Coherence in EFL Learners' Spoken Discourse:
A Case Study of English Majors in NTNU

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Introduction

More and more researchers these years started to pay close attention to text structure of EFL learners' works with a discourse perspective (Beaman 1984, Chang 1995, Connor 1984, Danielowicz 1984, Gallego 1990, Halliday & Hasan 1976, Lee 1998, Tyler 1992, Tyler & Bro 1992, Tyler, Jefferies & Davies 1990 and Williams 1992), not just with a micro-scope viewpoint such as grammar, sentence structure, sound variation etc. Attention was drawn mostly to the written discourse, concentrating on coherence and cohesion. Nonetheless, other than written works, EFL learners are bound to learn English speaking. Therefore, spoken discourse of EFL learners like ITAs' (International Teaching Assistant) lectures or foreigner teachers' classes concerns more and more researchers. As for the purpose of the present study, it is to scrutinize the discourse structure and coherence (incoherence) of English majors' presentations by following the framework of Tyler (1992) which compares the discourse structures of in-class lectures of a non-native teaching assistant coming from Taiwan and a native teaching assistant. Most researches have been done, focusing on coherence of the English majors' written works (Chang, 1995) whereas little has yet focused on the spoken discourse structure of English majors' oral presentations despite the fact that they are certainly to be given tons of chances of doing oral presentations. Hence, this study aims to see what typical discourse errors English majors at two proficiency levels are prone to make and what might be the difference concerning discourse structure between their written discourse and spoken discourse on the same topic.

The research rationale in Tyler (1992) was adopted to examine the English majors' data by three criteria including (1) lexical discourse marker: numerical markers, sequential markers, additive markers and so on, (2) lexical specificity: pronominalization and also lexical choice and (3) discourse structuring device: relative clause, subordinate clause, complement clause and others.

In the present study, there are three working hypotheses being held to be tested in two main dimensions: the misuses of linguistic criteria and the difference between spoken discourse and written discourse:

Working Hypothesis 1: misuses of linguistic criteria

1.1 Some typical misuses would emerge in the spoken discourse of both high-proficient learners and low-proficient learners.

1.2 Certain miscues would emerge mainly in the spoken discourse of low-proficient learners.

Working Hypothesis 2: difference between spoken discourse and written discourse

2.1 There is difference between the spoken discourse and written discourse by three criteria. To be more specific, their performance in written discourse should be better than that in their spoken discourse.

Literature Review

As has been mentioned, more and more researches have devoted to the studies of coherence and cohesion of EFL students' works. In terms of coherence and cohesion of writing, Chang in 1995 has done an error analysis study with both qualitative and quantitative approaches to scrutinize freshman students' writing. Lee (1998) even proposed some effective methods to enhance students' awareness of coherence in their writings. Beaman (1984) looks at both spoken and written narrative discourse by inspecting the syntactic structure such as coordination and subordination. Another early work on checking cohesion and coherence in EFL students' writing is Connor's work in 1984. However, these years more and more studies have drawn researchers' attention to coherence and cohesion in the spoken discourse. And some pioneering studies have been done on ITA and foreign teachers' oral performance in class (Gallego 1990, Williams 1992). Each researcher has different methods to look at coherence and cohesion. Basturkmen (2002) argues that EFL learners can learn to observe and reflect on their and others' spoken discourse or learn how to appropriately conduct questioning (2001). Young (1982) argues that the difference of information structure between Chinese and English results in poor comprehension. Most researchers would look at the use of discourse marker in EFL spoken discourse (Chaudron & Richards 1986, Flowerdew & Tauroza 1995, Lenk 1998, Trillo 2002) although the definition of discourse marker can be different from researcher to researcher (Fraser 1990, Schiffrin 1994). Among these researches, Tyler can be considered the one who has done the most complete study on EFL learners' spoken performance. And the following three studies are the most related ones:

Tyler, Jefferies & Davis 1988

The framework of this study is based on Gumperz (1982). "In his theory of

conversational inference, participants in an interaction depend on complex constellation of cues from all levels of linguistic structure to construct an interpretation. (p. 101)" As mentioned here, native listeners need these discourse-structuring cues to construct coherence. In order to examine non-native speakers' spoken discourse structure, eighteen Korean and Chinese graduate students were chosen to have their teaching demonstration videotaped. Two variables – pronunciation and the order of ideas were not included in the considerations of this study. Instead, the current study explores 1) prosodic patterning, 2) subordinating syntactic structure and also 3) lexicalized discourse markings. In terms of prosodic patterning, listeners' confusion resulted from some misleading prosodic features such as unexpected stress pattern, pre-pause intonation contour and pause structure. In addition to prosodic problem, another difference between native and non-native speakers is non-native speakers' lack of the subordinative syntactic device to "signal foregrounding and backgrounding of information" (p.105). They tended to leave units of information at equal level of prominence. As for lexicalized discourse marking, non-native speakers had used some inappropriate strategies. They might be inclined to make use of simple lexical substitution, to overuse some lexical markers, "to latch onto one or two discourse markers and to use them exclusively and often, regardless of semantic appropriateness" (p. 106) and also to begin with some false discourse markers. Like Tyler (1992), Tyler & Bro (1992), the study also shows that native speakers' perception of the incoherence of non-native speakers' spoken discourse stemmed from cumulative unexpected misuses or "interaction of miscues from the different levels" (p.107).

Tyler 1992

Tyler has done a qualitative research on exploring the discourse structuring cues of ITA (International Teaching Assistant) and to scrutinize the comprehensibility of ITA's spoken discourse. He argues that the perception of incoherence may stem from "cumulative result of interacting miscues at the discourse level" (Tyler and Bro, 1992). One of the subjects is a native speaker of Chinese from Taiwan who was examined on his introductory lecture on traffic engineering. The other subject is a native speaker of U.S. English who gave a lecture concerning about introductory biology. Tyler focuses this study on four dimensions: *lexical discourse makers, lexical specificity, syntactic incorporation* and *prosodies/interactive effects.* Based on these four dimensions, Tyler concentrated on discussion on the Taiwanese ITA's

misuses and had the native speaker's sample as a comparison. As for lexical discourse marker, the Taiwanese ITA "uses lexical discourse markers in an unexpected, nonparrellel manner" (p.719). He mixed strategies like enumeration, sequential markers and additive markers, which led to inconsistency and confusion of audience. In terms of lexical specificity, this speaker failed to clearly specify and link the key ideas, which led to the lack of lexical specification and left the audience the impression of incoherent and incohesive discourse. Another divergent characteristic of the Taiwanese speaker's lecture is his frequent use of coordination conjunction and juxtaposition sentences instead of subordinate structures which are assumed to be "important information organizing devices to provide cues about prominence, focus and logical relations" (p. 721). Nonetheless, the weak inter-clausal connection led to the impression of digression from the main topic. The last criterion concerns with the interactive effects among syntax, prosody, semantics and lexical specification. This non-native speaker sometimes made his utterances hard for interpretation because he did not use relative clause which is expected by native audience to continue his point and also misused falling intonation to signal the end of the point whereas the foregoing uses were not appropriately compatible in terms of semantics. Compared with earlier studies, this study is particularly impressive by proving that "the establishment of a synonym set is an important discourse structuring device in native-speaker discourse" and also that "cuing of logical and prominence relations at the microlevel does make an important contribution to comprehensibility" (p. 726).

