

# The Effect of Teaching Structural Discourse Markers in an EFL Classroom Setting

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effects of explicit teaching on the acquisition of spoken discourse markers (DMs) on EFL learners' presentation production. It also aimed to measure the impact of two different treatments on the acquisition of a set of DMs.

This study is an experimental study and focuses on the overall production of spoken structural DMs in pre and post instruction where two particular teaching methods are employed. For this purpose, 41 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) female learners from the foundation program participated and they were on the Upper intermediate or B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference Ability Scale (CEFR) at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia. Learners were divided into two groups; one group was taught using Task-Based-Language Teaching method (TBLT) while for the other group was taught using the Presentation-Practice-Production model (PPP) was used. Based on the functions of structural discourse markers, five selected topics were taught by the researcher for two hours per lesson, which makes up ten hours per group.

The study mainly aspires to answer three questions; Firstly, it explores which discourse markers do Saudi EFL learners use in giving presentations in English speaking classes (pre-test) and the reason for doing so, is to examine the progress of learners use of DMs through the whole teaching period. Secondly, it investigates which DMs do Saudi learners use after instruction in the immediate post-test and in the delayed post-test that is four weeks after the instruction. Finally, by carrying out a comparative analysis between (TBLT and PPP) the study aims to find out which teaching method is more effective and why.

**Keywords:** discourse markers, EFL learners, explicit instruction, giving presentation, TBLT & PPP

## 1. Background

Recent studies in corpus linguistics have examined specific aspects of spoken grammar particularly in unplanned speech. According to McCarthy and Carter (2001, p. 1), "spoken grammars have uniquely special qualities that distinguish them from written ones". There are many elements of spoken grammar, such as:

- discourse markers, e.g. "I mean", "I see", "Ok", "well", "right";
- ellipsis, e.g. "... got an awful cold" (ellipsis of "I've");
- vague language, e.g. "kind of" and "or something", as in "Can you get me a sandwich or something?"

(Carter & McCarthy, 1995, 1997, 2006; McCarthy & Carter, 1995)

In spoken discourse, according to Fung and Carter (2007), the amount and frequency of DM use is significant in comparison to the use of other forms because they serve important textual and interpersonal functions. Schiffrin (1987), Maschler (1998) and Fraser (1999) agree that DMs act as influential interactional features rather than having a purely grammatical function. One of the most important features of using DMs is to constitute and organize talk. DMs have different/open grammar classes for example "Now" can be an adverb and "So" can be a conjunction. So, based on their grammatical classes "Now" and "So" are not DMs here (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, Fung & Carter, 2007). Furthermore, they can be single words such as "First" or longer expressions such as "Let's move on to". According to Fung and Carter (2007) DMs are multifunctional words and as an example

“so” and “Now” can be used for both summarizing and shifting topics. Furthermore, DMs have been studied from different perspectives in linguistics. Perhaps for this reason, as Jucker and Ziv (1998a) state, “there is no generally agreed upon definition of the term ‘discourse marker’” (p. 1) and the same holds true for their functions. Nonetheless, there is acknowledgement that DMs have a pragmatic meaning in discourse and consequently play a significant role in speakers’ pragmatic competence because they “contribute to the pragmatic meaning of utterances” (Müller, 2005, p. 1). Thus, the following paragraph covers a number of definitions from different perspectives. Schiffrin (1987) defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (p. 31). From a grammatical-pragmatic perspective, Fraser (1999) defines them as “a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases” (p. 931). Fraser holds the view that DMs “contribute to the interpretation of an utterance rather than to its propositional content” (1999, p. 946). He noted that DMs connect two segments in utterances (Fraser, 1999). Fraser, also distinguished different types of DMs and identified two main categories:

- 1) DMs which relate to messages such as:
  - a) Contrastive: (al) though, but, etc.
  - b) Collateral: above all, also, etc.
- 2) DMs which relate to topics, such as: back to the original topic, by the way, etc.

(Fraser, 1999, pp. 946-950)

Fraser (1990) notes that DMs are highly beneficial guides for explaining the intention of the speakers in communication and omitting them from the discourse could lead to a breakdown in communication. In support of Fraser’s previous argument, it can be argued that to give a good oral presentation, learners’ should use cohesive devices (DMs), which will aid the coherence of the presentation.

### *1.1 The Instruction of DMs*

There are a limited number of studies conducted on the instruction of DMs in EFL contexts, for example (Aidinlou & Shahrokhi, 2012; Rahimi & Riasati, 2012; Sadeghi & Heidaryan, 2012). All studies revealed similar findings, namely explicit instruction has a positive impact on learners’ production. The main difference being that each study focused on a different genre: writing skills, oral production and listening comprehension, respectively. In all these studies the addition of a delayed post-test would have been beneficial to measure the long-lasting effects of teaching DMs on learners’ acquisition. Rahimi and Riasati (2012) stated that using DMs will help learners to perform better in spoken skills. In English as a Second Language context (ESL) Jones (2009) carried out a small-scale study with two groups, both of which were given the same DMs using two different teaching approaches: illustration, interaction and induction (III) and presentation, practice and production (PPP). The results demonstrated that PPP had a considerable effect on learners’ use of the taught DMs.

