

THE USE OF CONJUNCTIONS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Alfonsa Saskia Ardanellia¹, Truly Almendo Pasaribu²

University of Sanata Dharma

¹saskialfonsa@gmail.com

²trulyalmendo@usd.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Conjunctions connect words or phrases of semantic units to guide the writing and reading process. Conjunctions help the reader progresses one idea to the next. This study aimed at examining EFL learners' use of conjunctions in writing descriptive texts. This study analyzed (1) the use of conjunctions in students' descriptive texts and (2) the errors of using conjunctions. The study involved forty-four students' descriptive texts which were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method using Halliday and Hasan's taxonomy (1976) as well as Ong's framework (2011). The researchers found 417 conjunctions which are classified into additive conjunctions (71.22%), the most common conjunctions used by the students, temporal conjunctions (13.43%), adversative conjunctions (11.99%), and causal conjunctions (3.36%). The predominance of additives denotes that the students added information in describing people. Although the students used these four types of conjunctions, some conjunctions were used inappropriately. The researchers found the errors of conjunctions: misuse errors (42.55%), unnecessary addition errors (40.43%), omission errors (8.51%), and redundant repetition (8.51%). The study of discourse markers is relevant for designing writing materials for EFL students. Teachers can help students enhance their writing through various exposures of different discourse markers with their pragmatic functions.

Keywords: Conjunctions, Descriptive Paragraph, Writing, Error Analysis

ABSTRAK

Konjungsi (kata sambung) menghubungkan kata atau frasa unit semantik untuk yang dapat memudahkan proses penulisan dan membaca. Konjungsi membantu pembaca mengaitkan satu ide ke ide berikutnya. Penelitian ²³ bertujuan untuk menggali penggunaan konjungsi peserta didik ⁶ Bahasa Inggris dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Penelitian ini menganalisis (1) penggunaan konjungsi dalam teks deskriptif yang ditulis oleh siswa SMA dan (2) kesalahan dalam penggunaan konjungsi. Penelitian ini melibatkan empat puluh empat teks deskriptif yang dianalisis menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif menggunakan taksonomi Halliday dan Hasan (1976) serta kerangka kerja Ong (2011). Peneliti menemukan 417 konjungsi yang diklasifikasikan menjadi konjungsi aditif (71,22%), konjungsi

yang paling umum digunakan oleh siswa, konjungsi temporal (13,43%), konjungsi adversatif (11,99%), dan konjungsi kausal (3,36%). Konjungsi aditif menunjukkan bahwa siswa dapat menambahkan informasi tambahan ketika mendeskripsikan orang dalam bentuk paragraf. Meskipun siswa menggunakan keempat jenis konjungsi, beberapa konjungsi digunakan secara tidak tepat. Para peneliti menemukan kesalahan, yaitu: kesalahan penyalahgunaan (42,55%), kesalahan penambahan yang tidak perlu (40,43%), kesalahan kelalaian (8,51%), dan pengulangan yang berlebihan (8,51%). Penelitian tentang penanda wacana ini relevan untuk pembelajaran keterampilan menulis. Pendidik dapat membantu siswa menggunakan konjungsi yang beragam mereka dengan memberi banyak contoh penanda wacana serta fungsi pragmatis mereka.

Kata Kunci: Kata Sambung, Paragraf Deskriptif, Menulis, Analisis Kesalahan

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a skill essential for language learners as it enables learners to communicate their ideas. Brain and Yorouzu (1998), as cited from Javed, et al (2013) mention that a writing skill requires a well-structured content of thought presented in an organized way in order to give a great impact on readers' comprehension. To make their writing well-structured, EFL students need to use conjunctions.

Conjunctions have the function as discourse markers when they are used in texts. Zhao (2014) states that the use of discourse markers helps the writers organize their idea and elaborate their sentences in communicative situation. Meanwhile, conjunctions are words or phrases used to connect one idea with another (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, Pasaribu, 2016). Besides, conjunctions are used to help the reader progresses from one idea to next. Tse and Hyland (2004) state that conjunctions are the most use markers in academic writing. The use of conjunctions will make the text has a good groove between sentences. Sometimes, EFL learners will transfer their first language form into the target language form (Nugraheni, 2016). It will make the product sounds less understandable and awkward. Hence, the use of conjunctions is important because it deals with how the writers and the readers interpret the forms, meanings, and the actions in order to comprehend the overall meaning of the text (Schriffin, 1987). In addition, the use of conjunctions will help the readers grab the writer's idea successfully. Besides, it will make the text coherent, cohesive, and understandable.