Tyler and Bro 1992

Compared with Tyler 1992, Tyler and Bro conducted a different study with a quantitative research method to test the hypothesis proposed by Young (1982) that difficulty of perception for native English speakers results from different discourse-level structure. One hundred fifteen undergraduate students were asked to rate four versions of the Chinese-produced discourse in English presented in Young's study to test comprehensibility. To carry out this study, a reading task was conducted to prevent from variables such as accent, pronunciation, fluency and so on. Four versions of excerpt were designed. One is exactly the same as Young's original version. The second version modifies the topic-comment order of sentences to make the excerpt more resemble "supposedly typical English rhetorical pattern. (p. 79)" Unlike the second version, the third one manipulates the discourse-structuring cues

concerning specificity, tense/aspect and logical connectors while not changing the sentence order. The fourth one manipulated both these discourse cues as well as the order of sentences. These excepts aimed to see which aspect subjects tend to consider more difficult to follow: discourse-structuring cues or order of ideas. The result shows that the importance of discourse-structuring devices outperforms the order of ideas in the light of comprehensibility.

Methodology

Procedure

The current study presents a qualitative discourse analysis of the planned discourse presentation of six English majors in NTNU (National Taiwan Normal University) by adopting the research framework developed by Tyler (1992) and Tyler and Bro (1992). The data is collected from (a) the spoken presentation discourse and written summary discourse in question, (b) the interview with the subjects and listeners and (c) information gathered from the experimental audience of the presentation and also from raters of the written summary.

The Speakers

All the subjects involved in this study are now English majors in NTNU in their junior year who are experienced in doing English oral presentations. These six English majors were chosen out of total twenty students who were asked to take a listening pretest at the advanced level of GEPT (General English Proficiency Test). The top three students were grouped as high achievers marked as A, B and C, while the last three students low achievers marked as D, E and F to serve as a comparison. A and D form an experimental pair and so do B and E and C and F. Both members in each pair were given the same article to prepare about one week before they handed in their written summary and delivered their spoken presentations. Articles assigned to each pair are different. Presenters were required to do their oral presentation no longer than five minutes. They were also notified to bear in mind that any presentation out of memorization of the summary was not allowed and that their written summary could serve only as reference in doing presentation. The presentation order of the subjects is scrambled but does not follow the alphabetic order. All the presentations were tape-recorded.

The Experimental Audience & Raters

In order to obtain overall comprehensibility of subjects' spoken and written discourses, ten graduate students were asked to serve as experimental audience for oral presentations and

another ten graduate students as raters for written summaries. All twenty graduate students are from graduate institute of English department in NTNU. Half of the experimental listeners are linguistics majors and the other half are TESOL majors and so do the raters. The experimental listeners were asked to listen to six oral presentations and give general comments. The raters were asked to read six written summaries and give general comments as well. They were also notified to be objective since they were to listen to or read materials on the same topic twice. They were not informed of any background information of the subjects nor did they know the materials beforehand.

Results

The Overall Performance-Scoring from Listeners and Raters.

The result of the data will be shown in terms of three criteria: lexical discourse marker, lexical specificity and complex syntactic clause. Furthermore, the three proposed working hypotheses are to be tested by the result. Before I move on to present the data and hypotheses-testing, the mean scores of spoken discourse and written discourse of each individual subject and also of both high- and low-proficiency learners should be manifested first below.[1] In the following two tables, we can know that though individual variations do appear in both groups, generally speaking the high-proficiency learners still outperform the low-proficiency learners in both spoken discourse and written discourse.

Table 1
Mean score of spoken discourse and written discourse of individual subject[2]

	A	B	C	D	E	F
spoken discourse	3.1	2	1.6	1.9	3.9	2.7
written discourse	2.7	2.1	2.2	1.8	2.6	3.3

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[1] The scores vary from 1 to 5 which respectively range from "very comprehensible" to "very hard to follow". See Appendix 1.
[2] Six subjects of three pairs are compared in this study. Subject A and Subject E were chosen to present the same topic, so do Subject B and Subject D and so do Subject C and Subject F.

