines were manually analyzed to interpret their functions.

Frequency counts indicate that overall, the Materials Sciences sub-corpus had a slightly higher frequency than the Politics sub-corpus (315.3 and 289.5 instances per 100 000 words). In both corpora, *thus* and *therefore* were the most frequent markers while *in consequence/as a consequence* was the least used (1.6 and 0.3 per 100 000 words). The other markers with very low frequencies of less than 10 counts per 100 000 words in both corpora were *as a result*, *accordingly*, and *thereby*. The totals for *then* (Politics 44.2; Materials 34.30) and

consequently (Politics 15.3; Materials 10.7 per 100 000 words) were roughly similar. Great differences were observed in the frequency counts for *hence* and *so*. In Politics, *hence* had 19 occurrences while it was more than double in Materials (51 per 100 000 words). The marker *so* in Materials was also more than double the number in Politics (Materials 34.7; Politics 15.8).

Regarding functions of these markers, it was observed that the marker *then* was used to summarize the argument presented so far and draw a conclusion. Some differences of functions were observed in the use of *so* and *consequently*. In Politics, *so* had both a summative and resultive meaning. In Materials, *so* was used mainly to indicate immediate practical results in the experimental actions and processes. As regards *consequently*, it was observed that in Materials, it was mostly used to indicate the cause-effect relationship relating to the writers' work. It was also used to state the consequence of a well-known fact or a point generally accepted in the writers' discipline. In Politics, it was used to develop the writers' arguments which were based on the evaluation of a given scenario. This was a logical result. With regard to the functions of *thus, therefore* and *hence*, it was observed that these markers, which, in both corpora tended to co-occur with *and,* were used to state a direct or practical result of a situation presented in the preceding sentence.

As can be seen, studies that examined transition, along with other metadiscourse sub categories, indicate that transitions ranked high, thereby demonstrating their importance in creating reader friendly texts.

2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to find out how National University of Lesotho undergraduate students misuse transitions in their research projects. In particular, the paper seeks to find out which transitions the students used inappropriately, what kind of errors they committed and lastly the extent to which such inappropriate use affected text comprehensibility.

This study is important in that it adds to the existing body of research on the misuse of metadiscourse in students' writing and the findings have implications for the teaching extended writing. For instance, when Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) compared the use of metadiscourse in six good and six poor persuasive essays written by final year undergraduate and first year postgraduate ESL university students from French-speaking Canada, they observed that the errors occurred most frequently in connectives.

Cheng and Steffensen (1996:163) suggest that while the study of metadiscourse features is important, it is also important to examine errors in the use of those features. They point out that examining these errors, especially in students' writing, goes a long way to helping teachers coach their students into using metadiscourse features correctly. The notion of inappropriate use is succinctly explained by Li and Wharton (2012:348), who, when analyzing L1 Mandarin undergraduate students writing in English, added a fourth category, misuse, to Hyland's (2005) categorization of transitions. They explain that

This category was deemed necessary to account for the relatively frequent syntactic or discoursal infelicity which was noted in students 'deployment of this function. We found

examples of students using words or phrases which looked like transitions, but which expressed an inaccurate or inappropriate semantic relation between clauses.

3. Methods and Analysis

Data for this study were the discussion sections of the National University of Lesotho [NUL] undergraduate students' research projects in the departments of Agricultural Economics (Faculty of Agriculture), Language and Social Education (Faculty of Education), Nutrition (Faculty of Health Sciences), Historical Studies (Faculty of Humanities), Biology, (Faculty of Science and Technology) and Politics and Administrative Studies (Faculty of Social Sciences). The texts were scanned to produce an electronic corpus with each faculty having its own sub corpus.

A sample of sixty (60) texts was drawn, ten from each of the identified departments. The sample was selected randomly and it produced a corpus of 108,653 words. It shared the following parameters: genre, setting, level of study by writers and time frame. All the texts were extracted from NUL students' academic research reports submitted in the fourth and final year of undergraduate studies. These projects had been submitted in the period between 2004/5 – 2007/8 academic years.

Using a list of potential search items provided by Hyland (2005) and grammar books (e.g. Quirk et al 1985), an electronic search of transitions was made using Wordsmith Tools Version 5, a text analysis and concordance program. This was complemented by an in-depth contextual manual analysis. As this study is concerned with inappropriate use of transitions, in which case the use of a transition does not enhance text comprehension, cases of appropriate use were discarded. Cases of inappropriate uses were thus identified, counted and classified according to the type of inappropriacy they illustrated. Then, a careful analysis was made to determine the effect of such inappropriate uses on text comprehension.

4. Findings and Interpretation

Frequency counts indicate that there were 96 instances of inappropriate use of transitions. These instances involved five markers for the additive function, four for contrastive function and three for resultive function. The following table shows the distribution of these markers.