### *1.2 Teaching Methods in the Saudi Arabian EFL Context and Study Application*

According to Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013), within the Saudi context “explicit classroom teaching should be provided to improve the knowledge of four basic skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking” (p. 117). However, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia tend to follow traditional methods (Shah et al., 2013). It has been labelled by Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013 and Shehdeh, 2010 as an insufficient method since it is teacher-centred. Al-Seghayer stated “Saudi EFL teacher is viewed as a material presenter and content demonstrator, not as a manager of language learning situations” (2014, p. 20). English teaching methods in Saudi Arabia context are based heavily on two teaching methods respectively: the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) and Grammar Translation Method (GTM). In ALM, teachers are engaging learners in drills and repetition of new grammatical structures and new vocabularies and phrases (Al-Seghayer, 2014). While in GTM, there is an emphasis on explaining grammatical forms and structures and translating texts (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Khan (2011) argued that teachers in Saudi Arabia apply “the traditional grammar and translation method as it seems easier for them as well as the students. And, finally the target language suffers” (p. 119). I agree with Khan (2011) in that, grammar translation method might be easier for both teachers and learners but the most important factor in this process is ‘learners’ not ‘teachers’. In fact, learners are not exposed to language use outside their classes. Due to lack of language use, Saudi EFL learners need to practice and communicate the language effectively within the classroom in order for them to acquire the input/target forms. Based on the previous discussions and having provided an overview of the nature of teaching English in the Saudi context, it is significant to consider the effectiveness of different communicative teaching methods. In this particular study both TBLT and PPP will be introduced differently. TBLT will be applied inductively while PPP will be applied deductively. Inductive and deductive teaching are two different ways of teaching. Richards and Schmidt (2010) defined inductive learning

as: “learners are not taught the grammatical or other types of rules directly but are left to discover or induce rules from their experience of using the language” (p. 158). On other hand, they also defined deductive learning as “an approach to language teaching in which learners are taught rules and given specific information about a language” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 158). Applying TBLT and the PPP model (new way of teaching in this context) will help establish the most effective way of teaching DMs to learners in this specific context in terms of their effects on learners’ spoken skills. Both TBLT and PPP will be used within the communicative approach. For the purposes of this study, as students in the Saudi context are expected to give a presentation as part of their studies. I chose to focus on the structural function to aid students in structuring their speech, for example, opening/closing topics and sequencing points in a presentation. As Fung and Carter (2007) point out, “Structurally, [DMs] are used to orientate and organize the discourse in progress and signal links and transitions between topics” (p. 435). The proposed target DMs are drawn from Fung and Carter (2007), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Target structural DMs

Function	English discourse marker
Opening and closing topics	Now, OK/okay, right, well, let’s start. Ok, Right
Sequencing	First, second, next, then, finally
Giving examples	For example, Like.
Topic shifts	So, now, well, let’s turn to, let’s move on to
Summarizing opinions	So, to conclude

Source: Fung & Carter, 2007, p. 418.

### 1.3 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Saudi Arabia

According to Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013), teachers in Saudi Arabia find it hard to employ communicative methodologies and this is as a result of many institutional and sociocultural restrictions. However, Shah *et al.* (2013) argue that there is a demand for adopting CLT in EFL contexts. Al-Seghayer (2014) summarized these restrictions under four key constraints: beliefs, curriculum, pedagogical and administrative constraints. Teaching methods constraint has been discussed before. In brief, teachers need to rethink more about the effectiveness of teaching English to learners regardless of the constrains within this context as I believe they can overcome these obstacles but it needs solid effort and dedication from them. There is also a need for the implementation of communicative teaching methods. Shehdeh (2010) argues that, learners’ exposure to English needs to be maximized by adopting communicative tasks as well as increasing the learners’ talking time. Shah *et al.* (2013) also contend that teachers need to make efforts in involving their students in communicative activities.

### 1.4 PPP model

The PPP model is a form-focused approach and is common in that many teachers use it and many textbooks are based on it. PPP stands for presentation, practice and production (Thornbury, 2006). Willis and Willis (2007) point out the main features of this method as:

- 1) A focus on one or two forms.
- 2) This focus on form comes before learners engage in communicative activity.
- 3) The teacher has control of learner language.
- 4) The success of the procedure is judged in terms of whether or not learners produce the forms with an acceptable level of accuracy.