However, it is not an easy thing to compose a good coherent and cohesive text, especially for EFL learners. They still face difficulty in choosing a word as the connector. This happened because EFL learners pay little attention to the use of conjunctions which leads them to make errors in their texts. Therefore, there is no doubt that errors of conjunctions are still found in EFL learners' texts. Those reasons lead us to conduct a research on the use of conjunctions, in this case, in the form of descriptive paragraph. This study investigated two research problems: 1) what types of conjunctions are found in students' descriptive texts?

and 2) what types of errors are found in students' descriptive texts? To answer the questions, the researchers use some theories, such as discourse markers, the types of conjunctions, EFL writing, and error analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conjunctions have the same functions as discourse markers when they are used in a text. Moreover, discourse markers are sets of linguistic expression from word classes such as conjunctions, adverbs, interjections, and lexicalize phrases (Schriffin, 1987). Conjunctions and discourse markers are included into cohesive devices. They are used as the connector elements to correlate one sentence with another in a paragraph (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Furthermore, Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that cohesion occurs to gather the sentence in order to prevent the inherent meaning between sentences.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) categorize conjunctions into four types: additive conjunctions, adversative conjunctions, causal conjunctions, and temporal conjunctions. The first type is the additive conjunctions aiming for connecting units of semantic similarity. Halliday and Hassan (1976) suggest that it is "structurally in the form of coordination and usually used to give further information about the previous sentence". Additive conjunctions are the most common conjunctions found in EFL learners' texts. Nugraheni (2016) mentions that additive conjunctions appear for almost 50% in the learners' texts, especially the conjunctions *and* and *or*. The second type is the adversative conjunction. In contrast with additive conjunctions, adversative conjunctions aim to show a contrast or opposite between sentences. In other words, they are used to give contrast meaning which adverse to the expectation from the previous sentence (Nugraheni, 2016). The most common use of this type of conjunction is the conjunction *but*. The third type is the causal conjunction. They indicate the results or sequences of sentences. Causal conjunctions usually refer to cause and effect relation. The conjunctions *so*, *thus*, *hence*, and *therefore* are some of the simple form of causal conjunctions. The last are the temporal conjunctions. They are used to relate two consecutive sentences in which their relation as content is a sequence in time. Temporal conjunctions belong to the easiest-identifiable conjunctions among the four kinds. It is because they always answer the question "when" and usually appearing in a procedure text (Rahman, 2018). The common used of temporal conjunctions are the conjunctions *now*, *since*, *when*, and *after*.

Nugraheni (2016) on her study about cohesive devices states that "conjunctions help writers to elaborate their ideas by giving examples, clarifications, explanations, effects, etc" (p. 51). Through the research, she also indicates about the inappropriate use of the conjunctions. Sometimes, EFL learners still find the difficulty in the use of conjunctions either it is in the form of the functions or the inappropriate use of the conjunctions itself. Her study supported by another research from Darweesh and Kadhim (2016). They state students are unable to keep the propositional content of conjunctions because of the lack of knowledge in terms of cohesive function.

As we know that there are a lot of genres of texts. However, this research

was focused on the use of conjunctions in descriptive texts. Descriptive texts are used to describe something. It needs our view of the object in order to make the reader imagine and feel what we describe (Rusmawan, 2018).