Table 2

Mean score of spoken discourse and written discourse of both groups

	High-proficiency learners	Low-proficiency learners
Spoken discourse	2.23	2.83
Written discourse	2.33	2.56

Lexical Discourse Marker

After having a rough look at the overall performance scored by listeners and raters, the detailed result will be shown in terms of the above-mentioned three criteria. Regarding the first criterion: lexical discourse markers, Tyler (1992) argues that Chinese ITA fails to present a consistent introductory lecture by using appropriate lexical discourse makers. However, it is not suggested that non-native speakers are not capable of employing lexical discourse markers in their spoken discourse; instead, non-native speakers' problem of leading to poor comprehensibility actually stems from their inconsistent use of discourse markers. Tyler claims that the mixture use of numerical lexical markers, sequential markers and additive markers result in barriers of understanding to native speakers. Particularly, non-native speaker utilizes additive markers which are semantically ambiguous and functionally multiple (Schiffrin, 1987) in a messy manner. These are the potential problems non-native learners are faced with and also the one of the foci of this study. Here, the data concerning lexical discourse markers of English majors should be presented along with working hypotheses to be tested.

Table 3

Lexical discourse markers in spoken discourse

A	B	C
and first (numerical) secondly (numerical) and next (sequential) and next (sequential) and the next (sequential) and then (sequential) and the rest (additive) and also (additive)	for example (exemplification) and another reason (sequential) and the third part (numerical)	first of all (numerical) the second distinction (numerical) the final one (sequential)

D	E	F
the first one (numerical)	at the beginning (sequential)	first (numerical)
secondly (numerical)	furthermore (additive)	the second way (numerical)
and finally (sequential)	and furthermore (additive)	and finally (sequential)
finally	and (additive)	some main ideas
	besides (additive)	first (numerical)
	and also (additive)	another thing (sequential)
	and (additive)	
	and also (additive)	
	and (additive)	
	thus (causative)	

After looking at the data, we can now move on to check the first working hypothesis 1.1 to see if indeed non-native learners in the light of lexical discourse markers in spoken discourse do have any problem for both high-proficiency achievers and low-proficiency achievers are. The presented data does support that some typical misuses of discourse markers appear in both groups. On the one hand, both groups are inclined to take a mixed and inconsistent way of using lexical discourse markers especially by mixing usually three types of markers including numerical markers, sequential markers and additive markers or others like exemplification.[3]On the other hand, almost all of the subjects fail to indicate the exact number of subsequent points in the introduction section. Thus, according to the listeners, they found it hard to follow the sequence of ideas when the presenters did not clearly identify the overall outline of the presentation in the very beginning. As for the second working hypothesis 1.2, it is also supported because only the group of low-proficiency achievers tend to use additive discourse markers which according to Tyler (1992) lead to confusion, ambiguity and poor comprehension. With regard to the third working hypothesis 2.1 about the disparity between written and spoken discourse, the data shows that most subjects in their written data manifest exact number of subsequent points in the introduction section while none of them do so in spoken discourse, which shows that they indeed do better in written data. Nonetheless, though

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[3] Compare with data of native speaker (Tyler, 1992) which shows that native speakers tend to mix only numerical markers and sequential markers but not other, non-native speakers are apt to employ at least three types of markers in their presentation.

four subjects use discourse markers more consistently in written discourse than their spoken discourse, there are still the other two subjects do better in spoken data. The aforementioned data can partially support hypothesis 2.1 since some of the subjects do better in their spoken data. Still, we are qualified to claim that there is still difference between the data in these two types of discourse.

Lexical Specificity

Tyler (1992) has his own definition of lexical specificity by stating "The overarching notion of lexical specificity is that the referent in the discourse should be sufficiently identified to avoid confusion for the audience." This notion has been widely discussed and pursued subsequently (Halliday & Hasan 1976, Green 1989) and roughly includes pronominalization, certain patterns of adjectival modification, repetition, and appropriate lexical choice (Tyler 1992). The present study deploys only two sub-criteria of lexical specificity to scrutinize the data: pronominalization and appropriate lexical choice of listing items. Firstly, in terms of the working hypothesis 1.1, concerning pronominalization, both groups tend to use pronouns in a mixed and unclear way by mixing editorial *we* (Robins 1989) and *you* and also by interchanging pronouns *they* and *you* and pronouns *they* and generic *it* all the time. Thus, the working hypothesis 1.1 can be viewed supported. As for the working hypothesis 1.2, it is also supported since two of the low-proficient achievers fail to make use of appropriate lexicon by either using none or using confusing, inconsistent wording in listing items such as the loose linking among *attitude*, *first* and *on the one hand*. Comparatively, the group of high-proficiency learners has no major problems concerning lexical choice of listing items. For example, when talking about a company listing some information for job vacancy, one subject keeps on using verbs like *describe*, *tell*, *hold*, *talk about* on listing items or like the linking between *ingredients* and *properties* or *dimension* and *distinction*. Thirdly, the third working hypothesis should also be considered supported because in the written discourse, almost all subjects are capable of manipulating pronominalization and lexical choice better than in spoken discourse by using consistent and intelligible pronouns and lexical listing items.