In addition, the sequencing of the lesson is as follows:

- **Presentation:** grammar structures are explained and presented by the teacher or elicited from the learners
- **Practice:** learners practise using these structures (accuracy)
- **Production:** learners produce the language (fluency)

(Thornbury, 2006, p. 172)

### 1.5 Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has attracted the attention of many scholars such as Ellis (2005) and Samuda and Bygate (2008) and in recent years there has been increased interest in exploring TBLT in classroom settings in different contexts (Leaver & Willis, 2004; Littlewood, 2007; Van den Branden, 2006). Moreover, studies have also focused on different aspects of TBLT and the impact of the design and implementation of tasks on learners' oral output. Many researchers support the use of TBLT (e.g. Ellis, 2003; Long, 1996; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). Richards and Schmidt (2010) define TBLT as "a teaching approach based on the use of communicative and interactive tasks as the central units for the planning and delivery of instruction" (p. 585). Willis and Willis (2007) state "the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is done by designing tasks – discussions, problems, games and so on – which require learners to use the language for themselves" (p. 1). In this approach, language is viewed as a means of communication and learners are encouraged to use the language. The approach perceives "meaning as the starting point for language development, and ... form as developing from meaning" (W. Willis & D. Willis, 2007, p. 7). According to Carless, (2012) "TBLT approaches the acquisition of grammatical form in a different way to the more explicit teacher-fronted explanation practiced by many teachers". (p. 348). So, the main objective of applying TBLT in this context is to test out the suitability of the implementation of TBLT in university settings particularly in the Saudi EFL context as well as deciding whether or not we need to move away from the traditional methods to the TBLT method based on measuring the long lasting effect of teaching on the acquisition.

### 1.5.1 Framework for TBLT

A well-known framework for TBLT is provided by Willis (1996), who identifies three stages. These stages are elaborated in Figure 1.

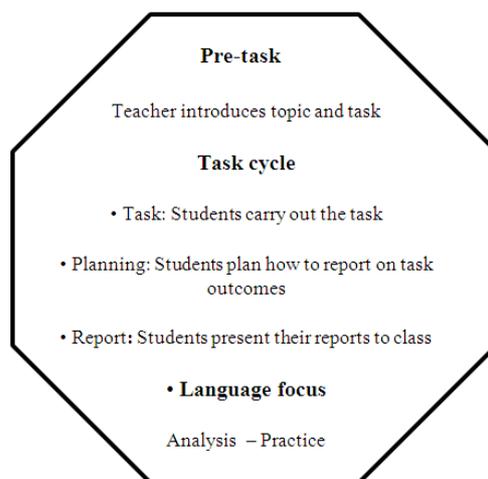


Figure 1. A framework for TBLT (Willis, 1996, p. 52)

### 1.6 Challenges within the Saudi Context

According to Ellis "in teaching contexts where teachers and students are used to traditional approaches it would be unwise to make a sudden and total switch to TBLT" (2015, p. 383) hence this study is a small attempt to test out the suitability of communicative methodologies (TBLT and PPP) in this context. In fact, applying TBLT in EFL settings requires changes to the conventional roles for both teachers and learners (Carless, 2012). However, there are many challenges in the Saudi context arising from the implementation of TBLT and PPP such as the use of first language (L1), learner's motivation and classroom management. With regard to the use of mother tongue, the implementation of TBLT will minimize the use of L1 (W. Willis & D. Willis, 2007). Learner's lack of intrinsic motivation is another challenge, as learners want to pass their exams only. Classroom management was another challenge I faced in applying my pilot study as learners were sitting in rows and asking them to sit in groups was a real challenge because classrooms are not equipped for group work. Finally, Ellis (2015) argues that TBLT is not an alternative to traditional methods, but an adjunct to them. In support of Ellis' argument, it can be said that, using communicative methods alongside traditional methods is a demand in order to boost

learners' communicative competence.

## 2. Statement of Originality

This study will make an original contribution to classroom research by examining the effectiveness of different methods of teaching DMs in the Saudi EFL context. This study will thus differ from others in three respects: the location (a Saudi university), the context (EFL speaking classes) and the genre (presentation skills). In the Saudi context, to my knowledge this study is the first that investigates the effects of explicit teaching on the acquisition of spoken discourse markers in EFL speaking classes in Saudi Arabia. However, there are a number of studies investigating the use of DMs in writing skills by Saudi EFL learners, for example (Al-Yaari et al., 2012; Daif-Allah & Albeshir, 2013; Almakoshi, 2014; Alghamdi, 2014). However, this study will be different in finding out the use of DMs, then teaching them to two different groups using two different methods in order to find out which teaching methods work better on learners' spoken production. The research also has significance for the participants in the research, potentially raising the awareness of the EFL learners and the teachers on the importance of teaching/learning and using DMs and highlighting their structural function in discourse. Furthermore, I aim to contribute to the effort that has already been made in promoting and improving classroom research in the EFL context. It is also hoped that this research will contribute to the research fields in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, this study is a small attempt to make changes in teaching methods in this context which is based on helping learners to pass tests rather than helping them to be communicatively competent. As a result of employing traditional teaching methods (GTM and ALM), Al-Seghayer (2014) contends "There has been a rapid increase in the percentage of Saudi students who have failed to acquire competency levels in English" (p. 22). This study aims to be beneficial for EFL teachers, scholars, researchers and materials' designers.