Meanwhile, as EFL learners, students consider that writing is the most difficult task besides listening, speaking, and reading. It is supported by some errors that they still make when they write a text. Moreover, writing a text is such a big deal for EFL learners. In writing a text, it can be called coherent if each sentence clearly relates to the controlling idea without obvious jumps between sentences. However, most of EFL learners' texts are not coherent and cohesive because of the lack of awareness of good writing, especially the lack of conjunctions. Therefore, error analysis is needed in order to prevent EFL learners to compose incoherent texts. ⁷

Error analysis is a process of observing, analyzing, classifying the divergence of the second language rules and reviewing the system operated by learners (Brown, 1980). Hasyim (2004) states that error analysis is a technique for analyzing and classifying the unacceptable form of English using procedures provided by linguistics. In other words, it is a process of identifying, analyzing, and classifying the foreign language form. In this case, many EFL learners may make errors in the use of conjunctions in their texts so this research focuses in the error analysis of the use of conjunctions. Ong (2011) classifies the errors into four types: misuse errors, unnecessary addition errors, omission errors, and redundant repetition errors.

Misuse errors happen when EFL learners use a specific conjunction in the text wrongly. In other words, they should use this correct conjunction instead of that conjunction. On her research, Ong declares that misuse errors are the most common errors found in the learners' texts, especially the misuse of additive and adversative conjunctions. This result is also in line with Feng (2003) and Zhang (1997) that state students not only make errors in misuse errors but also overuse of those conjunctions. The next errors are the unnecessary addition errors. These errors happen when EFL learners use a certain conjunction unnecessarily in the text. Most of EFL learners begin a sentence with the conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, and *so*. According to Davis, Minihan, Small, and Yitbarek (2001), as cited from Fauziah (2016), it is clearly inappropriate to use those conjunctions in the beginning of a sentence. It is because it will make the sentence less formal. On the other hand, omission errors happen when EFL learners do not use a specific conjunction that is expected to be used in the text. The last errors are redundant repetition errors. These errors happen when EFL learners use the same conjunction more than once within a sentence. Meanwhile, some of the conjunctions can be replaced with other conjunctions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method which is document analysis. Qualitative research refers to a social and cultural oriented phenomenon. Meanwhile, Corbin and Strauss (2008), as cited from Bowen (2009) state that document analysis needs documents whether they are printed or electronic

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materials. Those documents would be analyzed and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. We wanted to know the use of conjunctions and also the errors of it in the students' descriptive texts.

To answer the research questions, the researchers gathered the data through e-mail. The researchers asked the students to write a descriptive text about themselves and their family. Then, the researchers asked them to send their descriptive texts through e-mail. This research was conducted in the end of August until the middle of September 2018 in SMA X, specifically class X-A1 and X-S1. Each class consisted of 22 students. Therefore, there were forty-four descriptive texts used as the data source. There were forty-four students' descriptive texts that were used as the data source. Second, the researchers read the students' descriptive texts and marked the conjunctions that appeared in the texts. Third, the researchers counted the conjunctions using AntConc application. AntConc is an analysis application used for concordancing. Then, the researchers used a table to make it easier in organizing and presenting the data. The researchers classified the conjunctions based on their types according to Halliday and Hassan's (1976) theory.

The second way was applied to answer the second research problem: what types of errors are found in students' descriptive texts? After knowing the types of conjunctions, the researchers used the first research problem's results as the data source for the second research problem. The researchers used a table in order to make it easier in organizing and presenting the data. The researchers looked into the errors of conjunctions and classified it into their types based on Ong's (2011) theory. The researchers also validated the data to the experts after finishing the analysis to make the results valid. The researchers consulted the tables of the use of conjunctions and also the errors of conjunctions to the experts who are TESOL lecturers. The experts checked the classifications of the types of conjunctions and also the errors.

DISCUSSION

Forty-four descriptive texts had been analyzed. The researchers had counted that there were 417 conjunctions found in the texts with additive conjunctions were the most common used in the students' texts. The following table is the results of the use of conjunctions that were taken from the analysis.