Discourse Structure Device

Some of the previous studies (Biber 1988, Chafe 1982, Danielewicz 1984) argue that

native speakers are inclined to use more clauses with complex syntactic structures like relative clauses, subordinate clauses, complement clauses and others to differentiate the semantic and pragmatic prominence and logical relation of each clause while Tyler (1988, 1992) indicates that non-native speakers tend to use more coordinate structures which are deficient to manifest the differentiation of clausal prominence, which gives rise to poor comprehension or even confusion. The present research will also shed lights on the performance of discourse structure devices in spoken discourse and this study will also compare the data of Taiwanese English majors with the case study of one native speaker ITA (see Tyler 1992). The sub-criteria of complex discourse structure devices in the present study subsume relative clauses, subordinate clauses, complement clauses and other clauses like participle clauses. Table 4 show the frequency of the differences in the use of discourse structure devices in the individual spoken discourse. Table 5 show the frequency of the differences in the use of discourse structure devices in the individual written discourse. Table 6 shows the frequency of the differences in the use of discourse structure devices in both spoken and written discourse of both groups and native speaker's spoken data.

Table 4
Use of discourse structuring devices in spoken discourse

	A	B	C	D	E	F	NS
total clauses	26	35	68	48	32	30	25
relative clause	6 (23.0)	4 (11.4)	1 (1.5)	10 (20.8)	3 (9.4)	0 (0)	5 (20)
subordinate clause	4 (15.4)	2 (5.7)	14 (20.6)	6 (12.5)	4 (12.5)	2 (6.7)	2 (8)
complement clause	2 (7.7)	6 (17.1)	4 (5.9)	10 (20.8)	1 (3.1)	10 (33.3)	7 (28)
other clause	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (5.9)	0 (0)	4 (12.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
TOTAL	12 (46.1)	12 (34.3)	23 (33.8)	26 (54.2)	12 (37.5)	12 (40.0)	14 (56)

Table 5

Use of discourse structuring devices in written discourse

	A	B	C	D	E	F
total clauses	26	31	33	44	28	13
relative clause	6 (23.1)	3 (9.7)	5 (15.2)	9 (20.5)	6 (21.4)	1 (7.7)
subordinate clause	2 (7.7)	2 (6.5)	5 (15.2)	5 (11.4)	3 (10.7)	1 (7.7)
complement clause	1 (3.8)	7 (22.6)	1 (3.0)	12 (27.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
other clause	0 (0)	1 (3.2)	4 (12.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
TOTAL	9 (34.6)	13 (41.9)	15 (45.5)	26 (59.1)	9 (32.1)	2 (15.4)

Table 6

Use of discourse structuring devices in spoken and written discourse of both groups and native speaker's spoken data.