## 3. Methods

The study aims to answer the following questions for the PhD stage:

- 1) To what extent does teaching DMs explicitly in the specific Saudi EFL higher education context assist students to use them effectively?
- 2) Which teaching method, PPP (inductive), PPP (deductive) or TBLT has a long-lasting effect on acquisition of DMs?
- 3) To what extent do Saudi EFL learners consider learning structural DMs via PPP or TBLT more effective than traditional teaching methods?

This is an experimental study and the first research question is raised to establish a baseline for the study by finding, which DMs Saudi learners use in their presentations in pre-test, post-test and delayed post-tests. The second research question is set to find out whether inductive teaching has a long lasting effect than deductive teaching. And the third research question is raised to gain an understanding of learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of learning DMs and teaching methods. The main aim for the pilot study is exploratory, as well as to obtain primary answers to research questions. The pilot study mainly aspires to answer the following questions for the MPhil stage.

- 1) To what extent does teaching DMs explicitly in the specific Saudi EFL higher education context assist students to use them effectively?
- 2) Which teaching method has a greater impact upon acquisition (PPP or TBLT)?

In order to answer the above questions the following hypotheses were created.

- 1) Teaching DMs will make a difference in learners' presentation production.
- 2) Teaching methods will have the same impact on learners' acquisition of DMs.

The pilot study seeks to explore which discourse markers Saudi EFL learners use in giving presentations in pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-tests. The reason for doing so is to examine the progress of learners' use of DMs throughout the whole teaching period to establish a baseline for the study. Additionally, by doing a comparative analysis between TBLT and PPP the study aims to find out which teaching method is more effective in this context and why. This study was carried out by collecting data from instructed classes. According to Timmis (2012), "if we take the view that applied linguistics involves the interaction of theory and practice, rather than simply the application of theory to practice, two further kinds of research will be useful: attitudinal research and classroom research" (p. 521). Hence, this study is an experimental study and consists of classroom research. For the aim of conducting a pilot study and answering the research questions at this stage, the main intention was to use a quantitative method. Dornyei defines quantitative method as, "quantitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data" (2007, p. 24). A mixed

methods approach will be adopted in the main study “to achieve fuller understanding of a target phenomenon” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 164), and to get more in-depth results and to enrich the statistical findings. For the purposes of this study, 41 female learners in the foundation program at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia were selected based on their language proficiency level (B2 or upper intermediate). Learners were divided into two groups: one group was taught by using Task-Based-Language-Teaching method, while the other was taught using the Presentation-Practice-Production model. Their age groups ranged between 18 and 20 years. Learners in both groups had a pre-course test, which is the Oxford Online Placement Test. So, based on the results of the tests, they were placed in upper intermediate (B2) classes. Having some learners who are lower than B2 level in the speaking skills is inevitable in language classes. Additionally, the B2 level is defined as ‘the independent user’ and learners at this level “Can understand the main ideas... Can interact with a degree of fluency... Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue ...” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24). The level of students is essential in drawing a strong and informative conclusion. The reason for choosing this specific level is based on Swan’s (2005) claim that TBLT is appropriate for advanced students, something that Carless (2009) supports, noting that “TBLT strategies are likely to be suitable for adult learners who already have substantial linguistic resources and need mainly to activate this language” (p.52). It can be said that TBLT is not appropriate for learners with low proficiency in English as they do not have the basic resources of English to do the tasks and participate effectively. The reason for choosing TBLT and PPP is to introduce Saudi learners to communicative learning methods. In this study, the implementation of both TBLT and PPP were different in that TBLT was taught inductively where learners are left to find out the target DMs by noticing the difference between their first presentation and the good model of presentation. While, deductive learning was used with the PPP model where learners were taught the DMs first and then applied these DMs in their presentations. With regard to the presentation tasks, TBLT groups were exposed to do the productive task before the receptive tasks. Furthermore, they had to finish all the task cycle then apply the DMs to their initial presentations (after doing the receptive task which contains target forms) while in the PPP model learners were taught deductively to do the receptive tasks before doing the productive tasks. (See appendix 3 for Sample lesson procedures for TBLT and PPP). The choice of participants was based on purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is the selection of particular participants (Dornyei, 2007). All the participants were at B2 level and were EFL learners in the foundation program in Saudi Arabia who were available at the required time to participate in this study (during their normal classes). The sample size as mentioned earlier was 41 students who were divided into two groups, following Dornyei (2007) recommendations. Students’ presentations (pre- and post-instruction) and (four weeks delayed-tests) were recorded and transcribed. The participants’ use of discourse markers was judged to be contextually correct. So, it needs to be ‘functionally’ correct in order to be counted. Fung and Carter noted, “the status of DMs need to be contextually referenced” (2007, p, 413). The transcripts of the presentations were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to establish the frequency of use of DMs and which DMs were used.

Two implications are drawn from the pilot study. First, in terms of the data, it is notable that the learners’ use of DMs increased from the pre-test to the post-test for both groups equally and decreased in the delayed post-test when compared to the post-test for both groups. Second, in terms of the teaching methods, both the TBLT method and PPP model helped learners in increasing the use of the target discourse markers equally in the short-term period. However, TBLT seems to work better in the long-term period in this context when compared with a deductive PPP model.