Table 1: The Total and Percentage of Conjunctions Used in Students' Descriptive Texts

Type	Forms	Σ	%
Additive	And	297	71.22
	Or		
	Besides		

	In addition		
Adversative	Even though	50	11.99
	Though		
	But		
	Only		
	Rather than		
	Either		
Causal	So	14	3.36
	Therefore		
Temporal	Then	56	13.43
	Previously		
	First		
	Late		
	Once		
	Until		
	Second		
	Now		
	When		
	Since		
	Next		
	At this time		
	Before		
	While		
After			
Total		417	100

Out of 417 conjunctions, 27 forms of conjunctions appear in the students' descriptive texts. The results are in line with Nugraheni's (2016) finding, which state that additive conjunctions appear almost 50% in the students' texts. In this case, the additive conjunctions appear 297 times with percentage around 71.22%. Among those forms of conjunctions, the conjunction *and* is the most common used by the students, which is 280 times. The students tend to use the conjunction *and* on their texts because the use of the conjunction *and* is similar whether it is used in the first language or in the target language (Nugraheni, 2016). In addition, the type of the texts that are being used here is the descriptive text. The students used descriptive text to describe and introduce themselves in which they tended to give more explanation and also information related to their story. This research will have a different research if the type of the text that the students used is a cause and effect text. This reason is in line with Pasaribu (2017) who states that EFL learners prefer to evolve their texts by giving examples, explanations, and detail related to the topic rather than giving arguments (p. 80).

The researchers provide the explanation of each type of conjunctions. The researchers will use the most dominant and the least conjunction of each type. The

discussion talks about the evidences of the conjunctions in sentences that appeared in the students' texts.

Additive Conjunctions

The conjunction *and* (94.28) is the most frequent conjunction used by the students on their texts. The conjunction *and* is used to connect units or words that have similarity in sense as shown in Example (1) (Seaton & Mew, 2000, p. 232, as cited by Fauziah, 2016).

- (1) I really like Korean cultures **and** their traditional foods. I started to have a dream to be an idol was when I watched idols performed **and** when they did some funny stuff in front of the camera. (A12)

In Example (1) above, the conjunction that appeared in the sentence is the conjunction *and*. The student used the conjunction *and* to connect two noun phrases, which were (Korean cultures) and (traditional foods). Meanwhile, for the second conjunction *and*, it used to add additional information about the reason why the student wanted to be an idol.

The least conjunction used by the students is the conjunction *in addition* (0.67%). The conjunction *in addition* is used to add additional information of the previous sentence as seen in Example (2).

- (2) I can play guitar. There are songs that I can play with, though, I'm not skillful in it. **In addition**, there are idols whose songs I like to play, such as 5 Seconds of Summer, Green Day, Shawn Mendes, and The Vamps. (S5)

In the example above, the use of the conjunction *in addition* meant that the student gave some additional information about the song that was often played by him/her.

The use of the conjunction *in addition* is different when it is used in target language or in native language. In native language, the writers cannot translate the conjunction *in addition* literary same as the meaning in target language. That what makes the conjunction *in addition* is rarely being used by the students.

Adversative Conjunctions

The conjunction *but* (86.00%) is the most frequent conjunction used by the students. The results is in line with Nugraheni, (2016) who state that the most common use of adversative conjunctions is the conjunction *but*. This conjunction can be seen in Example (3).

- (3) I don't like reading because it is kind of boring activity for me **but** I like drawing and painting because I have a lot of imaginations in my mind. (A3)

The student used the conjunction *but* to show a contrast of her/his statement. The student showed that she/he liked to draw or paint something instead of reading a book.

The least adversative conjunction used by the students is the conjunction *only* (2.00%). Actually, the word *only* can be used as an adverb, an adjective, and

a conjunction. As a conjunction, the word *only* is used to add something in the sentence which will make the sentence less true. In Example (4) below, the conjunction *only* was combined with the form '*not..but..*' which means that the sentence is still adverse to the expectation (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 254).

- (4) This residential was the house for soldiers, which was a place for army to stay. Now, most of residents here are **not only** for soldier **but also** for non-military residents. (S5)

In the example above, the student wanted to show the contrast about the residential. At first, the student said that she/he lived in a residential which was the house for soldiers. However, at this time, everyone could live at that residential, no matter if they were soldiers or not.

Most of the students do not use the word *only* as a conjunction. It is because the conjunction *only* is still rarely being used in the students' textbooks, so that the students are not familiar with the word *only* as a conjunction in a sentence.

Causal Conjunctions

There two kinds of causal conjunctions used by the students, those are the conjunctions *so* and *therefore*. The conjunction *so* (87.51%) is the most common conjunction used by the students on their texts. Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 257) state that the use of the conjunction *so* in a sentence means 'as the results of this', 'for this reason', and 'for this purpose' as shown in Example (5) below.