	High-proficient learners		Low-proficient learners		NS
total clauses	90	129	85	110	25
relative clause	14 (15.6)	11 (8.5)	16 (18.8)	13 (11.8)	5 (20)
subordinate clause	9 (10.0)	20 (15.5)	9 (10.6)	12 (10.9)	2 (8)
complement clause	9 (10.0)	12 (9.3)	12 (14.1)	21 (19.0)	7 (28)
other clause	5 (5.6)	4 (3.1)	0 (0)	4 (3.6)	0 (0)
TOTAL	37 (41.1)	47 (36.4)	37 (43.5)	50 (45.5)	14 (56)

Generally speaking, both high-proficiency learners (36.4%) and low-proficiency learners (45.5%) do not use as many discourse structuring devices as native speakers (56%) in their spoken discourse especially in relative clauses and complement clauses. Thus, the first working hypothesis 1.1 and the claim proposed by the previous studies are all supported. Nevertheless, the second working hypothesis 1.2 is not supported at all since, contrary to my expectation, low-proficiency learners comparatively behave more like native-speakers by using more discourse structuring devices. To be more specific, they use more relative clauses (11.8%) and complement clauses (19.0%) in a more native-like way. In addition to spoken discourse, low-proficiency learners also use more discourse structuring devices in written discourse. Thus, the distinction of high-low proficiency does not be equivalent to the distributional use of discourse structuring devices. Another noteworthy phenomenon is the disparity between spoken and written discourse of both high- and low-proficient achievers. High-proficiency learners do better in written discourse as hypothesized while low-proficiency learners do better in spoken one. As for high-proficiency learners, they use few discourse structuring devices in spoken discourse (36.4%) compared with those in their written discourse (41.1%), which is correspondent to my hypothesis 2.1. Nevertheless, low-proficiency learners tend to apply more discourse structuring devices in their spoken discourse (45.5) than in their written discourse (43.5).

Discussion

Lexical Discourse Marker

According to listeners' report, a close connection between lexical discourse markers (organization) and comprehensibility is shown. Thus, better utilization of lexical discourse markers lends support to better scores of comprehensibility. For example, the two subjects with highest scores (1.6 and 1.9, see Table 1) make use of two types of lexical discourse markers including numerical and sequential markers to organize the whole spoken text. That is to say, the model of lexical discourse makers is proved valid in terms of comprehensibility. Consistent use of numerical markers like *first*, *second* etc. or its mixed use with sequential markers like *next*, *finally* etc. contribute to better comprehension whereas more additive markers or mixed use of markers result in poor comprehension, which coincides with Tyler's (1992) claim since Subject E who mostly uses additive discourse markers such as *and* or *and also* is reported as the most difficult one to follow. The bewilderment of the use of additive

markers especially *and* can be accounted for in a sense that *and* in nature has been used as a discourse markers with multiple functions (Schiffrin, 1987). Hence, listeners reported that they found it hard to adequately interpret *and* since it can be interpreted as a listing lexical discourse marker, a pause filler or others. To sum up, comprehensibility of spoken discourse according to studies does have a lot to do with the lexical discourse markers on which non-native speakers still have room to improve.

Lexical Specificity

In terms of lexical specificity, the present study focuses on pronominalization and appropriate lexical choice. It seems that in addition to lexical discourse markers, better manipulation of pronouns does also contribute to better comprehension. Inconsistent or incorrect use of pronouns leads to confusion. Take Subject A and Subject E as examples. Though both of these two subjects present the same topic, compared with other subjects, their uses of pronouns were relatively messy and confusing by referring to the same referent with mixed use of *they* and *it* or *they* and *you*. The lack of clear identification of the referents leads the listeners to bewilderment. However, to my surprise, the mixed use of editorial *we* and *you* does not hinder listeners' comprehension. According the interview with the listeners, it may be due to the circumstance of oral presentation in which listeners naturally interpret the editorial *we* as *you* referring the listeners themselves. In such a case, though the pronouns are used in an interchangeable manner, they do not hamper comprehension. As or appropriate lexical choice, most subjects in the present study do not seem to have significant problems on the one hand. On the other hand, it suggests that appropriate lexical choice enjoys minor and peripheral significance in terms of comprehensibility because no listener reports the connection between lexical choice and comprehension, and it is not strongly shown that better use of lexical choice give rise to better score of comprehension. Also, the situation can be found in written discourse. However, certain problem needs extra heed. Most of them tend not to specify the topic and some of them may switch the focus throughout the introduction, which distracts listeners' concentration and understanding. For example, Subject B though a high-proficiency learner started with her presentation by talking about some side effects of drinking red wine, proceeding with some related studies, then providing some reasons to discuss and finally moving on to some possible ingredients causing headache. This problem also occurs to some other subjects in the introduction section but not listing items. In view of

this problem, studies on lexical choice in the introductory part should be pursued by more studies.