#### **4. Analysis**

##### *4.1 Research Question 1*

This question was raised to explore which discourse markers Saudi EFL learners use in giving presentations in English speaking classes (pre-test), an immediate post-test following the instruction were carried out to measure the effect of treatment on learning DMs, while conducting the 4 weeks delayed post-test aimed to find out the effect of treatment upon acquisition of the target DMs. The reason for doing so is to examine the progress of learners’ use of DMs through the whole teaching period. For this, group presentations were held and transcribed at three time points: pre-instruction, post-instruction, and 4 weeks post-instruction in order to find out “how many” from the target discourse makers do these students use in giving presentation. (See Appendix 1 for raw scores and the overall counts of DMs in pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test)

To answer the first research question, pre-test, post-test and delayed post-tests were performed and compared. It is clear that most of the DMs that Saudi EFL learners from the TBLT and PPP groups used in giving presentations in the pre-test stage were for sequencing function (e.g. first, second, then, next and finally), and for giving examples (e.g. like and for example). Additionally, the summarizing topic DM (so) was mainly used by

TBLT group (See Appendix 1). The use of DMs by TBLT was limited to first, second, finally, like, for example and so, while the PPP group used the DMs first, second, next, then, finally and like in the pre-test. To conclude, 11 DMs were used by TBLT group, whereas 13 DMs were used by the PPP group in the first Phase, known as pre-instruction. With regard to the post-test, it is evident that learners in both groups (TBLT and PPP) showed a significant improvement from pre-test to immediate post-test following the instruction of DMs. The overall count of the DMs used by TBLT group improved from 11 DMs in the pre-test, to 59 DMs in the immediate post-test, resulting in an increase of 48 uses. On the other hand, in the PPP group the overall count of DMs improved from 13 DMs in the pre-test, to 48 DMs in the immediate post-test resulting in an increase of 35 uses (See Appendix 1). Both groups used some DMs which were not targeted in this study, for example, “after that” and “such as”. In brief, both groups demonstrated a good increase in the usage of the target DMs from the pre-test to the post-test, while the greatest use of DMs was by the TBLT group. The delayed post-test (See appendix 1) was carried out 4 weeks after the treatment in which the TBLT group used 33 DMs, while the PPP group used only 11 DMs. Thus, the performance of the TBLT group was greater in the delayed post-test in comparison to the PPP group. So, the first null hypothesis of the pilot study which states that teaching DMs will make a difference in learners’ presentation production, is accepted.

#### 4.2 Research Questions 2

The purpose of the second research question was to ascertain which teaching methods have a greater impact upon acquisition (PPP or TBLT) and why. For this purpose, two independent-sample t-tests were performed. The reason for conducting t-tests was to compare the results of the independent groups (Dorneyi, 2007). The first independent-sample t-test was to investigate if the mean of the total scores of DMs were statistically significant i.e. pre-instruction, post-instruction, and 4 weeks delayed post-instruction. The second independent-sample t-test, was performed to investigate if the gain scores of DM were statistically significant difference between TBLT and PPP. Table 2 below shows the analysis results of the mean of the total scores of DMs.

Table 2. Analysis results of the mean of the total scores of DMs (N = participants. Sig = p-value for the t-test)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig.
Pre-test	TBLT	20	.55	1.504	.336	
	PPP	21	.62	1.431	.312	.843
Post-test	TBLT	20	2.95	6.065	1.356	
	PPP	21	2.29	4.900	1.069	.341
Delayed-test	TBLT	20	1.65	3.558	.796	
	PPP	21	.52	1.167	.255	.002

It is apparent from Table 2 that there is an increase in the mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test in both groups’ performance. However, the TBLT group was slightly better in the post-test than the PPP group, and the overall mean for TBLT group improved rapidly from 0.55 to 2.95, whereas the mean for the PPP group improved from 0.62 to 2.29. Consequently, there is no significant difference in the usage of the DMs between the two groups. In the delayed post-test, the PPP and TBLT groups showed a decrease in the mean scores in comparison to the post-test, and the overall mean for TBLT group decreased from 2.95 to 1.65, whereas the mean for the PPP group decreased from 2.29 to 0.52. To conclude, TBLT scores in the immediate post-test and delayed post-test were better than the PPP group. So, based on the results of the first t-test, we conclude:

- There was no statistically significant difference in the mean of the total scores of DMs between PPP and TBLT in the pre-instruction phase at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.843). The mean of the total scores of DMs was 0.55 for TBLT and 0.62 for PPP. If the p-value/sig is less than 0.05 of Levene's test it leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis of equality of variances.
- There was no statistically significant difference in the mean of total scores of DMs between PPP and TBLT in the post-intervention phase at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.341). The mean of the total scores of DMs was 2.95 for TBLT and 2.29 for PPP.
- There was a statistically significant difference in the mean of total scores of DMs between PPP and TBLT in the 4 weeks post-intervention phase at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.002). The mean of the total scores of DMs was 1.65 for TBLT and 0.52 for PPP.