- (5) My dream is to be an architect but I still do not know. The reason why I wanna be an architect is just because it is the only job that I can manage that has a quite high salary **so** I can buy stuff that I want and it won't be hard for me to survive in this kind of cruel world. (A12)

The student used the conjunction *so* to show the results of her/his dream. She/he wanted to be an architect in order to get a high salary to fulfill her/his needs.

Meanwhile, the word *therefore* usually implies some kind of argument from a premise (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 267). Actually, the word *therefore* is used as an adverb, but it also can be used as a conjunction if we use the word *therefore* in the beginning of a sentence and use a semicolon instead of comma (grammarist.com).

- (6) My dream, when I graduate, is to be a Badminton athlete. **Therefore**, I usually practice playing badminton with my father on the weekend. (S1)

The conjunction *therefore* in the sentence above shows what the students needs to do to achieve his/her goal as a Badminton athlete. In order to achieve his/her dream, the student often plays badminton with his/her father on weekend.

Temporal Conjunctions

The conjunction *when* (30.36%) is the most frequent conjunction used by the students. The word *when* can be used either as conjunctions or pronouns. The

use of the conjunction *when* usually consists of two clauses. In Example (7) below, the student used the conjunction *when*. It meant that as the time the student grew up, she wanted to be a great scientist.

(7) **When** I grow up, I want to be a great scientist because my favorite subject is physic and mathematic and I hate memorizing. (A17)

(8) Since childhood, my brother and I have been taught religious education by our parents, like praying **before** doing activities, worshipping every week and forgiving each others. (A15)

The least conjunction used by the students is the conjunction *before* (1.79%). The use of the conjunction *before* means previously to the time when something happens (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). In the example above, the student used the conjunction *before* to show his/her religious activity. That was before doing something, he/she always prayed to God.

By knowing the types of conjunctions, the students will know the various types of conjunctions that they never knew before. The students are expected to use the various kind of conjunction in their texts. In addition, knowing the types of conjunctions make the students know the functions of each type of the conjunctions. It prevents them from making errors in the use of conjunctions in their texts.

Table 2: The Total and Percentage of the Errors of Conjunctions Used in Students' Descriptive Texts

TYPES OF ERRORS	ADDITIVE (Σ)	ADVER-SATIVE (Σ)	CAUSAL (Σ)	TEM-PORAL (Σ)	Σ	%
Misuse	9	8	2	1	20	42.55
Unnecessary	16	2	1	0	19	40.43
Omission	2	1	1	0	4	8.51
Redundant Repetition	3	1	0	0	4	8.51
Total	30 (63.83%)	12 (25.53%)	4 (8.51%)	1 (2.13%)	47	100

The table shows that misuse errors on additive conjunctions (63.83%) are the highest errors found in students' texts. The results are in line with Ong's (2011) results. She states that misuse cohesive device errors are the most frequent errors of conjunctions used by the students. It happened because of the language habits and language transfers of the students' first language. Moreover, the students tend to use simple conjunctions on their text just like when they write a text on their first language (Wang & Zhang, 2016).

Misuse Errors

The table shows that there are 20 sentences that contained misuse errors. The conjunction *but* (40.00%) is the most frequent errors found in the students' texts. Lots of the students use the conjunctions *but*, *and*, *or*, and *so* in the

beginning of a sentence. It is clearly an error based on Davis, Minihan, Small, and Yitbarek (2017) because it will make the sentence less formal.

- (9) I am interested in books. I have two novels. I like reading novels when there is free time. I want to have more novel. **But [besides]**, I also like reading news, by reading various news, I can find out what happen. (S20)

In the example above, the student used the conjunction *but* to connect two sentences that have similarity in topic. That was about the student's hobbies. Instead of showing contrast, the student used the conjunction *but* to add additional information which it is clearly misused. It will be more appropriate if the conjunction *but* is replaced with the conjunction *besides*.

Unnecessary Addition Errors

The results show that unnecessary addition errors are the second common errors found in the students' texts. The students mostly get wrong in the use of the conjunction *and* (84.21%). In the example below, the student used the conjunction *and* unnecessarily in the text.