Table 2. Distribution of transition markers

Transition Marker	*Type of relation*	*Frequency*
Hence	Resultive	15
Therefore	Resultive	13
Furthermore	Additive	11
Thus	Resultive	10
But	Contrastive	9
In addition	Additive	8

On the other hand	Contrastive	8
Even though	Contrastive	7
Moreover	Additive	6
However	Contrastive	4
Also	Additive	3
And	Additive	2
Total		*96*

As the table above indicates, there were instances of incorrect use in each of the three subcategories of transitions. Here are examples from the additive subcategory:

1. To achieve a diet containing less than 4 grams of salt, a person should not add salt to their food or cooking. Barker (2003) **also** indicates that an increased salt intake may contribute to high blood pressure. **In addition** Whitney et al (2000) concludes that reducing salt intake cause no harm and diminishes risk of hypertension. [FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES-1]

2. 20 percent of respondents said that they store their waste together, which means that their waste is collected and disposed together. But 80 percent said that they separate the food remainings from the rest of their waste materials. This food is collected by people from neighboring villages, like Qoaling for animal feeding. **Also,** this separation helps avoid the co-disposal of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste together and also reduces smell. [FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-4]

3. Fluoride is a primary anticaries agent because it affects the ability of tooth to resist decay. **Furthermore**, Murray (1988) indicated that during 24-hour period after brushing the teeth with fluoridated tooth paste, the rate of plaque regrowth is lowered by 27 percent. [FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES-8]

4. 5.2.2 National Parks and other conservation areas

Furthermore national parks or nature reserves are other means through which they try to conserve medicinal plants and to promote scientific research. [FACULTY OF HUMANITIES-4]

5. From cycle one to three, the teacher did not make good preparations for guided discovery. Lesson plans were clearly and well-designed but the students were not acclimatized to this kind of teaching method. Poor English actually affected students' performance because they could not answer questions correctly. **Moreover,** organization and guidance of discovery method determines its failure or success. [FACULTY OF EDUCATION-6]

6. Treatment with EM effectively reduces chloroform bacteria, which is harmful to the environment **and** enhanced spinach yield. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-3]

In example 1, the writer failed to logically sequence the ideas expressed in the three sentences. The first sentence is a statement on how to have a healthy dosage of salt in a diet. The second relates to the effects of high doses of salt in the body. The third sentence is about the rewards of having a low salt intake. These inappropriate links, which are caused by the misuse of the additive markers, render the text incoherent because even though the three sentences relate to hypertension, they are not ordered in such a manner that they make the text flow. To correct this error, the last two sentences could be joined by a contrastive marker such as *while* to balance the points relating to the effects of salt intake (i.e. high vs. low intake). Then, having shown these two sides, the writer could then introduce the third sentence which will logically fit in to indicate what a person can do in order to attain the required healthy doses of salt in the body. The resultant structure would be:

7. While high salt intake may contribute to high blood pressure (Barker, 2003), low salt intake reduces the risk of hypertension (Whitney et al 2000). To achieve a diet containing less than 4 grams of salt, a person should not add salt to their food or cooking.

In example 2, there was no need to use *also* as that would suggest that the writer has already indicated at least one advantage of separating food remains from the rest of household waste. Here, the student just needed to omit *also* and produce a structure like:

8. …80 percent said that they separate the food remainings from the rest of their waste materials. The food is collected by people from neighboring villages, like Qoaling for animal feeding. Separating the food remainings from the rest of household waste helps avoid the co-disposal of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste together and reduces smell.

In example 3, the first sentence is a claim the writer makes about fluoride, namely that it is an anticaries agent. The second sentence is a statement giving concrete support to the claim made about fluoride. That being the case, the transition *furthermore* is not an appropriate link between the claim and the supporting details. A marker such as *for instance* would be more appropriate.

Example 4 shows how students would just use a transition marker even when there was no preceding clause. Here the student was beginning a new section and it just did not make sense to use the marker *furthermore*. This is because the marker *furthermore* has a semantic reading of *in addition*.

As regards example 5, it can be observed that the student linked totally unrelated points. For instance, the student starts by narrating his/her classroom experience (see sentences 1-3). Then, suddenly he/she introduces a totally unrelated point. The student's claim that organization and guidance of discovery method determines whether it will be successful or not is best suited for a topic sentence that the writer could develop by explaining how the method can determine its failure or success.