Table 3 shows the results of the second sample t-tests on investigating whether the gain scores of the DM was significantly different between TBLT and PPP and the change of the DM frequency counts was calculated as follows (the gain scores):

- Post-test  $\rightarrow$  pre-test = Total frequency counts of DMs in immediate post-instruction — Total frequency counts of DMs in pre-instruction.
- Delayed-test  $\rightarrow$  Post-test = Total frequency counts of DMs in 4 weeks delayed post-instruction — Total frequency counts of DMs in immediate post-instruction.
- Delayed-test  $\rightarrow$  pre-test = Total frequency counts of DMs in 4 weeks delayed post-instruction — Total frequency counts of DMs in pre-instruction.

Table 3. Analysis results of the gain scores of DM. N = participants. Mean = Gain scores. Sig= p-value for the t-test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig.
Post-Pre	TBLT	20	2.40	5.020	1.122	.188
	PPP	21	1.67	3.596	.785	
Delayed-Post	TBLT	20	-1.30	2.793	.624	.250
	PPP	21	-1.76	3.767	.822	
Delayed-Pre	TBLT	20	1.10	2.490	.557	.000
	PPP	21	-0.10	.539	.118	

Based on the results of the second independent-sample t-test we can conclude:

- It is clear that the gain scores improved for both groups from the pre-test to the post-test but there was no statistically significant difference in the change of gain scores of DMs for the pre-instruction and post-instruction phases between PPP and TBLT at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.188). The gain of DMs from the pre-test to the post-test was 2.40 for TBLT and 1.67 for PPP.
- It is clear that the gain scores from post-test to delayed post-test was not improved and there was no statistically significant difference in the change of gain scores of DMs for the 4 weeks post-instruction and post-instruction phases between PPP and TBLT at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.250). The gain of DMs from the delayed post-test to the post-test was -1.30 for TBLT and -1.76 for PPP.
- It is clear that the gain scores from the pre-test to the delayed post-test decreased for the PPP group and increased for the TBLT group and as a result of that, there was a statistically significant difference in the change of gain scores of DMs for the 4 weeks delayed post-instruction and pre-instruction phases between PPP and TBLT at the 0.05 Level (sig = 0.000). The gain of DMs from delayed post-test to the pre-test was 1.10 for TBLT and -0.10 for PPP.

Thus, we can conclude that for the post-instruction and pre-instruction phases, there was no statistically significant change of DM usage between PPP and TBLT groups. For the 4 weeks delayed post-instruction and post-instruction phases, there was no statistically significant change of DM usage between PPP and TBLT groups. However, for the 4 weeks post-instruction and pre-instruction phases, there was a statistically significant change of DM usage between PPP and TBLT groups. The change of DM usage for TBLT group was greater than the change of the PPP group. Thus, TBLT had a better impact on the acquisition in the long term. To conclude, the second null hypothesis of the pilot study which states that teaching methods will have the same impact on learners' acquisition of DMs, is rejected.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The findings of the pilot study demonstrated that both TBLT method and PPP model, helped learners in increasing the use of the target discourse markers equally. This is evident in the immediate post-test following the instruction of discourse markers, which is affecting the improvement of the overall mean of targeted DMs and consequently affecting the gain scores from the pre-test to the post-test. In terms of the flow and coherence of learner's presentation, Fraser (1990) notes that DMs are highly beneficial guides for explaining the intention of the speakers in communication. It is apparent from the findings that the increase in the usage of structural

DMs from pre-test to the post-test showed that learners produced a more coherent presentations. With regards to the effect of treatment on learning the target DMs, it is notable from the results that learners in both groups (TBLT and PPP) are improving from the pre-test to the post-test which is as a result of practicing doing the tests many times and by different groups which Dorneyi referred to as “the practice effect” (2007, p. 53). Moreover, TBLT showed a slightly higher difference in the increase of the mean and the gain scores from the pre-test to the post-test like the PPP group, but statistically this is considered insignificant. It can be suggested that the similarities in the mean and gain scores between both groups in the post-test is due to the fact that learners are trying to apply the knowledge acquired in the lessons to their presentations. In brief, both the TBLT method and PPP model showed a great effect on learners’ learning of the target DMs.

To conclude, applying TBLT method in teaching DMs had a greater impact on learners’ acquisition of target DMs than PPP model which is evident from the results of the 4 weeks delayed post-test (TBLT’s overall mean and the gain scores of DMs were higher than the PPP group). Consequently, both TBLT and PPP influenced language learning positively. However, TBLT seems to work better in this context as the long-lasting effect appeared in the TBLT group. These are in line with what Carless (2009) noted “a key risk in P-P-P is that it is superficially attractive, but not leading to long-term acquisition of the target grammatical forms” (p. 64). The reasons why TBLT assists learners more than the PPP model might be due to the application of inductive teaching in TBLT method which helped learners notice the target DMs in the receptive tasks. McCarthy and Carter (1995) also state that “inductive learning might be more suitable than PPP model”. (p. 207). (Examples of the transcribed tests can be found in Appendix 2).