Discourse Structure Device

Like the report about lexical choice, no listener reports strong connection between syntactic structure and their comprehension. What's more, according to the scores in terms of group and individual differences, it is interesting to note that more native-like use of syntactic structure does not give rise to better score of comprehensibility though Tyler (1992) implies that non-native speaker's little use of discourse structuring devices affect native speakers' understanding. This difference may result from the listeners pool in the present research are non-native speakers though their English proficiency are supposed to be quite native-like (see METHODOLOGY). Nonetheless, as far as written discourse is concerned, discourse structuring devices come to be considerably relevant to coherence and comprehensibility (Chang, 1995). Namely, better control of syntactic structure in writing contributes to better understanding. To take a closer look at Subject B, C and D who are scored the highest three, the frequency of discourse structuring devices in their written discourse also ranked the highest three.

To take all the three criteria into consideration and comparison, we can claim that though three of them are argued for better comprehension, there is a hierarchical difference of significance concerning comprehension. On the one hand, in terms of spoken discourse, better comprehension have a lot to do with better use of lexical discourse markers (Flowerdew and Tauroza, 1995; Tyler 1998, 1992; Williams 1992) and pronominalization and next some with appropriate lexical choice but little with syntactic structure. On the other hand, in terms of written discourse, better comprehension seems to have much to do with syntactic structure and some with pronominalization and lexical choice but little with lexical discourse markers, which needs further studies. To sum up, non-native speakers in speaking training are obliged to pay more attention to monitoring their employment of lexical discourse markers and pronominalization to contribute to better coherence of the spoken discourse.

Conclusion

Following Tyler's rationale of lexical discourse markers, lexical specificity and discourse structuring device, the present study does support the three working hypotheses. In

terms of lexical discourse marker, EFL learners indeed encounter some difficulties consistently manipulating discourse markers, especially for low-proficient learners. Though both groups of subjects mange to better control their use of discourse markers in written discourse, they need to pay more attention to their spoken structure. That is to say, the teaching of spoken discourse markers is needed and should draw heed to the differentiation between sequential markers and additive markers. As for lexical specificity, though EFL learners do not show many problems about appropriate lexical choice, they still need to improve their use of pronouns when in spoken discourse. Teachers may need to remind EFL learners of their use of editorial *we* and listener-oriented *you*. Also, for some students who employ pronouns in a mixed way, teachers may need to ask them to consciously monitor their use of pronouns in speaking or even record their speaking for discussion. With regard to the third criterion – discourse structuring device, the present study seems to have a different result from previous studies: low-proficient learners behave more native-like, which needs more researches. Nonetheless, from the result of this study, we can see that Taiwanese EFL learners may not have too many problems to appropriately use complex sentences in their spoken discourse compared lexical discourse markers or lexical specificity. To take a thorough view of this research, we can conclude that teaching English speaking should draw more attention to learners' control of lexical discourse markers which influence comprehension most and also learners' use of pronouns.

This study exerts to take a complete view of EFL learners' spoken discourse by mainly focusing on qualitative error analysis of the transcription of subjects' oral presentation and also referring to listeners' and raters' evaluation and some supplementary interviews. Nonetheless, the future study will be better if the listeners and raters can be native speakers to be more reliable. In spite of the fact that the listeners and raters in the present study are not native speaker but graduate students in English department, the present study tries to rely more on the error analysis and comparison of the empirical data and take listeners' and raters' comment and score as reference. Also, in order to see more significant difference between the high-proficient subjects and low-proficient subjects, the subject pool can be enlarged and include more EFL learners other than English majors in the further study so as to provide more concrete teaching implications.

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