Example 6 illustrates the use of a wrong marker. Here, the contrastive marker *although* is appropriate to show concession because, if chloroform bacteria is harmful to the environment, it comes as unexpected that it can enhance crop yields. The resultant structure would be:

9. Treatment with EM effectively reduces chloroform bacteria, which, although is harmful to the environment, enhanced spinach yield. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-3]

With regard to the contrastive markers, it was observed that most wrong uses of contrastive markers concerned redundancy involving the use of *although* and *but* to express concession. Students had a tendency to use them together within the same sentence as shown below:

10. **Though** it was found that most of the farmers went to tertiary, **but** none of them undertook a course in dairy production. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-5]

11. **Even though** the staff personnel was found to be cooperative **but** the service was still inaccessible because of the reasons mentioned above. [FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-8]

12. **Although** discoloration was not assessed in this study **but** in samples where amounts of algae decreased the water was becoming clear. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-6]

13. Therefore it can be concluded that **even though** the chiefs and the local councilors argued that the poor and the rich have equal access **but** in reality the rich have more access than the poor. [FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-7]

Apart from that, students used the wrong markers as in the following:

14. Even though the information at Telecom Lesotho reveals that privatization leads to improved management and increasing profits, it does not benefit ordinary Basotho at the grass-root level. **But** the records show that per capita income has been declining since the privatization programme was launched. [FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-8]

15. According to Piper (1996), tea is a major source of fluoride in the diet, providing 70 percent of fluoride...Seafoods such as fish also provide some fluoride**... On the other hand** fluoridated toothpaste provides fluoride. [FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES-8]

In example 14, the clause introduced by *but* is proof that privatization has not benefited ordinary Basotho. The student should have used an exemplification marker such as *for example*. This way, it will be clear that the second sentence is evidence to the claim the writer made in the preceding sentence. The relationship between the two sentences is that of claim and support.

In example 15, the student has no reason to use *on the other hand* as it is clear that he/she is sequencing points about the sources of fluoride. The first two sentences relate to dietary sources of fluoride (i.e. tea and seafood). Although the third sentence relates to a non-dietary source of fluoride (i.e. toothpaste), this does not warrant the use of contrastive marker. An additive marker would be appropriate to produce a structure such as:

16. According to Piper (1996), tea is a major source of fluoride in the diet, providing 70 percent of fluoride...Seafoods such as fish also provide some fluoride… Fluoridated toothpaste **also** provides fluoride. [FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES-8]

In some cases, the students used contrastive markers even when this was not necessary.

17. When a child falls asleep with the bottle during naptime or at night, child's teeth get serious harm. During sleeping, the flow of saliva decreases allowing the sweetened liquid in the bottle to pool around the child's teeth for a long time (Naidoo and Yengopal, 2003).**On the other hand**, the percentage of children who were Faculty of Education by cups constituted only 58.4 percent as compared to those who were bottle Faculty of Education. [FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES-8]

18. The whole plant is rarely used as a medicine. This is because the active ingredients in leaves, roots, bark, stem and rhizoids may be quite different. One part may be very toxic and another harmless. Roots, bark, stem and rhizoids are normally used as medicinal parts (Matsaba, 2004). **However,** some poisonous plants are still used in Lesotho. [FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-4]

In these examples, it is not clear what meaning the writers intended to convey by using the contrastive markers. In example 17, if we remove the transition *on the other hand*, the relationship among the three sentences is very clear and logical. In this case, the student could have simply replaced *on the other hand* with a phrase like *in this study*. In other words, there was no need to use the transition marker. In example 18, the whole sentence, and not just transition *however i*s simply irrelevant. This sentence simply interrupts the flow of the text.

Concerning resultive markers, it was observed that, as with other categories, there were instances of inappropriate use. It was not clear how the clauses introduced by *therefore/thus/hence* were logically derived from preceding sentences. Here are examples:

19. The brown colour is due to organic matter incorporation into the soil **therefore** organic matter improves drainage. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-8]

20. This might be due to the fact that most farmers rely on purchased feeds, they do not grow any feeds, hence experience high costs of feeding the dairy cows, which may in turn discourage them to rear more dairy cows. Lekota (2003) indicated that although the household is a decision making body, the household head decisions normally prevail, **thus,** the socio-economic status of the household determines the level of technology in production. [FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE-5]

21. This action research also provided me with basic principles of how to mitigate the disruptive learning and teaching situation without harshly punishing the learners **hence** it is not easy to break the rules that one have been outlined by him or her. [FACULTY OF EDUCATION-6]

In example 19, there is no implication of result. Even if it is true that the brown color is a result of the presence of organic matter, that does not justify the conclusion that organic

matter improves drainage. If we analyze the sentence at face value and focus on the meaning, it is clear that the student makes two claims about organic matter. The first part of the sentence explains that it was the presence of organic matter that caused the brown color while the second is just a statement of fact about organic matter. From what we generally know about organic matter, it improves drainage regardless of the color. That being the case, there is no resultive relationship between the arguments in this sentence.