## 6. Work to Be Completed Following Pilot Study

The pilot study data has been collected, transcribed and analysed. Thus, the main study needs to be completed. According to Dorneyi (2007), “over the past 15 years, mixed methods research has been increasingly seen as a third approach in research methodology” (p. 42). Quantitative and qualitative research methods will be employed in the main study to ensure that from both a theoretical and a practical perspective the study is as coherent and as comprehensive as possible.

Taking into consideration the findings of the pilot study the following changes will be made.

1) Apply mixed research methods (quantitative and qualitative). Using mixed method will help me as a researcher to draw a fuller picture on the importance of teaching structural DMs in this context and finding out the effectiveness of implementing communicative teaching methods based on the finding of both quantitative and qualitative measures. Using quantitative method will measure the overall use of the target DMs during all the stages (pre-instruction, post-instruction and 4 weeks delayed post-instruction). However, qualitative method will be employed in order to enhance the results from the quantitative method and to get more robust results (Schmitt, 2010). Qualitative method will be based mainly on interviewing selected students to participate in semi-structured interviews. Jones (2009) argues that to establish “... how effective a particular type of explicit teaching is ... we also need to ask the learners who are experiencing the instruction what they think about its effectiveness” (p. 87). Thus, ten students from each group will be selected and interviewed to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the effectiveness of learning DMs and teaching methods. The key reason for interviewing people is to find out the usefulness of studying and practicing DMs as well as finding out about the methodologies by doing a comparison with the grammar-translation method and asking students which is more effective and why. The reason behind this is to find out about learners’ thoughts about applying the TBLT and PPP and to consider how students use these DMs to structure their presentations and how using DMs affect their oral presentation in order to get more in-depth results. The interview transcripts will be analysed qualitatively to establish their views on the impact of the instruction on their presentation skills.

2) The pre-test, post-test and two delayed post-tests will be given. The main reasons for conducting these tests are: First, pre-test is used to find which DMs do EFL learners use in giving presentation. Second, Post-test will be conducted in order to find out the effect of treatment on learning DMs. Finally, two delayed post-tests will be carried out in order to find out the effect of treatment upon acquisition. Schmitt (2010) noted, “vocabulary learning is longitudinal and incremental in nature” (p. 156). Thus, in order to incorporate longitudinal research, one or more delayed post-test should be added to the study design (Schmitt, 2010). Hernández (2013) argues that a second delayed post-test is important in measuring learner’s knowledge of the new DMs. Scores on immediate post-test drop when measured on a delayed post-test. This means, interpreting the post-tests scores as a short-term learning while delayed post-test as a long-term learning (Schmitt, 2010). With regard to the length of the delayed post-test, Schmitt (2010) stated “no standard period of delay” exists? (P.156) .I will follow Schmitt’s suggestion “any delayed post-test of less than one week is likely to be relatively uninformative” and “a delayed

post-test of three weeks should be indicative of learning which is stable and durable” (2010, p.157). So, the first delayed test will be 4 weeks after instruction and the second delayed post-test will be 6 weeks after the instruction.

3) The focus will be on group presentations in order to measure the learning and the acquisition of DMs in order to draw a strong conclusion about which teaching methods work better in this context (English as a foreign Language).

4) Increasing the treatment groups to three groups (inductive TBLT, inductive PPP and deductive PPP). The pilot study found that Inductive TBLT works better in this context than Deductive PPP. Comparing inductive and deductive teaching is an attempt to find out whether or not applying inductive teaching has a long-lasting effect on learning DMs than deductive teaching. The teaching period will be the same as the pilot study (ten hours) for each group over two weeks. Norris and Ortega (2001) identified the length of treatment as follow: short treatment lasted for less than two hours while long treatment lasted for three hours or longer. It can be said that, the treatment in this study will be a long treatment, as it will last for 10 hours. In addition, the number of participants will be 20 in each group as was in the pilot study and as recommended by Dornyei (2007). The reason behind the length of treatment (ten hours) is, from my experience in the pilot study, that it is maximum hours teachers would allow me to access their classes, otherwise they are going to fall behind the schedule as they explained to me in the pilot study. So, it is hoped to get teachers' cooperation in accessing their classes for two hours for five days spread over one or two weeks.

5) The target structural DMs in the main study will be the same as the pilot study.