- (10) I have a big sister. She is annoying for me but she is also fun and always there if I need help. **And [to omit]** in this life I want to achieve a best result and become a lecturer in pharmacy. (A4)

In the example above, the sentence before the conjunction *and* was talking about the student's sister, meanwhile the sentence after the conjunction *and* was talking about the student's goal. Those two sentences were talking about different topic. Therefore, it is better that the conjunction *and* be omitted.

Omission Errors

The additive conjunction *and* is the most frequent omission errors found in the students' texts. It reaches over 50%. Halliday and Hassan (1976) state that the use of the conjunction *and* is to connect words that have similarity in sense. However, in Example (11) below, the student did not use the conjunction *and* specifically in the sentence.

- (11) My dream is become a professional gamer around world and go to some countries for tournaments. [...] I want to get a job there as a player. Now, I try to learn some tricks by myself. **[and]** I already know some common tricks. (S7)

In the example above, the student just separated the sentences using a full stop, whereas, those sentences could be combined together. Instead of using a punctuation full stop, it is better if the student use the conjunction *and* to connect the sentences.

Redundant Repetition Errors

The additive conjunction *and* (75%) is the most common redundant repetition errors used by the students. In the example below, the student used the conjunction *and* more than once within a sentence. Besides, the structure of the

sentence was not correct. The student did not use a punctuation mark full stop to separate the sentences, instead the student just used the conjunction *and* and a punctuation mark comma to connect the sentences.

- (12) Talking about my family, I have one brother **and** two sisters **and** I am the last child, my brother's name is Triardy Amtio Barshobedie, he attends senior high school grade 12 **and** my sisters' name are Githa Amtia Barshobedie **and** Thalia Doryunie Barshobedie they were both still looking the job, my father work as a civil servant **and** my mother is a housewife. (A10)

The conjunction *and* was used repeatedly in the example above. Ong (2011) says that if there are same conjunctions used repeatedly in a sentence, one or two conjunctions should be deleted or replaced with another conjunction. In order to make the sentence looks understandable, it should be revised by deleting some conjunctions *and* and putting the punctuation marks. Therefore, the correct sentence should be "Talking about family, I have one brother, two sisters, **and** I am the last child. My brother's name is Triardy Amtio Barshobedie **and** he is in senior high school grade 12. **Whereas**, my sisters' names are Githa Amtia Barshobedie **and** Thalia Doryunie Barshobedie. Both of my sisters are still looking for a job. My father works as a civil servant **and** my mother is a housewife."

Through the discussions above, the researchers conclude that students can produce texts, specifically a descriptive text. However, most of the texts are not cohesive and coherent because there are still found the errors of conjunctions in their texts (Li, 2010). Most of the students used the conjunctions *but*, *and*, *or*, and *so* in the beginning of a sentence. This is clearly errors because it will make the sentence less formal based on Davis, Minihan, Small, and Yitbarek (2011). Besides, the students are still confused about the function of each type conjunctions. Sometimes, they used the conjunction *but* to add additional information instead of showing contrast between sentences.

CONCLUSION

The first goal of this research is to **22** find the use of conjunctions in the students' descriptive texts. There are four types of conjunctions used by the students. Those are additive conjunctions (71.22%), temporal conjunctions (13.43%), adversative c**5**onjunctions (11.99%), and causal conjunctions (3.36%). The findings reveal that **6** students tend to use the additive conjunctions, especially the conjunction *and*. It is because the use of the conjunction *and* itself is similar when u**2**sed in native language or in target language. Meanwhile, the second goal of this **research is to know the errors of conjunctions found in the students' texts.** The researchers found that there are four types of errors in the students' texts. Those are misuse errors (42.55%), unnecessary addition errors (40.43%), omission errors (8.51%), and redundant repetition errors (8.51%). The misuse errors are the common errors used by the students as a lot of students use the conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, and *so* to begin a sentence indicating an informal style

of writing. This study should be viewed with its limitations. The first one, the sample used in this study is very limited, so future studies with larger sample should be conducted. The second one, this study is limited to descriptive genre and formal register. Future research can investigate discourse markers in cross genre or cross register discourse.

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