In example 20, the clause introduced by *thus* ought to have shown the situation that would arise as a result of the household head making a decision. As it stands, the present clause does not address that result. In example 21, there seems to be a gap in presenting the argument. Instead of rushing to the result, the writer ought to have elaborated on the first clause, saying more about the basic principles of how to mitigate disruptive learning. If we want to retain the meaning contained in the clause introduced by hence, those principles might, it seems, include engaging students in making rules. Then the writer could rephrase the second clause to highlight the result (*hence it will not be easy to break the rules the students made themselves*).

In some cases, there was no need to use the transitions. In the following example, for instance, the student just needed to omit the transition.

> 22. The last chapter provided literature review for the study; this chapter is about data analysis and interpretation. The chapter **therefore** is divided into three categories…[FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-9]

In this example the writer gives the impression that the chapter on data analysis and interpretation ought to have three categories. This conclusion is wrong.

Looking at these errors, we can categorize cases of inappropriate use of transitions into four types. The first type concerned cases of related clauses, wrong marker (e.g. example1). Here, the semantic relations between the clauses were clear but the writers used the wrong links. As pointed out earlier, transitions simply make the relations between clauses and the meaning relations can still be established in their absence. Another kind of error, which is closely related to cases of related clauses, wrong marker, involved cases where the meaning relations could be established. Here the problem was grammatical redundancy where students used two markers, *although* and *but* in the same sentence (e.g. example 10) while only one transition was sufficient. The third kind of error concerned unnecessary transitions. In these cases, the meaning relations would still be clear and there was absolutely no need for to use the transitions (e.g. example 2). The fourth and last kind of error concerned cases of unrelated clauses, wrong marker (e.g. example 19). In such cases, the clauses were not at related and meaning relations could therefore not be established.

The findings in this study are similar to others which examined the use of transitions in students' writing. For example, Crewe (1990) in a study of linking adverbials at Hong Kong University observed cases of the use of wrong markers where students would for instance use *on the contrary* instead of *however* or *on the other hand*. Crewe attributes such misuse to the fact that textbooks or teaching materials often offer lists of linking devices under certain

categories and students tend to take them as equivalents. Field and Yip (1992) also observed that students would misuse transitions. For example, they would use *on the other hand* to add a point. In a study of the use of linking devices in French EFL students' writing, Granger and Tyson (1996) observed that students seemed not to understand the semantic properties of certain adverbials hence the misuse. They also observed cases of inappropriate syntactic positioning. Chen (2006) and Lei (2012) observed cases of the use of transitions for surface logicality. These involved cases where students' sentences are connected well superficially, but when conducting a detailed analysis, it is observed that the sentences are loosely connected and lack cohesion.

We conclude this discussion by examining the effects of these errors on text comprehension. The errors that were observed ranged from minor errors that did not affect text comprehensibility to very serious ones that could leave the reader wondering if the writer understood what he/she was saying. As regards the errors that did not affect text comprehensibility, it was observed that these were mainly grammatical. In those cases, the reader would have had no difficulty understanding the arguments made. To a reader (or supervisor) who is not very strict about language or mechanics, these errors can be tolerated. This is mainly because the writers could easily correct them as they proofread their work. In examples 10-13 for instance, the writer only needed to decide which of the two markers (*even though* and *but*) to remove. Cases of related clauses, wrong markers also did not adversely affect text comprehensibility.

Some errors were, however, more serious and readers were likely to find them irritating. One very serious error concerned cases where it was difficult for the reader to interpret what the writer was trying to say even though he/she had used metadiscourse. In these cases, the errors made it difficult to comprehend the writers' arguments. This means that the use of metadiscourse markers did not at all make the text easily accessible to the reader. These errors could not be tolerated because they produced incoherent texts. Lack of logical relations between the sentences creates confusion as could be seen in cases which we classified as unrelated clauses, wrong marker. For errors involving unrelated clauses, it can be concluded that these errors were a result of poor argumentation and not understanding the meanings expressed by the transitions used. The reader is thus forced to reanalyze the text in order to try to understand the inferences the writer meant to make.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

To conclude, as it has been observed that using transitions appropriately is still a challenge to NUL students, it is recommended that students need to be made aware of the meaning of each of the transition markers. It does not help much to just give a list of transitions and may be group them under the major functional categories of addition, contrast, result, etc. currently, many books and course materials aimed at helping ESL students improve their writing seem to take for granted that students, if given the functional categories of linking words, will be able to appropriately use them. For instance, Oshima and Hogue (1999), likening transition signals to links of a chain, advise students on the importance of using signals to show relationships between parts of their texts. Likewise, Beekman et al (2011) encourage students

to use these signals as they provide text cohesion and are thus found in academic assignments. They also group them into functional categories. As there is evidence that students still face challenges in using transitions appropriately, the challenge is for teachers to focus on the explicit teaching of how to use each of these markers. Future research should thus focus on whether students would still face problems even after explicit teaching.

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