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**Appendix 1** raw scores:**Pre-test usage of the target structural DMs: TBLT and PPP groups (Pilot study)**

Groups	Sequencing					Opening conversation				Closing conversation		Giving examples		Topic shifts					Summarizing topics		Overall counts for each group	
	First	Second	Next	Then	Finally	Right	Now	Ok	Let's start	Ok	Right	Like	For example	Well	So	Now	Let's turn to	Let's move on to	To conclude	So		
TBLT Groups	3	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11
PPP Groups	4	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13

**Post-test usage of the target structural DMs: TBLT and PPP groups (Pilot study)**

Groups	Sequencing					Opening conversation				Closing conversation		Giving examples		Topic shifts					Summarizing topics		Overall counts for each group
	First	Second	Next	Then	Finally	Right	Now	Ok	Let's start	Ok	Right	Like	For example	Well	So	Now	Let's turn to	Let's move on to	To conclude	So	
TBLT Groups	4	4	4	3	4	4	0	4	4	2	2	4	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	59
PPP Groups	4	4	3	3	4	4	1	3	2	1	2	3	0	1	2	1	1	3	3	3	48

**Delayed Post-test usage of the target structural DMs: TBLT and PPP groups (Pilot study)**

Groups	Sequencing					Opening conversation				Closing conversation		Giving examples		Topic shifts					Summarizing topics		Overall counts for each group
	First	Second	Next	Then	Finally	Right	Now	Ok	Let's start	Ok	Right	Like	For example	Well	So	Now	Let's turn to	Let's move on to	To conclude	So	
TBLT Groups	4	4	2	1	3	1	0	1	2	1	3	4	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	33
PPP Groups	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11

**Appendix 2** Examples of the transcribed tests (Pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test) (student errors have not been corrected).

**Topics:**

- **Pre-test** (what makes a good home)
- **Post-tests** (1. five things you would like to change in our society, 2.planning a party, 3.fashion, 4.marriage in Saudi culture and finally 5.online shopping).
- **Delayed post-test** (what is your favourite places)

PPP group (Group A)

Pre-test

Good morning. We will present about what makes a good home. **First**, It should have five five bedrooms, three bathrooms and a big dining room with many with big big table with chairs...)

Post-test (Lesson one, Sequencing DMs)

We would like to talk about five things we would like to have in our society. **First**, traffic in the roads because all people want to arrive at the time...)

Delayed post-test

Hi Ladies, how are you Today I am going to talk about three fun places in Madinah. **First**, uh I like the Baskin Robins, it is the ice cream it is really delicious, and it has many flavours **like** chocolate...)

PPP group (Group B)

Pre-test

Good morning, today we are going to present design for our houses. **First**, first, uh first outside the home there is a big courtyard erm on the right side there is a swimming pool with with seats...)

Post-test (Lesson two, opening and closing topics DMs)

**Right**, in this weekend we would like to go to the sea. **Ok**, in the beginning we should buy all the things we need it like food, swimming balls, toys, umbrellas...)

Delayed post-test

Welcome everyone, I am Majidh and these are my friends Rana, Noha and Eman. We will speak about our best places in my city. **First**, Movenpick Water Park...)

TBLT group (Group C)

Pre-test

Good morning everyone, today our presentation will talk about what makes a good home. Home is the place we where where we live. **So**, it should be comfortable. **First**, the good home should have a lot of rooms...)

Post-test (Lesson three, giving examples DMs)

First, I like many brands **like** Zara and Ellie Saab. Second, we buy these brands because of the good quality. Third, I do not think it's it's a waste of money and feel comfortable about them...)

Delayed post-test

Uhh, Good morning ladies, uh today our presentation is about three fun places in our country. So, **let's start**, **First**, Alfasliah Tower and it is considered as one of the most important buildings in Riyadh...)

TBLT group (Group D)

Pre-test

Good morning everyone I want today to speak about what makes Uh a good home. We live we live in Al-Nassem near a big park. Uh we have seven rooms and three bathrooms and one big living room and 3 bedrooms...)

Post-test (Lesson Four, topic shifts DMs)

**Let's move on** when we start preparation for the wedding party we define the budget and invite all guests...)

Delayed post-test

Today, we will tell about five top places in my area. **Let's start**. **First**, Al-Noor mall, I always love to go shopping with my friends and do interesting activities. **Second**, The beach...)

**Appendix 3** Sample lesson procedures: TBLT and PPP (Pilot study)

TBLT	PPP
<p><b>Pre-task</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce and define the topic.</li> <li>2. Eliciting information and vocabularies in order to prepare learners for the task ahead.</li> <li>3. Set up the topic.</li> </ol> <p><b>Task cycle</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning and thinking of ideas</li> <li>2. Rehearse what students will say in their presentation</li> <li>3. Doing a brief presentation.</li> </ol> <p><b>Post-task</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen and look at a transcript of a better presentation.</li> <li>2. Find DMs in the transcript.</li> <li>3. Compare them to your own task.</li> <li>4. Applying the taught DMs to their first presentation and represent it again.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Presentation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher explains DMs for sequencing function.</li> <li>2. Provide learners with examples in order to illustrate the use of DMs</li> </ol> <p><b>Practice</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are given a transcript with the DMs in the dialogue blanked out. They discuss what they think is missing from each space. They then listen and check.</li> <li>2. Ask students to have their 5 things they would like to change and discuss them in groups of five and advice them to use the DMs in their discussion (write them on board or DMs on cards).</li> </ol> <p><b>Production</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask students to write a presentation together using the taught DMs.</li> <li>2. Students will present their presentation in front of the class and teacher will give them feedback.</li> </ol>

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